

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Blacknall, Richard D., House other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 300 Alexander Avenue not for publication N/A city, town Durham vicinity N/A state North Carolina code NC county Durham code 063 zip code 27701

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Resources of Durham

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Williams S. Fair, Jr. Date: 1-24-90

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stucco

walls brick

roof asphalt

other wood porch

shingles (wood)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Richard D. Blacknall House, constructed c. 1889, is a handsome, nearly intact two-and-one-half story Queen Anne style brick house. It is Durham's only identified surviving nineteenth century brick residence, and is the city's only extant example of the Queen Anne style rendered in brick. The Blacknall House, which originally stood at the southwest corner of Erwin Road and Anderson Street, was moved in 1985 when it was threatened by demolition due to the widening of Erwin Road and other road construction associated with a new cross-town highway. The new location at 300 Alexander Avenue, a large landscaped city lot shaded by mature deciduous trees, is approximately two blocks southeast of the original site. The house now faces east onto the quiet residential street and enjoys a compatible setting and setback similar to its original site. In 1987 the Blacknall House was restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and is now in use for professional offices.

The Blacknall House displays the characteristic Queen Anne style asymmetrical composition, exhibiting a variety of rooflines, materials and decorative elements. The house rests on a high scored stucco foundation (original random course rubble foundation was not moved with the house) and is crowned by an intricate multi-planed roof. While most of the building is a full two stories with attic, the rear gabled roof slopes farther on the south side so that the southwest portion of the house appears one-and-one-half stories tall. The south elevation is embellished with a decorative, shingled wall dormer containing a fifteen-over-one window. The brick elevations are laid in 1:5 common bond and are enlivened by clipped shingles (painted white) in most of the gables, with applied half-timbering in the gables of the uppermost portion of the roof. During the recent restoration, the brick elevations were painted the same dark red (matching the color of the brick) applied when the house was constructed. The asphalt singled roof is pierced by two tall chimneys with corbeled caps, one rising above the center of the house and the other, an interior end chimney,

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at the rear. A variety of window types is represented. They include tall, paired or single sash windows with a border of small lights in the top pane over a single pane; fifteen or twenty-over-one sash; six-over-six sash; nine-over-one sash; and, at the second story above the main entrance, a single sash window whose muntins create an intricate rectangular and diamond shaped pattern.

The main elevation of the Blacknall House is dominated by a two-story, one room deep rectangular projecting bay and by a distinctive wraparound hip roof porch carried by turned posts and sawn spandrels. The fluted porch balusters are bisected by a fluted horizontal rail, creating a lattice or fretwork effect which echoes the lattice infill between the brick porch piers. A molded handrail connects the balusters. The main entrance is recessed at the right of the projecting bay. The entrance door, composed of two narrow glass panes over molded wooden panels, is framed by sidelights and topped by a three-light transom. At the second story, the main entrance bay is highlighted by a window with decorative muntin pattern, and, above the window, a recessed and corbeled brick panel. A secondary entrance is recessed at the left of the projecting bay; this entrance originally provided access to the dining room from the porch.

The remarkably well-preserved interior of the Blacknall House displays a side hall plan with the stairs rising against the north wall of the spacious, sunny hall. The staircase balusters are square in section and the robust, square newel post is chamfered. The walls are plastered throughout the house. All of the molded six-panel doors and fluted door surrounds with bulls-eye corner blocks remain intact. The original heart pine floors are also intact throughout the house. The five fireplaces have shallow, coal burning fireboxes and are framed by simple mantelpieces with a plain deep shelf supported by plain pilasters with simply molded bases and caps.

The first floor of the Blacknall House contains five rooms (adaptively reused now as offices): a generously proportioned parlor and dining room; a kitchen (now used for storage); a small room at the rear of the hall; and a small bathroom located under the stairs. There are also five rooms on the second story, also now in use for offices: three large bedrooms, a small bedroom and a small bathroom. The only significant interior

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alterations have been the installation of an occasional recessed lighting fixture, updated bathrooms, removal of kitchen appliances to create the storage room on the first floor, and installation of a partial partition wall in the former dining room to create an anteroom for the office there. The building's many large windows create an airy, bright office environment. After the house was moved, a new small office suite was created in the basement, with its main entrance at the building's rear.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
c. 1889

Significant Dates
c. 1889

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Richard D. Blacknall House is architecturally significant as Durham's only identified extant nineteenth century brick residence and is unique as the city's sole surviving Queen Anne style residence rendered in brick. The handsome, newly restored two-story house, constructed c. 1889, exhibits characteristic features of the Queen Anne style including an asymmetrical composition; steeply pitched multi-gable roofline; decorative, scalloped shingles in the gable ends and the ornamental wall dormer; tall corbeled interior chimneys; tall double-hung sash windows with upper sash with a border of small square lights over a single sash; and a distinctive hip-roofed wraparound porch with turned posts, sawn spandrels and fretwork style porch balusters. The interior also survives intact and displays a side hall plan, stairway with robust square newel post, heart pine floors, plaster walls, fluted and grooved trim, and five coal-burning fireplaces with restrained mantelpieces. The house was constructed for Richard D. Blacknall, who was a member of a prominent early Durham family, a pharmacist and owner of Durham's earliest pharmacy, and an influential Presbyterian Church member and founder of the West Durham Presbyterian Mission Church (now Blacknall Memorial Presbyterian Church). The Blacknall House subsequently was associated with Erwin Cotton Mills (later Burlington Industries) which purchased the house in 1909 and leased it to a succession of supervisory personnel until 1965 when it was purchased by Duke University, also for rental purposes. The house, originally located at the corner of Erwin Road and Anderson Street, was vacant from 1978 until 1985 when, threatened by demolition for highway construction, it was moved two blocks southeast to a lot at 300 Alexander Avenue, a compatible new location identical in character to the original setting. The house was carefully restored in 1987-1988 and adapted for use as professional office space.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Richard D. Blacknall was thirteen years old in 1860 when his family moved ten miles south from the rural community of Red Mountain to the growing town of Durham. His father was Dr. Richard Blacknall, a physician who became a prominent and well-respected member of the small town which then comprised a railroad station, three stores, two barrooms, a carpentry shop and a handful of residences. [Boyd, pp. 29-30] In April, 1865 the family's home, located just south of the railroad station, served as the Confederate cavalry commander General Hugh J. Kilpatrick's headquarters during the closing days of the Civil War. [Boyd, p. 35] Dr. Blacknall was a devout Presbyterian (and for a time, along with his family, the only Presbyterians in town) and is remembered as "the [town's] pioneer Presbyterian and also the individual most responsible for the organization of the church in Durham." [Boyd, pp. 191-193] The congregation of the First Presbyterian Church was organized in 1871, and in 1875 a church was constructed on a lot donated by Dr. Blacknall at the corner of Main and Roxboro streets.

About 1875 (exact date unknown) Richard D. Blacknall became associated with his physician father in the operation of R. Blacknall & Son, a pharmacy located at the southeast corner of Main and Depot streets. [Paul, p. 233] It is not known where or when Richard D. Blacknall received his training as a pharmacist. The 1895 Handbook of Durham noted that R. Blacknall & Son "does an extensive drug business [and is the] oldest drug store in the town and controls a patronage which has been extended them for many years by the older residents of the town and country."

In the late 1880s Richard D. Blacknall moved from his downtown home (located on Dillard Street, according to local tradition) to suburban West Durham where "some of Durham's prosperous businessmen seeking a less urban environment were building their homes." [Roberts, p. 147] In February 1889 Blacknall and his wife, the former Sadie Blount of Durham, purchased approximately thirteen acres along a dirt track which later became Erwin Road. [Mortgage Book 13, p. 285] In March 1889 Blacknall acquired three and one-half additional acres, enlarging his original tract. [Deed Book 9, p. 325] Both tracts adjoined the property of J.R. Blacknall, a farmer and kinsman

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of undetermined relationship. Nothing is known about the designer or builder of the stylish two-story brick Queen Anne style house erected about 1889 on this tract for Richard D. and Sadie Blacknall.

According to City Directories, Richard D. Blacknall opened a branch of his pharmacy in West Durham in 1892, perhaps in response to the construction that year of the immensely successful Erwin Cotton Mills and its large surrounding mill village. [Ramsey's Durham Directory, 1892] By its third year of operation in 1896 "the mill employed 1,000 workers housed in approximately 440 houses covering more than fifteen blocks around the West Durham Mill." [Roberts, p. 148] The Blacknall House, situated on its large suburban tract, was soon surrounded by scores of one-story frame mill houses while more elaborate two-story supervisors' residences rose on Main and Pettigrew streets, a short distance north.

Richard D. Blacknall and his wife Sadie were devout Presbyterians who attended the downtown church his father had founded. After their move to West Durham, Sadie Blacknall recalled in her 1901 "Memories" that they "felt that the lost sheep a half mile west of us in Hickstown should be helped." Mrs. Blacknall recorded that she, along with other Blacknall family members and students from newly established nearby Trinity College (now Duke University), and "many Mission pastors held Sunday school in an empty barroom in Hickstown until 1894." ["Memories", n.p.] Services were held there until 1896 when the Mission was moved to rented rooms in nearby West Durham. ["Memories"] According to Sadie Blacknall, a lot on Bolton Street, directly behind Erwin Mills, was donated by J.R. Blacknall as the site of a permanent church, and her husband Richard was the guiding force in the construction of the frame church. She wrote:

In April, 1898, a car of lumber for the new church came. We swelled with pride as the foundations were built that month. My husband's first outlook every morning was toward the new church. One day he went out on the side porch and looked across the fields and there was no church. A violent wind and rain storm had flattened the partially sheathed and weatherboarded building. This was the contractor's loss but the delay was bad. ["Memories"]

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The church was dedicated in 1898 and served the congregation until the present church was built in 1922 at the corner of Perry and Iredell streets, a few blocks east of the original Mission church. The new church was named Blacknall Memorial Church to honor the Blacknall family.

Richard D. Blacknall died on March 26, 1900 at the age of 53. His obituary reads in part:

He spent his life in Durham in the drug business having associated with his father during the latter's lifetime and in honor of whose memory the style of the firm's name had never changed. He was the president of the local Druggists Association. . . .For a quarter of a century Mr. Blacknall had been intimately associated with the business, social and religious life of Durham into all of which circles he was a welcome, valued, and useful member. He was a noble type of man. He exhibited through his long connection with the Presbyterian Church beautiful Christian character and faith that grew brighter and stronger with his years. [The Durham Recorder, March 29, 1900]

According to a December 29, 1900 deed, Blacknall had not paid off an overdue \$1,000 mortgage on his house tract and his widow Sadie retained the property by buying it for \$1,034 at a courthouse foreclosure sale. [Deed Book 24, p. 299] Sadie Blacknall continued to live in the house until about 1906 when, according to Durham city directories, she moved to Angier Avenue, and later North Queen Street, in East Durham. [Hill's Durham Directory, 1905-1906 and 1911-1912] On March 24, 1909 she sold the house and fifteen-acre tract to Erwin Cotton Mills for \$7,000. [Deed Book 40, p. 161] At some undetermined date the large tract was subdivided for mill housing. The 1937 Sanborn map reveals that the Blacknall House still occupied a sizeable lot, while several one-story mill houses had been built nearby along Anderson Street.

By 1909 Erwin Mills had greatly expanded with the construction of Mill Number 4 along West Main Street, west of the original mill, and now employed 1,600 hands. [Roberts, p. 148] Expanded mill operations meant more supervisory personnel in need of quality housing such as the Blacknall House. W.P. Phillips, Erwin Mills superintendent, occupied the house

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from 1907 until the early 1920s. Edward G. Atkins, who rose from mill foreman to overseer and finally to supervisor, occupied the house the longest, from 1926 until 1955. [Hill's Durham Directory, 1926 to 1978, inclusive] Atkins was followed by several other overseers and supervisors who lived in the house until Duke University bought the property and several other large tracts along Erwin and Anderson roads in 1965. [Deed Book 311, pp. 273-282] Duke University continued to use the house as residential rental property for a variety of tenants and built two-story brick student apartment buildings on several of the previously vacant tracts along Erwin and Anderson roads. The Blacknall House was abandoned in 1978.

For several years the Blacknall house stood vacant and overgrown by vines and shrubs. In July 1983 the house was in imminent danger of being demolished by the North Carolina Department of Transportation to make way for the widening of Erwin Road and other road construction connected with the extension of the cross-town I.L. "Buck" Dean Freeway. Staff members from the Durham Planning Department notified the Historic Preservation Society of Durham of the approaching December 1984 demolition date. The Preservation Society began a search for a nearby vacant lot where the house could be relocated and a developer who would undertake the move and subsequent adaptive reuse of the house. The fate of the Blacknall House remained in limbo for the next year and a half. Meanwhile, the Department of Transportation extended several demolition deadlines and the construction company building the expressway delayed work on that portion of the highway. The Durham City Council joined the preservation effort on behalf of the house by appropriating \$35,000 toward the anticipated cost of the house move. In January 1985, local real estate developer Randolph Few agreed to move the house to a vacant lot he owned at 300 Alexander Avenue, around the corner and approximately two blocks southeast of the house's original location at the southwest corner of Erwin Road and Anderson Street.

On April 28, 1985 the 350-ton brick house was safely moved to its new location. (The original stone foundation was not moved with the house. The slightly greater slope the new site allowed a basement level office to be added at the rear of the

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of the house. The new foundation is stucco over cinder block, scored to resemble stone blocks). Unable to complete the restoration, Randolph Few sold the house to developer Brian South on September 23, 1987. [Deed Book 1403 p. 149] South, who has extensive experience in the restoration and adaptive reuse of historic properties in North Carolina, principally in Charlotte and Durham, carefully restored the house according to the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines and adapted it for office use. South sold the restored house on November 3, 1987 to the Blacknall House Partnership, a group of eight investors who are leasing the building as professional office space. [Deed Book 1412, p. 518] Tenants now include several psychiatrists, the Duke University Medical Outreach program and a computer-related company. [see Durham Morning Herald, January 23, 1985, July 17, 1988, and May 6, 1989 and Raleigh News and Observer, July 7, 1988 for accounts of the demolition delays and the moving of the house]

The restoration and adaptive reuse of the Richard D. Blacknall House represents an impressive and successful public/private partnership involving the Durham City Planning Department, the Durham City Council, the Historic Preservation Society of Durham, two preservation-minded developers and a variety of investors and tenants.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT:

Queen Anne style architecture was enormously popular in Durham during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The local economy was booming, fueled by the burgeoning tobacco and textile industries. Durham's new-made millionaires, like Julian Carr and the Washington Duke family, proclaimed their prosperity by choosing this eclectic, highly ornamented, even flamboyant, style for their new mansions, businesses, and for the public institutions they founded or endowed. Queen Anne style structures once located within a few blocks of each other in downtown Durham included "Somerset Villa," Julian Carr's spectacular residence built in 1888; the Carolina Hotel, a rambling seventy-three room hotel with turrets, towers, and enormous wraparound verandah, constructed in 1893 by Julian

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Carr; the First National Bank, constructed by Carr in 1892, which epitomized the style with its multiple and varied rooflines, colorful patterned brickwork and curved tower; the 1897 Public Library, a Queen Anne cottage with colorful, patterned roof (library lot donated by Carr); and a palatial Queen Anne style frame residence, "Fairview," constructed in 1888 by Washington Duke, family patriarch and founder of a vast tobacco manufacturing empire. None of these buildings survives.

Queen Anne was the architectural style of choice not only for Durham's mill owners, but also for a variety of local professional men--"the choice of bankers and physicians in small town America until the turn of the century." [Poppeliers, p. 59] In Durham in 1892, about one mile east of town, construction was beginning on Trinity College (later Duke University) and on a row of five small, but highly ornamented, Queen Anne style cottages built for faculty housing. (The relocation of Trinity College from rural Randolph County to Durham was financed jointly by Julian Carr and Washington Duke. Four of the faculty houses survive intact, moved during the 1910s to the adjacent Trinity Park neighborhood. See "Faculty Row Houses," NR nomination, 1979.) One of Durham's most prestigious early neighborhoods developed just north of downtown during the late 1880s and 1890s. Now known as the Cleveland Avenue and Holloway Street Historic Districts (NR, 1984), the area boasted many elaborate Italianate and Queen Anne Style residences. Even though Urban Renewal programs of the 1960s leveled several blocks of this area, the Cleveland-Holloway neighborhood still contains the largest assortment of the city's surviving Queen Anne style structures, all of frame construction. Probably the most elaborate of these is the Stone-Hackney-Markham House, 204 N. Dillard Street, built c. 1890 for a prominent merchant, William H. Stone, and later owned at the turn of the century by Durham mayor and newspaper publisher, Edward Hackney. The house is ornamented by a plethora of sawnwork, and a particularly fine wraparound porch with turned balusters, sawn spandrels and a projecting, polygonal gazebo at the porch corner.

When pharmacist Richard Blacknall constructed his new house c. 1889, brick houses were quite rare in Durham. While some frame Queen Anne style houses survive, the Blacknall House

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is doubly significant as Durham's only identified surviving brick Queen Anne style house and as the only known nineteenth century brick house of any style. Although the decoration of the Blacknall House is fairly restrained in comparison to high-style Queen Anne houses, the Blacknall House is unusually grand in terms of its materials and originally rural setting. It is interesting to note that when Blacknall moved to rural (soon to be suburban) West Durham, he was moving from Dillard Street in downtown Durham. During the 1880s Dillard Street was one Durham's most fashionable residential streets, with many Queen Anne style houses being built there. It seems likely that Blacknall's decision to build what is essentially a Queen Anne style townhouse "out in the country" was influenced by architectural choices being made by his former in-town neighbors. Surviving documentary photographs of the parlor and dining room reveal that Blacknall's new house was decorated in the popular late Victorian fashion with patterned rugs, dark patterned wallpapers, shawl-draped center tables with massive turned legs, a heavy large sideboard, wicker rocking chair and side table, a turned bamboo firescreen and a surfeit of family photos and bibelots covering the tables and mantels.

The stylish, tall, and narrow brick house must have appeared anomalous in its rural setting where sprawling farmsteads were still the norm, and especially so considering that it was soon surrounded by scores of modest, one-story, one-room deep L-shaped frame mill houses constructed during the 1890s to house the textile workers at nearby Erwin Mills (later Burlington Industries). Approximately 440 mill houses, covering fifteen blocks around the West Durham mill, were completed by the turn of the century. [Roberts, p. 148] Today a large number of these mill houses survive basically intact and in private ownership; portions of the brick former textile mill complex has been adaptively reused as apartments and offices. When the Blacknall House was moved in 1985 from its original location at the corner of Erwin Road and Anderson Street, to a location around the corner and two blocks southeast at 300 Alexander Street, it was once again located in the midst of "institutional" housing composed of a mix of privately built mill worker houses and new Duke student housing, primarily two-story brick apartment buildings constructed in the late 1970s-early 1980s by the University. The new location is compatible also because the house has the same set-back as the original and the large lot is shaded, as before, by old deciduous trees.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	7
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6	8	6	8	2	0
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3	9	8	6	1	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Durham County Tax Map Number 107, Block 5, Lot 6

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary incorporates all of the land currently associated with the Richard D. Blacknall House, which is a residential city lot very similar in topography and vegetation to the nearby parcel on which the house originally stood.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia S. Dickinson, Consultant

organization _____

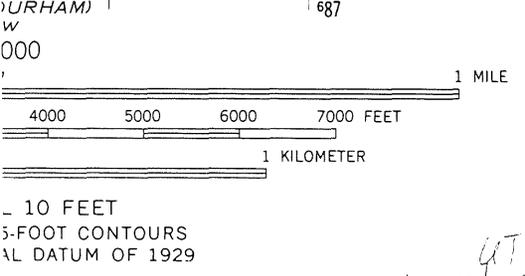
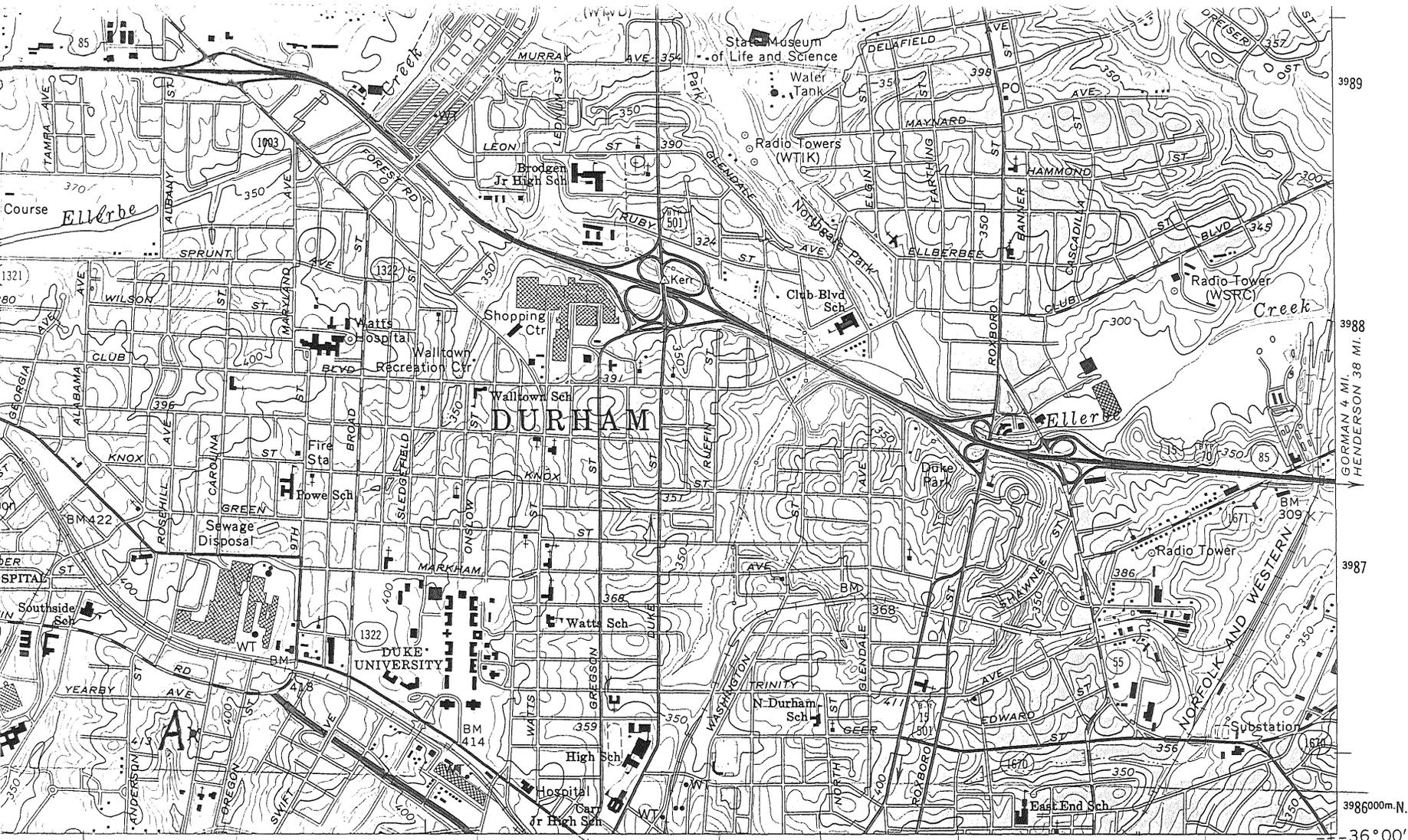
street & number 4606 Hunt Road

city or town Hillsborough

date November 3, 1989

telephone (919) 732-5439

state N.C. zip code 27278



Richard D. Blacknall House
300 Alexander Ave.
Durham, N.C. 27701
 NORTHWEST DURHAM QUAD

UTIX Reference
A-17/60820/3486150

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with State of North Carolina agencies from aerial photographs taken 1984 and other sources. This information not field checked
 Map edited 1987

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

NORTHWEST DURHAM, N. C.

SW/4 DURHAM NORTH 15' QUADRANGLE
 36078-A8-TF-024

1973
 PHOTOREVISED 1987
 DMA 5256 III SW-SERIES V842

(SOUTHEAST DURHAM)
 5255 IV NE

