

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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received

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 Perry-Spruill House

and/or common Spruill House

2. Location

street & number 326 Washington Street _____ not for publication

city, town Plymouth _____ vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Washington code 187

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name James S. Currie

street & number 631 Marlowe Road telephone: (919) 787-0214

city, town Raleigh _____ vicinity of state North Carolina 27600

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 Historic & Architectural Resources of the Tar-Neuse River Basin has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records North Carolina Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

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 date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Perry-Spruill House, built between 1882 and 1884, is a charmingly picturesque story-and-a-half Gothic Revival cottage. Located in the community of Plymouth, the house fronts on Washington Street--a pleasant, tranquil avenue of mixed commercial, residential, and school buildings. Plymouth (1980 census population: 4,571) is both the governmental center of Washington County and the center of the local lumber industry. The neatly kept yard surrounding the house is well planted with evergreens, flowering shrubs, and shade trees. The application of the Gothic Revival style to an urban residence is noteworthy as A.J. Davis and A.J. Downing, the chief promulgators of the style, stressed its suitability for rural residences.

Sheathed with weatherboarding and featuring plain cornerboards, the frame house is covered by a high hip roof intersected by cross gables. Two chimneys with blind arcading and corbeled caps pierce the ridge of the roof. Decorative sawnwork featuring inverted fleur-de-lys skirts the eaves. Similar sawn bargeboards frame each of the four gable ends, a simple rakeboard outlines each slope, and an ornate pierced sawnwork finial crowns the summit of each. Each of the gable ends also features a pointed Gothic window with louvered blinds. The first floor windows contain six-over-six sash framed by louvered blinds except in the rear, where the blinds have been removed. Window treatment throughout consists of plain surrounds outlined with a thin unmolded strip, a feature commonly found in the county.

The one-story front porch extends almost the full length of the three-bay facade. Four square-in-section posts support a nearly flat low hip roof. Each post has a single band of neck molding and a splayed, symmetrically molded cap. These posts are not original. Documentary photographs reveal that the original posts consisted of narrow vertical structural members filled in with elaborate sawnwork and capped with curvilinear sawn brackets. The balustrade today is formed by vertical, horizontal, and diagonally intersecting rectangular-in-section members. Originally it too was a typical thin sawnwork design, with members imitating in profile the shape of stylized classical balusters.

The central entrance contains a double door, each leaf of which has two raised panels in heavily molded frames. The door is flanked by three-light sidelights above molded flat panels. A four-light transom surmounts the door. The glass in the sidelights is etched with inset roundels.

The interior, distinguished by its fourteen foot ceilings, features a center-hall double-pile plan. The staircase in the hall, a dominant element of the design, rises front to back in a single run open string stair. Sawn curvilinear brackets ornament the end of each step. The wide molded handrail eases into a massive turned newel post and ramps over turned balusters. Throughout are high baseboards, four-panel doors with flat panels in molded frames surmounted by four-light transoms, and plain window and door surrounds similar to those on the exterior.

There are three notable mantels. The most elaborate is of slate with incised frets, medallions, and simple stylized floral ornament. A wooden mantel features a rounded fire opening, layered strips of curvilinear molding, and curvilinear shelf supported on floral patterned iron brackets. A third mantel is severely plain and has a shelf supported by similar brackets.

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Perry-Spruill House

Continuation sheet Architectural description Item number 7

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The attic area is finished with plastered walls and ceilings which conform to the roof form. The two principal rooms are dominated each by an exposed chimney stack which arches from the point of origin above the fire openings, to the exit near the center of the roof ridge.

In the rear, a shallow hipped roof breezeway connects the house to a detached dining room with its board and batten entrance and kitchen. These rooms are screened by an attractive lattice work porch.

There are several outbuildings near the house. A small frame gable-roof smokehouse sits in the northern side yard and is now used for storage. The woodhouse, located immediately behind the detached kitchen, was built specifically for storing firewood and is still used for that purpose. Near the rear property line were the stables which have long since been torn down.

The structures are, of course, closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Between 1882 & 1884 Builder/Architect Joseph A. Latham (?)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Perry-Spruill House was built for Theodore A. Perry between 1882 and 1884, possibly by Joseph A. Latham, a local house carpenter. Jeremiah C. Spruill bought the property in 1895 and developed a complex of outbuildings, only two of which remain today--a smokehouse and woodhouse. Spruill was the owner and operator of J.C. Spruill & Co., one of the most successful general merchandise businesses in Plymouth, for over forty years. He also owned several farms in Washington County. Spruill was active in civic affairs, a county commissioner, and long time member of Plymouth Methodist Church. A picturesque Gothic Revival cottage, the Perry-Spruill House presents a charming contrast to the simple residences that surround it. Its high hip roof features intersecting cross gables ornamented with inverted fleur-de-lys sawnwork, pointed Gothic windows, and pierced and sawn finials and pendants. A notable latticework porch connects the house to a detached dining room/kitchen.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the commercial development of Plymouth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The house and complex also represent the rise of a prosperous merchant class during the late nineteenth century who combined a basic rural orientation with an urban lifestyle. Around the turn of the century such combinations were fairly prevalent in areas where only a few small towns intruded upon a dominant agricultural economy.
- B. Associated with the prominent Spruill family since 1895 and especially with the life of Jeremiah C. "Jerry" Spruill who operated J.C. Spruill & Co., one of Plymouth's most successful general merchandise businesses.
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Downingesque Gothic Revival cottage as applied to an urban residence rather than a rural one. Its high hip roof is intersected by cross gables featuring pointed Gothic windows and decorative sawnwork skirting the eaves. The interior boasts a handsome staircase and a particularly fine slate mantel incised with fret and stylized floral motifs. The Perry-Spruill House embodies the uncommon practice of using the Gothic Revival style for dwellings in eastern North Carolina.

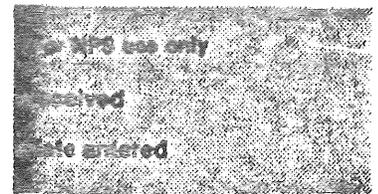
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Perry-Spruill House

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The Perry-Spruill House located at 326 Washington Street in Plymouth was constructed for Theodore A. and Ida Perry between June 30, 1882 and May 20, 1884. A mortgage from Perry to W. R. Hampton on June 15, 1883 for \$1,000 suggests that the house was either completed or under construction on that date. Perry had paid \$280 for "part of lot 24" (100'x 108') when he bought it from Joseph A. Latham, a house carpenter.¹ It seems quite likely that Latham then constructed the house for Perry and had it completed by June 15, 1883, at which time the lot was mortgaged to obtain funds to pay for the construction. Both the purchase deed and the mortgage were recorded on the same date.

Theodore Perry (b. 1850) was a sales representative for a machinery company and a man of only modest means; thus, it seems unlikely that he built the outbuildings later associated with the house.² Furthermore, he did not own lot 23 on which some of the structures later appeared. Perry's purchase included only the southern portion of lot 24 bounded by Washington and Fourth streets. The lot extended 108 feet along Washington and 100 feet along Fourth Street.³ Most of the original lots in Plymouth were 100' x 200'; thus, it appears that 92 feet on the northern portion of lot 24 had been taken to build the expansive Ausbon House and to lay out its grounds about 1830.⁴

On May 20, 1884 T. A. and Ida Perry took out a second mortgage in an effort to pay off the construction debt. A year later they had paid \$634 of the second mortgage of \$1,000 but in 1887 they transferred all right and title to G. L. Davenport of Tyrrell County.⁵ The Perrys do not appear to have remained in Plymouth and it is possible that Theodore's sales job had involved a transfer which prompted the action.

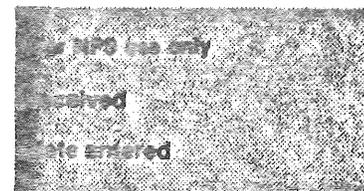
G. L. Davenport sold lot 24 and lot 23, which he had acquired in 1889, to James P. Cooper on March 1, 1892.⁶ Cooper was a mariner who traveled the east coast carrying cargo to various ports of entry.⁷ While there is no clear documentation, it seems likely that he occupied the house on lot 24 when not at sea. By 1895 he and his wife Carrie had moved to Baltimore where they were living on November 4 when they transferred the house and property to Jeremiah C. Spruill.⁸

J. C. "Jerry" Spruill (September 18, 1857–September 2, 1935) was born near Skinnersville. After moving to Plymouth he owned and operated J. C. Spruill & Co., a general merchandise business, as well as several farms outside of town. He served as a county commissioner and was active in the Plymouth Methodist Church. True to the Christian spirit, Spruill used his modest wealth to help others, often lending money to others in the community. J. C. Spruill & Co. received considerable business from the maritime traffic on the Roanoke River, bringing Jerry Spruill into contact with people from far away towns. Through this connection he met and married Mary Virginia "Jennie" Layton of Bridgeville, Delaware.⁹

Jerry and Jennie Spruill moved into the house that now bears their name in 1895. Expansion of the complex began almost immediately. A stable for riding horses and livestock was constructed on lot 23 to the rear of the dwelling house. A smokehouse was built about 1910 and fourteen years later an addition was attached to the stable (destroyed in 1940s). In the latter year, 1924, Spruill extended the front porch to the end of the house. It is not clear whether or not Jerry Spruill built the detached dining room, but it seems likely that he constructed an intricate latticework breezeway that now connects it to the main house. A large garden was laid out back of the Washington Street dwelling.¹⁰

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Jerry and Jennie Spruill had five children, but only four lived to maturity: Annie W., Jerry L., Mary K. (Kathleen) and Jennie May (May). The two youngest, Kathleen and May, were born in the house.¹¹ Of the four, only Kathleen carried on the family line. In 1917 she married Wilbur Calhoun Spruill who shortly afterwards entered service in World War I. Returning home he took a job with the North Carolina Highway Commission (now the Department of State Transportation) and worked out of Raleigh. For several years Kathleen remained at home while her husband traveled, and there her first two children were born: Virginia Layton and William C. Spruill. After a few years in Raleigh, Wilbur C. Spruill took his family to Winston-Salem where a third child, James P. was born. Virginia Layton Spruill later married James S. Currie who bought the Spruill House in 1978.¹²

None of Jerry and Jennie Spruill's other children ever married, and they continued to live in the family home. Jerry Spruill supported his family by operating his general merchandise business and the farms. J. C. Spruill & Co. thrived until the onset of the Great Depression which brought personal as well as economic tragedy. Jennie and her son Jerry L. both died in the early 1930s, and the store's inventory dwindled until little or no profit was made. Disconsolate at the loss of his wife and son, hard hit by the scarcity of money in the county, and advancing in years, Jerry Spruill made no effort to rebuild his failing business, relying instead on the farms to provide an income. He died in 1935 and was buried in the Plymouth Methodist Church cemetery.¹³

Spruill's three surviving daughters inherited all his property. Annie and May felt no strong interest in merchandising and decided to sell the store. They called in a salvage company from Norfolk to sell the remaining stock and then sold the building itself. They preferred the outdoor life anyway and turned to full time management of the farms for a livelihood. Sometime afterwards, Kathleen Spruill, who had separated from her husband, returned to Plymouth to live with her sisters. W. C. Spruill died in 1939 and Kathleen married Luther Nobles, a salesman. No children were born of this union and Kathleen and Luther lived in the house with Annie and May.¹⁴

Annie Spruill died in 1965 and Kathleen in 1968, leaving May and her brother-in-law Luther to live in the house. During her residency Kathleen had seen to it that the homeplace was kept in repair, but Luther took little interest after her death.¹⁵ The structure began deterioration and was in bad shape when James S. Currie, husband of Virginia Layton Spruill Currie, bought the property in 1978.¹⁶ Currie immediately initiated stabilization measures, including a new roof, and rehabilitated much of the interior and exterior. Much of the decorative sawnwork in the gables had to be replaced but was done with such meticulous care that only an expert can discern it from the original.¹⁷

Luther Nobles moved out in June, 1978. May Spruill, the only living child of Jerry and Jennie Spruill, still lives in the home of her birth. She will be eighty-four years of age on December 6, 1984, and she is cared for by Martha Bell who has been employed by the family for half a century. Virginia Currie, now a resident of Raleigh, periodically returns to her birthplace for a visit with "Aunt May" and is concerned that the house be well maintained.¹⁸ What the future of the century old structure will be after the departure of May Spruill is, at this point, uncertain.

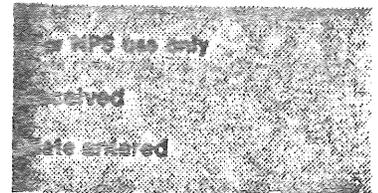
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FOOTNOTES

¹Washington County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Washington County Courthouse, Plymouth, Deed Book W, 46-47, 48-49, 414-416, hereinafter cited as Washington County Deed Book.

²See Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: North Carolina-Washington County, Population Schedule, Plymouth Town, 12. Census records hereinafter cited by number, date, schedule, and page.

³Washington County Deed Book W, 46-47.

⁴Washington County Historical Society, Historic Washington County (Plymouth: N.p.), 4, 10.

⁵Washington County Deed Book W, 414-416. See marginal notes for much of the data.

⁶Washington County Deed Book 33, p. 47; and Book DD, 143.

⁷Researcher's interview with Virginia S. Currie, October 17, 1984. Mrs. Currie is the granddaughter of Jeremiah C. Spruill and the niece of May Spruill who currently lives in the house. Virginia was born there and her mother lived there from the late 1930s to 1968; thus, Virginia is well versed in the local history. Source hereinafter cited as Virginia Currie interview.

⁸Washington County Deed Book 34, pp. 174-176. See also Deed Book 32, p. 344.

⁹"J. C. 'Jeremiah' Spruill . . . Bridgeville, Delaware." Biographical data from Virginia Currie interview.

¹⁰Structural changes from Virginia Currie interview.

¹¹Thirteenth Census, 1910, 4th Ward, Sheet 18 B. The Spruill's first child, Frederick, died at about six years of age. Virginia Currie interview.

¹²Virginia Currie interview; and Washington County Deed Book 267, p. 25. See also Deed Book 267, p. 25. See also Deed Book 206, p. 507, and will of Jeremiah C. Spruill, Washington County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Washington County Courthouse, Plymouth, Will Book B, 532, hereinafter cited as Washington County Will Book.

¹³None of . . . cemetery." Virginia Currie interview.

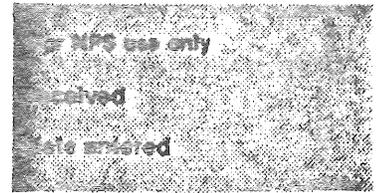
¹⁴Washington County Will Book B, 532; and Virginia Currie interview.

¹⁵Virginia Currie interview.

¹⁶Washington County Deed Book 267, p. 25.

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17 Virginia Currie interview.

18 Virginia Currie interview.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Plymouth East, N.C. (1974)

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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3	4	2	0	8	0
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3	9	7	0	0	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached Washington County tax map Section 25A - Part III. Property outlined in red.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Description: H. McKelden Smith, III, Survey Specialist; revised by Stanley Little
Statement of Significance: Jerry L. Cross, Research historian

organization Eastern Office
N.C. Division of Archives and History date December 1, 1984

street & number 117 W. 5th Street telephone (919) 752-7778

city or town Greenville state North Carolina 27834

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.

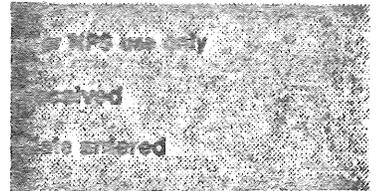
State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William J. Price, Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date March 7, 1985

For NPS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Perry-Spruill House

Continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

Page 1

Currie, Virginia S. Interview, October 17, 1984.

United States Census Records. North Carolina: Washington County.

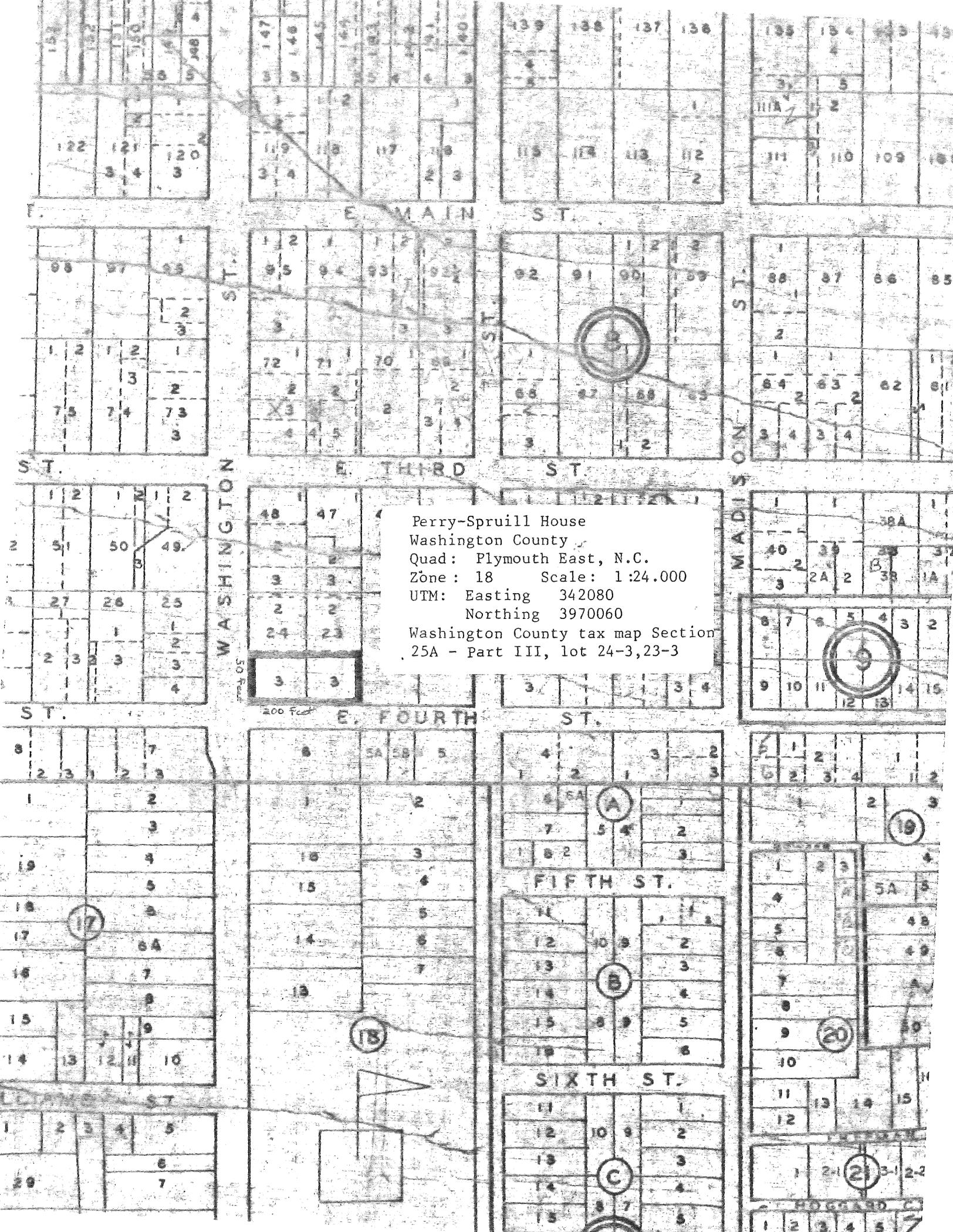
Washington County Historical Society. Historic Washington County. Plymouth: N.p.

Washington County Records

Deeds

Estates Papers

Wills



Perry-Spruill House
 Washington County
 Quad: Plymouth East, N.C.
 Zone: 18 Scale: 1:24,000
 UTM: Easting 342080
 Northing 3970060
 Washington County tax map Section
 25A - Part III, lot 24-3, 23-3

200 Feet

17

18

19

20

21

22

A

B

C

FIFTH ST.

SIXTH ST.

E. MAIN ST.

E. THIRD ST.

E. FOURTH ST.

WASHINGTON ST.

MADISON ST.

T.

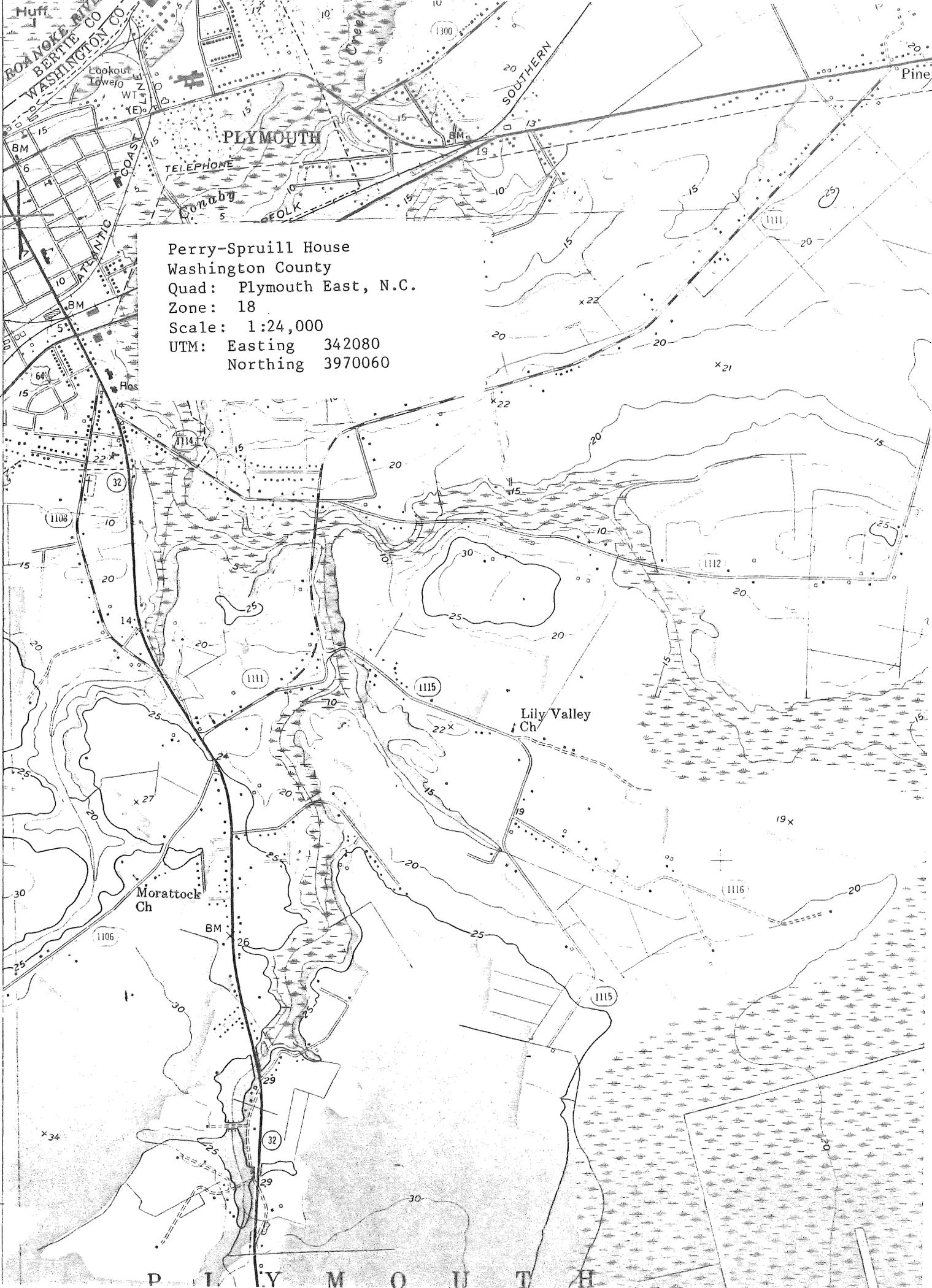
S.T.

S.T.

LELAND ST.

ROBERTSON C.

971000m N.
3970
3969
3968
3967
50'
3966
3965



Perry-Spruill House
Washington County
Quad: Plymouth East, N.C.
Zone: 18
Scale: 1:24,000
UTM: Easting 342080
Northing 3970060

P L Y M O U T H

