NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 any 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 onl 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 Ritcher House

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 3039 Churchill Road N/A not for publication

city or town Raleigh N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27607

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William S. Price, Jr. 7-26-94

Signature of certifying official Date

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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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): _____

5. Classification of Property

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)
- X private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)
- X building(s)
- ___ district
- ___ site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Early Modern Architecture in Raleigh Associated with the Faculty of the NCSU School of Design, Raleigh, North Carolina

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Wrightian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT
walls WOOD
other GLASS

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.

_X_ 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 ndividual distinction.

____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

_X_ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object,or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1950

Significant Dates

1950

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect-Matsumoto, George
Contractor-Walser, Frank

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:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing
17	709860	3964660

Verbal Boundary Description
(see continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification
(see continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David R. Black/Architectural Historian

organization Black & Black, Preservation Consultants date April 1994

street & number 620 Wills Forest Street telephone (919) 828-4616

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27605

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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 listings. 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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

7. Description

Integrated with care into a thickly-wooded lot in west Raleigh, the 1950 Ritcher House is a one-story, wood frame/post and beam structure designed in accordance with the principles of the Usonian House, developed by Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1930s and 1940s. The house incorporates a number of passive climatic control devices such as clearstory ventilation and deeply-overhanging eaves that shelter the south elevation from summer sun, but which allow for solar heating in the winter. The interior spaces are carefully laid out to provide a maximum amount of high-quality living and storage space with a minimum of waste. The house is built on a six-foot module based on standard three-foot widths of plywood, and standard building materials are used throughout to achieve economies in construction. Wrightian elements such as modular, Cherokee-red concrete floors and radiant heating are incorporated throughout the design. Largely unaltered and well-maintained, the Ritcher House retains an integrity of setting, materials, workmanship and feeling.

The house sits well back from Churchill Road on a deep, mostly-wooded lot in the Sunset Hills Extended Subdivision. From the road, the land slopes down to a small valley, then rises in a gentle slope toward the south, with the dwelling located about half-way up the slope, its main axis parallel with the road. At the west end of the lot is a paved driveway that leads to a small parking area directly in front of the residence. Behind the house is a large, landscaped rear yard crossed by paths and surrounded by a board fence (See Exhibit A).

In plan, the Ritcher House is made up of two overlapping rectangles, both aligned east and west (See Exhibit B). The larger, one-story front (north) section is flat-roofed with a gravel-ballasted, built-up roof. The less-wide rear (south) section has a low-sloped shed roof inclined toward the rear, also with a gravel-ballasted, built-up roof. Rising above the roof near the front of the building is the flue for the boiler, while at

the rear of the house are flues for two fireplaces and a barbecue grill, all of asbestos pipe painted a bright orange.

Laid out on a six-foot module, the post and beam frame of the house is tied together by cross beams made up of 2"x10" boards with 3/4"x10" boards sandwiched between. These cross beams span from front to back at six foot intervals, tapering at their ends to support deep eaves (several of the longer beams are flitched with steel). Horizontal clearstory windows run across the front elevation between the beams.

The right (west) side of the front elevation is recessed three feet from the line of the left (east) side to provide a covered entry area. This recessed area is sheathed in plywood panels and has paired casement windows for the kitchen. Elsewhere, the exterior of the building is covered in vertical, tongue and groove redwood boards painted with a red/brown stain.

Originally, the flat roof of the house extended to the west to shelter a carport and rear storage shed. In recent years the carport has been enclosed with vertical tongue and groove boards to make a garage.

The flush-paneled main door to the house, which is flanked by a full-length sidelight and topped by a transom, opens into a small, vinyl-tiled entrance hall. Except for the bathrooms and the kitchen, which have vinyl tile floors, and the master bedroom, which has wood parquet flooring, the rest of the house has typically-Usonian Cherokee red concrete floors marked out with a three-foot incised module. Pipes for the radiant heating system are set in this concrete slab as Wright placed them in his houses.

The rectangular, six-bay-long living/dining room is the largest space in the house. Its beamed ceiling slopes from the front to the rear, allowing for narrow, horizontal clearstory windows on the north side that are set between the ceiling beams. These windows originally were operable for cross ventilation, but now are fixed. The rear wall of the house is completely glazed from about a foot above the floor. Large picture windows alternate with pairs of casement windows and wood-framed, glass doors. Transom windows run horizontally between the ceiling beams at the top of the wall.

The fireplace is located in this glazed south wall in the second bay from the east. Its random ashlar granite face stops at the transom level, the flue continuing up as an orange-painted asbestos pipe that is visible through the transom window. A raised hearth of stack-bond brick runs in front of the fireplace and extends to the end wall to form a window seat. Across the north wall of the living room are built-in shelves.

Adjacent to the dining area is a long, narrow kitchen. A doorway and a pass-through opening with levels of shelves connect the two spaces.

The interior of the house is finished in a variety of woods. The ceiling beams are of stained and varnished pine, and the ceilings are sheathed with tongue-and-groove pine boards finished the same way. The walls are covered with stained and varnished plywoods of several different types, from simple pine veneers to striated plywood and ornamental hardwood veneers. During the 1960s, some of the walls of the living/dining room were covered with sheetrock, but the current owner has restored them carefully to their original appearance.

A narrow, straight corridor runs from the entrance area to the master bedroom at the far (east) end of the house. Along the north side of the corridor are the bathrooms and storage closets, while on the south side are two small bedrooms. Wood sliding doors allow these bedrooms to be combined into one room. The south wall of each room is glazed from desk height upward with a large picture window, paired casements, and horizontal transoms. In Wrightian fashion, the rooms have substantial amounts of built-in cabinetry.

The master bedroom originally filled the east end of the house from front to rear. During the 1960s, it was extended approximately ten feet to the south, and a second chimney and rear entrance were built. The plywood walls of the room were painted white and a plain, painted brick fireplace was constructed. The existing beamed ceiling was extended and a cross beam was installed. Built-in cabinets along the north wall were preserved, as was the large end window consisting of a central pane flanked by casements.

Directly behind the house, adjacent to the living/dining room, is a wedge-shaped sunken terrace paved with basket weave brick, and framed by 30 inch high curved brick and

concrete block retaining walls. Backing up to the main chimney is a barbecue fireplace of stack bond brick with an orange-painted asbestos flue. At the east end of the terrace, adjacent to the master bedroom addition, is a new section of terrace paved with broken terra cotta tile set in concrete At the side of the terrace an added wood and fiberglass screen wall extends out from the house.

Exhibit A

Site Plan from Owner's Survey

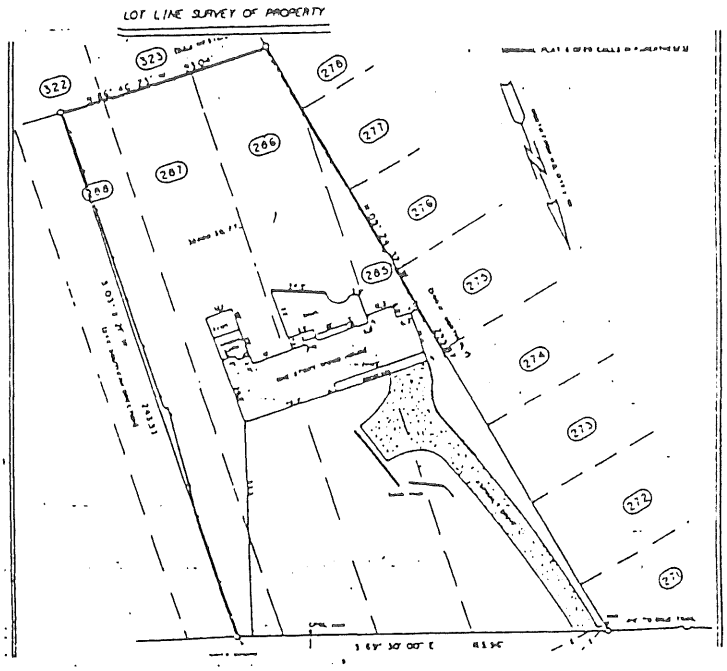
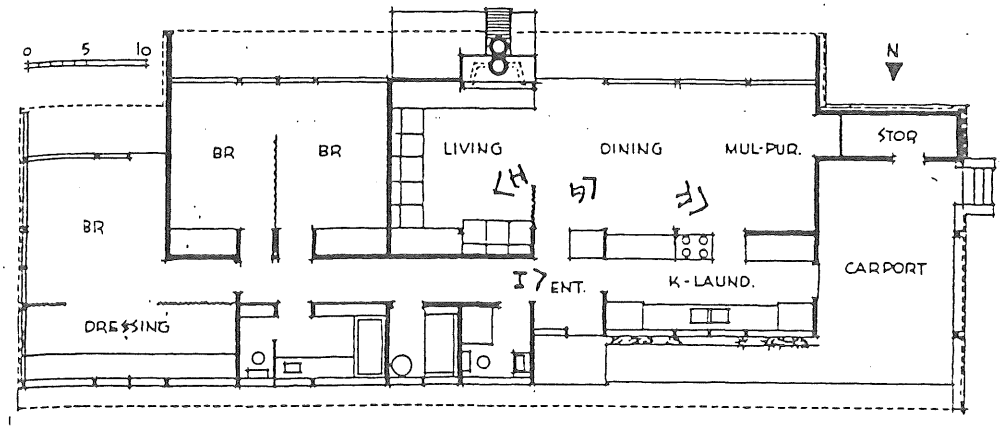


Exhibit B

Floor Plan from Ford, Katherine and Creighton, Thomas, Quality Budget Homes

(> indicates vantage point of photographs)



8. Statement of Significance

Summary

Erected in 1950 to the designs of George Matsumoto, the Ritcher House was one of the first of a series of innovative Raleigh residences created by faculty of the new School of Design at North Carolina State University that incorporated the ideas of the Modern Movement (See Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Early Modern Architecture in Raleigh Associated with the Faculty of the North Carolina State University School of Design, Raleigh, North Carolina"). It is being nominated under Criterion C, as the work of a master that possesses high artistic values. Matsumoto was only 27 when he designed the house, which was his first independent architectural commission in North Carolina, but he had already established himself as an adept and thoughtful architect. In his design for the Ritcher House he deftly employed the range of techniques developed by Frank Lloyd Wright in his Usonian houses of the 1930s and 1940s, such as passive climatic control, integrating the building into the natural environment and orienting it away from the street, modular design and construction with low-cost modern materials, and innovative structural systems. However, while the techniques may have come from Wright, the skilled composition, warmth, and wit of the detailing were provided by Matsumoto. It was the last Wrightian project by Matsumoto, but it includes elements he incorporated in his later Miesian buildings. Recognition of the high quality of the house's design came from contemporary publication in a number of sources, including House and Home, Progressive Architecture, and Quality Budget Homes.

Historical Background

Paul O. Ritcher, an entomology professor at North Carolina State College, and his wife June purchased three and parts of a fourth lot in the Sunset Hills Extended Subdivision in west Raleigh in December of 1949 (Wake County Deeds, Book 1027,p. 455). Later they purchased an additional portion of the partial lot (Wake County Deeds; Book

1065, p. 169). They asked George Matsumoto, an assistant professor in the architecture department of the new School of Design, to plan a new house for them. Although Matsumoto had aided Dean Henry Kamphoefner in the design of his new house in 1948, it was not until March 27, 1950 that Matsumoto was licensed to practice architecture in North Carolina, probably a move prompted by the Ritcher commission, his first independent commission in the state. Plans for the house are dated from April to June, 1950.

The contractor selected for the construction was Frank Walser, a young man for whom the Ritcher House was his second project, the first being the Fadum House (NR), which was completed in the summer of 1950. Walser recalls pouring the concrete floor during a lunar eclipse in September of 1950 ("George Matsumoto and the Ritcher House," unpublished manuscript by Hoyt Bangs). Later Walser would construct many of the early modern houses and buildings designed by School of Design faculty members. The cost of the Ritcher House was $19,145; 1824 square feet at $10.40 per foot (Ford, Quality Budget Homes, p. 110).

Matsumoto was only 27 years old when he designed the Ritcher House, but his design is a skilled working out of a number of architectural issues. It accomodated the programmatic requirements of the Ritchers for 100 square feet of book storage space, protection against termites and wood borers, a multi-purpose area complete with storage, daughters' rooms convertible into one large play space, overnight guest accommodation, bathrooms arranged to carry a 7 AM peak load, weather control based on cross ventilation, and an outside terrace with barbecue grill ("In-line Plan for a Suburban House," House and Home, February 1952). It also represented an experiment in Usonian planning carried out in a deft and thoughtful fashion. The Ritcher House was described in House and Home in 1952 as follows:

> Fine structural details (handsomely sturdy beams tapered under the wide overhang and window casing strips carried down to the foundation in unbroken vertical lines) are the more enjoyable against the simple rectangular shape of the house. And there is a particularly nice combination of old-fashioned atmosphere and modern good sense about ease of construction. For example, the fireplace treatment [sic]. It is built of stone to honor man's desire for the traditional hearth. But the stonework stops at the transom bar to avoid flashing and the complication of

> masonry meeting roof--and, incidentally, to give a tantalizing view of sky and treetops, and an orange painted pipe as jaunty as it is practical.
>
> Finally, the house is suited not only to the way the family likes to live, but also to its heavily-wooded site. . . .Its long, low, clean lines are softened by the tall trees, and the total effect is a house that naturally belongs where it is ("In-Line Plan," House and Home, February, 1952).

A number of contemporary architectural publications documented the Ritcher House, including House and Home in 1952, Quality Budget Homes in 1952, and the Japanese edition of Progressive Architecture in 1953.

The Ritcher House passed through several owners before being occupied by Randal D. Brown and H. Hoyt Bangs III in 1988 (Wake County Deeds; Book 1948, p. 615; Book 2848, p. 335; Book 4807, p. 104; Book 4227, p. 365; Book 5435, p. 575). Since that time they have reversed a number of alterations to the house, restoring its interior spaces mostly to their original appearance.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ford, Katherine Morrow and Creighton, Thomas H. Quality Budget Homes. Reinhold, New York, 1954.

Hoyt Bangs Interview with George Matsumoto, March 1993.

Sergeant, John. Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses. Watson-Guptil, New York, 1976.

Survey Files, Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

Wake County Deeds.

_____. "George Matsumoto." Southern Architect, May 1961, p. 17.

_____. "Matsumoto, George." Supplement to Who's Who in America 45th Edition, 1989-1990. Wilmette, Illinois, Marquis Who's Who, 1989, p. 773.

_____. "Two Variations of One Structural System." House and Home, February, 1952.

_____. "Houses." Progressive Architecture, January 1953, p. 71.

_____. "Tarheel of the Week-George Matsumoto." The (Raleigh) News and Observer, 22 September 1957.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

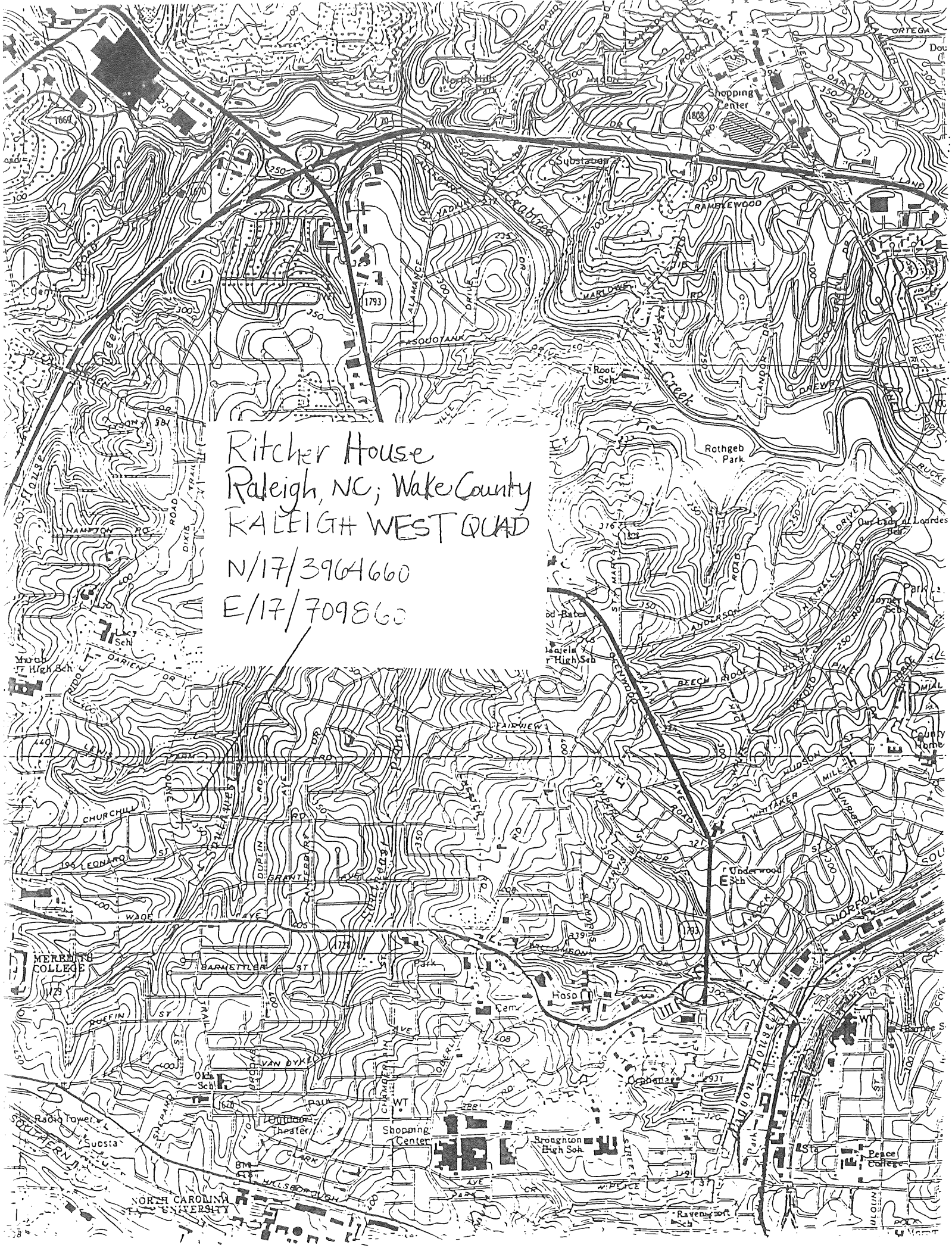
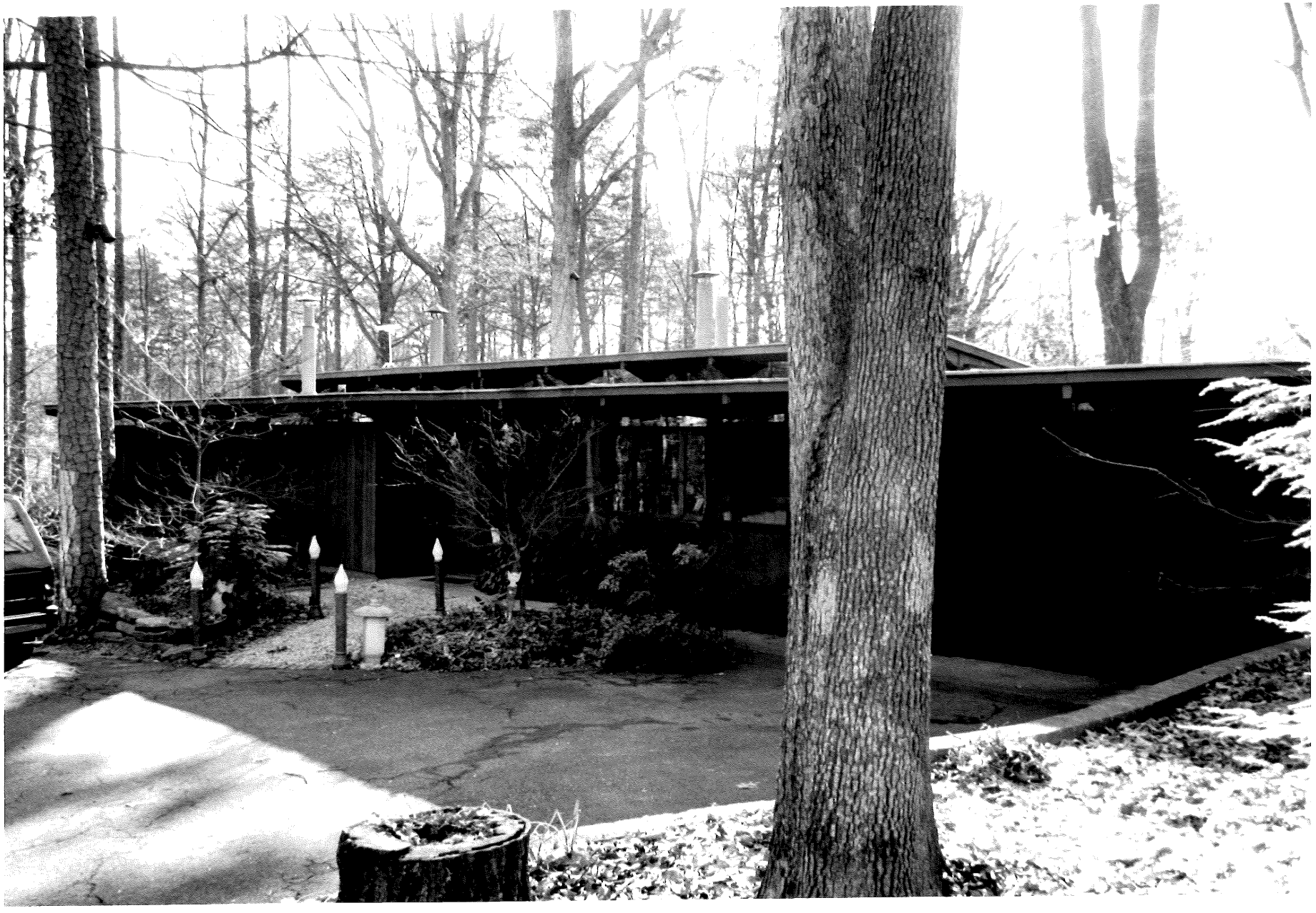
The boundaries of the Ritcher House nomination are as shown by the dashed line on the accompanying Wake County Orthophotographic Map # 0794.07, drawn at a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Ritcher House nomination include the original lot on which the residence was constructed and which provides an appropriate setting for the building.

RITCHER HOUSE
3039 CHURCHILL ROAD
RALEIGH, NC

WAKE COUNTY ORTHOPHOTOGRAPHIC MAP #0794.07
1 INCH = 100 FEET
(> indicates vantage point of photograph)


Ritcher House
Raleigh, NC; Wake County
RALEIGH WEST QUAD
N/17/3964660
E/17/709860
Shopping Center
Substation
Crabtree
Creek
Rothgeb Park
Root Sch
Our Lady of Loordes
Park
Underwood Sch
Hosp
Cem
Broughton High Sch
Peace College
Shopping Center
Theater
Radio Tower
Sub sta
NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
MEREDITH COLLEGE
Broughton House
Ravenscroft Sch
Olds Sch
Lacy Sch
Sta
WT
Park