

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 Ragsdale Farm

other names/site number Magnolia Farms

2. Location

street & number 404 E. Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Jamestown

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Guilford

code 081

zip code 27282

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>13</u>	<u>8</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>19</u>	<u>13</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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 William J. Fair

Date 7-22-91

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

LANDSCAPE/garden

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

LANDSCAPE/garden

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Other: Traditional Agricultural

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stucco

walls Weatherboard

Wood

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Ragsdale Farm is a country estate of approximately thirty-nine acres wedged in a triangular shape between E. Main Street (Greensboro Road) on the north and the Southern Railway tracks on the south in southwestern Guilford County. Although it is located just east of the center of Jamestown, its appearance is surprisingly rural in character. Ragsdale Farm consists of the Colonial Revival-style Ragsdale House facing E. Main Street (Greensboro Road) near the western end of the property; three tenant houses and a collection of farm and domestic outbuildings arranged primarily along a lane running south from the house; gardens in the vicinity of the house; and rolling acres of pastures, woods, and a pond stretching eastward from the house to the point where the railroad track crosses Greensboro Road.

Of the property's thirty-two resources, nineteen are "contributing" buildings, sites, and structures, while thirteen are "noncontributing" buildings and structures. Although the noncontributing resources constitute forty-one percent of the total, their nature suggests a much smaller role in the overall character of the place. Most are small outbuildings, farm structures--such as a smokehouse and an equipment shed--traditional in form and materials but built in the mid-twentieth century after the period of significance, or amenities such as a riding ring, a swimming pool, and a guest house which help convey the mid-twentieth-century "gentleman's farm." The property as a whole is dominated by the contributing resources.

Ragsdale Farm possesses a high level of integrity as a property which evolved through several generations of family ownership and use from a nineteenth-century working farm to a prosperous twentieth-century country estate. As such, changes over time to the buildings and landscape have followed a natural progression that bears an integral relationship with the family story and helps convey the overall significance of the place. (Particular changes to buildings and landscape will be discussed as part of the inventory.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

1. Ragsdale House. 1880, 1900, 1948. Contributing. The Ragsdale House is a large, two-story frame, Colonial Revival-style dwelling which dates primarily from 1900. Family tradition suggests that the original house was a vernacular structure already on the property when Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale purchased it in 1866. Descriptions imply that it was a one-and-a-half or two-story hall-and-parlor plan structure with a front shed room and porch and a side kitchen. Whether any of this structure survives within the present house is not known, as its presence is not immediately evident. In 1880 Joseph and Emily Ragsdale enlarged the original house, converting it to two-story, center-hall, single-pile dwelling with a triple-A roof, gable-end chimneys, a shed-roofed front porch, and simple Italianate-style detailing. It was typical of its period. Evidence of the 1880 house remains today in the rear elevation's segmental-arched windows and, more prominently, on the interior. Here the center hall flanked by two rooms remains, with the handsome Victorian stair with heavy newel, turned balusters, and bracketed steps still intact. In 1900 Joseph Ragsdale again enlarged and remodeled his house. Ragsdale doubled the house by extending the center passage to the front and adding four rooms (two over two). The roof took on a pyramidal form with front and side gables (decoratively shingled on the front) and hipped dormers. Chimneys changed from exterior to interior, facade fenestration changed from three bays to five, and the front porch took on a three-sided wrap-around configuration with a projecting center bay and Tuscan columns. On the interior, turn-of-the-century features include a beaded board wainscot in the front hall and molded door surrounds with bull's-eye corner blocks. In 1948 William G. Ragsdale, Jr. and his wife, Mary, extended the dining room by adding a large bay window on the east side of the house, added a laundry room on the first story and a dressing room on the second story, and installed handsome Georgian paneling and cornices in the major first-floor rooms. While 1880 features remain visible and the 1948 changes are significant in scope, the 1900 Colonial Revival appearance predominates the overall character of the house.
2. Playhouse. 1940s. Noncontributing. On the west side of the brick terrace behind the Ragsdale House is the playhouse built for the children of W. G. Jr. and Mary Ragsdale. It is a diminutive one-story German-sided structure with a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2 Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

symmetrical three-bay facade and an engaged shed-roofed front porch.

3. Granary. Late 19th cent. Contributing. Located behind the house, the granary is a one-story weatherboarded structure with entrance in the gable end and windows on both side elevations. It was originally divided into sections, with one-third holding oats and two-thirds holding wheat.
4. Guest house. 1944. Noncontributing. The guest house occupies the site of the original smokehouse, tool house, and laundry which had burned. It is a one-story weatherboarded structure with a gable roof, a gable-end chimney on the south side, and a partial main facade porch.
5. Pool. 1961. Noncontributing. Located behind (east of) the guest house, the large rectangular swimming pool was built on the site of the earlier vegetable garden.
6. Shuffleboard deck. 1961. Noncontributing. The single-lane shuffleboard deck is located just east of the swimming pool.
7. Garage/wood shed. Ca. 1920s. Contributing. Built for use by Joseph Ragsdale's daughter, Virginia, this single-bay garage has German siding and a front-facing gable roof. Attached to the north side is the wood shed.
8. Smokehouse. Mid-1940s. Noncontributing. Gable-ended frame smokehouse built after earlier smokehouse across the lane burned.
9. Dog house. ca. 1920s, moved to site ca. 1940. Contributing. Small, gable-roofed, frame dog house located in front of smokehouse. Originally used by W. G. Ragsdale, Jr. for one of his dogs when Ragsdale lived at his boyhood home across Greensboro Rd. (Main St.). He moved the dog house to its present site after purchasing and moving to his grandparents' home, Ragsdale Farm, in 1939.
10. Garage. 1943. Noncontributing. Five-bay weatherboarded garage with gable roof.
11. Ragsdale Office. 1870s, moved to site in 1960s. Noncontributing. Originally located across Greensboro Rd. (Main St.) where the Jamestown Town Hall now stands, this

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

was the office which Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale and his brother, John R. Ragsdale, used in their tree nursery business. Local tradition also claims that it served for a time as the Jamestown Post Office. The building is a small but handsome rectangular structure with weatherboard siding, a gable roof with a boxed cornice, a round-arched decorative window in the front gable end, a gable-end entrance, and two-over-two sash windows.

12. Dog house. Mid-20th cent. Noncontributing. Small gable-roofed frame structure.
13. Rabbit pen. Mid-20th cent. Noncontributing. Gable-roofed frame structure enclosed with wire mesh.
14. Chicken coop. Early 20th cent. Contributing. Low frame and screen coop with shed roof.
15. Chicken coop. Early 20th cent. Contributing. Larger (than #14) coop with weatherboard siding, a shed roof, and slatted ventilators.
16. Fowl house. Early 20th cent. Contributing. Small frame structure raised about a foot and a half off the ground on stilts, with weatherboard siding and a gable roof.
17. Corncrib. Late 19th-early 20th cent. Contributing. Handsome frame corncrib with brick pier foundation, narrow slatted sides for ventilation, and a gable roof with a wide, braced overhang in front.
18. Privy. Late 19th-early 20th cent. Contributing. Typical frame outhouse with weatherboard siding, a batten door, and a shed roof.
19. Tenant house. Third quarter 20th cent. Noncontributing. This structure started out, probably in the early twentieth century, as a chicken house. After the swimming pool was built in 1961, it was converted to a boys' bath house. In the 1970s it was remodeled and converted to a tenant house.
20. Pump house. Late 19th cent. Contributing. Located at the edge of the pasture downhill and east of the other outbuildings, the pump house is a board-and-batten structure with windows and a gable roof. Family tradition asserts

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

that the pump was run by steam and that someone came from the Oakdale Cotton Mill to build a fire and pump water about once a month for a tank that stood near the barn. It supplied water for everything except drinking purposes.

21. Well house. Late 19th cent. Contributing. The frame well house has weatherboard siding, a batten door, and a gable roof which spans both the enclosed half of the structure and the shed which is open on south and east sides. The original wood shingle can still be seen beneath the current asphalt shingle roof.
22. Cow barn. Ca. 1870. Contributing. The cow barn may be the oldest outbuilding surviving from the earliest years of Ragsdale Farm. The mortise-and-tenon-framed structure is sheathed with board-and-batten siding and is covered with an usually broad gable roof. Several small six-light windows are irregularly placed, and there are both single and double-leaf doors as well as loft loading doors.
23. Chicken coop. Early 20th cent. Contributing. A few feet from the rear of the cow barn (east of it) is another chicken coop. This one has the typical shed roof but utilizes a combination of weatherboard and board-and-batten siding.
24. Riding ring. 1950s. Noncontributing. Located on the west side of the lane, the large oval-shaped riding ring is defined by a white board fence.
25. Horse barn. Ca. 1900. Contributing. The horse barn is the largest and most prominent outbuilding at Ragsdale Farm. The handsome board-and-batten structure is tall, with a steeply pitched gable roof covering two levels of loft. Small gabled ventilators project from the ridge of the roof, and at the south end, the gable peak projects to house a hoisting pulley for the high loft loading door. The barn has a center passage with horizontal sliding doors at north and south ends, and sheds with sash windows along east and west sides.
26. Carriage/equipment shed. 1966. Noncontributing. This large, L-shaped shed features vertical board siding and a low gable roof. The thirteen bays open to the north and west behind the horse barn.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

27. Storage shed. Ca. 1970. Noncontributing. This small corrugated metal shed behind (south of) the carriage/equipment shed was installed by one of the Ragsdales' tenants and left on site when he moved. It is the only outbuilding or landscape feature which seems incompatible with the character of the farm estate, but it can be seen only from the rear of the property.
28. Tenant house. Mid-late 19th cent.-20th cent. Contributing. This one-story frame tenant house with loft was built in several stages. The earliest section, defined by a flush-sheathed facade and a gable-end chimney, may pre-date Ragsdale occupancy of the property. The first addition extended the house to the south, and a subsequent addition created shed rooms across the rear. The house has weatherboard siding, a gable roof with widely overhanging eaves, a pair of front doors, and narrow loft windows above the shed-roofed front porch.
29. Smokehouse. Late 19th cent. Contributing. Behind the tenant house is a board-and-batten smokehouse with a gable roof.
30. Tenant house. Late 19th-early 20th cent. Contributing. This small one-story-with-loft house has weatherboard siding, a gable roof with widely overhanging eaves, an east gable-end flue stack, and a hip-roofed front porch. Attached to the rear of the house by what was probably once a breezeway is a smaller gabled section with gable-end chimney which typically would have served originally as the kitchen. Although the house is situated on its own small triangular tract which was not purchased by the Ragsdales until the 1940s, it was previously owned by the Oakdale Cotton Mill and had for years been used by the Ragsdales as a tenant house for their farm.
31. Domestic landscape/gardens. 1880-mid 20th cent. Contributing. The domestic landscape, consisting of both gardens and lawns in the vicinity of the house, is one of the most physically significant aspects of Ragsdale Farm. It conveys the Ragsdales' long-term collective interest in gardening. According to Virginia Ragsdale, Peter Cash, an Italian who had done some landscaping in Lexington, was engaged in 1880 to "develop the yard." He lived and worked

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

with the Ragsdales for three months, during which time he laid off walks, established symmetrical flower beds, and planted a variety of trees, shrubs, and flowers. Modifications to the original scheme have occurred through the years as the property has evolved and as a personal interest in gardening and landscaping has continued within the family. When Joseph Ragsdale served in the state legislature in 1881, his homecoming gifts to his wife, Emily, included unusual plants brought from Raleigh. In the 1920s Virginia Ragsdale tended a formal boxwood garden behind the house. A long privet hedge outlines the front of the lawns, separating them from the road. The hedge originally turned southward to define the sides of the yard, but in 1944 the sides were removed to enlarge the yard. At the same time, the William G. Ragsdales, Jr., planted 103 white pines along the western edge of the property and along either side of the southernmost stretch of the lane leading from the outbuildings past the tenant houses to the west end of the property. A brick walk (formerly gravel) forms a horseshoe in front of the Ragsdale House and then continues around the sides of the house. In front of the house are large magnolias planted in 1880-1881 and other large trees and smaller flowering trees and shrubs. A variety of plant materials continues around the sides of the house, distinguishing this area from the more expansive side lawns. Directly behind the house is a brick terrace dating from 1946, more hedges and other plantings, and a goldfish pond. Southeast of the house is Virginia Ragsdale's boxwood garden with an arched trellis gateway in the center of each side. Running downhill east of the boxwood garden is a terraced garden established by the Ragsdales in the mid-twentieth century for 500 rose bushes. The bay window added to the east side of the house in 1948 provides a better view of the gardens and of the bucolic pastures stretching eastward from the house.

32. Agricultural landscape. 1866-mid 20th cent. Contributing. Like the outbuildings, the landscape at Ragsdale Farm helps visually to support an understanding of the changing nature of the place over time and the multiple interests of the Ragsdale family. A 1938 soil survey map of the property suggests that the agricultural landscape has not changed significantly during the last half-century. The landscape consists of a combination of woods at the east end of the property, pastures along the north of the property and in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

the far west beyond the riding ring, a large pond added by W. G. Ragsdale, Jr. in 1940 near the center of the property, and a small orchard on the south side of the property behind the carriage/equipment shed. White board fences line the front along the road and define some of the pastures as well as some of the areas around the outbuildings. Though no longer cultivated, the open pastures and wooded areas still convey the expanse of land associated with Ragsdale Farm when it was a fairly typical Guilford County farm of the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition, the bucolic rolling pastures bordered by woods and white fences provide a spectacular vista of the house and outbuildings from the east and clearly announce the prominence of the place.

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)

Industry
Education
Architecture
Agriculture

Period of Significance

1866 - 1941

Significant Dates

1866
1880
1900
1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Ragsdale, Joseph Sinclair
Ragsdale, William Gannaway Jr.
Ragsdale, Virginia

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

SUMMARY:

Ragsdale Farm is an estate of approximately thirty-nine acres associated for the last 125 years with the Ragsdales, the most prominent family in Guilford County's Jamestown area during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The locally significant property represents typical agricultural practices in late nineteenth-century Guilford County as well as popular architectural design during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. The unusual sophistication of the combined Colonial Revival house, outbuildings, and planned landscape suggests intentions that moved well beyond a sole interest in agriculture. Indeed, Ragsdale Farm is a property which evolved in both use and appearance according to the needs and aspirations of a family whose successive generations made multiple contributions in the fields of industry and education. First owner Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale (1836-1903) was a teacher and farmer who served a term in the state legislature (1881) and after 1885 became the moving force in Jamestown's most significant late nineteenth and twentieth-century industry, Oakdale Cotton Mill (NR). Joseph Ragsdale's son, William G. Ragsdale (1874-1929), and grandson, William G. Ragsdale, Jr. (1911-1969), continued as the leaders and primary stockholders of the mill, and today William G. Ragsdale, III serves as president. Significance in the Ragsdale family was not confined to the male members, however. Virginia Ragsdale (1870-1945) established an extraordinary record in women's education for her time, both in the education she received and then in the education she imparted to others. She was awarded a Ph.D degree in math from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania in 1903, based in part on study in Germany, and later taught for seventeen years (1911-1928) at N. C. Woman's College in Greensboro (now UNC-G),

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

the last two years as head of the Department of Mathematics. Ragsdale Farm's period of significance spans the years from 1866, when Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale purchased the first portion of his farm and moved to it, to 1941, the last year in which the property meets the fifty-year requirement for listing in the National Register.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: INDUSTRY

The Deep River which passes through southwestern Guilford County was conducive to industrial development, and from the earliest years of settlement a variety of small and not-so-small industries developed in this area of the county. Industrial endeavors during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries included a hat-making shop, a tanyard, a pottery, and numerous grist mills (Robinson and Stoesen, 57).

Among the nineteenth-century Deep River industries was the Jamestown Woolen Mill. During the Civil War the mill made uniforms for the Confederate Army, until the factory was burned in 1865 by a contingent of General Stoneman's raiders. They mistook it for the Confederate Gun Factory which was located two miles down the river (where the Oakdale Cotton Mill now stands) (Robinson and Stoesen, 57). Jamestown, in fact, became a nineteenth-century center for gunsmithing, and by 1850 the Jamestown-Deep River school comprised one of the largest groups of gunsmiths in the South (Bivins, 43). Gold and copper mining also played a role of some significance in the industrial history of southwest Guilford County, with several gold mines located in the area during the nineteenth century (Carpenter, 38,40; Topkins and Suttlemyre).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the area traversed by the Deep River was a leading manufacturing region for textiles in North Carolina, and this held true for its passage through Guilford County. The Oakdale Cotton Mill (NR) south of Jamestown is the oldest textile firm in continuous operation in Guilford County, one of North Carolina's major industrial centers. In its physical setting, industrial development, and corporate history, the mill is an excellent example of nineteenth-century manufacturing in North Carolina's Piedmont. The site of the mill was used for other industrial purposes even before its development as a cotton factory in 1865. Prior to the Civil War, a two-story frame grist mill was located at the site. During the Civil War, the grist mill was converted to the Confederate Gun Factory, which produced between 1,500 and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

3,000 rifles between 1862 and 1864. In 1865 the Logan Manufacturing Company was organized and began producing cotton warps on the site. In 1871 the company's name was changed to Oakdale Mills, and its cotton twine found a ready market in Baltimore (Glass and Little-Stokes).

In 1885 Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale (1836-1903) was hired as manager of the mill, and soon thereafter several structural and organizational changes took place which contributed to the success of the Oakdale Cotton Mill Company. By 1889 a brick complex had replaced the old frame mill that had served as a grist mill, gun factory, and cotton mill for over thirty years. Prior to 1900 steam power was introduced at the mill. Typical of cotton mills of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in North Carolina, Oakdale developed a village for its workers with housing, a company store, a school, and other amenities. In 1896 Oakdale Mills was incorporated with Joseph Ragsdale as secretary-treasurer, a position he held until his death in 1903. Although leading stockholders at that time included such prominent Winston-Salem industrialists and financiers as Francis H. Fries, H. F. Shaffner (vice-president), and William H. Ragan (president), Ragsdale--who made his home in Jamestown--was the on-site man who was largely responsible for the mill's successful operation and growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Glass and Little-Stokes).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the smaller-scale industries centered around Jamestown were surpassed by the larger-scale industrial developments of both Greensboro and High Point, and Guilford County shifted toward an urbanized industrial economy (Smith, 24). Through all this, however, Oakdale Cotton Mills, under the direction of the Ragsdales, continued to prosper.

When Joseph Ragsdale died in 1903, it was written that "His death was the greatest calamity that ever struck Jamestown" (Young, 165). Joseph's son, William G. Ragsdale (1874-1929), who had joined Oakdale in 1897, then became company treasurer. As Oakdale sought to compete with larger manufacturers in North Carolina's growing textile industry, the mill's work force doubled to 150 workers by 1910, and between 1890 and 1910 the number of spindles increased from 10,000 to 50,000. In 1914 William G. Ragsdale was elected president and treasurer of Oakdale Mills, positions which he held until his death in 1929 (Young, 165; Glass and Little-Stokes). (William G. Ragsdale resided during his adult life in a Queen Anne style house which he built across the road from his boyhood home, Ragsdale Farm. That house has been demolished.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

Upon William Ragsdale's death in 1929, his sons, William G. Ragsdale, Jr. (1911-1969) and Thomas C. Ragsdale, followed him as officers in the company. William G. Ragsdale, Jr. became president and eventually board chairman of Oakdale Cotton Mills. By 1950 he had acquired controlling stock in the company. After William G. Ragsdale's death in 1969, Thomas C. Ragsdale took over management. Today William G. Ragsdale, III, son of William G. Ragsdale, Jr. and great grandson of Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale, is president of Oakdale Cotton Mills (Glass and Little-Stokes; W. G. Ragsdale, Jr. Obituary; Mary Ragsdale, Interview).

The industrial roles of the Ragsdales at Oakdale Cotton Mills coalesced their power, but their multiple achievements and contributions to the community had a profound influence on the Jamestown area. Joseph Ragsdale came to Jamestown in 1866. As a teacher at Flint Hill Academy and as farmer he gained a high degree of community respect, and in 1881 he was sent to Raleigh for a term in the state legislature (Young, 165; Cheney, 461). William G. Ragsdale, in addition to his industrial interests, was director of two area banks and served for a time on the Guilford County Board of Commissioners (Young, 166). Like his father, William G. Ragsdale, Jr. served on the Guilford County Board of Commissioners. His twenty years (1945-1965) on the Board included many years as vice-chairman. In 1967 William, Jr. won a seat on the Jamestown Town Council, which his brother, Thomas C. Ragsdale, had headed as mayor since the town was incorporated in 1947. Other business interests included Jamestown Mills (chairman of board), Highland Container Corp. (president), and William G. Ragsdale, Jr., Inc., a land development firm which he founded. In addition, he was a trustee of Oak Ridge Military Academy, was on the board of Guilford County Tuberculosis Sanatorium from 1935 until it closed prior to 1958, and was chairman of the board of trustees and treasurer of Jamestown Methodist Church. William G. Ragsdale, Jr. took a leading role in gathering and preserving Jamestown's history, while his concern for the town's present and future earned him recognition as Jamestown's "No. 1 booster" (William G. Ragsdale, Jr. Obituary).

Although Logan Manufacturing Company (Oakdale Cotton Mill Village) is already listed in the National Register, Ragsdale Farm--as the only well-preserved property exclusively associated with the successive generations of the Ragsdale family--most clearly reflects the multiple accomplishments of Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale and William G. Ragsdale, Jr. as individuals. Their significant roles in the industrial development of southwestern Guilford County provided the foundation for their local political

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

power as well as the funds to continue developing the homeplace as a property reflecting the extent of their achievements.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: EDUCATION

General indifference to the education of women was prevalent throughout the Colonial period in North Carolina and continued for much of the nineteenth century. Due to the lack of available men, the Civil War brought an increase of women in the public schools. Indeed, the state's leaders in education were beginning to recognize the importance of women teachers in the schools. During both the Civil War and Reconstruction periods many academies and private schools as well as those sponsored by churches were opened in various communities for both elementary and high school education. Many of the private schools were taught by women. In the late 1870s graded schools were provided in the state, and women soon dominated the elementary field. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century, the female academies, institutes, and colleges for women which had been established before the middle of the 1880s began to make their influence felt in the teaching field. Women educated in these schools generally contributed to education by teaching in private schools, though many of them transferred to the public schools as soon as these were established (Camp, 1, 6-7).

It was between 1860 and 1880 that women began to play a part in higher education in North Carolina. An example was Mary Mendenhall, who joined the faculty of Guilford College in 1878 and through her teaching, writing, and lectures promoted the cause of higher education for women. Although women were teaching on all levels in these decades, private and church schools furnished the only facilities for higher education for women in North Carolina. Twenty-four such schools were reported at this time. The State began to provide professional training for women in the teaching field in 1877 when women were admitted to the Normal Summer School held on the campus of the University of North Carolina (Camp, 7).

Nevertheless, North Carolina as a state made no general provision for the higher education of its women before the establishment of the State Normal and Industrial School in Greensboro in 1892. This school numbered among its early faculty members a number of women who had received their basic education at private or church schools in the state and their advanced education out of state. Among these were Gertrude Mendenhall and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

Mary Petty, both graduates of Guilford College with B. S. degrees from Wellesley, and Viola Boddie, a graduate of Littleton College with a degree from the Normal School at Nashville (now Peabody College) (Camp, 7-8). Other faculty members received all their education out of state, such as Anna Gove, who studied at MIT and later in Vienna. When the State Normal and Industrial School opened in 1892, there were no faculty members with a Ph.D degree. The first was Dixie Lee Bryant, another graduate of MIT who studied further in Germany. She received her Ph.D in 1904 (Carter, 5-6). By 1920 the State Normal and Industrial School had become a standard four-year college and its name had been changed to the North Carolina College for Women (later Woman's College of the University of North Carolina and now University of North Carolina at Greensboro). By 1920 the school had enrolled over 10,000 women, 565 of whom had graduated (Camp, 8).

Advanced degrees remained difficult for women to obtain, at least in North Carolina. It was not until 1917 that the University of North Carolina admitted freshmen women to its general program, and then only those who were living with their parents or with relatives in Chapel Hill. And it was not until 1924 that the first women, Anna Forbes Liddell and Irene Dillard, received Ph.D. degrees at the University (Camp, 9).

It was in this setting that Virginia Ragsdale (1870-1945), daughter of Joseph Sinclair and Emily Jane (Idol) Ragsdale, received her education and then served as an educator herself. Information on her life reveals her to have been a rather unusual North Carolina woman for her time, and the role she played in women's education in the state is significant.

Education was always considered important in the Ragsdale family. Joseph Ragsdale owned and taught for a couple of years at the Flint Hill School in Jamestown. During most of Virginia's childhood her teacher was Julius M. Weatherly, whom she described as "an eccentric but good teacher, full of energy and ambition and so dynamic that school was never dull." Mental arithmetic was his delight, and his teaching had an obvious impact on Virginia's life (Ragsdale: Childhood, 1, 4).

Virginia Ragsdale entered Salem Academy as a junior and graduated in 1887 as valedictorian of her class. In 1891 she entered Guilford College and received a B. S. degree in 1892 with the highest scholastic average of the women there. As such she was the first to receive the newly established Bryn Mawr scholarship for further study (Guilford College Bulletin, 4).

The Ragsdales' choice of schools for Virginia seems another significant indicator of the value which they placed on education. Salem Academy was a Moravian school which had for

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

years been a prominent educational center for young women in the Piedmont. Guilford College, run by the Quakers, was the only co-educational college in the South (and one of only three in the nation) when it opened in 1837 (Beverly Rogers Interview). Both the Moravians and the Quakers considered education highly important, and both schools viewed education in a much broader sense than simply training for future teachers.

Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania was also a Quaker school. Virginia Ragsdale entered in 1892 and received a B. A. degree there in 1896. She returned to Bryn Mawr the following year as a graduate student in mathematics and demonstrator in physics, and at the end of the year was awarded the Bryn Mawr European Fellowship. During the year 1897-1898 she studied mathematics under leading scholars at the University of Gottingen in Germany and traveled in Europe. Upon returning to the United States, Ragsdale taught mathematics and science at the Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore from 1891-1901. In 1901 she received the fellowship awarded by the Baltimore Association for the Promotion of University Education of Women and returned to Bryn Mawr College for further study. In 1903 she received her Ph.D degree from Bryn Mawr, with pure mathematics as her major and a double minor in physics and applied mathematics. Her dissertation, "On the Arrangement of the Real Branches of Plane Algebraic Curves," was published in the American Journal of Mathematics (Guilford College Bulletin, 4; Ragsdale, Life).

From 1903 to 1905 Virginia Ragsdale taught at Dr. Sach's School for Girls in New York City. After spending a year at home, she resumed teaching and was Head of the Department of Mathematics at the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania from 1906 to 1911. Then she returned to North Carolina and was Instructor, Associate Professor, and then Professor in the Department of Mathematics at the North Carolina College for Women from 1911 to 1926. From 1926 to 1928 she was Head of the Department, retiring to fulfill another responsibility, the care of her elderly and infirm mother in Jamestown (Ragsdale, Virginia Ragsdale).

Virginia Ragsdale was the third holder of a Ph.D degree appointed to the faculty at North Carolina College for Women. While there, she was a strong influence for higher academic standards and urged the establishment of an honors program for the able (Schumann, 40). At her insistence the school acquired a telescope, and although statistics was not formally introduced into the curriculum until 1929, it was Ragsdale who took the first steps toward planning for this inclusion (Gove et al., 2).

While teaching in Greensboro, Ragsdale likely lived near

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

campus, as did other teachers. However, the existence of a surviving residence which she inhabited there during those years is not known. It is clear from her writings, however, that she maintained close ties with her home in Jamestown and spent much time at Ragsdale Farm throughout the period of her accomplishments.

After her mother's death in 1934, Virginia Ragsdale built, in 1936, a simple, two-story brick Colonial Revival house on the Guilford College campus. She lived there the last nine years of her life (she was not teaching then) and left the house as her parting gift to Guilford College. After Ragsdale's death in 1945 it was used for some years as the Alumni House and in 1965 became the President's House, which had been her original intent (Beverly Rogers Interview). Meanwhile, at Woman's College a residence hall built in 1950 was named in her honor, suggesting further the impact she had on that school and its students (Schumann, 40).

HISTORIC CONTEXT: ARCHITECTURE

The Ragsdale House is significant in representing in one structure the evolution from a typical late nineteenth-century farmhouse to a more prosperous turn-of-the-century Colonial Revival dwelling which was again updated with Georgian Revival interiors during the 1940s. The house reflects both stylistically and symbolically the increasing wealth and community status of the Ragsdale family over several generations. Along with the house itself, the outbuildings and the planned landscape contribute to an overall understanding of the changing nature of this important family seat.

Few buildings of distinction were erected in Guilford County in the years immediately following the Civil War. Throughout the next several decades, in fact, most farm houses were not large or richly detailed. The most important post-war farmstead was the Model Farm, built in the Springfield community of southwest Guilford County. After the war, the Baltimore Association of Friends to Advise and Assist Friends of the Southern States established a working farm to demonstrate improved methods of agriculture to the impoverished farmers of the area. Built in the late 1860s, the two-story frame model farm house with its "triple-A" roof and center-hall plan served as a precedent for countless simple farm houses built throughout the area during the following half century (Smith, 21-22). The Ragsdale House which was built in 1880 to enlarge or replace the original vernacular

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

dwelling on the farm was just such a triple-A house. Built at a time when Joseph Ragsdale was beginning to become more prosperous, the house was enlivened with simple Italianate style detailing, such as bracketed cornices and arched window heads, to give it more stylistic flair. Only the center-hall plan and the handsome Italianate stair remain as readily visible reminders of this period of building.

The Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles, which were often intermixed, appeared in the late nineteenth century and continued on into the early twentieth century in Guilford County. The best examples of these styles predominated in the dwellings of the well-to-do in the urban centers of the county, but occasionally examples appeared in the more rural areas. On the other hand, watered-down examples proliferated (Smith, 23). The Ragsdale House is among the most sophisticated examples surviving in the county, its present overall appearance dating from Joseph Ragsdale's 1900 enlargement and remodeling efforts. The large, two-story frame dwelling is primarily Colonial Revival in style, but has decorative shingled gables and other features which reflect some Queen Anne-style influence. Built at the peak of Ragsdale's career and shortly before his death, the 1900 house doubled the size of the 1880 house and expressed visually the family's prominence in Jamestown. In the 1940s another generation of even more prosperous Ragsdales remodeled the major first floor rooms with sophisticated Georgian Revival paneling representing a later phase of the stylish Colonial Revival.

Outbuildings help visually to tell the history of the changing character of the Ragsdale Farm over time. Several, in particular, are typical representatives of their time and period. The oldest surviving outbuilding, believed to date from the earliest years of Ragsdale Farm, is the cow barn (#22). Typical of mid-nineteenth-century barn construction, it features mortise-and-tenon framing. The cow barn is sheathed with board-and-batten siding and is covered by a broad gable roof. The tenant house (#30) at the far southwestern corner of the property is typical of simple vernacular farm dwellings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nearly square one-story-with-loft frame house has a gable roof with widely overhanging eaves, a hip-roofed front porch, and a once-separate rear kitchen with a gable-end chimney which reflects in slightly smaller form the main house. The large, ca. 1900 horse barn (#25) is an unusually handsome representative of its period and may well be based on a barn featured in a building design book of the time. The late nineteenth-century well house (#21) is a well-preserved example of countless structures of its type from the period. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

gable-roofed frame building features a nearly square enclosed room and a front shed open on two sides and sheltered by an extension of the main roof. An equally fine example of a late nineteenth-early twentieth century Piedmont farm outbuilding is the corncrib (#17). This tall and narrow rectangular structure has neatly slatted walls for ventilation and a gable roof which projects beyond the front wall in front. The small weatherboarded privy (#18) with batten door and shed roof is representative of one of the most common outhouse forms from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Piedmont North Carolina. These buildings are associated with the period during which Ragsdale Farm was actively farmed. When the place began the transformation into a "gentleman's farm" or country estate some fifty years ago, the newer auxiliary structures at Ragsdale Farm reflected a greater interest in recreation, relaxation, and social life than in agricultural function. Thus, a child's playhouse (#2), a guest house (#4), a swimming pool (#5), a shuffleboard deck (#6), and a riding ring (#24) were added to the collection of outbuildings.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: AGRICULTURE

From the third quarter of the nineteenth century to World War II, Ragsdale Farm has been associated with agricultural trends in Guilford County. The farm has evolved in use by the Ragsdale family from a typical middling farm of the nineteenth century which was a primary means of support for the family to a mid-twentieth century "gentleman's farm"--a country estate which retained in many ways the appearance of a farm but not the activity. Instead, agrarian functions were largely supplanted by recreational ones.

Although overshadowed by the drama of the area's industrial development, agriculture has been an ever-present facet of the lifestyle and economy of southwest Guilford County. Most of this has consisted of small-scale subsistence farming. Of particular significance to regional agriculture after the Civil War was the development of the Model Farm, located in southwest Guilford County. After the war, the Baltimore Association of Friends to Advise and Assist Friends of the Southern States established an instructional farm. Improved methods of agriculture and animal husbandry were demonstrated both at the farm and through local meetings. A barn, dwellings, and a mill were constructed in the late 1860s, and the farm reportedly was a success which influenced many farmers in the Piedmont region (Smith, 22).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

It was during this period that Joseph Ragsdale took up farming in Jamestown. Like many farmers, he practiced another occupation as well. When he arrived in Jamestown in 1866, he taught school for a couple of years and then went into the tree nursery business, ultimately operating a joint business with his brother, John, in the 1870s. However, even after Joseph Ragsdale became involved with the Oakdale Cotton Mills in 1885, he continued to farm his land (Ragsdale: Childhood, 1)

Census records for Guilford County give the best picture of agriculture in the area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1870 winter wheat, oats, and Irish potatoes were the predominant crops, and the county had one of the highest populations of swine, sheep, cows, and horses in the state. The individual record for Ragsdale's farm indicates that it was fairly typical. Ragsdale had ten sheep, three swine, and two cows, and his biggest crop was oats, followed by Indian corn, winter wheat, sweet (rather than Irish) potatoes, and orchard products (1870 Census: Agriculture). The mortise-and-tenon-framed cow barn at Ragsdale Farm appears to date from this earliest period of farming.

In 1880 Ragsdale's farm occupied 100 acres, which apparently included not only the present tract but acreage on the north side of Greensboro Road as well. Although the size of his farm was somewhat less than the average 127 acres for Guilford County at that time, and the number of his improved acres was also less than average, the stated value of his farm and the value of his farm productions were considerably higher than the average. The reasons for this are not totally clear. Ragsdale, as an educated man, may well have been practicing scientific farming methods, as espoused by the Model Farm, so that his acreage had a higher yield than did many farms. While in 1880 Ragsdale reported only one horse and three cows (and no sheep or swine), he excelled in the production of oats, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, orchard products, forest products, and poultry (1880 Census: Agriculture).

From 1890 to the late 1930s there are no individual records for Ragsdale Farm. Some information can be inferred, however, from agricultural census records for Guilford County as a whole, from outbuildings present on the farm, and from family tradition. The trend was generally toward more but smaller farms. In 1900 81 percent of farms in the county reported dairy products. In addition to livestock and poultry products, the largest crops included corn, oats, wheat, grasses, clover, and orchard products (1890, 1900, 1910 Census: Agriculture). The Ragsdale barns, chicken coops, granary, and corncrib suggest that this farm was

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

fairly representative of the county trends. After Joseph Ragsdale's death in 1903, Emily Ragsdale continued to farm their land with the help of tenants and boys who boarded at the house while attending school in Jamestown (Mary Ragsdale Interview).

When in 1939 William G. Ragsdale, Jr. purchased the 38.15-acre family tract that lay with the house on the south side of the road, the use, if not the overall appearance of Ragsdale Farm began to change. Bill Ragsdale was first and foremost an industrialist, and his aspirations for the property were different from those of this grandfather. As the emphasis on agricultural production decreased, an emphasis on comfortable "country" living increased. Thus, a fishing lake was created, a horseback riding ring was constructed, and a pool, shuffleboard deck, and guest house were added. Ragsdale Farm evolved into an impressive gentleman's farm and country estate in which house and outbuildings were well maintained and the landscape of pastures, woods, and gardens was preserved and appreciated.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Joseph Sinclair Ragsdale (1836-1903) was educated at Trinity College and served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War (Young, 165). In 1866 he married Emily Jane Idol (1841-1934) and moved to Jamestown to teach at the Flint Hill School (Ragsdale: Childhood, 1). That same year he purchased the first twelve acres of what became the Ragsdale Farm (Deed Book 42, 98). In subsequent years he added to his acreage through a series of transactions. The first house on the property appears by description to have been a simple vernacular hall-and-parlor plan dwelling with a front shed room and porch and a side kitchen. In addition to his teaching, Ragsdale entered into general farming of the type common in Guilford County during the period. After teaching for a couple of years, he sold trees for J. Van Lindley until he and his brother, John, established their own nursery in Jamestown in the 1870s (Ragsdale: Childhood, 1).

The Ragsdales were fairly cosmopolitan people for rural southwestern Guilford County in the late nineteenth century. For example, in 1876 they attended the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. By 1880 Ragsdale had saved enough to enlarge his house as a typical late nineteenth-century two-story frame dwelling with a triple-A roof, simple Italianate trim, and a center-hall plan. When the house was completed, the Ragsdales traveled to Richmond to buy the latest in furniture, carpets, and curtains. At the same time, they hired Peter Cash, an Italian

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

who had done some landscaping in Lexington, to "develop the yard." He lived with the Ragsdales for three months and proceeded to lay out gardens with walks, symmetrically arranged flower beds, and a variety of trees, shrubs, and flowering plants. It was at this time that the large magnolias in front of the house were planted (Ragsdale: Childhood, 2-4). Although the gardens were altered from time to time during the following years, a love for gardening and beautiful landscapes has remained present through three generations of the family.

The 1880s were important for Joseph Ragsdale. Not only did he improve his physical surroundings, but in 1881 he served a term in the state legislature (Ragsdale: Childhood, 4). In 1885 he became manager of Oakdale Cotton Mills, thus beginning the long and important association of the family with that textile industry (Glass and Little-Stokes).

In 1900 the Ragsdales again enlarged and remodeled their house (Ragsdale: Childhood, 3). This time they added four rooms with a center hall to the front, thereby doubling the size of the house. Remodeled in the Colonial Revival style with a hint of the Queen Anne, the large dwelling became one of the most handsome of the turn-of-the-century period in rural Guilford County.

When Joseph Ragsdale died in 1903, he left all his property to his wife, Emily. At her death, the remaining property was to be divided equally among the three surviving Ragsdale children-- Julia Ida (1868-1911), Virginia (1870-1945), and William Gannaway (1874-1929). As part of his share, Will Ragsdale was to receive, after the death of his mother, the home place with approximately 100 acres of land. He was to provide his sister, Virginia, with a home as long as she remained unmarried (Will Book G, 333). In the meantime, Will built his own Victorian house across the road from the Ragsdale House (presumably on part of the 100 acres he was to receive from his father's estate) (Mary Ragsdale Interview). Will preceded his mother in death by five years, so the home place never became totally his. Ida had already died in 1911, which left Virginia as the sole surviving child of Joseph and Emily.

Virginia Ragsdale was a rarity for her time in North Carolina. A math scholar, she received a Ph.D. degree from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania in 1903, based in part on fellowship study at the University of Gottingen in Germany. She returned to North Carolina in 1911 to teach at the North Carolina College for Women in Greensboro and remained there for the next seventeen years, the last two as Head of the Mathematics Department. During those years she maintained close ties with the family home

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

in Jamestown and contributed her gardening skills to its benefit. When her elderly mother reached the point where she needed special care, Virginia Ragsdale, with a strong sense of family responsibility, left her teaching career and resumed full-time residency at Ragsdale Farm in 1928 (Guilford College Bulletin, 4, 15; Mary Ragsdale Interview). After Emily Ragsdale's death in 1934, Virginia Ragsdale continued to live at the farm for two more years. In 1936 she built and moved to a house on the Guilford College campus, where she spent her final years. (Upon her death in 1945, that house was given to the college and now serves as the president's residence (Guilford College Bulletin, 15; Beverly Rogers Interview).)

In 1939 William G. Ragsdale, Jr., who, like his father and grandfather before him, was a leader of the Oakdale Cotton Mills, purchased from the other family heirs--his mother and six brothers and sisters--the 38.15-acre tract of the Ragsdale Farm which lay on the south side of Greensboro Road (Deed Book 894, 33-35). He and his new bride, Mary Elizabeth Perry, moved to the property, and in the ensuing years it became more and more a gentleman's farm, complete with such added amenities as a fishing lake, a swimming pool, and a horseback riding ring. Bill and Mary Ragsdale reared two children at Ragsdale Farm, one of whom (William G. III), is currently president of Oakdale Cotton Mills (Mary Ragsdale Interview).

Since Bill Ragsdale's death in 1969, Mary Ragsdale has continued to reside at Ragsdale Farm. She has life occupancy of the place, and at her death ownership will transfer to her daughter, Mary Perry Ragsdale Davis (Mary Ragsdale Interview).

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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 Approx. 39 acres

UTM References

A 17 596850 3983970
Zone Easting Northing

B 17 595990 3983580
Zone Easting Northing

C 17 596050 3984000

D 17 596710 3984130

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of Tracts 1 and 17 of Block 952 on Tax Map ACL-94-7093, Guilford County, N.C.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the 38.15-acre portion (Tract 1) of the original Ragsdale Farm which is located south of Greensboro Rd. (Main St.) and which has remained intact with the house tract since the property was sub-divided in 1939. The property also include the 3/4-acre Tract 17 owned by the Ragsdales which contains the late 19th/early 20th cent. tenant house historically associated with Ragsdale Farm.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 1

Ragsdale Farm
Guilford County, NC

The following information applies to all nomination photographs:

- 1) Ragsdale Farm
- 2) Jamestown, Guilford County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) April 4, 1991 - Photos B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J, K, L
March, 1990 - Photos A, H
- 6-7) A: overall view of house, outbuildings, landscape, to the southwest
B: facade of house, to the south
C: east elevation of house, to the west
D: west elevation and rear of house, to the northeast
E: interior of house (hall and stair), to the south
F: horse barn and riding ring, to the southeast
G: cow barn, to the southeast
H: group of outbuildings (cow barn, well house, office, corncrib), to the north
I: tenant house, to the northwest
J: pool, shuffleboard deck, guest house, to the northwest
K: landscape (boxwood garden, pasture), to the east
L: landscape (pastures, woodland), to the east

RAGSDALE FARM

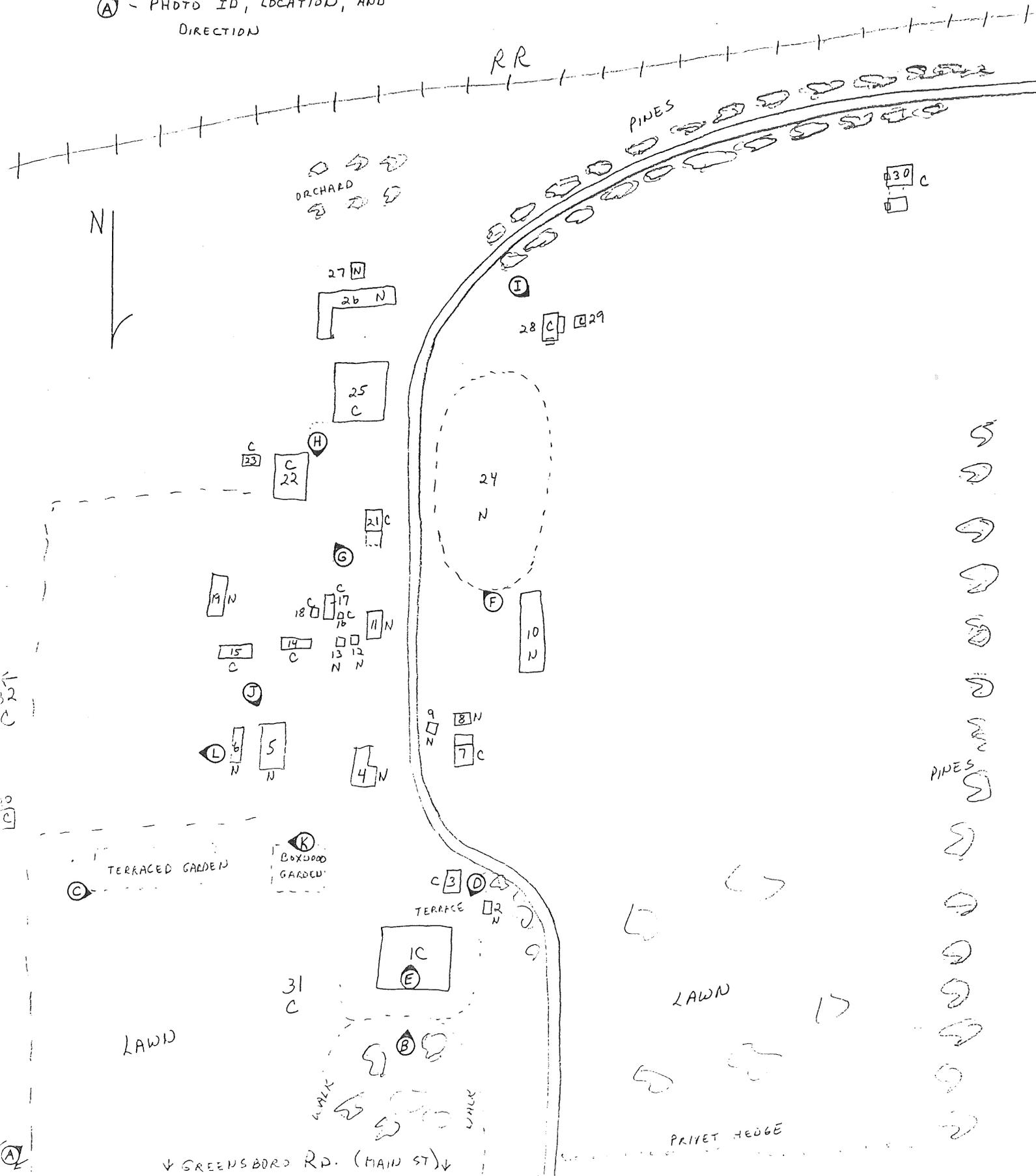
(NOT TO SCALE)

3 - RESOURCE NUMBER

C - CONTRIBUTING

N - NONCONTRIBUTING

(A) - PHOTO ID, LOCATION, AND DIRECTION



RAGSDALE FARM, GREENSBORO Co., N.C.

HIGH POINT EAST ROAD
1:24000

A 17/596850/3983970

C 17/596050/3984000

HIGH POINT EAST QUADRANGLE

NORTH CAROLINA

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

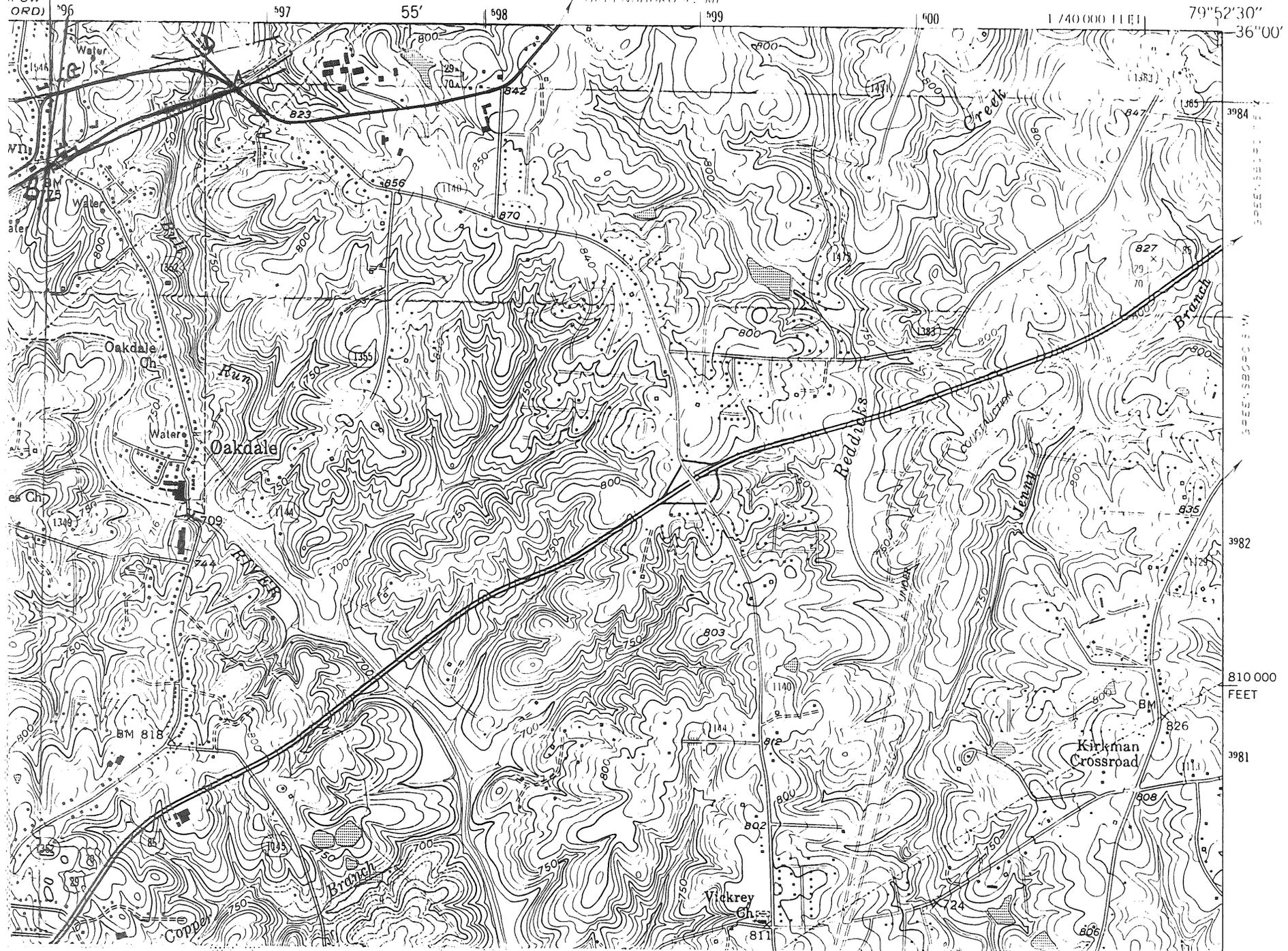
B 17/595990/3983580

D 17/596710/3984130

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