

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 1 1987
date entered OCT - 1 1987

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

1. Name

historic Reed, William House

and/or common Reed-Riddle-Jemison House (Spring Lake Farm)

2. Location

street & number 888 Twin Lake Drive NA not for publication

city, town Birmingham NA vicinity of congressional district 6

state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" 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 | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | NA | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: unoccupied |

4. Owner of Property

name Hugh M. Riddle

street & number 868 Twin Lake Drive

city, town Birmingham NA vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office, Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 716 21st Street North

city, town Birmingham state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

| | |
|---|---|
| Jefferson County Historical Commission Survey | X |
| title Alabama Inventory | has this property been determined eligible? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no |
| c. 1975 | X |
| date 1970-present | <input type="checkbox"/> federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> county <input type="checkbox"/> local |

depository for survey records Jefferson County Historical Commission
Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Birmingham Alabama
Montgomery Alabama

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The core of the Reed House is the story-and-a-half hewn log dwelling, measuring about 18 x 22 feet, which was built by William Reed perhaps as early as 1816. A massive stone chimney abuts the east gable end of this portion of the house. In a manner typical of such dwellings throughout frontier America, the log walls are laid approximately four feet above the ceiling of the main room to accommodate a spacious, gabled loft area that was used for sleeping and storage. The present closed-stinger stair dates from the 1970s, the original ladder-like stair having disappeared long ago. Except for additional door openings at the west end of the room, the log fabric appears largely undisturbed. Evidence of the original wood shingles which covered the roof can still be seen in the loft area.

Beginning perhaps as early as the 1830s or 1840s, the house underwent a series of enlargements. The first of these was a frame room built at the west side of the original log structure and, like it, served by a massive chimney of hewn stone with a distinctive stone beltcourse near the top of the stack. This frame addition (as does the log part of the house) retains the original log puncheons that serve as floor joists. The floors themselves have been partially patched and covered.

At an undetermined later date, a frame ell was constructed behind the log nucleus, at the northeast rear.

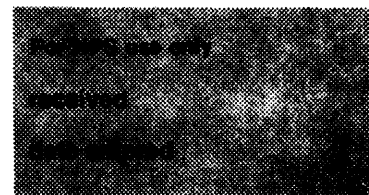
By the Civil War period, the Reed house seems to have evolved into a dwelling similar in overall appearance to the still-extant (but not as early) McLaughlin-DeShazo and Moor houses about 10 miles away, in what is now the town of Leeds. The two-room plan of the main block, without the central hall or open dogtrot usually found in rural antebellum Alabama, was characteristic of a number of the better farmhouses in the upper Cahaba Valley around modern-day Birmingham.

Further expansion of the house about the turn-of-the-century added two more rooms and a central hall across the front, while enlarging the rear ell. At the same time, two parallel gables were built projecting from the front slope of the roof, while a porch was constructed across the new facade and down the east side of the house. A 1905 photograph shows that by then the front of the house stood essentially as it has remained to this day. A back porch and lean-to was positioned in the reentrant angle between the main block of the house and the ell. A long, L-shaped back porch (now enclosed) extended along the west side of the ell and around the back of the main block. To this porch was added, about 1922, a small "bathing room" primarily for the use of Mrs. Hallie Reed Riddle who, with her husband and children, then occupied the house. Modern plumbing, however, was not installed for several more years.

Further structural modifications, made in the 1920s, during the Jemison ownership of the house, created a large living room by combining the original southwest front room with the adjacent center hall to the east. At the same time, the living room fireplace was rebuilt in brick after a modified Arts and Crafts manner, and a sunroom added behind the chimney to the west, overlooking the lake which inspired the Jemisons to name their country retreat Spring Lake Farm. A basement was also excavated beneath

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part of the house to accommodate a coal furnace. On the front porch, the slender paneled supports dating from the turn-of-the-century were replaced by heavier square box columns.

Changes have included poorly-built service rooms against the west rear porch and the creation of a small breakfast room and second kitchen out of part of the rear shed extension. The western two bays of the front porch, screened during the 1930s and 1940s, were incorporated into the living room during the ownership of N. E. Ware (1947-58). Glazed doors in each of the forward-projecting gables at the front of the house were installed in the late 1970s. During this same time period, the weatherboarding was removed from the oldest part of the east side of the house to expose the original logs underneath.

To the northwest rear of the main residence is situated the remains of a small stone springhouse, dating from the 1920s. Other outbuildings, including barns and stables, have disappeared.

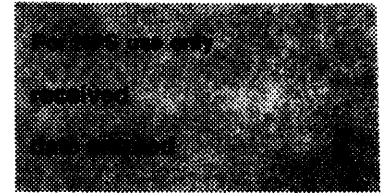
Still surviving, however, is much of the English boxwood from the General Joseph Wheeler plantation in north Alabama, planted during the 1920s by Mrs. Robert Jemison.

A block east of the house, along the old Springville Road at the corner of Tarpon Drive, is the tiny private cemetery--once part of the original farm--where William Reed, who initially built the house, and members of his family are buried.

2 contributing
0 noncontributing
2 total

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Historical Summary

The Reed-Riddle House, also known as Spring Lake Farm, is believed to be the oldest extant structure within the corporate limits of modern Birmingham. Now surrounded by suburbs, the house sprawls beside a small lake just off the Springville Road in the northeastern suburb of Huffman. It was built there about 1820 (possibly as early as 1816) by William Reed (1770-1856) near the site of a large spring in a fertile upland valley of the Appalachian foothills. William Reed (a semi-legendary character known in local chronicles as "Silver Billy") brought with him to Alabama his parents, as well as his wife and his oldest son, Robert Reed. His next-born daughter, Ruth, is believed to have been the first child born in the house, which at that time was a story-and-a-half hewn log cabin.

Originally from Guilford County, North Carolina, the Reeds came into Jefferson County with other early settlers, who entered the area by way of the Huntsville and Springville roads and found homesites in the eastern part of the county near what are now Pinson, Roebuck, Huffman, East Lake, and Woodlawn. Near the Reed farm were the now-destroyed homesites of other prominent early families such as the Woods, the Trusses, and the Vanns.

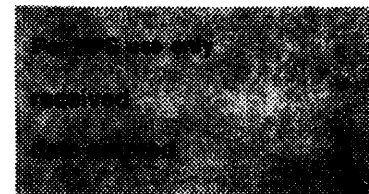
William Reed's original tract, encompassing the spring, comprised approximately 162 acres in Section 30, Township 16, Range 1 West; eventually the property would include portions of Sections 19, 20 and 29 as well. The original tract is the site of the cabin as well as the family cemetery, where William's father, John T. Reed, was buried in 1820, a year prior to the granting of the Federal land patent in August, 1821. Since government land patents were issued only after the final payment had been made, it seems reasonable to accept the traditional date of 1816 as the initial date of settlement and perhaps of the building of the log portion of the house.

From that time until after the Civil War, William Reed and his family cultivated the lands surrounding their sturdy log house, gradually making improvements. In time, these included a water-powered mill as well as the usual farm dependencies. The 1850 census lists William Reed, age 80, and his wife Ruth, age 73, as living on the farm along with their son Robert, age 54. Their real estate was valued at \$5,300.

William Reed's oldest son, Robert Reed (1796-1873), married three times and had four sons, the youngest of whom--John T. Reed (died 1918)--became owner of the house in 1865 through a conveyance of title from his father. Twenty years later John Reed and his wife--having decided to move to Birmingham--sold the property to a young man named Thomas Watkins Riddle (1858-1943). Four years later in 1889, Riddle married one of John Reed's daughters, Hallie Catherine. At the time the property was sold to Mr. Riddle it was "185 acres more or less," according to the warranty deed. Hallie Reed Riddle then returned to her birthplace and had nine children of her own, one of whom was Hugh Morrow Riddle (b. 1908)--named after his father's hunting companion, Hugh

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Morrow--an eminent Birmingham lawyer. Mr. Riddle is the present owner of the house and the sixth generation in descent from John T. Reed the family patriarch who died on the land in 1820.

It was apparently during the ownership of Thomas Watkins Riddle that the house took the form it has essentially preserved to the present day. During the 19th century the original story-and-a-half log dwelling had been enlarged, by a frame room to the west side and an ell room to the rear (or north). This may have occurred as early as the 1830s or 1840s. Probably during the 1890s, the house was again expanded--the existing porch being added and the roof assuming its present configuration. This is confirmed by a 1905 photograph of the house, the earliest known view, which shows the dwelling basically as it stands today.

Thomas Watkins Riddle continued to farm the land into the early years of this century, establishing a certified dairy farm in 1912. About the same time, he built a dam across the stream which flowed northwestward from the spring near the house--thereby transforming the adjacent marshland into the present lake. Only two years later, in 1914 he sold a portion of the property--except for a tract of 55 acres, half interest in the spring and the half-acre family cemetery plot--to the New South Land Company. Eleven years later, in 1925, the remainder of the lands were acquired by the same company and then sold the next day to Robert Jemison, Jr. (the deeds show that the 55 acres and the cemetery were retained by Riddle, but the spring became part of the Jemison property).

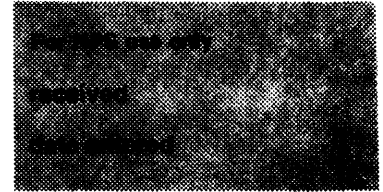
With this change of hands, the Reed house and farm passed from the ownership of one of Jefferson County's pioneer families into the possession of a family instrumental in the subsequent development of the city of Birmingham. Robert Jemison, Jr., is a recurring figure in Birmingham's explosive growth between 1900 and 1930: founder of the city's leading real estate firm, president of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, civic leader, and industrial entrepreneur.

Jemison had already been the father of two major suburban developments--Mountain Terrace and the elite Mountain Brook community--by the time he acquired the Reed property. At this time, the Reed farm was still remote from the downtown bustle. Jemison and his family wanted the house as a country retreat, a place that would enable them to escape once in awhile from the demands of business and social obligations.

Mrs. Jemison, the former Virginia Earle Walker, set about making various improvements, including the planting of English boxwood about the house. These boxwood cuttings came from the Tennessee Valley plantation of Confederate General Joseph Wheeler (Mrs. Jemison was a friend of the general's daughter, Miss Annie Wheeler).

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If the Reeds represented the yeomanry that comprised the bulk of early Jefferson County's landholders, Mrs. Jemison represented the patrician element of the antebellum county hierarchy. Her maternal grandfather, Judge William S. Mudd (1816-1884), had been an antebellum planter and lawyer, and subsequently one of the promoters of Birmingham in the early 1870s. (Coincidentally, Judge Mudd's white-columned home, Arlington, shares with the Reed house the distinction of being one of the city's two extant pre-Civil War structures.)

The Jemisons also made certain changes to the old Reed homestead itself, including renovation of the front rooms into a spacious, informal open living area centering about a brick bungalow-type fireplace. At the same time, a sunroom was build on the west side of the house, overlooking the spring-fed lake. The expansive porch across the front and along the east side was also modified by the substitution of box columns for the original slender supports.

Mr. Jemison called his country property (by one report now expanded to 500 acres) Spring Lake Farm; and it became an important part of his life. Although used initially as an occasional retreat (but also kept under cultivation as a producing farm), it became his full-time residence during the depression years. Contemporary reports refer to Spring Lake Farm as Mr. Jemison's "favorite hobby"; here he provided agricultural and animal husbandry demonstrations and raised a prize herd of Jersey cattle. He also raised Arabian horses, Percherons, Shetland ponies, and all manner of other domesticated farm animals. Hill Ferguson speaks of the farm as a "model estate of the modern country gentleman."

In 1947 the Jemisons sold Spring Lake Farm to Mr. and Mrs. N. E. Ware; the deed reports the conveyed property to be "270 acres, more or less." In 1956 the property was surveyed and subdivided, and the homesite, which had become lot 3, block 5, Spring Lake Farms survey, was sold to Mr. and Mrs. James C. Burns in 1958. Around the house grew up a suburb of ranch-style brick houses on curving streets named after Florida towns.

Mr. Hugh M. Riddle, having left his boyhood home in 1925, returned to Birmingham and decided to purchase the old family home from the Burnses in 1976. He remains the owner, although he resides in another house just down the street. Currently the house is unoccupied.

In 1976, the house was marked as a local landmark by the Jefferson County Historical Commission.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" 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 c. 1816-20 and later **Builder/Architect** William Reed

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A. Architectural

The story-and-a-half log nucleus of the Reed House (Spring Lake Farm) is the oldest structure (circa 1816-20) in the city of Birmingham and one of the earliest extant buildings in north central Alabama. The house predates the founding of Birmingham itself by more than half a century and is a unique architectural link between the modern city and the territorial and early statehood period. As the dwelling was subsequently expanded, it is also an excellent example of a prosperous upland farmhouse of the kind that existed in the environs of Birmingham around the turn-of-the-century. Structurally, the house exhibits a century and a half of changing technology and taste in domestic building: from hewn log to frame construction, with a stylistic admixture mirroring later Victorian and Craftsman influence.

B. Social

This house is closely associated with two notable Jefferson County families: the pioneering William Reed family who settled here when the tract was still part of the Alabama Territory, and the Jemison family--founders and leaders of modern Birmingham who for twenty years made this their country home.

C. Agricultural

The William Reed House is an important material link between the small-farm economy that dominated this area in the early 19th century and the modern industrial city of Birmingham which had its beginnings in the 1870s. The farm's subsequent "gentrification" as the country retreat of the Jemison family during the 1920s and 1930s likewise represents the romanticization of rural life as the Birmingham area became increasingly urbanized.

D. Exploration/Settlement

The William Reed log cabin (circa 1816-20) which forms the nucleus of the present house is the only structure left within the corporate limits of Birmingham that is associated with the earliest days of exploration and settlement in this area.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.7

Quadrangle name Irondale

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

| | | | |
|------|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| A | <u>16</u> | <u>530160</u> | <u>3719650</u> |
| 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

Lot 9, Block 4 (Spring Lake Estates). See attached map with boundary outlined.

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

| state | NA | code | county | code |
|-------|----|------|--------|------|
|-------|----|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Linda Nelson, Historic Preservationist/Operation New Birmingham
Bob Gamble, Architectural Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date May 1987

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

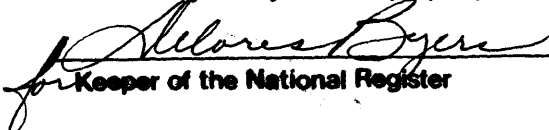
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 8-26-87

For NPS use only

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

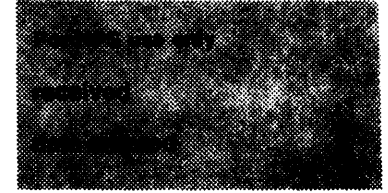

 Keeper of the National Register date 10-1-87

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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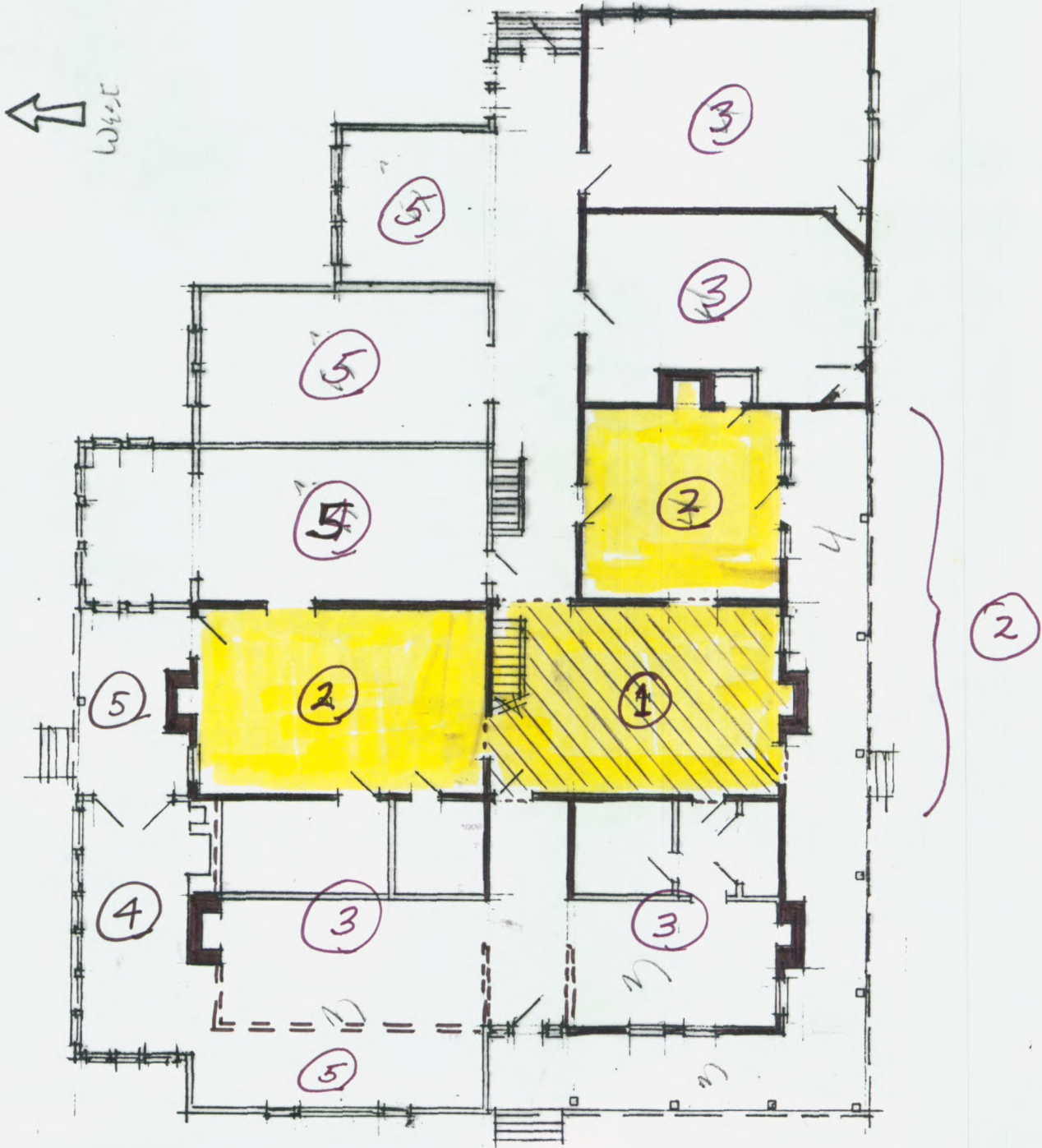
Jefferson County Historical Commission, Research files, Birmingham.

Jefferson County Tractbook, Office of the Secretary of State, Montgomery.

Riddle, Hugh M. Family Papers and Interview, March - May, 1987.

Smith, Virginia Jemison. Interviews, April 1987.

Reed-Riddle-Jemison House
(Spring Lake Farm)

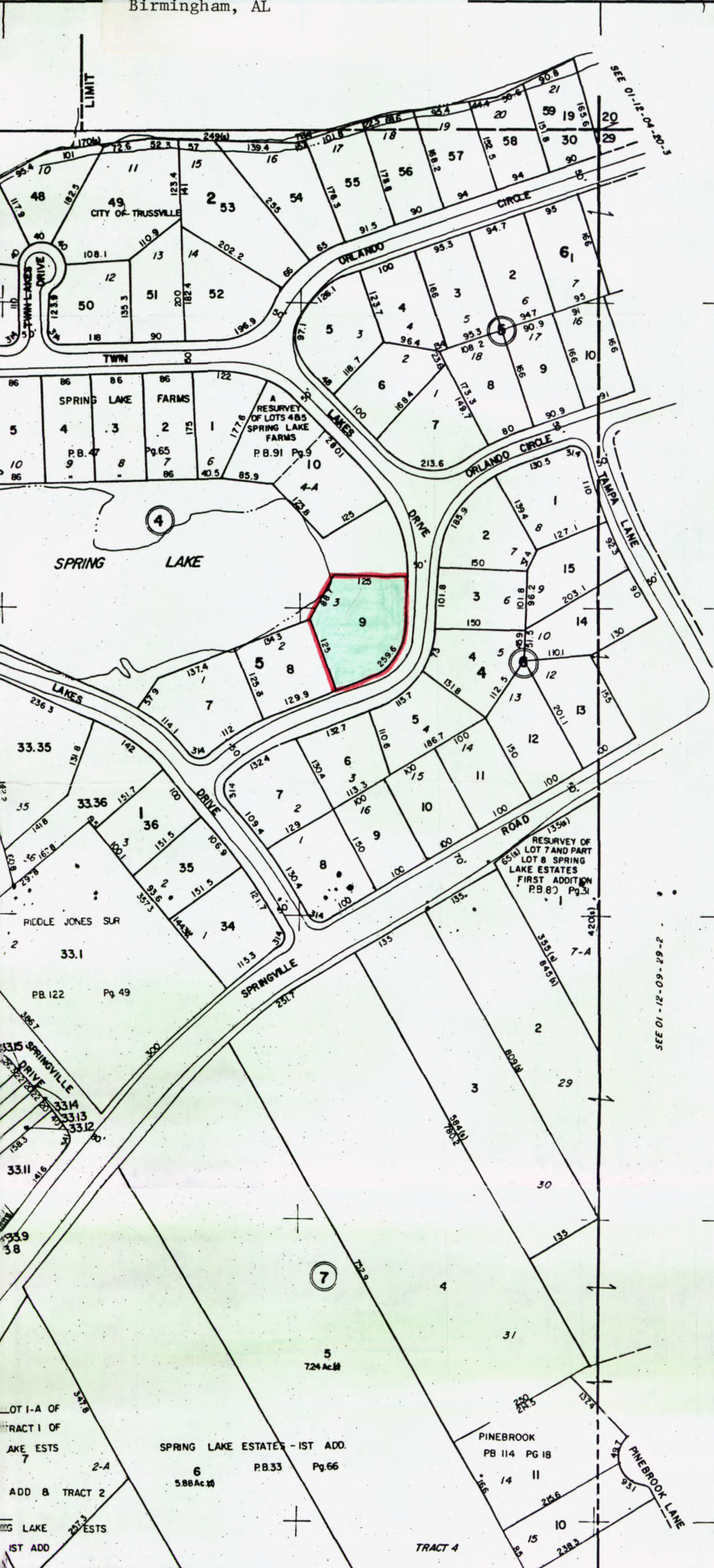


- ① = Phase 1 (original log house)
- ② = Phase 2 enlargement, c. 1830-1870
- ③ = Phase 3 " , c. 1890-1900
- ④ = Phase 4 " , c. 1925-30

⑤ = Phase 5 enlargement, c. 1947-

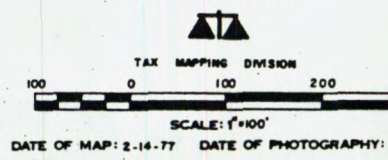
William Reed House
888 Twin Lake Drive
Birmingham, AL

Tax map 12-30-1

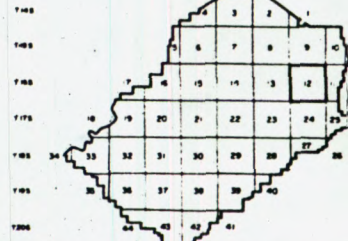


OWNERSHIP MAP
COUNTY OF
JEFFERSON
PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION
OF THE
STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
AD VALOREM TAX DIVISION

PREPARED BY
COLE LAYER TRUMBLE CO.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA



COUNTY LOCATOR



TOWNSHIP LOCATOR
(INDEX TO 1"=400' & 1"=200' MAPPING)

| | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 03 | | 02 | | 01 | |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 18 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 13 |
| 04 | | 05 | | 06 | |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 30 | 29 | 28 | 27 | 26 | 25 |
| 09 | | 08 | | 07 | |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 |

SUB-SHEET INDEX

| | | |
|------|------|------|
| 19-3 | 19-4 | 20-3 |
| 30-2 | 30-1 | 29-2 |
| 30-3 | 30-4 | 29-3 |

LEGEND

- STATE LINE ----- AREA (FROM DEED)
- COUNTY LINE ----- AREA (CALCULATED)
- CORPORATION LINE ----- DIMENSION (FROM DEED)
- DISTRICT LINE ----- DIMENSION (SCALED)
- ROAD R/W ===== WATER
- TRAVELED ROAD WAY ===== INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- RAILROAD R/W ===== U.S. HIGHWAY
- PROPERTY LINE ----- STATE HIGHWAY
- LAND HOOK ----- COUNTY HIGHWAY
- INTERIOR TRACT LINE OR ORIGINAL TRACT LINE ----- ROADS OR STREETS
- SUBVISION LOT NUMBER 29 ----- MAJOR TRANSMISSION LINES
- PARCEL NUMBER 15 ----- SECTION CORNERS
- BLOCK LBRT. (WHERE APPLICABLE) ----- STATE PLANE COORDINATES
- OWNERSHIP MAP BLOCK. (WHERE APPLICABLE) (2)

LOT 1-A OF TRACT 1 OF LAKE ESTS ADD B TRACT 2 LAKE ESTS 1ST ADD

SPRING LAKE ESTATES - 1ST ADD. P.B.33 Pg.66 6 588Ac±

PINEBROOK P.B.114 PG.18 14 11 15 10 238.3

TRACT 4

SEE 01-12-09-29-2

SEE 01-12-04-20-3