

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic William Fields House

and or common

2. Location

street & number 447 Arlington Street not for publication

city, town Greensboro vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Guilford code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Old Greensborough Preservation Society

street & number 447 Arlington Street

city, town Greensboro vicinity of state North Carolina

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Guilford County Courthouse, Register of Deeds

street & number 201 S. Eugene St.

city, town Greensboro state NC

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Architecture of Greensboro has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1976 federal state county  local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, NC Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state NC 27611

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" 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

The William Fields House at 447 Arlington Street is one of the most interesting surviving examples of the handful of mid-19th century architecture remaining in Greensboro. Built between 1875 and 1879, it is located one block east of the major commercial district for that period. It was built in the Gothic cottage mode, one of three thought to be designed by the same architect, possibly Lyndon Swaim of Greensboro. The design was obviously influenced by A. J. Downing and probably adapted one of Downing's patterns from his book, The Architecture of Country Houses, into a "simple cottage" for Mr. Fields and his bride. Just as Downing suggests, he keeps the design simple to keep the costs low. The interior woodwork is modest and the windows are large and plentiful to take advantage of the sunshine. The asymmetrical composition, T-shape, steep gables and dormers, and the lancet-arched windows of the upper story are all hallmarks of the Downingesque mode. Such ornament quatrefoils and brackets also repeat Downingesque motifs. First-story windows have large, rectangular six-over-six sash. The projecting gable elevation of the top of the T is outlined with projecting brickwork and marked by a quatrefoil vent in the apex. A third lancet window fills the upper story and a bay window garnished with brackets and panels like the porch lights the first story.

This one-and-a-half story, common-bond brick house sits on a brick foundation and follows a T-shape plan (see attachment #1). Its side faces the street (west) and the top of the T to the right (south). A one-story brick wing protrudes from the rear of the long side of the T and a one-story porch extends across the front. On the southwest side of the front facade, the gable end contains a bay window with a pointed arch window at the second story and a quatrefoil ventilator in the attic. The eaves of the bay windows are decorated with cut brackets with turned pendants.

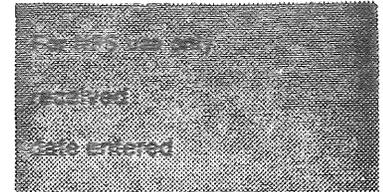
The front elevation is three bays wide. At the upper level, a pair of lancet-arched windows fill small wall dormers in the stem of the T. The front porch within the front angle of the T has four chamfered posts on plinths with capitals of cut brackets. The four-panel front door has a cast bronze door frame with reeded pilasters and has a rectangular transom light above. The plan (see enclosed plan) has a central foyer with a room (an enclosed back porch) to the rear of it. Interior 4-brick-thick partition walls divide the hall from a large parlor with the dining room behind on the right and a smaller parlor on the left. In the foyer, a staircase curves along the left and rear sides of the hall to form a suspended half-spiral staircase. The staircase has turned balusters and newel posts. The dining room has an unusual built-in cupboard with 4-paneled doors to the left of the fireplace. Entered from the recently enclosed back porch, this room, probably a bedroom, has already been partitioned to make a bathroom and will soon be adapted into a kitchen.

The second floor has three bedrooms, one of which was evidently partitioned to include a bathroom during a renovation of unknown date. All the second story windows have pointed arches and have been adapted to open out with separately operating 6-pane sashes. The original wide pine flooring remains in good condition upstairs.

The 4-panel doors and wide baseboards remain intact. The former owner maintains that the mantels are all original and are typically plain.

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Continuation sheet

William Fields House

Item number 7

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At the time of the restoration work done in 1979, the woodwork was sandblasted to remove paint, making the woodwork very rough and pitted. Also in 1979, the exterior paint was said to have been chemically removed. This was evidently incorrectly done because there has been some brick deterioration and much mortar chipping.

A local architect, an architectural conservator, and a restoration specialist from the North Carolina Department of Archives and History have been consulted to assess problems and suggest remedies. New plans are being made to repaint the entire exterior of the house along with caulking and glazing windows, reworking the gutter system, and venting the basement. Inside, the woodwork will be sanded and painted and the first floor strengthened by replacing old floor joists. These efforts should preserve the William Fields House so that many generations to come can observe a prime example of domestic architecture of this era, few of which remain in Greensboro today.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Little-Stokes, An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Greensboro, North Carolina (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1976), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, The Architecture of Country Homes (Reprint edition, New York: De Capo Press, 1968), p. 43-48.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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 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 type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

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Specific dates	Unknown	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

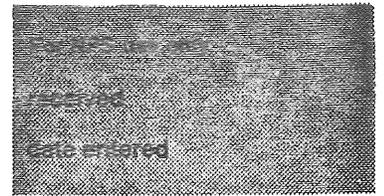
The William Fields House, one of three important early post-bellum period brick structures surviving in Greensboro, was built between 1875 and 1879. Executed in the Gothic Revival idiom, the house is a rare North Carolina example of this style. The house is currently undergoing analysis to stop deterioration and correct earlier incorrect restorative measures. Despite the unfortunate treatment of the building's surfaces, the Fields house retains its architectural significance in two ways: as one of a tiny number of buildings surviving from Greensboro's mid-19th century history as an important piedmont city; and as an example of an important type of American popular architecture--the Downingesque Gothic cottage--which, as comparison with documentary photographs indicates, retains its original form and detail, including all the stylistic hallmarks of the mode.

**Criteria Assessment:**

- A. Associated with the post-bellum development of the town of Greensboro and with the increasing prosperity and growth of the town during the last quarter of the 19th century; associated with evolving post-bellum urban residential and social patterns in the South.
- B. Associated with William Fields, a moderately prosperous tobacco merchant and small landowner. He and his family can be considered an example of a post-bellum urban middle-class family in Greensboro. However, the rarity of the structure is more important than the occupant.
- C. The house embodies characteristics of late 19th-century brick construction and design, reflecting a nationally popular architectural style, the Gothic Revival cottage, that is relatively rare in this state. The house represents a period in the development of Greensboro of which few examples of architecture and construction methods have survived.

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Continuation sheet William Fields House Item number 8 Page 1

The fact that the William Fields House is built in the Gothic Revival style makes this house very important to the architectural history of Greensboro. This style became popular in the 1850s. There are very few residential examples of this style in all of North Carolina. A tiny number may date from the 1850s; most of the surviving examples date from the late 1860s and the 1870s, and an era of renewed buildings after the war. In 1976, only 16 pre-1879 buildings survived in Greensboro, subsequent growth and demolition having essentially destroyed all but scattered vestiges of the small mid-19th century piedmont city. This number has continued to dwindle. Hence, such structures, if recognizably intact, gain special local value in this context.

Greensboro possesses two other houses--the Leftwich-Murphy House on Church Street and the Gatekeeper's House on Battleground Avenue--that are also surviving examples of this style, according to a spokesman from the Guilford County Historic Properties Commission. Because of their rare brick construction and similar Gothic Revival features, these three houses have been attributed to the same architect, Lyndon Swaim.<sup>2</sup> No documentation exists, however. Mr. Swaim was a prominent resident of Greensboro who served as the editor and, for a time, owner of Greensboro's newspaper, the Patriot. He also served as the Clerk of Court from 1853-1869. He then studied to be an architect and was the town's leading architect for twenty years.<sup>3</sup>

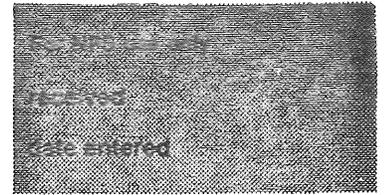
The house also exemplifies the 19th-century growth of Greensboro's middle class. In the 1870s, Greensboro was beginning to grow in population and industry. The population in 1870 was 1500 and the corporate limits encompassed one square mile.<sup>4</sup> The town construction began to spread and the railroad depot became the hub of activity rather than the courthouse square located four blocks north.<sup>5</sup> During the 1870s, the tobacco industry began to develop and warehouses were built on streets adjacent to the residential area around Arlington Street.<sup>6</sup> Textiles and furniture manufacturing were also beginning during this period and, the population swelled to 10,000 by 1910.<sup>8</sup>

This industrial growth, combined with broad patterns of urbanization statewide, promoted the development of a middle class in Greensboro.

Located one block from the commercial district on a shady residential street, the William Fields House is a symbol of what middle-class residents could accomplish during this period of growth and development. Mr. Fields bought his land from Joseph Shields, "a northern investor in southern real estate."<sup>10</sup> Mr. Shields bought fifty acres of land south of the commercial district and the railroad tracks and behind Asheboro Street, with its beautiful large houses. In 1873 he placed seventy residential lots on the market. Because Elm Street, Greensboro's main street, stopped at the railroad tracks, this area, called Shieldstown, was a small village in itself. It has been said that it marked "the beginning of active residential development in Greensboro."<sup>11</sup> Fields' land was on the very edge of this development.

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William Absolum Fields, born April 17, 1847, was a moderately prosperous man. He served in the Civil War and returned to become a manufacturer of plug tobacco.<sup>12</sup> He was married in 1882 to Annie Caroline Tucker of Pleasant Garden.<sup>13</sup> They had five children, three sons and two daughters.<sup>14</sup> There is no record that he was involved in politics or civic leadership, but he was a faithful member of Centenary Methodist Church for many years.<sup>15</sup> He died of pneumonia on May 2, 1923, at age 76.<sup>16</sup> He has four surviving grandchildren, none of whom live in Greensboro.

Fields purchased land from Shields in July 1875 for \$550.00.<sup>17</sup> C. M. Ward's Map of Greensboro, 1879, indicates a house on the property by this time.<sup>18</sup> In 1906, Fields sold the house to E. L. Stamey and built another house at 437 Arlington Street.<sup>20</sup> Stamey in turn sold it to H. F. Starr in 1908.<sup>21</sup> Starr sold the house to the Centenary Methodist Church in 1909 for \$4,500.00.<sup>22</sup> It was used as the church's parsonage for many years. There are still members of this church who have fond memories of weddings, parties, and church gatherings in the house.<sup>23</sup> In 1943, the house was sold to Jessie and Annie Huffiness<sup>24</sup> who sold it to Hoyt Edwards in 1960.<sup>25</sup>

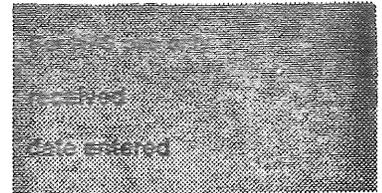
By the turn of the century, the Dukes had begun to dominate the tobacco manufacturing market and began locating in Durham. One by one, the warehouses in Greensboro closed and the commercial and residential growth began to move north.<sup>26</sup> Arlington Street was no longer considered "fashionable."

In 1979, Carol Johnson, an antique dealer and interior decorator, bought the house from Edwards<sup>27</sup> to house her business. She recognized the historic and architectural significance of the house and rescued it from its decaying state. She made improvements, not all in accord with standard preservationist techniques, and opened her shop in 1980. It was soon found to be economically impractical so it stood vacant again for several years.

Once more the William Fields House has been rescued. This time, through the efforts of the owners, the Old Greensborough Preservation Society, lasting restorative measures will be taken. The society plans to use the house for its offices and boardroom and to open it to civic groups for meetings and to private citizens for social occasions.

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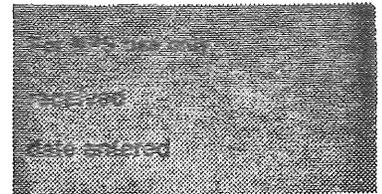
Page 3

Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> T. T. Watterman, The Early Architecture of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 180.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Gayle Tripp, local historian.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert Dick Douglas, Founders and Builders of Greensboro 1808-1908 (Greensboro: Joseph J. Stone and Company, 1925) p. 125-127.
- <sup>4</sup> Jonathan F. Baylin, "An Historical Study of Residential Development in Greensboro, 1805-1965" (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1968, p. 31.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 36-37.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 45.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 30.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 66.
- <sup>9</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 51, p. 15.
- <sup>10</sup> Baylin, p. 38.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 39.
- <sup>12</sup> Greensboro Daily News, Obituary, 3 May 1923.
- <sup>13</sup> Death Certificate, North Carolina State Archives, volume 773, p. 276.
- <sup>14</sup> Will of William A. Fields, Office of Clerk of Superior Court, Guilford County Courthouse, Greensboro, North Carolina. file #03011.
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with grandson, Mr. Branch Fields, on 5 March 1985.
- <sup>16</sup> Death Certificate, North Carolina State Archives, volume 773, p. 276.
- <sup>17</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 51, p. 15.
- <sup>18</sup> C. M. Ward's Map of Greensboro, 1879, Office of the Register of Deeds, Guilford County Courthouse, Greensboro, North Carolina.
- <sup>19</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 184, p. 675.

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- 20 Interview with grandson, Branch Fields, 5 March 1985.
- 21 Guilford County Deed Book 200, p. 54.
- 22 Guilford County Deed Book 216, p. 226.
- 23 Interview with grandson, Branch Fields, 5 March 1985.
- 24 Guilford County Deed Book 1024, p. 261.
- 25 Guilford County Deed Book 1904, p. 91.
- 26 Ruth Little-Stokes, p. 4
- 27 Guilford County Deed Book 3008, p. 733.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Greensboro

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	0	9	0	4	10	3	9	9	1	6	3	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

see continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ann L. Holleman

organization Old Greensborough Preservation Society date 8/1/85

street & number 447 Arlington Street telephone 272-6617

city or town Greensboro state North Carolina

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  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 *William S. King, Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 10, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

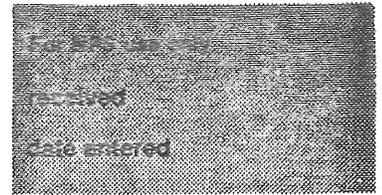
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet William Fields House Item number 9 Page 1

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Baylin, Jonathan F. "An Historical Study of Residential Development in Greensboro, 1808-1965," Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1968.

Douglas, Robert Dick. Founders and Builders of Greensboro 1808-1908. Greensboro: Joseph J. Stone and Company, 1925.

Downing, Andrew Jackson. The Architecture of Country Houses. Reprint edition, New York: Da Capo Press, 1968.

Fields, Branch T. Interview. 5 March 1985.

Fripp, Gayle. Interview. 1 October 1985.

Greensboro Daily News 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1923.

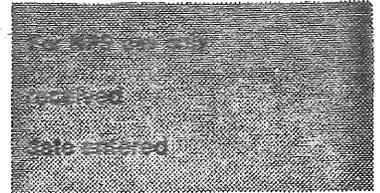
Guilford County Records. Guilford County Courthouse. Greensboro, North Carolina. (Subgroup: Deeds, Estates, Maps.)

Little-Stokes, Ruth. An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Greensboro, North Carolina. Raleigh; Division of Archives and History, 1976. North Carolina State Archives, death certificate Volume 773, p. 276.

Watterman, T. T. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

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Continuation sheet William Fields House Item number 10 Page 1

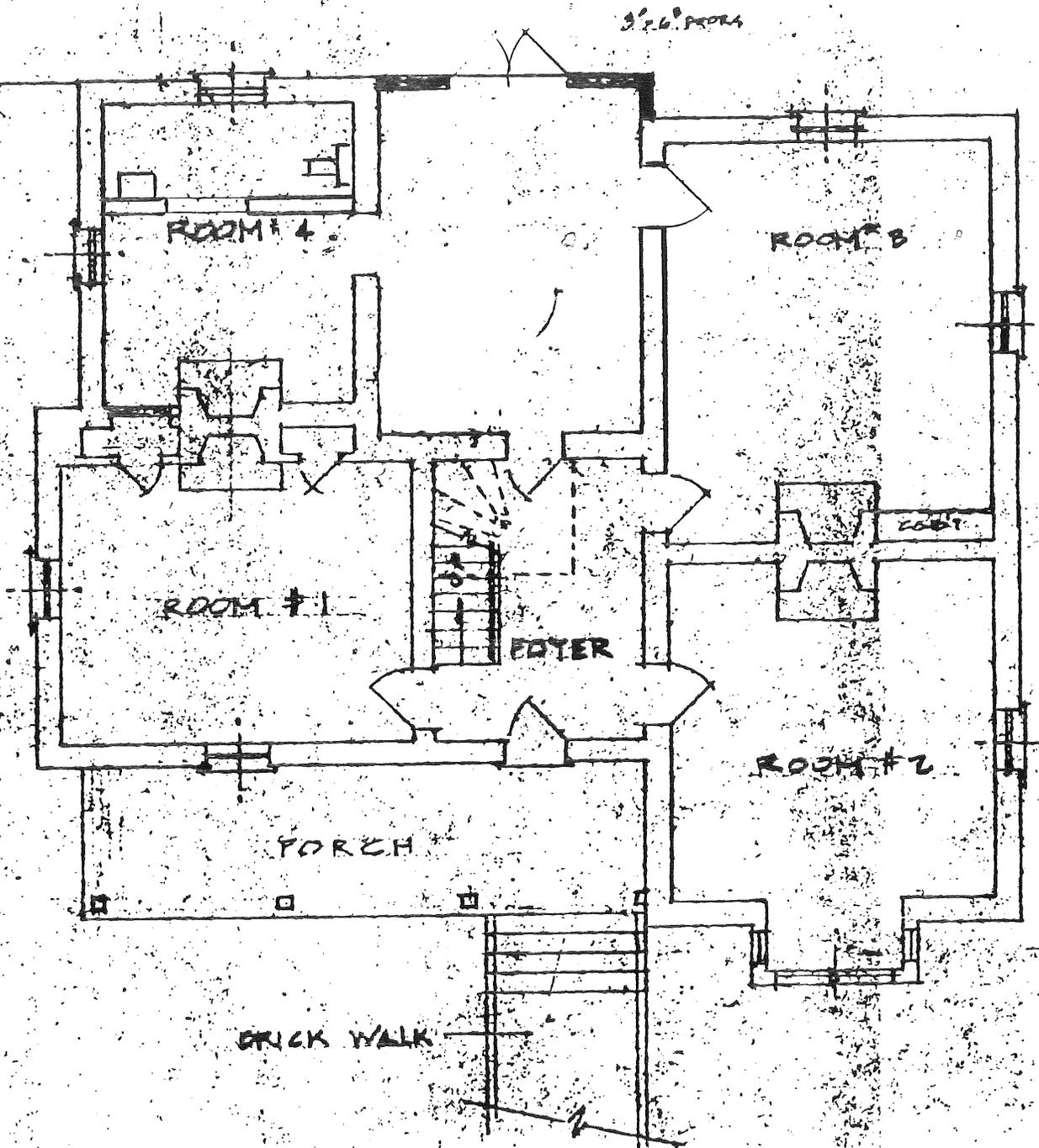
TRACT I

BEGINNING at a stake on the east side of Arlington Street, Bellamy's northwest corner, and running thence along and with the eastern margin of Arlington Street North 03 degrees 22 minutes 30 seconds East 65.40 feet to a stake; thence South 87 degrees 23 minutes 44 seconds East 242.88 feet to a stake; thence South 00 degrees 41 minutes 05 seconds West 66.11 feet to a stake; thence North 87 degrees 15 minutes 17 seconds West 245.61 feet to a stake in the eastern margin of Arlington Street, being the point and place of BEGINNING.

TRACT II

BEGINNING at a point, said point being the intersection of Jack H. Wagner's East line and the West margin of Lewis Street; thence along said West margin, being a curve to the right and having a chord bearing and distance of South 25 degrees 07 minutes 30 seconds East 14.35 feet to a point of tangency; thence South 21 degrees 12 minutes 20 seconds East 132.36 feet, still with said west margin, to a point of curvature; thence still with the West margin of Lewis Street, being a curve to the right and having a chord bearing and distance of South 09 degrees 32 minutes West 40.87 feet to a point of reverse curve; thence along the west margin of Murray Street, being a curve to the left and having a chord bearing and distance of South 27 degrees 33 minutes 10 seconds West 68.23 feet to a point; thence South 64 degrees 06 minutes 40 seconds West 11.36 feet to a point in the east line of J. L. Bellamy; thence the following bearings and distances along the east lines of Bellamy, grantee, Kenneth Mizel, Marvin L. Drake and Jack Wagner; North 01 degrees 18 minutes West 35.71 feet to a point, said point being Bellamy's northeast corner; thence North 00 degrees 42 minutes West 66.17 feet to a point; said point being Kenneth Mizel's southeast corner; thence North 01 degrees 32 minutes 50 seconds West 140.34 feet to the point of BEGINNING.

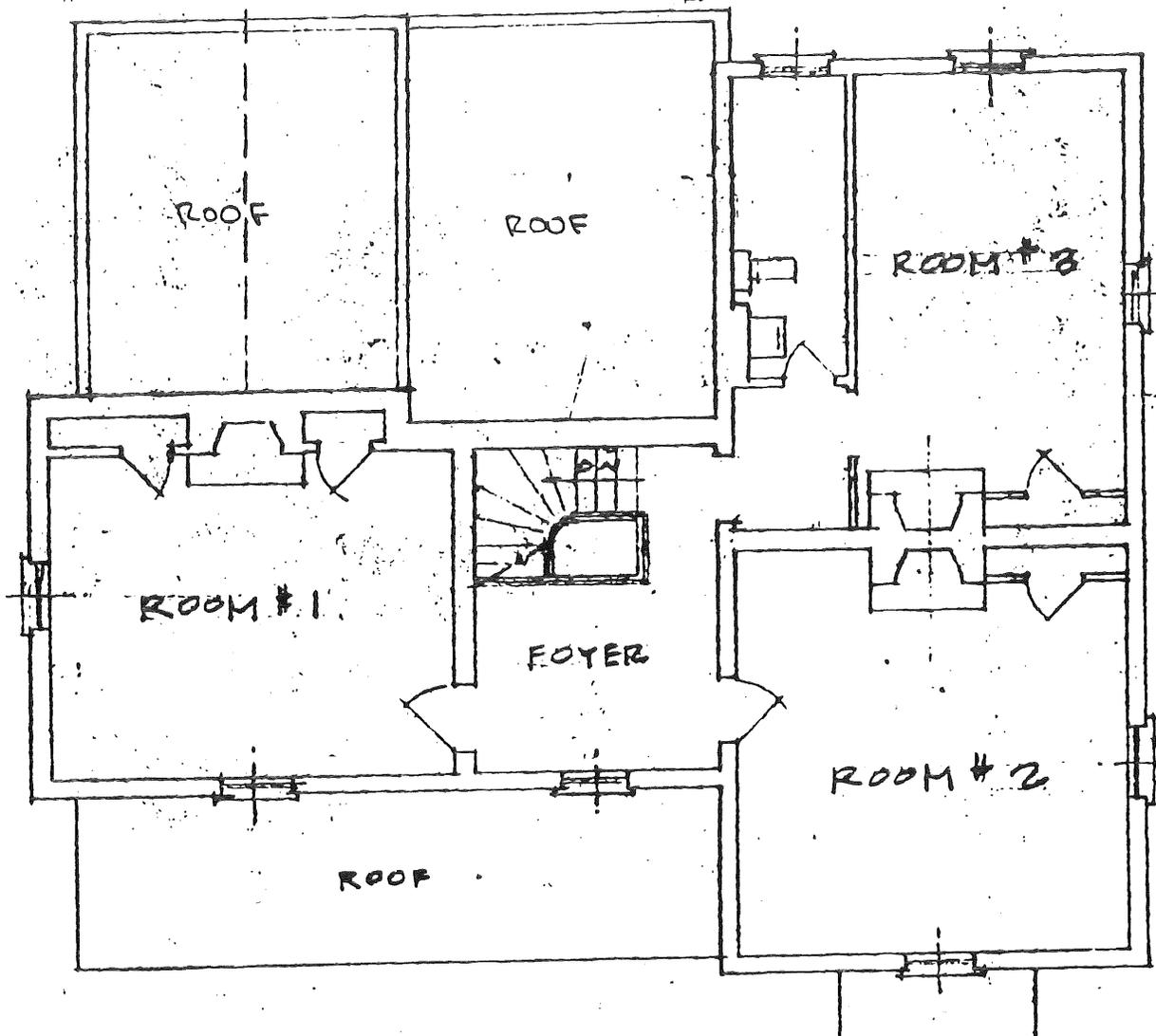
See attached map.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
 1/8" = 1'-0"

27

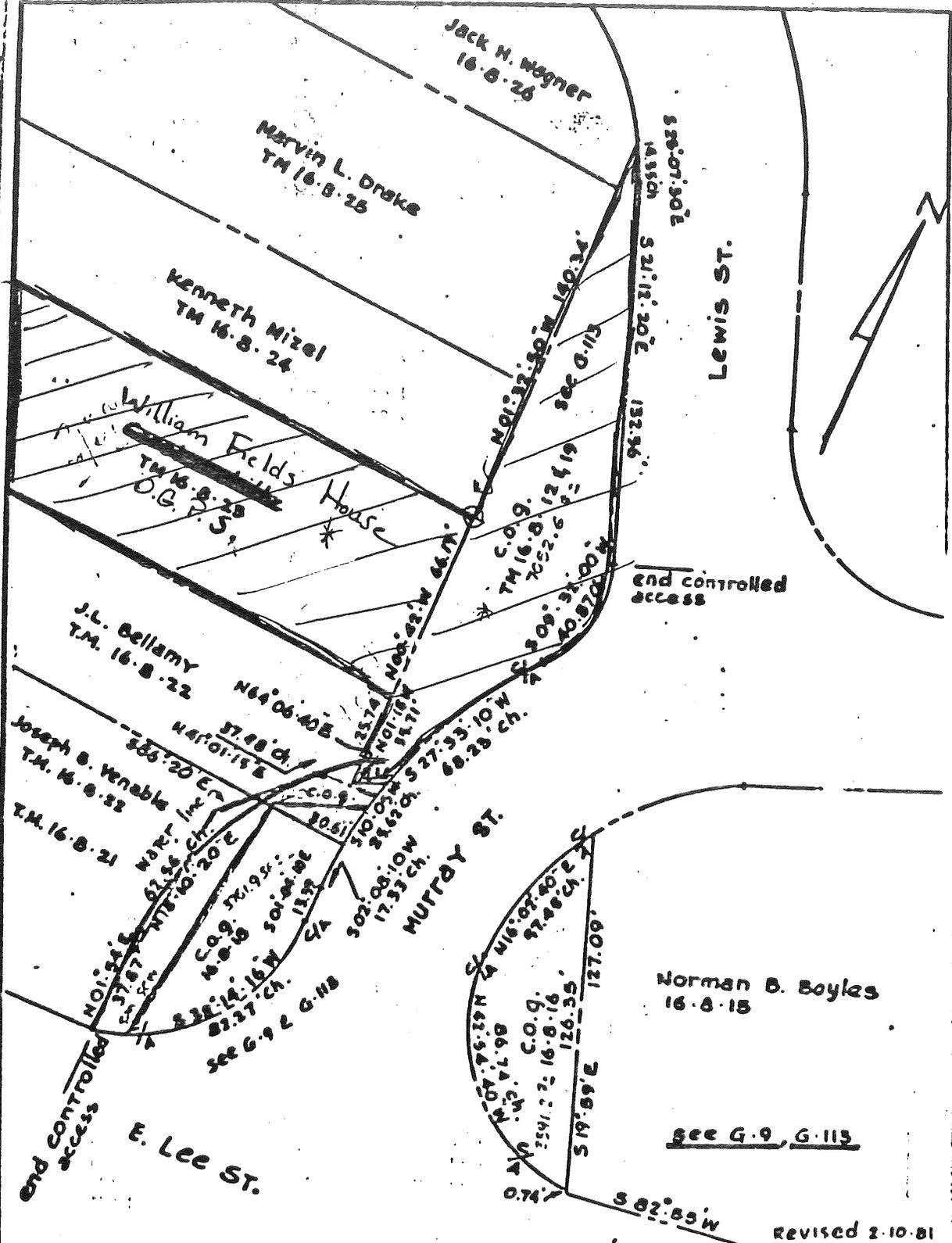
THE WILLIAM FIELDS HOUSE      447 ARLINGTON ST.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

$\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

ZF



Revised 2-10-81

SURVEY <u>J.P.</u> TRACED <u>MAC</u> CHECKED _____	CITY OF GREENSBORO, N. C. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS	DRAWING <u>D-1874</u>
	LEWIS ST. - MURRAY ST. C.O.G. PROPERTY @ E. LEE STREET	DATE <u>10-31-80</u> SCALE 1" = 40'



WILLIAM FIELDS  
HOUSE  
circa 1870

DESIGNATED  
U.S. DEPT. INTERIOR  
NATIONAL REGISTRY  
CUSTOM INTERIORS  
*Antiques*

PARKING  
←