

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Tarboro Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)  
(Partial:  
Historic Resources of Tarboro (historic and architectural--not archeological)

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

The area of Tarboro developed by 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Edgecombe

CODE

065

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☒ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☒ UNOCCUPIED☒ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☒ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☒ COMMERCIAL☒ EDUCATIONAL☒ ENTERTAINMENT☒ GOVERNMENT☒ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☒ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☒ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☒ TRANSPORTATION☒ OTHER:

Multiple Resource

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Town of Tarboro: Mayor, Victor Herring

Multiple Ownership. Notify: Town Manager, Donald Taylor/Planner, Watson Brown

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

VICINITY OF

STATE

NC

27886

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Edgecombe County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

STATE

NC

27886

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey (Cotton Press, Lanier House,)

DATE

1940

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

HABS, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
DC

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT      ☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ GOOD            ☐ RUINS  
☐ FAIR            ☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☐ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☐ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

#### Tarboro Multiple Resource Description

NOTE: Sections and letters like the content and order herein, follow draft instructions for completing multiple resource nominations.

#### A. General Physical Description

Tarboro is a middle-sized coastal plains town of about 10,000 people, which has served as a county political center and regional trade center since its establishment at the upper limit of navigation of the Tar River in 1760. It is located on rather flat land typical of the coastal plain, on the north side of the Tar River. The railroad--the Seaboard Coast Line, formerly the Atlantic Coast Line--enters the town toward its north end, running diagonally southeast into town, with branches extending into town and southward along the main through side street, Albemarle Avenue. Like many communities, Tarboro has in the period since World War II, and especially since about 1960, grown rapidly at its edges, so that it has a border of suburban residential fabric, as well as a good deal of industrial and strip commercial development. At the heart of the town, however, extending north from the Tar River that gave the town its life, and along the railroad that continued the town's development from the mid-19th century, survives a substantial core of historic fabric from the 18th century through the early 20th century. Scattered isolated historic structures also stand in the edge areas.

The survey of the multiple resource area included the entire area of Tarboro as it had developed by roughly fifty years ago--as recorded on the April, 1931, map of the town produced by the Sanborn Map Company of New York. (See Sanborn Map enclosed.) This area is believed to include all significant or possibly significant standing resources of Tarboro. This entire area was studied because much of the town's important historical and architectural development occurred in the early 20th century. The initial survey sought to identify all significant individual properties and complexes or neighborhoods that maintained their visual and/or historic integrity. The initial survey revealed, however, that not all of the area included retained architectural or historical integrity; and that, in fact, the areas most disturbed by (a) demolition; (b) new construction and/or (c) alteration of individual buildings, were those developed between ca. 1900 and ca. 1931. The area whose integrity was least disturbed was the historic heart, the oldest portion of the community, and the late 19th century-early 20th century residential area north of it.

The following general areas of pre-1931 development were identified and assessed:

1. Central business district, composed of commercial, industrial, and scattered residential fabric. Some intrusions, some demolition, but generally intact. (This is shown on the 1931 Sanborn Map as Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and lower parts of 7, 8, and 9). This area consists of a dense, traditional grid of streets, with the central spine, Main Street, lined with commercial buildings, many of the late 19th-early 20th century, and low frame or brick industrial buildings of the same era. This area is included in the National Register district nomination (which see for more detail).

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2. Early residential areas, flanking and north of the business district, composed of a grid of streets lined with trees and houses of the period ca. 1790s to the present, with antebellum, postwar, and early 20th century fabric dominant. Several notable churches stand here, with their churchyards vital open spaces. This area is shown by Sanborn Map, 1931, upper sections of 7, 8, 9, east edge of 4, and lower parts of 10 and 11. This area, much of which is included in a local historic district ordinance, is also included in the National Register district nomination (which see).
3. The surviving north part of the Common. This is a historically significant and visually vital open space designated as a Town Common when the town was laid out. It is in the local historic district, individually listed in the National Register, and included in the present National Register district nomination. It formed for many years the upper (northern) boundary of the dense grid of the town.
4. Slightly later residential district north of the Common. By 1882 this area was still largely undeveloped except by the presence of a row of antebellum suburban estates and a few postwar houses. The area developed rapidly, on a grid plan, in the period ca. 1880-1930s, so that it now contains a high concentration of evenly placed, generally well-kept dwellings of Victorian, Queen Anne, Bungalow, and Colonial Revival houses. (See 1931 Sanborn Map, Sections 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 29, 21, 22.) There are only minor intrusions, and the use is all domestic. Most of this section is included in the local historic district, and it is included in the National Register district nomination (which see).
5. East and northeast of the business district, across Panola Street (a boundary of the town through about 1908) is a primarily early 20th century neighborhood, also grid plan, developed on former farmland to provide worker's housing. (Sanborn Map, 1931, Sections 10, 11, 12, 16, etc.) The neighborhood is primarily black. It had deteriorated in the 20th century. While the neighborhood is significant to the development of Tarboro, the historical and visual integrity of the neighborhood has been severely altered by recent improvements to living conditions. Many of the small frame dwellings, in the area known as Panola Heights have been demolished and new houses built, and others have been remodeled extensively. This area is thus not included in the district nomination.

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Note that the southern part (and oldest) of the east Tarboro section, predominantly black, is included under area 2 (above), early residential development. These are more substantial and less altered blocks and date from the late 19th-early 20th century. Within the Panola Heights neighborhood, however, stand two churches of considerable local significance: Eastern Star Baptist Church (A) and St. Paul Baptist Church (B). Each of these was built downtown as a white church in the late 19th century, and each was given to a black congregation and moved to east Tarboro in the early 20th century. They are not only architecturally significant, as being among the town's only late 19th century churches, but most important, they have been centers of the black community for over fifty years and stand as landmarks now in the neighborhood. These are thus included as individual entries in the multiple resource nomination (which see).

6. There are two large mill villages that developed by 1931 which supported the industrial growth of the town. (Sanborn Map, 1931, Sections 30, 31, 19, 20, 24, 27). The earliest is northeast of Hendricks Creek (19,20,24), with small Victorian houses; street development and new construction have altered most of this important early housing development which predates 1901. A few blocks of Walnut Street remain fairly intact as does some of Howard Avenue, but this is rather scattered. Another mill housing area west of Hendricks Creek along West Wilson Street retains essentially its original plan and the relationship of the houses. The mill has been much expanded and changed, however, and the individual houses have nearly all been altered. At this point, study of mill housing areas in the eastern part of the state is incomplete; possible these areas could be added later, but at this time they do not appear to retain sufficient visual integrity relative to known important mill villages statewide. Thus, none of this western part of town is now included in the Multiple Resource nomination.
7. North of the district is recent commercial strip development and industrial development. This area was built up considerably between 1913 and 1931, but has been rebuilt a great deal in recent years. However, amid this recent fabric stand two important components of the town's history--the railroad depot and freight building (E); and, a little south, the Edgecombe Agricultural Works Building (D), a brick structure erected by 1882 and probably about 1870--thus not only the oldest industrial building in Tarboro, but one of the earliest in the region. These two, the railroad complex and the Agricultural Works Building, are included as individual entries in the Multiple Resource nomination.

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B.      General description of area through time.

The description of various areas of town in Section A (above) deals with the various growth areas of Tarboro. More detailed analysis of the resources from its early history to the 20th century, as exhibited in the historic district, is contained in the description section of the district nomination. Attached are copies of maps dating 1882, 1901, 1923, and 1931. These show the general development of the town.

1890,

C.      Architectural component.

The predominant component of this multiple resource nomination is the district nomination; only five individual entries are included besides this. Thus it seems most appropriate to concentrate on descriptions of types, and periods of architecture in the district nomination description section. The surrounding individual entries have no spatial relation to each other as they are isolated amid altered or non-contributing fabric.

1,2. Generally, however, some broad observations about the entire area are possible. Tarboro throughout the pre-1931 area is laid out on a consistent grid pattern, and streets are (except in the commercial area) lined with trees. Buildings are generally modest in scale and simple in detail, following regional and local adaptations of popular national styles. Houses are--with very, very few exceptions until the 1920s when brick became more frequently used--simple frame structures, one or two stories, with varying degrees of decorative woodwork trim. Porches are omnipresent on houses of nearly all periods, as they are throughout North Carolina. While in the oldest residential area retains a few houses whose porches extend to the sidewalk in a traditional urban orientation, most houses sit back from the sidewalk several feet, creating a yard. They are all free-standing, with the space between them depending on age and wealth of the neighborhood; there are no row houses. The suburban antebellum estates (see district) had vast yards. Some other early houses were originally farmhouses around which the town grew up. Only a few retain broad lawns, as the land around most has been infilled with grid houses since the 1880s.

Commercial buildings are all masonry, usually brick, with one to three stories the most common size. Italianate details are usual in the predominantly ca. 1870-1920 fabric. The downtown commercial buildings all abut the sidewalk, creating a solid, even row. Industrial buildings from the 1870s to the 1930s are most one and two-story cotton, tobacco, and peanut storage or processing structures, located on the perimeter of the heart of town. The earlier and simpler ones are frame, later ones of

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brick, often with Italianate or classical detail. These range from simple box forms to rather expansive buildings covering much of a block or lot. As noted in the description of the historic district, the river and its natural, undeveloped bank area, the churchyards, and the Common are crucial (and quite different) open spaces, a foil to the density of the grid plan.

The chief change over time is that the town was once bounded by the Common on the north, the river and its Common on the south, and Hendricks Creek on the west, with farmland beyond on all sides. Expansion has occurred as the maps and previous descriptions indicate, so that development surrounds the core of the town. However, these boundaries still persist, with the river and the Common being most obvious and crucial. The commercial district has spilled over somewhat into flanking residential sections, but much of the integrity of both remains.

3. In the entire area surveyed (see above for what that included), a 1978 zoning map shows the following: the old southern portion of town is about 25% I-2 (industrial); along Hendrick's Creek, about 40% B-1 (business); and the remainder of the historic district is RA-6 (medium-density residential) and RT-6. The area around the depot, is B-3 and I-2; the housing areas developed around the mills RA-6 and RA-8. Thus the survey area is well over 50% residential. This reflects the usage as well as the zoning.

D. Archeological component: not included.

E. Survey Methodology.

The survey was conducted over a several-year period primarily by Catherine W. Bishir, head, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, and several other groups and persons. Most of the latter have worked directly with the Tarboro Planning Department. In 1975, a planning class from the University of North Carolina conducted a survey of the residential area as part of the development of the local historic district ordinance. In 1977, an intern from the National Trust for Historic Preservation surveyed and made recommendations for preservation activities within the central business district. In 1978, students from the North Carolina State University School of Design conducted a more intensive survey and developed design guidelines for the central business district. All these projects generated photographic, written, and mapped records. These were made available by the Tarboro Planning Department to Archives and History and were used in the study of the Multiple Resource area. An intensive study of East Tarboro was conducted by Ms. Bishir and Diane Lea of the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina, before determining to include only the churches. Ms. Bishir and Angela Barnett, Archives and History Intern, worked

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to establish other boundaries after inspecting the entire area and then did further survey as needed. Ms. Barnett assembled and correlated masses of material from the various projects and keyed them to a single map. Research on the district and the individual entries was done by Joe Mobley, Archives and History researcher, and by Ms. Bishir. The research was assisted tremendously by the files of local historian Sarah Brinson and other Tarboro citizens' records and memories (see Bibliography for district nomination for interviews, correspondence). All properties were assessed relative to National Register criteria and the statewide North Carolina's survey's findings concerning resources in the state. The survey data is kept on a series of cards, one for each property in the district, each with a picture and basic data. These are numbered to correspond with the NR Map and inventory list.

Susan Mooring, Duke University student intern, collated and mapped the final district material.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	Est.	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Various
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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Tarboro is a significant community historically and architecturally as a small early riverside trade center it retains important elements of many periods of development from its pre-Revolutionary beginnings at the head of navigation on the Tar River, through an antebellum growth period, through the successful efforts at industrialization after the Civil War and continued business growth in the early 20th century. Chief survivors of its early days are the grid plan extending back from the river and the vital open space of the Common, an important example of early community planning. Scattered, handsome late 18th and early 19th century dwellings survive, some with early outbuildings. A line of stylish villas stretching north from the Common is a unique survival of such antebellum suburban development. These and other dwellings of the period recall the cotton-based prosperity of the prewar era, as well as the beautiful Calvary Church. Important concentrations of commercial and industrial buildings alike date from the energetic efforts of Tarboro businessmen to regain economic strength in the postwar period, and the town retains an impressive collection of architecture from the period ca. 1867-1900, including the homes of white and black political and business leaders. The early 20th century witnessed continued growth in business and housing, expressed in the many fine commercial buildings and notable Colonial Revival, bungalow, and other dwellings.

Despite destruction of some of its landmarks in a mid-20th century growth spurt, Tarboro retains a unique charm all its own. It has a remarkable survival of the graciousness of the small Old South town it was in its early decades--the beautiful open spaces of the Common and Calvary Churchyard, the antebellum townhouses and villas with their broad yards and urban outbuildings, the multitudes of magnolias and other flowering Southern trees, the presence of old families and older buildings typical of Eastern North Carolina. Spicing the mixture, however, is the bolder energy characteristic of the New South generated in Tarboro by determined leaders, old and new, after the War. Railroad and industrial buildings crowd along the rail and river arteries around the town, vital collections of agriculture-dependent processing and selling operations. Blocks of substantial Victorian and early 20th century residential neighborhoods blend with their older neighbors and include the homes of railroad and industrial leaders as well as the workers attracted to town for jobs. This blend is rare: the state has several communities where either the prewar grace has survived with little subsequent growth, or where late 19th and early 20th century development created new towns where only villages had been before or obliterated the early fabric, but few retaining so much of both times.



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Criteria Assessment:

- A. The historic district and associated individual properties included within the Tarboro Multiple Resource nomination are associated several important broad patterns of history: the development of inland, riverside trading centers throughout North Carolina in the eighteenth century; the growth of the plantation economy in the antebellum period and burgeoning trading and service communities dependent upon this economy; the late nineteenth century establishment and success of agriculture-related industry and commerce and attendant population growth; and increasing urbanization in the early and mid twentieth century.
- B. Individual buildings and the development of the community in general are associated with a series of persons significant to the history of the town, state, and nation. Craftsmen, business leaders, industrial figures, clerics, political leaders, educators, and others have played prominent roles in Tarboro and beyond. A sampling would include Episcopal bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire II; industrialists W. S. Battle and F. S. Royster; politicians Thomas Blount, George H. White, and W. E. Fountain; newspaper editors George Howard, Frank Powell, and John C. Dancy; businessmen David Pender, John L. Bridgers, and Arthur Morris; architects William Percival and E. G. Lind; craftsmen Edward Zoeller, Henry C. Cherry, and Charlie Pulley; governor Henry T. Clark; military figure Louis Wilson, and dozens more.
- C. Tarboro's architecture includes representative examples of domestic architecture from the late eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century, and commercial, industrial, and religious buildings from the early nineteenth century onward. The scale of the community is harmonious, the grid of the streets remains intact extending back from the river, and the open spaces of the Town Common and churchyards survive. A few individually outstanding buildings punctuate the architectural fabric of the town, such as the Barracks, a romantic villa, and the elegant Gothic Revival Calvary Church designed by William Percival, and the charming Gothic cottages of the mid-nineteenth century; earlier dwellings like the Blount House and other similar traditional houses survive in a regionally significant concentration, and notable Victorian houses include the Farrar House, Redmond-Shackelford House, and others. However, the principal significance of Tarboro's architecture lies in the totality of its character--the solid and unbroken rows of commercial buildings lining Main Street, the gracious lawns and well-preserved dwellings north of the Common, the functional and sturdy industrial buildings near the river and Hendricks Creek, the notable collection of antebellum villas west of North Main Street, the scattered churches and their churchyards, the charming repetition and variety of the sprightly sawn lattice trims of many porches, and other clusters and relationships that knit the fabric of the town.

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- A.      The overall significance of Tarboro as it now appears is concentrated primarily within the historic district, as is the surviving significant fabric. Therefore, the principal chronological historical narrative is included in the district nomination. This, because of the predominance of the district in the multiple resource nomination, seems to be most appropriate. There follows here a summary of significance.

Briefly, Tarboro is significant as a regional trade center that played an important role in the development of eastern North Carolina and that maintains a substantial portion of its historic architectural and visual character. The town was a small river-oriented trade community established in the pre-Revolutionary period. It thus is recognized in the state as one of the several towns with early historical significance, where Revolutionary activity took place, the early legislature met, and where George Washington visited. It retains only scant architectural remnants of this period, but its plan, street names, and Common survive. The antebellum period saw considerable growth, and during this era Tarboro was the trade center for a county (Edgecombe) whose progressive and prospering planters were recognized far and wide. The labor-intensive use of marl as fertilizer, especially, provided exceptional productivity of cotton; planters studied various scientific techniques; and the county thrived, as did Tarboro.

In 1860, when agrarian North Carolina--"civitas sine urbibus"--had only 25 towns, there were only four towns with more than 4,000 people, and only eleven of more than 1,000. Tarboro was among the latter group and thus a significant population and trade center in the rural state. The town had a busy business district, substantial buildings, and a row of suburban estates north of town across the common. Many of the antebellum buildings, especially among the latter group, survive.

After the Civil War, economic and political change were dramatic in Tarboro as throughout the state, especially those sections (like Edgecombe County) that had relied heavily upon slave labor. Some formerly thriving small towns stagnated or dwindled while new or once-unimportant communities sprang into new industrial growth. Tarboro, however, was an antebellum town that retained much of its prewar character yet entered energetically into the new era. In the late 19th century conscious efforts were made to develop industry.

A later newspaper article (News & Observer, May 3, 1931) assessed the postwar development and its influence on the growth of the area:

"Edgecombe capital began to realize that the product of the soil could be handled at home freeing the county from the class of counties which through lack of enterprise are contented to be

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crop producers and nothing else. Thus in a very short time, companies were organized and capital gotten together and factories erected so that today Edgecombe County has three cotton mills, four cotton seed oil mills, three knitting mills, two guano factories and a number of lumber mills."

By 1882 and evidently by about 1870 the Edgecombe Agricultural Works (which manufactured farm implements) stood north of town near the railroad that had come to Tarboro in 1860. From the 1880s through the early 20th century, industrial development occurred along the river near the boat landing and north and west of town--in the form of fertilizer, cotton, lumber, and later peanut and tobacco storage and processing operations. These used regionally produced materials for the most part and benefited the area's economy. Industry and growing prosperity attracted people--businessmen, industrialists, bankers, merchants, and workers--to Tarboro, resulting in new residential construction north, east, and west of the original area of town. This ranged from modest workers' housing to substantial Victorian and later Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival mansions.

In the early 20th century the town emphasized modernity, sanitation, and improvements, an attitude sweeping the nation, and established municipal electric, water, and milk plants. Businesses like Carolina Telephone and Telegraph and a remarkable number of banks, as well as regional wholesale groceries, were established by the early 20th century. During the postwar era, reconstruction and its aftermath, Tarboro's citizens included a number of important black political figures, some natives of the community, others not, who were to make statewide or national contributions. In the latter years of the 19th century and the opening decades of the 20th as well, Tarboro produced businessmen who began operations in Tarboro that later were expanded into regional or national concerns of broad significance. (See district for more details, as they were located within the district.)

Thus Tarboro is significant not only as a town that has preserved much from her 18th and early 19th century eras of prominence but also that retains important elements from the energetic industrial development and thus the population growth in the late 19th and early 20th century. The town possesses a lively amalgam of buildings from the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, unified by generally consistent scale and materials and the retention of a grid plan.

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B.,C.      Since most of the historical development occurred in the historic district area, and most of the important people lived or had their industries or businesses there, and since the historic district encompasses all of Tarboro's area for nearly all her history, the history will be given in the district nomination, as will data on important people. Individual entries mention major figures as salient.

D.      Explanation on areas of significance checked on form.

Agriculture. The town's prosperity from 18th century onward depended largely upon the agricultural economy of the county and region around it. Money made in farming was spent in town. Many people who had thriving farms or plantations lived in town. The boat landing, an important focus of activity and source of money in Tarboro, was the point of departure for much of the agricultural production of the county and region. Later, industries were established that had agricultural bases--storing, selling, or processing cotton, tobacco, peanuts, etc., and producing guano fertilizer to assist agriculture. The Edgecombe Agricultural Works (an individual entry) was established in the mid-19th century; it is an unusual surviving example of a mid-19th century operation that manufactured and repaired farming implements, and the Edgecombe cotton planter, said invented here, was widely used.

Architecture. Tarboro retains a wide range of examples of architectural resources, from the 18th to the 20th century (see description, significance). Vernacular domestic types from early small traditional houses to bungalows, and examples of popular styles from Italianate villas to Colonial Revival houses are present, as are a wide range of well-preserved and characteristic 19th and 20th century churches, industrial, and commercial buildings. The interaction of popular styles and conservative vernacular usages is obvious. The variety and consistency rather than the magnificence of the total architecture composition of the town is significant, accented by a scattering of ambitious and outstanding structures.

Commerce. Tarboro has always been a center of commerce and is thus significant as a representative example, adapting over time to changing technology and events, of a regional trade and commercial center benefiting from the presence of a river boat landing and a railroad. Among the notable commercial operations are early 20th century development of the businesses and banks established here, the homes of several business leaders and bankers, a notable grouping of tobacco and cotton storage and sales buildings, and a consistent Main Street row of 19th and 20th century commercial buildings.

Communications. The early 20th century building of Carolina Telephone and Telegraph, established by Tarboro businessman George Holderness and William ("Buck") Powell, stands here in the district; the company is regionally important.

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OVERALL

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Community Planning. The Town Common, still a beautiful open space north of downtown, is one of the very few such areas surviving in the South and was part of the original plan of the town in 1760.

Industry. The Royster fertilizer factory and a tobacco warehouse near the river (built in the 1890s) and located in the district, the Edgecombe Agricultural Works at the north end of town (probably ca. 1870), the various tobacco and cotton storage and sales buildings in the district along Hendricks Creek, and others within the district are important resources in the history of the development of industry in post-Civil War South. These relied upon the river and the railroad. Homes of industrialists and businessmen who contributed to the development of industry also stand in the historic district. The successful efforts to industrialize Tarboro after the Civil War, and the retention of much early industrial fabric, are important to the town's character. There were major mills at the edges of town by the late 19th century, but they and their villages have been changed over time.

Politics/Government. The town was the county seat since the 1760s and has thus been the scene of local political events throughout its history; in 1787 it hosted a meeting of the state legislature. Unfortunately, the 1830s/1910s courthouse and the late 19th century town hall were destroyed in the mid-20th century. The role of the town as political center is nevertheless significant. In addition, homes of several important political leaders--local and state--stand in Tarboro's historic district, leaders from the 18th century on, black and white. See district nomination for specifics.

Social/Humanitarian. The increasing complexity of municipal social services in the early 20th century is represented in Tarboro's surviving buildings by the municipal electric plant, the water plant, the municipal milk plant, the latter one of the first such in the nation, which was celebrated as having reduced infant mortality dramatically. An important early hospital has been destroyed.

Transportation. Water and rail transportation were crucial to Tarboro's history. An early bridge across the Tar River, plus the fact of the town's location at the upper-most (and chancy) reaches of the river's navigation, and the presence of a river boat landing that welcomed boats until the 1920s were important. The river boat landing site is within the district nomination and could produce archeological information. The railroad came to Tarboro in 1860 and was vital to its growth thereafter. The ca. 1910 railroad depot replacing an earlier frame structure and the 1884 freight depot (individual entries) are significant railroad buildings of major importance to the town and region.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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E. Archeology - not included.

F. Preservation/restoration activity.

Tarboro lost a great deal in intensive modernizing and growth in the mid-20th century, but in the 1970s the town has gained an excellent reputation for its progressive planning that emphasizes historic preservation. Since the mid-20th century a local historical society has promoted preservation, recognition, and restoration for many years: this active group has accomplished the restoration of the Cotton Press, and the Pender Museum, as well as various educational and publicity activities. This group also supported the introduction and progress of the municipal preservation endeavors described below. The town has had since 1976 an exemplary and carefully planned local historic district ordinance. Community Development funds have been used since 1975 to provide low-interest loans to qualifying homeowners including many of houses of historic value. Various planning tools have been used to stimulate preservation activity, and facade renovations, landscaping, and economic incentives for preservation in the central business district are beginning.

G. Explanation of choice of components.

The combination of district, plus the individual sites is noted in the description above.

H. Explanation of exemptions from exclusions.

A few properties are included that are generally exempted; they are in fact very significant to Tarboro. Two of the individual properties--the two churches in east Tarboro--have been moved and are used for religious purposes (as intended). However, they are among the late 19th century churches in town and have very different but obvious architectural significance (see individual entry sheets). Also, they were moved more than fifty years ago, and each has attained its own identity and significance within the black community since being moved.

I. Integration of Survey into various plans.

The results of the Survey will be integrated into both state and local planning processes. In Tarboro, a copy of the National Register nomination will be kept in the Planning Department. Any activity affecting these resources will take the significance of the nominated properties into account.

In the state office, the materials will be placed in the permanent statewide survey files. Automatic Data Processing forms will be filled out for the district and individual properties. Review of all state and federally funded projects will take into consideration these resources.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See the bibliography for the district nomination, which is the standard bibliography for Tarboro, and would be duplicated (at great length) for the Multiple Resource Bibliography.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY See district & individual entries

UTM REFERENCES

A see attached for lat & long - cont. sheet  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C

B  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION of Multiple Resource Area. The study area included all of the area seen as urbanized on the Sanborn Map of 1931 (attached). This is bounded generally thus: beginning at the mouth of Hendricks Creek, go east along the E. Carolina Railroad to its junction with St. James Street, then generally northeast to the east end of Wilson Street, along Wilson Street to the Town Limit, then north along this limit or Hendricks Creek to Howard Street and the Atlantic Coastline Railroad, then across Howard eastward to its end, then diagonally along various as seen on and going slightly beyond the edges of the town as seen on SM of 1931, to the eastern town boundary, then along the town's eastern boundary and

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

Descriptions and general preparation by Catherine Bishir;  
NAME/TITLE Research by Joe Mobley, researcher, and Bishir; Assistance by Angela Barnett,  
intern and Susan Mooring, student assistant.

ORGANIZATION Survey & Planning Branch

DATE

N. C. Division of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 E. Jones Street

919-733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

NC 27611

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE xx

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5-10-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Ray Luce  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST: Carol A. Dubois  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 4/2/80  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
DATE 4/2/80

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southern boundary back to the beginning. This included all the town as of 1931, including large areas of which have been altered, as noted earlier.

Acreage of individual properties and districts appears on forms herein for them. About UTM References: The last USGS Map done for Tarboro was in 1902. Inquiries have produced discouragement about future mapping being available any time soon. Therefore there are no UTM references herein. We provide, however, latitude and longitude references for the outer limits of the study area.



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

*Tarboro Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)*  
(Partial:  
Historic Resources of Tarboro (historic and architectural--not archeological)

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

The area of Tarboro developed by 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Edgecombe

CODE

065

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☒ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☒ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☒ COMMERCIAL☒ EDUCATIONAL☒ ENTERTAINMENT☒ GOVERNMENT☒ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☒ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☒ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☒ TRANSPORTATION☒ OTHER:

Multiple Resource

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Town of Tarboro: Mayor, Victor Herring

Multiple Ownership. Notify: Town Manager, Donald Taylor/Planner, Watson Brown

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

VICINITY OF

STATE

NC

27886

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Edgecombe County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

STATE

NC

27886

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey (Cotton Press, Lanier House,)

DATE

1940

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

HABS, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
DC

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

#### Tarboro Multiple Resource Description

NOTE: Sections and letters like the content and order herein, follow draft instructions for completing multiple resource nominations.

#### A. General Physical Description

Tarboro is a middle-sized coastal plains town of about 10,000 people, which has served as a county political center and regional trade center since its establishment at the upper limit of navigation of the Tar River in 1760. It is located on rather flat land typical of the coastal plain, on the north side of the Tar River. The railroad--the Seaboard Coast Line, formerly the Atlantic Coast Line--enters the town toward its north end, running diagonally southeast into town, with branches extending into town and southward along the main through side street, Albemarle Avenue. Like many communities, Tarboro has in the period since World War II, and especially since about 1960, grown rapidly at its edges, so that it has a border of suburban residential fabric, as well as a good deal of industrial and strip commercial development. At the heart of the town, however, extending north from the Tar River that gave the town its life, and along the railroad that continued the town's development from the mid-19th century, survives a substantial core of historic fabric from the 18th century through the early 20th century. Scattered isolated historic structures also stand in the edge areas.

The survey of the multiple resource area included the entire area of Tarboro as it had developed by roughly fifty years ago--as recorded on the April, 1931, map of the town produced by the Sanborn Map Company of New York. (See Sanborn Map enclosed .) This area is believed to include all significant or possibly significant standing resources of Tarboro. This entire area was studied because much of the town's important historical and architectural development occurred in the early 20th century. The initial survey sought to identify all significant individual properties and complexes or neighborhoods that maintained their visual and/or historic integrity. The initial survey revealed, however, that not all of the area included retained architectural or historical integrity; and that, in fact, the areas most disturbed by (a) demolition; (b) new construction and/or (c) alteration of individual buildings, were those developed between ca. 1900 and ca. 1931. The area whose integrity was least disturbed was the historic heart, the oldest portion of the community, and the late 19th century-early 20th century residential area north of it.

The following general areas of pre-1931 development were identified and assessed:

1. Central business district, composed of commercial, industrial, and scattered residential fabric. Some intrusions, some demolition, but generally intact. (This is shown on the 1931 Sanborn Map as Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and lower parts of 7, 8, and 9). This area consists of a dense, traditional grid of streets, with the central spine, Main Street, lined with commercial buildings, many of the late 19th-early 20th century, and low frame or brick industrial buildings of the same era. This area is included in the National Register district nomination (which see for more detail).