

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel

AND/OR COMMON  
(same)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
400-412 Fayetteville Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN  
Raleigh

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
4th

STATE  
North Carolina

CODE  
37

COUNTY  
Wake

CODE  
183

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
William B. Benton (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER  
Benton, Anderson, Benton and Holmes Box 21

CITY, TOWN  
Winston-Salem VICINITY OF  
STATE  
North Carolina 27102

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Wake County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN  
Raleigh STATE  
North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
DATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN STATE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Owners, cont.

David Weil  
Box 2063  
Goldsboro, NC 27530

First Federal Savings and Loan Association  
c/o President  
300 S. Salisbury Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

# 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 slightly	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sir Walter Hotel is located at the corner of Fayetteville Street, Raleigh's broad main street now developed as a pedestrian mall, and Davie Street, a side street. The large brick structure, which runs west through the city block to Salisbury Street, is typical of hotels of the 1920s--a massive, functional brick L-shaped structure with classical ornament at street and roof levels. When it was opened in 1924, it was the tallest, most massive structure at the south end of the business district; it is now dwarfed by the towering multistory office and government buildings near it.

The hotel is ten stories high. Its Fayetteville Street facade is seven bays wide, and the depth running along Davie Street is fourteen bays, with some bays having double windows. The westernmost six bays were added in 1938-1939; the addition was treated identically with the original block.

The first two stories are sheathed in a striated gray stone veneer and formally treated. The ground floor has been remodeled over the years, but originally had a series of large rectangular openings, large doorways and show windows. The main entrance is on Fayetteville Street. Above this level runs a prominent projecting cornice, adorned with egg and dart and other moldings, forming a base for the more elaborate second level treatment, which survives unaltered. The striated courses of the stone create voisseurs for the tall arched openings in each bay at this level. These are accented by scroll keystones. On the Fayetteville Street facade, the corner bays have blind arches and the other four are glazed; the corner bays are further emphasized by the striation of the stone. On the Davie Street facade, there are pairs of blind-arched openings with the central openings glazed, and the emphasis through striation is repeated. Elaborate cartouches occur between the bays of the central portion of each facade. This story is terminated by a broad, heavy molded cornice.

The seven middle stories feature simply treated windows set cleanly into the brick wall, and they are arranged in pairs and singly within the bays, generally alternating single and paired vertical rows.

The roofline of the building is emphasized by a lower cornice of stone, a final band of windows, and a heavier upper cornice adorned with heavy modillions and topped by a brick parapet with stone coping. Mechanical equipment is located on the roof. The rear and south side of the building are more simply treated.

The interior of the hotel has, as might be expected, small dining rooms and shops on the ground level, a large lobby and other rooms on the first floor, meeting and dining rooms on the mezzanine floor overlooking the lobby, guest rooms on the intervening floors, and large dining and meeting rooms on the top floor. Remodeling has occurred over the years. The lobby is a large one with banks of elevators, cashiers and other booths, and stairs leading to the mezzanine. Large paneled pillars and mezzanine balustrades, plus ceiling decoration, are handled in handsome classical fashion, creating a gracious and pleasant room.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

1924

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

J. A. Salter

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sir Walter Hotel, built in 1923-1924, is a Raleigh landmark as the chief (and soon to be the only) surviving major hotel in a town that once boasted many; its state-wide significance, however, derives from its role in the twentieth century political history of North Carolina. Called the "third house of state government," the Sir Walter Hotel was throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s a major headquarters for political activity in the state; lacking office space around the Capitol, legislators, lobbyists, newspapermen, and others did much of their work and determined much of the political history of the state in the Sir Walter. The hotel was designed by architect J. A. Salter and built by B. H. Griffin, contracted by C. N. York. It has been leased and owned by several companies. Following the construction of the Legislative Building in 1963 and several suburban motels, the hotel's vitality dwindled; it is now being considered for conversion into apartments, a plan which can provide for its survival as a part of downtown Raleigh. (The significant property is the building and the land it stands on.)

In 1923 General Albert Cox and Josephus Daniels formed the Capital Construction Company for the express purpose of building, in Raleigh, a large, convention-oriented hotel that would attract to the capital city the convention traffic that had been going to Greensboro and Durham.<sup>1</sup> In January, 1924, the Sir Walter Hotel was opened in response to these efforts. The hotel, costing approximately \$900,00 was designed by J. A. Salter, built by B. H. Griffin, and contracted by C. N. York. The Capital Construction Company leased the hotel to Griffin, T. L. "Alton" Bland and Virgil St. Cloud. The first public meeting in the hotel was held by the Raleigh Kiwanis Club, on January 11, 1924, with Josephus Daniels giving the keynote address.<sup>2</sup> Daniels, Salter, York, Bland, and St. Cloud were all members of the Kiwanis Club.

The hotel was an immediate financial success.<sup>3</sup> In 1934, however, in the midst of the depression, its lessees went bankrupt, and the hotel was leased to the North State Hotel Company, with Robert Meyer as president.<sup>4</sup> The list of directors for the new lessees included future governor J. Melville Broughton. By January of 1935 Meyer,<sup>5</sup> head of a chain of ten eastern and southern hotels, had spent \$75,000 on renovations. In 1938 Meyer employed New York hotel architect W. L. Stoddard to add 50 rooms to the hotel, making it the largest in the state with 400 rooms. In 1940 the Sir Walter was valued at \$1,250,000.<sup>6</sup>

These additions solidified the Sir Walter's reputation as one of North Carolina's finest convention hotels. For many years the hotel, along with the Memorial Auditorium, was the cornerstone of Raleigh's lucrative convention industry. Of greater importance, however, was the Sir Walter's unofficial but widely accepted designation as the headquarters of the Democratic Party in North Carolina. For years lack of space in the

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official government complex had made mandatory the use of non-government buildings for conventions, dinners, and meetings, both backroom and otherwise. The Yarborough House served this function for many years until the opening of the Sir Walter. Following the inauguration of Angus McLean as governor in 1925 one source estimates that 80% of the state legislators moved into the Sir Walter. The accidental burning of the Yarborough House on July 3, 1928, left the Sir Walter as the undisputed "third house of state government."

Throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s the Sir Walter continued this role. Jonathan Daniels, writing in 1941, said:

Sir Walter in an important sense is the whole State of North Carolina. . . . The east meets the west in it. The Piedmont shares the liquor of the planters. Almost a majority of the judges of the Supreme Court lives there. . . . The official affairs of state go on in a whole company of new buildings around the honestly lovely old granite Capitol. . . . But what that government is grows in the Sir Walter, and State Government in North Carolina is probably more important than in any other State. . . . Power is in the capital and the people come to it in the Sir Walter Hotel.

Legislators, lobbyists, aides, jurors, newspapermen, businessmen, and others used the Sir Walter as their headquarters. Willard Gatewood, Jr., in his biography of Eugene Clyde Brooks, the noted North Carolina educator, relates that Brooks, after his retirement in 1934, decided to move into the Sir Walter, rather than his home on North Blount Street in order "to remain in close touch with individuals conducting the affairs of North Carolina. . . . He was frequently visited by state officials, members of the General Assembly and former students and associates."

The Meyer chain purchased the hotel from the Capital Construction Company in 1956, but sold it in 1964 due to falling revenues. After the departure of the Meyer chain, the hotel underwent rapid turnover in ownership. Announced plans to renovate and revitalize the hotel were never fulfilled. The decline of downtown Raleigh, the rise of the motel and the creation of the new State Legislature Building in 1963 conspired to make the Sir Walter obsolete.<sup>10</sup> Present plans call for it to be converted into apartments by David Weil of Goldsboro and the Winston-Salem development firm of Anderson-Benton-Holmes.

For the better part of four decades the Sir Walter served a significant role in the lives of North Carolinians. Jonathan Daniels summed up the importance of the Sir Walter thus:

Perhaps the shaping of important decisions in a State's destiny in a hotel is not what we expect where we have provided council chambers and

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legislative halls. It is not what perfectionists desire in an open world of open dealings. But decision grows, even in pure democracy (which we have not got), slowly, informally, in the easy meeting of men and their minds. . . . In that process the hotel room has a place. The fate of the land beyond Sir Walter's brave colony might seem more sweetly fashioned if it were done always in decorum under flags. It will be native, still, if it is done in the Sir Walter Hotel over glasses and cigarettes.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>News and Observer (Raleigh), March 7, 1971, hereinafter cited as News and Observer.

<sup>2</sup>News and Observer, January 12, 1924.

<sup>3</sup>News and Observer, January 18, 1928. At this time the Capital Construction Company reported a 6 percent dividend and also that its mortgages would be paid off ahead of time.

<sup>4</sup>News and Observer, October 3, 1934.

<sup>5</sup>News and Observer, January 30, 1935.

<sup>6</sup>News and Observer, June 3, 1938, May 18, 1940.

<sup>7</sup>News and Observer, March 7, 1971.

<sup>8</sup>Jonathan Daniels, Tar Heels: A Portrait of North Carolina (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1941), p. 117, p. 319, hereinafter cited as Daniels, Tar Heels.

<sup>9</sup>Willard Gatewood, Jr., Eugene Clyde Brooks: Educator and Public Servant (Durham: Duke University Press, 1960), p. 268.

<sup>10</sup>News and Observer, March 7, 1971.

<sup>11</sup>Daniels, Tar Heels, p. 327.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Daniels, Jonathan. Tar Heels: A Portrait of North Carolina. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1941.
- Gatewood, Jr., Willard. Eugene Clyde Brooks: Educator and Public Servant. Durham: Duke University Press, 1960.
- News and Observer (Raleigh). January 12, 1924; January 18, 1928; October 3, 1934; January 30, 1935; June 3, 1938; May 18, 1940; March 7, 1971.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

(The significant property is the building and the land it stands on.)

A 

1	7	7	1	3	3	2	0	3	9	6	1	3	9	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

C 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

D 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Description prepared by Catherine W. Bishir, Head, Survey and Planning Branch  
Significance prepared by Jim Sumner, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina ZIP 27611

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE 

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE January 12, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

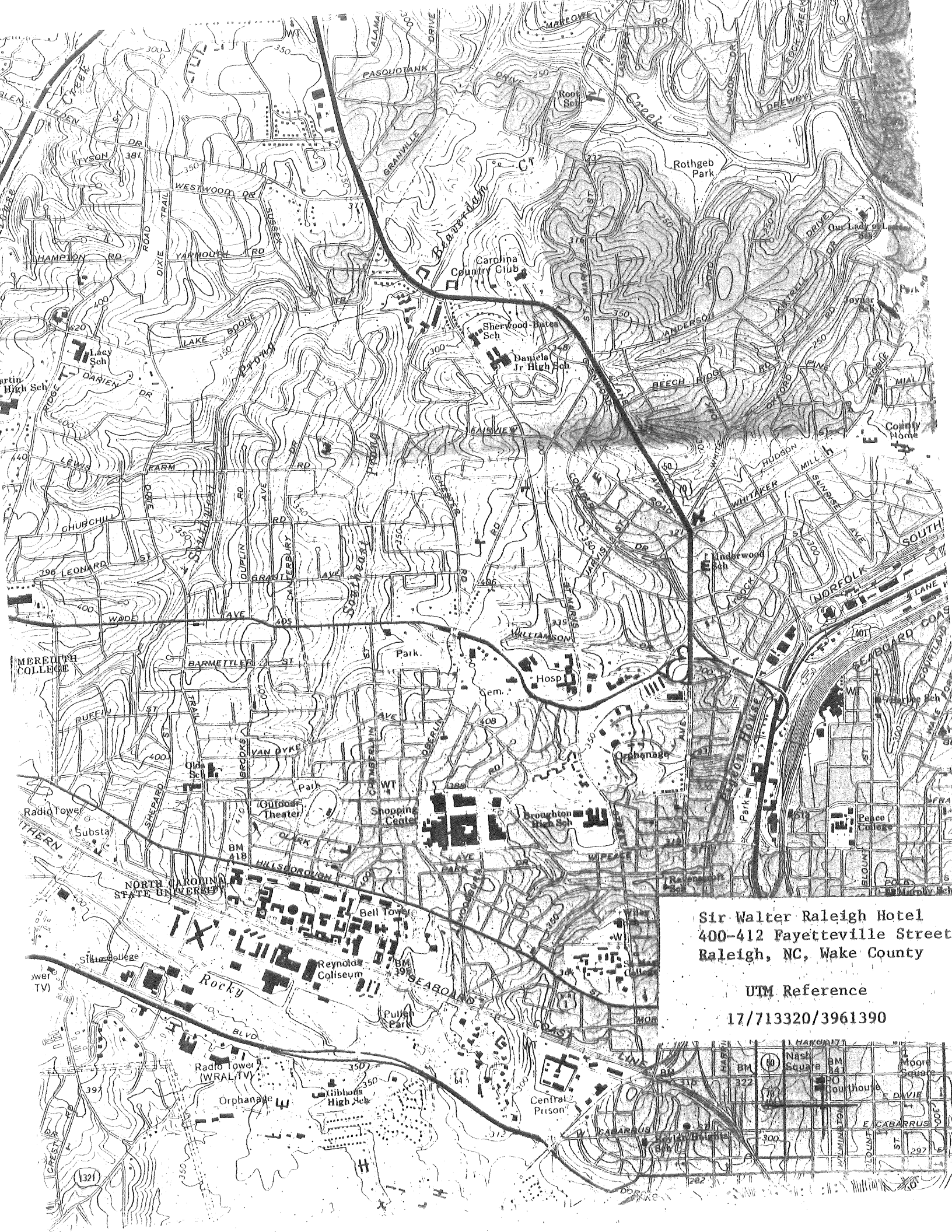
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

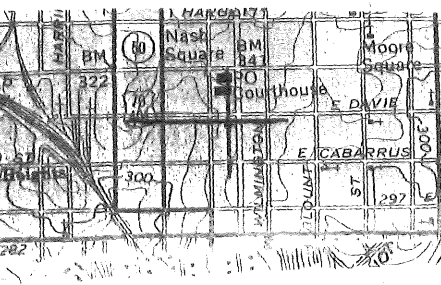
DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel  
400-412 Fayetteville Street  
Raleigh, NC, Wake County

UTM Reference  
17/713320/3961390







HOTEL SIR WALTER

SIR WALTER

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SIR WALTER  
HOTEL

WALTER