

(Oct. 1990)

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Penny, Jesse, House and Outbuildings

other names/site number Penny House

### 2. Location

street & number S side of SR 1379, 1 mile SW of SR 1371 (5615 Penny Road) N/A  not for publication

city or town Raleigh  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27606

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
 nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

- 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:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Penny, Jesse, House & Outbuildings  
Name of Property

Wake County, NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 |

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	1	buildings
0	0	sites
2	1	structures
0	1	objects
6	3	Total

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

Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County,  
North Carolina, ca. 1770-1941

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
FUNERARY/grave  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural  
outbuilding  
LANDSCAPE/fence

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
FUNERARY/grave  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage  
LANDSCAPE/fence

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Triple-A I-house

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Vinyl  
Weatherboard  
roof Asphalt  
other Metal

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1900

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Dupree, Peter

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Penny, Jesse, House & Outbuildings  
Name of Property

Wake County, NC  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5 1/2 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>707920</u> Easting	<u>3954160</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

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

### Boundary Justification

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer F. Martin  
organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. date June 26, 2001  
street & number 5400 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 412 telephone (919) 785-9702  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27612

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

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

## Property Owner

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

name Sherri and John McLamb  
street & number 5615 Penny Road telephone (919) 833-7087  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27606

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

The Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings stand on the south side of Penny Road (SR 1379) in Swift Creek Township in south central Wake County. Yates Mill (NR, 1970) and Mill Pond, a historic industrial property and long-time community focal point in southern Wake County, is one mile northeast; Lake Wheeler is approximately 1.2 miles south. Modern housing developments and cul-de-sac communities have transformed the once bucolic setting of the Penny House complex. Substantial houses built mostly in the last five to ten years and occupying former agricultural fields surround the five-and-a-half-acre tract containing the nominated property. The topography in this part of Swift Creek Township is generally level to rolling and historically soils were conducive to the production of corn, cotton, and tobacco.

The Penny House complex consists of the main house and support buildings and structures on a five-and-a-half-acre tract. An original and well-maintained picket fence, whose front section parallels Penny Road, encloses the dwelling and adjacent well house and remains one of the earliest such structures in the county. A modern fence extends along a portion of the yard behind the house. Two barns, a chicken house, and a one-story cottage, formerly a barn, occupy an area behind or south of the house. A lone grave marker in the east yard marks the burial place of James G. Penny (1891-1909), one of Jesse and Lillian Penny's children. A mown field lies immediately south of the outbuildings and is part of the nominated parcel. Large pecan trees on both sides of the house enhance the complex's setting. Nearly parallel gravel driveways flank the east and west sides of the house: the easternmost leads to the cottage, while the western drive provides access to the outbuildings.

The following inventory begins with the farmhouse and proceeds in a counterclockwise direction around the property. Resources are categorized as noncontributing if their date of construction falls outside the period of significance or if they lack sufficient integrity.

Jesse Penny House  
1890; 1900  
Contributing Building

The majority of the frame, two-story, single-pile house with rear additions took shape around the turn of the twentieth century. The current rear ell on the southwest corner of the house dates to 1890 and the front block was added around 1900. Previous owners sheathed the house in vinyl siding sometime between February 1990 and June 1994. The current owners plan to remove the vinyl in the immediate future. A well-preserved hip-roofed porch with turned posts and balusters and a delicate spindle frieze wraps around the north and west elevations terminating at the north wall of the rear ell's porch room. A double-leaf door with sidelights is centered on the first level of the three-bay façade. Four-over-four double-hung sash windows with synthetic shutters pierce the north, east and west elevations. A single sash window without shutters occupies the second level of the southern elevation. Prominent vented gables with cornice returns enhance the front elevation and the gable ends. Two ample brick chimneys with corbelled caps rise from the south slope of the side-gabled, asphalt-shingled roof. The house rests on a brick foundation.

The one-story rear ell at the southwest corner features a hip-roofed, nearly full-width partially enclosed porch with turned posts and balustrades sheltering the single-leaf door and flanking six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   2  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

west elevation. The eaves are flush on the south gable end. A single-shouldered brick chimney laid in 5:1 common bond and crowned with a free-standing stack once occupied the south gable end, but was removed when the house was sided.

An early kitchen forms the southeast corner of the house and is attached to the rear ell at a right angle. A stepped single shoulder brick chimney laid in stretcher bond occupies the east gable end of the early kitchen. In the 1970s, the space between the kitchen and main dwelling, which had previously been a porch, was enclosed creating a bedroom, sitting room and bathroom. This portion of the house is covered with a shed roof. The result is that the house has a nearly rectangular overall massing. The former kitchen features four-over-four sash windows, while the enclosed porch features six-over-six sash windows.

The interior follows a central-passage plan with parlors on each side of the hallway. The most notable interior space is the east parlor, a room featuring unpainted, but dark-stained tongue-and-groove walls and ceiling. The ceiling presents a bold geometric composition expressed in tongue and groove sheathing: eight large panels containing sheathing set parallel to the walls and divided by wood strips radiate around a central circular element. Horizontal wainscoting capped with a simple molded chair rail occupies the lower portion of the wall; above the rail, the tongue and groove sheathing is diagonal. The mantel consists of a post-and-lintel form with Doric colonettes crowned with an identical, but slightly dwarfed overmantel. The west parlor, now a bedroom, also retains the original dark-stained tongue and groove sheathing, but in a less dramatic horizontal composition. The mantel occupying the west parlor is a post-and-lintel design with curved pilasters resting on a base and supporting an upper shelf below the mantelshelf.

The ell, the earliest portion of the dwelling, contains two small rooms, the modern kitchen, and a bathroom contained in a porch room. While the ell's original south gable end chimney does not remain, the southern room's mantel—a vernacular Greek Revival piece with a beaded undershelf supported by square Doric pilasters—remains in place. The northern room's mantel features bold Doric pilasters resting on a base and supporting an undershelf just beneath mantelshelf. The modern kitchen occupies a space formerly used as a back porch or breezeway.

A door at the south end of the main central passage leads to a space that once served as an open porch leading to the rear of the house. This space has been enclosed and holds a bedroom and, separated by a wall, the dwelling's main kitchen accessible via the southwest rear ell. The southeast corner of the house originally served as a kitchen and contains a fireplace and vernacular Greek Revival post-and-lintel mantel. This section of the house continues to serve as a secondary kitchen. The space between the old kitchen and the two-story block was infilled in the 1970s and contains a living space and small bathroom.

The second level contains two bedrooms and a small bathroom. The space is plainly finished and simple post-and-lintel mantels stand in each bedroom.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   3  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

Well/Pump House  
ca. 1900  
Contributing Structure

A well house stands just off the southwest corner of the main house and within the domestic space enclosed by the picket fence. A standing-seam metal covered gable roof whose ridge is set on an east-west axis surmounts the diminutive frame building sheathed in weatherboard. The eastern half is open and supported on two corners of the east end by square posts crowned with latticework; similar lattice enhances the opposite corners as well. A door occupies the north elevation and a small window pierces the west elevation.

Barn/Garage  
ca. 1900  
Contributing Building

The barn/garage stands southwest of the well house, outside the area enclosed by the historic fence. A standing-seam metal covered gable roof whose ridge is set on a north-south axis surmounts the frame building sheathed in wood. A single-bay addition occupies the north end of the building. The main block contains a drive-through bay and storage space. The lower half of the south end is open and sheltered by the overhanging gable.

Barn  
ca. 1900  
Contributing Building

A front-gabled-roofed barn resting on a stone foundation and with sheds on its south, east and west elevations stands due south of the house and east of the barn/garage. A standing-seam metal roof covers the wooden building and extends to the west to cover a tractor bay. A single-leaf wooden door is centered on the façade and is crowned by a smaller hay loft door on the upper level. The rear elevation features a shed addition in poor condition.

Chicken House  
ca. 1900  
Contributing Building

A standing-seam metal shed roof surmounts the long, wooden building that features open stalls on its south elevation to provide warmth and light to the chickens. The eastern half of the building is recessed back from the western half. The building rests on a stone foundation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   4  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

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Cottage/former barn

ca. 1900/ca. 1910/ ca. 1950

Noncontributing Building (due to alterations)

Jesse Penny converted the former barn to a residence sometime in the early twentieth century. According to some local sources, he converted the building to accommodate Lillian Penny's mother, Emma, when she lived with the Pennys before her death in 1918. Since then, the building has always served as a residence. Evidence of its past function is apparent in the shed that occupies the eastern portion of the building. This space retains the appearance of a storage area common to barns. In addition to its conversion to a guest house, the cottage has undergone considerable change including the rebuilding of the chimney and the application of vinyl siding. In the 1950s, when Susan Blanche Penny quit her teaching job in Virginia and moved back to the Penny House to take care of her aging parents, her father gave her \$1,500 to remodel the cottage.

Picket Fence

ca. 1900

Contributing Structure

The well-preserved fence surrounding the complex's domestic space measures 384 feet and remains one of the earliest intact picket fences in Wake County. A strikingly similar fence encloses the early-twentieth century Tula Upchurch Holland House at 323 N. Salem Street in nearby Apex. Swinging gates pierce the west, north and east sides of the fence.

Grave Marker

ca. 1909

Noncontributing Object

A small stone obelisk in the east yard marks the grave of James Garland Penny, (1891-1909) who died of pneumonia.

Carport

ca. 1999

Noncontributing Structure

Four posts support the flat-roofed carport built to shelter a single automobile. The non-obtrusive structure stands due east of the house and outside of the picket fence.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

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SUMMARY

The Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings, located in Swift Creek Township, constitutes a remarkably intact assemblage of turn-of-the-twentieth-century vernacular building types associated with agriculture prosperity in rural Wake County. Around 1900 Jesse Wood Penny, a farmer and timber dealer, hired local carpenter Peter Dupree to build the two-story, triple-A house onto the front of an earlier one-story house on land near his father James Penny's homeplace. Dupree's personal journals from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the very early twentieth century provide a glimpse into the life and work of a local artisan. Jesse Penny (1862-1960) raised livestock, grew corn, cotton, and tobacco, and built outbuildings on his property to support his farming activities. Barns, a well house, and chicken house stand in the complex, as does a ca. 1900 picket fence, one of the oldest such structures remaining in Wake County. To supplement his farm income, Penny operated a lumber business throughout most of the twentieth century. Context 3, "Populism to Progressivism, 1885-1918" and Context 4, "Boon, Bust and Recovery Between the World Wars, 1919-1941," in "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina, ca. 1770-1941," (MPDF) provide the context for establishing the Penny House and Outbuilding's eligibility under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture. The Penny House falls under Property Type 1B, "Farm Complexes Between the Civil War and World War I" and Property Type 3, "Houses Built Between the Civil War and World War I." Additional context for the Penny House and Outbuildings is provided herein. The period of significance for the Penny House and Outbuildings is 1900, the date of construction of the majority of the house and support buildings.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jesse Wood Penny was born on September 12, 1862 to Mary Jane and James Penny. James Penny, a native of Johnston County born in 1817, married Mary Jane Wood, daughter of Jesse and Nancy Pollock Wood, in 1840. In the mid-nineteenth century James Penny, a prosperous farmer whose land holdings in 1850 were valued at \$2,600, built a two-story Greek Revival style house at the center of his farm and just west of the local mill pond. In 1854 Penny, along with Thomas Briggs and John Primrose, purchased the local millpond, an industry begun in the late eighteenth century. Soon after, Penny gained full ownership and the millpond became known as Penny's Pond. James Penny sold the mill to his son-in-law Phares Yates in the 1860s and since then the mill has been known as Yates Mill. James Penny raised a variety of crops, including apples that he harvested from seventy-five trees growing on his farm. Mary Jane Penny died in 1902, followed by James Penny in 1904.<sup>1</sup>

Jesse W. Penny and his twin sister Nancy were the last of eleven children born to James and Mary Jane Penny. Jesse Penny farmed and worked in the lumber business. He married Margaret Lillian Franks (1867-1957), daughter of Emma and J.D. Franks, in 1887. The Pennys had five daughters and two sons. At the turn of the century, their school-aged children attended school for three-and-a-half months a year and likely spent the remaining months helping their parents on the farm.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Agriculture (microfilm), North Carolina State Archives; Geneva Campbell Davis, "James and Mary Wood Penny Family," in *The Heritage of Wake County* (Raleigh: Wake County Genealogical Society, 1983), 394-395; 1850 Census of Wake County, North Carolina (on-line version).

<sup>2</sup> Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population (microfilm), North Carolina State Archives.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

Like his father, Jesse Penny acquired much land in Swift Creek Township of Wake County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Jesse Penny's daughter, Susan Blanche Penny, he paid from two dollars per acre to ten dollars per acre.<sup>3</sup> In 1889, James and Mary Jane Penny and Phares and Roxanne Penny Yates sold Jesse seventy-five acres adjacent to his father's land and to land belonging to W.H. Strother, who married Jesse's sister Octavia or "Ockey." In December 1896, his father and mother sold Jesse 28 3/8 acres adjacent to land held by Phares Yates and W.H. Strother. In 1901, Jesse purchased a little over 339 acres, part of the former Peace Plantation known as Shepherd's Rest, from the Capehart and Peace families. Jesse continued to acquire land in the Swift Creek Township in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> His family's holdings grew with Lillian Penny's inheritance of almost ninety acres from her father in 1904.<sup>5</sup> Penny did not inherit land upon his father's death in 1904. Following some disagreement among James Penny's children as to the division of their father's 314 acres, in 1910, the ten living children decided by majority vote to sell the land and divide the proceeds equally among them.<sup>6</sup> An auctioneer sold the land in four tracts on the steps of the Wake County courthouse. Jesse Penny purchased the majority of the land including the parcel containing his father's house.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to land, Jesse Penny accumulated a good deal of material wealth in the early part of the century. In 1904, he owned horses, mules, goats, cattle and hogs, all valued at over \$600. His household furniture and library were worth fifty dollars, while his musical instruments, including a piano, were valued at \$200. In all, Jesse Penny's real and personal property in 1904 was valued at over \$3,700.<sup>8</sup> Even though he acquired a good deal of wealth, Jesse Penny described himself as possessing simple "habits and tastes" and as being neither "extravagant" nor "wasteful."<sup>9</sup> He attended Inwood Baptist Church located on Lake Wheeler Road and worked for the betterment of local education by taking an active role in early efforts to consolidate Wake County schools.<sup>10</sup>

Around 1900, as a sign of his prosperity, Penny added the two-story portion of the house now facing Penny Road. Peter Dupree, a local builder and handyman, built the addition. Dupree kept meticulous journals for the years 1879 to 1884 and 1890 to 1902. Dupree's entries indicate that he worked on the Penny House sporadically starting on July 24, 1898. By July 1901, he had completed 117 days of work for Jesse Penny. Among the entries in the journal are, "finish work for J.W. Penny," on July 25, 1901, indicating he carried out some finish carpentry at the Penny House. Dupree

<sup>3</sup> Isabella Cannon, "Oral History of the Macedonia Area," January 28, 1972, unpublished article, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Various Deeds, Wake County Register of Deeds Office, Raleigh.

<sup>5</sup> Will of J.D. Franks, recorded July 1904, Wake County Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Raleigh.

<sup>6</sup> Wake County Superior Court, Order of Sale: *Mrs. Mary A. Adams et al v. Jesse W. Penny and his wife*, September 14, 1910, in J.W. Penny Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Report of W.N. Jones, Commissioner, May 11, 1910, J.W. Penny Estate Papers, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Wake County Tax Lists, 1904 (microfilm), North Carolina State Archives; in her will, Susan Penny, one of Jesse and Lillian's children, mentioned a piano belonging to her father that was left in the family homeplace, Will of Susan Blanche Penny, March 16, 1971, Wake County Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Raleigh.

<sup>9</sup> *Susan A. Penny v. J.W. Penny and wife, Margaret L. Penny* (Answer), January 4, 1922, in James Penny Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Obituary, Jesse Wood Penny, News and Observer (Raleigh), January 6, 1960.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

probably became acquainted with Jesse Penny through Lillian Penny's father, J.D. Franks, who had hired Dupree for various building projects. Dupree's journal entry from April 27, 1894 indicates that J.D. Franks owed him fifteen dollars for "work on piazza."<sup>11</sup> Dupree also helped move the Franks House in November 1901. A crude sketch drawn by Dupree and tucked inside one of his journals clearly shows the first floor of the Penny House with the southwest ell labeled "old" and the front two parlors marked as measuring sixteen feet squared. The sketch also indicates the current arrangement of the former kitchen attached to the original one-story dwelling. The breezeway is shown to extend from the center hall to the rear of the house. Although not dated, the plan is tucked inside a journal from the late 1880s.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence that Dupree built the house is substantiated in an interview local noted historian Isabella Cannon conducted with Susan Blanche Penny in 1972. Ms. Penny, who was eighty years old, told Isabella Cannon, "Mr. Dupree was the man who did the building." Jesse Penny paid him one dollar per day and when Penny ran out of money to pay Dupree, Penny would tell him to work for other people in the area and come back when the family had money to pay him. Ms. Penny also remembered that Mr. Dupree had created the sunburst motif in the front parlor with a penknife. Ms. Penny expressed hope that later occupants of the house would not obscure the tongue and groove sheathing on the walls and ceiling. Ms. Cannon remarked that Ms. Penny's "pride in the room is great, and justifiably so. The walls really belong in one of the museums showing workmanship done with pride."<sup>13</sup>

Like many farmers in Wake County in the early twentieth century, Jesse and Lillian Penny's economic status began to decline somewhat in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As cotton prices in the county plummeted at the end of the nineteenth century, the number of large Wake County farms decreased. Jesse and Lillian Penny became indebted from buying land. Soon after they purchased James Penny's land and took out a mortgage held by the Raleigh Savings Bank and Trust Company, "the World War came...and on account of the condition of the country and the low price of cotton," it appeared the Pennys would be "sold out and subjected to great loss."<sup>14</sup> In fact, Jesse's sister Susan characterized her brother as "embarrassed with debt."<sup>15</sup> The family recovered by selling "some timber and some land."<sup>16</sup>

By 1934 Jesse Penny's land holdings had shrunk to 194 acres.<sup>17</sup> The next year, a farm census survey showed that Penny farmed only fifty of his 194 acres. He grew twenty acres of corn and smaller plots of cotton (nine acres), tobacco (five acres), cowpeas for hay (twelve acres) and one acre of sweet potatoes. His livestock holdings included

<sup>11</sup> Piazza (usually pronounced "pizer"), another term for porch, was used, and is still heard frequently, in eastern North Carolina.

<sup>12</sup> Dupree kept well-detailed accounts of his daily activities, even indicating that Jesse Penny's mule died on November 4, 1898, Peter Dupree, Journals 1890-1902, in possession of Sherri and John McLamb.

<sup>13</sup> Isabella Cannon, "Oral History of the Macedonia Area," 23.

<sup>14</sup> *Susan A. Penny v. J.W. Penny and wife, Margaret L. Penny* (Answer), January 4, 1922, in James Penny Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>15</sup> *Susan A. Penny v. J.W. Penny and wife, Margaret L. Penny* (Plaintiff's Reply to Further Answer of Defendants), March 30, 1920 in James Penny Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>16</sup> *Susan A. Penny v. J.W. Penny and wife, Margaret L. Penny* (Answer), January 4, 1922, in James Penny Estate Records; Cannon, "Oral History of Macedonia," 23.

<sup>17</sup> Wake County Tax Lists, 1934 (microfilm), North Carolina State Archives.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

two horses or mules and one milk cow.<sup>18</sup> A ledger belonging to the family and dating from 1934 indicates that for at least six months, the Pennys operated a small-scale poultry and egg business. In January 1934, the family sold a little over fifteen dollars worth of hens and eggs. The same ledger shows the family's typical monthly expenses for 1934. In April 1934, the family spent a little over eight dollars on lye, butter, meal, sugar, flour, soda, cereal, coffee, sugar and other household necessities.<sup>19</sup>

In order to supplement his earnings from farming, Jesse Penny worked as a "lumberman" or dealer in cut and finished lumber.<sup>20</sup> For a period, he operated a lumber business with Ernest Sorrells. Jesse Penny kept a "lumber book" for the years 1900 and 1901 that provides quantities and prices for their wood, as well as client names.<sup>21</sup> A business directory for 1910 indicates the two men also operated a cotton gin, but little is known about that business.<sup>22</sup>

Jesse Penny was not alone in his financial struggles for the period between the World Wars proved challenging for most farmers in Wake County. Prices for cotton and tobacco fell sharply and many families in the county abandoned farming completely.<sup>23</sup> Unlike hundreds of families, the Pennys survived the economic crisis of the pre-World War II period and retained their farm.

Lillian Penny died on August 17, 1957 at age ninety from natural causes. On January 5, 1960, after a seven-day illness, Jesse Penny died at Rex Hospital at age ninety-seven from heart disease.<sup>24</sup> His funeral was held at Inwood Baptist Church, but both he and Lillian and Jesse Penny are interred in the Catawba Springs Christian Church cemetery located on the south side of Lake Wheeler.<sup>25</sup> The house Jesse Penny built and a portion of the surrounding acreage passed to daughter, Susan Blanche Penny, who lived with her parents when they died and who continued to live at the homeplace until her death in December 1978. She left the house and land to her sisters, Celeste, Jessie, Mary and Pauline. Susan Penny's will included a "Family Settlement Agreement," indicating that there was some friction among the siblings over the family property. One tenet of Susan Blanche Penny's will declared that the "Penny family homeplace, inclusive of the house, outbuildings and barn, and approximately nine acres of land shall remain in the Penny family."<sup>26</sup> Pauline Penny Beaver lived in the house until her death in 1992. In 1996, Pauline Beaver's heirs sold the house to John McLamb, who, along with his wife, Sherri, currently live in and maintain the property. John

<sup>18</sup> County Farm Census Survey of North Carolina Townships (1935), Swift Creek Township, Wake County, North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Statistical Division, North Carolina State Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Jesse Penny, "Ledger," 1934 (partial year), in possession of Sherri and John McLamb.

<sup>20</sup> Obituary, Jesse Wood Penny, (Raleigh) News and Observer, January 6, 1960.

<sup>21</sup> Jesse Penny "Lumber Book," 1900-1901, in possession of Sherri and John McLamb.

<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the entry for "Penny and Sorrell" was mistakenly placed under a listing for cotton gins doing business in the county instead of lumber mills, *North Carolina Yearbook, 1910*, Raleigh: News and Observer, 1910.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly A. Lally, *The Historic Architecture of Wake County, North Carolina*, (Raleigh: Wake County Government, 1994) 137.

<sup>24</sup> Certificate of Death, Jessie [sic] Wood Penny, Wake County Office of Register of Deeds, Office of Vital Statistics, January 6, 1960.

<sup>25</sup> Obituary, Jesse Wood Penny, (Raleigh) News and Observer, January 6, 1960.

<sup>26</sup> Will of Susan Blanche Penny, March 16, 1971, Wake County Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Raleigh.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

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McLamb, who lived in the cottage as a child, and his wife, wish to carefully restore the Penny House and Outbuildings.

ARCHITECTURE CONTEXT: EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY DOMESTIC AGRICULTURAL COMPLEXES  
IN RURAL WAKE COUNTY

At the turn of the twentieth century, farmers in rural Wake County continued to prefer the plainly finished vernacular dwellings built widely in the county during previous half century. The proliferation of mass-produced construction materials enabled builders to erect houses in a variety of forms and with a range of decoration and trim, although a few styles dominated the landscape. One of the most popular was the two-story, single-pile, side-gabled house type known widely as the I-house. In the late nineteenth century this traditional form took on a new flavor with the addition of a gable centered on the front façade, a form known locally as the “triple-A.” At the turn of the twentieth century, one- and two-story triple A houses stood as the most popular dwellings in Wake County.<sup>27</sup>

Wake County retains many intact early twentieth-century two-story triple-A farmhouses of an age and form comparable to the Jesse Penny House. More rare are domestic rural agricultural complexes of the period that retain the central dwelling and an intact complement of outbuildings and support structures. Areas of the county where cotton and tobacco reigned as cash crops during the period contain the most examples to provide context for understanding the significance of the Penny House and Outbuildings.

From October 1988 through June 1991, architectural historian Kelly Lally conducted a comprehensive survey of rural Wake County and documented approximately two thousand properties. Since the publication of the survey in *The Historic Architecture of Wake County, North Carolina* in 1994, rapid development has continued to transform the rural portions of the county. In the past five to eight years, sprawling housing developments that have systematically swallowed up former farmland and forests have also eradicated or wholly transformed former domestic agricultural complexes.

One of the most dramatic examples is the C.J. Lassiter House located in Barton’s Creek Township in northwestern Wake County. Mill owner C.J. Lassiter built the two-story, single-pile triple-A farmhouse circa 1890 at the center of his farm. Like the Jesse Penny House, the Lassiter House interior features decorative diagonal tongue-and-groove sheathing and wainscoting. While much of the finish remains intact, one wall of the center hall was removed thereby compromising the original central passage plan. The most stunning alteration to the Lassiter House has been its incorporation into a new housing development called Traemor. The house now serves as the development’s office and the outbuildings that stood in the early 1990s have been removed. A substantial two-story garage with oversized doors occupies the west elevation and a high stone wall separates the house from SR 1830, thereby disrupting its original orientation.

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<sup>27</sup> Lally, 104-105.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   6  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

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Closer to the Penny House and located in Swift Creek Township, the David Smith House, also a two-story, single-pile triple-A frame house, features a decorative sawn balustrade and turned posts as well as a corner gazebo. The late-nineteenth-century dwelling, similar in form and decoration to the Penny House, recently underwent a major alteration with the addition of a two-story, side-gabled-roof section to the west gable end. The Smith House faces the encroachment of a new housing development whose boundaries terminate only a few yards from the east side of the dwelling. The Betts-Yarborough Farm in Holly Springs Township appears similar to the Penny property. A two-story, single-pile triple-A, I-house, altered by copious replacement material, stands as the center of compound of frame and log outbuildings. From the presence of historic and modern curing buildings, it appears the Betts-Yarborough Farm operated as more of a production-intensive flue-cured tobacco farm than the Penny House and Outbuildings.

Since the completion of the county survey, the William and Amelia Turner Farm in Panther Branch Township in southeastern Wake County has fared much better than similar properties in Wake County. The main dwelling, nearly identical in form and embellishment to the Jesse Penny House, retains its original exterior sheathing and turned porch ornament. Several notable outbuildings, including a frame smokehouse and detached kitchen, stand on the complex. The house currently appears vacant and the adjacent land is for sale.

The Penny House and Outbuildings, despite the recent application of vinyl siding to the main dwelling, remains a remarkable survival in a county whose rural landscape continues to erode. While the turn-of-the-century domestic agricultural complex once seemed a ubiquitous property type in Wake County, few intact examples exist.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   1  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   2  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

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Wake County Tax Lists, 1904 (microfilm). North Carolina State Archives.

Wake County Tax Lists, 1934 (microfilm). North Carolina State Archives.

Will of J.D. Penny, July 1904. Wake County Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Raleigh.

Will of Susan Blanche Penny, March 16, 1971. Wake County Clerk of Superior Court, Estates Division, Raleigh.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   10   Page   1  

Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Wake County, North Carolina

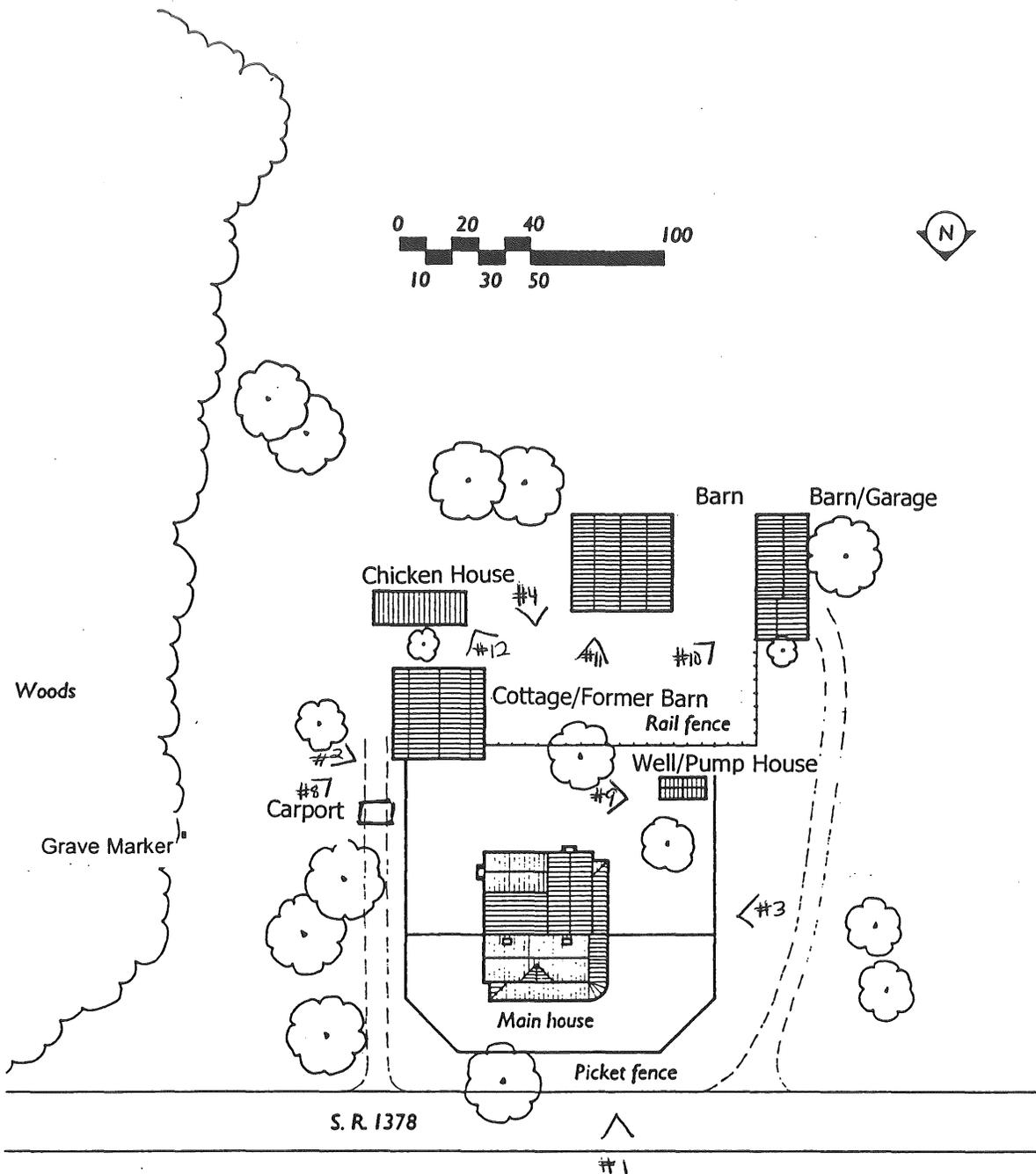
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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings is shown as the solid black line on the accompanying map drawn at a scale of 1"=100' and entitled, "Survey of Lot A (5.49 AC) Celeste Penny Land," by Michael D. Barr, Registered Land Surveyor.

**Boundary Justification**

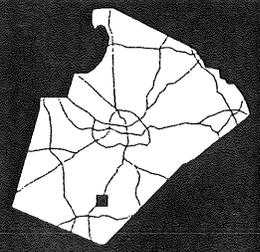
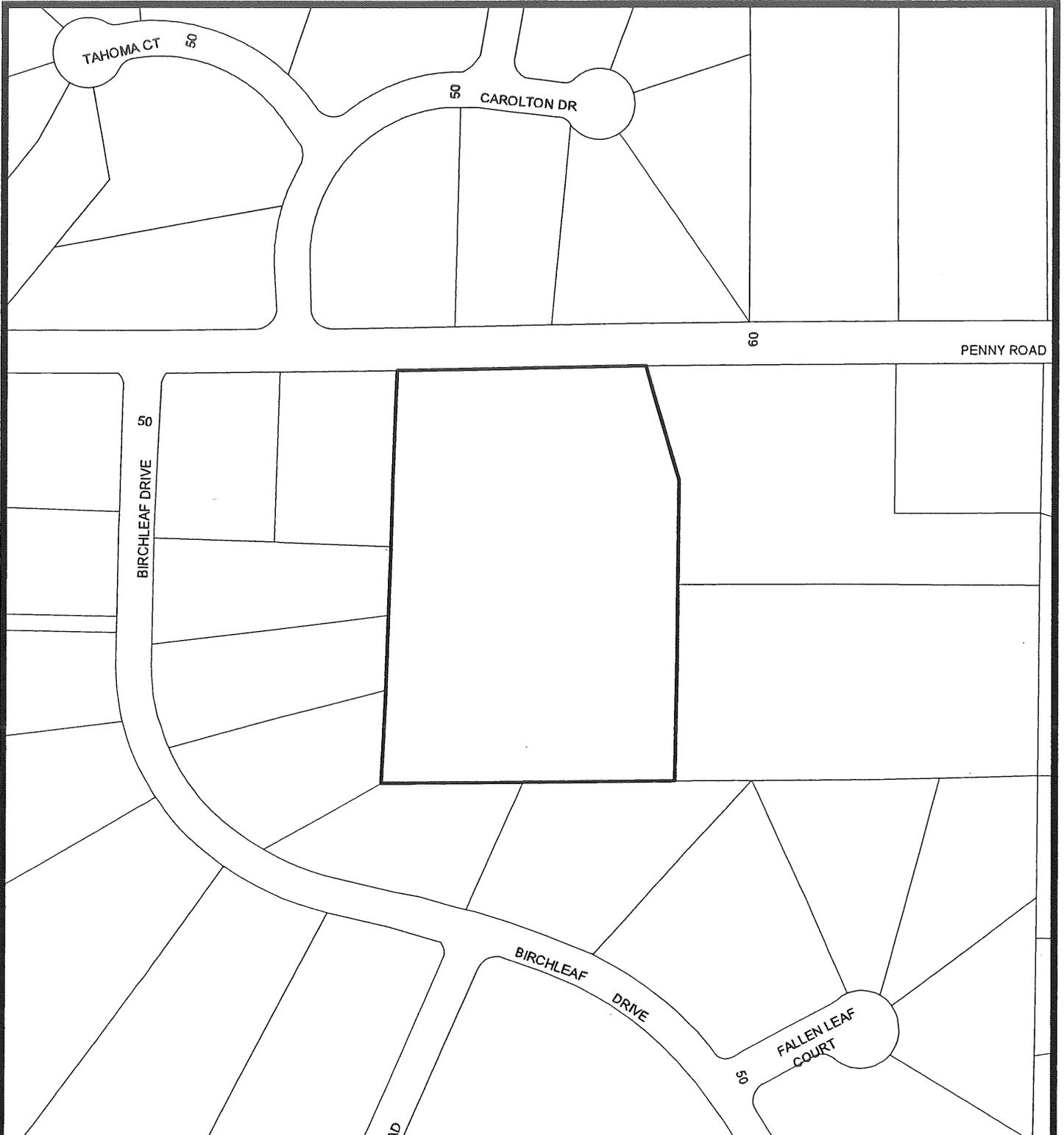
The boundary includes the farmhouse, outbuildings, support structures and residual acreage that once formed the core of the Jesse Penny farm. Additional farmland and woodlands historically associated with the Penny farm are no longer associated with the main complex and have lost integrity because of new suburban development.



Jesse W. and Lillian F. Penny House and Outbuildings  
Site Plan (Drawing by Robin J. Stancil)

Photos are keyed to map

Adapted from: Kelly A. Lally, *The Historic Architecture of Wake County, North Carolina* (Raleigh: Wake County Government, 1994), 107.



Jesse Penny House and Out-buildings  
Raleigh vicinity  
Wake County Tax Map



Jesse Penny House and Outbuildings  
Raleigh vic, Wake Co, NC Zone 17  
Lake Wheeler Quad E 707920

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
NORTH CAROLINA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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