

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rigsbee's Rock House

other names/site number The Rock House

2. Location

street & number NW corner of interesection of Lawrence Road and N/A not for publication

city, town Highway 70 West Bypass, east of Hillsborough, NC vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Orange code 135 zip code 27278

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u>3</u>	<u> </u> structures
<u>3</u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>8</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
NONE

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

William S. Finley
State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

9 Sep 88

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Tudor Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

Stucco

roof Asphalt

other Brick

Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION

Rigsbee's Rock House, a Tudor Revival home built around 1929, is situated on a 1.84 acre corner lot about 2 miles east of Hillsborough, NC. The lightly wooded property is surrounded on three sides by a low, white flint rubble rock wall. An original two car, detached garage, a pump house, and an outdoor swimming pool, each constructed of white flint rock, are also contained within the parameters of the property.

Rigsbee's Rock House, ca. 1929. Contributing Building.

The Rock House is a sprawling, one and one half story, roughly rectangular dwelling with a front terrace and three original porches on the side and rear elevations. A deep hip roof crowns the rock first story. The exterior of the house is constructed of white flint rubble rock wall cladding with rope or grape-vine mortar. The steeply pitched roof has front and rear gabled dormers and large cross gables. All gables and dormers have decorative half timbering of wood and stucco. The white flint rubble rock stack of the interior chimney extends above the roof line on the east end of the house. The wooden six over six window sashes are placed singly and in groups of two and three in brick sills and frames. Originally, a rock arch led onto the front terrace. The columns remain but for safety reasons the arch was removed a number of years ago. A low white flint rubble rock wall surrounds the front terrace which is floored in a gray slate known locally as "Duke Stone." Two white flint rubble rock columns support the side gabled roof of the porch on the east side of the house. A smaller porch extends off the west side of the house and a screened porch off the rear elevation.

The arched, wooden front door has two vertical panels topped by five panes of glass, stacked two over three. The door opens into an entrance hall, with a living room to the left side and a parlor to the right. Two of the five bedrooms are on the first floor, the other three upstairs. The interior of the house retains the original oak tongue and groove flooring, window and door surrounds, textured wall plaster, doors and door hardware. The house's only fireplace, in the living room, is constructed of white flint rubble rock (see photo #7). The original marble mantel shelf was replaced during an unknown period with a thick,

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varnished wooden slab mantel. The dirt floored basement contains the original furnace (inoperative) and the currently used modern heat pump. The house and surrounding outbuildings, with the exception of the garage, retain a high degree of architectural integrity, having undergone only one major refurbishing in 1986-87. This refurbishing carefully restored the original fabric of the house with only the following minor alterations. Several interior walls in the kitchen-breakfast room area of the rear were removed and the area converted into one large eat-in kitchen. Two new upstairs bathrooms were constructed out of a dressing room/bathroom and storage space in the rear gable, and a small upstairs bedroom was expanded utilizing storage space in the front gable. A closet was added to the upstairs master bedroom utilizing space in the steeply gabled roof.

Outbuildings and Yard Sculpture

1. Garage. (See photo #3). Ca. 1929. Contributing building. Constructed of white flint rubble rock, with front gabled asphalt shingled roof. Converted in 1986 to an apartment/guest house.

2. Pump House. (See photo #4). Ca. 1929. Contributing structure. Constructed of white flint rubble rock with steeply pitched, asphalt shingled hipped roof. The original interior contains the old well pump.

3. Wall. (See photos #2 & 5). Ca. 1929. Contributing structure. White flint rubble rock surrounds the property on the north, east and west property lines. Two rock columns flank the main entrance to the property at the junction of Lawrence Road and US 70 West Bypass. The front drive circles in front of the house, entering off Lawrence Road and exiting onto US 70 West Bypass. An arched entrance way in the east wall leads onto a walkway and to the east side porch. Small rock columns flank the front exit off US 70 and the rear entrance to the property off of Lawrence Road.

4. Swimming Pool. (See photo #5). Ca. 1929. Contributing structure. Located in the front yard and constructed of concrete with white flint rubble rock walls, capped with marble slabs. The pool has not been in use for many years.

5. Two Planters and One Arch. (See photos #2 & 5). Ca. 1929. Contributing objects. A free standing white flint rubble rock arch stands near the pool and two tiered six foot rubble rock planters flank the front of the house.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Social History

1929-1931

1931

Architecture

1929

1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Rigsbee's Rock House, a 1929 rural country estate near Hillsborough, is architecturally significant as the best known example in Orange County of a 1920s Tudor Revival style estate, with associated outbuildings and yard sculpture, all constructed of white flint rock. But its primary significance is its association with convicted bootleggers Mack Rigsbee and his wife, for whom the house was built. The house has colorful legends linking its spacious attic storage areas and overstructured bathroom floor to bootlegging in the house. Rigsbee's Rock House enhances Orange County's reputation as one of North Carolina's premier bootlegging counties in the Depression years.

Historical Background:

Mack Rigsbee, and his wife Julie E. Rigsbee, purchased in June, 1927 lots 72-75 in Block D of the Bankhead Forest Property (Orange County Deed Book 88, page 39). In April 1928, the Rigsbees purchased the adjacent lots 68-71 (Orange County Deed Book 90, pages 37-38). It is assumed that the house and outbuildings were completed and occupied by late 1928 or early 1929. The Rigsbees defaulted on their mortgage in 1931 (Orange County Deed Book 96, page 200). Since then the house has had a succession of owners. The current owners purchased the property in June, 1986 and immediately began renovations to the house which had been neglected through the years.

The architect and builder of the house are unknown. However, identical stone masonry can be seen in the foundations, chimneys and lowrock walls of 1920s & 30s small bungalow homes along south Alston Street in Durham, NC. This is a historically black neighborhood and suggests that black stone masons may have helped construct Rigsbee's house near Hillsborough. A Mrs. Brogdon, one of the subsequent owners of the house, recalled

See continuation sheet

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hearing that an Italian stone mason hired to work on the buildings at Duke University, also worked on the Rigsbee house (Singleton Interview). The white flint rock is said to have come off an Orange County farm and the slate used to floor the front porch from the same quarry that provided stone for Duke University in Durham. (Singleton Interview).

Very little factual information is known about Mack Rigsbee but local stories of his notoriety abound even today. According to local lore, Rigsbee was a Prohibition bootlegger who styled himself as a "gentleman farmer." He was alleged to have used the many storage areas created by his house's steeply pitched roof and dormers to hide the moonshine some say he distilled in the downstairs bathroom. The construction of the Rock House provides possible corroboration for the legend. The current owners found that the downstairs bathroom had a reinforced floor and an oversized drain in the bathtub. The upstairs bedroom and bathroom walls end far from the roof eaves, leaving oversized storage areas beneath the steeply pitched hip roof. One of the faucets in the upstairs sink was fed by its own tank concealed in the eaves of the roof. Some have speculated that Rigsbee and his guests had only to turn the appropriate faucet to fill their glasses with illegal libation. Another tale recalls a tunnel from the basement to the garage so liquor could be smuggled in and out of the house without being seen. Clarence Jones, a local historian who knew Mack Rigsbee, remembers the bootlegger as a short dapper man who wore kid gloves, drove a new Model A every year, dressed his wife in finery and was a wholesaler-distributor of illegal whiskey, known locally as East Lake Rye. (Charlotte Observer, 26 January 1987).

Documentation for the legends that surround Rigsbee's bootlegging activities exist both in Durham County court records and in North Carolina Supreme Court records.* Neighboring Durham County records document Mack Rigsbee's conviction in June, 1929 on charges of assault with a deadly weapon. Co-defendants were Felix Rigsbee who was found not guilty of assault and battery with a deadly weapon and Whalen Barbee who was found guilty of those charges. The events leading up to the trial are not known; however, Mack Rigsbee was fined \$500 and given a suspended two year sentence on the Durham County Road gang providing he gave "\$1000 bond to guarantee the maintenance of peace with Felix Rigsbee." (Durham Superior Court Minutes, 1929, pp. 416, 552, 558.)

* Orange County Court Records are not indexed and have not been thoroughly searched.

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During the mid 1930s Mack Rigsbee and his family lived in the vicinities of Henderson, Oxford, and Durham. Mack Rigsbee, sometime car dealer and filling station operator, was charged and convicted in September, 1935 of illegal possession of whiskey. Law enforcement officers had stopped him driving through Durham, NC, with his grown sons, Wallace and Warren. They found three one half-gallon jars of illegal whiskey. He was convicted and sentenced to eighteen months on the Durham County Jail road gang. Three months later, in December, law enforcement officials found twelve half-gallon jars of whiskey hidden in the attic of the Rigsbee's Granville County home. Court records frequently mention that two new Ford V-8s were parked in the yard. The couple was tried and convicted of illegal possession and transportation of whiskey and Mack was sentenced to twelve months on the Granville County Jail road gang. One witness testified that he had known Mrs. Rigsbee for ten years and that she had a bad reputation for "handling liquor". Another witness testified that he had known Mrs. Rigsbee since 1929 and she had once lived "between Durham and Hillsborough in a rock house." Other testimony mentioned that 87 gallons of liquor were found hidden in a closet of the Rigsbee's home at an earlier date. Both convictions were unsuccessfully appealed to the State Supreme Court by Mack Rigsbee. (State v. Mack Rigsbee. 211 NC 128, 189 S.E. 181 (1937).).

The court records, while shedding little light on Rigsbee's Orange County activities, do lend credence to his generally held reputation as a bootlegger. His Tudor Revival country estate home near Hillsborough is not only a well-preserved 1920s landmark but also a unique example of the lifestyle of one the area's better known bootleggers.

Social History Context:

Prohibition became law in North Carolina in 1909 and nationally in 1920. Bootlegging required little capital when undertaken on a modest scale and in many North Carolina counties it served to offset the financial travails of the depression. Orange County was considered one of the state's "premier moonshining counties." The illicit manufacture and sale of whiskey continued to be common practice for many years even after the 1933 repeal of Prohibition. (Parramore, pp. 15-16). Although bootlegging was a widespread illegal activity in the 1920s, and, on a smaller scale, until the recent past, the Rock House is the first site associated with it which has been documented by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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Architectural Context:

Rigsbee's Rock House is a well preserved Tudor Revival home, an architectural style popular in early twentieth century, middle class suburbs throughout the Piedmont and Western areas of North Carolina. The style was less popular in rural areas of the state. No complete survey of historic properties exists for Orange County; however, it is believed locally that Rigsbee's Rock House, as a rustic country estate with a garage, pump house, swimming pool, gates, walls and planters, all built of white flint rock, is unique in Orange County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet 9.1

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.84

UTM References

A
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Block B, Lot 9

The nominated property is outlined in red on the enclosed Orange County Tax Map #3 and constitutes lots 68-75 of the Bankhead Forest Development. The 1.84 acre lot measures 189.85' x 400' x 200' x 400'.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property constitutes the entire lot historically associated with the house and outbuildings.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michelle A. Francis, Consultant

organization _____
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 city or town Raleigh

date 3 June 1988
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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Charlotte Observer. 26 January 1987.

Durham County Superior Court Docket, Vol. 21, 1928-1929. (Microfilm, State Archives, Raleigh.)

Interview: James and Judy Singleton, 1987-1988, Hillsborough, NC. The Singletons provided information on the renovation of the house, newspaper clippings about Mack Riggsbee, and local lore gathered from neighbors and long-time residents of Hillsborough.

Lefler, Hugh and Wager, Paul, Editors. Orange County, 1752-1952. Chapel Hill: The Orange Printshop, 1953.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Orange County Deeds, Registrar of Deeds Office, Hillsborough, NC.

Parramore, Thomas C. Express Lanes & Country Roads. The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1920-1978. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

State v. Mack Riggsbee 211 NC 128, 189 S.E. 181 (1937). Transcript found in Records & Briefs, Fall Term 1936, Vol. 1, 10-11 Districts. State Supreme Court Library, Raleigh, NC.

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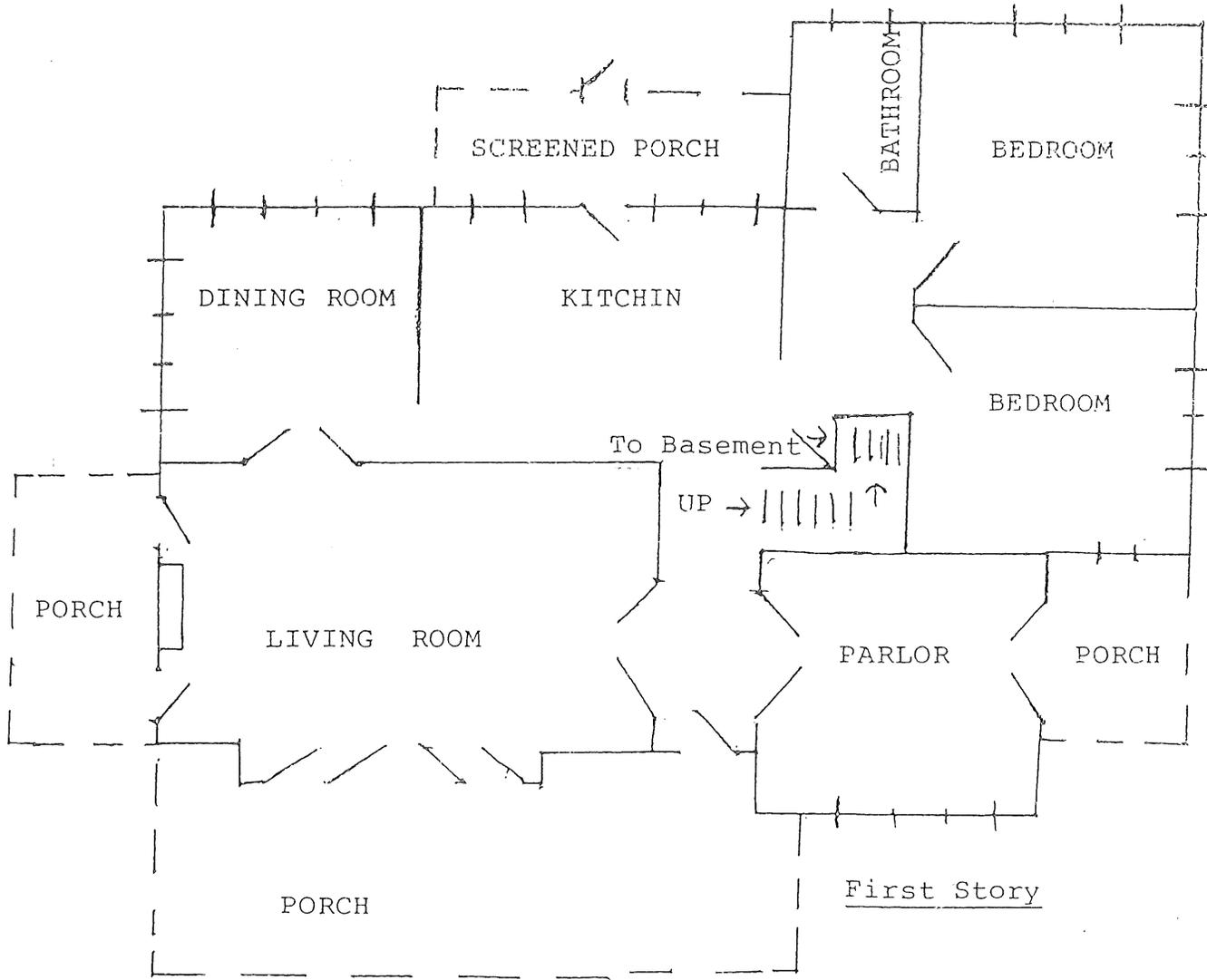
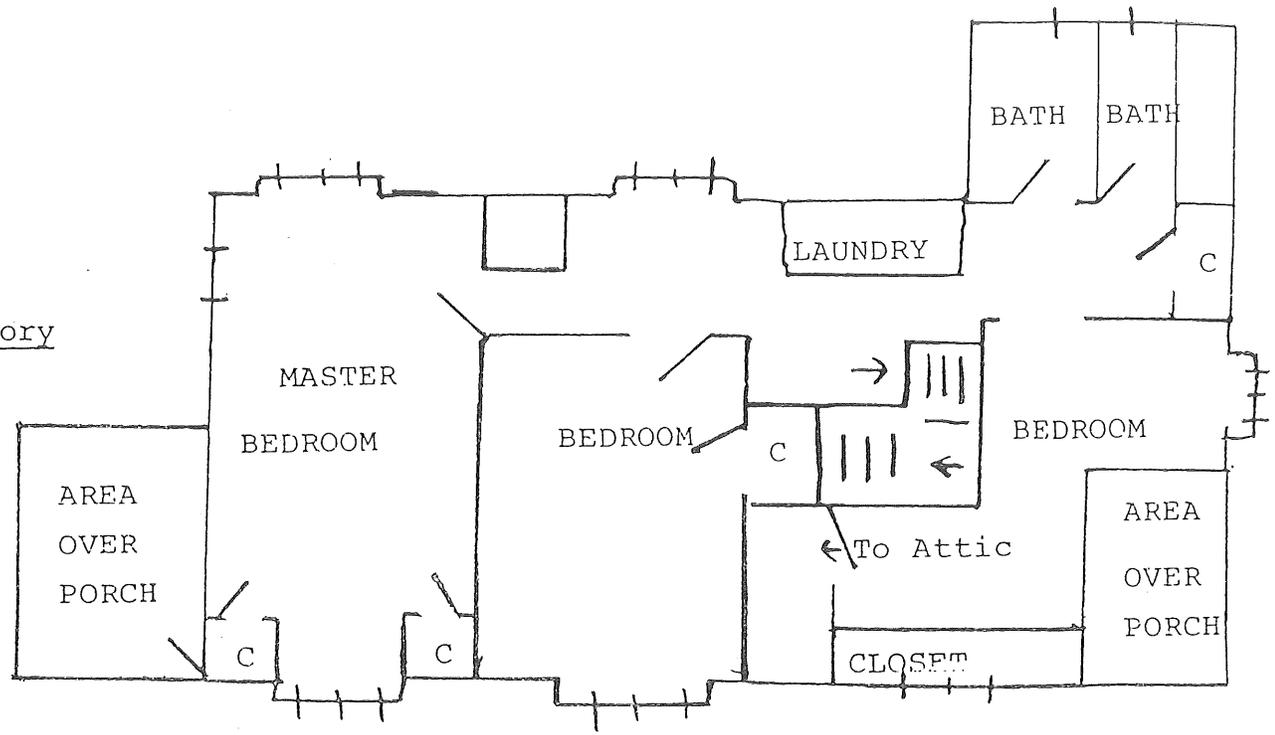
PHOTOGRAPHS

Rigsbee's Rock House, Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina.

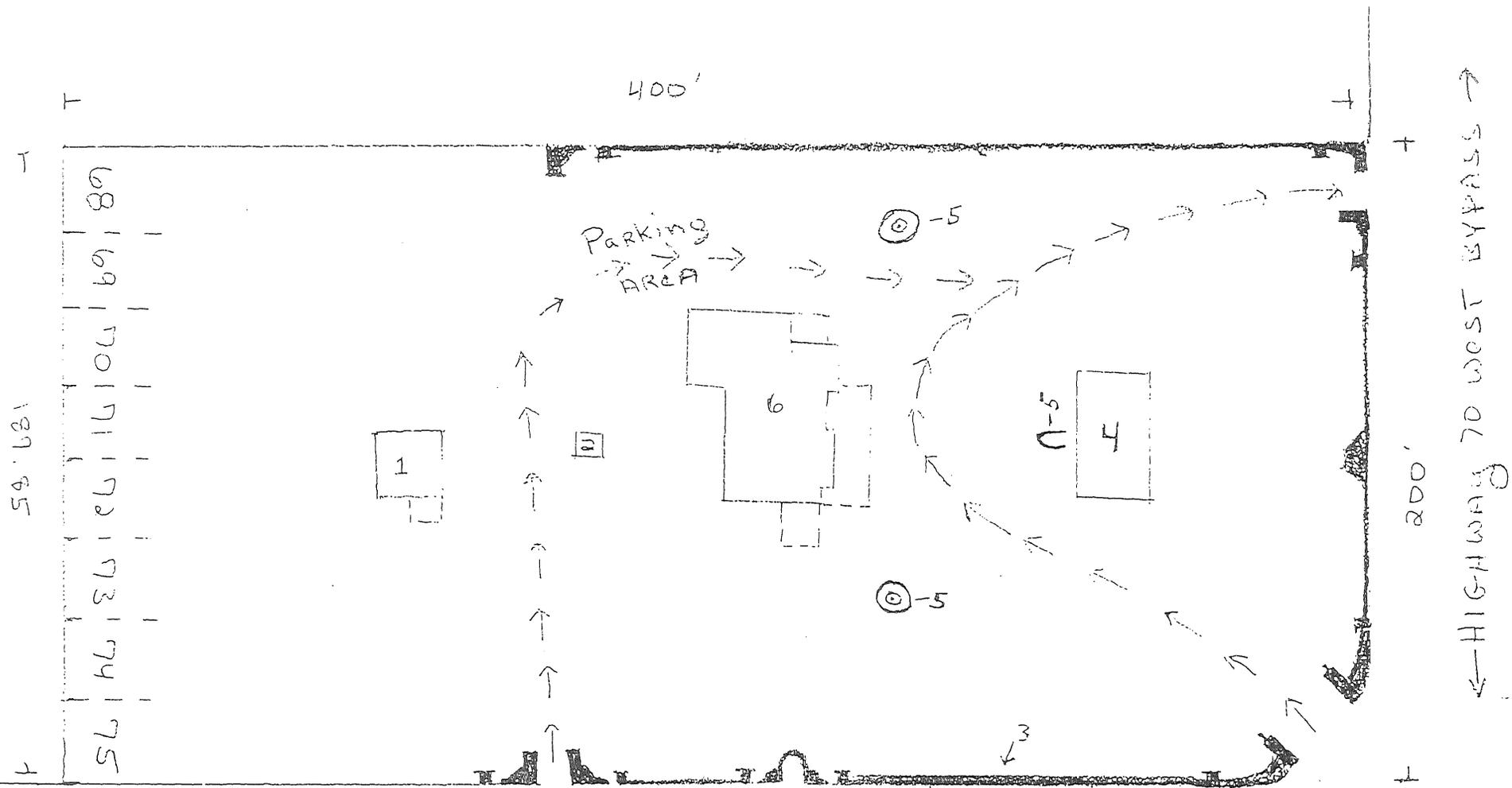
Photographs #1-6 were taken by Michelle A. Francis in 1987 and 1988. Photograph #7 was taken by James Singleton in 1988. All negatives are on file with the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

1. Rigsbee's Rock House, Front Elevation
Looking South
#6 on Sketch Map
2. Rigsbee's Rock House, Wall, Arch and Planter, East Elevation
Looking West
#3, 5, & 6 on Sketch Map
3. Garage, Front Elevation
Looking West
#1 on Sketch Map
4. Rigsbee's Rock House and Pump House, Rear Elevations
Looking Northwest
#2 & 6 on Sketch Map
5. Swimming Pool, Main Entrance, Arch
Looking East
#4 & 5 on Sketch Map
6. Rigsbee's Rock House, West Elevation
Looking East
6 on Sketch Map
7. Fireplace in Living Room
Looking East

Second Story



First Story



Map based in part on 1986 survey
 by Dale D. Faulkner for James R.
 Singleton. Lots 68-75, Bankhead
 Forest Property.

- Key:
- 1. Garage
 - 2. Pump House
 - 3. Rock Wall
 - 4. Swimming Pool
 - 5. Planters and Arch
 - 6. Rock House
 - Driveways

HILLSBOROUGH
QUAD
Rigsbee's
Rock House
ZONE 17
674 110
3992060

