

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Latham House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 311 East Main Street

CITY, TOWN Plymouth VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY Washington CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1st STATE North Carolina CODE 37

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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 PROCESS	<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: vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Thomas Burgess Also: Mrs. D. R. Campbell  
STREET & NUMBER Conaby Drive 213 Adams Street  
CITY, TOWN Plymouth VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ STATE North Carolina 27962

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Washington County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Plymouth STATE North Carolina 27962

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
DATE  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE one

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Mr. John S. Lilly, Chairman  
Latham Foundation, Inc.  
423 Jefferson Street  
Plymouth, NC 27962

Mr. R. Wendell Hutchins  
Box 1085  
Plymouth, NC 27962

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Latham House is a two-story, frame Greek Revival dwelling three bays wide and two deep, raised on a high basement. Except for the basement, a highly unusual feature for the region, its other characteristics, including a center hall, two pile plan and typical Greek Revival motifs, are not extraordinary, but the location of the house, its age, historical association, and bold, assertive quality mark it as Plymouth's principal domestic landmark. The house is pleasantly sited on a large, shady lot of ample lawn, with handsome trees, shrubs, and remnants of Victorian landscaping (flowers) which appear seasonably.

The weatherboarded structure rests on a foundation of brick laid in irregular bond. It is capped by a cross gable roof with returns at each gable end. The two gable ends, which are original, are flush sheathed, distinguishing them from the cross gables added later, and all but the rear gable feature louvered lunettes. Two interior brick chimneys with corbelled caps pierce the ridge line of the roof.

The simple but deeply overhanging, unmolded, corbelled cornice rests on small Italianate pendant brackets which do not appear to be original. Their somewhat whimsical character makes an interesting contrast to the solemn dignity of the mass of the house and its Greek elements. The cornerposts are simple sawn boards decorated with thin unmolded strips suggestive of fluting. This form of ornamentation is used throughout the house and is frequently found in the county. The cornerposts terminate below the cornice with a plain block in low relief and are tied to the adjacent window frames with a plain board frieze. The window frames with their mock fluting and corner blocks repeat the larger order of the corner posts. The two-over-two sash at the first level is not original. The second-floor windows have their original six-over-six sash. They are considerably smaller and do not repeat the full length windows of the first.

A one story porch with a hip roof wraps around the north, or entrance front, to a half bay of the east side. Like the roof of the house the porch roof has a broad, overhanging cornice with pendant brackets and is supported by large, square-in-section posts, each with a simple necking and molded cap. (The original porch once stretched across the front of the house terminating at the extreme sides of the windows.) This porch was extended between 1914 and 1924 to provide the existing porte-cochère and to provide additional play area for the five Burgess daughters. The original decorative scheme was maintained in this alteration. The curiously vernacular balustrade is a variation of Chinese lattice.

In the rear (south side) a shed roof porch runs three bays, almost the full length of the facade. It is probably a replacement. The plain box posts with neck molding and simple balustrade are not consistent with the rest of the house. A strip of "pilaster" on the rear of the house suggests that the original porch may have matched that in front. The porch wall is flush sheathed.

The interior of the house is reached through double doors, each leaf having a single raised panel beneath a long, vertical section of glazing. The entrance is flanked by three-over-two sash sidelights and surmounted by a four light transom. Flush siding

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

occurs between the entrance and the flanking windows. The entire entrance is framed by the "fluted" strips and cornerblocks. The rear entrance is framed in the same manner, but there are no sidelights and the door is a single leaf.

The typical Greek Revival floor plan consists of a center stair hall with two rooms on either side. The hall has recently been bisected by the addition of a thin partition wall at its midpoint. There is a plaster ceiling roundel in the front portion of the hall.

Flush sheathed wainscoting runs throughout the first floor except in the rear, left room (southeast) which has a flat-paneled wainscot. Doors, too, are consistent and feature six raised panels on their fronts and flat paneled backs. Plain baseboards and symmetrically molded chair rails are found throughout.

The single run, open-string staircase, probably a replacement, terminates in a scrolled curtail and rises front to back on the left (east) side of the hall. Rectangular-in-section balusters support the rounded handrail which ends in an elegant spiral over the segmented newel.

The right front room (northwest) has a plaster ceiling roundel. Its mantel and the mantel in the front left room are identical. These Greek Revival mantels are decorated with strips of square and rectangular elements forming pilasters, corner blocks, and friezes in low relief. The mantels repeat the exterior decorative scheme.

The two rooms on the east side of the house are joined by open passages not reduced in size by partitions and doorways. This spatial arrangement exhibits the same dignity and boldness that is suggested by the exterior decoration and proportions. The fireplace appears to be free standing in a large room rather than separating two small rooms, an unusual spatial effect and a practical design, because it improves circulation of air in the sultry climate.

The floor plan of the second floor is similar to the first. Two rooms on each side, each with fireplaces, flank the center hall. The mantels are simple, consisting of flat unmolded frames around the fire openings with a single flat panel above. Shelves are supported by two unmolded corbels. They match the mantel in the first floor's southeast chamber.

Upstairs window and door cases are framed with fluting strips and corner blocks, and there is a chair rail and simple baseboard. Of particular note is the door from the hall into the right rear (southwest) bedroom, heavily scarred allegedly by bullets fired at the house by Northern troops when Plymouth was raided during the Civil War.

The low attic is unfinished and reached through a trap door.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

The raised basement with its brick partition walls and floor is of interest. The irregular plan does not correspond with the upper floors. There are four rooms arranged around a short hall which contains the plain, steep, open string, quarter turn stair with windows. Each room has a fire opening, but only the left front room retains the mantel. Only the hall has a wainscot. Window openings are glazed, with four-over-four horizontally sliding sash. Some have their original wooden grills and louvered blinds. Doors are identical to those throughout the first floor.

# 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 checked="" 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 ca. 1850

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Latham House is a handsomely sited Greek Revival house set on a high basement unusual in coastal Washington County. Its bold Greek Revival finish and imposing character make it the chief domestic historic landmark in the town of Plymouth. It was built about 1850 for Charles Latham, a locally prominent political figure; the house has a special place in local Civil War history because of the tradition that Plymouth citizens took refuge in its basement during the Battle of Plymouth in 1864.

On January 16, 1849, Charles Latham purchased for \$300 Samuel Kissam's interest in a 26-acre tract of land in Washington County, North Carolina, bordering the town of Plymouth and the Roanoke River. It was on this tract that he built his handsome two-story Greek Revival house, evidently in 1850.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Latham was a prominent figure in Washington County. He was high sheriff of the county, a member of the state House of Representatives from 1860 to 1861, and the state Senate in 1865 to 1867 and from 1874 to 1877. His son, Louis Charles Latham, was graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1859, studied law, was a major in the Confederate army, a member of the General Assembly, a trustee of the University, and from 1881 to 1883 he was a member of Congress, and served another term from 1887 to 1889.<sup>3</sup>

The 1860 census for Washington County shows Charles Latham to have been a rich man. He owned 30 slaves who worked his 75 acres of improved land, and he had 250 acres of unimproved land. It would appear that he might have rented out his slaves, which was a common custom in that time, for the acreage was not large enough to work that many slaves in farming, unless he was involved in the turpentine business, which the census does not indicate. He had real estate worth only \$7,000 while he listed his personal property at \$70,000, which would support the supposition that he was engaged in some other type of lucrative financial scheme other than planting. The census does indicate that his land was productive. He raised Indian corn, oats, peas and beans, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and hay, and he had the usual variety of plantation stock.

There is a strong and sustained tradition in Plymouth that during the Battle of Plymouth, in 1864, citizens of the town crowded into the basement of the Latham House for protection--its basement being among the few in the town. A cannon ball went through a basement window, it is said, but was thrown out by Latham before it exploded.<sup>4</sup> Ransom's Brigade engaged the Federals in battle on the Latham lawn as they advanced on Fort Williams. After the battle, the dead were laid out on the Latham yard. Charles Latham is said to have closely examined the bodies to see if any of his three sons in Confederate service had not survived the battle. One cannon ball penetrated both the front and back doors of the house according to local historians.<sup>5</sup>

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

In 1886 the house was deeded to Charles Latham's daughter, Claudia, after she married Walter Carstarphen.<sup>6</sup> The Carstarphens were very social people and are still remembered for their elegant style of living. Walter Carstarphen was one of the men who on February 22, 1897, helped reorganize the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati at Raleigh,<sup>7</sup> and was one of the most prominent members of that society until his<sup>9</sup> death in 1927.<sup>8</sup> The Carstarphens had one child, Minnie, who married Thomas Burgess. The Burgesses extended the front porch so that their children would have more play area, and they partitioned the twelve foot wide center hall, into two rooms. Otherwise the house is almost as it was built in 1850. The children of Minnie and Thomas Burgess now own the house. It is thought that this house is one of the few antebellum houses in Washington County in the family of the original builder.<sup>10</sup>

The Latham Foundation, Inc., which obtained an option on the property in November, 1975, is in the process of raising funds to purchase the property and to restore it for use as a community center, museum, and foundation headquarters.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE two

FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Historic Washington County, p. 12; Washington County Deed Book, J:750.
- <sup>2</sup> Cheney, John L., North Carolina Government 1585-1974, 699, 703, 1297.
- <sup>3</sup> University of North Carolina Alumni Directory, p. 515.
- <sup>4</sup> Historic Washington County, p. 12.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid, (Also Washington County Deed Book "AA":454).
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Archives of the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- <sup>9</sup> Washington County Will Book, B:355-357.
- <sup>10</sup> Historic Washington County, p. 12.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Washington County Historical Society, Historic Washington County. Plymouth, N.C.: (no date).  
University of North Carolina Alumni Directory. Durham, N.C.: Seeman Printery, 1954.  
Cheney, John L. North Carolina Government 1585-1974. Raleigh, N.C.: Department of the Secretary of State, 1975.  
Archives of the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati, North Carolina Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	7	3	4	2	3	4	0	3	9	7	0	4	1	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

C 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

D 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

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 Description by Janet K. Seapker, Acting Administrator, Preservation Section  
Significance by John B. Flowers, III, Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Department of Archives and History

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

109 East Jones Street

TELEPHONE

829-4763

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina 27611

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

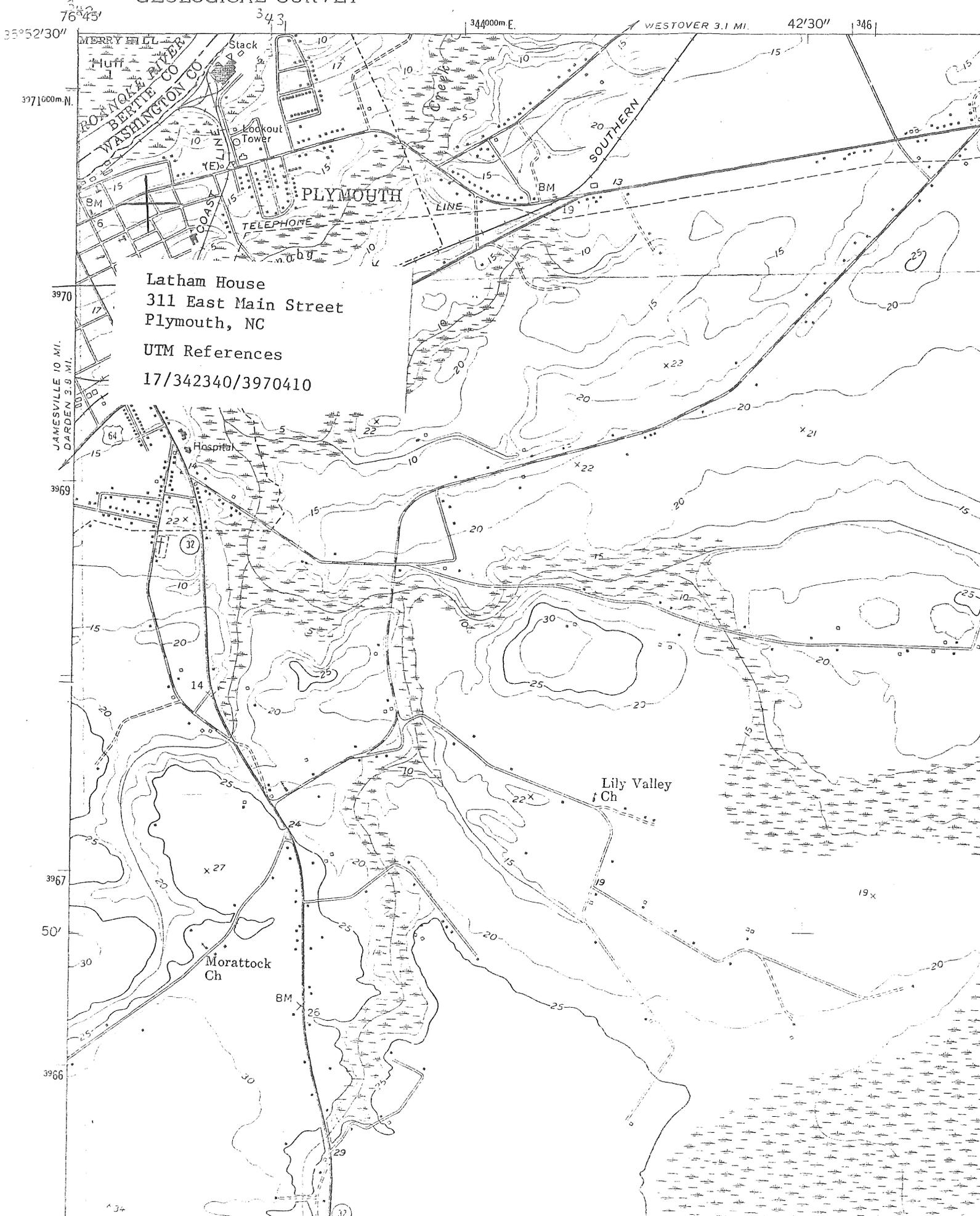
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Latham House  
311 East Main Street  
Plymouth, NC  
UTM References  
17/342340/3970410

JAMESVILLE 10 MI.  
DARDEN 3.9 MI.

