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# 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** Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage  
**other names/site number** N/A

## 2. Location

**street & number** 14 8<sup>th</sup> Place  
**city, town** Tybee Island ( ) vicinity of  
**county** Chatham **code** 051  
**state** Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31328

( ) not for publication

## 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:

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
<b>buildings</b>	1	0
<b>sites</b>	0	0
<b>structures</b>	0	0
<b>objects</b>	0	0
<b>total</b>	1	0

**Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:** N/A

**Name of previous listing:** N/A

**Name of related multiple property listing:** N/A

**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 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 the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Rudolf Cloves 3-13-08  
Signature of certifying official Date

*W. Ray Luce*  
W. Ray Luce  
Historic Preservation Division Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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 or bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 4-29-08

determined eligible for the National Register

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determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_

removed from the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_

other, explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

see continuation sheet

for  
Keeper of the National Register Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

Domestic: single dwelling

### Current Functions:

Domestic: single dwelling

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

Other: raised Tybee cottage

### Materials:

<b>foundation</b>	Concrete
<b>walls</b>	Asbestos
<b>roof</b>	Terra Cotta
<b>other</b>	Wood

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage is an example of a beach house constructed for middle-class families on Tybee Island from the early 1920s through the 1940s. Built in c.1933-1935, the Mulherin-Righton cottage is located at 14 8<sup>th</sup> Place on the east side of Butler Avenue, the main thoroughfare on Tybee Island. The island, which lies 15 miles east of Savannah, is a small coastal resort community. A few large hotels face the Atlantic Ocean, but most of the development on the island is small in scale with mostly one- and two-story commercial buildings and numerous one-story frame houses.

The Mulherin-Righton cottage is a frame, rectangular, two-story beach house in which the main living quarters are raised on wood posts above the servant quarters, bath/changing rooms, and automobile stalls located on the ground level. The cottage has a hip roof with overhanging eaves, exposed rafter ends, and metal shingles. The wraparound porch extends the length of the south side and part of the west side. The porch on the east side has been enclosed. The cottage is sided in scallop-edged asbestos shingles that have been added over the original clapboard. Windows are mostly six-over-six-light sash windows arranged as single, double, and triple windows. Wood louvers shelter windows on the west façade from the evening sun. Exterior stairs are located on the north and east sides. The east side, which faces the ocean, was historically the front of the cottage.

The interior floor plan is similar to a bungalow with two side-by-side sets of rooms and a small rear hall that serves the back bedrooms and bathroom. This informal plan, which is reminiscent of cottages built along the Tybee Strand in the early 1900s, is centered on the living room and kitchen. The living room, since the porch on the east side was enclosed, flows past the chimney into the dining room. Both bedrooms on the west end have direct access to the porch.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

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The cottage retains its original unpainted, heart-pine interior, which was common for Tybee cottages during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The interior includes varnished wallboards and paneling on the walls and ceilings. Wood floors, baseboards, crown moldings, plain door and window frames, and five-panel wood doors are located throughout the house. The interior also retains the original brick fireplace and pine mantel.

The open ground level provides utilitarian spaces for automobile storage, bath/changing rooms, and servant quarters. These spaces are organized among a grid of eight-inch-square wood posts and screened with wood lattice. The two auto stalls are defined by poured-concrete tread pads. The stalls are entered through lattice doors on 8<sup>th</sup> Place. A poured-concrete foundation was added later by filling in the earthen areas around the wood posts. An inscription in the concrete reads "VJ Day 1946."

The servant and bath/changing rooms are located along the north wall in two clusters. Servant quarters, bath, and closet are located in the northwest corner. Stairs along the north wall provided the servant room with direct access to the kitchen on the main floor. The two bath and changing rooms, located in the northeast corner of the ground floor, were entered through a lattice door on the east side at the foot of the main entrance stair. One room was used by men, the other by women. The perceived need for "his" and "her" bathhouses was a late Victorian-period requirement that was reflected in the design of some early Tybee cottages. In each room a wood partition separated the shower area from the changing area. Only the easternmost bath/changing room retains its original configuration and is used for its original purpose. The westernmost bath/changing room was altered during the 2000s for use as a laundry room. Finishes in the servant and bath/changing rooms, like the main floor, consist of pine wallboard and floors and pine window and door surrounds.

The Mulherin-Righton cottage retains a high level of historic integrity. Changes to the exterior include the installation of asbestos shingles over the original clapboard siding and the enclosure of the east end of the porch during the 1990s. During this time a band of triple sash windows was installed in the east elevation and French doors were installed on the south elevation. The newly enclosed space became the primary entrance room to the cottage. A small wood deck was added to the southeast corner of the house. The small ground-level deck lies within the perimeter of the house and can only be seen from within the lattice screen.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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**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):**  N/A

A       B       C       D       E       F       G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

Architecture  
Community Planning and Development  
Entertainment/Recreation

**Period of Significance:**

c.1933-1935 – 1958

**Significant Dates:**

c.1933-1935 – Harold and Margaret Mulherin of Savannah built the cottage as a summer cottage.

1939-1958 – Dr. and Mrs. Harry Righton of Savannah ownership of the cottage, which they used a seaside retreat.

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

N/A

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

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**Statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage is an excellent example of a raised Tybee cottage, a beach house design for middle-class families on Tybee Island from the early 1920s through the 1940s. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tybee Island developed as a popular seaside resort for nearby residents of Savannah, especially after the Tybee Road was opened in 1923. The Mulherin-Righton cottage is an excellent example of a raised Tybee cottage, a beach house that emerged in the early 1920s. In recent years, skyrocketing land values and intensive development have resulted in the demolition of numerous raised Tybee cottages. The Mulherin-Righton cottage is among the few intact cottages that survive from Tybee's golden era of resort development from the 1910s through the 1930s.

The raised Tybee cottage is unique to Tybee Island, Georgia, where multiple developers built as many as 110 raised Tybee cottages. This type of cottage is the most prevalent historic building type on the island, comprising nearly 25 percent of the historic buildings on Tybee.

The Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of a raised Tybee cottage. Built in c.1933-1935, the Mulherin-Righton cottage is a two-story, wood-frame cottage raised on wood posts and covered with a hip roof. The characteristics that define the raised Tybee cottage are the main living quarters raised a full story to protect against high water and provide ocean breezes and views to the ocean. Porches wrap around two or three sides. The lower level accommodates automobiles, boat storage, and sometimes servant quarters. The house is usually raised on wood posts, which are covered with either vertical wood planks or lattice. The small size of the cottages reflects the size of the building lots, which were subdivided as demand for building sites on the island increased.

The Mulherin-Righton house is significant in the areas of community planning and development and entertainment/recreation because it represents the first period of intensive resort development on Tybee Island. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tybee Island, also known as Savannah Beach, developed as a coastal resort for residents of nearby Savannah. The opening of the Tybee Road in 1923 fueled the demand for oceanfront property. Many lots were subdivided to accommodate the construction of seasonal beach houses, such as the Mulherin-Righton cottage.

Tybee Island is unique among the coastal island resorts in Georgia because it developed as the only major coastal resort in the state and the only coastal resort in Georgia for the middle class. A few wealthy families owned many of Georgia's barrier islands, such as Cumberland, Ossabaw, St. Catherines, and Sapelo islands. Some islands developed as exclusive resorts for the wealthy, such as Jekyll Island Club on Jekyll Island. Saint Simons is an example of Georgia coastal island that was transformed by development in the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Tybee Island is the only barrier island that developed as a middle-class resort, which is reflected in its plan of streets and its resort architecture.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

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Early Resort Development on Tybee Island: 1873-1920

Prepared by Robert A. Cuicevich

Tybee Island is the only example of the American coastal resort movement in Georgia. The movement finds its roots in the English coastal resorts of Scarborough and Briton, in which English physicians expounded the virtues of the curative powers of seawater and sea air as a panacea in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this idea was transplanted to America and gave rise to the coastal resorts along the Atlantic coast. Many Georgians as well as people throughout the South traveled north to resorts in Cape May, New Jersey, and Nantucket, Massachusetts, and on Long Island, New York. These resorts had been in operation for many years and had set the standard by offering such amenities as transportation, hotels, service-oriented businesses and amusement establishments. Tybee was modeled after these resorts and was even referred to in advertisements as "The Long Branch of the South." Like the northern resorts, many private cottages were built near the resorts on land made available by the development companies.

In the early 1870s, a group of entrepreneurs formed the Tybee Improvement Company for the purpose of promoting the development of Tybee as a seaside resort. In 1873, a daily steamer route to the island from nearby Savannah was established, and a plan for the subdivision of the island into building lots was developed. In an effort to stimulate the sales of lots, plans were made for the establishment of a comfortable hotel on the south end of the island with the oceanfront lots between Centre and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets. John Tebeau's 1873 "Plan of Tybee Island" shows all of the lots from Centre Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street and from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street beyond Tilton Avenue as having been sold.

In 1876, the Ocean House hotel was completed along with a wooden tramway to transport guests from the steamship pier on the north end of the island to the resort along the beachfront. The horse railway continued along Main Street (now Butler Avenue) to the Inlet in order to provide guests with the option of bathing in the calm waters of the Back River. By the 1880s, the development of Tybee as a seaside resort was a great success. Many bathhouses, dancing pavilions, boarding houses, and summer cottages were erected along the beachfront close to the hotel.

In 1885, Daniel G. Purse, a Savannah entrepreneur, bought a controlling interest in the island and solicited financial backing from his peers for the purpose of developing a railroad to Tybee. The Savannah and Tybee Railroad was completed in 1887. The train not only reduced by half the travel time from Savannah to 45 minutes, it also made the entire island more accessible by offering eight stops between the north end and the Back River.

The Tybee Beach Company was formed earlier that same year to supervise and control the continued development of the island. The stockholders must have been pleased with the burst of new development that occurred following the opening of the railroad. By 1888, at least two new hotels with dancing pavilions and bathing facilities, as well as a number of summer cottages, had been built in the vicinity of the Ocean House.

In an effort to encourage lot sales on the south end of the island, the stockholders announced the construction of a first-class hotel in the vicinity of the Back River, between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets. The

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hotel, named Hotel Tybee, was completed in 1891. As the stockholders had hoped, lots were sold and summer cottages, boarding houses, and other businesses began to develop around the new hotel.

Tybee became a regional resort when the Savannah and Tybee Railroad became a unit of the Central of Georgia Railroad in 1890 and then under its direct ownership in 1895. This affiliation gave the island a direct link to hundreds of towns and cities throughout Georgia and Alabama, resulting in the construction of numerous summer cottages for Savannah families and out-of-town families as well. In an effort to entice people to come to the resort by way of their rail system, the Central of Georgia in c.1900 built an enormous dancing and entertainment pavilion, called the Tybrisa, next to Hotel Tybee.

By 1910, the south end had become the center of resort activity on Tybee. In 1911, the new Hotel Tybee, an elegant three-and-one-half story, Mediterranean-style hotel, was completed on the site of the first Hotel Tybee, which was destroyed by fire in 1908. The new hotel, which was easily the finest hostelry built on the island, elevated the resort construction to new levels, offering guests unparalleled comfort and luxury.

Tybee's popularity as a resort continued to increase and by 1920, the oceanfront resort area between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets included three hotels, three dance pavilions, four bathhouse pavilions, and dozens of boarding houses and inns.

Early Summer Cottages on Tybee Island: 1895-1920

The Strand and Back River neighborhoods, which represent the oldest and most substantial concentration of resort cottages remaining on Tybee, are private summer resort settlements that developed between 1895 and 1920 as a direct result of the construction of the Savannah and Tybee Railroad in 1887 and the construction of Hotel Tybee on the south end of the island in 1891.

The beachfront area sandwiched between Tybee's first major hotels, the Hotel Tybee and the Ocean House, is the location of the original "Strand." These lots became desirable because of their beachfront locations and their proximity to the two main resort centers. In addition, the railroad had five stops along Main Street (later Butler Avenue), adjacent to the Strand district. Tybee Island suffered devastating hurricanes in 1881, 1893, and 1898 and several fires destroyed many buildings in the Strand district.

Located between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> streets, the oldest buildings remaining in the Strand district are a row of private summer cottages, known as the "Strand cottages," which developed next to Hotel Tybee. Built between 1895 and 1920, each cottage was built in the center of an oceanfront lot that extended from Butler Avenue to the beach. The cottages were built at a substantial setback from the dunes, which provided a grassy expanse (or strand) with wax myrtle, palmetto trees, mature oaks, and sand dunes between the homes and the beach. A walkway passed in front of the steps of each cottage, connecting the settlement with the resort at Hotel Tybee. This arrangement afforded property owners



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private and communal settings. In addition, each cottage had a path to the beach.

The Strand cottages feature hip roofs with overhanging eaves and recessed wraparound porches. Most cottages are raised one-half story on wood piers. Servants' quarters and changing rooms (for ocean bathing) were located on the ground level with the main living quarters located on the raised level. The main living quarters of most cottages appear to be a variation of the bungalow floor plan, although some have central-hall and Georgian plans. Strand cottages are generally more ornate than cottages on the south end or the Back River, the area at the mouth of Chimney Creek along the west side of the island. Many cottages feature floor length windows, French doors, stained glass windows, transom and sidelight door surrounds, pressed-metal shingles, roof finials, bay windows, and polygonal corner porches.

The character of the Back River district is that of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhood of beach resort cottages. While resort hotels, bathhouses, and pavilions, as well as summer cottages were built along the frenetic oceanfront, the Back River developed as a quiet, secluded neighborhood. Most of the cottages were built for families from Savannah and the region to spend the summer months. The most intact group of cottages is located between Inlet Avenue and the mouth of Chimney Creek. This row of cottages, sometimes referred to as "Colony Row," was built between 1900 and 1915. Each cottage is situated in the center of a one- and one-half-acre lot facing the river.

The South End/Back River cottages are characterized as large, two-story, hip-roof buildings featuring an overall square shape, widely overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends, and a recessed, two-tier, wraparound porch that extends around all four sides of the building. The main living quarters (bedrooms and living room) are located on the second floor while service-related rooms (dining room and kitchen) are located on the ground floor. Most South End/Back River cottages have a foursquare-derived floor plan in which several of the rooms open onto the porches through French doors or floor length windows. The type is also typically mortise-and-tenon construction and has a wood pier foundation. Unlike the Strand cottages of the same period, the servants' quarters and bathhouses are located in separate buildings in back of the house.

Both the Tybee Island Strand Cottages Historic District and the Tybee Island Back River Historic District were listed in the National Register in 1999.

The Raised Tybee Cottage: 1923-1955

The beach houses that have come to be known as raised Tybee cottages were first introduced during Tybee's golden era as a coastal summer resort. Built from the early 1920s through the 1940s, the raised Tybee cottage retains several design elements of the earlier cottages built on the island while providing a new functionality that served new trends in development in the 1920s.

The raised Tybee cottage is characterized as a frame, often square, two-story beach house in which the main living quarters are situated on the raised level and servants' quarters, changing rooms, and automobile stall are located on the ground level. The main living quarters are generally raised on

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wood piers, with the ground level enclosed with wood lattice in which lattice garage doors face side streets or lanes. Most examples have hip roofs, which are often covered with pressed metal shingles, and recessed wraparound porches. Early raised Tybee cottages feature an informal plan in which the entrance opens into a large common room or parlor that is flanked on both sides by several smaller rooms. Bedrooms are usually located along the side porch, with service-oriented rooms, such as the kitchen and bathroom, located on the opposite side of the parlor. The parlor is usually large and serves several functions, often doubling as a casual dining area. Raised Tybee cottages are generally smaller than their predecessors in order to take advantage of smaller building lots.

The completion of the Tybee Road in 1923 ushered in a golden era for Tybee. As a result of the island's increased accessibility, the resorts flourished and Tybee entered into an unparalleled building boom. It was during this time that Cab Calloway, Bob Crosby, and other Big Band personalities performed at Tybee's dancing pavilions. Tybee was arguably the most popular resort on the south Atlantic coast. Rows of boarding houses were built and numerous small hotels were established during this time to accommodate the crush of people visiting the island. It was during this period that the raised Tybee cottage was first introduced.

The opening of the Tybee Road spurred a dramatic increase in the demand for oceanfront property, causing development and construction practices in the Strand district to be changed dramatically. Because the island was more accessible than ever before, more people were interested in beach cottages. Instead of one large cottage being built in the center of an oceanfront lot, the lots were subdivided and many smaller cottages were built. The small size of the lots required a different type of cottage than those built on the island in previous years, thus providing the inspiration for the raised Tybee cottage.

Whether or not it was the intention of Tybee's cottage builders of the 1920s and 1930s, the new cottage that resulted appears to be a combination of the Strand and Back River cottages. The raised Tybee cottage retains the square shape, two-story height, and recessed wraparound porch of the Back River cottages while employing the basic form of the Strand cottage with its open, raised ground level containing the servants' quarters and changing rooms. The combination of the compact square shape of the Back River cottages and the ground level location of the changing rooms and servants quarters of the Strand cottages allowed maximum utilization of the newly subdivided lots. The most significant change in the raised Tybee cottage, however, is its full-height ground level, which was raised a full story in order to incorporate space for automobiles. Because Tybee's streets were little more than one-lane sand pathways when these oceanfront cottages were built, it was necessary to provide a place to store the automobiles without using up any of the already space-challenged lots.

With this in mind, it is apparent that the compact design of the raised Tybee cottage and its accommodation of the automobile are local characteristics that reflect the changes in land use and development trends brought on by the completion of the Tybee Road.

Apart from what has been garnered through field research and analysis, relatively little is known about the origin of the raised Tybee cottage. It appears that the cottage was established as a local

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building type shortly after the completion of Tybee Road and the design was subsequently adopted by Tybee's cottage builders. The establishment of the design as a building standard for beach cottages on Tybee is evidenced by the number of raised Tybee cottages built on the island during its period of significance and by the variety of contractors and builders who are known to have built them. In addition, the raised Tybee cottage is the most common historic building type on the island.

Although the design of the raised Tybee cottage is not attributed to any one builder or architect, A. P. Solomon, Jr., owner of the Tybee Contracting Company, is the person most closely associated with the genesis and construction of this unique beach cottage type. In 1931, Solomon established the Shirley Park subdivision, located between Butler Avenue and the beach and between 10<sup>th</sup> and Shirley streets. Built adjacent to the Fresh Air Home, the development was billed in newspaper advertisements as "Tybee's New and Only Ocean Front Subdivision." While most speculators and developers were selling subdivided lots one by one to individuals, Solomon offered lots and cottages "built and sold as a unit." Created through the subdivision of two original oceanfront lots, the Shirley Park subdivision offered 17 graded building lots with electrical and water connections. Solomon's contribution to the development of the raised Tybee cottage is evidenced in the building plans offered by his company to individuals purchasing lots in Shirley Park. As noted in an advertisement for the subdivision that appeared in the *Savannah Morning News* on May 17, 1931, Solomon offered prospective buyers "several plans which he has and which his company will build and sell to purchasers, complete." Of the 15 cottages built by Solomon and his company in Shirley Park, 11 are raised Tybee cottages. Other builders associated with the raised Tybee cottage include George Dutton (14 13<sup>th</sup> Street Lane, c.1929), Joseph Muir Lang (1714 Chatham Avenue, 1930s), Ed Braun (4 8<sup>th</sup> Street, c.1932), John Lee (11 8<sup>th</sup> Place, c.1935 and 7 8<sup>th</sup> Street, c.1930-1934), and Henrik Wallen (8 9<sup>th</sup> Street, c.1930-1934). The Seiler Cottage, located at 12 8<sup>th</sup> Street, was built c.1936 by Perry Solomon, Sr. Perry Solomon was the father of Tybee developer A. P. Solomon.

Most raised Tybee cottages were constructed by builders without plans prepared by architects. There were, however, a few examples that were designed by prominent Savannah architect Cletus Bergen (1896-1966), who may have had a significant role in developing the raised Tybee cottage. Bergen, a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta in 1919, began his career as an architect in the office of Levy and Clarke in Savannah. Five years later he became a partner in the firm. Bergen, who is called the "dean of Savannah architects" during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, started his own architectural firm in 1927. Between 1931 and 1936, he completed plans for six raised Tybee beach cottages. Of the three that were constructed, the Pierpont Cottage, designed and built in 1931, is the earliest of the Bergen cottages. It is a formal example of a raised Tybee cottage with separate living and dining rooms. This may be an indication that the client was an upper-middle-class client. Subsequent Bergen commissions in 1935 and 1936 resulted in designs for the Jesse Fulenwider Cottage (1935), the identical Harry Fulenwider Cottage (1935), the Andrew Smith Cottage (1936), and the Fitzgerald Cottage (1936), which represent typical raised Tybee cottages.

The earliest examples of the raised Tybee cottage were built during the mid-to-late 1920s, but the cottage enjoyed its greatest popularity during the early to mid-1930s. Although a majority of raised Tybee cottages are located in the Strand area, there are several examples located on inland lots

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west of Butler Avenue. By the early 1930s, few prime oceanfront lots remained available as most of the seaside lots on the ocean side of Butler Avenue had been purchased and developed. As a result, several dozen examples of raised Tybee cottages were built on lots scattered throughout the inland section of the island. The smaller inland lots located between Butler and Jones avenues were ideal for the compact design of the raised Tybee cottage. Most of the later examples of the type were built on these lots from the late 1930s through the early 1950s.

From the 1940s to the 1970s, side porches and sections of the ground floor were commonly enclosed to create additional living space. In most examples, the basic design of the cottage remained intact with a majority of the ground floor remaining open, particularly the lattice enclosed areas under façade and side porches. The raised Tybee cottage remains a distinctive house type on Tybee Island, the only middle-class resort to develop on the Georgia coast. The characteristics of the house type that remained constant are its roughly square shape, hip roof, recessed porches, raised living quarters, and ground level with servants' quarters and bath/changing rooms, and auto bays surrounded by lattice work.

### Architectural Characteristics of Raised Tybee Cottages

The raised Tybee cottage is characterized as a frame, usually square, two-story beach house in which the main living quarters are situated on the raised level and servants' quarters, bath/changing rooms, and automobile stall(s) are located on the ground level. The main living quarters are raised on wood piers with the ground level enclosed with wood lattice in which lattice garage doors face side streets or lanes. Most examples have steeply pitched hip roofs, widely overhanging eaves, exposed rafter ends, and recessed wraparound porches that extend around two or more sides. Side- and front-gable examples are common. Rooms located along porches often open directly onto the porch.

Raised Tybee cottages were built with balloon-frame construction, clad in weatherboard. Asbestos shingles often were added later. Single and paired six-over-six-light and two-over-two-light double-hung windows are common. Casement windows are occasionally found in some examples. Wood shingles were most often used as roofing materials until 1931, when they were banned by a local building ordinance. Pressed-metal shingles, asphalt shingles, and standing-seam sheet metal became the preferred roofing material.

Heart pine was used almost exclusively for framing, interior walls, ceilings, and floors. Inexpensive and lightweight, pine was easy to transport. From a structural standpoint, the use of pine in the construction of these cottages was ideal as it provides the building with flexibility in strong winds associated with summer storms and hurricanes, allowing the cottage to "bend, not break." Pine interiors were left unpainted, and instead coated with clear shellac that protected and highlighted the natural character of the wood. Early examples sometimes feature Craftsman-inspired interior treatments such as built-in bookshelves, benches (in dining room area), and wrought-iron fixtures (door hinges and latches, light fixtures, handles, etc). Most raised cottages, however, characteristically feature very little ornament and reflect an austere "beach house" aesthetic.

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## **Ground Level**

In most examples, the ground level is almost completely open. These areas remain bare, sandy ground and appear to be generally used for the storage of outdoor recreational equipment, such as boats, barbeque grills, fishing nets, and crab pots. Concrete walks leading to the bath/changing rooms and servants' quarters are common, as are concrete tread pads for the auto stalls. In many examples, a poured-concrete floor was added later.

### *Bath/Changing Rooms, Servants' Quarters*

The location of bath/changing rooms and servants' quarters is largely determined by the location of the auto stalls, which most often face the adjacent street or lane. Most often, bath/changing rooms and servants' quarters were located along the wall opposite or adjacent to the auto stall openings, depending on the general shape of the building, the size of the building lot, and its orientation to the site. Changing rooms and servants' quarters were often, but not always, built side by side and appear to always be located under the main mass of the raised main living quarters. The size and number of bath/changing rooms and servants' quarters vary. Bath/changing rooms and servants' quarters usually have clapboard exterior siding and bead-board walls and ceilings. Bath/changing rooms generally feature poured-concrete floors and two or three-light, wood hopper windows, while servants' quarters feature hardwood floors and double-hung wood windows.

### *Pier Foundation and Lattice Work*

The auto stalls, bath/changing rooms, and servant quarters are positioned between the trussed wood piers that support the raised main living quarters of the cottage. Pier foundations are usually eight-inch-square wood pilings set atop eight-inch-square poured-concrete footings. In order to provide a degree of privacy, the ground floor is enclosed by lattice work comprised of a series of evenly spaced vertical wood slats affixed to a horizontal framing between the exterior wood foundation piers. The width and depth of the vertical slats, the spaces between the slats, as well as the framing structure in which they are attached, appear to vary with each example.

### *Auto Stalls*

Hinged lattice garage doors on the ground level provide access to each auto stall. Raised Tybee cottages include one to three auto stalls, each marked by two, poured-concrete tread pads.

### *Access Stairs between Ground Level and Raised Main Living Quarters*

Access between the ground floor and the raised living areas also vary with each example. Many examples of the type feature an exterior wood stair between the ground level and the raised porch, from which entry into the raised main living quarters is accessed through the main entrance. The exterior stair may also lead directly to the interior of the main living quarters. These stairways often

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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are located in a corner of the ground level and open into the kitchen or are located in the center of the ground floor and open into an access hall or space between service-related rooms, such as the kitchen and bathroom. Many raised Tybee cottages, particularly in early examples, feature both exterior porch stairs and interior stair halls between the ground level and main living quarters. Stairs located outside of the lattice surround that lead directly to the upper porch were also commonly constructed.

### **Raised Main Living Quarters**

#### *Floor Plans*

Many early examples of the type feature an informal open plan in which the main entrance opens into a large common room or parlor that is flanked on both sides by several smaller rooms. Bedrooms are usually located in a row along the side porch, with service-oriented rooms (kitchen, bathroom, etc.) located on the opposite side of the parlor. The parlor is usually large and serves several functions, often doubling as a casual dining area. Bedrooms are accessed from the parlor and, in addition to access doors opening directly onto the porch, often feature doors between each bedroom. This floor plan likely developed into the standard for the raised Tybee cottage by the early 1930s.

Although not as common, several early examples of the raised Tybee cottage feature a variation on the bungalow floor plan, which was apparently carried over from the Strand cottages of the early 1900s. Like the Strand cottages, these examples are rectangular in shape, feature low-pitched hip roofs, and a recessed wraparound porch that often extends around three sides. Unlike their predecessors, these cottages are smaller in size and feature a fully raised ground floor.

#### *Porches*

Most examples of the raised Tybee cottage feature recessed wraparound porches that extend fully or partially along the length of at least two sides of the building. The earliest examples were built in the Strand area east of Butler Avenue facing the ocean. These examples typically have recessed porches along the main façade (east elevation) and south elevation in order to take advantage of northeasterly ocean breezes. Service rooms are typically located along the north elevation where there is often no porch. Most inland examples of the type appear to have adopted the same porch arrangement with west facing lots featuring a porch on the west elevation. Porches typically feature wood railings with either a cross pattern or plain square balusters.

### **Variations**

It appears that most of the variations on the raised Tybee cottage type occurred during the late 1930s through the mid-1950s. The majority of these examples are located on smaller inland lots situated along First, Second, and Jones avenues. Variations, which most often involve the floor plan, porches, and the enclosed ground level, are discussed below.

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*Floor Plans and Roof Shape*

Generally after 1935, many examples of the raised Tybee cottage were designed with what is essentially a standard bungalow floor plan. Unlike earlier raised Tybee cottages with bungalow-derived plans, this variation evolved into a sub-form featuring a front-oriented gable. These examples, which essentially resemble a raised front-gable bungalow, feature either a recessed wraparound porch or simply a recessed façade porch. Apart from these variations, all other cottage characteristics are present (main living quarters raised on wood piers and ground level with service-oriented rooms, auto stalls, and lattice work surround). Most of these examples are situated on inland lots. Eventually, other forms were substituted for the raised main living quarters in the same manner as the front gable-bungalow. With only a few occurrences, these examples feature all the ground-level characteristics of the raised Tybee cottage while employing a decidedly non-coastal architecture for the raised main living quarters.

*Pier Foundations*

There are a few examples in which brick or concrete block were used in supporting the main raised living quarters of the structure. This application appears to be limited to the exterior supports located under the recessed porches and outer walls (those areas visible from the outside), with wood lattice located between the piers, enclosing the ground level as would have been the norm if the characteristic wood piers had been used. Under the building, however, the use of wood piers is maintained. This variation appears to be limited to mid-to-late examples of the type, typically cottages built between 1935 and 1950 along the inland lots west of Butler Avenue.

*Porches*

By the late 1930s, in concert with other variations, such as the floor plan, some examples of the type feature non-integral wraparound porches. In these examples, porches are raised as before, but are not recessed under the main roof of the building, and may or may not wrap around two sides of the building. In addition, it is common in these examples for the areas under the "attached" porch to serve as the location for one or more auto stalls.

*Servant Quarters and Bath/Changing Rooms*

Although few in number, some late examples of the type do not feature servants' quarters and may or may not have originally featured enclosed changing rooms and baths on the ground level. These examples are without exception smaller beach houses built on small inland lots for middle-class families who had no servants, particularly following the difficult economic times of the Great Depression. In place of the servant quarters, the ground level might have other rooms such as a small living room, kitchen, and/or dining room. In these examples, the bath/changing room may be reduced to an unenclosed showerhead used to rinse off after swimming in the surf.

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**National Register Criteria**

A— The Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage is significant in the areas of community planning and development and entertainment/recreation because it represents the first period of intensive resort development on Tybee Island.

C— The Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of a raised Tybee cottage, a house type that developed as a standard beach house design for middle-class families on Tybee Island from the early 1920s through the 1940s.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

N/A

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in c.1933-1935 with the completion of the Mulherin-Righton cottage on Tybee Island and ends in 1958 at the 50-year end date when the house last served as a seaside retreat during the historic period.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

The Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage is the only historic resource associated with this nomination. There are no other resources located within the bounds of the property.

**Developmental history (if appropriate)**

In 1861, John Screven was a principal owner of Tybee Island. Screven sold most of his property to the Tybee Improvement Company in 1873. Screven retained a few oceanfront lots in the vicinity of a proposed hotel, called Ocean House.

In 1879, Benjamin S. Purse, a Savannah physician, purchased Beach Lot 51 from Screven. He also purchased from the town of Tybee in 1914 the eastern extension of Beach Lot 51. At the time of his death in 1927, Purse owned all of Lot 51 from Butler Avenue to the Strand. It does not appear that any buildings had been constructed on his property.

In October 1930, Wilhelmina Elizabeth Paul (formerly Purse), acting as the Executrix of Purse's estate, sold the entire Lot 51 to Thomas Gamble, a Savannah publisher, who later served as mayor of Savannah (1933-1936) and editor of the *Savannah Morning News*. Gamble apparently purchased the lot as a speculative venture. He later subdivided the property into three smaller building lots. In July 1931, in order to provide access to the new lots, Gamble came to an agreement with William J. Hartz, the owner of the adjacent full-size beach lot (Lot 52), in which each owner granted a 10-foot-wide easement between the lots in order to create a common roadway (8<sup>th</sup> Place) from Butler Avenue to the Strand.



National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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In October 1931, Gamble sold the front one-third (Lot 3) of original Beach Lot 51 to S. G. Sumser of Jeffersonville, Kentucky, who was probably serving as an agent for a Kentucky land corporation called W. B. Pell & Bros. Pell & Brothers purchased the rest of Beach Lot 51 from Gamble within the next few years because the corporation sold all of Lot 51 to J. Harold and Margaret Haslam Mulherin in 1933.

In 1933, John Harold Mulherin served as assistant secretary of the Georgia Supply Company, residing with his wife and family at 314 45<sup>th</sup> Street in Chatham Crescent, a fashionable Savannah suburb of middle- and upper-middle-class families. In 1935, the Mulherin's further subdivided Lot 51 into six parcels, dividing in half each of Gamble's three building lots. Five of the lots were made available for sale. The cottage was probably built by the Mulherin's before the re-subdivision of Lot 51 between 1933 and 1935, or perhaps shortly thereafter. The cottage at 14 8<sup>th</sup> Place was built adjacent to Butler Avenue on what became known thereafter as the "Western one-half of Lot 3 of a Re-Subdivision of Beach Lot 51, Ward 2." Three of the lots east of the cottage were sold shortly after the 1935 subdivision, resulting in the construction of three raised Tybee cottages between 1935 and 1939. 14 8<sup>th</sup> Place apparently served as a summer cottage for the Mulherin family for several years until 1939, when the property was sold to Dr. Harry Righton and his wife "Birdie."

Dr. Harry Righton, a Savannah physician, resided with his wife and family at 401 45<sup>th</sup> Street in Chatham Crescent. The Rightons are most closely associated with the cottage, known locally as "The Dr. Righton Cottage," because they owned it for more than 20 years, from 1939 to 1961. The property was apparently passed down to Wylene Righton Commander of Fulton County, the Righton's daughter, who sold the cottage to Eugene C. Thompson, Jr. in 1961.

In 1961, Eugene C. Thompson, Jr. worked as a district sales manager of a local GMAC car dealership. Thompson resided with his family at 302 E. 56<sup>th</sup> Street near the Ardmore Subdivision, a middle-class neighborhood of one-story brick bungalows located adjacent to Ardsley Park in the Midtown area of Savannah. Thompson sold the property to Bertha L. Fordham in 1966.

In 1972, the Fordhams sold the cottage to Curtis J. Wilkes, a local real estate developer, who summered on the island with his family for several years until 1986, when the property was sold to Charles S. and Jacqueline Embry. The Embrys owned the cottage for only one year, selling the property to Stephen Taggart in 1987. In 1992, Taggart, a local real estate developer and homebuilder, sold the property to J. Harry Haslam, an accountant with Price Waterhouse. In 2002, the property was purchased by the current owners, John R. Higham and Pamela E. Hearon of Boston, Massachusetts.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Ciucevich, Robert A. "Raised Tybee Cottages on Tybee Island, Georgia. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Registration Form, June 2005. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia. Note: This draft document is used as a historic context for the identification and evaluation of raised Tybee cottages.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Tybee Island Historic Resources Survey and Report, 2002-2004." On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tybee Island: The Long Branch of the South. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued**  
**date issued:**
- 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:**

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A**

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## **10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property**      Approximately 0.25 acres

### **UTM References**

A)    Zone 17      Easting 514660      Northing 3540550

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The historic district boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached map, which is drawn to scale.

### **Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the remaining property historically associated with the Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**State Historic Preservation Office**

**name/title** Steven Moffson, Architectural Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**mailing address** 34 Peachtree Street, N.W., Suite 1600  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** January 1, 2008  
**e-mail** steven.moffson@dnr.state.ga.us

**Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)** ( ) not applicable

**name/title** Robert A. Ciucevich  
**organization** Quatrefoil Consulting  
**mailing address** 22 West Bryan Street #139  
**city or town** Savannah **state** GA **zip code** 31401  
**telephone** N/A  
**e-mail** N/A

- ( ) **property owner**  
(X) **consultant**  
( ) **regional development center preservation planner**  
( ) **other:**

**Property Owner or Contact Information**

**names** John Higman and Pamela Hearon  
**organization (if applicable)**  
**mailing address** 119 Rogers Avenue  
**city or town** Somerville **state** GA **zip code** 02144  
**e-mail (optional)** N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage  
**City or Vicinity:** Tybee Island  
**County:** Chatham  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** May 2006

**Description of Photograph(s):**

Number of photographs: 18

1. Main facade, photographer facing southeast.
2. Main façade and south side, photographer facing northeast.
3. Main façade and south side, photographer facing northeast.
4. South side, photographer facing northeast.
5. South side and rear façade, photographer facing northwest.
6. Rear façade, photographer facing southwest.
7. Rear façade, photographer facing southwest.
8. Rear façade and north side, photographer facing southwest.
9. Auto stalls and changing rooms, photographer facing north.
10. Auto stalls and changing rooms, photographer facing northeast.
11. Changing room, photographer facing north.
12. Porch, photographer facing west.
13. Porch, photographer facing north.
14. Porch with view into front bedroom, photographer facing north.
15. Living room with view to dining room, photographer facing southwest.
16. Hall, photographer facing west.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

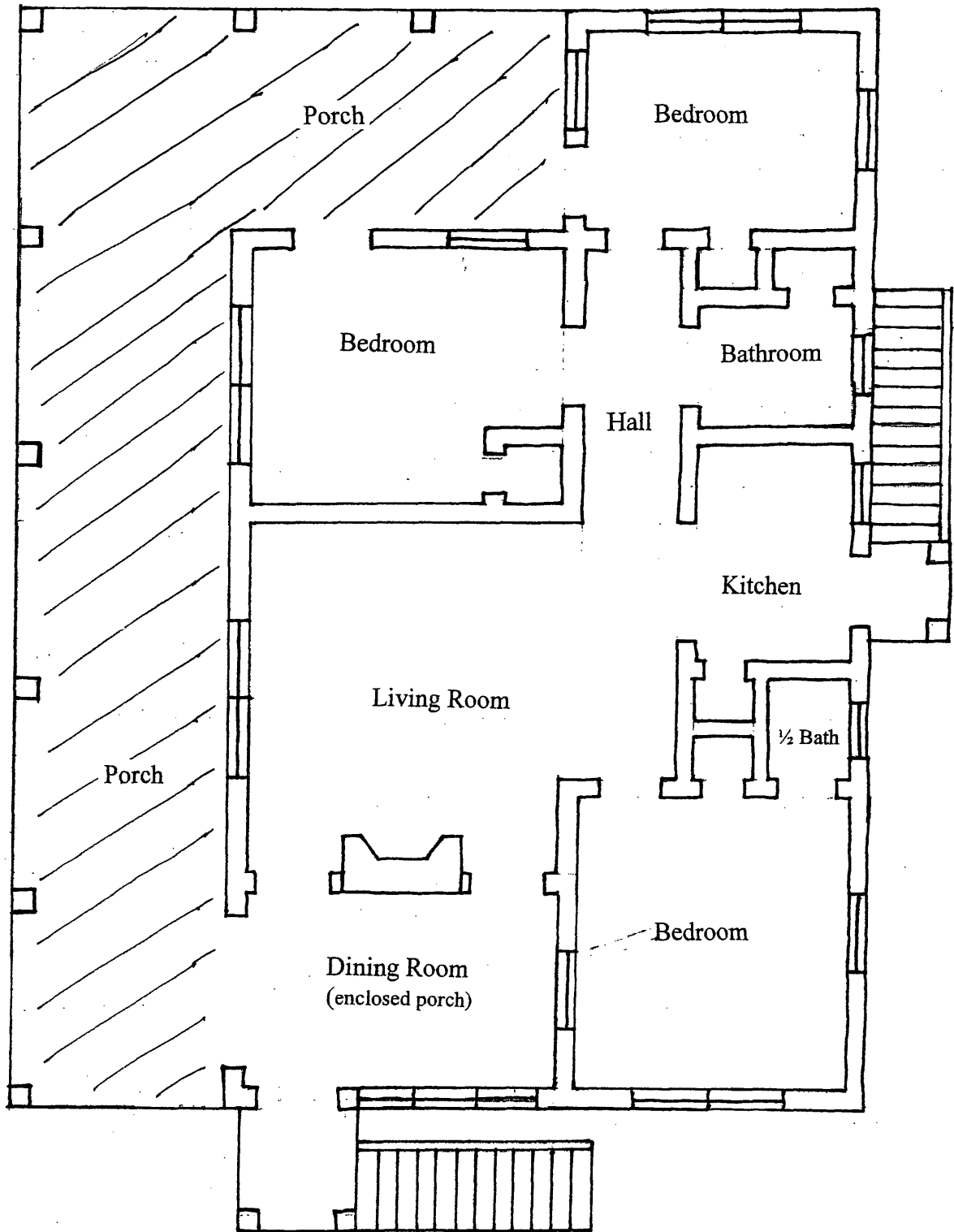
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17. Back bedroom, photographer facing northwest.

18. Middle bedroom, photographer facing south.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)

Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage  
Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia



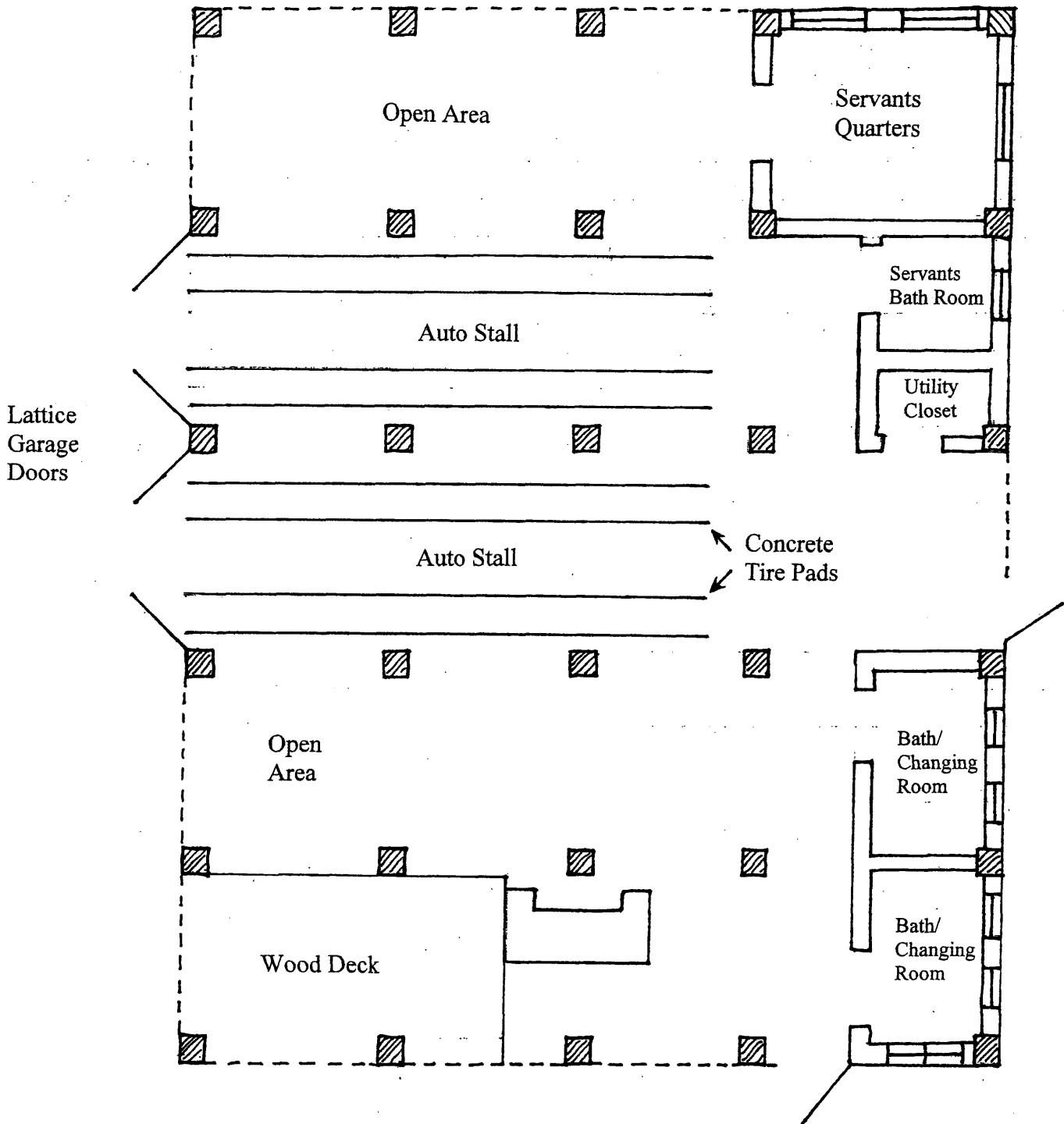
No Scale

North



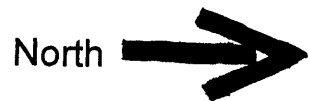
Floor Plan – Main Raised Living Quarters  
Mulherin-Righton Cottage – 14 8<sup>th</sup> Place  
Tybee Island, Chatham Co., Ga. 31328  
Drawn by R.A. Ciucevich, 2005

Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage  
Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia



Floor Plan – Ground Level  
Mulherin-Righton Cottage – 14 8<sup>th</sup> Place  
Tybee Island, Chatham Co., Ga. 31328  
Drawn by R.A. Ciucevich, 2005

No Scale





(18A)

Mulherin-Righton Raised Tybee Cottage  
Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia

National Register Boundary 

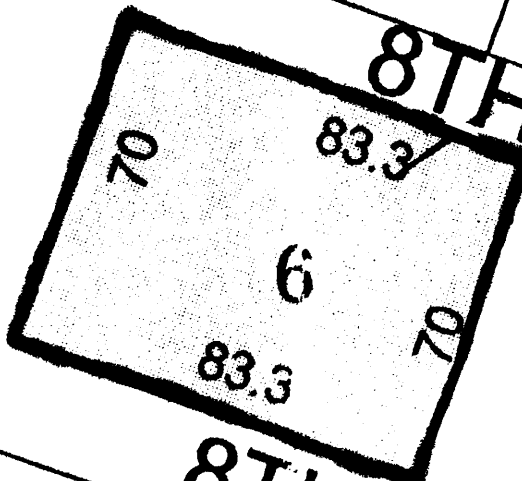
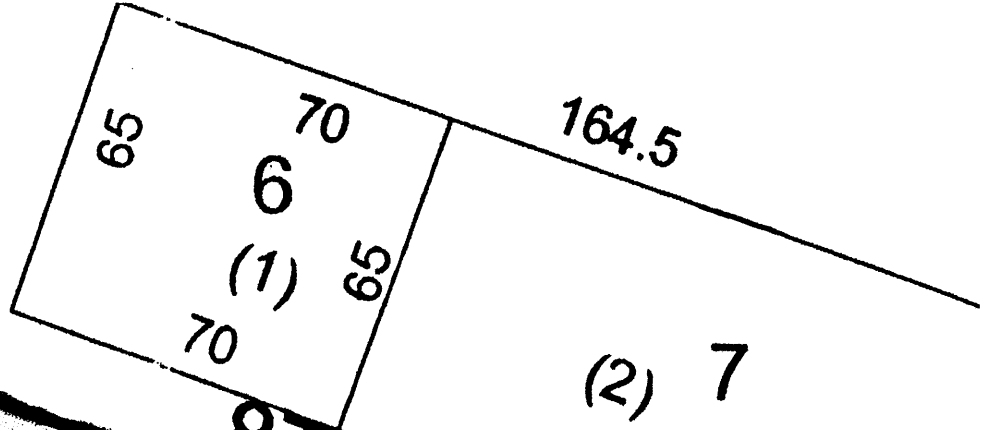
Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 40 feet



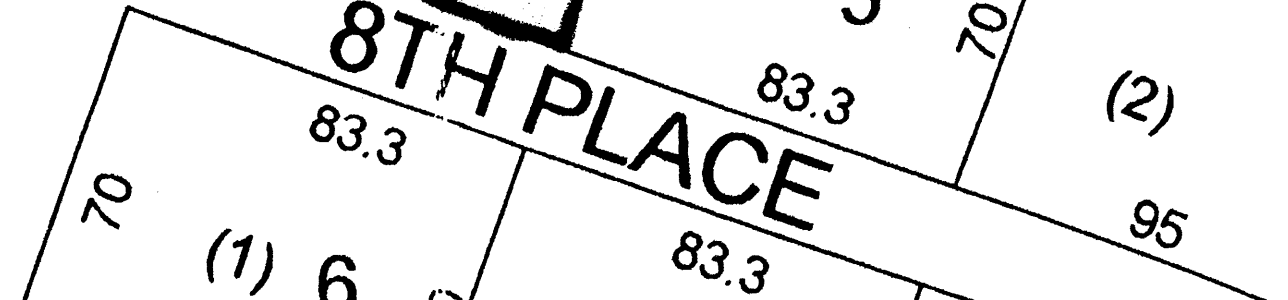
19A)

240

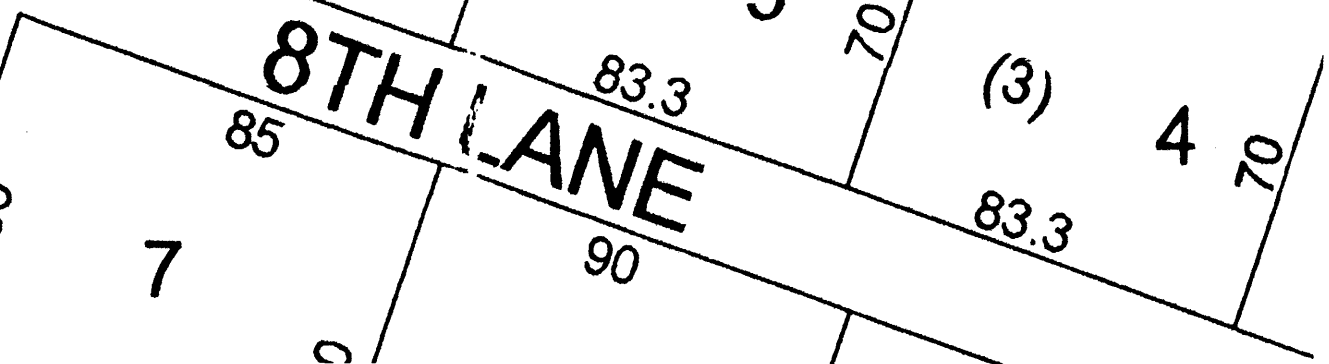
Butler Avenue



8TH TERRACE



8TH PLACE



8TH LANE