

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wentworth Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery

and or common Wentworth United Methodist Church

2. Location

street & number South side NC 65, 0.2 mi West of
junction with SR 2124

not for publication

city, town Wentworth vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Rockingham code 157

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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: cemetery

4. Owner of Property

name Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church

street & number P. O. Box 18750

city, town Charlotte vicinity of state NC 28218

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rockingham County Register of Deeds

street & number c/o Post Office

city, town Wentworth state NC

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

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

In its partially wooded setting just west of the Wentworth town limits, located in the rolling hills of Rockingham County, the ca. 1859 Wentworth Methodist Episcopal Church typifies antebellum churches in rural North Carolina. Resting on a fieldstone foundation, the simple rectangular frame building exhibits the meeting house, with its symmetrical two-bay facade and three-bay side elevations. The weatherboard-clad structure is topped by a pedimented gable front roof of standing seam metal which has a small, open, gabled belfry at its apex. The exterior's most unusual feature is a rectangular, box-like projection with louvers on all three sides, set in the center of the pediment, which apparently provided ventilation and is thought to be original. Just east of the building is a small graveled parking area, and a cemetery extends to east and west behind the church, as well as down the hill in the wooded area to the southwest. A two-story with basement classroom and office annex was added to the rear of the church in 1953, at which time two windows on the chancel wall were converted to doorways.

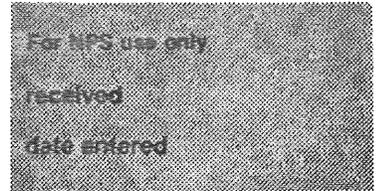
The simplicity of the church's form is echoed in its details, both exterior and interior. Four-panel doors and six-over-six windows are set in flat surrounds with a narrow projecting square bead topping each lintel and at the base of the window sills. Flat corner boards rise to the simple box cornice. Poured concrete steps with plain iron railings lead to concrete stoops in front of each entrance and are the principal changes to the exterior. Each entrance has a four-panel door with a large six-over-six window above. Identical windows pierce each bay on the side elevations, with a small, four-panel door near the front of the west elevation being the original entrance to the slave gallery stairwell.

Although the interior of the church has undergone some remodeling during its 125-year existence, much of the original fabric remains intact. Both floor and ceiling are of wide pine planking, while the walls are plastered. Tall, flat baseboards continue the simple decorative motif as do the flush window and door surrounds with flat corner blocks, suggestive of a modest classical influence. Three ranks of pews with rectangular end panels face the chancel, with aisles separating the narrower side ranks from the wider central section. These pews were apparently grained late in the 19th century in a manner similar to that used on woodwork at the nearby Wright Tavern (National Register, 1970); most of this graining has been painted over. The chancel consists of a rectangular platform projecting from the south wall and surrounded by the original semicircular chancel rail of turned balusters. In front of the platform is a replacement altar table; the original, smaller altar table has been moved to a new position near the organ and piano in the southeast corner of the sanctuary. On the platform are the original Greek Revival style lectern and three later Victorian chairs obtained from the First Baptist Church of Reidsville.

The original slave gallery still spans the north end of the building, supported by a heavy paneled square post. As already noted, the gallery formerly could be reached only through a small door in the west elevation which opened to a winding stairway. Pews identical to those on the main level are set on a floor which slopes to a low, paneled retaining wall. The area under the gallery was enclosed and several rows of pews removed in 1953 to create a vestibule. At the same time, an interior entrance to the gallery was cut; this necessitated the reorientation of several pews in the northwest

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Continuation sheet Church and Cemetery

Item number 7

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corner of the sanctuary, as did the removal of two stoves which had been located about midway in each side section. Other changes included the removal of a partition which originally ran down the center of the sanctuary and the conversion (already mentioned) of two windows in the chancel wall into doors with transoms. These doors lead to the two-story with basement frame and cinder block, one-room deep, 1953 annex containing Sunday School classrooms and offices, which is separated from the sanctuary by a narrow hall. The hip-roofed addition has separate exterior entrances at the rear basement level and on the first floor facing the highway beside the east elevation. Although the addition extends about five feet to each side of the church building, it is of the same height and does not detract from the appearance of the church.

The cemetery to the rear of the church consists of two sections, that nearest the church in a grassy area containing the graves of white church members, with a wooded area behind that used for burying local blacks well into the 20th century. The former has a fine collection of late 19th and early 20th century markers, plus some more typical of later 20th century granite tombstones. Several family plots are set off by ornate iron fences, one of which contains obelisks erected by state senator George D. Boyd in memory of his three sons who died in the Civil War. The earliest tombstone predates the construction of the church; it is a flat table marker placed over the grave of Priscilla Minor (died 15 June 1853), whose husband Levin Minor donated the land on which the church was built. The area of the cemetery reserved for black members of the community slopes gently to the southwest and is fairly heavily wooded and carpeted with leaves and scattered underbrush and saplings. The majority of the markers are rough, unscribed fieldstone with the appearance of being randomly placed. It seems likely that stones have deteriorated and fallen over and that some graves were not marked. A few markers, principally dating from the 1920s, are simple but competently executed carved stones. There are at least as many graves in this area as in the white area, although this fact is not readily apparent because of the disparity in the size of finish of tombstones and the different physical setting of the two sections.

Together, the Wentworth Methodist Church and its cemetery are an impressive feature on the landscape of rural Rockingham County and a surprising coda at the western edge of the county seat. Their charm remains essentially unchanged, a delightful departure from a marked trend of destruction or radical alteration of 19th and early 20th century rural churches.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration-settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics-government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Ca. 1859 **Builder Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The ca. 1850 building of the Wentworth Methodist (Episcopal) Church is a handsome and remarkably intact example of an antebellum meeting-house form church in rural North Carolina. This oldest Methodist church building surviving in Rockingham County is also associated with the lives of Rev. Numa Reid and his two sons. Reverend Reid, who is buried in the churchyard, was one of the most prominent 19th century Methodist ministers in the state, and his sons, Frank L. and James W., were prominent in their own right, the former as president of two North Carolina colleges, and the latter as a U. S. Congressman. The cemetery to the rear of the church is notable as the resting place of many prominent members of the Wentworth community and contains a fine collection of tombstones dating from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. It can also provide information information regarding societal stratification in the same period, as the cemetery is divided into two sections, one for whites and one for blacks, with a clear physical demarcation between the two sections and in the size and quality of grave markers in each.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:

- B. Is associated with the lives of Rev. Numa Reid, prominent 19th century North Carolina Methodist minister, and his sons, Frank L. Reid, president of Greensboro and Louisburg colleges, and James W. Reid, a U. S. Congressmen.
- C. Is a handsome and intact example of a rural antebellum meeting-house form church with a fine collection of mid-19th to early 20th century tombstones in its cemetery.
- D. Is likely to yield information in our history through study of the cemetery's two distinct sections.

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The Wentworth United Methodist Church is located in the Rockingham County seat of Wentworth. The church dates from 1836. The present sanctuary was built in 1859, and is the oldest Methodist building in the county.

Methodists came to Rockingham County slightly later than did Baptists and Presbyterians. Noted Methodist leader Fransis Asbury preached in the county seat as early as 1786. The first Methodist church in the county was founded in Lowes in 1796. In 1804 evangelist Lorenzo Dow preached an outdoor revival in Wentworth before an estimated 1,500 people. A Methodist church was organized in Wentworth in 1833 but reorganized in 1836. The 1836 trustees purchased a plot of land from James Wall and built a small church building. Among these 1836 trustees were Joseph Holderly, George Holderly, Thomas Wesdon, William Wesdon and Loyd Watrs. The present church building was constructed in 1859 at a new site.

The Reverend Numa Fletcher Reid (1835-1873), one of the state's leading Methodists in the middle of the nineteenth century, was pastor of the congregation during the early 1850s, prior to the construction of the present building and at irregular intervals afterwards. Dr. Reid was a prominent educator and churchman, who was superintendent for the Greensboro district for many years. His son, Frank Lewis Reid (1851-1894), was also associated with the church prior to becoming president of Greensboro Coloege. Among other pastors of the church during the post Civil War period were J. W. Lewis, Caiphas Norman, and R. P. Tory.

The sanctuary has remained relatively unchanged since its completion. The Reid family sponsored minor remodeling in the late 1870s and further minor remodeling was undertaken around 1950. In 1953 a school room annex was added.

Located close to the building is the church cemetery, which dates to the 1850s. A number of leading Wentworth citizens are buried there, including Numa Reig, state legislator George Boyd, and two of his sons who were killed during the Civil War.

Although a county seat Wentworth has remained a small town. Consequently the Wentworth United Methodist Church has a small congregation which hopes to restore the building.

Footnotes:

1 Rockingham County Deed Book 21, p. 314; Charles Rodenbaugh (ed.) The Heritage of Rockingham County (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company for the Rockingham County Historical Society, 1983), 105, hereinafter cited as Rodenbaugh (ed.), The Heritage of Rockingham County; Lindley S. Butler, Rockingham County: A Brief History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1982), 48, hereinafter cited as Butler, Rockingham County.

2 Rodenbaugh (ed.), The Heritage of Rockingham County, 48, 515-516; Butler, Rockingham County, 48; Alberta Ratliff Craig, "Old Wentworth Sketches," North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July, 1934), 189, 192, hereinafter cited as Criag: "Old Wentworth Sketches."

3 Information supplied by Michael Perdue.

4 Craig, "Old Wentworth Sketches," 192.

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.86 acres

Quadrangle name southwest Eden

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	6	0	9	6	0	0	4	0	2	8	9	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification See attached survey map. The property consists of three land parcels: the original (1859) plot of 1.64 acres which contains the church and most of the cemetery and 2 additional parcels obtained in 1883. The entire acreage has been associated with the church for more than 100 years, contains the church cemetery, and is an integral part of the church setting.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Description and significance statements - Allison H. Black, Survey Specialist
name/title Historical statement -

organization N. C. Division of Archives & History date Aug. 30, 1985

street & number 109 E. Jones St. telephone 919/733-6545

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William S. Fin, Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 10, 1985

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Wentworth Un. Meth. Church Item number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Butler, Lindley S. Rockingham County: A Brief History. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1982.

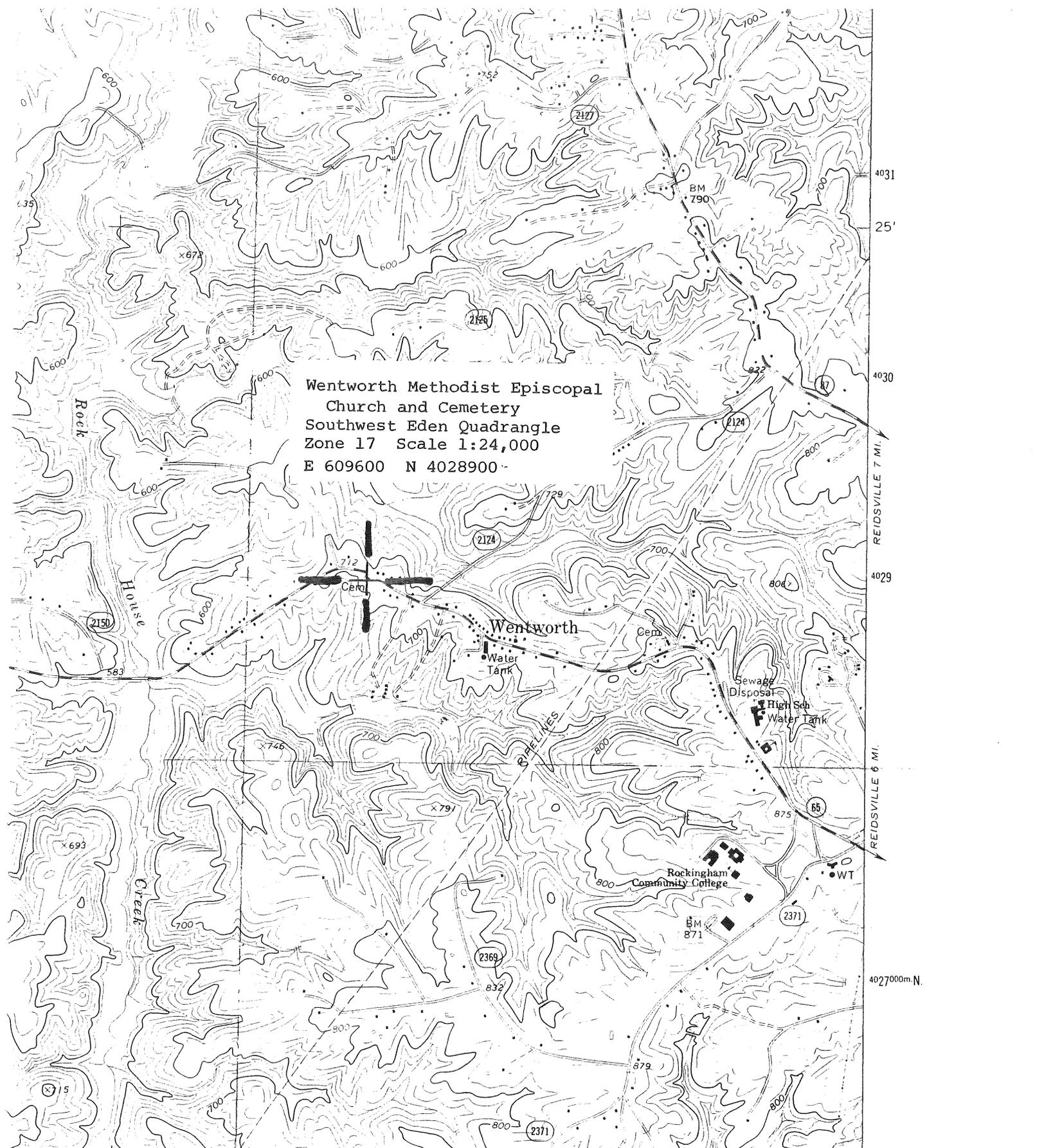
Craig, Alberta Radcliffe. "Old Wentworth Sketches," North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July, 1934).

Perdue, Michael. Information supplied by.

Rockingham county Deed Books.

Rodenbaugh, Charles (ed.). The Heritage of Rockingham County. Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company for the Rockingham County Historical Society, 1983.

Wentworth Methodist Episcopal
 Church and Cemetery
 Southwest Eden Quadrangle
 Zone 17 Scale 1:24,000
 E 609600 N 4028900



REIDSVILLE 7 MI.
 REIDSVILLE 6 MI.
 4031
 25'
 4030
 4029
 4028
 4027000m N.

608 47'30" 609 610 611 612000m E 79°45' 36°22'30"

● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON, D.C.—1974

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

(REIDSVILLE)
 5056 1 SW



