Edgecombe County Architectural Survey Update
Final Report

Prepared for:
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PROJECT BACKGROUND, COORDINATION, AND ADMINISTRATION

In early 2021, the Historic Architecture staff of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) requested MdM Historical Consultants Inc. (MdM) conduct an architectural survey and prepare a comprehensive architectural inventory of Edgecombe County, North Carolina. The survey is one of several phases of mitigation to document the existing architectural heritage of the region prior to the construction and operational launch of planned CSX track improvements and an intermodal terminal. NCDOT funding will be used for all phases of the mitigation. MdM conducted work on the Edgecombe County Architectural Survey Update from 2021 through 2023.

The project required resurvey of 429 previously documented properties plus the recording of 342 historic properties not previously identified in earlier projects. Most previously surveyed properties had been documented during an intensive-level survey that historian Henry V. Taves conducted from 1984 through 1985. Taves's scope of work concentrated fieldwork on rural Edgecombe County and excluded not just Tarboro and Rocky Mount but all the smaller incorporated towns. Taves summarized his findings in "The Rural Architectural Heritage of Edgecombe County, North Carolina," an unpublished report available on the State Archives of North Carolina website. In his report, Taves presents a comprehensive description of Edgecombe County's landscape and a thorough history that begins with the events leading up to the formation of the county in 1741. He covers the economic and social factors that shaped the history, landscape, and architecture of Edgecombe County from county formation through about 1935. Within the historical narrative, Taves wove in the evolution of architectural forms, beginning with log and timber frame structures. Because of their prevalence on the landscape during his survey, his report focused on nineteenth-century architectural styles such as the Federal, Italianate, and Greek Revival. The report concludes with a brief discussion of events and architectural trends in the period from the 1930s to the 1980s, including preservation efforts in the county that led to the 1985 survey. Several other surveys have been conducted within Edgecombe County; none included a countywide scope as did Taves's work from the 1980s and MdM's recent work. (Previous surveys are noted below, at the end of the methodology section.)

MdM's work, then, was largely an update to Taves's survey but also included, for the first time, the incorporated towns other than Tarboro and Rocky Mount. MdM's work was guided by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) survey manual, previous intensive survey results, and the reconnaissance survey report that MdM prepared in July 2021. The study area was generally Edgecombe County, North Carolina, excluding the town of Tarboro and the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction and City Limits of Rocky Mount. MdM completed a comprehensive survey update of Tarboro from 2020 to 2022. The Edgecombe County portions of Rocky Mount will be documented in a subsequent architectural survey, scheduled to conclude in 2024, by another consulting architectural historian.

The 2021-2023 project has been supervised by NCDOT Historic Architecture staff and completed according to survey standards established by the HPO and described in the HPO survey manual, *North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Architectural Survey Manual: Practical Advice for Recording Historic Resources* (2021 edition). MdM meets 36 CFR 61 qualifications for architectural historian. Staff from the HPO reviewed and commented on the deliverables generated by this project, including this report.

The authors are grateful to several local history experts consulted on the project, including Monika Fleming, Watson Brown, and Reid Thomas. Pam Edmonson, the local history librarian at the Edgecombe County Memorial Library in Tarboro, was generous with her time and expertise. We also acknowledge the contributions of HPO staff who assisted with and reviewed the project products: Rebecca O. Spanbauer, Elizabeth C. King, Chandrea Burch, and Andrew Edmonds. Likewise, the authors credit residents and property owners with providing a wealth of information as well as access to properties. This benefitted the project enormously.

METHODOLOGY

The project comprised three phases: reconnaissance, survey and research, and reporting. Products from the survey phase include updated and new survey files that are maintained at the File Room in the HPO office in Raleigh. Products from the reporting phase include this report and a Study List presentation made at the October 19, 2023, National Register Advisory Committee meeting.

Reconnaissance Phase

In the project's initial phase, MdM Principal Investigators and Architectural Historians Jennifer Martin and Cynthia de Miranda worked with HPO staff to prepare for the intensive survey. MdM acquired paper copies of the seventeen U. S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangle maps produced at a scale of 1:24,000 that include all portions of the county. HPOWeb, the HPO's GIS web service, provided the locations of all surveyed properties in Edgecombe County, enabling the investigators to mark the locations of 429 previously documented properties on the paper maps. These maps served as field maps during the intensive survey. Additionally, Andrew Edmonds, GIS Technical Support Analyst, supplied MdM with an Access database populated with previously surveyed Edgecombe County properties and to which newly surveyed resources were added. Chandrea Burch, HPO Technical Assistant, provided survey site numbers (SSN) to be assigned to newly surveyed properties.

Seventeen previously documented properties are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and twenty-five are on the state Study List (SL) of properties that appear to be potentially eligible for the NRHP. Seventeen properties have been determined eligible (DOE) through the environmental review process.

Survey and Research Phase

Beginning in the summer of 2021 and using a time schedule developed in the planning report, MdM documented individual properties in the field with DSLR photography and survey notes. For each previously documented property, MdM visited the site and photographed the exterior; interior, if possible; outbuildings and support structures; and significant landscape elements. MdM noted each resource's condition compared to when it was previously documented.

Roughly half of the historic buildings and structures documented prior to 2021 were not found at their identified locations. A few are known to have been relocated, such as Piney Prospect (ED0012, NR 1971 at its original location, and ED2211, SL 2023 at its new location) and

probably the Price Log Tobacco Barn (ED0876, ED2190). The vast majority, however, are presumed to have been demolished. Information about each of these resources was entered into the HPO's Access database as well, using the paper files from previous documentation.

To broaden understanding of Edgecombe County's historic architecture, MdM documented historic properties not previously recorded. These were noted as "newly surveyed" in the Access database. MdM identified and surveyed 344 properties for the first time, including resources dating to 1936 and later, resources pre-dating 1936 that had not been documented previously, and buildings and structures in Princeville, Speed, Macclesfield, Pinetops, Battleboro, Leggett, Conetoe, and Whitakers. They include a wide range of historic building types and styles, including intact and representative Ranch and Minimal Traditional houses, tenant houses, community clubhouses, schools, churches, agricultural processing plants, water supply tanks, and canals. In general, the properties reflect development and architectural trends in the late nineteenth century to circa 1975, expanding the scope of historical and architectural trends documented in previous projects. While the date range of these buildings is concentrated in the first three quarters of the twentieth century, there are a few outliers that date to the late nineteenth century and to the later 1970s.

MdM undertook research for each individual property from their offices in Durham, examining digitized records from the Edgecombe County GIS department (which included building construction dates that generally seem accurate); the Edgecombe County Register of Deeds; and HPOWeb. Board of Education records on microfilm at the State Archives provided information about schools. MdM completed a wide array of searches for individual properties, businesses, and residents on Newspapers.com and Ancestry.com. In the field and by phone and email, the investigators gathered information from farmers, homeowners, dwelling occupants, businesspeople, and other individuals knowledgeable about the breadth of historic places in the county. MdM compiled agricultural statistics for the county from the agricultural census records in the Census of Agriculture Historical Archive digitized and maintained by Cornell University. The survey and research phase began during the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting quarantine. The quarantine included restrictions on gatherings that made public meetings, typical of projects like this, impossible. Instead, MdM described the survey and posted questions to two Facebook pages: "Yesteryear in Tarboro and Edgecombe County" and "Edgecombe County Genealogical and Historical Society." Together, those pages have over five thousand members, and MdM received many helpful replies to queries about individual buildings and developments.
Much of the work of the survey was updating the Access database so that it includes all properties in the towns and in rural Edgecombe County for which survey files exist. Many files are not associated with the Taves survey and were created in earlier or subsequent smaller scale projects or site visits by the HPO. Part of this updating included completing database entries for properties that had previously been identified as no longer extant by adding information from paper files into the Access database.

Reporting Phase

Because of the comprehensive nature of Henry Taves's report, this document does not replicate a history of the county or its architectural development. Rather, it provides supplemental information to present a fuller picture of the forces that have shaped the county and its

architecture. This report will focus on subjects not covered in the 1985 report, including the history and architecture of the county's towns, excluding Tarboro and Rocky Mount, which have been well-documented in other architectural surveys and survey reports. Other subjects covered here include education before and after integration, changes in agricultural practices, the effects of natural disasters, and efforts to preserve the county's historic buildings.

Other Previous Architectural Survey Projects in Rural Edgecombe County

In 1965, the Edgecombe County Historical Society conducted a reconnaissance survey focused on dwellings built prior to the Civil War. Local volunteers documented about two hundred buildings and assembled scrapbooks containing their research and photographs. The group published a brochure in 1970 that functioned as a self-guided driving tour complete with maps and brief descriptions of the most notable houses.

The HPO first conducted historic architectural survey work in Edgecombe County in the mid to late 1970s. In 1976-1977, Catherine W. Bishir and Renee Gledhill-Early conducted a survey of the historic resources of the Tar-Neuse River Basin. That work resulted in the publication *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Tar Neuse River Basin*, by Ms. Bishir and historian Davyd Foard Hood. The town of Princeville has been the subject of two architectural survey projects. Historian Margaret Long Stephenson surveyed Princeville in 1980-1981 resulting in a research report by Joe Mobley, a historian with the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Neither survey files nor maps for that work exist, according to the HPO. In July 1986, Mobley's expanded report was published as, "In the Shadow of White Society: Princeville, a Black Town in North Carolina, 1865-1915," in the *North Carolina Historical Review*. In 2000, engineering consulting firm URS conducted a thorough comprehensive survey of Princeville for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). That project resulted in the production of survey files, maps, and a two-volume report on the town's historic architecture.

As noted earlier, Henry Taves surveyed rural Edgecombe County in 1984, summarizing his findings in an unpublished survey report, "The Rural Architectural Heritage of Edgecombe County, North Carolina." The Taves survey included only resources outside the incorporated places in Edgecombe County. Files for the approximately 429 properties previously documented are archived in the HPO's file room.

Starting in 2005, Professor Monika Fleming, retired Director of the Edgecombe Community College's historic preservation technology program, directed several architectural surveys of buildings in Edgecombe County. Her database of properties includes photographs and entries for hundreds of historic buildings; this material is in her private collection.

In 2006, C. Rudolph Knight (1947-2013) and Lawrence Auld, local historians focused on Black heritage in Edgecombe County, conducted a survey of the county's Rosenwald Fund schools. The pair recorded seventeen buildings during that project; most of those are no longer standing. The documentation is maintained with the files for Edgecombe County at the HPO in Raleigh.

In addition to the above projects, numerous environmental review reports document historic properties in specific areas of Edgecombe County. The HPO makes those reports available on-

line (https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/historic-preservation-office/environmental-review/Historic-Structure-Survey-Report_List.pdf) and in its library in the Archives and History Building at 109 East Jones Street in Raleigh.

SMALL INCORPORATED COMMUNITIES OF EDGECOMBE COUNTY

Princeville

During the Civil War, a group of approximately thirty Black Edgecombe County enslaved men fled to the United States Army lines to enlist in the 35th, 36th, and 37th U. S. Colored Troops, 14th U. S. Colored Heavy Artillery, and the Navy. When the war ended, and with the help of the U. S. Army and Freedmen's Bureau, former enslaved people settled on low, swampy, nearly unusable land on the former plantations of John Lloyd and Lafayette Dancy located on the opposite side of the Tar River from Tarboro. The refugees named their community Freedom Hill, also known as Liberty Hill, after a nearby knoll where Army soldiers had stood to proclaim them free after the Union victory in the war.[1]

Sarah Foreman Prince and her husband Turner Richard Prince (d. 1912), who were married by an elder in the AME Zion Church in Tarboro in May 1864, were among the earliest settlers in Freedom Hill.[2] Turner Prince, a carpenter born with slave status in Pitt County in 1843, had been enslaved by David Pender and forced to work as a driver for the Confederate Army during the war. For Prince's nineteen days of service, the Confederacy paid David Pender $12.50.[3] Between 1870 and 1880, Sarah and Turner Prince moved from Tarboro to Freedom Hill where he built houses for his family and others and she worked as a washerwoman.[4]

Although considered poor quality by landholders Lloyd and Dancy, the land where Freedom Hill was founded soon gave rise to a small community of residents. By 1881, the population stood at 260, according to the August 4, 1881, issue of the *Tarborough Southerner* newspaper, including people who worked as laborers, painters, washerwomen, farmers, teachers, and a grocer. They lived in simple houses and in many cases continued to work for the same families that had enslaved them and their forebears. Most white residents of Tarboro and the surrounding area saw the establishment of Princeville as a positive development because it meant the ready availability of a labor force. When the state legislature incorporated the town in 1885, residents honored Turner Prince by naming the community for him. With its official founding, Princeville became the first all-Black, independently governed, incorporated community in the United States.[5]
By 1900, the census counted 552 residents in Princeville. On March 8 of that year, the *Tarboro Southerner* reported "there are over there now at least a half dozen dwellings just completed or in

[1] Joe A. Mobley, "Princeville: A Black Town in North Carolina, 1865-1881," Office of Archives and History Research Report, North Carolina Digital Collections, https://ncdcr.quartexcollections.com/documents/detail/378660.
[2] North Carolina County Registers of Deeds, microfilm, record group 048, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C., accessed on ancestry.com.
[3] Confederate Slave Payrolls, 1874 - 1899., NAID: 7194477, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, 1825 - 1927, Record Group 109, National Archives at Washington, D.C., accessed on ancestry.com.
[4] Ninth Census of the United States,1870, U.S. census, population schedules, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, accessed on ancestry.com; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Records of the Bureau of the Census, National Archives, Washington, D.C., accessed on ancestry.com.
[5] Marker: Princeville, from Slavery to Freedom Hill, North Carolina Digital Collections, digital.ncdcr.gov

process of erection." The 1900 census reveals an array of occupations among Princeville residents consisting mostly of day laborers and laundresses, but also wife-and-husband schoolteachers, Carrie and Frank Battle. Other occupations included grocers, steamboat workers, farm laborers, chambermaids, restauranteurs, and firefighters. Charles Peal, who was white, and his son, Joseph, repaired bicycles. They were two of only five white residents in 1900.[6]

In 1920, the population had hardly grown, with only 562 people enumerated in the census.[7] In 1922, after the passage of a bond referendum in 1921, Princeville received electricity. The *Daily Southerner* newspaper reported, "a line of lights will be strung from the foot of the river bridge to the railroad and a connecting line in the residential section of town."[8] It would be 1975 before a water system was installed. Before then, residents relied on hand pumps and wells and the fire department operated bucket brigades to douse fires.[9]

In the first half of the twentieth century, Black-owned businesses lined Princeville's streets. Ray Matthewson, who was born in Princeville in 1915, opened Jones Store with his brother, Glennie, in 1930. Ray Matthewson, who also served as the town's mayor for twenty years, remembered that whites made up 60 percent of their customers and he and his brother treated Black and white customers equally, never letting race determine who was served first.[10]

Elsewhere in and around Princeville, the racist legislation of the Jim Crow era impacted the town's residents. Tensions were especially strained between officials in Tarboro and Princeville. In 1936 and 1937, the Tarboro town board ordered its chief of police to inform the Black Princeville police officer, the town's only law enforcement official, "to stay out of Tarboro while wearing his official trappings after it had been reported that the sight of the man on the street created the belief among strangers that Tarboro had a Negro policeman." The town board ordered that the Black policeman was welcome in Tarboro, but he had to leave his badge at home so as not to give the impression that Tarboro employed Black officers.[11]

After World War II, at least eighteen businesses operated in Princeville, including a garage, blacksmith shop, grist mill, cement block shop, several grocery and general merchandise stores, and a few auto service stations. Three churches served the town. Residents had to travel to east Tarboro, the Black section of the county seat, for their legal service and medical and dental care.[12]

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[6] Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Records of the Bureau of the Census, National Archives, Washington, D.C., accessed on ancestry.com.
[7] "Edgecombe Shows Increase of 18.7," *The Daily Southerner* (Tarboro), September 29, 1920.
[8] "Electric Current for Princeville," *The Daily Southerner* (Tarboro), August 9, 1922.
[9] "Black Town was Founded as 'Freedom Hill,'" *Rocky Mount Telegram*, October 9, 1977.
[10] "Princeville's Mayor's Knowledge is Never-Ending," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, February 17, 1985.
[11] "Negro Policeman Told to Leave Badge Home," *News and Observer*, August 3, 1936; "Tarboro-Princeville Troubles Continued," *News and Observer*, February 11, 1937.
[12] "Princeville is the Only Town in the Entire U.S. Incorporated and Operated by Negroes," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, August 10, 1946.

In 1960, the population stood at 795. In 1962, the Princeville School was renovated to serve as the town hall and community center. Several surrounding areas were annexed so that by 1963, just under 1,000 people lived in Princeville.[13]

Former mayor Ray Matthewson, in a 1985 interview, reported that during the school integration fight and civil rights movement the store's white clientele decreased to around 10 percent, but that in Princeville, "'we didn't have much trouble about the civil rights movement. We were over here living with ourselves.'"[14]

The town experienced a resurgence in the 1980s when the population grew to 2,200. In the early 1980s, streets were paved and several sidewalks installed. Substandard housing was demolished, and federal funds provided for the construction of apartment buildings. In 1985, former mayor Ray Matthewson remarked, "people in Princeville now enjoy indoor plumbing, paved streets, adequate sewage, and adequate housing. People are happy…they are living better than they have ever lived in their lives."[15]

Throughout Princeville's history, the Tar River, which flows along the north and west sides of the low-lying area, has flooded the town. Part of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin, the Tar River is a slow-moving body with swampy and marshy areas along its banks. Major floods occurred in 1919, 1924, 1940, and 1958. In 1965, the Army Corps of Engineers built a 2.5-mile-long dike along the Tar River to protect Princeville from flooding. In September 1999 floodwaters resulting from Hurricane Floyd compromised the dike, and water from the Tar River inundated Princeville. Fifteen to twenty feet of floodwater submerged the town's commercial and residential areas for nearly two weeks following the devastating storm.[16]

Repeated inundations of water have washed buildings away or caused severe damage resulting in the demolition or removal of family homes, outbuildings, and commercial and institutional buildings. The built landscape of Princeville contains few historic buildings or older structures that have been substantially renovated after experiencing flooding.

A total of ninety-two resources in Princeville were documented using HPO procedures prior to the 2021-2023 Edgecombe County survey. Several of those properties remain, including the Princeville Baptismal Site (ED1065, DOE 2000) on the Princeville side of the Tar River near the base of the bridge that provides access to Tarboro. Black churches in Princeville and Tarboro used the site between the 1890s and 1950s but stopped when public health laws restricted rivers and creeks for the purpose. The one-story, weatherboard Princeville School (ED1039, NR 2001) was built between 1935 and 1940 according to plans available from the Rosenwald Fund through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, though it did not receive capital from the Rosenwald Fund. The Rosenwald Fund, headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, made the plans available to Black and white communities through publications. Except for a few deviations, most notably the hipped roof, the Princeville School most closely follows the Rosenwald Fund

[13] "Little Princeville Seeks Industry, Improves Town in Progress Fight," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, February 14, 1963.
[14] "Princeville's Mayor's Knowledge is Never-Ending," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, February 17, 1985.
[15] Ibid; "Princeville Endured Against Tough Odds," *News and Record* (Greensboro), July 6, 1984.
[16] "Princeville and the Environmental Landscape of Race," *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, openrivers.lib.umn.edu, Spring 2016.

Floor Plan No. 3: Three Teacher Community School found in the 1925 booklet, "Bulletin 3: Community School Plans." The building served as town hall from 1966 to 1999. Later additions that were part of the building when it was listed in the NRHP in 2001 have been removed. The 1871 Mount Zion Primitive Baptist Church (ED1064, SL 2001), a front-gabled, Gothic Revival-style building with weatherboard siding and an original bell tower, stands on Church Street. A marble marker with a crowning cross-gable pointed arch and a carved likeness of Elder Abraham Wooten, founder of the Radicue Primitive Baptist Church, has occupied the front steps since 1896. The April 21, 1910, edition of the *Tarborough Southerner* reported that "although Princeville has a population exceeding 600, it has only one church, Primitive Baptist, whose pastor is Elder Abraham Wooten, who is a real founder of the church and in front of its door on a pedestal of granite is a life size bust of the Elder in Italian marble."

While several historic resources have survived, dwellings have borne the brunt of flooding and demolition, either by the federal government or property owners. Of the eighty-four houses documented in previous surveys, sixty-seven no longer stand, including the circa 1870 house Turner Prince built for his family (ED1108). Seventeen houses remain, but most are altered with vinyl siding and replacement windows. One of the most significant dwellings, the Isabella and Abraham Wooten House (ED1129, DOE 2001), stands in poor condition with a missing front door, missing or boarded over windows, and framing exposed to the elements. Built around 1890, the frame shotgun house belonged to Abraham Wooten (1835-1919), a political and religious figure credited with founding Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church (ED1064) and associated Primitive Baptist churches in the county, and his wife, Isabella (1853-1951).

The Princeville Community Cemetery (ED1080, SL 2023) spans over fourteen level acres on the east side of town. Stones range from unpretentious concrete tablets or steles carved by hand with the decedent's name and birth and death dates to professionally created marble or concrete tablets or ledgers. Some family groups are contained by wrought iron, chain link, wood post and chain fences or low concrete block and brick walls. The property includes the community burial yard as well as the Carney, Wilson, and Dancy Memorial Cemeteries. The community cemetery contains over fourteen hundred marked graves, while Carney Cemetery includes approximately eighteen members of the extended Carney family members who passed away in the twentieth century. Over one thousand graves are in the Dancy Memorial Cemetery. Wilson Cemetery was established after the founding of Princeville in 1885. Located at the rear of the town cemetery, Wilson Cemetery contains the graves of Elder Abraham Wooten and Turner Prince, the man for whom the town is named. Wooten's stone features a Bible atop a pedestal.

In April 1999, using funding from a $45,000 state grant, the Princeville Cemetery Preservation Committee spearheaded a clean-up of the property that included clearing weeds, brush, and snakes.[17] Unfortunately, in October later that same year, twenty inches of flood water from Hurricane Floyd overflowed the Tar River and unearthed approximately 163 caskets. Boat crews gathered the floating caskets and tethered them to trees and other stationary objects. Over 200 government employees and volunteers identified the remains and re-buried the caskets to a depth of eighteen inches. The federal government paid for new headstones where the recovered caskets were re-interred.[18]

[17] "Taking Back the Past: Princeville Cleans Up Cemetery," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, April 29, 1999.
[18] "Reburial Begins for Flooded Caskets," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, October 30, 1999.

Speed

Speed, a turn-of-the-twentieth-century railroad town, was devastated by flooding from Hurricane Floyd in September 1999. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) bought out and demolished most of the buildings in the aftermath. Only a handful remain, including dwellings, a bank, a fire station, and a social hall. A few remaining houses are totally overgrown and just barely visible from the roadway. The plat remains evident due to the paved streets and the mature trees that dot the residential yards and give a sense of the shady, tidy town that once was.

When the Norfolk and Carolina Railroad extended a line from Pinners Point in Virginia, near Norfolk, down to Tarboro in 1890, the company established a stop near the hamlet of Knights Station, northeast of the terminus in Tarboro. Soon, there was a post office and a new name, Speed, after Dr. Eugene Travis Speed, a recently deceased country doctor who had lived a few miles south. John W. Satterthwaite, the first postmaster, likely lived across NC Highway 122 in the house on the west edge of his large tract of land south of Mill Pond Road (ED2070). Andrew Jackson Parker soon bought the land west of the rail line and began platting the town in a neat grid system.[19]

The town was largely built out in the 1910s and 1920s. Architectural historian Marvin Brown called the dwellings that once lined the streets "conservatively fashioned and plainly articulated." Most were a single-story, but two-story houses were not entirely unknown. Perhaps the finest house in town was a two-story, multi-gabled dwelling with a two-story wraparound porch that once stood at 204 Railroad Street and served for a time as a hotel. The house stood on the white side of the segregated town; Black families lived in the modest frame dwellings on Catherine and Margaret streets at the north end of town.[20]

Speed gained a local bank in a fine Neoclassical-style building (ED0787, SL 1985) in 1920 when the Tarboro-based Farmers Bank & Trust Company built a branch here. Perhaps noticing the momentum building in Speed, in 1923, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad replaced the original depot with a larger structure based on its standardized design. The new frame building (ED0788, SL 1985) had freight storage, a ticket office, and separate waiting rooms to segregate ticket holders.[21]

The bank failed in 1930 and the town's growth stalled. Its population always remained quite small, generally less than 150 people in the town proper. Speed reactivated its charter in the 1950s, perhaps a sign of community health, but by the 1970s, more residents were renters than homeowners. At the very end of the twentieth century, the floodwaters of Hurricane Floyd rushed in and submerged the town. Many of the houses to the west of the tiny commercial strip on Railroad Street remained half-full of water for weeks. FEMA's buyout program resulted in

[19] Marvin Brown, "History of Speed, Edgecombe County, North Carolina," prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, May 2001, viewed online at https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/historic-preservation-office/PDFs/ER_01-09000.pdf May 30, 2023.
[20] Ibid; Ancestry.com, *1900-1950 Federal Censuses* [databases on-line], (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 2012).
[21] Henry V. Taves, "The Rural Heritage of Edgecombe County, North Carolina," December 1985, report of architectural survey funded jointly by the Historic Preservation Fund of Edgecombe County and the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, in the collection of the HPO, 31.

demolition of most of the dwellings in town. Even the Speed Depot, which was remarkably intact at the time of the 2021-2023 survey update, is likely gone now. It had been hoisted off its foundation in two sections in preparation for a move out of town, but MdM could not determine who was moving the building or where it would be relocated. It was, according to Henry Taves at the time of his survey, the county's last rural depot in its original location.[22]

Leggett

Leggett is a crossroads community at the intersection of NC Highway 33, which leads south to Tarboro, and NC Highway 97, which runs southwest to Rocky Mount. The Savage family operated plantations in this vicinity before the Civil War, and two surviving buildings reflect this fact. The Federal-style Susan and William Savage House (ED0460, NR 2014) dates to around 1815, and Cedar Lane (ED0441, NR 1982), a Greek Revival-style house, dates to ca. 1840. Cedar Lane was later associated with the Almon Fountain family. Exum Lewis Jr. built the Georgian-style Mount Prospect plantation house around 1815; that house burned in the 1970s and is no longer extant.[23]

At the mid-point of the nineteenth century, Theo and Arthur Fountain established a mortise-and-tenoned commercial cotton gin (ED0456, not extant) in the north area of today's Leggett. Other commercial enterprises followed, including J. R. Harper's general store (ED0458, not extant); the building stood for nearly a century before it was demolished around 1985. Above the grocery, in a second-floor room, Harper ran a dance hall. Theo Fountain loaned space in his store to the Presbyterians to run a Sunday school toward the end of the nineteenth century; soon after, the Olivet Presbyterian Church (ED0457) was established. Today's William and Mary Hart Presbyterian Church (ED2148) is the continuation of that congregation. A frame, multi-room schoolhouse operated in Leggett in the early twentieth century, when horse-drawn wagons carried students to and from the school. That building is no longer extant, nor is a brick consolidated school from the 1920s known for decades as Leggett School. The county changed the name from Leggett School to North Edgecombe School in 1955; the previous year, the school had enrolled 138 elementary and 76 high school students. It eventually became a dedicated high school, one of four in the county.[24]

Although structures relating to late-nineteenth century commercial enterprises do not survive, houses from the late nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century lining NC Highway 33 south of the crossroads illustrate that Leggett grew in that period. In December 1949, locals established a branch of the Ruritan Club. The next year, the club's ladies' night took place in the local school gymnasium. The club had designs on a clubhouse from at least 1955, when it established a building fund. In 1960, the club purchased the land, which lay just beyond the town boundary on its southeast side, but it would be another decade before the building itself was erected and put into use. In the 1970s, it was commonly used for bridal showers and

[22] Taves, 31; Brown, 18, 21.
[23] Laura A. W. Phillips, "William and Susan Savage House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2014; Lula Fountain Goodwyn, "Cedar Lane," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1984.
[24] Lawrence Gulley (Leggett native), interview with Cynthia de Miranda, July 2022; Monika S. Fleming, *Echoes of Edgecombe County 1860-1940* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 1996), 63; "Leggett School's Name Becomes "N. Edgecombe." *Rocky Mount Telegram,* August 10, 1955; *Edgecombe County Heritage, North Carolina, 1735-2009* (N.p.: The Edgecombe County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage, Inc.), 9.

wedding receptions. Leggett's population topped out in the 1990s and has been falling since. Today, Leggett is home to a peanut processing plant, the high school, the Presbyterian church, the Ruritan Club, several dwellings, a retail store, and a gas station.[25]

Conetoe

Conetoe is a very small town centered on the intersection of NC Highway 42 and what was originally the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. It has grown across the flat landscape in irregular form, with early development along the rail line and the highway, and later plats filling in residential construction. Some industrial development has always existed along the rail line, and cultivated farm fields likewise continue to be part of the town's landscape. While buildings dating to the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century characterize the town, the majority of surviving older buildings in Conetoe have been heavily altered. The ca. 1880 train depot has been relocated to Old Sparta. Presumably, many early buildings have also been demolished, including dwellings, schools, churches, stores, and agricultural buildings.

The settlement that grew up in the late nineteenth century in east Edgecombe County was initially called Warren's Station or Warrenton. Sisters Harriet and Lou Warren are said to have run an inn and/or a livery stable in the village that sprang up there; members of the Warren family continued living in Conetoe at least into the mid-twentieth century, according to property records. There was a bank and drug store in the early years as well. Markers of the community's growth in the late nineteenth century included the establishment of a post office in 1883 and the town's incorporation in 1887. The community was named for a waterway that cuts through the area, a creek with the Native American place name Conetoe. The geographic name "Conetoe Creek" appeared in county records from 1785 and on maps from 1770.[26]

In the 1890s, white children rode the train to and from Tarboro to attend school. By 1900, there were 35 households, and people in the village worked as farmers, builders, laborers, merchants, midwives, physicians, salesmen, cooks, millers, and bookkeepers. Commercial buildings dating to this period have been demolished; those that remain date to the mid-twentieth century (ED2106) and are on a parcel adjacent to the location of the earlier commercial structures. The bank operated from 1910 through 1927.[27]

Surviving houses in Conetoe date from roughly 1870 into the late twentieth century and include modest, vernacular nineteenth-century types like triple-A cottages and gable-front-and-wing dwellings. These houses front the rail line, generally on the west side. Later development came in plats, first to the southwest of the intersection of the rail line and the highway, where bungalows and a few two-story dwellings were built. Two of the most architecturally distinctive houses are along Warren Street, parallel to Railroad Street, on land subdivided by the Warren family (ED2107 and ED2108). Development along W. Church Street largely dates to the mid-

[25] "New Ruritan Club Formed at Leggett," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* December 10, 1949; "Leggett Ruritans Host Dinner on Ladies Night," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* September 22, 1950; "Lucas Family Reunion Held in Leggett," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* October 29, 1970.
[26] *Edgecombe County Heritage,* 3-4, 9; Monika S. Fleming, *Edgecombe County: Along the Tar River* (Charleston: Arcadia Press, 2003); "Conetoe" and "Conetoe Creek" entries, online version of William S. Powell and Michael Hill, *North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
[27] Fleming, *Echoes,* 54; *Edgecombe County Heritage, 9*.

twentieth century and is characterized by brick Ranch houses. At the north end of town, Stancil land was subdivided and developed, predominantly with modest Ranches in the mid-twentieth century. A trailer park on the former Conetoe School property dates to the later twentieth century.

At least three churches for white or predominantly white congregations were built in the nineteenth century (ED1552, ED2115, and ED2121). The Conetoe United Methodist Church (ED2115) was established in 1889, and the congregation completed the sanctuary on today's NC Highway 42 in 1892; the historic sanctuary of the Conetoe Missionary Baptist Church (ED1552) was destroyed in the floods following Hurricane Floyd in 1999. Little Conetoe Creek Primitive Baptist Church (ED2121) was established in 1803, but it was not until 1854 that the tract at the north end of today's town limits was purchased for the congregation. While the Primitive Baptist Church had a few Black members, it appears that Black congregations did not build churches in town until the mid-twentieth century: Weaver Primitive Baptist Church (ED2160) was built in 1950 with the aid of the Bethlehem Baptist Association, and Conetoe Chapel Baptist Church was built in 1940.[28]

Residents in Conetoe were farmers, farm laborers, teachers, dressmakers, blacksmiths, grocers, and business owners. Business either served the wider agricultural community, generally cotton farmers, or the immediate local community with groceries and gas. Some farmers, like Roland and Oscar Vines, lived in town (ED2123) and farmed land they owned outside of town. Conetoe's population was 196 in 1938, and businesses included a grocery and a service station. The Whitehurst Gin Company (ED1309) was used by farmers in eastern Edgecombe County; it remained active at least into the 1960s. At that time, it was one of six cotton gins operating in the county. The Conetoe Cotton Storage Company operated a warehouse just east of the rail line and very near the rail depot in the 1920s and 1930s.[29]

Formal education in the area existed as far back as 1835, when Conetoe Academy was opened. A school called J. F. Howard was in operation in 1891. Edgecombe County School No. 2 operated here in the early twentieth century, with 178 white students and 601 Black students enrolled, presumably at different times or in separate buildings. The Conetoe School was built in the late 1920s for white students. The county Board of Education bought the Primitive Baptist Church parcel in 1962 to augment its school property. The school at some point became a Black school and it remained in operation until 1971. The campus was demolished in the 1990s.[30]

Buildings erected in the 1950s and 1960s reflect both the social life and basic needs of residents: a community building (ED2100) was erected near the rail line in 1955, and within five years a barbeque hut (ED2099) was built on the same parcel. A cooperative established a local water system in the mid-1960s. Other civic enterprises of the period included the establishment of the volunteer fire department and construction of a town hall.[31]

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[28] *Edgecombe County Heritage,* 21.
[29] Ancestry.com, *1900-1950 Federal Censuses* [databases on-line], (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 2012); *North Carolina Industrial Directory and Reference Book* (Christian Print Company, 1938).
[30] Fleming, *Along the Tar,* 87-88.
[31] Edgecombe County GIS, www.edgecombecountync.gov; Conetoe Community Water Association, "About Us," online at https://conetoewater.org.

County Border Towns

The Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad, established in 1834, came through the area in 1839 and began operating in 1840. The line operated under that name until 1855, when it changed to the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Between those towns, the rail line passed through the west part of Edgecombe County. Three county towns grew up along the rail line: Battleboro, Whitakers, and Sharpsburg. In 1871, the line became a new border between Edgecombe and Nash counties so that a portion of each town became part of Nash County.

Battleboro

Battleboro originated as Battle's Camp on the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad, established by Joseph S. Battle in 1835 and incorporated as the town of Battleboro in 1873. The Battle family's ownership of land in the area dates to Elisha Battle's 1742 grant from the Earl of Granville. In the 1830s, Joseph Battle had a contract to build eight miles of roadbed, the substructure for the railroad track, through the area. Battleboro was a busy settlement through the end of the nineteenth century, with businesses including mills, shops, a cotton gin, and a tobacco market. Service businesses included a barber shop, dining room, and even a music store. The nineteenth-century business district, entirely on the Nash County side, was wiped out in a devastating 1902 fire.[32]

The Edgecombe County portion of town includes E. Battleboro Avenue, where some late nineteenth-century buildings survive, including the Carpenter Gothic-style St. John's Episcopal Church (ED0014, NR 1971) and the notable Queen Anne-style Hobgood House (ED2269). Much of the rest of the Edgecombe County side of town comprises streets lined with modest brick Ranch houses that appear to date to the 1960s and streets lined with mobile homes. A small agricultural processing plant (ED2281, SL 2023), originally for peanuts, is at the north end of town on the Edgecombe County side. The plant was owned in the 1960s and 1970s by peanut farmer Henry Milgrom (1919-1979), who also served in the State Senate and as president of the N.C. Association of County Commissioners.[33]

Battleboro was annexed by the City of Rocky Mount in 1996 after Battleboro residents overwhelmingly passed a referendum in favor of becoming part of the city.[34]

Whitakers

Richard and Elizabeth Whitaker settled the area that is now Whitakers in 1740; a century later, descendants and area landowners Richard Whitaker and Henry Whitaker provided wood for rail construction. The railroad built a turnout, a mechanism that allows a train to change tracks while in motion, in this vicinity and named it for the donors. Trains also stopped here for more wood to fuel the steam engines. Over time, the place grew into the Town of Whitakers, which

[32] "Battleboro, Founded 1835, Was Incorporated 1873," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, July 6, 1976.
[33] "A New President Takes A Stand For The Principle of Home Rule," *Nashville (N.C.) Graphic*, June 21, 1962; "Milgrom Appointed to State Position in Democrat Party," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, May 6, 1976.
[34] "Battleboro Residents Try to Preserve Identity," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, February 1, 2004.

incorporated in 1872 with limits defined as a circle with a one-mile radius, set from the point where Main Street crosses the rail line.[35]

Nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Whitakers was bustling: there were several stores, small industrial plants, a livery stable, and barrooms. Industry included agricultural concerns, including a cotton gin and grist mill, as well as factories producing coffins, window sash and blinds, fabric, architectural ornament and hardware, and a sawmill producing lumber. Whitakers was also home to a private school, Whitakers Academy. A tobacco warehouse was established in 1885.[36]

The early twentieth century saw the founding of the Bank of Whitakers by local men W. T. Braswell Sr., Gurney P. Hood, and W. J. Taylor. The town had forty-eight businesses in 1925. The bank saw early success, and bank directors decided to erect an elaborate new building to project the sense of wealth and achievement. Ironically, the cost of the marble in the lobby, the gold leaf on the chandelier, the revolving doors, and other architectural flourishes resulted in the failure of the concern in 1926. The building stayed in use by other banks for some time before it was abandoned, but the Bank of Whitakers' collapse led to an economic decline in town.[37]

By 1975, a few small factories still operated in Whitakers, including makers of synthetic yarn, children's clothing, and veneer building products. Area farmers were growing tobacco, peanuts, corn, soybeans, and cotton and keeping livestock that included cattle and hogs. The population was then 976. The population has been slowly declining since at least the 1990s and stood at 675 in 2022, housed in about 350 dwellings on both sides of the county line.[38]

The Edgecombe County side of Whitakers includes commercial, institutional, and residential properties, as does the Nash side. Buildings in Edgecombe's part of town date from the late nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century; the most notable buildings are Queen Anne dwellings and Romanesque commercial buildings, but there are standard industrial and commercial buildings and vernacular dwellings as well. Architecturally speaking, the best buildings on the Edgecombe side are concentrated at Railroad and E. Main streets.

Sharpsburg

Sharpsburg straddles three counties—Edgecombe, Nash, and Wilson—and developed around town founder John J. Sharpe's well, which was used to replenish steam-powered train engines passing through the area in the mid-nineteenth century. Sharpe later donated land and materials for a school in Wilson County, which was built in 1875. Sharpsburg received its first town charter in 1867 and was rechartered in 1913. The Sharpsburg Post Office (ED0592) and Batchelor's Store (ED0591) stand on the Edgecombe County side of town, but most of the town lies in Wilson County.[39]

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[35] "Whitakers Grew Where Train Stopped for Fuel," *Nashville (N.C.) Graphic,* April 29, 1975.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.; "Whitakers, North Carolina, Population History 1990-2021," stats gleaned from United States Census Bureau by BiggestUSCities.com, viewed online May 30, 2023.
[39] Ginny J. Landvater and Jamilla T. Hawkins, "Sharpsburg Digital Story," 2013, viewed online at https://www.sharpsburgnc.com/about-us/history/sharpsburg-digital-story.

Edgecombe County's East Carolina Railway Towns

Henry C. Bridgers, a nephew of Wilmington and Weldon Railroad president Robert R. Bridgers, built a spur line he called the East Carolina Railway on wooded land south of Tarboro. In the waning years of the nineteenth century, Henry Bridgers began acquiring right of way from area farmers in preparation for the line. He also established two corporations: the Macclesfield Company and the East Carolina Railway Company. The Macclesfield Company owned equipment, land, and facilities and manufactured building materials, developed real estate, and ran agricultural processing sites. The East Carolina Railway Company built the line. Construction began in 1899. Camps for the hundred or so men doing the work were established along the line and moved as needed. Bridgers's Macclesfield Company platted and developed the south Edgecombe County towns of Pinetops and Macclesfield along the new line.[40]

Pinetops

Pinetops has a distinct early-twentieth-century commercial district, some light-industrial development from the first half of the century, and several residential neighborhoods with resources dating to the early, middle, and late twentieth century. The town plat was drawn to align with the East Carolina Railway: numbered streets run parallel to the rail line and named streets are perpendicular. The depot (ED1311) is remodeled and repurposed but still stands at the center of town, the intersection of Hamlet and First streets. At the time of the survey update, the central business district filled the center blocks of East and West Hamlet Street and North and South First Street with mostly one-story commercial buildings. Surviving frame buildings housing early businesses on South First Street have been heavily altered, while those north of Hamlet Street date to later in the twentieth century and have masonry exteriors. Mid-to-late-twentieth-century auto service stations bookend the Hamlet Street portion of the district at Second Street to the east and Third Street to the west, including the mid-twentieth-century station at the northwest corner of Second and East Hamlet (ED2320). The largest commercial building stands at Third and West Hamlet (ED2340), a two-story, three-storefront building. Although most of the commercial buildings have seen at least some alterations, those on the south side of Hamlet Street are more intact than the surviving row on the north side. The single frame commercial building that remains is the W. L. Dunn & Sons Building (ED2318) at East Hamlet and First streets. Houses occur in all four quadrants surrounding this center, and light-industrial operations occur in the southeast and northeast quadrants. Schools were built at the east and west edges of town.

The town emerged from one of the railroad construction camps associated with the East Carolina Railway. Early in 1900, Bridgers moved the construction camp to the spot, then populated just with pine trees. The first residents were the incarcerated workers who built the line, presumably living in tents or some other type of temporary housing. In his history of the line, Henry Bridgers noted that there was a means for rotating the train, presumably a turntable, for a trip back to Tarboro.[41]

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[40] Phil Carlton, *From Pine Tops to Pinetops: The First One Hundred Years* (Pinetops: Centennial House Publishing, 2003), 1, 8-17.
[41] Carlton, 9-17.

A community sprang up, first to accommodate construction of the railroad and then to capitalize on the advantages of the good access to transportation provided by the line. Bridgers platted the town and opened a commissary on Second Street. Shopkeeper William Lamon Dunn moved to the new camp town from nearby St. Lewis to run the store. W. E. Phillips moved a sawmill from the Phillips farm to supply Bridgers with lumber for the rail line, locating on the east side of the tracks and running seven wood-fired steam engines to keep the mill running. He later converted the mill to coal-fired. Phillips's brother, Riley Phillips, followed suit, moving his own sawmill from his farm to town. This mill stood on the block bounded Hamlet, First, Dunn, and Third streets. Local historian J. Phillip Carlton writes that Riley Phillips "built the first two houses in the settlement for workers in his mill" on the northwest and southwest corners of W. Hamlet and Third streets. The houses were later moved for commercial development, but both survive in town (ED2344 and ED2347). The first rail passengers arrived on July 2, 1900, and Henry Bridgers noted that there were "two true residents" on that day, likely meaning the occupants of the two houses Riley Phillips had built. He either ignored the temporary residents of the construction camp or had moved the camp down the line by then.[42]

The new rail line significantly advantaged the nascent town of Pinetops, and other merchants from St. Lewis, four miles to the west, also relocated there. The settlement got a post office in 1901, had a plat drawn in 1902, and incorporated as a town in 1903. Carlton notes that at the time, Pinetops "business section included three mercantile stores, three barrooms, a blacksmith shop, a depot, and a sawmill and had about 125 inhabitants." Dunn built a large frame building at the corner of E. Hamlet and First streets and started his own store at the first floor while living above with his family for a time (ED2318). The family eventually moved into the house on North Second Street (ED2321).[43]

The Vines family also moved to Pinetops in its early decades. George Vines lived and operated a small grocery on South Second Street (ED2342), in the first block south of Hamlet Street, as early as the 1920s. George had moved with his wife Lula and their children from Old Sparta, where they were farming, to Pinetops between 1900 and 1920. George worked as a log hauler at one of the sawmills and established his grocery before 1930. His adult daughter George Anna Vines lived next door in a concrete-block house (ED2343) and Mollie Vines Pender, another daughter, and her family lived with George. Mollie ran a café in the building at the corner. George Vines was a son or stepson of Jordan Vines, who had been enslaved at Vinedale (ED0562, NR 1982) in the nineteenth century.[44]

Other early dwellings built in town remain but are heavily altered. They are frame and exhibit the same massing often seen in rural areas, including side-gabled, single-pile dwellings with rear

[42] Carlton, 1, 8-17.
[43] Carlton, 19-20.
[44] Ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004); Ancestry.com, *1920 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010); Ancestry.com, *1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002); Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Marriage Records, 1741-2011* [database on-line], (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015); C. Rudolph Knight, "Vinedale and the Vines Family in White and Black," article published online at the Dancy Communications Network blog, 2012, viewed online at https://curmilus.wordpress.com/2012/07/01/vinedale-and-the-vines-family-in-white-and-black-by-c-rudolph-knight-historian/ on May 23, 2023.

ells; pyramidal cottages; and gable-front-and-wing houses. They cluster near the commercial business district to its north and south on both numbered and named streets. The *Tarboro Daily Southerner* noted in April 1920 that twenty-eight houses were "now under construction," and many of those appear to stand along West Hamlet and along the first and second blocks south on numbered streets. One example is the is the Lula and Sam Lancaster House (ED2349), a single-pile, side-gabled house with cornice returns and two-over-two sash windows that are still evident despite additions and alterations. A grandson of the couple recalled that the smokehouse in the rear yard was built in the 1940s by Sam Lancaster and his son Gary. The family kept hogs, as did many in town in the early to mid-twentieth century.[45]

Land-owning farmers from the surrounding area, who employed the tenant system to farm their acreage, began moving to town. A 1906 business directory notes a bank, a brickyard, and a sash and blind factory. These businesses, in addition to the sawmills and the rail line, made building supplies easily available. The business district grew along Hamlet and First streets, and residences clustered along Second and Third streets. A destructive fire swept through the business district in 1909. Merchants rebuilt, first with temporary wood structures and soon after in brick.[46]

Black residents established the Union Church of Pinetops and the St. James A.M.E Zion Church. White Methodists followed suit and established the Pinetops United Methodist Church, moving the old wood sanctuary used for St. Mary's Methodist Church from St. Lewis to Pinetops 1906. The building was veneered in brick in 1923 and classrooms were added at the rear; today it stands next to the late-twentieth-century church at the corner of North Third and Dunn streets.[47]

Pinetops had four cotton buyers listed in a 1909 business directory and an established cotton market by 1910. The town then built "two modern tobacco warehouses" in 1915; a third brick building provided storage (only one of these buildings remains, see ED2341). The Rural Directory and Mailing List for Edgecombe County in 1920 noted that Pinetops was "the market for the surrounding country, the tobacco market being its specialty, but much cotton is also produced. It has two banks and an excellent high school. The attractive homes testify to the prosperity of the community." The Planters Bank of Pinetops placed an advertisement in the directory but did not list its street address.[48]

The tobacco market thrived for about a decade, until it failed in the mid-1920s. An influx of light industrial uses, including mattress, furniture, and casket production (ED2357 and ED2341),

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[45] "Pinetops Continues to Make Rapid Progress," *The Daily Southerner*, April 2, 1920; Business Directory Sections for Edgecombe County and Nash County, 1869-1915, North Carolina City Directories Digital Collection of the Edgecombe County Memorial Library, viewed online at https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/25174?ln=en; Chester Lancaster, interview with Cynthia de Miranda, January 10, 2023; Carlton, 335.
[46] Carlton, 19.
[47] Carlton, 21-22, 36.
[48] "Edgecombe Casket Growth Story, From Three Workers to 55," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, March 31, 1974. Business Directory Sections for Edgecombe County and Nash County, 1869-1915, North Carolina City Directories Digital Collection of the Edgecombe County Memorial Library, viewed online at https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/25174?ln=en; "Rural Directory and Mailing List, Edgecombe County" ([Raleigh:] Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1920), viewed online at https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/25172?ln=en.

helped boost the economy during the Depression and sustain it through the mid-to-late twentieth century. One sawmill stayed in production at the north end of town (ED2353, SL 2023).[49]

Agricultural properties clustered first along the rail line, then spread, along with manufacturing facilities, to the southeast quadrant of the town. Today, a number of those buildings remain (ED2341, ED2356, ED2357, and ED2363), but cleared parcels also indicate that many did not survive. Shotgun housing of both frame and concrete block construction in the southeast quarter of the town appears to be worker housing, likely built by industry and operated as rentals.

At the east edge of town, the county's first high school for Black students was established in 1941 as the George Washington Carver High School. It stood on the south side of East Hamlet Street, just beyond the Vines Service Station (ED2337). The service station also sold snacks and drinks and was a popular after-school destination for Carver students. After integration, the campus was converted to an elementary school; today's Carver Elementary School (ED2338) occupies the same location as the historically Black Carver School. On the west side of town, a school built for white students stood from 1922 through sometime in the latter half of the twentieth century; it was the second building erected where municipal parks now exist south of Hamlet Street at School Street. The first building, erected in 1909, burned in 1911.[50]

The East Carolina Railway stopped running in 1962, and the tracks were removed in 1975. The last quarter of the twentieth century also saw the closure or relocation of some of Pinetops local industries. But residential development continued. In the northeast quarter, streets of small ranches and later prefabricated and mobile homes were developed; a mobile home park has been in this quarter since at least 1975. In the southwest quarter, houses tend to be modest to mid-sized and on large parcels in a pattern that appears to continue historic development in that quarter. The northwest quarter has brick Ranches and neotraditional houses from the last quarter of the twentieth century on curvilinear, suburban-style streets platted just south of farm fields and west of a surviving sawmill (ED2353, SL 2023). To the mill's east, along Pitt Street moving east from Second Street, there are several concrete-block houses that appear to have been built together, perhaps as worker housing for the mill.

Macclesfield

Like Pinetops, Macclesfield is an East Carolina Railway town, developed largely in the first half of the twentieth century on a small grid. Numbered streets First through Sixth run parallel to the rail line and named streets intersect. Between Second and Third streets is Railroad Street, once the location of the actual tracks. The depot is gone now, too, and the land on which it stood is now a simple park with lawn area, a gazebo, and a few small monuments.

Most of the buildings that composed the commercial corridor on the blocks of Green and Edgecombe streets between Second and Fourth streets are now gone. Early- to mid-twentieth-

[49] Carlton, 88; "Edgecombe Casket Growth Story, From Three Workers to 55," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, March 31, 1974.
[50] Louis Strickland and Phillip Guy for the Edgecombe County Planning Department, "Pinetops Land Development Plan, June 1975," (Report prepared for the Town of Pinetops and partially funded by an urban planning grant from HUD under Section 701 of Housing Act of 1954, as amended), 3; Carlton, 41.

century photographs show that the commercial corridor consisted of both frame and brick buildings, but only a few brick commercial structures remain, including an early twentieth-century store (ED2388) and a 1930s service station (ED2389). Several churches remain (see ED2383, ED2384, and ED2385) and date mainly to the middle decades of the twentieth century, in all cases replacing earlier smaller buildings that either burned or were outgrown by their congregations.[51]

The remaining built environment generally consists of the residential sections of town. Older dwellings cluster closest to the commercial core and include frame vernacular types such as single-story triple-A cottages with rear ells (ED2386 and ED2387) and center-hall, double-pile, hipped roof cottages (ED2382). Larger, stylish one-and-a half-story dwellings concentrate on the east end of Green Street with a few northeast of the commercial core (ED2161, ED2380 and ED2381). Mail-order bungalows from the Aladdin Company are in the north end of town as well (ED2377 and ED2378). Modest and moderately stylish Ranch houses fill in many blocks.

A small area at the north end of Railroad Street has a few gabled frame and concrete-block dwellings on parcels close together, in a pattern that doesn't match development elsewhere in town. The parcels are a redevelopment of land that used to be the Walton Brick Company, which advertised in the *Tarborough Southerner* as early as 1909. A heavily altered nineteenth-century house stands on East Wilson Street (ED2379) and is said to be the oldest dwelling in town, although it obviously predates establishment of Macclesfield.

The federal censuses from the first half of the twentieth century show that Macclesfield, like Pinetops, was generally populated by shopkeepers, some professionals, and farmers who preferred to live in town. Some Macclesfield residents worked in industry or other endeavors in Pinetops or Tarboro. The presence of the railway made transportation—for work or supplies—easy for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. The railway stopped running long before the tracks were removed in the mid-1970s.

A plaque installed at the base of the flagpole in the park commemorates the town's beautification award by *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine in 1949. The July issue that year detailed what it called "The Miracle of Macclesfield," the efforts of a group of women that inspired a dramatic community improvement campaign including trash hauling, home improvement, water supply improvement, and church rebuilding.[52]

EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

The graded school system in North Carolina began in 1873 in Charlotte. Graded schools soon followed in Raleigh and Greensboro.[53] In 1887, the General Assembly passed an act to create a free school district in the town of Sharpsburg, which occupies sections of Edgecombe, Wilson,

[51] Fleming, *Echoes*, 61; *Edgecombe County Heritage*, 12.
[52] Robert Crossley, "The Miracle of Macclesfield," *Better Homes and Gardens* Vol. 27, no. 11 (July 1949), 37-39, 130-137.
[53] "Graded Schools in North Carolina: The First was Started in Charlotte with Rev. J. B. Boone as Head," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), August 28, 1910.

and Nash counties. In 1891, as part of an act to create graded schools in Tarboro, a graded school was founded for Black students in Princeville.[54]

Edgecombe County operated separate schools based on race for over one hundred years. Separate public education facilities dated back to the years following the Civil War when amendments in 1875 to the 1868 North Carolina Constitution established racially segregated public schools. In the late nineteenth century, before devastating reversals due to the racist legislation of the Jim Crow era, Black schools in Edgecombe received relatively generous funding. On June 25, 1891, a column in the *Tarborough Southerner* rallied readers to support local taxes for better education and equal funding for Black and white schools, claiming "if the white race needs education, many times more does the colored." Disparities between funding would widen in the new century.[55]

The state legislature did not begin funding schools for Black students until 1910. In 1921, the legislature created the Division of Negro Education within the Department of Public Instruction to oversee rural schools for Black children. Public secondary schools were not available to Black students until 1918. Public education opportunities for Black children remained separate and inferior throughout the early twentieth century because of Jim Crow.

In the early twentieth century, one-, two-, three-, and five-teacher schools for white children were spread over Edgecombe County. Typical of these simple buildings is Mayo School (ED0837, SL 2023), a one-room building constructed in the 1880s near Mayo Crossroads. The plain weatherboard school was moved from its original location near the road into the farmstead at the Thomas L. Mayo Farm (ED0836) sometime after it closed in 1912. Other white schools from the nineteenth century survive in poor or altered conditions. An example is the ca. 1880 Old Sparta School (ED0896) in the community of Old Sparta.

The Edgecombe County school superintendent, like many of his cohorts across the state, spearheaded efforts beginning in the 1910s to consolidate county schools to improve education for white students.[56] In February 1916, the Raleigh *News and Observer* reported on the consolidation of three one-teacher rural schools in Lower Fishing Creek Township north of Tarboro. In 1913, the township voted on a tax to consolidate the schools and to provide transportation. The result was the construction of Leggett Public School, "an attractive and modern school building…well lighted, well ventilated and furnace heated."[57]

Consolidation of white public schools occurred across the county in the 1910s and 1920s. In 1921, *News and Observer* columnist Ben Dixon McNeill reported on the state's consolidation movement writing, "tearing down the little whitewashed schoolhouse is the biggest thing going

[54] "An Act to Incorporate the Tarboro School Board, 1891 Public Laws: Chapter 562," *Public Laws of the State of North Carolina Passed in 1891*, 615.
[55] Marvin Brown, "Research Report: Tools for Assessing the Significance and Integrity of North Carolina's Rosenwald Schools and Comprehensive Investigation of Rosenwald Schools in Edgecombe, Halifax, Johnston, Nash, Wayne, and Wilson Counties," for NCDOT, December 2007, 11.
[56] E. C. Brooks, "What the State Superintendent Saw in Edgecombe County," *North Carolina Education*, May, 1919, 3.
[57] "Consolidation Aids Efficiency: Township of Edgecombe County Transports Children to Central School," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), February 21, 1916.

on in education work in North Carolina this year."[58] Meanwhile, Black students who were able to attend school in Edgecombe County remained in small, often substandard buildings.

Busy Workers School (ED0761, SL 2023), located northwest of Speed, is a well-preserved example of a rural consolidation school. Edgecombe County Board of Education meeting minutes indicate the school was built in 1915 or 1916. At the July 6, 1915, board of education meeting, a committee pushing for a new school asked that they be given "a good two room house for their school in the Busy Workers District this fall." They told the board that the district had accumulated $462.31 out of their local taxes that they wished to apply toward their part of the cost of the requested school. The board directed the superintendent "to visit this building and site and ascertain the dimensions and plan [for] a two-room house for this district."

Busy Workers School closely follows Plan No. 2 in "Plans for Public Schoolhouses," a publication by Raleigh architects Charles Barrett and Frank K. Thomson for the North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The superintendent's office published the booklets from 1903 to 1914 to provide local school boards with plans and specifications for constructing schools that would meet requirements set out by the state. Every element of the buildings from their sites, what directions they should face, the materials to use, and sanitation standards were included in the plan books. Several similar schools for white students were built in the county, including at Conetoe, but Busy Workers School is the only surviving white school built according to the state plans.

The consolidation movement of the 1920s led to the construction of commodious, two-story brick buildings for white children in Leggett, Macclesfield, and Pinetops. Also among that group is West Edgecombe High School (ED2232), which began in 1922 in a one-story building containing a gymnatorium and six classrooms for students from the three surrounding townships. In 1928, the current two-story-on-basement Classical Revival building was erected, designed by George R. Berryman and built by contractor J. W. Hudson Jr. It remains the only large, two-story consolidated historic high school to survive from the 1920s. The original 1922 building became classrooms and the lunchroom. With the new building, additional white schools were consolidated at West Edgecombe.[59] As the school grew, the county added hip- and gable-roofed additions in 1954, 1959, 1969, and 1975. The facility operated as a high school until 1978, when it became a middle school. Built for white students, this red-brick school building displays typical 1920s consolidated high school elements including cast-concrete belt course, coping, and windowsills, and recessed sections for bays of large classroom windows.

While white schools consolidated in the 1910s and 1920s, Black children continued to attend small, scattered rural schools in generally substandard buildings. A bright spot for Black education in the period was the Rosenwald Fund, which provided for the construction of twenty-five schools in Edgecombe County. A recent study of the work of the Rosenwald Fund in the county can be found in historian Marvin Brown's "Research Report: Tools for Assessing the Significance and Integrity of North Carolina's Rosenwald Schools and Comprehensive Investigation of Rosenwald Schools in Edgecombe, Halifax, Johnston, Nash, Wayne, and Wilson Counties," prepared for NCDOT in 2007.

[58] "Gasoline Dissolves Fiction of Little Red School House," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), September 5, 1921.
[59] *1958 Wescomb*, West Edgecombe High School Yearbook, Rocky Mount, North Carolina, 11.

While the Rosenwald Fund partially provided greatly improved rural education facilities for Black children, it did little to combat the inequities in funding handed down by the white-run local school board. A 1932 study by the Rosenwald Fund reported that of all the counties in the coastal plain of North Carolina, Edgecombe allotted the least for its Black students while exceeding the average state allocation for white pupils.[60]

In his report on the Rosenwald schools in Edgecombe County, Marvin Brown chronicles the difficult circumstances under which Rosenwald schools were constructed. In 1924, the county school board hired white contractor, D. H. Harris & Son to build almost all the Rosenwald schools. By February 1926, it became apparent that Harris's work was of poor quality and that many of the schools were leaking or their paint was peeling. Apparently, Harris never fixed the buildings, and many fell further into disrepair. On top of the schools' poor conditions, the board botched the acquisition of land for the buildings, creating title issues. The board scrapped plans for additional Rosenwald schools in 1926.[61]

Neglect and demolition have impacted many Rosenwald schools across the state. Others have been altered in such a way that they are not recognizable. Of Edgecombe County's twenty-five Rosenwald schools, only two stand: Keech School, funded in 1923-1924, and Mount Olive School. Located just east of the Dogtown community, Keech School (ED0842) is in poor condition and surrounded by dense vegetation and trees. Mount Olive School (ED0568), funded in 1924-1925, remains standing in the Rocky Mount Extra Territorial Jurisdiction. It has been converted into a house and is significantly altered.

Construction of white schools continued during the Great Depression. In September 1935, the Edgecombe County Commissioners approved the construction of a new building for Mayo School (ED0838).[62] Wilson architect Frank Benton (1883-1960) of the firm Benton and Benton designed the school, which was completed in 1936. In 1937, the school won the state school beautification contest.[63] In August 1955, the board of education discontinued using the building for white students and converted it to a four-teacher school for Black pupils.[64] In 1970, the last year the school operated, three teachers worked at the school, which enrolled 104 students.[65] The U-shaped brick school retains its original form except for the large metal warehouse attached to the rear in the late 1980s. The fluted and paneled archway shelters the wholly intact double doors and a semi-elliptical fanlight. Many nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows remain intact, though plyboards cover some of the window bays.

In 1948, Edgecombe County enrolled 6,539 children in its rural schools, 64 percent of whom were Black. An assessment by a commission authorized under Governor Gregg Cherry paints a clear picture of the state of Black schools in the county in 1948. After much study, the commission concluded "there appears to be little need for white school construction in Edgecombe County," because of low enrollment. The study continued, "on the other hand the

[60] Brown, Research Report, 12.
[61] Brown, Research Report, 23-24.
[62] "Pick New Farm Agent," *Rocky Mount Herald*, September 6, 1935.
[63] "Mayo School Winner of Beautification Contest," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, October 20, 1937.
[64] "Negro Students to Mayo School," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, August 9, 1955.
[65] "Mayo School Property to be Sold by Board," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, April 27. 1977.

need for the construction of buildings for Negro schools in Edgecombe County is clear and pressing." Of the thirty-two schools for Black students, only one was brick while all white schools were brick. The report described many of the Black schools as very small frame buildings, many in bad condition. Most of the Black schools lacked indoor toilets. The report concluded: "Without saying more, it is perfectly obvious that there is an urgent and pressing need for the application of substantial expenditure for the construction of modern schools for Negro pupils in Edgecombe County."[66]

Following the state's assessment, the county built several schools for Black children. Phillips High School (ED2299) opened in 1949 as one of four high schools for Black students in Edgecombe County. Officials started the school after a May 1945 fire destroyed Bricks High School in northwest Edgecombe County where students from Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax counties attended. Initially, the displaced students went to school in churches and other available buildings in the area. When Phillips High School was completed, all the former Bricks students enrolled. In his first principal's report for the 1948-1949 school year, Carlos Carraway noted that the building contained ten classrooms, eight for high school and two for elementary. The school lacked a gym and lunchroom. Its first year, thirty-one students graduated from the high school. The school offered instruction in math, science, English, home economics, agriculture, French, and physical education.[67] In 1951, the school added a new twelve-classroom building. In 1952-1953, students from Nash and Halifax counties who had been attending Phillips High School were transferred to schools in their respective jurisdictions. In 1972, when integration occurred, high school students were sent to formerly all-white North Edgecombe High School. That year, Phillips became a magnet middle school.

In 1951, a county bond issue passed allowing for the construction of several schools and additions to others. With the funding, Oak Grove School (not extant) and Roberson School (ED2090) were built to serve Black students. The modernist Roberson School's fourteen-acre campus includes the main 1951 nine-room classroom building with an attached gymnasium, the 1957 eight-classroom building, and a circa 1965 lunchroom. In early November 1951, the school board announced "the nine-room elementary building for Negroes at Roberson School" would be completed by Thanksgiving of that year. At the same time the school board announced the construction of Roberson School, it reported that new buildings planned for Black students in the county would not completely alleviate the demand for classroom space. Many Black students would continue to attend school in small, frame buildings scattered around the county while others attended "classes in rented church buildings and in under-sized rooms not designed for classrooms." With the completion of schools for Blacks in 1951, just over 50 percent of pupils would attend schools in buildings with heat and sanitary facilities.[68] Roberson School closed in the 1990s over protests of the families it served.

The 1951 bonds also funded the construction of a new building for the all-Black Carver School to replace the original WPA-built frame school constructed in 1940. The bond projects were in addition to several other construction projects including an addition to West Edgecombe School to house first and second graders, a twelve-room elementary building for all-Black Phillips

[66] "Here's the Report of Commission Named by Cherry," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, March 17, 1948.
[67] High School Principals' Annual Reports, 1947-1950, Edgecombe County, State Archives, Raleigh.
[68] "School Construction Plans in Edgecombe Progressing," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, November 3, 1951.

School, and a nine-room elementary school for Black students located near Mayo Crossroads. Before the completion of many of these new buildings, the county rented churches and other buildings to house Black students. The county used some of the 1951 bond money to buy busses, bringing the total number to ninety-two.[69]

On May 17, 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court in the case *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ruled "separate educational facilities were inherently unequal." But integration, as in the rest of North Carolina, came slowly to Edgecombe County. In the years following Brown, schools in the county remained separate, and Black schools were underfunded and supplied with secondhand materials passed down from white schools.

After Brown, Edgecombe County continued to construct racially segregated schools. Willow Grove School (ED 2275), completed in 1956 for 350 students in first through eighth grade, suffered from overcrowding almost immediately upon its opening. On October 10, 1958, the *Rocky Mount Telegram* reported that students attended classes on the auditorium stage and in the library. In June 1989, after years of declining enrollment—only 147 students attended its last year—the county closed the school. The Edgecombe County Board of Education sold the building to a church in 1996.

Coker-Wimberly School (ED2224), built in 1959, is a one-story, low-slung, flat-roofed brick building inspired by the modernist movement. On January 21, 1962, the *Rocky Mount Telegram* reported the county school system was attempting to keep up with a rapidly expanding population of Black students by consolidating schools and building new buildings. At the same time, the white student population in public schools was declining, according to the newspaper. Additions were built in 1966, before integration, and in 1977 and 1992.

In 1965, Edgecombe County, like 154 other school administrative units in the state, implemented a "Freedom of Choice Plan," which did not require reassignment of students based on color. That year, the school population included 5,600 Black students and 2,500 white students. According to the county, under freedom of choice, only seven Black students requested enrollment at white schools during the 1965-1966 school year.[70] The small number of Black students attending white schools likely reflected an environment of intimidation felt by Black families instead of a lack of interest in integration on the part of these students.[71]

In 1966, the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) instructed the school board to revise its plan for integration to increase the percentage of Black students at white schools.[72] Local congressman L. H. Fountain of Tarboro forcefully rebuked the federal government's rejection of freedom of choice, calling the adherence to such percentages by HEW, "arbitrary and ill-considered." He added that the United States government "will not attempt to deny federal funds to a school district which has carried out a free-choice plan in good faith

[69] "Edgecombe Announces Plans for Spending School Funds," *Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*, May 19, 1951.
[70] "Edgecombe School Folk Study Federal Education Aid Setup" *Rocky Mount Telegram*, January 5, 1965.
[71] Grethen Givens, "The Life of a Southerner (in Drawings): An Interview with Jesse Whitaker," *Southern Cultures*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (Fall 1995) pages 137-153.
[72] "Federal Controls Cannot Be Evaded," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, April 14, 1966; "Edgecombe Co. Mailing Parents New 'Freedom of Choice' School Letters," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, August 13, 1966.

simply because the freely exercised choices of parents and students have not resulted in a particular percentage of integration."[73]

In 1968, HEW informed Edgecombe County that its freedom of choice plan was unacceptable and that the school board had to come up with a strategy for eliminating its dual-race education system by the beginning of the 1969-1970 school year. By 1969, 69 percent of the school age population in the county was Black and nine out of twelve schools remained all Black. In November 1969, after the school board failed to take appropriate action to integrate, HEW gave Edgecombe and thirteen other North Carolina county school districts until December 16, 1969, to submit a plan to the federal agency. Failure to submit a plan that would be put into effect on December 31 of that year meant HEW could authorize deferment of any federal funding to the district.[74]

Edgecombe County continued to drag its feet on abolishing the dual-school arrangement. Schools in the county opened for the 1970-1971 school year only partially integrated. Six schools remained all Black, while white and Black schools in three districts were merged.[75] Meanwhile, that fall, Tarboro reluctantly instituted a student assignment plan devised by the federal government that fully integrated its city schools.[76]

Delays and half-hearted attempts by the school board to abolish the dual educational system in the county prompted Black students and their families to protest. In the fall of 1970, around 250 Black students, mostly from Carver High School in Pinetops, marched to South Edgecombe School where their spokesperson, student Bertha Redmond, met with school superintendent Lee Hall. The students were upset that after the county's partial integration plan depleted the number of high school students at Carver, fewer college prerequisite classes were being offered at their school. The students also took issue with a lack of Black history classes at their school. The group called for "'100 percent integration or no integration at all.'"[77]

In May 1972, the board of education approved and released a new school zone attendance map for the 1972-1973 school year reflecting desegregation and consolidation of the county's schools.[78]

FARM CONSOLIDATION AND CORPORATIZATION

Several trends converged in the twentieth century to fuel an increase in larger farms and a decline in the number of farms. Mechanization—such as the replacement of mules with tractors and the increasing use of semi-automated harvesting and processing equipment—made it simpler and more efficient to farm and manage larger or disconnected swaths of land. Additionally, industrial economic development offered jobs that drew people off the family farm. According to federal agricultural census data, the number of farms in Edgecombe County was dramatically

[73] "Rep. Fountain Attacks School Policy Presented by U. S. Education Office," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, April 8, 1966.
[74] "Edgecombe Discusses School Integration Situation," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, November 26, 1969.
[75] "Strong First-Day Enrollment is Reported," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, September 1, 1970.
[76] "Tarboro School Board 'Reluctantly' Accepts Study Assignment Plan," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, August 24, 1970.
[77] "Group of 250 Negroes March, Question Edgecombe School," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, September 4, 1970.
[78] "Action Taken by Edgecombe for Full School Integration," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, May 10, 1972.

lower in the early twenty-first century than it had been four decades earlier. In 1964, there were 2,128 farms in the county; there were just 272 in 2012. The average size of farms in the same period had increased from 128 acres to 466. The county's total land in farms in 1964 was 272,821 acres, over twice the 2012 figure of 126,635.[79]

Agricultural and non-agricultural industry drew workers out of the fields. Early- to mid-twentieth-century industrial properties concentrate in Pinetops, which originated as a railroad construction camp. There are surviving plants related to several industrial concerns: the Monk Tobacco Redrying Plant (ED2363); the Edgecombe Casket Company, housed in the repurposed Pinetops Tobacco Warehouse (ED2341); and the Cotton Belt Mattress Company (ED2358). Several workers' houses and storage warehouses associated with the mattress company also survive on surrounding blocks. Additionally, many Pinetops residents were area farmers who opted to live in town and commute to their land in the surrounding area. Violet and Benjamin Weaver, for instance, were a farming family but built a Colonial Revival-style house (ED2351) in Pinetops in 1953. A number of twentieth-century peanut processing plants are scattered around the county; surviving examples include the former Milgrom Peanut Company (ED2281, SL 2023) in Battleboro and the Clark Industries Peanut Facility (ED2246, SL 2023) near Princeville.

Many families, however, continued to live on the land they had owned for generations, and these arrangements are generally reflected in additions to the farmhouse or construction of another house. Three generations of the Gorham family developed the nearly one-hundred-acre farm they called Sunnyside (ED2304, SL 2023). Minnie Leola Johnson Gorham (1886-1973) and Charles Henry "Charlie" Gorham (1873-1945) built a one-story, L-plan house with weatherboard siding around the turn of the century, adding another front-gabled wing and an additional kitchen on the south side for a second generation of Gorham farmers, Ethel and Tom Gorham. They moved in after their 1950 wedding. A porch across the bottom of the U-shape at the façade links the two generations' living quarters. Later, Ethel and Tom built a brick Ranch house on the land, but the old house still stands. At the Mayo Farm (ED0835, ED0836), east of Tarboro, Susan and Thomas Mayo's nineteenth-century house is now at the back of an early-twentieth-century Colonial Revival dwelling. The farmstead dates largely to the twentieth century, and a new generation of Mayos is considering restoring the house to move back to the farmland. The Jones-Howard Farm (ED2092), a Black-owned century farm near Fountain Fork, has a small farmstead centered on a single-story frame dwelling dating to about 1900 that was expanded over time, in part with the addition of a building that originally operated as a detached kitchen.

The topic of the demise of the family farm in the face of growing corporatization occupied local editorial pages and influenced political opinion throughout the later decades of the century. However, corporate farms in the mid-century period were not generally owned by large companies, according to a farm management specialist with the North Carolina State Extension Service writing in the *Rocky Mount Telegram* in the 1950s. In many cases, farmers incorporated their existing family farm for tax reasons, or banded together and incorporated with other, unrelated neighboring farmers to pool resources. A USDA study in 1984, around the time of Taves's survey, reported that 90 percent of corporate farms in the country reflected this family-

[79] Taves, 53-56; US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture Historical Archive, viewed online at agcensus.library.cornell.edu.

owned model. That appears to remain the case in the first quarter of the twenty-first century; the USDA reports that large corporate farms directly operate very few farms in the United States and that large farms remain family-owned corporate operations.[80]

During his survey in the last quarter of the twentieth century, Taves documented the ways these changes were reflected in the built environment. He observed the loss of mule barns, farmsteads, tenant houses, and agricultural outbuildings, and the rising use of new agricultural structures like tobacco bulk barns. MdM observed the continued loss of agricultural building types, finding, for instance, only a few surviving mule barns, such as those at Vinedale (ED0562, NR 1982) and the Goff Farm (ED2249). The use of bulk barns, a newer addition to the landscape at the time of Taves's survey, has apparently peaked and fallen. Views of the agricultural landscape from the roadway have changed, too, as the largest farming operations restrict access along farm lanes with locked gates and allow trees to grow up along the roadside, blocking the view of cultivated fields from the roadway.

CONCLUSION

The 2021-2023 architectural survey of Edgecombe County reveals much about the state of historic architecture in rural eastern North Carolina. While time, weather, and human activity have negatively impacted a considerable amount of the historic fabric from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, many houses, farms, plants, commercial buildings, churches, schools, and landscape elements survive to tell the story of a county with a rich history.

A preservation ethic has existed in the county for decades. In response to the loss of buildings and structures that chronicle the county's history, individuals and groups have rallied to save what remains. After fourteen dwellings formerly housing enslaved persons at Old Town Plantation were burned in the 1960s, a group of individuals formed the Edgecombe County Historical Society in 1964.[81]

Edgecombe County has also been on the cutting edge of historic preservation. The idea of a revolving fund came in 1982 at a meeting of the Edgecombe County Historical Society, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina (now Preservation North Carolina). The Edgecombe County Historic Preservation Fund bought historic buildings and sold them to buyers willing to restore them.[82] The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation awarded the Fund a $25,000 grant. That, coupled with the donation of Old Town Plantation, helped the organization get up and running in 1983 with Louise Boney as its first director. The coffers were boosted when the General Assembly appropriated $50,000.[83]

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[80] "Corporate Farms Offer Questions," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* December 3, 1969; "The Family Farm," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* August 22, 1974; "College Mob Prevents Wallace From Talking," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* October 22, 1968; "Corporate Farms May Rent Lands," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* January 12, 1971; "Nixon is Standing By Agriculture Nominee," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* November 25, 1972; "Farm Bill: Tricky Tight Rope," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* February 21, 1977; "Corporate Agriculture Slows Down," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* March 21, 1984; James M. MacDonald and Robert A. Hoppe, "Large Family Farms Continue to Dominate U.S. Agricultural Production," 2017, USDA Economic Research Service, ers.usda.gov.

[81] "Historic Preservationists Voice Concerns," *Rocky Mount Telegram,* February 25, 1988.

[82] "Preserving Rural Heritage," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), March 31, 1985.

[83] Ibid.

For its first project, the Fund teamed with the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina to save Old Town Plantation (ED0010, NR 1972, 1983), a house built in 1742, that had to be moved. Elizabeth Pearsall of Rocky Mount donated the house, and land for a new site came from descendants of Elisha Battle, a senator during the American Revolution who occupied the house. Jane and Chris Wilson bought the property in 1983 and began a careful restoration. For its second project, the Fund secured the Walston House (ED0845, DOE 1989), also known as the Edmondson-Walston House, which dates to 1853. It, too, was moved in 1983 and sold to Martha L. Browne of Raleigh. She restored the house and sold it in 1989. In the mid-1980s, the Fund also sold the Joseph Pippin House.[84]

In 1984-1985, the county received matching grant funds to conduct the countywide architectural survey completed by Henry Taves. Taves recorded hundreds of properties and authored a summarizing report on the history and architecture of the county.

In 2005, Monika Fleming, then the chair of the English and Humanities Department at Edgecombe Community College assisted the county's Historic Preservation Committee to research and identify historic resources outside of Tarboro. As an educator and historian, she trained future preservationists in research and fieldwork techniques. Fleming has been an active figure in historic preservation in the county, writing several books on Edgecombe history. Her first work was *Echoes of Edgecombe County, 1860-1940*.[85] Fleming later became coordinator of the community college's Historic Preservation Program and wrote additional books about the county. As evidence of her dedication to historic Edgecombe County, when she retired in 2021, Fleming and her husband purchased the Wilkinson-Dozier House (ED0016, NR 1974), one of the county's most significant early-nineteenth-century dwellings.

Many individuals in Edgecombe County have worked to preserve its historic resources, including E. Watson Brown, former Tarboro Planning and Economic Development Director, former chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, and former president of the Edgecombe County Historical Society. In 1981, he received the Gertrude S. Carraway Award from the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina (now Preservation North Carolina). In his retirement, Brown continues to highlight the county's historic buildings through his photography and advocacy.

Throughout the county, scores of individuals have labored to preserve historic buildings and structures that remain on the landscape. Many have enduring ties to their properties and cling to the memories of their forebears through the preservation of family homes, farms, and traditions. Others relocated to rural Edgecombe County, lured by the desire for an idyllic life living in a historic home they work to restore. What is common among them is a deep affection for the land and an awareness of the work required to persevere as time and unpredictable weather exert themselves on treasured buildings. Historic buildings require work, money, and time, but especially someone with the driving desire to safeguard what could easily be lost.

It is hoped that this project will again encourage the preservation of what can easily be lost.

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[84] Ibid.; "Historic Home is Moved to New Location," *Nashville Graphic*, June 21, 1983.
[85] "Preservation Group Eyes Historic Homes," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, July 18, 2005.

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Appendix: Properties Recommended for the Study List for Possible Inclusion in the NRHP

Mount Moriah ED0635
2419 Cool Spring Road, Whitakers vic.
Ca. 1815, 1851

Dr. James Jones Philips (1798-1874) established Mount Moriah farm in the early nineteenth century. The main house results from two construction periods beginning around 1815 when a Federal-style, two-story, side-gabled dwelling was built with a single-shoulder chimney. That section now serves as the rear ell for the 1851 Greek Revival-style addition that includes large, six-over-six windows. Throughout the interior, original finishes remain intact and well-preserved by descendants of the original owner, Dr. Philips.

Outbuildings on the 542-acre farm include a tenant house, silo, packhouse with an ordering pit, a smokehouse, livestock barn, cook's house, and a garage. On the site but barely visible behind the cook's house is what is known as the "old house," a three-bay building with mortise-and-tenon framing dating to the early 19th century.

Mount Moriah appears eligible for the NRHP under C in the area of Architecture and possibly A in the area of Agriculture, but more research would be needed to determine if the current mixture of cultivated fields and woodlands reflects the farm's historic period.

Piney Prospect ED2211
4249 Colonial Road, Old Sparta vic.
1790, 1820, 2006

Piney Prospect began as a one-and-a-half-story house built circa 1790. Peter Evans (1781-1852), a builder and an original owner of Rocky Mount Mills, purchased the house in 1809. Evans added a second story and, in 1820, the two-story front block was built.

Piney Prospect was listed in the NRHP in 1971. Several years later, the house sat unoccupied and deteriorating. Vandals removed some pieces of the house, including mantels and the crown molding in the parlor. Eventually, in 2005, the owner wanted the house gone from his land and donated it to Preservation North Carolina (PNC). PNC sold the house with the stipulation that it be moved and restored.

The new owners moved the house a quarter mile to the south onto 44 acres. It remains on Colonial Road with its original orientation and with similar setback from the highway. Beginning in 2006, the owners began restoring the house with the help of Dean Ruedrich according to the PNC stipulations. All of these elements have been restored and preserved. They include the main stair and all its features; wainscotting and molded baseboards in the main parlor and stair hall; the Federal mantel in the main parlor; paneled doors and window surrounds in the parlor and stair hall; flat-panel wainscot in the ca. 1790 part of the house; the reeded archway in the second-floor hall of the original house; original hand-grained wood; and original door hardware.

Before the move, the north elevation included several additions. Those have been removed and the elevation restored. An original chimney is to the west, and restored six-over-six and nine-over-nine windows remain. The other chimney on this elevation was built to match the original.

The new owners built a hyphen to connect a one-story, side-gabled addition on the north side of the rear shed room. That addition dates to 2007-2008. An enclosed porch on the rear of the 1790 section, not original to the house, was removed and a hipped roof rear ell was built. It contains a modern kitchen.

When Piney Prospect was moved in 2006, it was removed from the NRHP. In its new location and post-restoration, it appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C for Architecture. Criterion Consideration B applies because it is a building removed from its original location, but which is significant primarily for its architectural value.

Julia and Flo Lovelace House ED0940
Crisp
Ca. 1925

This excellent and intact example of the Craftsman style was built for Julia Berry Taylor (1887-1970) and Nathaniel Flournoy "Flo" (1890-1984) Lovelace around 1925. They used lumber from the local Lovelace sawmill, operated by Flo's brother Ed Lovelace on a parcel behind the crossroads stores in Crisp. Flo was a "merchant-farmer" in the words of his granddaughter, who lives in the house now. Flow ran the Crisp Cash Store at the crossroads and oversaw farming on land north of Crisp on Highway 258. He was active in the community and a founder of the Crisp Power Company in 1924, which also established the community's first water system.

The deep bracketed boxed eaves and hipped roof, along with the hipped dormer to vent the roof, are among the components of the Craftsman style seen on this foursquare. The single-story wings that flank the house hold a sunroom and a porte cochere, with French doors providing egress. There are interior brick chimneys, and a single-story rear wing has a partially enclosed porch on one end and a small room, likely a pantry, on the other. The exterior features weatherboards and original nine-over-one sash set singly and in pairs. There is a garage in the rear yard from the same period, with a lodging room at the back where a household employee sometimes stayed.

Interior doors have five horizontal panels and feature original crystal knobs. A stair is enclosed behind a French door in the living room and features a matchstick balustrade with square posts and a square newel capped with molding. Original mantels for the coal-burning fireplaces survive in all three bedrooms.

Even the few alterations to the house may have achieved significance in their own right: Dentillated crown molding and Georgian-style mantles were installed in the living room and dining room in 1966 to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of Julia and Flo. The millwork was produced in a building we also surveyed in Crisp, a frame workshop attached to the Crisp

electrical coop office building, which has been altered. The millwork was produced by William Lovelace, a nephew, for the couple.

The house appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

Bryant W. Thorpe Sr. House ED2195
3657 US 258 South, Tarboro vic.
Ca. 1910

The hipped-roof American Foursquare was the home of Bryant W. Thorpe Sr. (1855-1940). He bought the land in January 1910 and likely built the house soon after. Thorpe lived here as a widower with his five sons and a daughter.

Bryant Thorpe served in the North Carolina House of Representatives from Edgecombe County in 1885-1886. He was one of two Black members that session. In the 1885 session he was appointed to two committees – the Committee on Railroads, Postroads, and Turnpikes and the Committee on the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and Blind. We know from journals of the House of Representatives that he was an active member, proposing bills and amendments including an amendment that would have allowed the voters of Edgecombe County to decide whether they wanted a fence law.

Bryant W. Thorpe Sr. is significant as one of a group of Black Edgecombe County residents to serve in the North Carolina General Assembly in the period after Reconstruction and before 1900, the year when a state constitutional amendment disenfranchised most Black voters in North Carolina. From 1868 to 1900, Black residents, who were a majority in Edgecombe County, were able to hold a variety of public offices from the local to national level thanks to their residency in what became known as the Second District, a Black majority coalition of counties that included Edgecombe. From 1870 to 1900, Edgecombe sent 12 Black representatives to the House vs. 14 white representatives. The county had 6 Black senators and 6 white senators during that period. Everything changed for Black residents after the Amendment went into effect in 1901.

The Bryant W. Thorpe Sr. House is significant in the areas of Politics/Government and Black Ethnic Heritage under Criterion B for its association with Representative Thorpe. Although he had the house built after his tenure in Raleigh, it is the only known historic building associated with him. We were not able to access the interior but the intact nature of the exterior might indicate an intact interior. And, we are not nominating the house for its architecture, but only for the important connection between Thorpe and the house under Criterion B.

Braswell-Gaskill House ED2294
213 E Main Street, Whitakers
Ca. 1915

This two-story, ca. 1915, Neoclassical-style dwelling is on E. Main Street in Whitakers. The house was apparently built by Jesse and W. T. Braswell in 1910, who lived in a similarly fine

house next door, and sold to D. B. Gaskill in 1919 for $5,500. Gaskill was the Cashier at the Bank of Whitakers, according to the 1920 federal census.

A double-height porch over a single-story wraparound porch characterizes the Neoclassical style, and full-height gabled bays are at side elevations. There are interior brick chimneys with corbelled caps and windows are one-over-one sash. Classically-derived details include Tuscan columns at both porches and pedimented gables with dentil molding. There is a single-story gabled wing at the rear, along with some additions and alterations, including rear porch stair that goes to the second story. Inside, there is stained glass, paneled wainscot, and a lot of details that look like they could be from the Sears catalog.

This house, the Braswell house next door, and a few others on this block are impressive early twentieth-century Queen Anne-style dwellings and are all in the Study Listed Whitakers Historic District (ED1666, SL 2019). MdM was only able to access the interior of this house during the survey.

The Braswell-Gaskill House appears individually eligible for the NRHP for its significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

Viola Sessoms and R. Waverly Lucas House ED2150
782 NC Highway 97E, Leggett vic.

This 1950 Ranch house is of rusticated concrete block, built by first owner R. Waverly Lucas for himself and his wife, Viola Sessoms Lucas; the couple had married in 1942. He was blind, as least for a good portion of his adult life. Lucas had been born into a farming family in 1910 in Halifax. In 1920, he was living with his parents and attending school, apparently locally and not at the State School for the Blind and Deaf, so he seems to still be sighted in this period. Likewise, in 1930, he was 19 years old and living in Edgecombe County with his father and working as a farm laborer.

In 1947, he and Viola purchased this land. He was blind at this time, according to the current owner. She reports that Lucas made all the block for the house with a small machine on site and used salvaged windows, doors, and trim from houses in the area being demolished. Lucas worked with assistants who carried out tasks according to his direction. They added the back wing to the house in 1970, when his ailing brother moved in with him.

Also from about 1950 to perhaps as late as 1985, Lucas operated the Lucas Concrete Works out of a workshop on the property, making concrete septic tanks, concrete block, bird baths, and possibly other concrete items. His poured-concrete business signpost still stands at the side yard. South and southeast of the house is a collection of nine outbuildings, notably including the workshop of Lucas Concrete Works, which is the largest building in the rear yard. Lucas wove baskets and made canes in addition to the concrete products, and two buildings that he used for these purposes also survive on the site. Other outbuildings include storage and equipment sheds, a garage, and a chicken house. Most are unchanged, or perhaps some plywood doors have been added.

Also notable is a concrete path that snakes around the property. Lucas laid the path as an accessibility accommodation; he tapped a cane on the concrete to direct himself to various buildings and back to the workshop.

The complex appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Commerce and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The Lucas House is a great example of concrete-block construction but also the small-scale concrete products manufacturing business. Lucas attended a Lions Club camp for people with disabilities; the Lions Club also offered training to blind people and Lucas may have participated in these types of Lions Club activities as well.

Flowers House ED2161
404 E. Green Street, Macclesfield
1920

This Craftsman bungalow is rich with architectural detail and impressively intact at the exterior, although there is a large gabled addition to the rear elevation. The exterior is brick with shingles at the gable ends and this nice bracketed bay at the center with nine-over-one wood sash. Pairs and trios of squared columns with raised panels stand on concrete-capped brick piers to support the outside edge of the porch gable. A flat-roofed side porch on the east elevation connects to the front porch with a continuous terra cotta tile floor so that the corner of the wraparound is an open patio. Windows at the façade's first story, under the porch roof, are trios of eight-over-one Craftsman sash flanking the partially-glazed front door that is surrounded by transom and sidelights.

At the west elevation, a shed-roofed projecting bay has a trio of windows with a fifteen-light fixed sash flanked by taller eight-over-one Craftsman windows. The interior features beaded wainscot in a few rooms, and mantels are of wood with Craftsman or Colonial elements and may have been ordered from a catalog. There is a brick mantel with a later molded shelf in the front living room. The stair is open stringer and appears to have a balustrade with squared pickets. A period garage stands at the back of the parcel, accessible from a side street.

The house appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

Charlotte S. and Bobby Edmondson House ED2190
5109 McKendree Church Road, Tarboro vic.
1970

On April 7, 1970, Charlotte and Bobby Ray Edmondson bought five acres outside Tarboro in order to build a house following the plans for a Cape Cod they found in a publication called "Better Homes and Gardens Home Building Ideas, 1967." The plan's architect, William M. Thompson, was a Yale graduate who worked as the resident architect at Colonial Williamsburg in the late 1960s.

The Edmondsons hired builder Shorty Ellis to construct the house, which was completed in 1970. The plan suggests using old brick as the surface for the outdoor patio. Bobby Ray

Edmondson located vintage late 19th century Silas Lucas bricks from Wilson and built the patio himself on weekends and after work during the work week. An iron fence salvaged from a cemetery in Falkland encloses the brick patio on the west side. Salvaged brick was used for the paths on the east side of the house. The interior remains intact. Beams used in the den came from a tobacco warehouse in Wilson.

Repurposed material is used elsewhere on the property: two log tobacco barns stand in the rear yard. Both were shortened and moved to their sites in the 1970s and 1980s. A pack house in the foreground was fashioned into a country store by the Edmondsons.

The Edmondson House appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact plan book house from 1970. The house attests to the intense admiration of early American architecture in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Lawrence-Etheridge House ED0462
1174 Batts Chapel Road, Speed vic.
1880, 1900

The Lawrence-Etheridge House is an intact Queen Anne-style dwelling built in the late 19th century and expanded around 1900. Very few Queen Anne houses survive in rural Edgecombe. The vernacular one-story house with complex massing is, at its heart, a simple hipped roof cottage with a rear ell. The long front wing with canted corners and a wraparound porch pictured here was added at the turn of the 20th century. The house has a central passage plan and includes intact and carefully restored finishes, doors, and windows.

The house stands on what was once a cotton, tobacco, and peanut farm. Unfortunately, the cotton gin and a packhouse were lost in a hurricane, but a wood garage and wood chicken remain. A peanut drying barn is just outside the current parcel line but was historically associated with the farm.

The Lawrence-Etheridge House appears eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an intact and thoughtfully restored late 19th-turn of the 20th century Queen Anne-style house. There are many hipped roof cottages remaining in rural Edgecombe, but asymmetrically massed Queen Anne houses are unusual and speak to the Lawrence family's expanding status as farmers at the turn of the century.

Anderson Farm Rural Historic District ED2396 (includes ED0727, ED0728, ED0730, ED0731, and ED2102)
3053 Draughn Road, Leggett vic.
1887

The **Anderson Farm Rural Historic District** includes the Anderson Farm, Anderson Grocery, and the Anderson Cotton Gin, all located along Draughn Road near Leggett. The two-story, weatherboard house at the center of the Anderson Farm dates to 1887 and retains a bracketed cornice, original siding, and intricate porch detail. It has a center hall plan and a rear ell and retains its original finishes.

The complex around the house retains an impressive collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century outbuildings, including a prominent frame bell tower. An 1887 tenant house stands on the north side of the complex. Other outbuildings include weatherboard chicken buildings, a stock barn, and smokehouse. Directly behind the house is a metal-sided pack house, a front gable garage, a side-gabled equipment shed, and side-gabled board-and-batten workshop.

An open-sided ca. 1970 peanut shed stands farther to the south. In the 1970s, the Anderson family processed peanuts for Anderson-Talbot Peanut Company, which was in Leggett. Just to the south is the ca. 1880 Anderson Grocery. Nearly all the windows have been shuttered or enclosed with boards, but it appears the original six-over-six sash remain in at least some of the bays. A set of wooden stairs on the south elevation leads to an upper story where Dr. J. H. Anderson practiced medicine. A small 19th century building stands behind the store. Dr. Anderson's used it as a medical office before the store was built. The office was moved before 1945 from the farm to its current location and later it was expanded to serve as a dwelling.

A late-nineteenth-century cotton gin (ED2134), once part of the Anderson farm, stands on a separate parcel to the northeast of the farm at the north end of this small district. The farm and store passed down through the family and is now owned by a fourth generation Anderson.

The Anderson Farm Rural Historic District appears eligible under Criteria A and C in the areas of Agriculture, Commerce, and Architecture.

Barlow-Mayo Farm ED0798
Howell Road, Shiloh Hills vic.
Ca. 1840

The Barlow-Mayo Farm consists of three separate complexes on a 989-acre tract northeast of Princeville. At the north end is a modern collection of farm structures including grain bins, pole sheds sheltering metal peanut wagons, and a mid-twentieth-century house. The significant part of the farm is the main complex that includes the circa 1840 Arthur K. Barlow House. There are additions from the 1950s and the 1980s and the porch has been altered. However, numerous outbuildings and landscape features from the 19th and 20th centuries remain, including an extensive pecan and walnut grove in front of the house. Behind the house is a brick spring house, plank barn, dairy house, and garage. To the east is a workshop with a bell structure on top and plank smokehouse. Two barns—one of concrete block and the other with bargeboard along its cornice—are northeast of the house.

Arthur K. Barlow bought 619 acres between 1832 and 1845 and built the main house. In 1881, Benjamin C. Mayo bought the property, which became known as Piney Grove Farm. In the 1920s, his grandson, Benjamin Mayo (1887-1957), an officer with Mayo Mills in Tarboro, ran the farm, which focused on livestock and, at times, race horses. The farm remains in the Mayo family.

The Barlow-Mayo Farm appears eligible under Criteria A and C in the areas of Agriculture and Architecture.

Sunnyside Farm ED2304
3455 Seven Bridges Road, Battleboro vic.
Ca. 1900

Three generations of the Gorham family developed this nearly one-hundred-acre farm mostly in the first half of the twentieth century. Minnie and Charlie Gorham built a one-story, L-plan house with weatherboard siding around 1900. Not many years later, the family added another front-gable wing and an additional kitchen on the south side. This expansion accommodated Minnie and Charles's son and daughter-in-law Tom and Ethel Gorham, who moved in after their 1950 wedding. Once expanded, the family built a porch across the front between the two front-gable wings. That porch is missing, and windows have been boarded up, but the corbelled brick chimneys, original siding, and brick foundation piers remain.

After Ethel and Thomas married, they lived at and worked on the farm to help his mother who was widowed in 1945 after Charlie Gorham had a heart attack in the tobacco field. Ethel Gorham's grandfather, James Murphy Lamb, had founded Sunnyside Floral Nursery in Fayetteville in 1873, so the younger Gorhams christened the farm Sunnyside Farm. From her family's nursery, Ethel acquired Eastern Hemlock and Deodar Cedar saplings and planted one of each just in front of the house. Those trees now tower over the house.

Together, Minnie and Charles, Thomas and Ethel, and Thomas's brother William worked the farm, producing hogs, Angus beef cattle, tobacco, peanuts, and other crops to feed the family. The adults expected the children and grandchildren, including current owner Susan Gorham Hayes, to work on the farm. Susan Hayes reports that the only job she and her sister were not allowed to do was the castrating. In the 1960s, Ethel and Thomas built themselves a new, modern brick Ranch house. They raised their daughters there and welcomed extended family for social gatherings. The old house was abandoned, but not forgotten.

The variety of outbuildings on Sunnyside Farm speaks to the range of agricultural activities in which the Gorham family engaged. They employed tenant workers to help with the farm so they built not only tenant houses (two survive), but also a commissary for the farm workers. That building remains and was later expanded to include a workshop.

Two tobacco barns and a packhouse remain from the period when bright leaf was grown and processed. The circa 1940 terracotta flue-curing barn is likely the best-preserved example of its type in the county. Just to the east is a flue-curing barn with an attached looping shed. On the south side of the farm yard is a packhouse, later used to keep hog feed and for storage. Other outbuildings include a peanut grinding shed, a circa 1950 long barn that also contains a well and well house, a cattle combine shelter, and a smokehouse.

Sunnyside Farm is an outstanding example of a 20th century complex displaying the range of buildings, structures, and landscape features common on Edgecombe County farms. It appears eligible under Criteria A and C in the areas of Agriculture and Architecture.

Davenport Cotton Gin ED0646
3697 Morning Star Church Road, Battleboro vic.
Ca. 1930

Offie Davenport likely built this cotton gin in the 1930s as a family farm cotton gin as opposed to a community gin. The two-story, rectangular building includes a raised platform on the front where cotton could be unloaded from the upper level. Cotton was unloaded from wagons on the north elevation where a shed roof is supported by wood posts. The shed-roof projection on the south elevation held the seed room. The ell provided shelter for machinery. Edgecombe County remained a major producer of cotton into the 20th century, but smaller gins like the Davenport Gin have become rare. After World War II, large community gins took over. The Davenport Gin is eligible under Criterion A for Agriculture and Industry and Criterion C for Architecture as an intact example of a Depression-era cotton gin.

Killebrew Barn ED2251
S side Nobles Mill Pond Road at end of Howard Avenue Ext, Kingsboro vic.
Ca. 1930

This hundred-foot-long, frame barn is two stories tall and fifty feet wide. Side sheds along both eave walls are eighteen-feet deep. It is by far the largest barn observed in the county.

The center gambrel section has two open aisles flanked by animal pens and storage cabinets. Braced timbers standing on concrete piers provide support for the second floor; the posts are reinforced in some places with creosote logs. A wood stair along the south wall of the east aisle rises to the loft above. Two window openings at the loft have aluminum storms in them, but original windows pierce the side of the barn at the second story, in the area between the gambrel eave and the top of the shed roof. There, eight six-over-six double-hung sash windows are installed sideways, so that the windows are opened by sliding the sash from side-to-side rather than up or down. Aluminum siding covers the original weatherboard sheathing of the barn, some of which is visible at the east end of the building.

The barn stands on a 228-acre parcel identified in the Edgecombe County GIS website as W. H. Killebrew land. The system dates the barn to 1901, but folks living in the house next door noted that the barn was built in the 1930s and managed at some point in the twentieth century by H. Cofield Robbins. Robbins father, John Robbins, helped to build the barn, according to a family member, who lives in the gambrel-roofed house on the neighboring parcel to the barn (ED2252). The survey informant stated that there was no connection between that house and the barn.

The barn appears potentially eligible for the NRHP under significance under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture.

Clark Industries Peanut Facility ED2246
752 US 258 North, Princeville vic.
Ca. 1962

Clark Industries peanut processing and buying facility occupies seven acres just outside Princeville. This peanut processing and buying facility retains thirteen buildings and structures used in peanut processing and storage in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Buildings and structures include the office sheathed in corrugated metal. To the south, a two-part, corrugated metal elevator on tall wood posts is attached to a shed-roofed building. The taller section was used for loading trucks with peanuts. Large metal-sided warehouses stand at the rear of the complex. Open-sided buildings where the peanuts are dried and stored in wagons occupy the east side of the complex. They are fitted with large fans to dry the nuts. Original peanut wagons remain sheltered by these buildings.

William Grimes Clark of Tarboro started Clark Industries, a diversified business involved in agriculture and finance, in 1955. In 1962, Kathryn and Romaine Howard sold this parcel outside Princeville to Clark Industries. The property was a small portion of Oak Spring Farm, an expansive property George Howard purchased in 1869. In 1972, Katherine and Romaine Howard sold an adjacent parcel to Clark Industries for an expansion that happened in 1972, when the company added a dumping pit and machinery to unload peanuts.

Edgecombe County was one of the top peanut producers in the state throughout the 20th century but especially from the 1930s into the 1970s. Peanuts were a significant 20th century crop processed locally for market. Few of these properties retain such a diverse range of structures as the Clark Industries Peanut Facility. It appears eligible under Criterion A for Agriculture and Industry.

Milgrom Peanut Company ED2281
5260 Gainor Avenue, Battleboro
1960

This Battleboro-based peanut company facility comprises this large warehouse with monitor, a huge silo and elevator, and office buildings and sheds on a triangular parcel of land near the rail line. This parcel was owned by peanut farmer Henry Milgrom and his wife Ruby Milgrom from 1957 through the 1970s. Milgrom was also, according to a *Rocky Mount Telegram* article, a "former State Senator, past president of the N. C. Association of County Commissioners, and a Nash County business and civic leader." The county GIS system dates the warehouse and office to 1960, the other buildings appear to have a placeholder date of "1900" but more likely date to 1960 or later.

Today, the complex is owned by Battleboro Produce, a Rocky Mount-based agricultural company that grows, packages, ships, and exports sweet potatoes. The property appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture and Industry.

Few in Number Primitive Baptist Church ED0881
2296 Davistown-Mercer Road, Wiggins vic.
Ca. 1890

In 1876, Elder Abraham Wooten organized the Radicue Baptists, an independent denomination of Black worshipers who sought to establish churches not under the control of white congregations. Formerly enslaved and a Union Army veteran, Wooten, was ordained in 1878. He then founded three Radicue Primitive Baptist Churches in the county including this one, Few in Number Primitive Baptist Church.

The church was built near the rural community of Wiggins around 1890. Members from Tarboro often took the East Carolina Railway to Daviston and walked a half mile to attend. In 1953, the church had 118 members, the largest congregation in the thirteen-member Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Association. It remains an active congregation, and the interior retains its original finishes and original plan. A concrete block addition built in the 1960s extends from the rear.

Few in Number Primitive Baptist Church appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of a late-19th-century rural church building with elements of the Gothic Revival style. It is also appears eligible under Criterion A in the area of Religion and Black Ethnic Heritage as an example of a Primitive Baptist church organized by Black worshipers who sought to separate themselves from the white church following the Civil War. It meets Criteria Consideration A as a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural distinction or historical importance.

Former Mayo School ED0837
4697 Roberson School Road, Mayo's Crossroads, vic.
Ca. 1880

This one-room school building was built in the 1880s near Mayo's Crossroads for white students. It was replaced with another building around 1912 and was moved at some point to the nearby Mayo Farm, where it stands today.

The one-room front-gabled building has weatherboard siding, metal roofing, and a brick stack. There is a steeply-pitched roof on a box cornice; five-panel entry door at the gable end; batten side door; and six-over-six and six-over-one sash. The brick stack above the roof line survives but the interior section and the central stove it vented, which was documented in earlier survey, is gone. Interior walls and ceilings are sheathed in wood. The aluminum storms are likely salvaged from another building and do not fit the openings here. A shed porch at the gabled façade is a later addition constructed of plain squared timbers and metal roofing. This is the only 19th century school observed during survey and the only one-room schoolhouse.

The building appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of the one-room schoolhouse. It meets Criteria Consideration B for a moved property.

Busy Workers School ED0761
729 Kilquick Road, Lawrence vic.
Ca. 1915

The ca. 1915 former Busy Workers School stands northwest of Speed. The building is in excellent condition, retaining weatherboard siding, brick chimneys, and the distinct pair of front-gabled porches with turned posts on each end of a pair of interior cloakrooms. The oversized windows on the side elevations have been restored. The interior retains its original tongue and groove walls, ceilings, and wainscotting, wood floors, six-panel doors with working transoms, and fourteen-foot ceilings. Although now fixed in place for safety, the roll-down wall between former classrooms is original and retains the metal handle used to move it up and down. An original wood privy stands in the rear yard.

The school design closely follows Plan No. 2 in "Plans for Public Schoolhouses," a plan book produced by Raleigh architects Barrett and Thomson for the North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The superintendent's office published the booklets from 1903 to 1914 to provide local school boards with plans and specifications for constructing schools that would meet requirements set out by the state. Every element of the buildings, from their site, what direction they should face, the materials to use, and sanitation standards, were included in the plan books.

In the 1920s, following countywide school consolidation, the school was converted to a dwelling. In the 1960s, it was used for farm storage. In 2008, Daniel Cenci, whose ancestor bought the building in the 1920s, began restoring the school. He based the exterior paint color on remnants he found under the gable eaves. The interior functions as a dwelling but some clues as to its origins remain. For example, graffiti left by students remains on the foyer wall.

Busy Workers School appears eligible under Criterion A for its significance in the area of Education on the local level and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an outstanding and intact example of a schoolhouse built following a pattern book issued by the North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction in the early 20th century.

Conetoe Barbeque Building and Community Building ED2395
200 E. Church Street, Conetoe
Ca. 1955, ca. 1960

The ca. 1960 Conetoe Barbeque Building stands behind the 1955 concrete-block Conetoe Community Building near the heart of this tiny railroad community. The barbeque club was established in 1960 and appears to still be in use at least monthly. The barbeque club is a single-story rectangular-plan structure with half-height walls of brick under light frame walls with screens rather than sheathing. A gabled monitor with screened eave walls caps the roof. Both roofs have exposed rafter tails and metal roofing. A broad chimney rises along the west gable end of the building. Two single-leaf screened doors are at the north eave wall. A poured concrete floor is at the interior, with centered rectangular sand pit under the barbeque and two long prep and serving tables. A butcher block stands in one corner, and a bottle opener is affixed to a door frame.

The concrete-block community building dates to 1955; it was previously owned by the Conetoe Ruritan Club and seems to have been have been built by an independent group called the Conetoe Community Project; trustees included local business owners. The interior consists of one large gathering room under the main roof and restrooms and a kitchen in the shed-roofed back room; windows have been replaced.

The property appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Recreation.

Panola Heights Club ED2218
2205 Baker Street Extension, Tarboro vic.
1972

The Panola Heights Club was founded in 1950. Since the construction of this building in 1972, the club has served as a social and civic gathering place for Black residents of Tarboro and the surrounding area. Named for a historically Black neighborhood in east Tarboro, the simple building has a wide-open interior that lends itself to multiple uses. The interior has concrete block walls and a new tile floor. Open-sided, gable-roofed picnic shelters occupy the yard.

Organized Black social clubs have existed in North Carolina since at least the 1890s, when the Asheville Colored Club was founded. The Hollywood Club, formed in 1916 in Rocky Mount, is the oldest known Black social club in eastern North Carolina. It supported the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, and the YMCA. In 1959, the Young Men's Social Club in Rocky Mount purchased uniforms for the Booker T. Washington High School cheerleaders. These club were social, but members were also involved in the Civil Rights movement, and the clubs typically had a philanthropic mission as well. In the mid-20th century, clubs existed in Burlington, Roxboro, Washington, Laurinburg, and Winston-Salem. At the club's formation in 1950, white clubs would not have allowed Black members. The county's schools did not integrate until 1972.

Based on Edgecombe County's history as a Black majority county in the 20th century and the fact that no other mid-20th century Black clubs could be identified, we believe the Panola Heights Social Club appears eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Recreation, Social History, and Black Ethnic Heritage.

Sawmill ED2353
311 N. Second Street, Pinetops
Ca. 1915

When the East Carolina Railway was established around here in 1900, a few farmers moved their sawmills to the spot to facilitate building. What evolved was the Town of Pinetops, highly dependent on the early mills for physical development. Those early sawmills have long since been replaced with commercial development along Hamlet Street, but at the north edge of town, a mid-twentieth-century sawmilling complex survives. It includes sheds that sheltered milling machinery, a large storage building, and two other gabled structures, perhaps including an office.

Irene Craft inherited this land after 1930. She subdivided it and sold two portions to J. T. Weaver in 1949. The federal census notes that John T. Weaver owned and operated a sawmill in 1950

and lived in Pinetops with his wife and school-aged son. He had previously worked as a mechanic and as a school teacher.

We recommend this complex for the Study List for its significance under Criterion A in the area of Industry.

Macclesfield Jail ED2390
center of block bounded by W Edgecombe, N Railroad, W Green, N Third, Macclesfield
ca. 1925

Macclesfield is another town created by the 20th century East Carolina Railway, which was built by incarcerated workers. This tiny two-cell jail post-dates the construction period of the rail line, but certainly is a continuation of the town's origin story.

The shed-roofed brick building has a parapet roof, windows in the front third of the side elevations, and a single-leaf entry centered on the façade. There is a concrete floor and a small heating stove in the southwest corner of the building. The lighted front third of the building is separated from the back two thirds by a metal partition wall. One-over-one window sashes are missing glass, and the stile-and-rail single-leaf door with ceramic knob is deteriorating, but all the materials appear to be original. Both the window and door openings are reinforced with metal security grates. Cell doors are riveted metal lattice set on strap hinges, and cells lack any fenestration.

A local history notes that this is the second jail to function in the town, built "around 1925" after the first jail burned down. The iron door and iron window bars are salvaged from the first jail and reused here.

We recommend this building for the Study List for its significance under Criterion A in the area of Law.

(former) Crisp Water Tower (ED2333)
Crisp
Ca. 1950

Crisp's local power company also established a water system for the farming community east of Macclesfield around 1950, alleviating dependence on well water for the first time. The system operated on its own until 1979, when Crisp's system merged with the county system with the assistance of grant funds from Housing and Urban Development. Prior to the merger, the Crisp system and another small area system had been serving 74 households. There is now a modern tank standing nearby, but the elevated wood tank from about 1950 remains. At the foot of the tower is a gabled pumphouse overgrown with volunteer tree growth.

The property appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development.

Princeville Cemetery ED1080
Princeville
Ca. 1900 to present

Established in 1865 and incorporated in 1885, Princeville was the first independently governed African American town in the country. Throughout Princeville's history, the Tar River, which flows along its north and west borders, has flooded the town repeatedly. At this point, the built landscape of Princeville contains few historic buildings and most older structures have been substantially renovated using FEMA funding following the particularly devastating Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The overwhelming majority of the material culture that would otherwise depict the history of the town of Princeville has been lost. Of the 92 buildings documented before this survey, 70 no longer stand.

Because of the loss of historic fabric in the town, we are proposing the Princeville Community Cemetery for the Study List. It spans over fourteen acres with earthen lanes set in a grid pattern to allow access between groups of burials set mostly in neat rows. Stones range from concrete tablets carved by hand to professionally created marble or concrete tablets or ledgers. Some family groups are contained by wrought iron, chain link, and wood post fences or low concrete block and brick walls. The cemetery includes the community burial yard as well the Carney, Wilson, and Dancy Memorial Cemeteries. The community cemetery contains over fourteen hundred marked graves, while Carney Cemetery includes approximately eighteen members of the extended Carney family. Over one thousand graves are in the Dancy Memorial Cemetery. Wilson Cemetery contains the graves of Elder Abraham Wooten and Turner Prince, the man for whom the town is named.

Princeville Cemetery appears potentially eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A the area of Community Planning and Development, Black Ethnic Heritage, and Social History. Criterion Consideration D applies since the cemetery derives its significance from its association with historic events.

Ballahack Canal ED2155
Conetoe vic.
Ca. 1907

The construction of drainage canals to improve farming and forestry occurred throughout the nineteenth century in North Carolina. In the late 19th century, drainage districts were organized across eastern North Carolina to build and maintain canals. The North Carolina Drainage Association held its first convention in New Bern in 1908. Congressman John Small of Washington, North Carolina, drafted the North Carolina Drainage Act that passed the legislature in 1909 to encourage and support canal building among farmers. As a result, organized drainage projects began to increase as farmers and local officials recognized the importance of land improvement.

Agricultural drainage became the focus of much attention among farmers and politicians in Edgecombe County in the late nineteenth century, especially in the southeast part of the county near Conetoe. On November 29, 1894, an article promoting drainage in the *Tarborough*

Southerner newspaper provided two advantages to the practice. First, it allowed surplus water to run off the land quickly so that the soil could be tilled very soon after heavy rains. Also, drainage helped to retain necessary moisture in the soil by alleviating hard, compact clay. Individual farms were drained into the canals, which led to Conetoe Creek, which eventually dumped into the Tar River.

At least three canals remain in the Conetoe Creek Watershed, but the best preserved is the Ballahack Canal. It originates on the north side of Roberson School Road east of Tarboro. It extends a total of about six and a half miles southward and flows into Conetoe Creek just south of the town of Conetoe and eventually into the Tar River.

The exact date of construction remains unknown. A canal at around the same location as the Ballahack Canal appears on a Confederate Engineering Bureau map from around 1865. The first mention of it in a local newspaper came in 1922, when the *Daily Southerner* reported on a meeting of the Ballahack Canal Company of Conetoe. A barbeque dinner was served at the meeting where C. B. Keech was elected president and Calvin Warren secretary and treasurer. Four other men were elected to the committee which "had charge of making the necessary assessments and cleaning out the canal."

Canals became and remain essential to productive farming in southeast Edgecombe County. The Ballahack Canal, the best preserved of these structures, appears eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the areas of Conservation and Agriculture.

Edgecombe Fire Lookout Tower ED1662, DOE 2018
3091 West Wilson Street Tarboro NC, Tarboro vic.
1932

Fountain Fire Lookout Tower ED2166
15867 US 258 South, Macclesfield vic.
Ca. 1940

In 1925, the North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development was established and by 1927, the department had constructed its first fire lookout tower. Seventy-one towers had been built by 1936 with additional towers constructed by the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to protect federally owned land. In the 1990s, the Division of Forestry had moved away from the use of fire towers in favor of more modern methods of detection.

Edgecombe County fell within District 5 which covered a large area of eastern North Carolina that stretched from Northampton and Halifax counties at the northeast to Orange County to the west. Each county had its own forest ranger, fire lookout towers, and firefighters, and each county operated separately but could communicate with personnel in other counties. The Edgecombe Fire Lookout Tower just outside Tarboro—built in 1932—was the main tower for the county. The operator at Tarboro radioed the other tower attendants in the county four times per day to provide fire danger ratings. If danger was low, the towers were not manned. If fire danger reached a certain level, the tower attendant remained in the tower until the danger passed.

When a fire was spotted, the attendant obtained a compass reading for its location and then radioed the fire fighters, who respond to the blaze.

Besides the tower at Tarboro, the only other fire tower remaining in the county is the Fountain Fire Lookout Tower in the southern part of Edgecombe, likely built in the 1940s. Both towers are four-sided truss frame structures constructed of heavy galvanized steel members. They stand about 93 feet tall, have an interior stair that rises to an enclosed cabin and rest on four tapered concrete footers. Horizontal beams reinforce the diagonal truss frame and provide support for the stair, which doubles back and forth. Though the support elements and stair runners are metal, the planer elements of the steps and landings are constructed of wood. Metal handrails also line the stairs and at some point, metal wire, similar to fencing, was used to fill the open space between the steps and handrails. The one-room cabin appears to be made of metal sheets below ribbons of nine-light windows.

The Edgecombe Fire Lookout Tower and the Fountain Fire Lookout Tower appear eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Conservation.