

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Merrimon House  
AND/OR COMMON

Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

526 North Wilmington Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Raleigh

VICINITY OF

4th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Wake

193

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of North Carolina

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wake County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 Merrimon House is a two-story weatherboarded frame structure in Victorian Italianate style. The main block is six bays long and five deep, with the main facade dominated by an off-center two-story gable projections. Another similar projection extends at the south side. There are two elaborately ornamented one-story porches-- on either side of the front gable projection. Attached to the rear is a one-story, irregularly stepped shed. The whole stands on regularly spaced thick rectangular piers of running bonded brick.

The roof consists of three cross gables covered with alternating bands of rectangular and imbricated slate. Just above the west, south, and northeast eaves runs a small scalloped cornice. The broad, overhanging eaves are built up from strips of ovolo, scottia, and fillet moldings. They are supported by large rectangular chamfered modillions, each with an upper row of ovolo and fillet moldings, and a small raised panel end block. Two interior end chimneys pierce the roof, one straddling the ridge line in the northwest corner, the other punctuating the side slope of the southeast gable. Both chimneys are of running bonded brick with identical, elaborately corbelled caps. In the northeast corner of the rear shed is an exterior brick chimney with a two-course stepped cornice.

The first and second story windows are full length, running from baseboard to ceiling. Most are four-over-four segmental-arched sashes, although two-over-two sash occurs on the shallow sides of the two ground floor bays. The main block segmental-arched sashes are trimmed with heavy molded cornices, chamfered hood molds, flat paneled spandrels, and projecting keystones with bosses. Their bases are splayed outward in a series of pierced, strongly molded cyma reversa curves. The single round arched window, in the center of the first floor on the south, is similarly trimmed, although the spandrels are filled with tripartite foliate ornamentation. The bay windows are more simply framed, having chamfered unfluted pilasters capped by bulbous bosses. These windows stand on heavily molded, flat paneled bases with projecting plinths decorated with applied Greek crosses. The attic level windows, one pair to each elevation, are small rounded arches set within like-shaped trim.

One of the most charming features of the exterior is the abundant ornamentation of the porches. The main porch, north of the west (front) projection, is three bays long and one bay deep. Three freestanding columns and two engaged columns rise from the strongly molded handrail of the pierced balustrade. The columns are chamfered rectangles enlivened by symmetrically placed bosses. Heavily scalloped brackets with large turned pendants span the space between the splayed capitals and the porch ceiling. Between each pair of brackets is a broad semi-circular scalloped drop with a richly carved center sunburst. The north porch, running along the north side, is one bay longer and composed of identical elements. The main entrance is a double door surmounted by a single-light rectangular transom and flanked by broad sidelights.

The main block of the interior is organized around a center hall plan, two rooms deep on the south and three rooms deep on the north. Facing the main entrance on the south wall of the hall is an impressive stair which rises in a long single flight front to back between the principal stories and reverses itself between the second floor and attic. The stair has an open string, with turned and reeded balusters and a molded

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handrail. There is a large hexagonal newel with a four-sided cap decorated on each face with a lion's head. Set into the south wall near the first landing is a rounded, arched niche.

Behind the stairs, in the eastern end of the first floor hall, is a broad chamfered rectangular archway. The same configuration outlines the first floor bays. At the rear of the first floor hall, leading to the attached shed, is an elaborate round-arched double door. Other interior doors are flat paneled with very wide, heavily molded frames. Similarly molded baseboards are consistent throughout the house.

A trabeated arch of square fluted posts runs along the north wall and leads into the front room. Its Adamesque detailing includes a dentil cornice with egg-and-dart molding and flat-paneled soffit and bases.

The north front room originally contained a white marble mantel with center cartouche and paneled spandrels. The room directly behind this has a similar mantel of brown marble. The south front room contains a mantel with a flat paneled frieze with end blocks supported by elongated consoles, all of painted wood. The room directly behind this has a similar mantel with freestanding Ionic colonettes supporting the flat paneled frieze.

Second-floor mantels are simpler with the exception of one extremely plastic, curvilinear mantel. This mantel is heavily molded with broken, raised-paneled pilasters and an eclectic sinuous frieze relief.

# 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Merrimon House is a handsome, well-preserved Victorian Italianate dwelling, one of the best of the few major Victorian houses left in Raleigh. It is significant to the political history of post-Civil War Raleigh and North Carolina as the home of Augustus Merrimon, lawyer, judge, United States senator, and state supreme court justice.

The Merrimon House is believed to have been built for Augustus Merrimon about 1882. On August 3, 1874, Samuel F. Phillips and his wife, Frances R. Phillips, of Washington, D. C., deeded, through their attorney, R. H. Battle, "land Situate in the northern part of the City of Raleigh in the County of Wake & said State fronting on Wilmington Street . . ." to Margaret J. and A. S. Merrimon of Raleigh, North Carolina. The deed went on to designate the property as "part of the lot formerly occupied by S. F. Phillips for a Residence."

Samuel F. Phillips was a son of Dr. James Phillips, an early professor at the University of North Carolina. He was an able lawyer, member of the General Assembly, and speaker of the House of Commons. After the Civil War Phillips, a Republican, became solicitor-general of the United States.

Augustus Summerfield Merrimon was born at Cherryfields, Buncombe County (in present Transylvania County), North Carolina, on September 15, 1830. His parents were the Reverend Branch Merrimon and his wife Mary Paxton. His boyhood was spent in Haywood County, North Carolina, and was one of hard labor on the farm and in a sawmill, with limited educational opportunities. However, he "studied between the plow handles" and spent more than a year at school in Asheville, where he also served part of the time as a junior teacher. He studied law, and in 1852 he married Margaret J. Baird, the daughter of Israel Baird of Buncombe County, and a cousin of Zebulon Baird Vance (later governor and United States senator). In 1853 he received his license to practice law, and set up an office in Asheville. He was soon after made county attorney, after first being defeated for that post by Zebulon Vance. In 1860 he went to the House of Commons, and as a Union Whig, opposed the secession movement. Like many North Carolina Unionists he quickly changed his loyalties when war began, and became an officer in the Confederate Army, and served until 1862 when he was appointed solicitor of a western legal district, a post he held until 1865.

He was elected a judge of the superior court by the legislature in 1865, though he was greatly opposed to congressional Reconstruction, cooperating with the Conservative party. In 1871 he was one of the counsel of the board of managers in the impeachment of Governor W. W. Holden. Holden had been an outspoken supporter of secession before the war, and afterward he had become an enthusiastic supporter of the Republican adminis-

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tration that imposed Reconstruction on the South. After Holden was accused of violating the state constitution by placing certain counties under martial rule, the predominantly Democratic General Assembly brought charges of impeachment. Carpetbag rule of North Carolina was also a factor that weighed heavily in the proceedings, and when the final vote was announced William W. Holden became the first governor of the state to be forced out of office. Merrimon, a courageous and morally upright man, was one of those outraged by the excesses of the Holden administration.

In 1872 Merrimon was nominated for governor on the conservative ticket but was defeated by a small Republican majority which was supported with the full weight of the Grant administration. (Merrimon's role in the Holden trial, and his attachment to the conservatives had won him no friends in Washington.) He was elected by the General Assembly over Zebulon B. Vance (both men were conservatives) to the United States Senate in 1872, and served until 1879 when Vance replaced him after a bitter campaign. The small rift existing between these two giants since their earliest professional days in Asheville was widened to the point that the two never worked together again.

In 1883 Merrimon was appointed an associate justice of the state supreme court, and he filled the place until 1889, when he was appointed chief justice. He served in this capacity until his death on November 14, 1892.

Local tradition, coupled with late nineteenth century maps of the city of Raleigh, and stylistic evidence, indicate that Merrimon built the house at 526 North Wilmington Street about 1882. The 1883 city directory is the first to place the Merrimon family in that exact location.

Merrimon's will gave the majority of his property to two trustees, Branch H. Merrimon, his son, and Lee S. Overman (United States senator from North Carolina from 1903-1930), who had married his daughter, Mary Merrimon. The trustees were to hold the property in trust for the benefit of his wife and children. On February 23, 1899, Mrs. Margaret J. Merrimon (widow of A. S. Merrimon), Lee S. Overman, and B. H. Merrimon, trustees of the Merrimon estate, sold to Lula B. Page of Wake County, a tract of land in Raleigh and Wake County "Being lot No. 4---the Home place---of the property of the late Hon. A. S. Merrimon . . ." Mrs. Page paid \$6,000 for the property.

Allison Francis Page of Cary, Wake County, North Carolina, was married twice. His first wife was Catherine Frances Raboteau, and they were the parents of Walter Hines Page, who in 1913 was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to be ambassador to Great Britain. On November 16, 1898, Allison F. Page married Lula B. McLeod of Powellton, Montgomery County, North Carolina.

Mrs. Page remodeled the Merrimon house but basically the house remained unchanged. After Page's death Mrs. Page married J. Stanley Wynne of Raleigh. Mrs. Wynne had long maintained an interest in the development of Peace Institute, a Presbyterian academy and junior college for girls located near the Wynne home. On April 28, 1919, Mr. and

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Mrs. J. Stanley Wynne deeded their house to Peace Institute (now Peace College) for one hundred dollars and "other valuable considerations . . ." Peace College used the house as a dormitory, which was called the "Lula B. Wynne Hall for Girls." The house was also used for home economics classes, a vocal studio, and as a teacherage. In 1935 it became the college president's house when Dr. and Mrs. William Cornelius Pressly moved with their large family into Wynne Hall. The Pressly family lived there until Dr. Pressly retired as president of Peace College in 1965, and the house has since been used as a dormitory with the college chaplain and his wife as hosts.

The Merrimon House was recently purchased by the State of North Carolina, and its current status is uncertain. It lies within the area slated for expansion, where many buildings have been razed.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Battle, Kemp P., History of the University of North Carolina, 2 volumes. Raleigh, North Carolina: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1907.

Johnson, Allen, Malone, Dumas, and others (eds.). Dictionary of American Biography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 20 volumes, 1928.

Manuscript marriage index to the Raleigh News and Observer, compiled by Carrie Broughton and deposited in the Genealogical Section, North Carolina State Library, Raleigh, North Carolina

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	7,1,3,5,4,0	3,9,6,2,7,0,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist; architectural description by Mary Alice Hinson, consultant

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE 23 July 1975

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE   x   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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE *Tommy Allen Dwyer*

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 23 July 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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Wake County Records, Wake County Courthouse, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups:  
Deeds, Wills, Tax Lists).

Wake County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups:  
Deeds, Wills, Tax Lists).

Waugh, Elizabeth Culbertson. North Carolina's Capital, Raleigh. Raleigh, North  
Carolina: The Junior League of Raleigh, Inc., and the Raleigh Historic Sites  
Commission, Inc., 1967.

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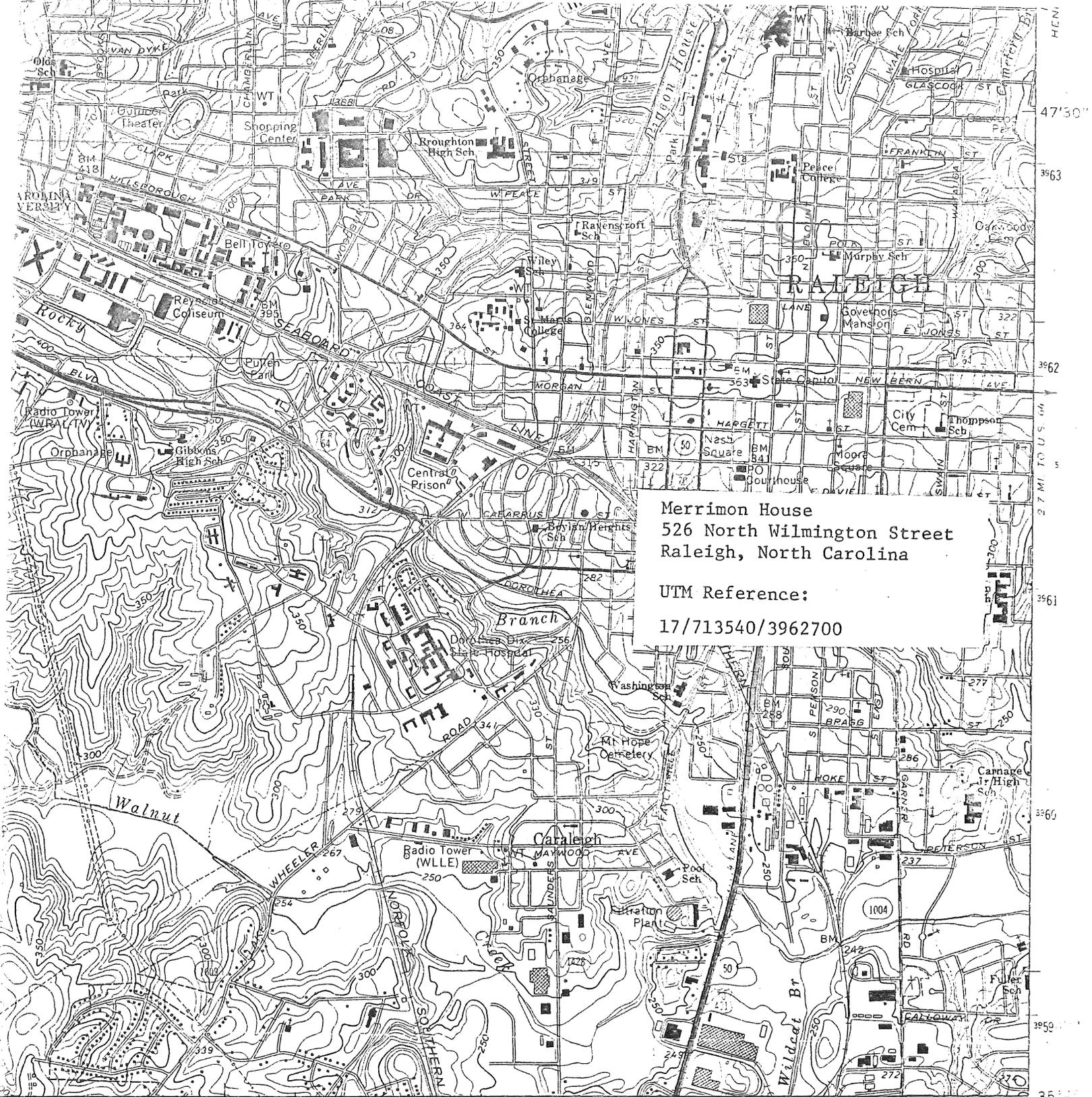
ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Merrimon House, Raleigh, North Carolina (Wake County)

Addendum:

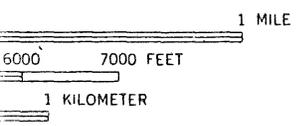
The Daily Sentinal (Raleigh, North Carolina) for October 9, 1875 (page 1, column 2) carried this item: "The City. . . Work has begun on Senator Merrimon's fine residence." Though it is only a passing comment, it shows that work had begun on the house which we have previously dated about 1882. It is believed that Merrimon and his family may have lived in another good residence on the property until their house was completed. There is no known completion date, and it is reasonable to expect that the house was more than a year in completion.



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1972-460-348/1  
 RALEIGH AIRPORT 11 MI. 7140000M.E. 78°37'30"

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

RALEIGH WEST, N. C.  
 SW/4 RALEIGH 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N3545 - W7837.5/7.5

