

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Leonidas L. Polk House

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

At rear of 612 North Blount Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Raleigh

VICINITY OF

4th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Wake

183

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

☐ DISTRICT☐ PUBLIC☒ OCCUPIED☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☒ BUILDING(S)☒ PRIVATE☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ STRUCTURE☐ BOTH☐ WORK IN PROGRESS☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ SITE☐ PUBLIC ACQUISITION☐ ACCESSIBLE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ OBJECT☐ IN PROCESS☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ BEING CONSIDERED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ NO☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Pretlow Winborne

STREET & NUMBER

612 North Blount Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wake County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT ☐ DETERIORATED
☐ GOOD ☐ RUINS
☒ FAIR ☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☐ ORIGINAL SITE
☒ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Leonidas L. Polk House, a late Victorian Shingle Style dwelling, is distinguished architecturally on the exterior by a corner turret and a front sawnwork porch with star-shaped ornament, and, on the interior, by a handsome main stair. Originally located on the west side of Person Street, the house was moved in the mid-1960s to its present site, approximately 200 feet west, in order to preserve it. It is joined by means of a one-story frame wing to a house facing Blount Street, which parallels Person, and served for several years as an antique shop.

The high, rectangular frame block, two stories high, two bays wide and five deep, faces east. On the south side, a bay window rises through both stories and terminates above the main gable roof in a polygonal turret. A one-story ell projects from the south side, and a three-bay wide one-story porch extends across the main (east) facade. Several features shown in the outline of the house which appears in the 1909 Sanborn Insurance Map of Raleigh have now disappeared: a one-story rear ell, the two-story south ell with rear porch, and the front porch extension around the south side to the ell, with a corner porch turret. (The second story and porch with pergola have been removed from the south ell, and the interior chimney stack lowered.)

The house rests on a cinder block foundation; the first story is covered with German siding, with cornerboards, and the second story is covered with rectangular wooden shingles with staggered butts. The steep hip roof, originally covered with slate and now with composition shingles, slopes from the center brick chimney. Eave treatment consists of plain frieze boards and wide overhanging boxed eaves, the soffits covered with flush beaded siding.

The main entrance, located in the north bay of the main facade, is a wide door, the lower half paneled, with applied reeding and roundel corner block ornament, the upper half glazed, surmounted by a single pane transom. The south bay of the main facade has a French double door: the lower third of each leaf paneled, with decorative reeding, and the upper leaves glazed. The second floor and south ell windows have two-over-two sash, and the side and rear windows have one-over-one pane sash, paired as double windows at both stories of the south bay. Beneath the turret eave is a band of four small windows, each a one-over-one pane casement. All of the exterior openings have plain surrounds with a mitred edging strip. The hip-roofed front porch, with eave treatment identical to that of the main block, has turned porch posts, curvilinear brackets with five-point star perforations, and a Chinese Chippendale-derived lattice railing with reeded rails.

The interior contains four rooms at each level, plus two small service areas at the rear of the first floor and two rooms in the south ell. The main entrance opens into the northeast room, the prototypical Queen Anne vestibule, which is the most ornately finished room in the house. The stair in the northeast corner of the vestibule, which climbs in two flights with winders to the second story, has a closed string, a turned Chinese Chippendale-derived balustrade and large square reeded newels with spherical finials. The corner fireplace here has a Queen Anne style mantel with a mirrored overmantel, whose turned shelf supports and reeding echo the stair railing. The room is finished with a vertically sheathed wainscot with a reeded chair rail, plaster walls and ceiling, reeded door and window surrounds, and a door with four raised panels.

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The other rooms have plastered walls and ceilings and identical doors and surrounds, but lack wainscots. Each of the remaining first-floor rooms has a corner fireplace. The southeast room, the parlor, contains a slightly simpler late Victorian mantel with paneled overmantel. The northwest room has a simple mantel with chamfered pilasters, shallow arched frieze, and chamfered shelf. The Neo-Classical Revival style mantel in the southwest room, with fluted pilasters and a modillion cornice, appears to be an early twentieth century replacement. The second floor rooms have no fireplaces, and were probably heated by stoves vented through chimney flues.

In the rear service area is an enclosed service stair, which rises in two flights with a landing to the northwest second floor room. Another enclosed stair, located in the southwest second floor room and entered from the northwest room, rises, with winders, to the turret room, finished with reeded flush sheathing. The remainder of the attic is unfinished.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE
☐ 1500-1599	☒ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE
☐ 1600-1699	☐ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER
☐ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☒ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		☐ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

ca. 1891

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As founder and editor of the Progressive Farmer journal, leader of the successful drives to establish the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and North Carolina State University, and president of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, Leonidas L. Polk was the most effective champion of agriculture reform in the history of North Carolina, and played a central role in the national reform politics of the early 1890s. The unpretentious late Victorian Shingle Style house which he built about 1891, at the height of his career, is Raleigh's most vivid reminder of this tireless crusader.

On April 8, 1890, Sarah P. Polk, wife of Leonidas LaFayette Polk, purchased "a certain lot or parcel of land in Wake County . . . adjoining the lands of Mrs. J. M. Heck and others. . . ." This lot was located on the west side of Person Street "as extended beyond the limits of the City of Raleigh" and contained one-third of an acre.¹ The Polks soon built their home on this lot, for the 1891 Raleigh City Directory gave their address as North Person Street; they had previously lived at 542 East Jones Street.

Leonidas LaFayette Polk was born in Anson County, North Carolina on April 24, 1837, the son of Andrew and Serena Autry Polk. He was a member of the same family that gave a number of distinguished men to the nation, among them a bishop of the Episcopal church, several officers in the Continental and Confederate armies, and a president of the United States. When he was fourteen years old his father died. He attended Davidson College and like his father he became a farmer. On September 23, 1857, he married Sarah Pamela Gaddy, a daughter of Joel and Mary Bennett Gaddy of Anson County. They had seven children--a son who died in infancy and six daughters.

During the Civil War and Reconstruction Polk attained some prominence. In 1860 and again in 1864-1865 he was a member of the General Assembly, and he served in two North Carolina regiments during the war. He was a member of the State Constitutional Convention of 1868, and in 1870 he urged the establishment of a state department of agriculture. In 1877 his efforts were successful and he became the first commissioner of agriculture, an office he held until 1880. That year he became the editor of the Raleigh News and the same year it was consolidated with the Observer under the name News and Observer, a paper that is still influential in North Carolina. After 1881 he was no longer associated with this newspaper. In 1886 Polk began publication of a journal known as the Progressive Farmer which sought to teach the farmers of the state better agricultural methods. This publication soon began to take the lead in politics as well. Through the pages of the Progressive Farmer Polk began to urge the establishment of clubs for farmers by which he felt the General Assembly might be pressured to concede to farmers' demands. It was through these "farmers' clubs"--in cooperation with the Watauga Club of Raleigh,

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a progressive congregation of prominent men led by Walter Hines Page (later ambassador to Britain)--that Polk's goal of establishing the North Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical College (not North Carolina State University) was accomplished.

When the Texas-based farm order, "Southern" Alliance, entered North Carolina Polk joined it and turned the Progressive Farmer into an official Alliance publication. The Alliance was primarily concerned with social and economic problems of the farmer. Though it originally stressed education, it soon became a strong political force to lobby for the betterment of the farm community. In 1887 he became national vice-president of the Alliance and in 1889 its president. With millions of Alliance members, Polk as its president became a formidable national political figure. Though he was a Southern Democrat he turned his political attentions to the newly organized People's Party which promised the alliance all it asked. It seemed apparent that Polk would receive the nomination for president on the People's Party ticket in 1892, but his sudden death in Washington, D. C., on June 11, 1892, terminated his career.

He died poor, having given his time, money, and energy to the reform movement of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union. After his debts were liquidated there was little left for the support of his wife. His funeral was a large one and the Polk Memorial and Relief Association was formed to mark his grave in Raleigh's Oakwood Cemetery. The memorial was never completed. The large base of the obelisk giving the milestones of his life was further inscribed with two sentences from one of his last speeches:

I am standing now just behind the curtain, in the full glow of the coming sunset. Behind me are the shadows on the track, before me lies the dark valley and the river, and when I mingle with its dark waters I want to cast one lingering look upon a country whose government is of the people, for the people and by the people.

Dr. Stuart Noblin, his official biographer, has said of Polk:

The memorial in Oakwood symbolizes both his life and the cause for which he was fighting: each, when he died, seemed sadly unfinished. Monuments more significant than stone, however, recall L. L. Polk in North Carolina. And the reinvigoration of American democracy during the first half of the twentieth century is in great measure a tribute to those who, like Polk, fought hardest when the issue was most in doubt.

After his death Polk's widow lived on in the Person Street house until her death on June 12, 1901, at which time it went to a daughter, Juanita, who had married James Denmark. Miss Leonita Denmark, daughter of Juanita and James Denmark, lived in the house until a year before her death in 1965. This property was sold by the Denmark heirs in 1906 to C. E. Aretakis who gave the dwelling house to Mrs. Fern Winborne who had it removed to its present location through the block, directly west of the

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original site. It is the only house in Raleigh which Polk owned. The Polk House was nominated for designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1975, but was not approved, primarily because of its present unfortunate setting. At the present time efforts are underway to move the house to a more compatible location and preserve it as a memorial to one of Raleigh's most important nineteenth century residents.

¹Wake County Deed Book 111:571.

²Noblin, Stuart. Leonidas LaFayette Polk. Agrarian Crusader. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949, last chapter.

³Ibid.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Anne Denmark Beaty (Mrs. Wm.), granddaughter of Leonidas L. Polk.
Raleigh, North Carolina.

Johnson, Allen. Dictionary of American Biography, 20 volumes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928.

Noblin, Stuart. Leonidas LaFayette Polk, Agrarian Crusader. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 713660 3962845
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist; architectural description by Ruth Little-Stokes, survey specialist

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

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

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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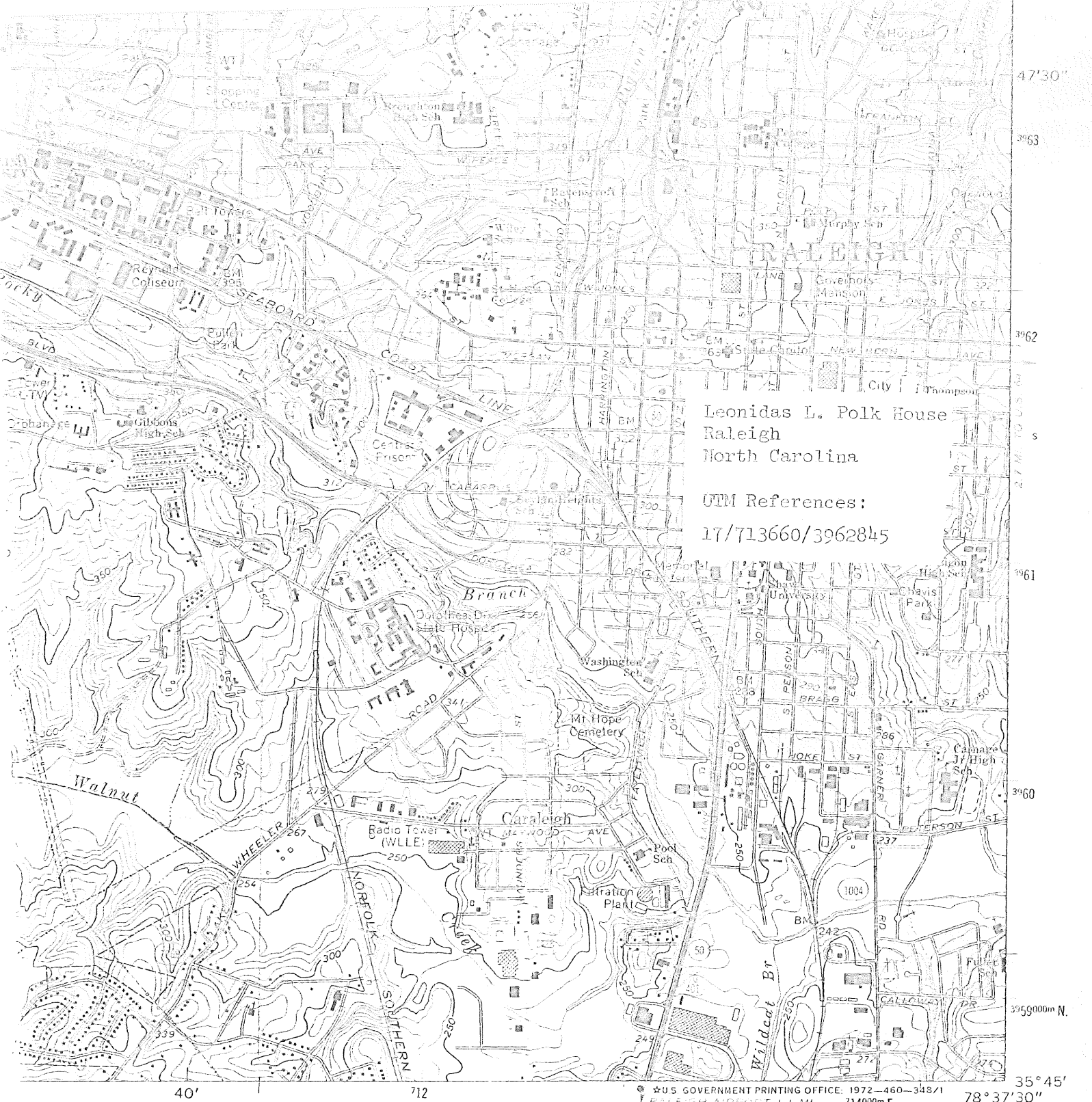
DATE ENTERED

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Wake County Records, Wake County Courthouse, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups:
Deeds, Wills, Tax Records).

Wake County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Tax Records).



Leonidas L. Polk House
Raleigh
North Carolina

UTM References:
17/713660/3962845

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1972-460-348/1
RALEIGH AIRPORT 1.1 MI. 714000m E.
FAYETTEVILLE 57 MI.

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

(GARNER)
5255 I NE

