



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State Historic Preservation Office

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Jeffrey J. Crow, Deputy Secretary

Office of Archives and History  
Division of Historical Resources  
David Brook, Director

October 16, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gregory Thorpe, Ph.D., Director  
Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch  
NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Peter Sandbeck *Peter Sandbeck*

SUBJECT: Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report US 21 (Sparta Western Loop) From SR 1172 (Grandview Drive) to US 21, R-4060, Alleghany County, GS 94-0030

Thank you for your letter of September 18, 2006, transmitting the survey report by Courtney Foley for the above project.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we concur that the following properties are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under the criteria cited.

**AL0193**  
**Sparta Prison Camp**, 263 Grandview Drive, near the intersection of SR 1172 and US 21, Alleghany County, is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A for transportation and C for architecture. The complex, comprised of the main prison block and eight outbuildings, is associated with the history of North Carolina's good roads movement of the early twentieth-century. The facility, constructed from 1931 to 1935, was one of fifty fireproof prison field camps built by the State Highway Commission (the precursor to the North Carolina Department of Transportation).

The prisons were built statewide as a result of the 1931 state legislation transferring the jurisdiction of county roads, county prisons, and county-owned prison camps to the State Highway Commission. The facility housed prisoners who worked as road crews, constructing and maintaining the newly expanded state-sponsored road network. The Sparta Prison Camp remains the least altered and most intact surviving example of this type of prison in the state.

The Sparta Prison Camp is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an exceptionally intact example of the standard fireproof county prison complex, constructed throughout the state in the 1930s. The facility retains a high degree of integrity in location, design, materials, and workmanship. The Prison Camp has undergone only minor alterations and little loss of architectural detailing. Although the prison fencing and office are gone and the setting has been somewhat compromised by recent buildings in the vicinity, the facility

ADMINISTRATION  
RESTORATION  
SURVEY & PLANNING

Location  
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manages to convey the feel and association of the time, place, and use for which the Sparta Prison Camp was constructed.

We concur with the proposed National Register boundary as described, justified, and delineated in the survey report.

**D.C. Bledsoe House**, 798 South Main Street, (US 21), Sparta, Alleghany County, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for architecture as a good intact example of a late 1930s house constructed of local stone. The Bledsoe house stands out among other stone houses of the period in Sparta and Alleghany County because of the fine level of architectural detail, seen in the house's Colonial Revival and Rustic Revival design elements, copper roof, and contrasting finished granite-stone window surrounds and quoins. In addition, the property's landscape is defined by an extensive use of local stone. The property has undergone little alteration and retains a high level of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feel, and association. We concur with the proposed National Register boundary as described, justified, and delineated in the survey report.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we concur that the following property is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places:

**Sparta Mill Pond**, south side of US 21 near Bridge No. 30 over the Sparta River. The Sparta Mill Pond and associated ruins of a stone and concrete dam and concrete structure, which once housed a hydroelectric generator, was destroyed during a flood of 1969. Therefore, the property no longer retains enough integrity to convey its significance under any National Register criteria of eligibility.

We concur with the not eligible determinations for properties 3 -8; 10 -11; 13 -21.

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 919/733-4763 ext. 246. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr  
Courtney Foley

bc: Brown/McBride  
County



# HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT

US 21 (SPARTA WESTERN LOOP) FROM SR 1172 (GRANDVIEW DRIVE) TO US 21  
ALLEGHANY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA


TIP No. R-4060  
WBS No. 34605.1.1  
FEDERAL AID No. STP-21(10)




Historic Architecture

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
REPORT PREPARED BY COURTNEY FOLEY

SEPTEMBER 2006

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Courtney Foley, Principal Investigator  
Historic Architecture Group  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

14 SEPTEMBER 2006  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor  
Historic Architecture Group  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

18 September 2006  
Date

## **Management Summary**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to extend the Sparta Western Loop from SR 1172 (Grandview Drive) to US 21 in Alleghany County. The proposed project consists of two lanes on new location south of downtown Sparta. The purpose and need of this project is to provide a roadway link between SR 1172 (Grandview Drive) and US 21. This project would reduce congestion on US 21 through the Sparta Central Business District by providing a bypass around the southern perimeter of town.

In response to a request for input, the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (HPO) requested on 2 September 2004 that a NCDOT architectural historian survey the project area to identify and evaluate any structures over fifty years of age since the area has not been surveyed in over twenty years.

This report documents historic architectural resources located within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for this project. The APE was delineated by NCDOT staff architectural historians and reviewed in the field in January 2006.

NCDOT architectural historians identified twenty-one (21) properties that appeared to be at least fifty years old within the APE in January 2006. Among the twenty-one properties identified, eighteen (18) were determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NR) and not worthy of further evaluation in a consultation meeting between HPO and NCDOT held on 28 February 2006 (see concurrence form in Appendix I). At that meeting, NCDOT and the HPO agreed that three (3) properties – Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp [AL 193]; Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond; and Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House [AL 191] – warranted additional investigation.

Based on this request, architectural historians completed additional field investigation and historical research. Further review recommends that Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp [AL 193] and Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House [AL191] are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

This project is Federally funded [Federal Aid Number STP-21(10)] and is classified as an Environmental Assessment (EA).



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## **Project Description**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to extend and complete the Sparta Western Loop from SR 1172 (Grandview Drive) to US 21 in Alleghany County. The proposed project consists of two lanes on new location south of downtown Sparta (see *Figure 1: Project Location Map*). The purpose and need of this project is to provide a roadway link between SR 1172 (Grandview Drive) and US 21. This project would reduce congestion on US 21 through the Sparta Central Business District by providing a bypass around the southern perimeter of town.

The proposed project would extend and complete the Sparta Western Loop and provide a roadway connection benefiting the local system. Without the project, the effectiveness of carrying bypass traffic would be diminished. The traffic demand would be directed along SR 1172 and US 21 east of Sparta, making these existing roads more congested and perhaps less safe.

## **Purpose of Survey and Report**

The purpose and need of this undertaking is to complete the Sparta Western Loop from SR 1172 to US 21 on new location in Alleghany County.

NCDOT conducted a survey and compiled this report in order to identify historic architectural resources located within the project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) as part of the environmental studies performed by NCDOT and documented by an Environmental Assessment (EA). This report is prepared as a technical appendix to the EA and as part of the documentation for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that if a federally funded, licensed, or permitted project has an effect on a property listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be given an opportunity to comment. This report is on file at NCDOT and is available for review by the public.

## **Methodology**

NCDOT conducted the survey and prepared this report in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Technical Advisory T 6640.8A (Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents); the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR §800; 36 CFR §60; and Survey and Procedures and Report Guidelines for Historic Architectural Resources by NCDOT. This survey and report meet the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service.

NCDOT conducted a survey with the following goals: 1) to determine the APE, defined as the geographic area or areas within which a project may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist; 2) to identify all significant architectural resources within the APE; and 3) to evaluate these resources according to the National Register of Historic Places criteria. The APE boundary is delineated on *Figure 2: Map of the APE*.

In January and May 2006, NCDOT architectural historians conducted an intensive survey by car and on foot to identify historic architectural resources within the project APE. Every property located within the APE appearing to be fifty years of age or older was photographed and documented.

Background research and National Register evaluation of properties in the project area included the following materials: architectural survey maps and files located at the Raleigh office of the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (HPO); deeds, plats, and tax records housed at the Alleghany County Government Offices in Sparta; and primary and secondary source material located at the following repositories: the Alleghany County Public Library, the North Carolina Division of Archives and History in Raleigh, and the Louis Round Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill.

### **Summary of Findings**

The January 2006 survey identified twenty-one (21) properties within the APE that appeared to be at least fifty years old. Among the twenty-one properties identified, eighteen (18) were determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and not worthy of further evaluation in a consultation meeting between HPO and NCDOT held on 28 February 2006 (see concurrence form in Appendix I). At that meeting, NCDOT and HPO agreed that three (3) properties warranted additional investigation – Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp [AL 193]; Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond; and Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House [AL 191].

#### **Historic Architectural Resources Located within the APE:**

*Properties Determined Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (DOE):*  
None

*Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places:*  
None

*Properties Listed in the North Carolina Study List:*  
None

*Properties that are Locally Designated:*  
None


*Properties Evaluated In This Report And Recommended **Eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places:*

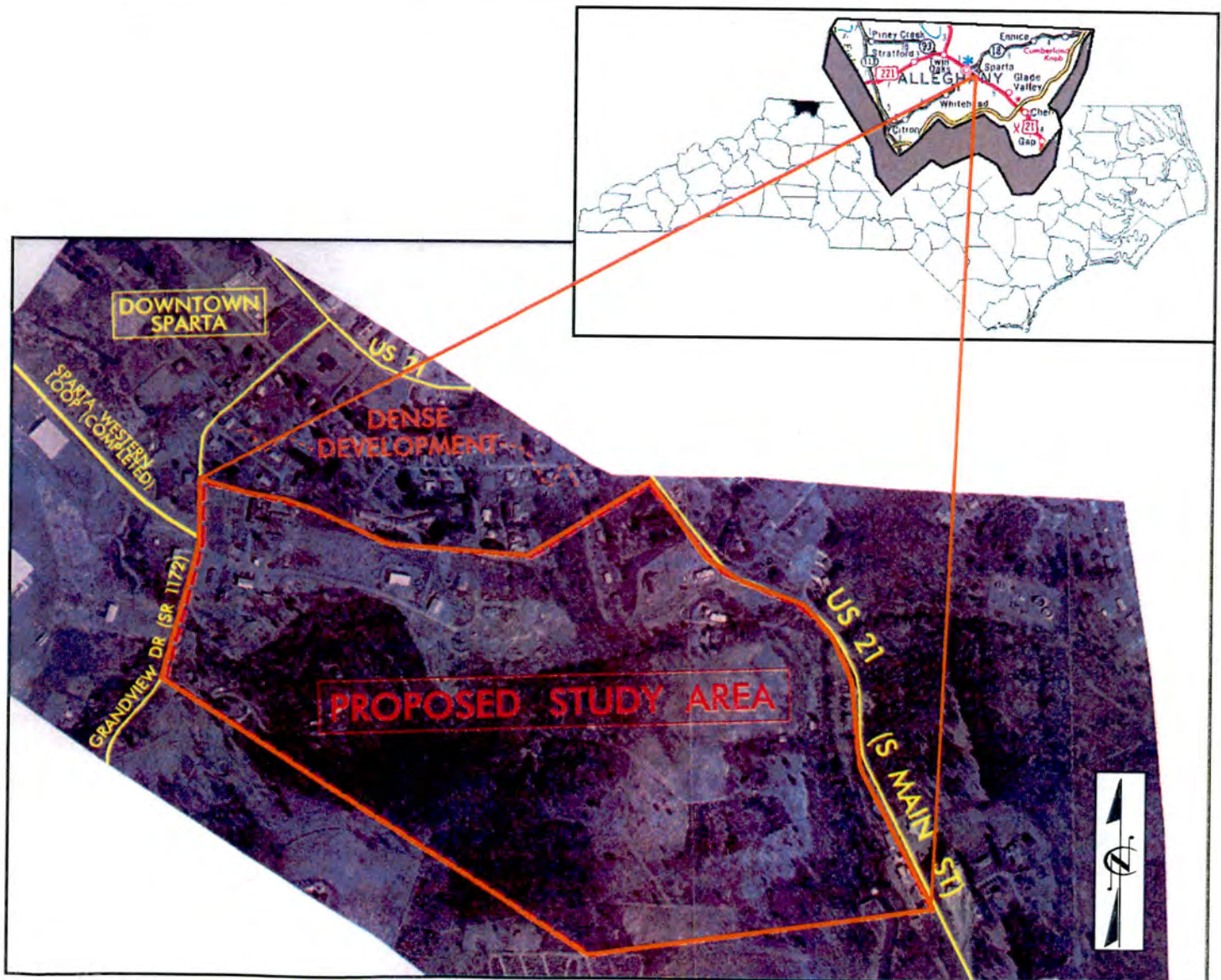
- Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp [AL 193]
- Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House [AL 191]

*Properties Evaluated In This Report And Recommended **Not Eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places:*

- Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond



<p><b>HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT</b></p>	 <p><b>Historic Architecture</b></p>
<p><b>US 21 (SPARTA WESTERN LOOP) FROM SR 1172 TO US 21 SPARTA, ALLEGHANY COUNTY TIP# R-4060</b></p>	
<p><b>FIGURE 1: PROJECT LOCATION MAP</b> — PROJECT LOCATION/STUDY AREA LIMITS NOT TO SCALE</p>	





**FIGURE 2: MAP OF THE APE**  
NOT TO SCALE

**LEGEND:**

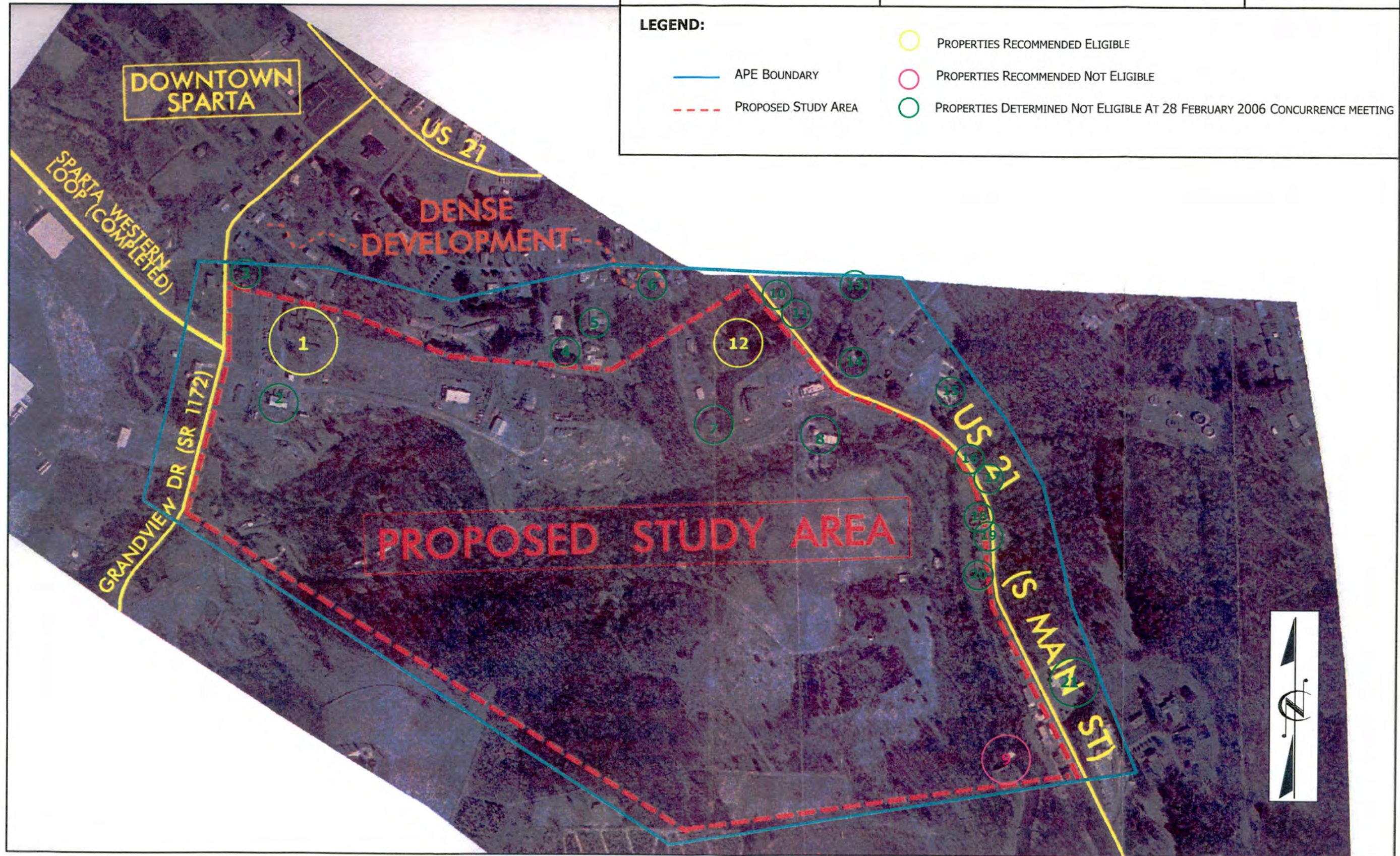
— APE BOUNDARY

- - - PROPOSED STUDY AREA

○ PROPERTIES RECOMMENDED ELIGIBLE

○ PROPERTIES RECOMMENDED NOT ELIGIBLE

○ PROPERTIES DETERMINED NOT ELIGIBLE AT 28 FEBRUARY 2006 CONCURRENCE MEETING





## **Historic Context: Alleghany County**

Located in the northwestern portion of the state, Alleghany County was carved out of Ashe County in 1859. Commissioners finally agreed on a site for the county seat in 1868 when local property owners donated fifty acres of land at the geographical center of the county. Sparta, the county seat, sits at the crossroads of NC 18 and US 21 and is the only municipality in Alleghany County.

County geography ranges from mountain peaks and steep slopes in the northwestern part to more undulating terrain along the New and Little Rivers, which stretch through the county. In general, the terrain holds an average elevation of 2,800 feet above sea level with some mountain peaks rising above 3,500 feet. This rugged terrain served as a barrier to the rest of the state, limiting development and growth until the 1930s when modern roads allowed ease of travel into the county.

Ranking fifth in size and ninety-second in population in the state according to the 2000 US Census, Alleghany County experienced a period of growth around the turn of the twentieth century. General prosperity reigned throughout the county.<sup>1</sup> Travel beyond the county border became more commonplace and afforded an influx of new ideas and improved communications networks. Sparta grew into the primary business center for the county, replacing small rural stores located at crossroads communities scattered throughout the county. The extension of the railroad into the region and the later introduction of the automobile allowed for the exchange of goods and ideas from outside the county with greater ease. Technological advances that increased farming production also occurred during this time.<sup>2</sup> The development of the Blue Ridge Parkway in the 1930s continued this exchange of ideas and provided outsiders with a destination in the mountains. These factors contributed to the continued growth of Sparta, which became a thriving mountain town.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Sizemore, *Alleghany Architecture: A Pictorial Survey*, Sparta, NC, 1983, vii-viii. (Hereinafter referred to as *Alleghany Architecture*).

<sup>2</sup> Sherry Joines, "Up Before Dawn: Farms and Farm Ways in Alleghany County, North Carolina" (Master's Thesis, University of Georgia, 1998), 13-15.

## **Historic Context: Prison Field Camps in North Carolina**

Manual labor, primarily provided by incarcerated men, constructed and maintained the budding North Carolina state road system in the first half of the twentieth century. The prison and highway departments in the state were officially linked as one state agency, the State Highways and Public Works Commission from 1931 to 1957. North Carolina used state and county prisoners for road construction as early as 1867 and continued this practice in various forms well into the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The prison system and the highway system in North Carolina share a common history that extends well beyond the twenty-six years that they were regulated by the same state agency.

The prison system gained legitimacy as a state agency in 1868 when the newly-adopted state constitution provided for building a state penitentiary. By 1875 private employers could lease inmates as laborers. A 1901 legislative mandate stated that the prison system retained responsibility for inmate custody even when contracted out. Over time, an informal system of mobile prison camps developed that moved from location to location, depending on where inmate labor was needed.<sup>4</sup>

While the prison system developed in the late nineteenth century, the state's roads languished. Very few groomed roads existed in the state. As North Carolina's economy evolved in the early twentieth century, improving transportation became increasingly important and popular. The North Carolina Good Roads Association, the major impetus for a cohesive state network of passable roads prior to 1920, campaigned throughout the state for better roads. Their "Good Roads and Good Men" platform focused on prison reform, the benefits that hard labor building roads would provide for inmates, and the advantages of a better road system throughout the state. State Prison superintendent Julian S. Mann stated in the 1907-1908 Biannual Report that, "the state can use its convict labor to no better advantage than in constructing permanent public highways in the most scientific and thorough matter, but always under the management of the state and not of the county."<sup>5</sup>

In 1912, 48,000 miles of road existed throughout the state, a majority of which consisted of dirt or a sand and clay base beneath topsoil that required (and often lacked) constant maintenance to keep the roads passable. By 1921 only 135 miles of hard-surface roads existed anywhere in the state.<sup>6</sup> Because most county roads were of the high-maintenance dirt-surfaced type, county administrators saw prisoners as an attractive source of cheap manual labor in the 1910s and 1920s, and chain gangs under county control were prevalent throughout the state.

Inmate living conditions in mobile camps were atrocious. However, county administrators feared that the elimination of chain gang labor would curtail the road building process and did little to improve unsanitary camps. The 1914 Good Roads Association proceedings noted that the state lacked legislation in regard to "how the

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<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Ireland, "Prison Reform, Road Building, and Southern Progressivism: Joseph Hyde Pratt and the Campaign For "Good Roads and Good Men." *North Carolina Historical Review* 68 (April 1991), 125. (Hereinafter referred to as "Prison Reform, Road Building, and Southern Progressivism").

<sup>4</sup> North Carolina Department of Corrections Website, <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/admin/Page1.htm>, accessed 31 January 2006.

<sup>5</sup> "Prison Reform, Road Building, and Southern Progressivism," 135-136.

<sup>6</sup> Walter R. Turner, *Paving Tobacco Road*, Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 2003, 2, 12. (Hereinafter referred to as *Paving Tobacco Road*).



convict camp is to be kept up.” Mobile camps usually consisted of modified railroad boxcars or steel cages used for circus animals that could be moved by horse from site to site. Hastily constructed wood buildings made up more permanent camps where, for security purposes, prisoners were chained to one another or to cots at night.<sup>7</sup> Despite the poor standard of living they were providing, counties balked at relinquishing control of county prisoners to a state-run agency. The Good Roads and Good Men Campaign began to fade after 1915, when members adopted a more systematic approach to penal reform.

Locke Craig, governor from 1913 - 1917, acted as the first “Good Roads” governor and served as the chairman of the first Highway Commission in 1915. Lacking any real power, the Highway Commission operated on a budget of \$10,000 and left road construction and the housing of chain gangs in the hands of the counties.<sup>8</sup>

The state legislature passed an act in 1921 that intended for the State “to lay out, take over, establish and construct, and assume control of approximately 5,500 miles of hard-surfaced and other dependable highways running to all county seats, and to all principal towns ... and linking up with State Highways of adjoining states.”<sup>9</sup> However, nothing came of the plan until 1931 when Governor Oliver Max Gardener proposed that the State Highway Commission take responsibility of an additional 45,000 miles of existing county roads as well as county-owned prison camps and road building equipment. Counties were relieved of all road-related responsibilities except payment of existing debt for prior road work.

As part of this 1931 proposal, the State Highway Commission and the prison department consolidated into the State Highways and Public Works Commission. The condition of existing prison camps and the increased need for manual labor to maintain the newly acquired roads made this a fiscally responsible move. The consolidation allowed money from the Highway Fund to be used for prison renovation, new prison camp construction, and general maintenance of all facilities. All told, eighty-six field camp units were constructed or converted as a result of this merger.

Between 1931 and 1933 the State Highway and Public Works Commission spent \$850,000 for permanent improvements to prison camps.<sup>10</sup> Located throughout the state – primarily for the convenience of road building and repair – the sixty-five proposed new prison camps achieved uniformity in living conditions and prison regulations. The benefit of consolidation came from the fact that all inmates would be assigned to road work except for the few needed for cooking and general housekeeping.<sup>11</sup> A member of the bridge department drew plans for the standard prison field camp and an experimental complex was built on the outskirts of Raleigh. The camp could hold eighty-five men and cost \$20,000 to construct. These updated field camps served as “models of housing for

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<sup>7</sup> “Prison Reform, Road Building, and Southern Progressivism,” 145-147.

<sup>8</sup> Harden, John, *North Carolina Roads and Their Builders*. Vol. 1. Raleigh: Superior Stone Company, 1952, 34. (Hereinafter referred to as *North Carolina Roads and Their Builders*).

<sup>9</sup> *North Carolina Roads and Their Builders*, 36.

<sup>10</sup> North Carolina Department of Corrections Website, <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/admin/Page1.htm>, accessed 31 January 2006.

<sup>11</sup> V. L. Bounds, “Changes Made In Prison Law and Administration in North Carolina 1953-1960.” Report Prepared for the North Carolina Prison Department March 1960, 59. (Hereinafter referred to as “Report Prepared for the North Carolina Prison Department”).

larger groups at close quarters” and “the last word in sanitation, safety from fire hazards, and economic design.”<sup>12</sup>

The State Highways and Public Works Commission adhered to the same utilitarian plan for each prison camp, with only slight modifications where necessary. Each camp occupied approximately thirty acres with the buildings surrounded by a nine-foot high barbed wire fence. The physical plant included a one-story brick fireproof cellblock building; a wood building housing the kitchen and mess hall; a small brick solitary confinement building; and a wood washhouse. A guardhouse/administration building stood just outside the fenced enclosure. Some prison camps had additional utilitarian buildings. Camps varied in capacity from 75 to as many as 225 men, although most were designed to house 100 inmates.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the focus in the 1930s shifted from construction of new roads to continued upkeep of the former county-maintained roads. As road building technology advanced, the constant need for manual labor decreased. This resulted in a decreased need for inmate labor by the Highway Department. In 1955 the General Assembly authorized a study to consider the feasibility of separating the prison system from the Highway Department, as North Carolina was the only state that had the two under the same state agency. On July 1, 1957, the Prison Department and the Highway Department became two separate agencies in the state government. As a result, prison operations consolidated and fifteen prison camps were closed. The closed camps were either reassigned to other state agencies, the NCDOT for the most part, or sold. Other camps remained in the system, closing as more modern prisons were constructed. Some county correctional centers have incorporated the historic field camp buildings into their modern complexes. Even today, a large portion of NCDOT county maintenance facilities are located on or adjoining land where a former prison field camp was located.

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<sup>12</sup> Carolyn L. Reynolds, “Model Highway Camps House Road Prisoners,” *News and Observer* (Raleigh), 1 May 1932.

<sup>13</sup> “Changes Made In Prison Law and Administration in North Carolina 1953-1960,” 60.

*Properties Evaluated and Recommended **Eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places:*

**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp [AL 193]**

**Property Identification:** The Sparta Prison Camp is identified as Resource 1 on *Figure 2: Map of the APE*. This property was identified as AL 193 in the HPO-sponsored 1983 Alleghany County Survey.

**Location and Setting** (*Photographs 1-3*): The Sparta Prison Camp is located at 263 Grandview Drive, approximately 1,400 feet from the intersection of SR 1172 and US 21 (refer to *Figure 2: Map of the APE*). The prison camp complex is part of a thirty-one-acre parcel that currently houses the NCDOT maintenance facility for Alleghany County. The buildings are clustered together in an area that is elevated above SR 1172. A paved road from the south provides access to the center of the complex. Mature hardwoods that are irregularly planted in close proximity to the buildings and grassed lawn are the only evidence of landscaping. Modern NCDOT maintenance facility buildings are located to the south and west of the historic prison complex.

**Description:** The Sparta Prison Camp comprises nine buildings (ten buildings historically) laid out in a utilitarian manner on a hillside just south of downtown Sparta. The complex includes the main prison block, prison office, kitchen and dining hall, laundry and wash house, smokehouse, solitary confinement, several utilitarian sheds, and a root cellar. Some buildings have building identification numbers painted on the exterior.

*Main Prison Block (Photographs 4-11):* The Main Prison Block is a one-story, horizontally-oriented, brick building. At the center of the symmetrical facade (west elevation), stripped Art Deco pilasters with cast stone bases and caps flank the entrance bay. Soldier courses run along the interior of the pilasters. Brick corbelling, courses of vertically aligned bricks, and three narrow, vertical panels of bricks laid in a herringbone pattern create a stripped Art Deco entablature that extends between the pilasters and is topped with a cast stone cornice. A steel paneled door is centered in this pavilion. A simple metal-shaded light fixture projects over the front door.

Eight bays extend on both sides of the entrance composition. Each bay contains a large metal industrial sash window divided into forty-two lights. The north and south elevations are identical: the original five-bay elevations consisting of an entrance door and four industrial windows now incorporate a garage bay (added when NCDOT began using the building for equipment storage), two windows with steel muntins on the lower level and three smaller windows, also with steel muntins, illuminating the upper attic space. Small chimney flues pierce the parapets on both elevations. A one-story ell punctuated with steel windows extends to the rear (east). A parapet with tile coping encircles the main block and follows the profile of each side elevation. The roof is a side-gable structure truncated so that the roof slopes terminate at a nearly flat plane that runs the length of the building. Diamond-shaped shingles clad the roof slopes.

Inside, the steel roof truss is exposed. The original configuration of a central corridor flanked by two prisoner holding areas is evident, although only the upper portions of the original steel prison bars remain. Metal support posts run lengthwise down the center of



the building. The floor is concrete and walls are a combination of exposed brick and plaster. Corrugated metal covers the ceiling.

Two stone side-gable utilitarian buildings are connected to the northeast corner of the ell. Constructed of rough cut, uncoursed dark river rock, the southernmost building features a single metal casement window on both the south and east elevations. A door opening at the southwest corner of the building provides access to the interior. A second stone building abuts the north wall of the first building, creating a valley where the gable roofs meet. The west and north elevations consist of rough cut, uncoursed light-colored river rock with flush mortar joints. A metal casement window is located in the center of each elevation. The east elevation features coursed ashlar stone with raised tuck-pointed mortar joints. A door made of vertical wood boards rests in a metal frame in the center of the east elevation. The east gable end contains a circular-shaped decorative design integrated into the stonework.

*Kitchen and Mess Hall (Photographs 12-15):* Located due east of the main prison block, the kitchen and mess hall is a one-story rectangular, front-gable building sheathed in weatherboard siding and set on a continuous brick foundation. The symmetrical west elevation features two doors that are each flanked by two hopper windows to the exterior side. The north and south side elevations each contain a row of nine-pane hopper windows that run the length of the mess hall area. Situated at the east end of the building, the kitchen is entered through a single door in the east elevation. Openings for hopper windows wrap the northeast corner, although the windows have been removed.

Two chimney flues pierce the asphalt-shingled front-gable roof at the ridgeline. A gabled monitor extends from the roof over the kitchen portion of the building. Window openings extend the length of the north and south sides of the monitor. The building and monitor roofs have wide eave overhangs and exposed rafter ends.

Two rooms make up the footprint of the building – the mess hall on the west end and the kitchen on the east end. The gable truss system and roof decking are exposed on the interior. Beadboard covers the walls and the floor is a concrete slab. A large beam supported by metal posts runs the length of the dining room. Utilitarian metal light fixtures hang from the ceiling.

*Smokehouse (Photograph 16):* A small front-gable building constructed of uncut rubble stone, the smokehouse is built into the slope of the hill. The roof, clad with metal sheets, overhangs the edge of the walls. Stones arranged in a fan-shaped pattern flank the sides of the centered door on the south elevation. A chimney flue pierces the roof on the east side of the ridge.

*Shed #4 (Photographs 16-17):* Shed #4 is a one-and-one-half story, front-gable stone building sited next to the smokehouse. The three-bay south elevation features a centered door opening with two fixed sash windows in disrepair on either side. A third fixed sash window is located in the gable end. Wide-spaced mortar joints that have been poorly repointed with Portland cement hold the uncoursed stone walls together. The slope of the hill in which Shed #4 lies is such that the south elevation is full height, while the north elevation is only a half-story in height. Metal roofing sheets form the exterior wall (gable end) on the north elevation. A five-panel wood door centered between two square window openings provide light and access to the upper story.

*Shed #6 (Photograph 18):* Shed #6 is a one-story front-gable shed constructed of unpainted concrete block located between the Kitchen and Mess Hall and the Laundry and Wash Room. Nestled into a steep embankment, only the south elevation of the shed is exposed in full. The south elevation contains a door opening and two six-pane fixed-sash windows. German siding encloses the gable end. V-crimp roofing covers the shed. Two rows of shelves line the interior walls.

*Laundry and Wash Room (Photographs 19-21):* The Laundry and Wash Room building is a one-story rectangular building with weatherboard siding set on a continuous brick foundation. Entrances are located on the north, west, and south elevations. The north and south elevations each contain five hopper windows that are randomly spaced along the wall. Two hopper windows punctuate both the east and west elevations. An exterior brick chimney is located on the west elevation. Asphalt shingles clad the gable roof, which has slightly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter ends.

*Solitary Confinement Cell (Photographs 22-24):* The solitary confinement cell is a nearly square building constructed with common bond brick and covered by a shed roof that is practically flat. The west elevation contains a metal door that provides access to the two isolation cells on the interior. The north and south elevations each contain two windows, although the windows on the north elevation are not original. A square brick chimney is located on the south elevation exterior.

*Shed #11 (Photographs 25-26):* Shed #11 is a front-gable stone shed that is open on the west elevation. The front-gable roof with exposed rafter ends covers the uncoursed, cut stone walls. A retaining wall constructed of the same uncoursed local stone curves away from the shed to the west and leads to the root cellar entrance.

*Root Cellar (Photographs 27-28):* The root cellar is a concrete block front-gable building with a double-leaf door. The roof is covered with V-crimp metal sheets. Access to the vegetable storage area requires going down several steps and through an additional doorway. Horizontal wood boards spaced slightly apart separate each of the eight vegetable storage areas and allow for air flow within the interior.

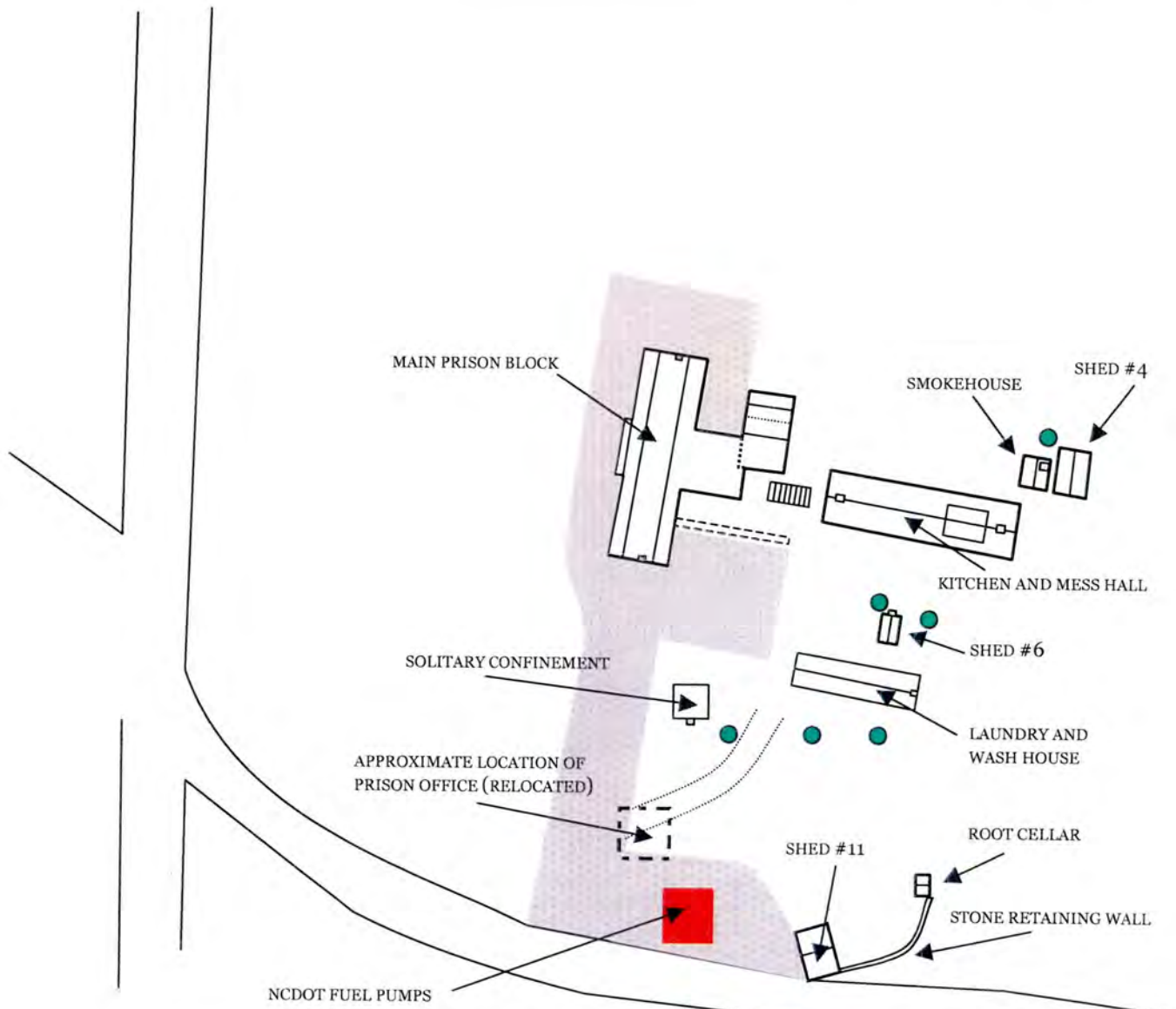
*Prison Office (nonextant)<sup>14</sup>:* The one-story, hipped-roof, three-bay cottage featured a central hall flanked by two rooms on either side. A partial-width, front-gable porch extended across the middle portion of the facade. Weatherboards clad the building. The 1983 HPO survey form indicates that the building was located approximately where the NCDOT fuel pumps now stand (refer to *Figure 3: Sparta Prison Camp Site Plan* for this location). At some point between 1983 and the present, the county moved the building to a new location for use as by the Alleghany County Schools as a central office building<sup>15</sup>, although this has not been visually confirmed.



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<sup>14</sup> This description is taken from 1980 photographs of the Prison Office taken as part of the AL 193 HPO survey form.

<sup>15</sup> Lon Leatherland, "Making a Visit to the Old Sparta Prison," Alleghany News Online: [www.ls.net/~allnews/hereandthere/column14.php](http://www.ls.net/~allnews/hereandthere/column14.php), accessed 23 June 2006.





<p><b>HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL          RESOURCES          SURVEY REPORT</b></p>	 <p><b>NCDOT</b>          Historic Architecture</p>	
<p><b>US 21 (SPARTA WESTERN LOOP) FROM SR 1172 TO US 21          SPARTA, ALLEGHANY COUNTY          TIP# R-4060</b></p>		
<p><b>FIGURE 3: RESOURCE 1: SPARTA PRISON CAMP SITE PLAN          NOT TO SCALE</b></p>		



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 1: View looking east towards the resource from the existing portion of the Sparta Western Loop.



Photograph 2: Looking north at the prison complex from the NCDOT fuel pumps.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 3: View looking west from the front of the Main Prison Block.



Photograph 4: West facade of the Main Prison Block.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 5: Detail of the facade entrance.



Photograph 6: South Elevation. Garage door opening is a nonhistoric modification.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 7: Coping along roof parapet of Main Prison Block.



Photograph 8: Interior of Main Prison Block with remnants of prison bars still visible.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 9: Stone additions on the east side of the Main Prison Block.



Photograph 10: North and west elevations of stone additions.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 11: Decorative detail in gable end of stone addition.



Photograph 12: Kitchen and Mess Hall – west elevation.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 13: Kitchen and Mess Hall – south elevation.



Photograph 14: View of monitor over kitchen area on east end of the Kitchen and Mess Hall.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 15: Interior view of the mess hall.



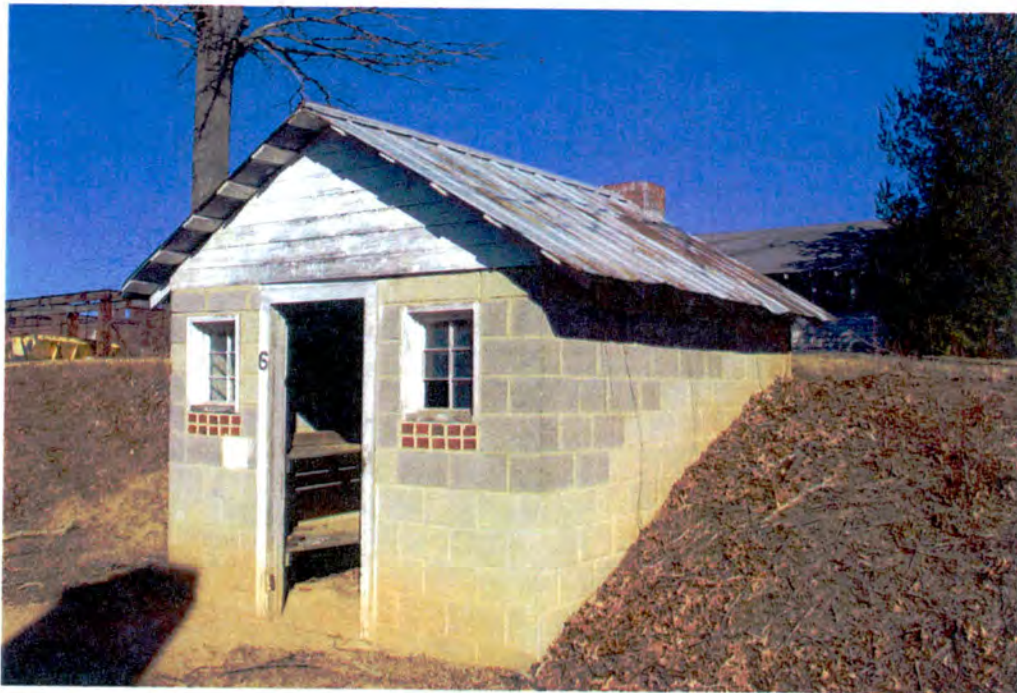
Photograph 16: Smokehouse(left) and Shed #4.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 17: Upper story on north elevation of Shed #4. Smokehouse roof on right.



Photograph 18: Shed #6.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 19: Laundry and Wash House – south elevation.



Photograph 20: Laundry and Wash House – west elevation.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



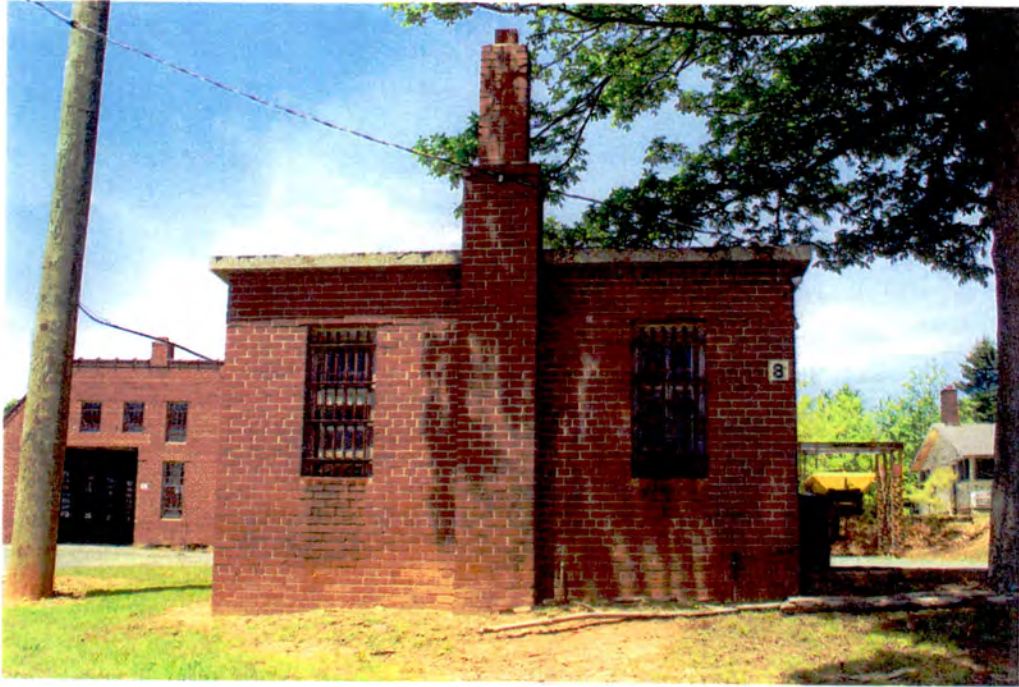
Photograph 21: Interior view of Laundry and Wash House.



Photograph 22: East and north elevations of Solitary Confinement.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 23: Solitary Confinement – south elevation.



Photograph 24: Interior view of Solitary Confinement.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 25: Shed #11.



Photograph 26: Stone retaining wall between Shed #11 and Root Cellar.



**Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Representative Photographs**



Photograph 27: Root Cellar.



Photograph 28: Interior of Root Cellar.



**Integrity:** The Sparta Prison Camp retains integrity of location as the complex remains at the site on which it was constructed. Although now used as a storage facility by NCDOT, this conversion has aided in the preservation of the original complex layout and building materials. Integrity of setting has been lessened by the construction of newer buildings in the vicinity (including the Sparta Business Park to the southwest and the NCDOT fuel pumps to the south), however open fields to the east and expansive views from the hill on which the complex is positioned still convey the rural nature of the complex. The complex retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Despite the fact that the prison closed in 1963, the upkeep of the buildings by NCDOT has resulted in only minor alterations and little loss of architectural detailing, especially when compared to historic prison camps of the same vintage located elsewhere in the state. Even with the loss of the prison fencing and the prison office, the complex conveys the time in which it was built, as well as the use for which it was constructed, clearly expressing integrity of feeling and association.

**Developmental Context:** The Sparta Prison Camp is a surviving example of a field camp unit constructed or converted during the consolidation of the state prison and highway departments. The State Highway and Public Works Commission purchased thirty acres of land south of Sparta in 1933 for \$2,500. The self-contained complex adheres to the typical design created in 1931 by a member of the Highway Department's bridge division for prison field camps throughout the state.

The Sparta camp, Prison Unit #091, opened about 1935. This maximum security prison housed between fifty and one hundred men, with seventy-five inmates at a time being the average. Inmates worked on road crews or had jobs around the camp – in the kitchen, laundry or cultivating fields to the east of the prison compound. Horses, mules, and cows were kept to help with farming and to provide fresh milk for the inmates.<sup>16</sup>

The prison closed for a brief period in the early 1940s because it consistently housed too few inmates to make running the camp cost effective. When the Highway Commission needed labor in the area for road maintenance, the prison camp reopened in 1943. The Sparta Prison Camp closed permanently in 1963 as part of the Department of Prisons consolidation efforts.

After 1963, Blue Ridge Shoe Factory used the complex. The USDA free food distribution center operated out of the main building as well. The property is currently owned by the Town of Sparta. The NCDOT uses the complex for storage of road equipment and maintenance supplies, and has done so since before 1980. The Alleghany County School system moved the prison office building to a different location in Sparta for their use sometime after 1980. A prefabricated office building, parking lots, and modern maintenance facilities used by NCDOT are located on the same tax parcel but outside of the prison camp confines.

**National Register Evaluation:** The Sparta Prison Camp was evaluated for listing in the National Register using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation as outlined in 36 CFR §60.4. For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Sparta Prison Camp is recommended *Eligible* for the National Register. The resource is recommended eligible for listing under Criterion A in the categories of transportation and other, for its association with the developmental

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<sup>16</sup> *Alleghany Architecture*, 85-86.

history of the NCDOT and the prison system in North Carolina. The resource is also recommended eligible under Criterion C for architecture.

**National Register Criteria Assessment:** The Sparta Prison Camp is **eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (Event). *To be eligible under Criterion A the property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American History or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community. Furthermore, the property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, the property's specific association must be important as well.* The Sparta Prison Camp is eligible under Criterion A in the categories of transportation and other for its association with the history and development of the NCDOT and the North Carolina Department of Corrections under the State Highways and Public Works Commission from 1931 to 1957. The North Carolina Highway Act of 1931 transferred jurisdiction over county roads, county prisoners, and county-owned prison camps to the State Highway Commission (a precursor to the NCDOT). This consolidation of county prisons and secondary roads at the state level allowed the Highway Commission to better utilize prisoners in constructing and maintaining the expanded state-sponsored road network. Research and site visits to other prison field camps indicate that the Sparta Prison Camp is the least altered, most intact surviving example of the fifty fireproof prison camps built throughout the state in the 1930s as a result of the 1931 legislation. As such, this resource best represents the relationship between county prison consolidation and improvements, the use of incarcerated labor for road work crews, and the county road building movement during 1931 – 1957, the time period in which the prison system and the highway department were one state agency. Therefore, the Sparta Prison Camp is eligible for the National Register at the state level under Criterion A.

The Sparta Prison Camp is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (Person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e., individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance; and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class or social or ethnic group.* There are no known associations with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented with this property. No associations were indicated or suggested as a result of additional research on the project area in general and on this specific property. The property does not illustrate the activities of any particular person notable in national, state, or local contexts.

The Sparta Prison Camp is **eligible** for National Register listing under Criterion C (Design/ Construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The Sparta Prison Camp is eligible under Criterion C for architecture as an exceptionally intact example of the standard fireproof county prison camp complex that was constructed throughout the state in the 1930s. The prison retains a high degree of

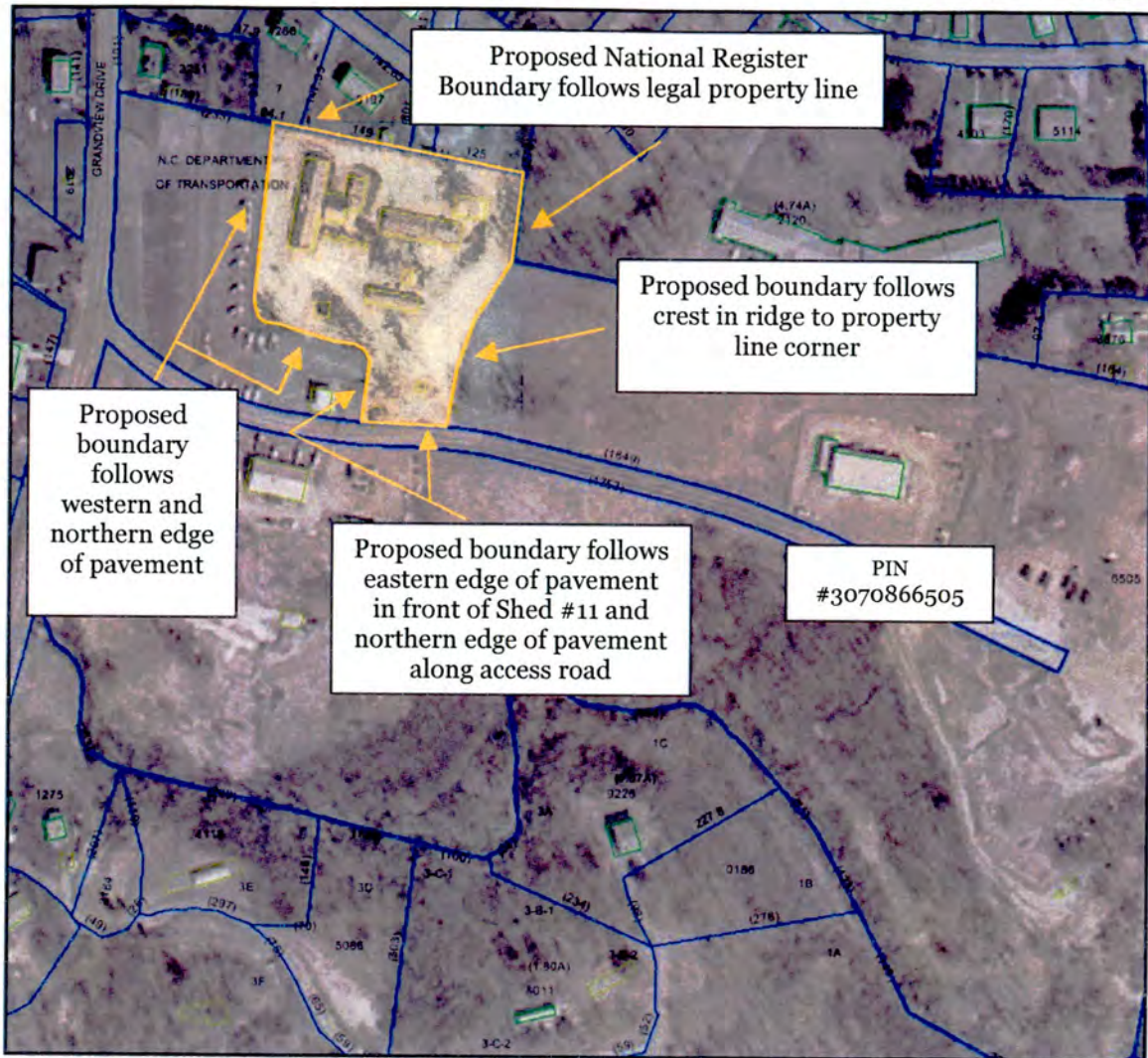




integrity; all but one of the original buildings are extant, and the complex looks much as it did when it operated as a county prison camp from the 1930s to the early 1960s. NCDOT architectural historians researched and visited twenty former county prison camps, most of which are still in use as part of a county jail complex. Of the twenty, the Sparta Prison Camp best illustrates the historic prison camp in architecture and in site plan. Therefore the Sparta Prison Camp is eligible under Criterion C at the state level for architecture.

The Sparta Prison Camp is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (Potential to Yield Information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contributing to our understanding of human history or prehistory, and 2) the information must be considered important.* This property does not appear to have the potential to be the principal source of important information. The type and method of construction of the property are not unique or unusual. Therefore, the Sparta Prison Camp is not recommended eligible under Criterion D.

**National Register Boundary:** The proposed National Register Boundary for the Sparta Prison Camp encompasses all contributing elements located within the legal property boundary of Alleghany County PIN: 3070866505 and contains approximately 2.195 acres. The proposed boundary is illustrated on *Figure 4: Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Proposed National Register Boundary*.

**National Register Boundary Justification and Description:** The proposed National Register Boundary includes the remaining intact portion of the Sparta Prison Camp and does not include the NCDOT fuel pumps or other modern maintenance buildings that are currently located on the same land parcel but are not historically associated with the prison camp. See *Figure 4: Resource 1: Sparta Prison Camp Proposed National Register Boundary* for a visual depiction of this proposed boundary. The boundary does not extend east or south to encompass fields that were historically used for agriculture because that land is currently overgrown and no longer communicates its historic function. The proposed boundary includes the prison camp buildings and all contributing landscape features.



<p><b>HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES          SURVEY REPORT</b></p>		
<p><b>US 21 (SPARTA WESTERN LOOP) FROM SR 1172 TO US 21          SPARTA, ALLEGHANY COUNTY          TIP# R-4060</b></p>		
<p><b>FIGURE 4: RESOURCE 1: SPARTA PRISON CAMP          PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY          NOT TO SCALE</b></p>		



*Properties Evaluated and Recommended **Eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places:*

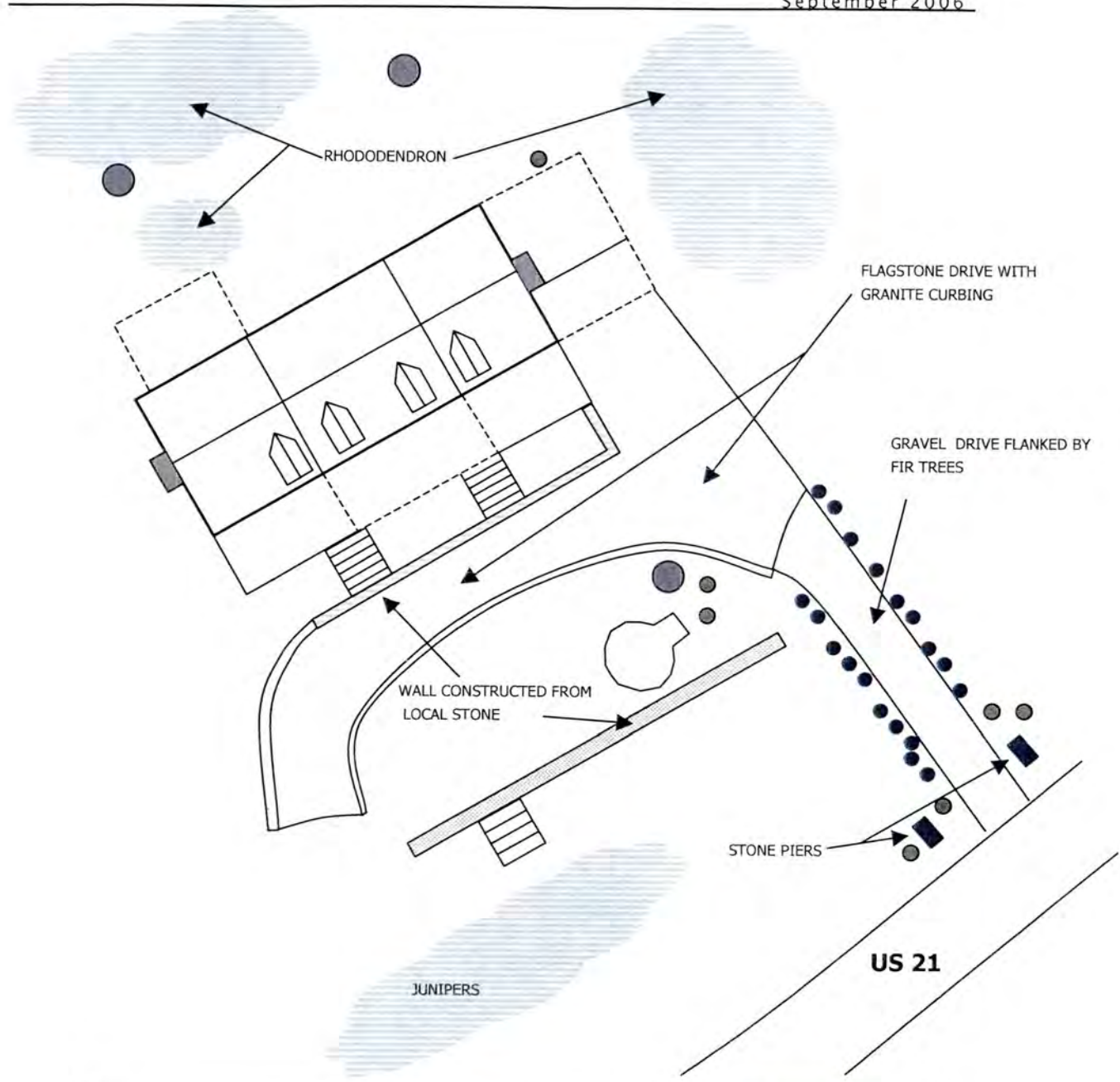
### **Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House [AL 191]**



**Property Identification:** The D.C. Bledsoe House is identified as Resource 12 on *Figure 2: Map of the APE*. This property was identified as AL 191 in the HPO-sponsored 1983 Alleghany County Survey.

**Location and Setting** (*Photographs 29-30*): The resource is located at 798 South Main Street (US 21), on the south side of the road adjacent to the Trojan Village Shopping Center (refer to *Figure 2: Map of the APE*). Set back from the road approximately 285 feet, established vegetation screens the dwelling from US 21. The property is accessed by a long gravel drive flanked by tall fir trees. A series of terraced stone walls, designed planting beds, and mature trees fill the balance of the 1.59-acre parcel and buffer the property from surrounding commercial development along US 21.

**Description** (*Photographs 31-38*): The D.C. Bledsoe House is a one-and-one-half story house faced with uncoursed rubble quartz cut from a local quarry. Three sets of paired six-over-six sash windows and two round-arched doorways punctuate the asymmetrical, five-bay northeast facade. Rectangular in shape, the house is three rooms wide and two rooms deep. Constructed in the late 1930s, the house is an eclectic of Colonial Revival and Rustic Revival elements. The uncoursed quartz varies in color and size and is loosely spaced in gray mortar. Decorative granite quoins are located at the front corners and the same dark granite is used for the door and window surrounds on the facade. A full-width piazza, partially covered by a flat roof supported by wrought-iron posts, extends across the front. A carport is located on the northwest side of the dwelling, and a small screened porch is located on the rear of the house at the southeast corner. A side-gable roof supported by battered piers covers the carport. The dwelling features two exterior end chimneys that are constructed of the same uncoursed quartz. Copper tiles, weathered to verdigris, sheath the side-gable roof. Four dormers lit by double hung windows interrupt the roof surface on the facade. All dormers, as well as the gable ends are clad in German siding. The center portion of the roof projects slightly above the established ridgeline. Decorative copper finials are located at the peak of each dormer and at each end of the ridgeline.

Extensive landscape and hardscape elements exist on the property. Large junipers and mature trees screen the dwelling from the road. The approach drive stretches beneath an established canopy of fir trees away from US 21 towards the northwest corner of the house. Extending around the front of the house in a semicircle, the drive becomes more formal and decorative as it changes from gravel to flagstone edged with granite curbing. Walls constructed of the same rubble stone quartz as the house create terraces, as well as a water feature in the front lawn. Foundation planting beds containing rhododendron and other shrubs are located on all sides of the house.



<p><b>HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES          SURVEY REPORT</b></p>	 <p><b>Historic Architecture</b></p>
<p><b>US 21 (SPARTA WESTERN LOOP) FROM SR 1172          TO US 21          SPARTA, ALLEGHANY COUNTY          TIP# R-4060</b></p>	
<p><b>FIGURE 5: RESOURCE 12: D.C. BLEDSOE HOUSE SITE PLAN</b>          NOT TO SCALE</p>	



**Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House Representative Photographs**



Photograph 29: View looking southeast down US 21 from front of D.C. Bledsoe property.



Photograph 30: View looking northwest towards Sparta along US 21 in front of the D.C. Bledsoe House. Trojan Village Shopping Center in background.



**Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House Representative Photographs**



Photograph 31: East facade.



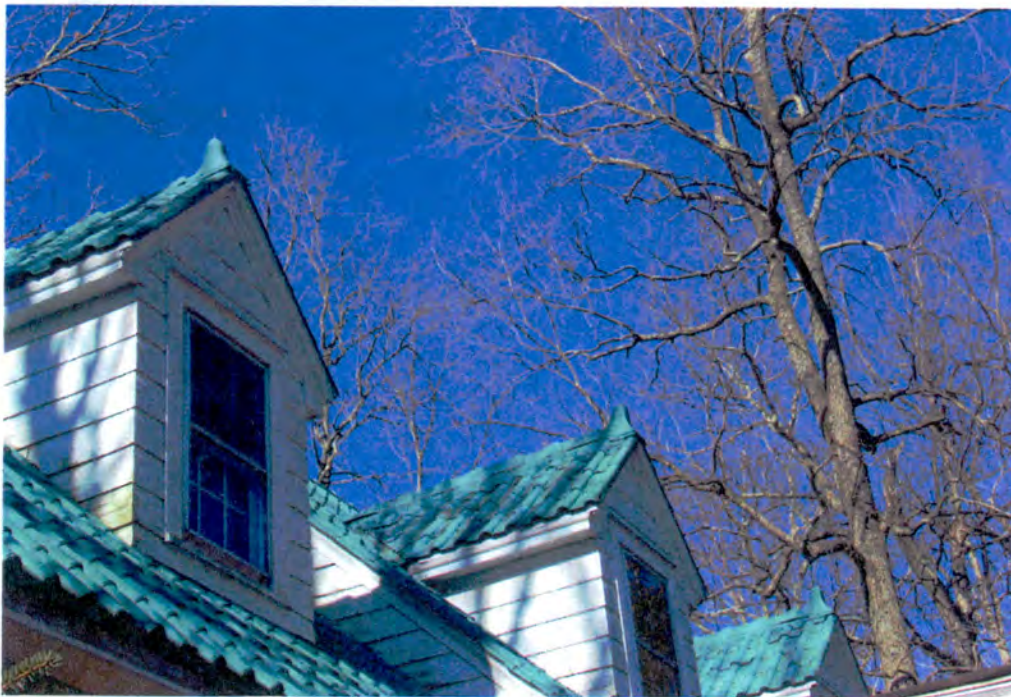
Photograph 32: Detail of stonework.



**Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House Representative Photographs**



Photograph 33: North side and west rear elevations.



Photograph 34: Detail of copper roof and dormer windows.



**Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House Representative Photographs**



Photograph 35: Stone piers at driveway entrance on US 21.



Photograph 36: Looking west up the driveway from US 21.



**Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House Representative Photographs**



Photograph 37: Detail of granite curbing and flagstone driveway.



Photograph 38: Water feature in front yard.



**Integrity:** The D.C. Bledsoe House retains a high level of integrity as few changes have occurred since the 1930s construction of the dwelling. The property possesses integrity of location because the house remains on the original site at the crest of the hill. Integrity of setting is intact. Although US 21 has become more commercial in nature along this stretch of the road, the extensive planned landscape on the property shields the house from modern development. The property retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship due to the fact that few alterations have occurred to dwelling and the original footprint remains unchanged. As a result, the D.C. Bledsoe House strongly conveys the time in which it was built and expresses integrity of feeling and association.

**Developmental Context:** Duke Colvard (D.C.) Bledsoe (1899 – 1952) was born in Ashe County to Jesse Bledsoe, Jr. and Dema Colvard. D.C. moved to Alleghany County in 1907 when his father was appointed by the North Carolina State Legislature to survey the county. Upon finishing high school, D.C. served in the U.S. Army at Camp Lewis in Washington State and in 1919 enrolled in Michigan State College (now University) to study automobile engineering. After one year of study, D.C. began working for Ford and Dodge dealers throughout the Midwest. He also served as a paintshop foreman for Henry Ford in Detroit.<sup>17</sup>

D.C. married Cynthia Pearl Reeves in 1925. Upon returning to Alleghany County in 1927, D.C. continued to work in the automobile sector, serving as a mechanic for several years before buying the local Ford dealership around 1930. The Federal Census data lists D.C. as living in Sparta Township with his wife and one son.<sup>18</sup> Evelyn Eckart, the current property owner, stated that the house was built in the late 1920s. However, deed research revealed that D.C. purchased the 4.83-acre parcel on which the D.C. Bledsoe House now stands in 1937, making the late 1930s a more probable date of construction<sup>19</sup>. According to Mrs. Eckart construction took almost six years. The house was thought to be built by local rock masons Claude Holloway (listed as farmer in the 1930 Alleghany County Federal Census) and Paul and Walter Andrews. Oxen hauled large pieces of flagstone up to the front of the house for the driveway.<sup>20</sup> In addition to his house, D.C. built the Alleghany Motor Company building on Main Street in Sparta (located outside of this project APE) also using local stone.

In 1945, the Ford dealership was sold, but D.C. opened a Dodge-Plymouth business in the same building. D.C. retired from the automobile business in 1948 and sold both the business and the building to Ben G. Reeves.<sup>21</sup>

The house remained in the Bledsoe family after D.C.'s death in 1952. Walter and Evelyn Eckert purchased the property (1.590 acres, the current lot size) from D.C.'s daughter, Virginia Bledsoe Lucas, in 1960. By that time, the original parcel had been subdivided into five tracts, with four vacant parcels sold for residential construction in November 1958.<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Eckert still resides in the house. She has updated some of the designed landscape, although the hardscape elements such as the stone terracing date to the D.C.

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<sup>17</sup> Alleghany County Historical Committee, *History of Alleghany County, 1859 Through 1976, Sparta, North Carolina*, n.p., 1976, 81-82. (Herein after referred to as *History of Alleghany County*.)

<sup>18</sup> Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Alleghany County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, Enumeration District 3-3. Sheet 10A.

<sup>19</sup> Alleghany County Deed Book 45, 110.

<sup>20</sup> Evelyn Eckert, interview by author, 26 January 2006.

<sup>21</sup> *History of Alleghany County*, 82.

<sup>22</sup> Alleghany County Deed Book 70, 45.



Bledsoe period of ownership. Mrs. Eckert stated that Hurricane Hugo uprooted numerous large trees in 1989. However, many mature trees remain on the property to this day.<sup>23</sup>

Few changes have been made to the house since the time of construction. The interior remains unaltered with arched doorways, hardwood floors, and the original molding. The screening of the rear porch and the replacement of the original front porch posts with decorative wrought iron posts are the only changes to the exterior of the dwelling.

**National Register Evaluation:** The D.C. Bledsoe House was evaluated for listing in the National Register using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation as outlined in 36 CFR §60.4. For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the property is recommended **Eligible** for the National Register. The D.C. Bledsoe House is recommended eligible under Criterion C for architecture.

**National Register Criteria Assessment:** The D.C. Bledsoe House is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (Event). *To be eligible under Criterion A the property must retain integrity and must be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American History or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community. Furthermore, the property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, the property's specific association must be important as well.* There are no known associations with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. There are no documented, specific events of outstanding significance associated with the history of the D.C. Bledsoe House.

The D.C. Bledsoe House is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (Person). *For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and 1) be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, i.e., individuals whose activities are demonstrably important within a local, state or national historic context; 2) be normally associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he/she achieved significance; and 3) should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's historic contributions. Furthermore, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is or was a member of an identifiable profession, class or social or ethnic group.* There are no known associations with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented with this property. No associations were indicated or suggested as a result of additional research on the project area in general nor on this specific property. The property does not illustrate the activities of any particular person notable in national, state, or local contexts.

The D.C. Bledsoe House is **eligible** for National Register listing under Criterion C (Design/Construction). *For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain integrity and either 1) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; 2) represent the work of a master; 3) possess high artistic value; or 4) represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.* The D.C. Bledsoe House is eligible under Criterion C for architecture as a

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<sup>23</sup> Evelyn Eckert, interview by author, 26 January 2006.

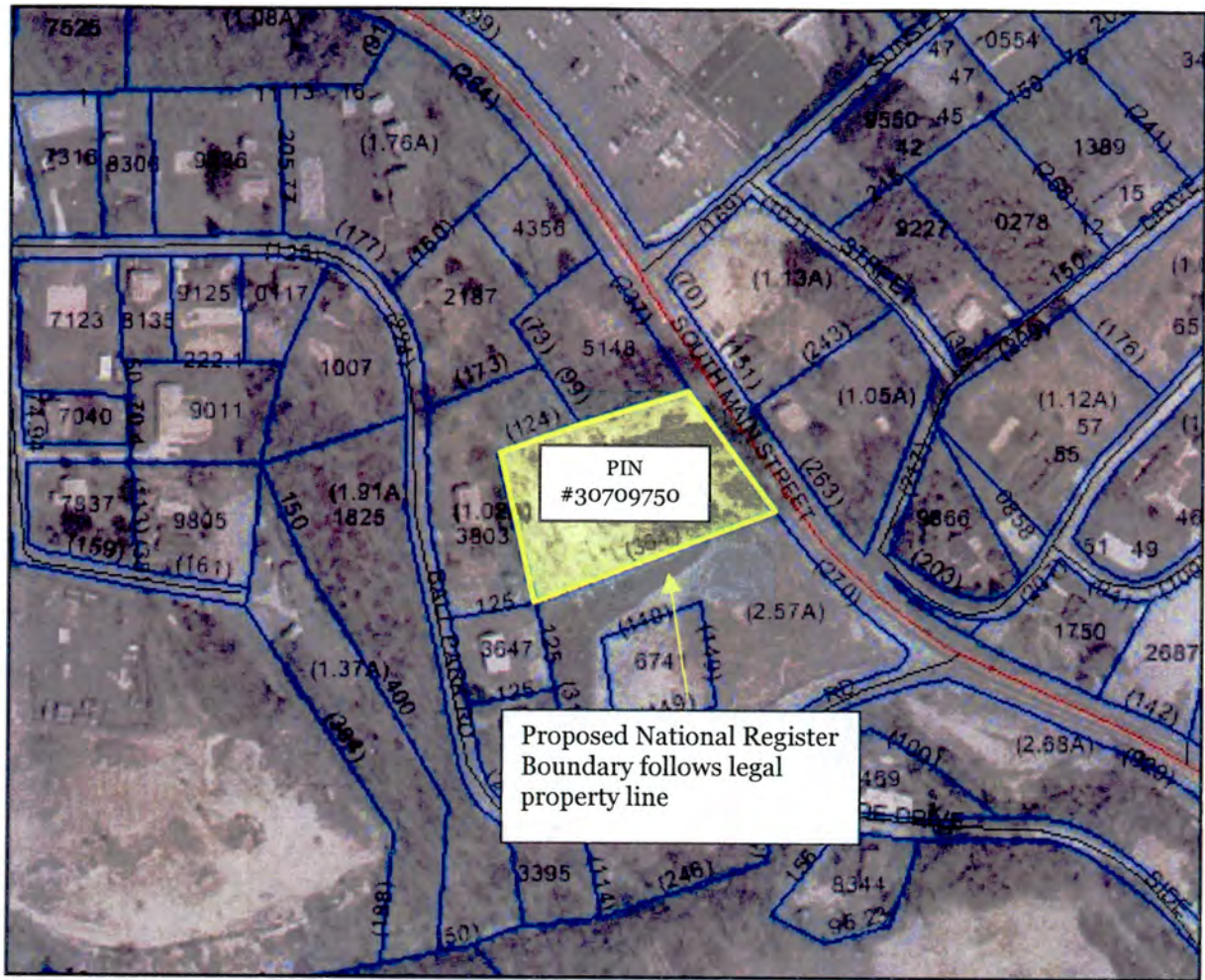
good, intact example of a late-1930s house constructed of local stone. The property retains a high degree of integrity because only a few alterations have been made since its original date of construction. Although the use of local stone as a building material is somewhat commonplace in both Sparta and Alleghany County, the D.C. Bledsoe House stands out as a particularly fine example, incorporating both Colonial Revival and Rustic Revival elements. The property contains architectural details that are not found on other stone houses in the area, such as a copper tile roof, complete with decorative finials, and the use of granite for contrasting detailing on the facade. In addition, the extensive use of rock throughout the landscape helps distinguish this property from other stone houses in Sparta. A windshield survey of Sparta and portions of Alleghany County failed to uncover any other examples of stone houses with a similar level of architectural detailing, nor any properties that featured such an extensive use of local stone as part of the historic landscaped setting. Therefore the D.C. Bledsoe House is eligible under Criterion C at the local level for architecture.



The D.C. Bledsoe House is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (Potential to Yield Information). *For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must meet two requirements: 1) the property must have, or have had, information to contribute to our understanding of human history or prehistory, and 2) the information must be considered important.* This property does not appear to have the potential to be the principal source of important information. Therefore, the property is not recommended eligible under Criterion D.

**National Register Boundary:** The proposed National Register Boundary for the D.C. Bledsoe House corresponds to the legal property boundary (Alleghany County PIN: 3070975030) and contains approximately 1.590 acres.

**National Register Boundary Justification and Description:** The proposed National Register Boundary includes the remaining intact portion of the acreage historically associated with the D.C. Bledsoe House (see *Figure 6: Resource 12: D.C. Bledsoe House Proposed National Register Boundary*). The proposed boundary includes the dwelling and all contributing landscape features including the stone piers that flank the driveway and several mature trees that contribute to the landscaped setting of the property located along US 21.





<p><b>HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES          SURVEY REPORT</b></p>	 <p><b>NCDOT</b>          Historic Architecture</p>	
<p><b>US 21 (SPARTA WESTERN LOOP) FROM SR 1172 TO US 21          SPARTA, ALLEGHANY COUNTY          TIP# R-4060</b></p>		
<p><b>FIGURE 6: RESOURCE 12: D.C. BLEDSOE HOUSE          PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY          NOT TO SCALE</b></p>		



*Properties Evaluated and Recommended **Not Eligible** for the National Register of Historic Places:*

**Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond** AL 0269

**Property Identification:** The Sparta Mill Pond is identified as Resource 9 on *Figure 2: Map of the APE*. This property was not identified in the 1983 HPO-sponsored Alleghany County Survey.

**Location and Setting** (*Photographs 39-40*): The Sparta Mill Pond site lies on the south side of US 21, approximately 1300 feet upstream from Bridge No. 30, which carries US 21 over the Little River. Steep terrain on either bank has limited development directly along this stretch of the river. The area to the southeast of the dam (the former mill pond) features open grassy banks that give way to a vertical incline a short distance from the flowing water. To the northwest, the river banks become increasingly rocky and steep, and vegetation grows directly up to the water's edge. A small gazebo that has been constructed in the last two years sits at the southwest corner of the dam.

**Description** (*Photographs 41-46*): The Sparta Mill Pond contains the ruins of a stone and concrete dam and a separate concrete structure contemporary to the dam that housed a hydroelectric generator. The dam was constructed in 1925-26 and destroyed during a flood in June 1969.

Historically, the dam was an approximately 150-foot wide concrete and stone structure that spanned the Little River and blocked the water flow to create the Sparta Mill Pond. Constructed of uncoursed local stone that has been encased in concrete, the dam wall stood fifteen to twenty feet high. Water spilled over the top of the wall allowing continued water flow on the Little River. Two small, poured-concrete walls (of unknown purpose but probably used in the hydroelectric process) are located on the east bank.

Located approximately 210 feet downstream from the dam, a concrete generator sits amidst steep, densely wooded terrain on the east bank of the river. Rectangular in shape, the concrete structure is topped by a metal housing that encased the transformer. A turbine would have been housed inside this structure when the hydroelectric dam was in operation. An assemblage of pipes, wires, transmission lines, and other machinery needed for the hydroelectric process were located on the east bank.

The dam continued to retain the mill pond long after a rolling mill and the hydroelectric plant ceased operation. For over fifty years, the mill pond served as a popular fishing spot for local residents. This ended in June 1969 when heavy rains from a storm caused the dam to "burst in a cascade of foaming water" resulting in the draining of the mill pond.<sup>24</sup>

Today the majority of the dam wall that remains rests on dry land on the west river bank, where it terminates tightly into the earth embankment. The dam wall stands anywhere from ground level to over ten feet high on the upstream side. On the downstream side, the dam stands much taller due to the natural change in elevation. The inconsistent wall height stems from the destruction caused when the dam burst in June 1969, as well as

<sup>24</sup> Alleghany Historical-Genealogical Society, *Alleghany County Heritage*, Winston-Salem, NC: Hunter Pub. Co, 1983, 32.



erosion by neglect for more than three decades. The river, which was once 150 feet wide to the north of the dam, now is approximately thirty-seven feet in width at the dam. A small portion of the dam wall remains on the east bank. Slanted wooden pilings running parallel to the banks are submerged in the river on the upstream side of the dam and create a fish habitat.

A circa 2002 gazebo is located on the west bank close to the river on the upstream side of the dam. Set on a concrete block foundation, this nonhistoric wood-frame building is topped by green aluminum roofing and features screened-in panels on the upper portion of all sides. A retaining wall surrounds the gazebo on three sides.

**Integrity:** Although enough evidence remains to determine that Resource 9 is a former dam site, the large-scale loss of original building materials and the change in the historic setting result in the Sparta Mill Pond failing to meet the basic integrity test set forth in *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. This bulletin states that a property significant for its historic association is only eligible for National Register listing “if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event.”<sup>25</sup> The dam breach in 1969 that destroyed the dam wall and drained the Sparta Mill Pond resulted in a radical change in appearance of the resource and the setting (see *Figure 7: Sparta Mill Pond Aerial Photograph Comparison*). The current width of the Little River is less than it was historically when the dam was intact. None of the machinery or transmission lines mentioned in the 1928 deed survive today, and roughly seventy percent of the dam wall is missing. As a result, the resource maintains only one aspect of integrity, that of location because the dam ruins remain at their original site on the Little River. Integrity of setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association were lost in 1969.

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<sup>25</sup> Shrimpton, Rebecca H., ed, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria For Evaluation*, Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002, 46.

**Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond Representative Photographs**



Photograph 39: Looking upstream (southeast) from the former concrete dam.



**Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond Representative Photographs**



Photograph 40: Looking downstream (northwest), dam ruins in foreground.



Photograph 41: Sparta Mill Pond site showing the former location of the dam and its relationship to the generator.



**Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond Representative Photographs**



Photograph 42: Remaining portion of dam wall.



Photograph 43: North bank of the Little River showing remnants of dam wall and poured concrete wall.



**Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond Representative Photographs**



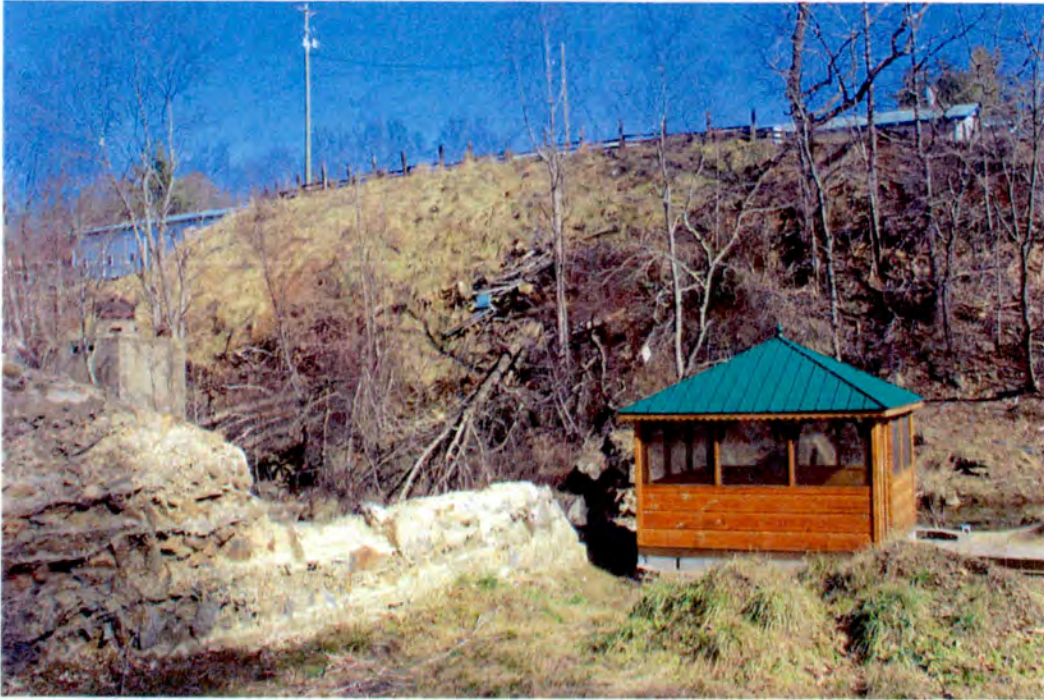
Photograph 44: View of generator from vicinity of gazebo.



Photograph 45: View of the generator from the hill above the Little River.



**Resource 9: Sparta Mill Pond Representative Photographs**



Photograph 46: Looking north towards US 21 showing the close proximity of the gazebo to the dam wall.



**Developmental Context:** Local history publications note Coy and Clennel Richardson purchased the Sparta Roller Mill and the Sparta Mill Pond in 1924.<sup>26</sup> However, chain-of-title research fails to uncover Richardson family ownership of the land on which the stone dam, generator, and mill pond are located. The mill consisted of a wooden dam for power and a mill building where the brothers milled corn meal and grain. A concrete and stone dam, the remnants of which can be seen on the site today, replaced the wooden dam in 1925. At that time an electric power plant, which supplied power for lights in Sparta, was also constructed.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 7: Sparta Mill Pond Aerial Photograph Comparison**

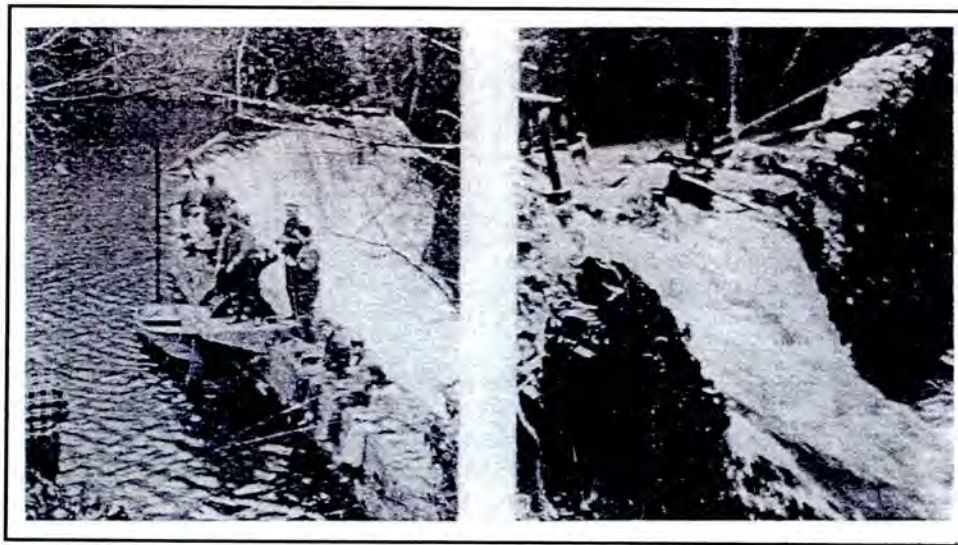
1933 aerial photograph of the Sparta Mill Pond. Inset photograph is of the Mill Pond and Dam in 1961 prior to the dam bursting. The resulting decrease in the river width from 150 feet to thirty-seven feet is clearly evident. Location of the dam in each photo is indicated by an orange circle.

<sup>26</sup> *History of Alleghany County*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> *History of Alleghany County*, 32.



Jupallo Public Service Company, based in Asheville, sold the dam and power plant machinery to Northwest Carolina Utilities in July 1931. The deed transferred the “complete power plant, dam, transmission, and distribution system, serving the Town of Sparta, NC and contiguous territory”.<sup>28</sup> The 16.28-acre tract of land was sold again in January 1945 as Tract One of five tracts containing over sixty acres (one tract did not have the associated acreage amount listed in the deed) from D and P Pipe Company to Sparta Pipes. The language in the deed indicates that although the dam and power plant were extant at the time of the transaction, electricity was no longer being produced as only water and riparian rights were mentioned.<sup>29</sup> In 1956 a 0.812-acre parcel of land containing the generator was sold to the Town of Sparta, the current owner of this small parcel.<sup>30</sup> A land survey conducted for Sparta Pipes, Inc in 1996 indicates that the “old dam” is part of a 20.70-acre parcel of land owned by Sparta Pipes.<sup>31</sup>



***Figure 8: Sparta Mill Pond Dam before and shortly after the dam breach in June 1969.***

The dam created the Sparta Mill Pond, which flooded the low-lying land behind the dam. The area was known locally as a good fishing spot. Although it is not known when the dam and generator stopped being used to provide electric power to the Town of Sparta, a particularly heavy rainstorm breached the dam on June 15, 1969.<sup>32</sup> At that time a majority of the dam wall was demolished. As a result, the Sparta Mill Pond drained, leaving only the natural flow of the river cutting through the area where the pond was once located. The dam wall continued to decay over time until it reached its present-day ruinous condition.

**National Register Evaluation:** The Sparta Mill Pond was evaluated for listing in the National Register using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation as outlined in 36

<sup>28</sup> Alleghany County Deed Book 42, p. 143.

<sup>29</sup> Alleghany County Deed Book 54, p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Alleghany County Deed Book 65, p. 288.

<sup>31</sup> Alleghany County Plat Book 9, p. 106.

<sup>32</sup> *History of Alleghany County*, 32.



CFR §60.4. For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Sparta Mill Pond is recommended **Not Eligible** for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The property does not retain a sufficient level of integrity to be evaluated under any of the four criteria.

**National Register Criteria Assessment:** Not Applicable.

**National Register Boundary:** Not Applicable

**National Register Boundary Justification and Description:** Not Applicable.

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**APPENDIX I:**

**Concurrence Form for Properties Not Eligible  
for the National Register of Historic Places**



Federal Aid # STP-21(10)

TIP# R-4060

County: Alleghany

**CONCURRENCE FORM FOR PROPERTIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR  
 THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Project Description: **Construct a two lane facility on new location, US 21 (Sparta Western Loop) from SR 1172 (Grandview Drive) to US 21.**

On **28 February 2006** representatives of the

- North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO)
- Other

Reviewed the subject project at

- Scoping meeting
- Historic architectural resources photograph review session/consultation
- Other

All parties present agreed

- There are no properties over fifty years old within the project's area of potential effects.
- There are no properties less than fifty years old which are considered to meet Criteria Consideration G within the project's area of potential effects.
- There are properties over fifty years old within the project's Area of Potential Effects (APE), but based on the historical information available and the photographs of each property, the properties identified as 2-8; 10-11; 13-21 are considered not eligible for the National Register and no further evaluation of them is necessary.
- There are no National Register-listed or Study Listed properties within the project's area of potential effects.
- All properties greater than 50 years of age located in the APE have been considered at this consultation, and based upon the above concurrence, all compliance for historic architecture with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and GS 121-12(a) has been completed for this project.
- There are no historic properties affected by this project. (Attach any notes or documents as needed)

Signed:

Courtney Wiley 2.28.2006  
 Representative, NCDOT Date

FHWA, for the Division Administrator, or other Federal Agency Date

David D. [Signature] 2-28-2006  
 Representative, HPO Date

Peter B. Sandburne 2/28/06  
 State Historic Preservation Officer Date

If a survey report is prepared, a final copy of this form and the attached list will be included.

1, 9, AND 12 TO BE EVALUATED IN A REPORT

**APPENDIX II:**

**Photographs of Properties Determined Not Eligible  
for the National Register of Historic Places**



**Properties Evaluated and Determined Not Eligible for the National Register  
of Historic Places at 28 February 2006 Concurrence Meeting**

**Not Significant for Architecture and Not Worthy of Further Evaluation**



**Properties Evaluated and Determined Not Eligible for the National Register  
of Historic Places at 28 February 2006 Concurrence Meeting**

**Not Significant for Architecture and Not Worthy of Further Evaluation**





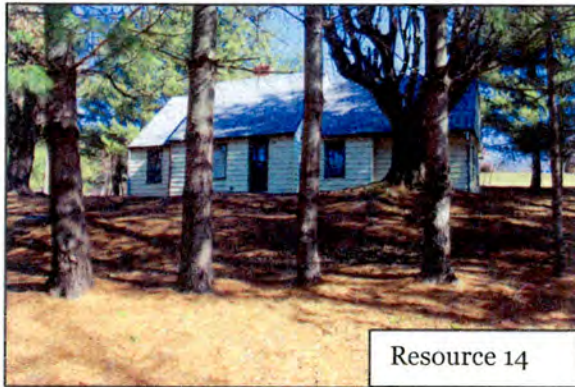
**Properties Evaluated and Determined Not Eligible for the National Register  
of Historic Places at 28 February 2006 Concurrence Meeting**

**Not Significant for Architecture and Not Worthy of Further Evaluation**



**Properties Evaluated and Determined Not Eligible for the National Register  
of Historic Places at 28 February 2006 Concurrence Meeting**

**Not Significant for Architecture and Not Worthy of Further Evaluation**





**Properties Evaluated and Determined Not Eligible for the National Register  
of Historic Places at 28 February 2006 Concurrence Meeting**

**Not Significant for Architecture and Not Worthy of Further Evaluation**



**Properties Evaluated and Determined Not Eligible for the National Register  
of Historic Places at 28 February 2006 Concurrence Meeting**

**Not Significant for Architecture and Not Worthy of Further Evaluation**



Resource 20



Resource 21