

EWING LIVESTOCK MARKET
South side of First Avenue North,
500 feet west of Route 724
Ewing
Lee County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1340

HABS
VA
53-EWI
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

EWING LIVESTOCK MARKET

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LOCATION: South side of First Avenue North, 500 feet west of Route 724
Ewing, Lee County, Virginia

USGS Ewing Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 17.282390.4057260

**PRESENT OWNER
AND OCCUPANT:** Ewing Livestock Market, Inc.

PRESENT USE: Shelter for livestock auctions. Slated for demolition in 1993.

**STATEMENT OF
SIGNIFICANCE:** The Ewing Livestock Market comprises a large, barn-like, wood frame building constructed in 1937, and a concrete-block wing built in 1960. The main section, which presently shelters numerous livestock pens, originally housed all the market's functions. The wing, built to meet the market's need for greater space, houses an auction arena and office. The market building, erected to serve the needs of a cooperative market organization made up of local farmers, was the first rural livestock market building in a large region, comprising southwest Virginia and adjacent areas of Tennessee and Kentucky, and is thought to have inspired the creation of similar market organizations and buildings.

PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Ewing Livestock Market, built in 1937, is situated on the northern outskirts of the village of Ewing in Lee County, Virginia. Ewing lies in the Indian Creek Valley, a relatively narrow, high-elevation valley set amidst the mountainous highlands of southwestern Virginia.

Settlement of the area by European Americans began circa 1760. Though the Wilderness Road passed through the Cumberland Gap about thirteen miles to the west, the Ewing vicinity long remained a remote location, distant from major transportation routes. Until the late nineteenth century the local economy was based almost entirely on agricultural production for subsistence, the crops consisting of hogs, corn and a few minor commodities. Non-farming business in Lee County was limited to a brickworks, a few iron mines and some custom-work gristmills. Commercial lumbering in the county began around 1860, and grew in scale slowly but steadily.

The construction of a branch line of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad in 1889-1890, extending up the Indian Creek Valley from Cumberland Gap to Pennington Gap (about twenty-five miles northeast of Ewing), began an economic transformation of the Ewing vicinity. The village of Ewing formed around a railroad depot, and grew as a rural service center. Commercial lumbering expanded throughout the area. The nature of local agriculture also began a significant shift in the 1890s toward the raising of cattle and sheep for distant markets. The lush grasslands of the Indian Creek Valley were particularly well suited to this activity, previously infeasible due to the difficulty of transportation. In the early twentieth century Indian Creek Valley farmers also took up the cultivation of burley tobacco, which has been the area's primary cash crop from the 1930s to the present.

The village of Ewing, more precisely the site of the Ewing Livestock Market and the railroad depot (the latter no longer standing), has functioned as the lower Indian Creek Valley's center for livestock purchasing and shipment since the 1890s. Prior to the incorporation of the Ewing Livestock Company and the construction of the market building in 1937, cattle and other livestock were driven directly to pens owned by the railroad and situated on the south side of the rail line next to the depot. Farmers drove herds on hoof from farms as far as fifteen miles distant, the lack of modern roads and automobiles necessitating an overnight trip for many. Located about two hundred feet southeast of the livestock market, across the rail line and on the east side of the depot, was a large general store business, founded at some date prior to 1937. Here a merchant bought a wide variety of agricultural products from local people, whatever they had as surplus, with an emphasis on poultry. In return he sold staple groceries, hardware and other goods brought in via the railroad.

The Ewing Livestock Market was constructed in 1937. The market building was constructed for the Ewing Livestock Company, Inc., chartered that year. The corporation's purpose was "to establish, conduct and maintain a general livestock and poultry market to buy, sell, exchange, export and import, for others, livestock and poultry" (Lee County Charter Book 2:27).

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Eleven men were named as officers and directors, including four from the Ewing vicinity, three from the vicinity of Rose Hill, four miles northeast, and four who gave their place of residence as Tazewell R.F.D., Tennessee. The latter four men were evidently farmers living over the Tennessee border, which runs just three miles south of Ewing. The enterprise was initially capitalized at \$15,000, with shares valued at \$50 each. According to Junior Edds (born circa 1933), manager of the Ewing Livestock Market in 1993 and a lifelong resident of the vicinity, the market building was designed by Howard Lightfoot, a young local farmer interested in the progressive agriculture movement.

Research has not identified the particular motives for the creation of the livestock market, but this experience evidently represented a response by local farmers to the straitened agricultural business conditions of the Great Depression, perhaps encouraged by government agricultural department officials in the region. It is likely that the Ewing Market's proponents hoped to give local livestock producers a greater measure of control, or at least influence, vis-à-vis prices in the broader market, shipping charges, and the power of the railroad and of other middlemen in the livestock industry.

The business history of the Ewing Livestock Market appears to have been a successful one; it is considered to have been so by its shareholders and patron farmers. When it began operation, the Ewing Market is said by Mr. Edds to have been the only co-op-managed or rurally located facility for livestock auction in a large region, the nearest livestock market houses being privately run ones in the cities of Bristol, in Virginia, and Knoxville and Greenville, in Tennessee. Mr. Edds believes that the Ewing Market was seen throughout the region as a model cooperative livestock market, and that it inspired the creation of similar livestock market cooperatives by regional farmers.

The character of the Ewing Market's operation, and in consequence the pattern of use of the market building, has changed since 1937, in relation to change in the nature of the local agricultural economy. The history of the Ewing Market has had two phases, with the transition between them of a gradual nature but probably most accelerated circa 1955-1960. The change was from a market where animals of many kinds were bought and sold, with cattle auction and export one major aspect of the market's operations, to a market devoted exclusively to cattle auction and export. The function of the market in its earlier phase served a varied local agriculture that retained a strong aspect of production for subsistence. The steady growth of the cattle-raising business in the Ewing vicinity, coupled with the decline of home agricultural production, resulted in restriction of the market's functions to those serving cattle raisers.

The Ewing Livestock Market has always had a role in the social life of the Ewing vicinity's people (evinced in the market's activities taking place only on Saturday mornings), but this social role was most important in the circa 1937-1955 period. Whole families came in from the surrounding countryside on market day. Dairy cattle, sheep, swine, horses, dogs, poultry and other animals were bought and sold, as well as beef cattle. The variety of animals was related

to the variety of agricultural activities commonly pursued by people of the area. Families living on the small farms that characterized the countryside kept at least one horse to enable plowing for the wheat and corn they raised for their own consumption. The grain was ground at local custom-work gristmills. Households in area villages and hamlets, as well as those on farms, generally kept a cow for milk, raised at least one calf or swine, usually two or three, for meat, and kept chickens for eggs and meat. Dogs were prized as aids in hunting. Trading in poultry, dogs and other small animals at the market took place amidst a flea-market-like setting, along the north side of First Avenue North across from the market building. Horses were held in the box stalls that are still (1993) ranged along the length of the east wall of the market building. The horse stalls occupied approximately three-tenths of the floor space taken up by animal pens inside the market building, in its original arrangement.

The 1950s saw acceleration in the decline of widespread subsistence agricultural activity, as rural and village people in the region increasingly met their grocery needs with purchases away from home. During the same period the business of raising cattle for export grew ever larger in scale. Small farms began to be consolidated into larger holdings as the old agricultural pattern of limited but varied farming, in which most local people had participated, died away. By 1960, when increase in the volume of cattle business led the shareholders of the Ewing Livestock Market to construct the market building's east arena wing, the transition between the two historic phases of the building's pattern of use had apparently been completed. The market was now devoted exclusively to the purposes of cattle auction and export. The box stalls along the east wall of the 1937 section were now used for cattle instead of horses. Continued growth of the cattle business required the addition, in about 1970, of a row of exterior overflow cattle pens along the south wall of the market building, attached to the main structure via a lean-to roof. These enclosures joined a row of similar exterior pens along the west wall that had evidently been built expressly to hold bulls as part of the original 1937 plan.

Other changes in the immediate setting of the market building that occurred circa 1960 were related to the shift in emphasis from rail transport to truck transport for livestock. The loading chute situated next to the rail depot, used for driving cattle onto train cars, was taken down. Eventually the depot was closed, and the rail line ceased operation. Cattle were transported from farms to the market building, and from thence to slaughterhouses, via trucks that pulled into the loading dock at the northwest corner of the building.

It is interesting to note that in 1993 agriculture in the Ewing vicinity retains something of its old subsistence-economy aspect. The variety of farming activity is restricted to cattle raising, limited feed crop production and tobacco cultivation, but farming itself is pursued by most farmers as a part-time activity. For them, residents in a county that has few opportunities for full-time employment, farming is one element in an economic strategy that also includes part-time work at a job or in a trade. Only a minority of farmers are full-time farmers managing large-scale farms.

The Ewing Livestock Market is a thriving cooperative concern as of 1993. The market is owned by about eighty shareholders, drawn largely from among the vicinity's more prosperous full-time farmers. The patrons at large, a much more numerous group, generally help as necessary in the running of the market every Saturday morning. The marketing of cattle at the market still follows the same process as it has throughout the cooperative's history, according to the present manager, Mr. Edds. The farmer brings his animals in via the loading dock at the northwest corner of the building, and runs them up one of the ramps to the livestock scale, one by one, for weighing. He then receives a receipt from the market staff, which lists his cattle and their weights. The cattle are then auctioned in the arena, again one by one, for cattle buyers who represent the meat-packing industry concerns from across the nation. After the auction, the farmer presents his receipt to the market staff in order to receive payment.

The 1937-1960 market building, slated for demolition due to improvements to U.S. Route 58, is being replaced with a new and larger structure.

PART II - DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

SETTING

The Ewing Livestock Market is situated on the northern outskirts of the village of Ewing. It stands on the south side of First Avenue North, a gravel lane which leads east approximately five hundred feet to intersect with Route 724, a secondary highway that runs northward from the village center. East of the market building, First Avenue North is lined with small frame dwellings, garages and a frame church. A feedmill is located about three hundred feet southwest of the market building. The abandoned railbed of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (Indian Creek Valley branch line) runs by the market building and the feedmill on a northeast-southwest alignment located to the southeast of the latter buildings. Across the railbed from the market building is a modern fertilizer plant (date unknown) that occupies the former sites of the Ewing rail depot, the depot cattle pens, and a large general store business. To the north and west of the market building is open farmland, dotted with exurban residences, most apparently built in recent years.

EXTERIOR

The main or original section of the livestock market building, constructed in 1937, is a large, rectangular, one-story, front-gable-roofed structure, approximately one hundred and forty-six feet long by eighty feet wide, built of wood frame on a foundation of poured concrete. The main section faces north, fronting on First Avenue North. A monitor runs along the roof ridge, but was removed from the southernmost third or so of the roof in 1989 due to windstorm damage. The main section is clad in weatherboard, its roof covered with corrugated metal. Extending eastward from the main section is the one-story, front-gable-roofed wing, approximately forty-six

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feet long by fifty-six feet wide. The south wall of the wing is flush with that of the main section. Built in 1960, the wing houses the present arena and office. The profile of its front gable, complete with monitor atop the roof, suggests that the design of the wing was intended to be architecturally harmonious with that of the 1937 structure, though the wing is built of concrete block rather than frame.

The market building's original fenestration is of limited extent, and is concentrated on the three gable ends. Six-light sash of uniform design glazes all but one of the original window openings on or within the main section. (Windows look through an interior partition from the original office onto the livestock-weight scale.) The front or north elevation of the main section has an asymmetrical arrangement of three six-over-six windows at the second-story level, and a double-door gateway with sliding board-and-batten barn doors, a plain office door and two six-over-six windows on the first story. Fenestration on the main section's south elevation is limited to a double-door gateway aligned with and similar to that on the north elevation, and a six-over-nine window beneath the peak of the gable. On the main section's west elevation, a series of fourteen evenly spaced, six-light, fixed-sash windows, set immediately below the eaves, begins at the south edge of the loading dock (approximately thirty feet from the north end of the building) and runs to the south end of the main section. Six gateways with rail doors are situated at the north end of the west elevation. There is no original fenestration on the east elevation of the main section. The side walls of the main section monitor are open.

The front or east entrance to the east wing is a double doorway with two plain sliding doors. The entrance is flanked by pairs of four-light, fixed-sash windows. Three similar evenly spaced windows on each wall line the north and south elevations of the wing. The side walls of the wing monitor appear to have originally been open. The market building's fenestration has been augmented by removal of the top course of weatherboard on the east, south and west elevations of the main section, two courses in some areas. The monitor side walls have been boarded over in the wing, however.

Exterior cattle pens, formed of post-and-rail fences and sheltered by lean-to roofs supported by posts and the market building wall, have apparently been an element in the livestock market's architecture since 1937. Junior Edds, born in 1933 and a life-long resident of the vicinity, recalls that the exterior pens along the west wall of the market building were present throughout his childhood. The exterior pens on the south side of the building were built circa 1970. As of September 1993, the demolition process for the livestock market building had proceeded so far as the removal of all of the west exterior pen structure except for some posts and rafters at the south end. Construction of a large, new gable-roofed exterior pen structure, which extends westward from the site of the west end of the projected gable-roofed, east-west oriented replacement market building, had already been completed.

PLAN

In plan, the first floor of the livestock market building is divided among pens and stalls for holding livestock, aisles for the movement of livestock and people, and areas for human activity. In the original or main section there is a second-floor area that extends over only a small portion of the first floor. A broad runway, extending completely through the main or original section from north to south, is the most prominent of the building's aisles. The runway is separated from the east wall of the main section by a row of ceiled box stalls designed for horses, with an enclosed storeroom as the northernmost unit in this row. Originally, all of the stalls except the southernmost were approximately thirty feet long by eleven feet wide. (One was subsequently divided.) The southernmost still measures about nine feet by eleven feet.

Regarding the large portion of the main section to the west of the main runway, the north end is devoted to the process of introducing livestock into the market building, which involves weighing the animals. Four ramps extend eastward from the gates adjoining the concrete loading dock at the north end of the west wall. The two southernmost ramps are wide concrete structures. The two northernmost ramps, no longer used in 1993, are wooden chutes set at different levels. These chutes were designed for use with two-tier trucks carrying sheep and swine, species that, as with horses, are no longer traded within the market building. The loading dock itself appears to be an original element in the main section's overall poured-concrete foundation.

A north-south aisle on the east side of the ramps separates the ramp area from the livestock-weight scale and the original office. The scale is set within a narrow cage, with metal gates at each end. The metal gates replaced heavy wooden ones. The floor of the scale, flush with that of the building, is composed of metal bars set less than an inch apart. An animal steps on the floor of the scale, and its weight is registered inside the office at the scale's calibrations.

The original office is a two-story frame structure, virtually a box-like building within the building, finished with weatherboard at both floor levels, within and without. A paneled door and a horizontal sash window, composed of three six-light sash, open onto the scale, which is separated from the original office by a narrow aisle. Inside the first floor of the original office, a long, fixed bench faces the window and the livestock market's scale, set on a broad window sill and in use since the market opened in 1937, a Fairfax Registering Beam. A partially enclosed right-angle stairway is situated in the northeast corner of the office. Since 1960 the first floor of the original office has been used only for supervision of the weighing process.

The remainder of the main section's first floor area, that is, the area south of the ramp and scale and west of the main runway, consists mainly of pens. This area includes the original auction arena (fourth pen from the north, adjoining the runway), now employed only as a pen. Facilitating movement among the pens is an aisle that runs southward along the west wall, from the loading dock at the north end to a point approximately thirty-six feet from the south end of

the main section. There it makes a ninety-degree turn and proceeds eastward to intersect with the main runway. A row of six small pens, typically about eight feet square, is ranged along the north side of the latter (east) extension of the aisle. To the north of the aisle are eight large pens (including the original arena), arranged in east and west ranks of four each. To the south of the aisle are three large pens, of narrow rectangular shape, that extend between the main runway and the west wall.

The spaces that compose the small second-floor area of the main section, no longer in active use, were designed for activities concerned directly with auctioning the livestock. The second floor of the original office is divided between the former cashier's office, now used only for storage, and a passage that runs along the east side of the structure. Set in the board partition separating these two spaces is a horizontal sash cashier's window composed of two six-light sash. It is here that a farmer who had had cattle auctioned by the market would come for payment following the auction. He would present the cashier with a receipt for his cattle that he had been issued by a clerk downstairs when the cattle had been weighed. On the south wall of the former cashier's office, a similar horizontal sash window surveys the interior of the main section.

The second-floor office passage leads to an open catwalk that extends about sixty feet southward to the original arena area. The former arena is a first-floor pen adjoined on the north, west and south by steeply rising wooden bleachers that are set above the arena pen's post-and-rail fence. A small box podium for the auctioneer is poised at the northwest corner of the arena. The arena is fitted with east and west gates, giving access to the main runway and to an adjoining pen, respectively. The bleachers could be reached from the first floor or from the catwalk. Areas beneath the bleachers were used as pen and storage bin space, hence the bleachers are considered here as part of the second-floor area of the building.

Changes in the use of the overall livestock market building, especially the construction in 1960 of the new wing, to which the arena and office were relocated, have resulted in some changes to the main section's floorplan. Two additional gates have been created on the west wall, immediately to the south of the loading dock. The more northerly of the new gates has its own small, added concrete dock. The southerly gate was made for ground-level access, and the original foundation has been partially broken away below it. These added gates appear to have been intended to serve the two northernmost in the central block of pens, which are now generally used in combination as a corridor for moving cattle out of the market building. An original exterior stairway for the office structure has been removed. It was located at the north end of the aisle which adjoins the office to the west. The original arena bleachers have been partially dismantled piecemeal. The southernmost of the four original large box stalls along the east wall has been parted in two, permitting use as anterooms for cattle being taken in and out of the arena in the 1960 wing.

The 1960 east wing of the market building is largely taken up by the arena floor, the podium, the short aisles flanking the podium that adjoin the gates leading to the main section, and the

extensive concrete audience galleries. The present office of the livestock market is a long, narrow room in the wing's southeast corner.

STRUCTURE

The extensive main or original section of the livestock market building is supported by a relatively light framing system. The roof structure, which appears to be the major element integrating the overall building, rests on six rows of wooden posts, each row aligned north-south, and on the rows of studs that hold the exterior walls.

The posts and studs are securely anchored, the posts on individual footings of poured concrete, the studs on sill timbers atop concrete footings. Boards extend from the top of each post to the next in the row, the ends of each board nailed onto the heads of the vertical timbers. These boards serve to compose plates for the support of the rafters, as well as to tie the posts together into framework systems. The systems of posts are further strengthened by additional tie boards set on notches at the tops of the posts (or about two feet below the tops, in the case of the two innermost rows of posts), and by diagonal braces connecting these boards to the posts. The northernmost and southernmost posts in each row of posts reinforce the north and south exterior walls. The latter curtain walls thus aid in connecting the overall structure. There are eleven posts in each row except the westernmost and easternmost, which have twelve and fourteen respectively. The posts in each system are irregularly spaced. Evidently the planned functions of the market building determined the design of the floorplan, which in turn determined the placement of the posts, quite unlike a traditional post-and-beam frame building with its rigid structural geometry. The studs on the exterior walls are spaced about every two feet, and are fitted into sills and plates.

The tall posts in the two innermost rows, which carry the monitor and thus represent key structural elements, are true posts, that is, massive timbers approximately nine inches square, with the exception of the northernmost and southernmost in each row. These latter, as well as all the "posts" in the other four rows, are composite members, each composed of three two-by-six boards to form a six-by-six timber. The plate and tie boards are two-by-eights, the rafters are two-by-sixes, and the studs and diagonal braces are two-by-fours. The nine-inch posts appear to have been sawn in a reciprocating or vertical sawmill; all the other lumber appears to have been circular sawn. According to Mr. Edds, the lumber was all felled and sawn locally. The large posts are said to be chestnut wood, for which the Ewing vicinity was well known in the early twentieth century.

The rafters, including those for the monitor, are arranged in systems of eight (four to each slope). These sets of rafters are spaced about three feet apart. The end of each rafter board is nailed to the end of the next in the system, except at the joining of the monitor rafter with the uppermost rafter of the main roof, where a short vertical board connects the two. The pairs of monitor rafters are butted at the peak. The ends of the three main roof rafters overlap, each

such joint situated over a plate board supported by one of the lesser post systems. The overall roof structure is further locked together by tie or collar boards spanning the underpinning of the monitor structure. These collars are spaced irregularly every two or three sets of rafters, nailed to posts or to the vertical boards linking monitor rafter with main roof rafter, as availability of posts permits.

MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

Electricity lines run into the building, for limited lighting and to provide power for the office. The only sources of heat are two coal-burning stoves, positioned in the first floor of the original office, adjacent to the scale, and in the 1960 office. The stove in the original office is served by an original brick chimney which rises to pierce the roof on the north gable end of the main section on the east side of the roof peak. The stove in the 1960 office uses a pipe for which a hole has been knocked through the east gable end wall at about ten feet above the floor. Water lines were at one time run into the main section, but these have been removed, as in recent years cattle are never in the building for more than a few hours.

FINISH

The inner face of the main or original section's exterior walls is completely unfinished, though the two-story original office structure is faced with weatherboard. The floors in the original office are of similar board. The floor throughout the rest of the main section is dirt. The exception is the steep eastern ends of the two larger ramps at the northwest corner, adjoining the scale, which have been built up of concrete, evidently due to heavy use. The slopes of all the cattle pens are directed downward toward the west, for drainage. In the east (1960) wing, the floor is cement, except for the dirt arena. The concrete-block exterior wall is not finished.

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

PUBLISHED

Jurney, R. C., S. S. Obenshain, Edward Shulcum, H. C. Porter, E. F. Henry, J. R. Moore, R. E. O'Brien, and R. C. Jurney, Jr.

1953 *Soil Survey of Lee County, Virginia.* U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

Reid, William H., Martha H. Bowers, Brad Koldehoff, Kay Simpson, and Linda Ferguson
1993 *Phase II Cultural Resource Investigations, U. S. Route 58 Improvements Project, Lee County, Virginia.* Submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation, Richmond, Virginia.

PUBLIC RECORDS

Lee County Charter Books. Office of the Lee County Clerk, Lee County Courthouse, Jonesville, VA

INTERVIEWS

Mr. Junior Edds, Ewing, Virginia, August 31-September 1, 1993.

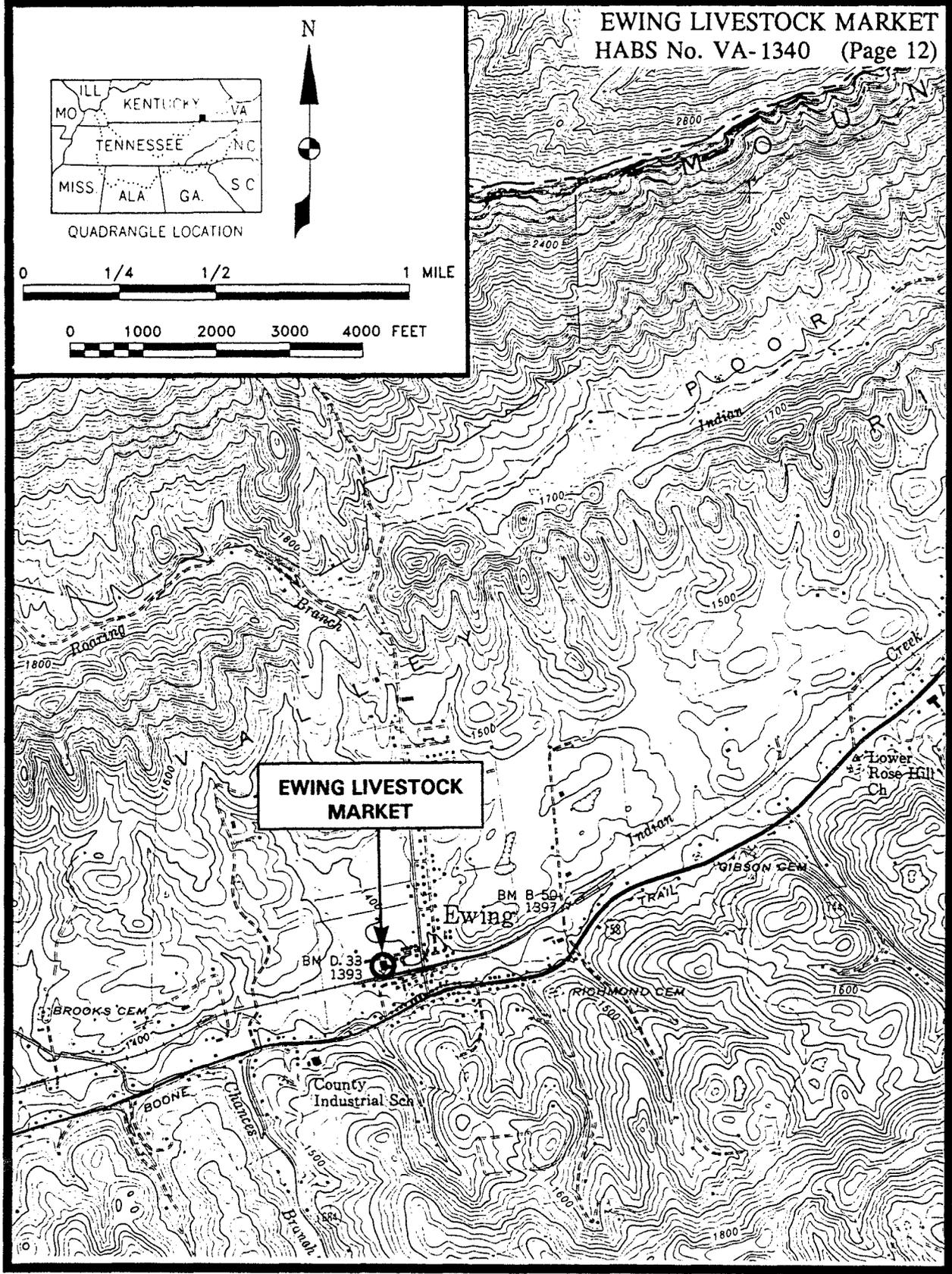
Mr. Enos Hensley, Ewing, Virginia, August 31, 1993.

PART IV - PROJECT INFORMATION

The Ewing Livestock Market will be demolished as part of the construction of a new alignment for U.S. Route 58 in Lee County. The market was recorded for the Virginia Department of Transportation by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., Richmond, Virginia. Project personnel included Philip E. Pendleton, Architectural Historian, and Robert A. Ryan of Berger/Ryan & Associates, Inc., Iowa City, Iowa, Photographer.

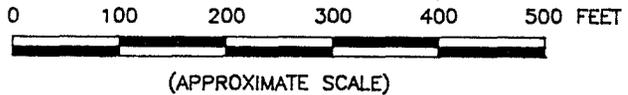
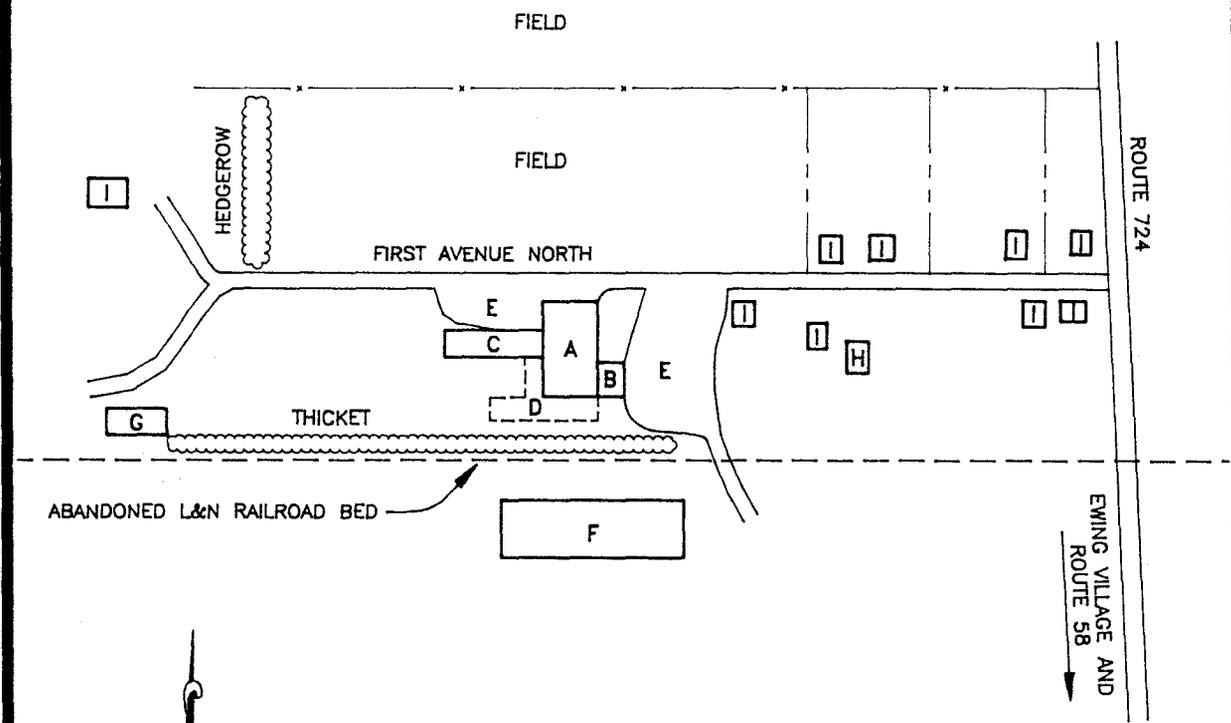
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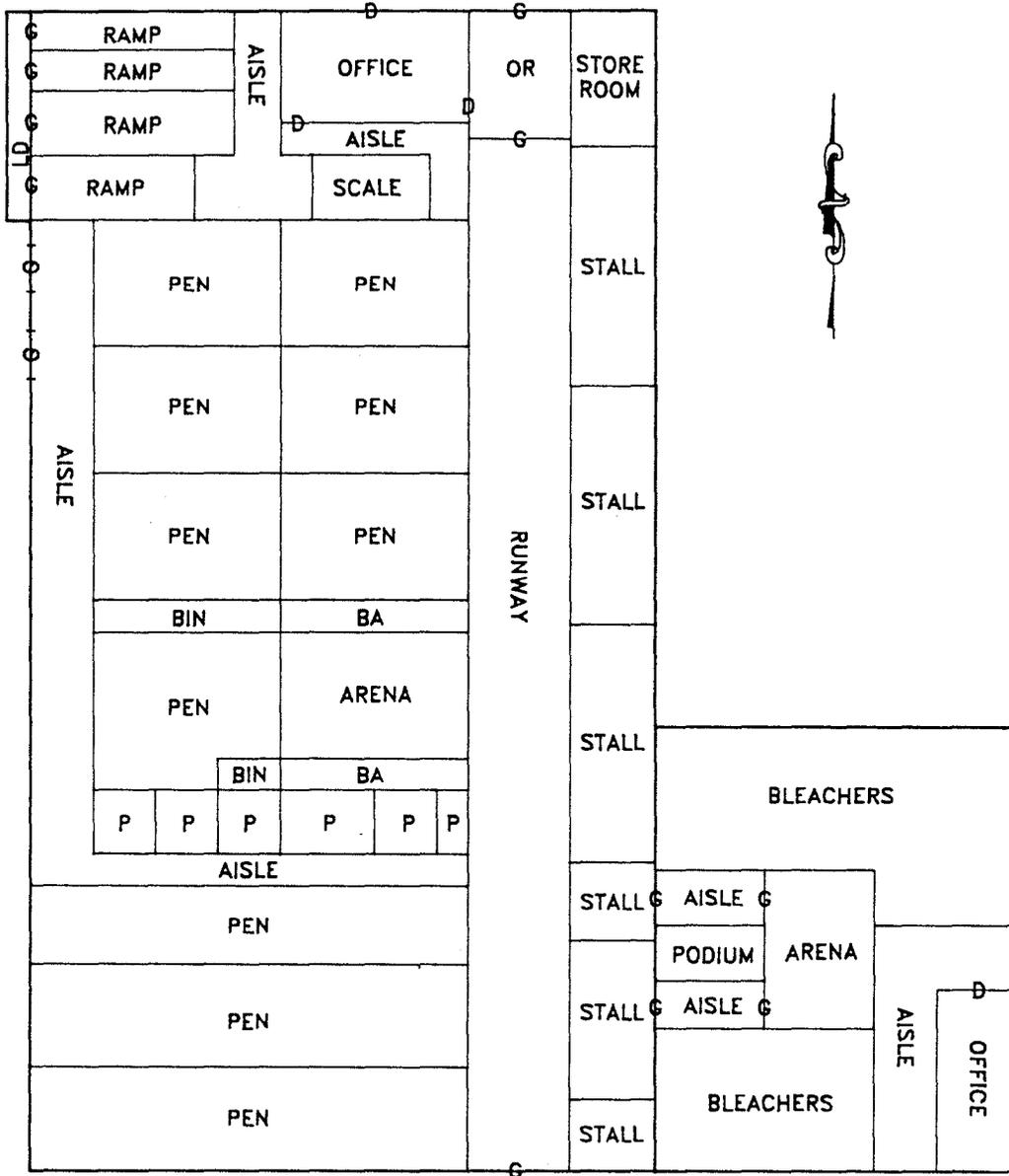
LOCATION

SOURCE: USGS 7.5 Minute Ewing Virginia 1946 Quadrangle (Photorevised 1969 & 1978)



- LEGEND**
- A EWING LIVESTOCK MARKET, 1937 WING
 - B EWING LIVESTOCK MARKET, 1960 WING
 - C EWING LIVESTOCK MARKET, PENS CONSTRUCTED 1993
 - D SITE OF EXTERIOR PENS
 - E PARKING AREAS
 - F FERTILIZER PLANT
 - G FEED MILL
 - H CHURCH
 - I HOUSES AND GARAGES

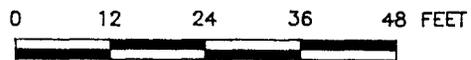
SITE PLAN

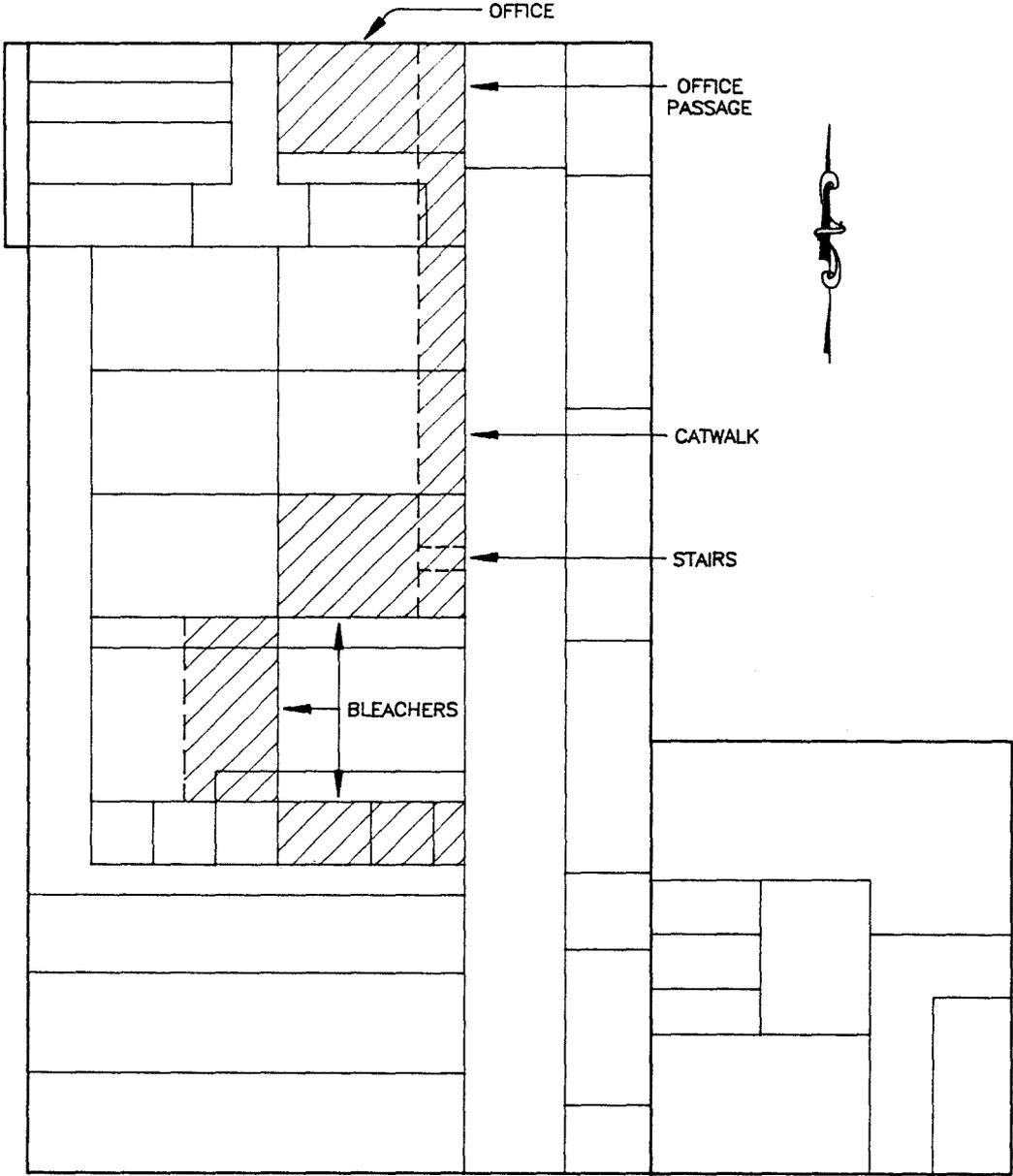


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

- BA BLEACHER AISLE
- D DOOR
- G PRINCIPAL GATE
- LD LOADING DOCK
- OR OUTER RUNWAY
- P PEN





SECOND FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND



BLEACHER

