

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 9/18/08
NRHP 12/31/08

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Somerton Historic District
other names/site number VDHR #133-5256

2. Location

street & number Arthur Drive, Pittmantown Road, Boonetown Road not for publication N/A
city or town Suffolk vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Suffolk (Independent City) code 800 zip code 23438

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination
 request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally
 statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. Catherine [Signature] November 18, 2008
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- X private
X public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
X district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings (15, 10), sites (2, 0), structures (0, 4), objects (0, 0), Total (17, 14).

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- Cat: AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE, DOMESTIC, COMMERCE/TRADE, SOCIAL, RELIGION, FUNERARY
Sub: agricultural field; agricultural outbuilding, single dwelling; hotel, department store; restaurant; meeting hall, religious facility, cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- Cat: AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE, DOMESTIC, RELIGION, FUNERARY
Sub: agricultural field; agricultural outbuilding, single dwelling, religious facility, cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- COLONIAL :Georgian
EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal
MID-19TH CENTURY: Gothic Revival
OTHER: Folk Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation BRICK; CONCRETE
roof METAL: Aluminum; ASPHALT
walls BRICK; WOOD: weatherboard; METAL: Aluminum; SYNTHETICS: Vinyl
other BRICK; WOOD

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance late-18th century -1955

Significant Dates 1800s, 1888

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 236.39 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>X</u> See continuation sheet.											

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Sarah C. McPhail, Preservation Specialist
 organization Commonwealth Preservation Group, LLC date April, August 2008
 street & number 139 N. Main Street telephone (757) 923-9991
 city or town Suffolk state VA zip code 23434

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name multiple owners - see attached labels
 street & number _____ telephone _____
 city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 1

SUMMARY ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The village of Somerton began in the 17th century when Sir Thomas Jernigan (also spelled Jarnigan) of Somerleyton, Suffolk County, England came to Virginia and was granted 250 acres in Suffolk. Bound by large agricultural fields on its north, south, and western edges and by US-13 on its east side, the Somerton Historic District rests in a rural context on the southern edge of the City of Suffolk. Situated between Suffolk, VA and Gates County, NC the small district comprises a concentrated residential center which functioned as an independent community in over 230 acres of agricultural fields. Buildings include an 18th century ordinary, a 19th century church, and modest dwellings dating from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. The buildings are one and two stories in height and the architectural styles range from Federal to Folk Victorian. The large agricultural fields surrounding the village have been an integral part of the vitality of Somerton since its establishment in the 17th century. The district is the oldest surviving rural community in the rapidly expanding City of Suffolk and retains its historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The district is set in a rural context between the City of Suffolk, VA and Gates County, NC. It is residential and agricultural in character. Of the three major roads in and around the district, Arthur Drive is the major thoroughfare. Boonetown Road intersects Arthur Drive in the northern portion of the district, Pittmantown Road intersects Arthur Drive at the nucleus of the district, and US13/Whaleyville Boulevard intersects Arthur Drive near the southernmost boundary of the district. Prior to the 1950s completion of the US13 bypass around Somerton, the Boonetown Road to Arthur Drive route was the main thoroughfare between Suffolk, Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

Somerton's streetscapes and physical appearance convey its rural character. The streets within the district are paved with asphalt. Many of the driveways and agricultural roads remain unpaved. There are no street curbs or gutters, nor are there any stoplights or sidewalks. The area surrounding the tight concentration of buildings consists of open fields and mature vegetation. The appearance of the village is historic in nature and is little changed from the way it looked when it was settled over 200 years ago.

Consisting of ten principal properties and numerous attached and free standing barns and outbuildings, the 236-acre Somerton Historic District is a collection of wood-frame buildings of late 18th- to early 20th- century construction and architecture. The one and two-story frame buildings are vernacular in character and reminiscent of a variety of architectural styles ranging from Federal to Folk Victorian. Most of the buildings have wood siding which, in some, has been covered with modern materials. The architectural detailing used is a typically vernacular version of more high style designs.

The dwellings have wood sash windows varying in type from six-over-six to nine-over-six to four-over-four. Typical 18th and 19th century floor plans such as center hall, hall parlor, and side hall can be found throughout the village. Other architectural features in the district include porches, side gabled and hipped roofs, and standing seam metal and asphalt roof coverings. Three of the community buildings located in the village are the Somerton United Methodist Church, the historic Washington Smith Ordinary, and the Ellis General Store. All three resources reflect the mixed architectural styles displayed within the district.

INVENTORY JUSTIFICATION

The non-contributing buildings within the district boundary include two newer modest dwellings, as well as secondary resources, none of which detract from the integrity of the district.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 2

**Somerton United Methodist Church (8610 Whaleyville Blvd)
Tax Parcel ID # 74*18A**

**Contributing
VDHR#133-5256-0001**

The c. 1880 Somerton United Methodist Church is the southernmost contributing building included in the district. The small sanctuary rests on a brick foundation located in the southern portion of the district. Its sides are clad in clapboard siding, covered with aluminum. The church has a front gabled roof clad in corrugated metal. Features such as lancet-shaped stained glass windows and a broken cornice return illustrate the vernacular Greek Revival style used in the design of the sanctuary. The front stoop is also covered by a gabled roof with a broken return on the cornice.

The rear of the church was altered during the 1920s and then again in the 1950s. It features an addition with three-over-one wood-frame windows typical of 1920s style and a c.1950 addition with Sunday school classrooms, a church office, and a fellowship hall used as a gathering place. The addition rests on a concrete block foundation. Clapboard siding was also used to cover the addition. The addition is topped by a gabled roof clad in corrugated metal. The three-over-one wood-frame windows are typical of 1920s style. They are enclosed by storm windows. The covered rear stoop has a brick foundation, gabled roof with corrugated metal and a cornice return, identical to the ones featured on the sanctuary. There is a small brick chimney on the west wall and a cinderblock bump-out covered with a flat roof clad in corrugated metal. The church has served as a place of worship and a meeting place for the community since its construction.

Cemetery

Contributing

A cemetery located directly south of the Church was deeded to the trustees of the church in the mid-1800s by Dempsey Odom, a resident of Somerton in the 19th century. The oldest stone dates to 1881 and original land owner Dempsey Odom and his immediate family members are buried there.

Open Picnic Shelter

Non-Contributing

An open picnic shelter is located on the north end of the parcel. It rests on a poured concrete foundation and is covered by a gabled roof clad in corrugated metal. The roof is supported by square posts and there are no walls. This building does not contribute to the district as it is a modern structure.

Utility Shed

Non-Contributing

A utility shed is also sited on the north end of the parcel. It rests on a poured concrete foundation and is covered by a gable roof clad in asphalt shingles. The exterior walls are clad with vertical siding. The building is modern and does not contribute to the district.

**8489 Whaleyville Blvd
Tax Parcel ID # 75*24**

**Non-Contributing
VDHR #133-5256-0002**

A four bay, one-story, c.1962 brick ranch is located in the southeast portion of the district. The dwelling sits on a brick foundation and is covered entirely by running bond brickwork. The gabled roof is clad in asphalt shingles and all of the windows are 2/2 wood sash single hung. There is one brick chimney on the exterior wall. This resource is considered non-contributing as it was constructed outside of the period of significance and has no historic features.

Garage

Non-Contributing

A two-car garage is located directly west of the dwelling. The garage rests on a poured concrete foundation and is topped by a gabled roof clad in asphalt shingles. Its exterior walls are clad in vinyl siding and the west elevation features two modern overhead doors. The garage does not contribute to the district as it was built outside of the period of significance of the district.

Shed

Non-Contributing

A small shed is also located west of the modern brick dwelling. Its sides are clad in vertical aluminum siding and it is topped with metal roof. The shed is currently being used for storage. The building is modern and does not contribute to the district.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 3

**Langston House (8440 Arthur Drive)
Tax Parcel ID # 75*21A**

**Contributing
VDHR #133-5256-0003**

The two-story, three-bay I-house was built in the late-18th century. The two story, three-bay single dwelling was originally an I-house with vernacular Federal influences. The house is located close to the nucleus of the district just on the north side of Arthur Drive at its intersection with Pittmantown Road. The dwelling rests on a brick foundation, its exterior walls are clad in vinyl and aluminum siding, and the side gabled roof is clad in standing seam metal. Two original end chimneys flank the main block of the house. The dwelling contains a variety of window types including double-hung, six-over-six and four-over-four wood sash. The original roof, clad in plain fish scale wood shingles, is still intact and visible from the attic. The existing roof features support beams that are smooth and very obviously milled by machine rather than hand hewn. Based on the building survey and oral history reports, the addition to the rear of the original house was likely appended in the early 1900s. The west facing front porch was enclosed sometime in the mid-20th century. The screened-in porch on the south side of the house was likely added at this time.

Interior features such as the mantles, wide panel wainscoting, and other woodwork are reminiscent of the Federal style used throughout the dwelling. Oral history indicates that this resource may have been the location of a possible tavern prior to the construction of the Washington Smith Ordinary. Regardless of its status as a historic tavern, the historic house acted as a single dwelling throughout the years following its construction.

Kitchen **Contributing**
A late-18th-century one-story wood frame detached kitchen is located directly east of the main dwelling. The building rests on a brick pier foundation and is topped by a gabled roof clad in corrugated metal. The exterior walls are clad in clapboard siding. The roof extends beyond the building providing covered outdoor space. The building was historically used as a kitchen and is used for storage today.

Smokehouse **Contributing**
A late-18th-century smokehouse is located directly south of the detached kitchen. The building rests on a brick pier foundation and is topped by a gabled roof clad in corrugated metal. The exterior walls are clad in clapboard siding. The shed has two separate sections. The north section of the shed was historically used as a smokehouse. A salted beam and nails for hanging cured meat are still extant on the interior. The south section was historically and still is used for storage.

Barn **Contributing**
An early-20th century barn rests on the far south portion of the parcel. The barn features a front gabled roof over its main block and a shed roof over an exterior storage area on the west elevation of the building. Both roofs are clad in corrugated metal and the exterior walls feature board and batten siding. Other features include a hayloft and former stables. Today, the barn is used for storage.

Garage **Non-Contributing**
A c.1980 garage rests to the south of the smokehouse. The garage is clad in T-111 siding and topped by a gabled roof clad in asphalt shingles. The garage features an overhead garage door and a pedestrian entrance. The modern garage was constructed outside of the period of significance and does not contribute to the district.

**Robert R. Smith House (8441 Arthur Drive)
Tax Parcel ID # 74*19D**

**Contributing
VDHR #133-5256-0004**

The Robert R. Smith House is located at the southwest corner at the intersection of Pittmantown Road and Arthur Drive. The three bay, two-story Federal style dwelling rests on a continuous brick foundation and is covered with a gable roof clad in standing seam metal with a bracketed cornice. It was built in the early 1800s by Washington Smith for his son Robert R. Smith. Like many of the other houses within the district, the exterior walls of the house have been covered with clapboard siding. The dwelling features a variety of windows including double hung nine-over-six wood sash, double hung four-over-four wood sash, and four light casement windows. The center window of the second level façade with its transom and sidelight surrounds is evidence of a second story porch which was removed in the early 20th century. Two end chimneys flank the house at its east and

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 4

Robert R. Smith House (continued)

elevations. The chimney on the west end may have been added or altered during renovations which took place c.1870 as a result of heavy vandalism during the Civil War.

A one-story frame dwelling from outside of the district was appended to the rear of the original dwelling during the late 20th century. The brick pier foundation and clapboard siding are consistent with the style of the original part of the house. The addition is covered by a hip-on-gabled roof. The addition features double hung four-over-four wood sash windows on the main level and several four light wood frame casement windows. The house has served as a single dwelling throughout its history and continues to serve the same purpose today. There are also two outbuildings located on the parcel, both contribute to the district.

Dairy

Contributing

A 19th-century dairy is located to the west of the dwelling. The building rests on a concrete block foundation that is not original. The wood-frame shed is clad in clapboard siding and topped by a tarp roof. The building serves as a storage shed today but still retains its historic integrity.

Well

Non-Contributing

A c. 1990 small, square well is located just north of the shed and west of the dwelling. The well rests on a brick foundation and is covered by clapboard siding and a flat roof.

Family Burial Lot

Contributing

The Robert R. Smith burial lot is located in the land between the Somerton Methodist Church and the Robert R. Smith house, as noted on the attached map (74*19D, Cemetery). Robert R. Smith, an innkeeper and business man was buried in the said cemetery after his c.1850 murder in Suffolk. His wife Sarah Jane Powell Smith was buried there as well as his eldest son, Washington C. Smith.

Washington Smith Ordinary (8442 Arthur Drive)

Contributing

Tax Parcel ID # 74*23A

VDHR # 133-5256-0005

The late-18th – early-19th century Washington Smith Ordinary is among the oldest and most impressive houses in the district. The dwelling is located at the northwest intersection of Pittmantown Road and Arthur Drive. The two-story wood frame dwelling with Greek Revival, Federal, and Georgian influences rests on a brick foundation and features a cellar that was once an English basement. The exterior walls are dressed in clapboard siding and its gabled roof is clad in standing seam metal. The wood frame windows contained on the first level are nine-over-nine, while the windows at the second level are six-over-nine. The east window in the center of the second level has sidelights and a transom. It appears to have been a door to a no longer extant second story porch. Architectural details such as the decorative cornice and the lunette window in the attic reflect the Greek Revival influences used in the construction and design of the house. Other detailing, reminiscent of Federal style, includes the windows, the stairway, and the wide paneled wainscoting found throughout the house. A permanent narrow stairway leads from the second floor landing to the attic space on the third floor. It appears to be original and is in sound condition. The stairway leading from the main side-hall down to the basement also features steps which appear to be historic. The basement is no longer accessible from the main house, only through an exterior door to the south of the chimney on the west elevation of the dwelling.

The ordinary exhibits many unique architectural details, including a double chimney with double shoulders and a pent roof with a window, reminiscent of Georgian style, a lunette window in the attic, and a three-part window on the second story facing Arthur Drive. The interior of the house is a side-hall plan and features detailing reminiscent of the Federal era. The mantles throughout the first floor feature elaborate detailing for such a rural dwelling. Throughout history, the dwelling served as both an ordinary and as a residence. It began as the "Thomas Smith Ordinary" and was later named the "Washington Smith Ordinary".

An addition was appended to the northeast side of the house during the early-mid 19th century. The addition rests on a brick foundation and is covered by clapboard siding and a gabled roof clad with corrugated metal. There is one brick chimney on the north end. The visible windows are nine-over-nine wood frame though some of them have been boarded up. The west side of the

addition features a shed roof covering the remnants of another porch. The interior of the addition features a narrow passageway and a kitchen on the first floor and a bed chamber on the second floor. The detailing on the interior of the addition

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 5

Washington Smith Ordinary (continued)

such as the mantles and woodwork are consistent with the style details featured in the original block of the dwelling indicating a relatively early construction date. One detail in the addition that is not a consistent with the original block of the house is the rope detailing featured at the interior corners of the wainscoting. The addition to the ordinary is in poor condition and is severely deteriorated. Moisture damage is causing the wing to sag and move away from the original unit of the dwelling.

Pump House

Non-Contributing

A small pump house shed located directly north of the dwelling features exterior walls clad in plywood siding and a shed roof. It still serves as a pump house today.

Smokehouse

Contributing

The larger outbuilding located on the parcel is 1 ½-stories in height. The exterior walls are clad in a mixture of plywood and clapboard siding. Historically, the building functioned as a smokehouse. At the time of construction, the interior studs were installed very close together to prevent someone from stealing the food items being smoked and stored in the shed. Today, the building is used for exterior storage.

8436 Arthur Drive

Contributing

Tax Parcel ID # 74*23E

VDHR # 133-5256-0006

This one-story, three-bay 19th century dwelling with Greek Revival influences rests on the parcel to the east of the Washington Smith Ordinary and directly north of the Langston home. The house was constructed in three different phases, the most recent dating to the 1990s. Prior to any additions, the house featured an L-shaped plan. The dwelling rests on a brick pier foundation and is covered by a cross gabled roof clad in standing seam metal. A shed roof also clad in standing seam metal and supported by chamfered columns covers the west facing front porch. The exterior walls are clad in clapboard siding. One of the boards is missing from the front of the house, allowing the hewn and pegged structural system of the main house to show. A variety of window types are contained in the dwelling including double hung nine-over-nine, six-over-six, eight-over-eight wood sash. The original block of the house features an end chimney on the south elevation and a central, interior chimney on the ell. The second addition of the house features a picture window and a c.1950s horizontal one-over-one wood sash window. The third phase of construction was completed c.1995 and includes a master suite with bedroom, bathroom, and walk-in closet. The exterior of the third phase of construction is consistent with the style of the original portion of the house. The house has served as a single dwelling since its construction. The home has been in the Arthur family for over fifty years and is still occupied by an immediate member of the family. There is a non-historic/non-contributing garage located on the parcel.

Garage

Non-Contributing

A modern garage is located on the north end of the parcel. It rests on a concrete block foundation and is covered by a gabled roof clad in asphalt shingles. The walls are clad in vinyl siding. The garage features two windows, a pedestrian door, and a modern overhead door. It serves as a garage and storage area.

8437 Arthur Drive

Non-Contributing

Tax Parcel ID # 74*23G

VDHR # 133-5256-0007

This 1 1/2 -story dwelling consists of two historic buildings connected by a modern building. The two historic buildings used to create the dwelling were moved to the current location on Arthur Drive from a location outside of the district boundaries within the last 15 years. The house was put together in the mid-1990s and features a mixture of architectural styles and detailing reminiscent of Folk Victorian, Federal, and Greek Revival. The dwelling rests on a brick foundation. The three porches on the north, east, and south elevations of the dwelling are supported by brick piers. The exterior walls are clad in aluminum siding and the roof is clad in asphalt shingles. The house features a variety of window types including nine-over-nine, four-over-four, and six-over-six. Even though it is constructed of two historic buildings, the dwelling is considered non-contributing to the district because the elements were moved to their current location from outside the district boundaries and do not have a historic relationship to one another.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 6

Car Port

Non-Contributing

A modern car port is located south of the main dwelling. The structure is supported by large wood posts and covered by a roof clad in corrugated metal. All four exterior walls are open and there is no foundation.

James E. Smith House (8400 Arthur Drive)

Contributing

Tax Parcel ID # 75*20

VDHR # 133-5256-0008

This c.1800 2 ½ -story Federal style dwelling rests on a brick pier foundation and is covered by a gabled roof clad in standing seam metal. The exterior is clad in clapboard siding and features a variety of window types including double hung nine-over-nine, six-over-nine, six-over-six, and four-over-four wood sash. The west facing front porch is supported by brick piers and covered by a shed roof clad in standing seam metal. The shed roof of the porch is supported by Tuscan columns. The dwelling features three brick chimneys on its north, east, and south elevations. The house has served and continues to serve as a single dwelling since its construction.

Exterior Kitchen

Contributing

An early-19th-century exterior kitchen is located southeast of the main dwelling. It rests on a brick pier foundation. The exterior walls are clad in clapboard siding and the gabled roof is clad in corrugated metal. A shed roof protrudes from the south elevation providing a covered exterior storage area. It is clad in corrugated metal. Historically, the building served as a kitchen. It is used for storage today.

Garage

Non-Contributing

A modern garage is located on the south end of the parcel. The exterior walls are clad in T-111 siding and topped with a gabled roof. There is double width doorway on the west elevation. The building was constructed during the mid-late-20th century and is used as a garage and storage area.

Shed

Non-Contributing

A modern one-story shed featuring exterior walls clad in clapboard siding and a shed roof sits on the southeast portion of the parcel. There is no foundation. The shed was added to the parcel outside of the period of significance and has been used as an exterior storage shed since its construction.

Well

Non-Contributing

A square structure clad in brick veneer and topped by a hipped roof clad in asphalt shingles is located north of the historic kitchen building. The structure provides access to the well located on the parcel. The structure was constructed outside of the period of significance and does not contribute to the district.

Ellis General Store (corner of Boonetown Road and Arthur Drive)

Contributing

Tax Parcel ID # 75*8A

VDHR # 133-5256-0009

The Ellis General Store, currently vacant, is located at the northeast intersection of Boonetown Road and Arthur Drive. The building exhibits detailing typical of early-20th-century rural commercial buildings. The store rests on a brick and concrete block foundation. It features clapboard siding and a gabled roof clad with standing seam metal. The hipped roof covering the canopy is also clad with standing seam metal. The general store and filling station was closed in the 1950s. Today, all of the windows are boarded up and metal bars cover the windows and doors on the building's façade. The existing building once served as a general store and filling station for the citizens of Somerton and the travelers passing through town. After it closed in the 1950s, the building served as a community meeting house for the men of Somerton.

The rear shed addition is covered by a standing seam metal roof and its sides are covered by the same clapboard siding used on the original building. A single brick chimney can be found in the center of the store. There are no additional resources on this parcel.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 7 Page 7

**1464 Boonetown Road
Tax Parcel ID # 75*22**

**Contributing
VDHR # 133-5256-0010**

This c.1910 one-story, three-bay dwelling rests on a brick foundation, has a hipped roof clad in standing seam metal, and its exterior walls are clad in clapboard siding. The house has no specific style but features a door and surround in Greek Revival style with its four-pane sidelights and slightly arched frame. The one-over-one vinyl windows are not original. The front porch is covered by a hipped roof clad in standing seam metal and supported by turned columns in Folk Victorian style. Two centrally located parged brick chimneys are extant in the main block of the dwelling. The building has served as a single dwelling since its construction in the early 1900s.

Horse Barn

Contributing

A 19th-century horse barn is located on the eastern edge of the parcel. The barn is built in two sections. The main section is two-stories in height and features a hay loft. It is topped by a gabled roof clad in corrugated metal. All four sides of the main section are clad in clapboard siding. The second section of the barn features the stalls and stables with a covered exterior storage space with three walls and one large opening and a small walk-in storage area. The roof is clad in corrugated metal and the walls are clad in clapboard siding. The open area between the large section and the small storage area may have been an addition to connect the two or to provide a covered parking area in modern times. Historically, the barn featured stables and storage for farm equipment. Today, the barn is used for storage.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 8 Page 8

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Somerton Historic District is a quaint village located in the southern portion of the City of Suffolk. The village contains a tight concentration of historic buildings surrounded by large agricultural fields, which support these resources. Somerton, historically known as "Sommer towne", was a part of Nansemond County until the county was incorporated into the City of Suffolk in 1974. The village was settled in the 17th century. One of the earliest known settlers of Somerton was Sir Thomas Jernigan of Somerleyton in Suffolk County, England¹. The development of the village weighed heavily on its location along the main route from Suffolk, VA to northeastern North Carolina. Throughout the years, travelers used Somerton as a place to stop along the way. The businesses within the district provided goods and services to people passing through. During his tour of the United States, Marquis de Lafayette stopped in Somerton. While he was in the village, Lafayette went to the Washington Smith Ordinary where a grand dinner party was held in his honor. Somerton was an independently functioning community with its conveniences including places for residents and visitors to shop, lodge, entertain, worship, and live.

APPLICABLE CRITERIA

The Somerton Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its 18th, 19th, and 20th century architecture, and under Criterion A for its development as an agricultural village from the 17th century. The district contains a concentrated collection of residential and community buildings with examples of Vernacular Federal, Folk Victorian, and Greek Revival architecture. The period of significance begins with the earliest extant resource, the Washington Smith ordinary in the late-18th century and ends in 1955, the year that the US-13 bypass around Somerton was completed. The completion of the bypass led to the decline of Somerton as a stopping place for travelers on the road between Suffolk and North Carolina. The Somerton Historic District retains the integrity of its historic location, association, setting, feeling, design, materials, and workmanship.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1634, the King of England ordered that eight counties be formed in Virginia Colony. First, the county was named "Elizabeth River Shire". Two years later, the county was divided and renamed "New Norfolk County". From there, "New Norfolk County", was divided into two counties: "Upper Norfolk County" and "Lower Norfolk County". "Upper Norfolk County" was re-named "Nansemond County" in 1646. In 1750, the county seat moved from Nansemond County to the newly settled town of Suffolk. The majority of historic records for Suffolk and Nansemond County were lost during several fires in the 18th- and 19th-centuries. A fire in 1734 at the home of the county clerk destroyed the majority of Nansemond County Court Records. The second loss of records occurred when Suffolk burned to the ground when the British Infantry set fire to the town in 1779. A third fire destroyed the Nansemond County court records in 1866 when the county clerk's office burnt to the ground.

Before the English arrived in Somerton, the Nansemond Indians occupied much of the land. Thomas Jernigan (Jarnigan) of Suffolk County, England was granted 250 acres of land in 1668 at Somerton². From the time the English arrived, Somerton developed as an independent village in a rural setting. The village itself is surrounded by large agricultural parcels. Community planning and development resulted in the construction of dwellings close together with agricultural fields to the rear. They all sit on large, reaching tracts of land. The tight concentration of buildings in the nucleus of the village is a unique feature that many rural areas do not have. The parcels labeled 74*23 and 75*8 on the attached tax parcel map are two of the last remaining areas of agricultural land historically surrounding the district. The non-contributing resource noted in the inventory under tax parcel numbers 74*23G is a dwelling which was moved from an area outside of the district after the period of significance. These large parcels of farm land have been integral to the economic vitality of Somerton for centuries. The land provided local farmers and residents of the village a place to cultivate crops and raise livestock for personal use and for sale.

Historically, Somerton had many characteristics and components necessary to make it an independent village within Nansemond County and later the City of Suffolk. Nansemond County and the City of Suffolk merged in 1974 and the county is now extinct.

Somerton featured single dwellings, a school, a church, cemeteries & family burial lots, general stores, a Masonic lodge, an ordinary, a local postmaster, and a local physician.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 8 Page 9

The majority of the remaining buildings within the Somerton Historic District are modest 18th and 19th century dwellings. The architectural styles range from Federal to Folk Victorian. Due to the rural nature of the town, any construction relied heavily on materials that were easily accessible and available.

Many of the dwellings have mixed architectural styles and many have additions which were appended as the economic vitality of the village increased.

The most well-known dwelling in the district is the "Washington Smith Ordinary". The late-18th to early-19th century dwelling is still standing today and the original block of the house is in good condition. The dwelling has been in the Smith and Arthur families for centuries. Thomas Smith and his wife Anne C. Smith were the first innkeepers of the ordinary. Thomas wanted to keep the business in the family, so he passed the ordinary down to his son, Washington Smith and his wife, Mary P. Smith.

While Washington and Mary were keeping the Inn during the first quarter of the 1800s, Marquis de Lafayette paid the ordinary a visit. He was on his tour of the 24 states and stopped in Somerton on his way to Murfreesboro, NC. Washington and Mary served him fine food and drinks during his stay at the ordinary³. Washington and Mary's son Thomas Washington Smith was born in the ordinary in 1832. Thomas W. Smith fought in and returned home from the Civil War and he served as a member of the 16th Virginia Infantry, Company A, 2nd Lieutenant.

Upon his return, Thomas W. Smith married Harriet Goodwin Borland of Murfreesboro, NC. Smith was a businessman in general merchandising, President of Farmer's Bank then of Suffolk National Bank, President of Suffolk Cotton Mills, and Commander of the Tom Smith Camp of Confederate Veterans. Later in his life, he raised money to have a monument erected in Cedar Hill Cemetery in downtown Suffolk, Virginia honoring local confederate veterans⁴.

Oral history reports reveal that there were at least two schools during the 18th and 19th centuries in Somerton. One was a small building which sat on a now vacant lot adjacent to the extant Somerton United Methodist Church⁵. This school building was moved to a location outside of the district boundaries. Another school building, which is no longer extant, stood across Arthur Drive from the Methodist Church. Records show that it was a parcel of land containing a 2-story dwelling referred to as a "hall". The said "hall" was deeded from Edwin Smith to the trustees for the Somerton Ancient Free & Accepted Masons Lodge No. 99. Within the deed, specific uses were set forth: "the upper or second story of said Hall, to be held by the said grantees and the survivors, and their successors in office, as a 'Masonic Hall' for the use of Somerton Lodge No. 99. In the first or lower story of said Hall to be held by these grantees, for the benefit of the people of the neighborhood, to be used solely as a school room for the purpose of promoting education"⁶. Even though the said hall is no longer standing, it proves that Somerton developed as a rural village independent from the main town of Suffolk.

Another element contributing to the character of the village of Somerton is the Church. There are two chapels-of-ease listed in the *Vestry Book of the Upper Parish, Nansemond County, Virginia 1743-1793*. The first chapel built in Somerton was built in accordance to an act of the Assembly of 1662. This act required that chapels-of-ease be built for convenience of Parishioners living at a distance from the parish church in Suffolk. The act also required that services be held at three points remote from church facilities; "Sommer towne" was one of these remote locations. The original log frame "Somerton Chapel" was located within the vicinity of the district. In the 1800s, the "Somerton Chapel" congregation moved to a new location at Holy Neck, a small community about ten miles down the road. The original chapel building was later used for occasional services by local Methodist ministers⁷. In September of 1881, a parcel of land was granted to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church South at Somerton by Dempsey Odom, another prominent member of the village of Somerton. This parcel was to be the site of a new church building and cemetery. The deed required that Dempsey Odom retain a burial lot within the said parcel of land for himself and all members of his family. Dempsey, his wife Martha "Pattie", and their son "Little" Dempsey Odom were all buried in the said lot upon their deaths⁸.

As requested, the extant church was built on the lot deeded by Dempsey Odom during the 1830s. The original sanctuary was of vernacular Gothic style featuring pointed stained glass windows and a broken return on the cornice. The building remained the

same until 1906 when a new pulpit, new pews, and stained glass memorial windows were added. At this time, the meeting-house type of church was rededicated as "Methodist Episcopal Church South". No additional changes were made until the Sunday school rooms and fellowship hall were appended to the west facing rear of the church in 1952⁹.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 8 Page 10

In addition the cemetery beside the Methodist Church, deeded by Dempsey Odom, there are family burial lots scattered throughout the district. The Robert Riddick Smith burial lot is one of them, located in the land between the Methodist Church and the Robert R. Smith House

The potential for archeological investigation is present in the village of Somerton. Oral history reports and other local history resources indicate that materials and goods from the buildings no longer extant in the district are buried beneath the surface and could provide residents and local historians with some insight of Somerton's unrecorded past.

As mentioned earlier, until the 1950s, the main route between Suffolk and northeastern North Carolina went right through the center of the village of Somerton. The village thrived as a trade center as early as the mid-18th century. Somerton was a place where travelers could stop and purchase the necessary goods and supplies for their trip to North Carolina. It also provided travelers with a place to eat and sleep if they chose to wait until the morning to continue their journey south. At one time, there was more than one general store in Somerton¹⁰. Evidence of a mercantile business in Somerton comes from the 1851 Mercantile Directory of Nansemond County. The directory listed William Hannaford and James E. Smith as general dealers in dry goods, groceries, hardware, etc., in Somerton. James E. Smith ran the "Smith Store" which sat on his parcel to the south of his two-story Federal style dwelling. According to oral history reports, the "Smith Store" was the only place you could get a new white shirt between Suffolk and Gatesville, NC¹¹. The store lot was granted to Mark W. Smith by James T. Smith (son of James E. Smith) in February of 1888¹². Mark W. Smith was also a merchant in Somerton and ran the "Smith Store" until it burned to the ground in 1930. Other merchants in the area included John R. Saunders and George Moore. They ran a firm by the name of "Saunders and Moore" in Somerton. They were also dealers of general dry goods.

The most recent merchant in town was the "Ellis Store", a general store and filling station. It was constructed c.1920 in its current location at the northeast corner of the intersection of Arthur Drive and Boonetown Road. The business served the community and people passing through the community until it was closed in the 1950s because Mr. Ellis was ready to retire and the business was no longer thriving as it once had. The building was put to good use after the business closed as a gathering place for the men of the village.

After the completion of the US-13 bypass around Somerton in 1955, the number of visitors passing through the village decreased and led to the gradual decline of the village as a stopping point for travelers.

Endnotes

¹ "Thomas Jernigan Descendents." *Heritage of White County Tennessee: 1806-1999*; pages 266-267.
http://www.ajlambert.com/jernigan/stry_tj.pdf

² "Thomas Jernigan SR. of Nansemond County, VA" *The Jernigan Connection Newsletter*; Issue 20, April 2007

³ "Roscius C Borland," *Sally's Family Place – Mulberry Grove*, 6 April 2007.

⁴ "Tom Smith Camp," *Tom Smith's Biography* 2006; <http://www.tomsmithcamp.com/biography>. 15 October 2007.

⁵ Edward Roettger, "Proposed Somerton Historic District" Interview by Sarah McPhail, transcript, 27 September 2007.

⁶ "Somerton Masonic Lodge Deed", 18 February 1868, Nansemond County, Virginia, Deed Book 1, page 527, Deed Room, Godwin Courts building, Suffolk, VA.

⁷ Mary Jane Arthur, "A Brief History of Somerton United Methodist Church", unpublished.

⁸ "Deed of sale from Dempsey Odom to trustees for Methodist Episcopal Church South at Somerton", 26 September 1881, Nansemond County, Virginia, Deed Book 9, page 557, Deed Room, Godwin Courts Building, Suffolk, VA.

⁹ Mary Jane Arthur, "A Brief History of Somerton United Methodist Church", unpublished.

¹⁰ Edward Roettger, "Robert R. Smith House", unpublished, 1995.

¹¹ Lou Kalwite, "RE: the time is near" 29 October 2007, e-mail message to Sarah McPhail, 03 November 2007.

¹² Lou Kalwite, "RE: the time is near" 29 October 2007, e-mail message to Sarah McPhail, 03 November 2007.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 9 Page 11

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Deed of sale from Dempsey Odom to trustees for Methodist Episcopal Church South at Somerton", 26 September 1881, Nansemond County, Virginia, Deed Book 9, page 557, Deed Room, Godwin Courts Building, Suffolk, VA.
- Deed of sale from James T. Smith to M.W. and O.H. Smith, 3 February 1888, Nansemond County, Virginia, Deed Book 19, page 523, Deed Room, Godwin Courts Building, Suffolk, VA.
- Edward Roettger, "Proposed Somerton Historic District" Interview by Sarah McPhail, transcript, 27 September 2007.
- Edward Roettger, "Robert R. Smith House", unpublished, 1995.
- Lou Kalwite, "RE: proof of another store", 14 October 2007, e-mail message to Sarah McPhail, 24 October 2007.
- Lou Kalwite, "RE: the time is near", 29 October 2007, e-mail message to Sarah McPhail, 03 November 2007. "Thomas Jernigan Descendents." *Heritage of White County Tennessee: 1806-1999*; pages 266-267. http://www.ajlambert.com/jernigan/stry_tj.pdf.
- Mary Jane Arthur, "A Brief History of Somerton United Methodist Church", unpublished.
- "Nansemond County, " Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory: Virginia 1851, 1 January 1998, <http://www.newrivernotes.com/va/vathom.htm#nan>
- "Roscius C Borland," Sally's Family Place-Mulberry Grove, 6 April 2007, <http://sallysfamilyplace.com/MulberryGrove/borlandrc/htm>, 9 October 2007
- "Somerton Masonic Lodge Deed", 18 February 1868, Nansemond County, Virginia, Deed Book 1, page 527, Deed Room, Godwin Courts Building, Suffolk, VA
- "Somerton, VA Post Office (--?—1911)" Author Unknown.
- "Thomas Jernigan SR. of Nansemond County, VA" *The Jernigan Connection Newsletter*, Issue 20, April 2007
- "Tom Smith Camp," Tom Smith's Biography 2006, <http://www.tomsithcamp.com/biography/> 15 October 2007.
- The Hornbook of Virginia History" <http://www.rootsweb.com/~vanansem/>

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA**

Section 10, Photographic Data Page 12

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM Datum 1927 Zone 18

A	342680E	4048900N	D	343760E	4048360N
B	343430E	4049160N	E	343330E	4047645N
C	343825E	4049160N	F	343720E	4048120N

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is shown on the attached scaled map from the city GIS web site and includes tax parcels; 74-18A, 74-19D with cemetery, 74-23, 74-23A, 74-23E, 74-23G, 75-8, 75-8A, 75-19, 75-20, 75-21, 75-21A, 75-22, 75-24. The district is roughly bound by large agricultural fields on its north, south, and western edges and by US-13 on its east side.

Boundary Justification

The Somerton Historic District boundaries were drawn to include the tight concentration of 18th, 19th, and 20th century buildings as well as the historical and agricultural setting which remains attached to the properties, particularly to the north.

PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA

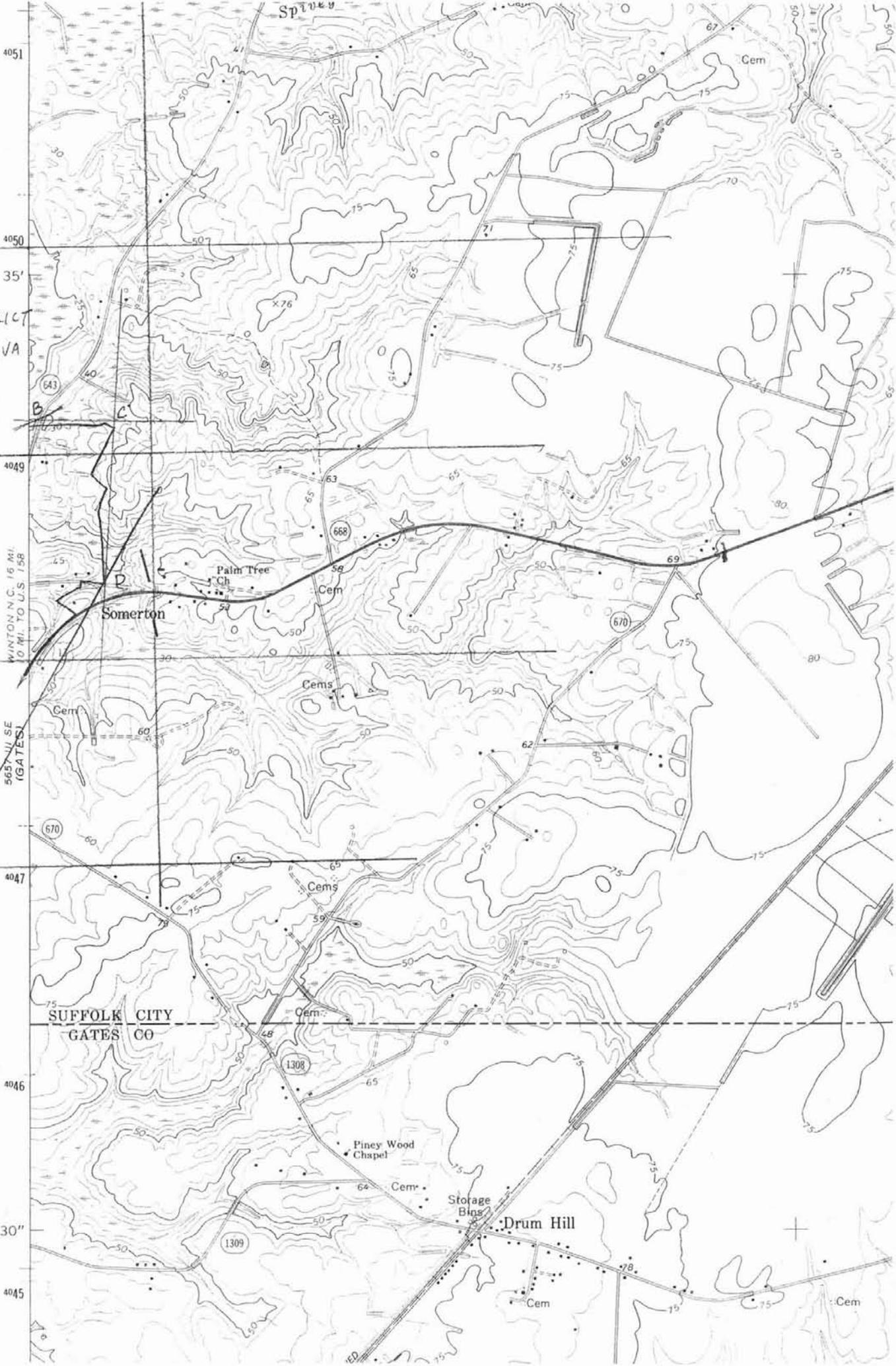
The following information is the same for all photographs:

Somerton Historic District (VDHR#133-5256)
Suffolk, Virginia

The photographs were taken by Sarah McPhail in October 2007, and January and March of 2008.
The digital images are stored at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	DIRECTION
No. 0001	Somerton United Methodist Church	West
No. 0002	Cemetery, Somerton Methodist Church	West
No. 0003	Brick ranch; 8489 Whaleyville Blvd.	West
No. 0004	Langston house; 8440 Arthur Drive	East
No. 0005	Langston house; 8440 Arthur Drive	North
No. 0006	Detached Kitchen; 8440 Arthur Drive	South
No. 0007	Smokehouse; 8440 Arthur Drive	East
No. 0008	Original roof remnants; 8440 Arthur Drive	West
No. 0009	Robert R. Smith House; 8441 Arthur Drive	South
No. 0010	Washington Smith Ordinary; 8442 Arthur Drive	North
No. 0011	Washington Smith Ordinary; 8442 Arthur Drive	East
No. 0012	Mantle Detail, Washington Smith Ordinary	West
No. 0013	8436 Arthur Drive	East
No. 0014	8437 Arthur Drive	West
No. 0015	James E. Smith House; 8400 Arthur Drive	East
No. 0016	Ellis General Store; corner Boonetown Rd. and Arthur Dr.	West
No. 0017	1464 Boonetown Road	South
No. 0018	Horse barn; 1464 Boonetown Road	East
No. 0019	Somerton Historic District; Overall View	North
No. 0020	Somerton Historic District; Overall View	Southeast

MERTON
HISTORIC DISTRICT
UFFOLK CITY, VA
133-5256
ITM ZONE 18
3 343430E
4049160N
343825E
4049160N
D 343760E
4048360N

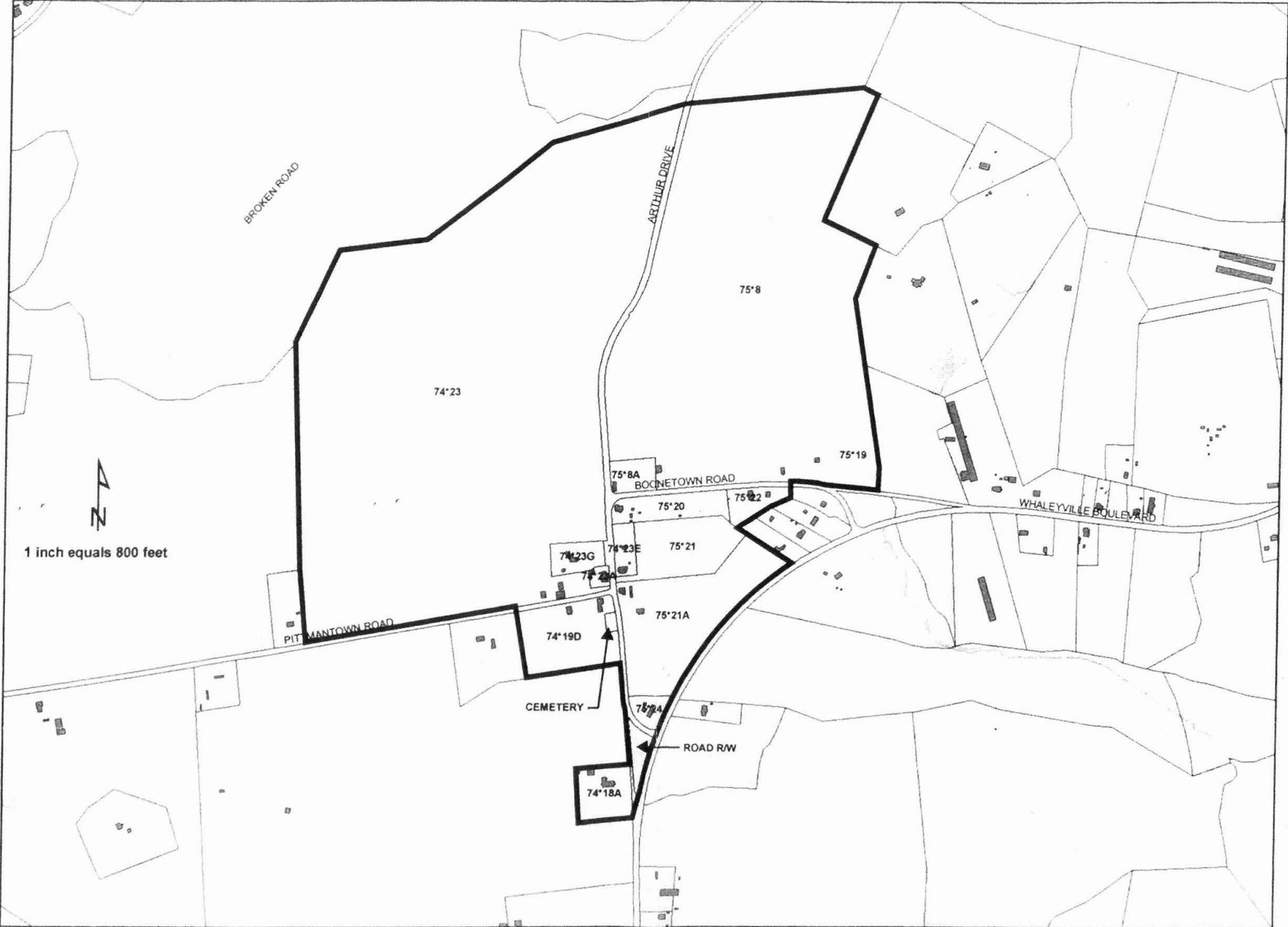


WINTON N.C. 16 MI.
TO U.S. 158

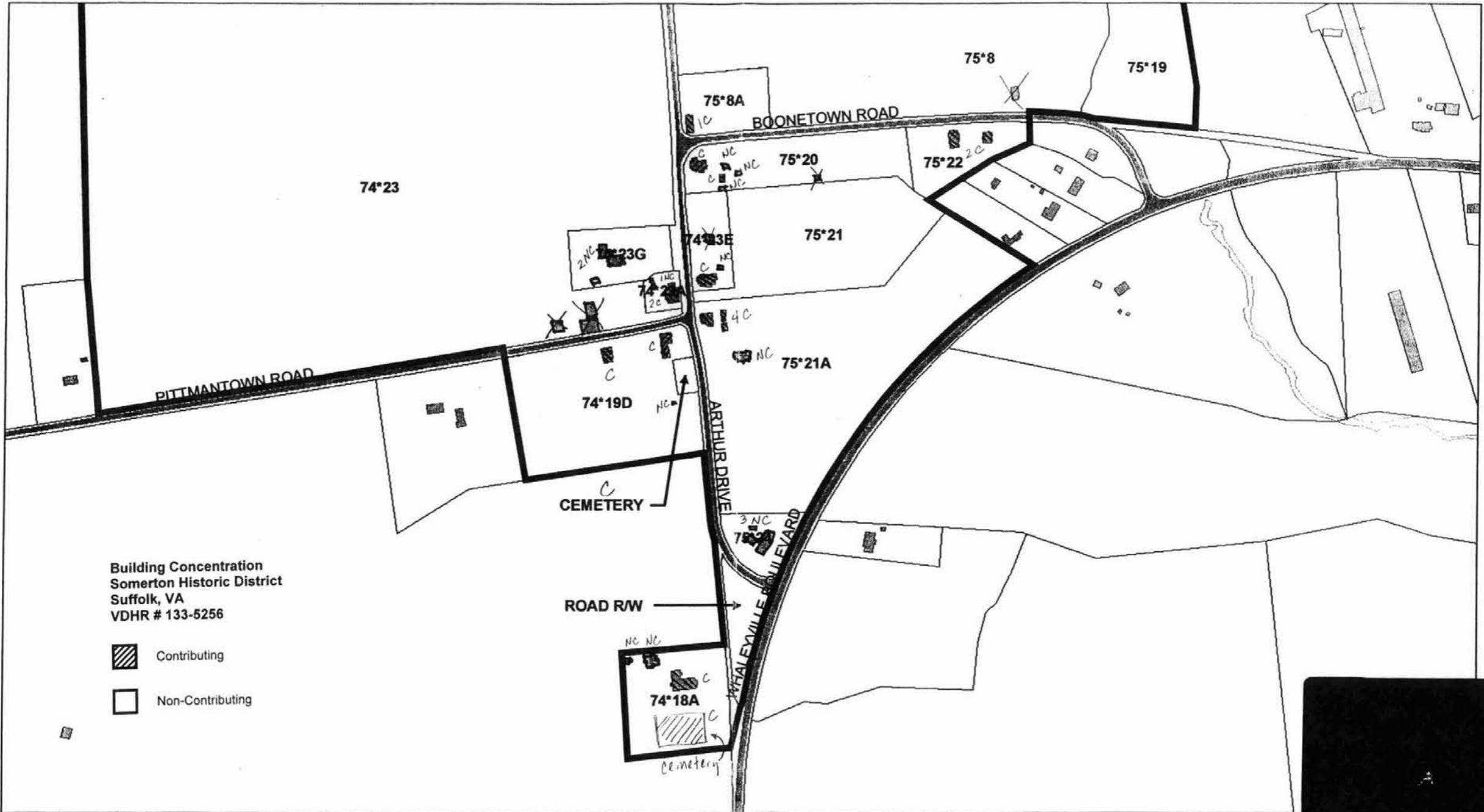
SUFFOLK CITY
GATES CO

32°30'

Potential Somerton National Register District



Potential Somerton National Register District



Building Concentration
Somerton Historic District
Suffolk, VA
VDHR # 133-5256

-  Contributing
-  Non-Contributing