

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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

DR. A. B. NOBLES HOUSE ("MC KENDREE FARM") AND MCKENDREE CHURCH

AND/OR COMMON

"CHOSUMNEDA"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East and West Sides of SR 1224
North of SR 1222

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF Mercer

Second

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

037

Edgecombe

065

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

William Fillmore

Mc Kendree Church

STREET & NUMBER

Route 3 Box 267

c/o Thomas L. Cherry
Rt. 2, Box 177

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro, NC 27886

___ VICINITY OF

Rocky Mount STATE NC 27801

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Edgecombe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tarboro

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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 Nobles House is a picturesque and well-preserved example of the Gothic cottage style, adapted from Calvert Vaux's patternbook, Villas and Cottages, and A. J. Downing's Architecture of Country Houses and executed in brick; it is an unusual survival in North Carolina as a rural brick version of this mode. The cottage, the center of a large working farm, stands amid a grove of large deciduous trees, facing the road across a lawn shaded by large magnolias and other trees. The side and rear yard are enclosed by a handsome wrought iron fence, which came from the old China-American Tobacco Company in Rocky Mount and was installed about 1952. It is entered through a gate composed of delicate vertical members and topped by an arch composed of scrolls, and the same slim verticals, topped with tiny spearheads, make up the fence as well.

The front door, within an ogee arch, has an arched transom and a double door with upper lancet panels. Steep gables and dormers, arched openings, and sprightly sawn trim follow the plates of Downing and Vaux. Outlining the projecting gable of the ell, the roofline of the porch and its gabled entrance projection, and the single and double dormers that interrupt the roofline, is vigorously designed open sawnwork trim, of a sinuous curving outline. Window openings, paired and single, are ogee-arched, outlined with simple brick labels. The projecting ell features a bay window with ogee windows and a corbel cornice.

The same finish is consistent around the house, and another bay window occurs at the west end of the transverse arm of the ell. To the rear stands a one-story extension with simpler finish but also having arched windows; behind it is a one-story addition of later date.

An old photograph of the house shows it painted grey with "oxblood" red trim.

The interior front block contains a central hall flanked by two front rooms, one in each arm of the ell, each with a bay window. In addition, there is a room to the rear of the left room, in the 1½ story section, and a room on the right in the one-story extension, flanking the hall. There are additional rooms in the rear extension and additions.

Finish in the house dates primarily from two eras--the original construction and refurbishing by the Fillmores (parents of present owner) in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The original finish is very simple, with flat-paneled doors, simple baseboards and molded door and window frames. The open-string stair with slim turned balusters and a molded handrail is also of this era, as are the broad floor boards and most of the upstairs finish. Simple milled pilaster-and-frieze mantels survive as well. The two front rooms were affected most by the refurbishing, which added neo-Georgian enrichment. The two front mantels were replaced by those of earlier and richer design, one with a frieze of swirls and nymphs above a crossetted surround, the other with strange molded pilasters angling in at a high frieze. A modillion cornice was also added at this time.

Although the refurbishing was at variance with the original character of the house, it did not destroy the integrity of the building. Another similar house survives in nearby Tarboro (see significance statement), and its interiors, like those that survive here, are very plain indeed. Apparently the exterior richness and picturesqueness was not continued in any elaborate interior Gothic decoration inside. The essential integrity of the house very clearly survives.

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CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The farmland surrounding the house is in active use, with both crops and forest areas. The McKendree Church, erected in the 1870s on land given by Nobles, stands on a slight rise southwest of the main house. It is a simple, one-story frame structure, its gable end the main facade. It is covered with plain weatherboards and has simple rectangular sash. The simplicity of the building is characteristic of many country churches of the period. Its chief significance is in its connection with the house and the little-altered and still-used condition. Many country churches have been abandoned or severely altered through brick veneering. This one stands essentially as built.

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 checked="" 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/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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nobles House is architecturally significant as a well-preserved and handsomely sited Gothic Revival cottage executed in brick. The picturesque charm of the house is complemented by its rural setting. Its construction, form, and decorative detail reveal the influence of the popular mid-19th century patternbooks of Calvert Vaux and A. J. Downing upon a local builder, possible Thomas Coats, who worked before and after the Civil War in Tarboro and Raleigh. The house was built for Dr. Allen B. Nobles, a locally prominent physician, Methodist layman and benefactor, and an extremely enterprising farmer who, like many of the county's leading farmers, sought the latest improvements in agricultural practice. The small Mc Kendree Church across the road was built about 1875 on land donated by Nobles; when Bishop Mc Kendree, for whom it was named, came to preach there, he stayed with Nobles in a room traditionally kept polished for his use.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Associated with the efforts of some southern farmers to regain pre-Civil War prosperity in agriculture through the use of the latest farming techniques; on this farm A. B. Nobles put into practice improved farming practices with considerable success: in 1882 he produced 65 bales of cotton on 52 acres. This reflected his activity in the local agricultural associations.
- B. Associated with Dr. A. B. Nobles, a locally prominent farmer, physician, Methodist layman, and occasional political figure. Also associated with Bishop Mc Kendree, for whom the church was named, a frequent visitor of Nobles.
- C. Exemplifies in well-preserved condition the use of the patternbooks of A. J. Downing and Calvert Vaux in building fashionable Gothic cottages; the house is a rare North Carolina example in brick and is related to another one, quite similar, in Tarboro. The church is a modest and representative example of post Civil War country church architecture.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Dr. Allen B. Nobles was born in Warren County in 1823. He was educated at Louisburg Academy in Franklin County and a medical school in Cincinnati, Ohio. He came to Edgecombe County about 1849 and began practicing medicine. He moved to Tarboro in 1852, and five years later he purchased from Jesse C. Knight, grandfather of his wife Susan, a tract of land in Edgecombe County. It was there that he would later build a Gothic Revival house. He continued to expand his holdings for a decade.¹

Evidently Nobles continued to practice medicine during the Civil War, but after the conflict abandoned his practice to devote full time to farming.² Local tradition claims that he built his house in the county between 1865 and 1870. Although it is not certain who the builder was, the design and style suggest that it may have been constructed by Thomas Coats. Coats, who lived in Tarboro at the time, worked frequently as contractor with architect William Percival in the construction of the First Baptist Church in Raleigh and Calvary Episcopal Church in Tarboro. The Barracks, home of William S. Battle, in Tarboro was also designed by Percival, as well as other notable buildings in the state. The Nobles house appears to derive from plates of Calvert Vaux and A. J. Downing; the work of Percival and Coats seems to have brought the latest patternbooks to Tarboro and Edgecombe County.

After Dr. Nobles moved to his new home following the Civil War, he became one of the county's most successful and enterprising farmers. In 1870 his farm was valued at \$9,800 but the value of his personal estate declined from \$20,000 to \$12,000 probably, at least partly, because of his loss of fifteen slaves as a result of the war.³ Always interested in agricultural programs, he was a strong supporter of the Edgecombe County Fair and was largely responsible for it being held near his farm in 1875. Nobles studied improved methods of farming and put many of them into operation.

In 1882 he produced the then-unusual amount of 71,505 pounds of seed cotton, or 65 bales, on 52 acres. This he accomplished by rejuvenating his land using compost and manure. Nobles was also active in the Farmer's Alliance and in 1889 was president of the Cocoa Branch of that organization.⁴

Besides his agricultural experience and service the former physician participated in local politics and government. In 1869 he was elected Magistrate of Walnut Creek District in Edgecombe County. In 1876 he ran for the United States House of Representatives on the Democratic ticket but was defeated by the Republican candidate. He later joined the Populist Party and was its nominee for County Treasurer in 1892 but was once again defeated. He returned to the Democratic Party in 1903.⁵

Dr. Nobles was also a religious leader in his community. Around 1875 he donated the land for the building of McKendree Methodist Church near the Nobles farm. The church still stands near the house. According to William Fillmore, who now owns the Nobles house, the doctor was devoted to the church and reserved a special room in his home to accomodate the visiting Bishop McKendree for whom the church was named.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

"The Bishop," claims Fillmore,

was a frequent visitor to the house and always stayed there when visiting Edgecombe County. On these visits he always stayed in the "Bishop's Room," an upstairs bedroom in the house. This room was set aside and kept immaculate for his use when he was in the area. The house was somewhat delapidated when my father Col. Fillmore purchased it in 1946. The "Bishop's Room," by contrast, was in good condition, with fresh paint and a highly polished floor.

In 1901 Dr. Nobles sold his house and land to Frank Gorham. Evidently Gorham subsequently left the property to his son, R. S. Gorham, who sold it to Col. William H. Fillmore in 1946.⁷ Since that time the property has passed to the Colonel's son, William C. Fillmore who, along with his wife, lives in the old Nobles house.

Architectural significance and context

The Nobles house, built shortly after the Civil War, is of statewide architectural significance as a well-preserved example of a type rarely surviving in the state, the picturesque Gothic cottage mode executed in brick. Its rural setting is also somewhat unusual, both as a 19th century brick farmhouse in eastern North Carolina, and as a rural example of the Gothic cottage mode. It is also one of the few stylish or ambitious farmhouses erected so soon after the war, in a period when towns were the chief focus of postwar economic efforts and most farmers, especially in the eastern plantation area, were in no condition to embark on building projects. The modishness of the patternbook design is a marked contrast to the traditional, frame, vernacular form that dominated early and mid (and even late) 19th century rural domestic architecture in Edgecombe County and most of eastern North Carolina. The character of the house reflects architectural developments in the nearby county seat town of Tarboro.

In and near Tarboro, in the late 1850s, architects E. G. Lind of Baltimore and William Percival of Virginia designed modish new buildings: Lind's Coolmore and Percival's Barrack were grand villas and Percival's Calvary Church was a sophisticated Gothic Revival building; the latter two were of brick. Thomas Coats, who was brick contractor for Percival, is credited with erecting for himself a picturesque English cottage of brick about 1860, perhaps inspired by access to the architects' pattern books. In addition, Coats (who moved to Raleigh and set himself up as architect later) is surmised locally to have been involved in the construction of the Cheshire-Nash House in Tarboro, built in the late 1860s and extremely similar to the Nobles House. Since it was across the street from and built for the rector of Calvary Church, and since completion of the church (interrupted by the war) occurred in 1867, Coats (contractor for the church) seems a likely candidate as builder of the brick picturesque cottages--Cheshire's house and Nobles house---of roughly the same era.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

Footnotes

- ¹ Joseph Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., History of Edgecombe County (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1920), pp. 481; Edgecombe County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro, Deed Book 27:382, hereinafter cited as Edgecombe Deed Books. See also property narrative, attached.
- ² Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Edgecombe County, Population Schedule I, 587.
- ³ Ibid., Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Slave Schedule, 76.
- ⁴ Turner and Bridgers, History of Edgecombe County, pp. 337, 294, 338-39.
- ⁵ Ibid., pp. 250, 294-95, 301, 481.
- ⁶ William C. Fillmore to Larry Tise, September 13, 1977, Noble-Gorham-Fillmore File, Historic Preservation Section, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
- ⁷ Edgecombe Deed Books, 104:376; 430:49.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Edgecombe County Records, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh (Subgroup: Deeds, Census).

Turner, Joseph Kelly and Bridgers, John L. Jr.

History of Edgecombe County, Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1920

William C. Fillmore to Larry Tise, September 13, 1977. Noble-Gorham-Fillmore File, Historic Preservation Section, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY APPROX. 391 ACRES

QUADRANGLE NAME Tarboro Quadrangle *Heartleaf*

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

	Longitude	Latitude	B	E	N
			ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A.	77° 38' 46"	35° 52' 23"	[]	[]	[]
B.	77° 38' 45"	35° 51' 39"	[]	[]	[]
C.	77° 39' 59"	35° 51' 40"	[]	[]	[]
D.	77° 39' 58"	35° 53' 04"	[]	[]	[]
			F	[]	[]
			H	[]	[]

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See attached continuation sheet - Item 10, Page 1

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 prepared by Catherine W. Bishir, Survey & Planning Branch
SIGNIFICANCE prepared by Joe Mobley, Research Branch

ORGANIZATION

Division of Archives & History

DATE

April 9, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

109 East Jones Street

TELEPHONE

919-733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh,

STATE

NC 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

[Signature]

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5-10-79

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

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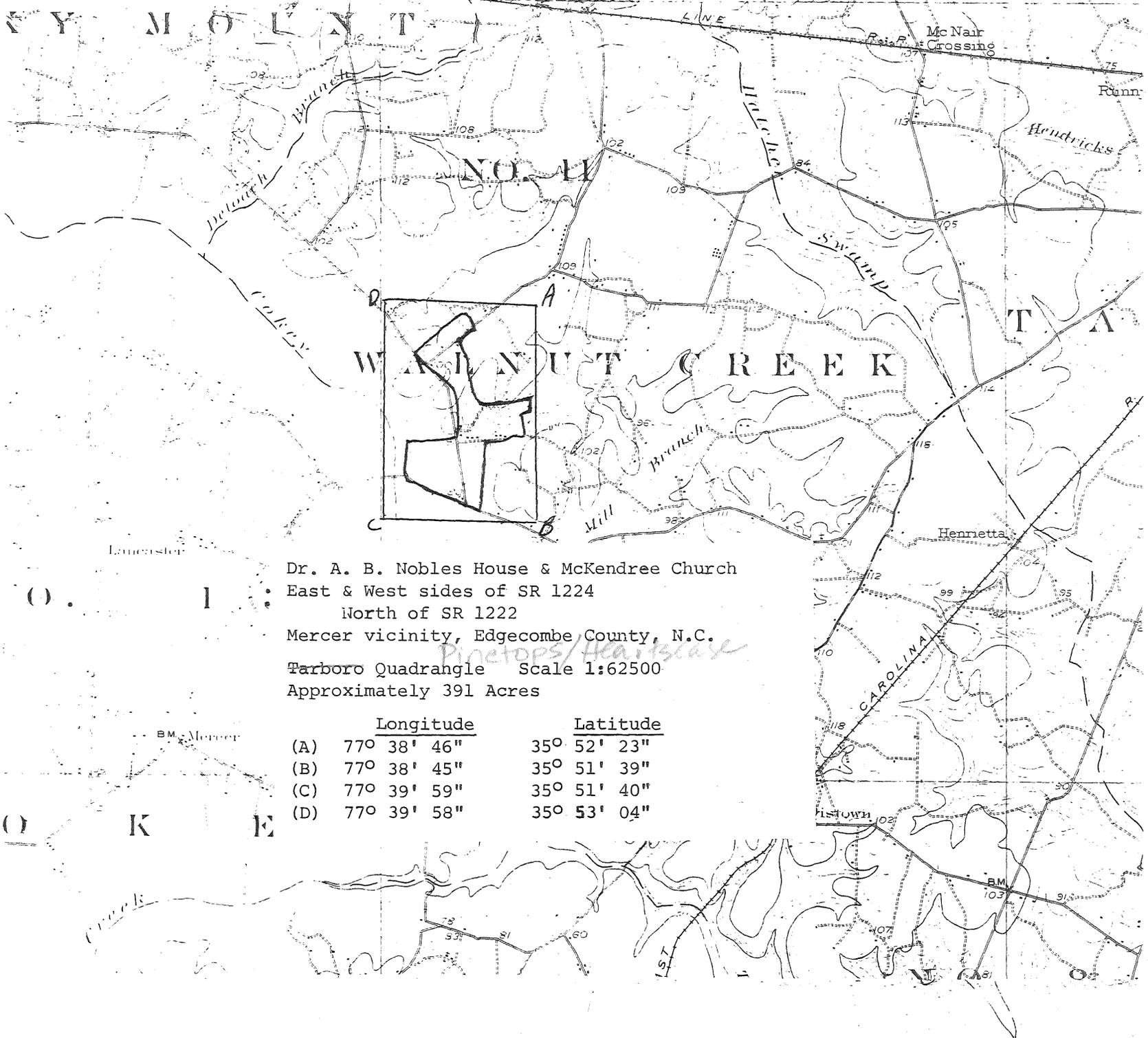
BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
CONTINUATION SHEET & JUSTIFICATION ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The 354.6-acre farm described in the attached boundary description as Tract One, in the division deed of 16 December, 1974, Martina Fillmore Taylor and husband Fletcher B. Taylor to William Carr Fillmore. Also shown on attached map, "Home Farm, William Carr Fillmore." The present owner recently purchased a tract of 36.2 acres to the east; it was part of the "Mc Kendree Farm" tract as mapped in 1922 (western half of lot 10). The nominated property includes this 390.8-acre farm plus the small tract of land carved out from it at the junction of S.R. 1222 and S.R. 1224, the property associated with the Mc Kendree Church and given from the present farm by Dr. Nobles.

JUSTIFICATION

The level farmland is still in farming use, with some woodlands characteristic of the tilled-wooded balance throughout the county and region and throughout much of the historic farm use of the land. Dr. Nobles, who built the house, was well known as a progressive farmer using the latest improved farming methods to produce large yields of cotton and other crops. The farmland is thus significant not only as the economic basis and agrarian context for the house but also because of Noble's farming practices there. The 354.6 acres, included with the house in the division of the property (see above) remains associated with the house, from a larger tract of 618 acres assembled by Dr. Nobles in the mid-19th century and sold to the Gorham family in 1901. The attached map ("Plat of Mc Kendree Farm") shows the 618-acre tract; outlined in red is the Fillmore farm. The only buildings on the property besides the house complex are small 20th century tenant houses of no architectural distinction. As noted above, the entire tract is farmland, as it has historically been. Economically, historically, and visually the land is closely connected with the house complex. And the church and the house are linked historically and by the land between them.



Dr. A. B. Nobles House & McKendree Church
 East & West sides of SR 1224
 North of SR 1222
 Mercer vicinity, Edgecombe County, N.C.
 Pinetops/Alamogordo
 Farboro Quadrangle Scale 1:62500
 Approximately 391 Acres

	<u>Longitude</u>	<u>Latitude</u>
(A)	77° 38' 46"	35° 52' 23"
(B)	77° 38' 45"	35° 51' 39"
(C)	77° 39' 59"	35° 51' 40"
(D)	77° 39' 58"	35° 53' 04"

Plan of the
MCKENDREE FARM

situated
No 11 Township Edgecombe County, N.C.

property of
F L Bland - G L Wimberly - Frank Gorham

Rocky Mt, N.C.

Subdivided for
ATLANTIC COAST REALTY
offices

Petersburg, Va & Greenville, N.C.

Scale 1" = 400' -- Oct 11, 1922

J M Credle, Engineer

