

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Magnolia Hotel

Other names/site number Magnolia House; Magnolia House Motel; GF0785

Name of related multiple property listing Historic *Green Book* Resources in North Carolina, 1938–1967
(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

2. Location

Street & Number: 442 Gorrell Street

City or town: Greensboro

State: North Carolina

County: Guilford

Not For Publication: ☐ N/A

Vicinity: ☐ N/A

Zip: 27406

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility 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 ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official:

Date

Title:

State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private ☒
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

2

3

1

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Hotel

COMMERCE: Restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Hotel

COMMERCE: Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian: Italianate

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Wood; Stone; Asphalt; Vinyl

Narrative Description

The Magnolia Hotel anchors the northeast corner of the South Greensboro Historic District (GF1129; NRHP, 1991), a historically Black neighborhood southeast of Greensboro's downtown business district. The two-story, frame building occupies a 0.40-acre parcel in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Gorrell and Plott streets. Constructed in 1889 and renovated in 1915, the Magnolia Hotel served as a single-family dwelling for white residents until 1949 when Arthur and Louie Gist purchased the dwelling and subsequently converted it into an owner-occupied tourist home for Black travelers. The well-preserved building exhibits elements of Italianate-style architecture from the 1889–1915 period such as ornate eave brackets, two tripartite bay windows, decorative wood trim, and a hipped roof with gable roof wings. A one-story, partially enclosed wraparound front porch, added in 1915, is supported by Tuscan columns and pilasters. The building

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was constructed with several rough-hewn granite stone elements, including the foundation, five chimneys, Craftsman-style porch columns and piers, porch steps, and a granite-faced wall along the rear wing. Containing 4,504 square feet of living space and six bedrooms for lodgers, the interior retains a combination of Italianate and Classical Revival-style features such as mantels and a staircase from the historic period. The L-shaped parcel is surrounded by a granite yard fence. The front yard has a large Southern Magnolia tree and a replica of the circa-1950 “Magnolia House Motel” street sign. A contemporary privacy fence surrounds the rear yard. The nominated property is surrounded by residential buildings to the north, east, and south, and flanked by South Murrow Boulevard, a circa-1965 four-lane depressed highway, to the west. The campus of Bennett College (GF1131; NRHP, 1992), a historically Black college for women, is two blocks to the east, and the Plaza Manor Hotel (GF9645), another *Green Book* resource, is one block to the north. Currently used as a full-service boutique hotel, living museum, and special events venue, the Magnolia Hotel retains integrity from its use as a tourist hotel for Black travelers during the *Green Book* era of 1938–1967.

Setting

The surrounding area is primarily residential and laid in an irregularly spaced grid pattern. Dwellings dating from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century line both sides of Gorrell Street and the east side of Plott Street, originally called Pearson Street. On the west side of Plott Street, a steep decline backs into the Greensboro Downtown Greenway—a paved walking and biking trail—and South Murrow Boulevard, a four-lane divided highway. To the west of the Gorrell and Plott intersection, Gorrell Street spans South Murrow Boulevard on a bridge and continues west for roughly 1,000 feet to Martin Luther King Jr Drive. Concrete pedestrian sidewalks run along Gorrell and Plott streets. East Gate City Boulevard, a major east–west thoroughfare, is one block south of the Magnolia Hotel.

The Magnolia Hotel faces north and stands close to the intersection of Gorrell and Plott streets. The house occupies most of the northern half of the L-shaped, 0.40-acre parcel. A hotel street sign and a mature Southern Magnolia tree stand in front of the house near its northwest corner. A rough-hewn granite yard fence runs along the north and west boundaries of the parcel, a granite yard fence runs along the east boundary of the northern half of the parcel, and a contemporary privacy fence bounds the remainder of the southern half of the parcel. The ground surface around the house is covered with white pebbles and turf grass inset with diamond-shaped concrete pavers. An L-shaped paver patio is situated in the backyard. A gravel and dirt driveway runs from the east side of Plott Street and along the south side of the paver patio. Deciduous trees in planting beds with rough-cut stone edging shade small shrubbery between the paver patio and the granite yard fence along Plott Street. The remainder of the backyard is covered with manicured lawn.

Magnolia Hotel (1889–circa 1960) [Building—Contributing]

Originally constructed in 1889 and renovated in 1915, the two-story, frame, Magnolia Hotel features elements of Italianate and Craftsman-style architecture and varied roof and wall planes. The 14-room building has a hipped roof above the main block with gable-roof wings on the north, east, and west

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elevations and a hipped-roof wing on the south elevation. The peak of the hipped roof in the main block contains a flat platform that originally supported rails forming a “widow’s walk.” The wall plane on the west gabled wing projects slightly further out from the remainder of the west elevation. A one-story, hip-roofed wraparound porch occupies the northwest corner of the dwelling. The wraparound porch is partially enclosed along the primary (north) elevation and northwest corner, and open on the west side elevation. Above the enclosed wraparound porch on the primary elevation is a second story shed-roofed room with cutaway corners. At the south end of the wraparound porch on the west elevation is a one-story projecting room clad with granite veneer. A two-story, three-bay, hip-roofed ell extends from the south elevation. A two-story, gabled projecting bay is on the east elevation. The main block of the house is composed of the cross-gabled section, enclosed wraparound porch, and hipped-roof section which give the main block a rectangular form. The building has a 480-square-foot semi-finished basement.

Exterior

The Magnolia Hotel sits on a raised granite-faced foundation, clad with contemporary cementitious siding which mimics the original weatherboard siding, and has a composition-shingled roof. Rough-hewn granite stones throughout the house are gray in color. The granite was acquired from a quarry in Mount Airy, North Carolina. The house is painted ivory white with moss green trim, cornices, and frieze. The cornices on the two-story main block are embellished with ornate brackets with pendants, with paired brackets supporting the cornice returns in the gables. Contemporary metal rain gutters and downspouts throughout the house are painted white. Five rough-hewn granite chimneys pierce the roof: one chimney on the gabled roof ridge, one on the west slope and two on the south slope of the main block, and one on the west slope of the south wing. The gables retain diamond-shaped attic vents with wood slats.

Multi-pane wood windows, most of which are two-over-two sash and eight-over-eight sash, light the interior. The two-story gabled bay on the east elevation has a single-light, leaded-glass window with a magnolia flower motif on each floor. Two-light, horizontally oriented windows are on the second floor of the rear hipped ell. All sash and stained-glass windows were replaced in kind between 1997 and 2007. The front and wing gables have diamond-shaped vents in the attic. The primary entrance occupies the center bay under the porch on the primary (north) elevation. The door has a large oval light superimposed on a panel and a cross-panel below the oval light. Leaded sidelights with cross-panels below flank the door on either side, and a leaded transom tops the door and sidelights. The primary entrance is a mahogany color. Secondary entrances include a half-light door with two panels, and three six-panel doors; all secondary entrance doors are painted white. All exterior entrances are in-kind replacements.

The asymmetrical primary (north) elevation features an L-shaped porch consisting of a hip-roofed section along the east end of the façade—in front of the gabled front—and a projecting gabled porch entrance at the center. The porch was added in 1915. Tuscan columns and pilasters on rough-hewn granite piers support the hipped, metal-clad porch roof, and Craftsman-style granite battered posts on granite piers support the gabled porch entrance. The entrance porch gable features crenellated boards, cornice returns, and molded cornices.

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At the east end of the façade, under the porch, is a one-story bay window with two-over-two wood sashes. The tripartite bay window has fluted architrave and corner molding, and a paneled frieze. The primary entrance occupies the center bay. On the west side of the façade is the enclosed one-story wraparound porch, which features a row of five two-over-two windows. The enclosed section of the porch serves as a sunroom. On the second floor, a two-over-two window lights the gable front and a ribbon of eight-over-eight windows light the room above the enclosed porch.

The west side elevation has a 1915 one-story hipped porch, which is the open portion of the wraparound porch. This porch has plain balustrades and rough-hewn Craftsman-style granite battered posts on granite piers. Stone steps with metal banisters lead up from the sidewalk to the porch. A one-story bay window, identical to the one on the primary elevation, is under the porch on the gabled wing. To the south of the gabled wing's wall plane under the porch are two openings: a secondary entrance and a two-over-two window. Other window openings on this elevation light the interior of the enclosed porch and the second floor. A one-story projecting room is at the south end of the wraparound porch and has rough-hewn granite veneer stones on its west and south elevations, which were previously covered with brick veneer until around 2000, and cementitious siding on its north elevation.¹ An external vent, part of the commercial kitchen exhaust system, pierces the south elevation of the one-story projecting room.

The south rear elevation is dominated by a two-story, three-bay, hip-roofed ell which spans three-fourths of the width of the two-story, hip-roofed main block. The hip-roofed ell features wood stairs with banisters that lead up to a second-floor deck and secondary entrance flanked by two-light windows. On the east side elevation of the hip-roofed ell is a first-floor deck and secondary entrance and two second-floor two-over-two windows. These window openings are not rectangular like other two-over-two windows, but they are squared. A first-floor secondary entrance is at the east end of the south elevation of the two-story hip-roofed main block.

The east side elevation features a two-story gabled projecting bay that occupies the center of this elevation. Leaded-glass windows with magnolia flower motifs light the projecting bay. On either side of the projecting bay are first- and second-floor two-over-two windows that light the mansard-roofed and gable-front blocks. Prior to 2000, brick veneer covered the first floor of the east side elevation.² According to oral history, Arthur Gist, a brick mason and co-owner of the Magnolia Hotel from 1949 until his death in 1966, completed the brickwork on the east side elevation and the one-story projection on the west side elevation.³

¹ North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (NCHPO), "Magnolia House (GF0785)," Survey Site File, North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1990.

² NCHPO, "Magnolia House (GF0785)."

³ Natalie Pass Miller, interview with Pofue Yang at the Magnolia Hotel, July 24, 2024.

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Interior

Original interior features include all fireplace mantels and stair banisters and newel posts. Some floorboards, interior doors, and fenestration trim are original, though most are replacements. In-kind replacements include floorboards, baseboards, drywalls, interior doors, and window sashes. Light fixtures and furnishings throughout the house are not original to the house but are period appropriate. Wood chair rails and cavetto crown moldings are not original. During the 1995–2012 renovation, the owners could not locate historic photographs or historic floor plans; however, they took photographs of the interior in the late 1990s and later hired architect Clinton Gravely to create plans for the Magnolia Hotel from the existing floor plan and photographs. According to the current owner, the current floor plan mostly follows the original plan, apart from some bump outs and combined rooms on both floors.⁴

First Floor

The primary entrance leads into a center hall flanked by a living room and stair hall on the east and a sunroom and ballroom on the west. At the east end of the stair hall is a bathroom. A passageway, extending one room deep, continues from the south end of the center hall to the service hall at the rear (south) section of the house. A dining room flanks the passageway on the east and a bar room flanks the west. The exterior secondary entrance on the west side elevation leads into the bar room. The service hall is perpendicular to the passageway and provides access to two service/supply closets and a bathroom along the eastern section of the service hall. At the east end of the service hall is an exit door. The west end of the service hall leads into the commercial kitchen, which occupies the southwest section of the house. Apart from the door openings along the center hall and passageway, door openings provide direct access between the sunroom and ballroom, the ballroom and bar room, and the bar room and commercial kitchen.⁵

Finishes include heart pine floors, painted walls and ceilings, molded wood baseboards and chair rails, molded and fluted window and door surrounds with corner blocks, and cavetto wood crown moldings. All the walls and ceilings have been painted.

The center hall extends two rooms deep. The passageway at the south end of the center hall is one room deep and is narrower and shorter than the center hall; it is the width of a double-leaf door. Double-leaf, multi-light glazed doors at the end of the passageway lead into the service hall. The walls along the center hall, passageway, and service hall are painted pale pink, except for the north wall of the center hall which is

⁴ Natalie Pass Miller, interview with Pofue Yang at the Magnolia Hotel, July 24, 2024.

⁵ The main block of the house is composed of the original L-shaped block, enclosed wraparound porch, and hip-roofed block with a flat platform at the ridge which give the main block a rectangular form with projections on the west, south, and east sides. The living room and stair hall occupy the gable front, and the ballroom occupies the wing gable. These rooms and the center hall make up the original L-shaped block. The sunroom occupies the enclosed wraparound porch. The bathroom at the end of the stair hall occupies the gabled projecting bay on the east side of the house. The dining room and bar room occupy the mansard-roofed block, the rooms along the service hall occupy the eastern portion of the two-story hip-roofed ell, and the commercial kitchen occupies the western portion of the two-story hip-roofed ell and the one-story hip-roofed room on the west side.

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painted moss green like the sunroom. The baseboards, chair rails, door surrounds, crown moldings, and ceilings are painted white. A pendant light illuminates the entry area, and three-light bulbous lights illuminate the passageway and service hall.

The living room on the east side of the center hall is distinguished by its tripartite bay window on the north wall and plastered chimney breast on the south wall. A door opening leads from the hall into the living room. The chimney breast contains a non-functional fireplace that features a plain heart pine mantel with a mantelshelf supported by curved legs, a tile hearth and firebox surround, and a masonry-block firebox. The walls, baseboards, chair rails, crown moldings, and window and door surrounds are painted dark teal, and the ceiling is painted white. Recessed circular lights illuminate the living room.

The stairway in the stair hall on the east side of the center hall rises to the east along the south wall of the stair hall to a stepped landing with tile floors, turns 180 degrees, and continues for three steps up to the second floor. The stairway features an ornamented, squared newel post with a chamfered post head topped with a round cap on the first floor; turned newel posts on the landing; turned balusters; and rails with convex tops. Inset wall lights illuminate the stairway.

At the east end of the stair hall on the first floor is a bathroom with a six-cross-panel door. The tile floor is laid with black tiles with yellow tilework that includes a large diamond-shaped inset composed of smaller tiles, a line of tiles creating a square around the large diamond-shaped inset, and smaller diamond-shaped insets. The tile wainscot is yellow, and the plaster is embellished with yellow palm leaf motifs.

The sunroom, which extends west from the primary entrance area at the south end of the center hall, is distinguished by its long, narrow footprint and its ribbon of windows. Unlike the living room, the sunroom does not have chair rails. The walls are painted moss green, and the window and door surrounds are painted white. Pendant lights illuminate the sunroom. A pocket door on the south wall provides access between the sunroom and ballroom.

The ballroom on the west side of the center hall is distinguished by its bay window on the west wall and projecting fireplace on the south wall. An original pocket door on the east wall of the ballroom provides access between the ballroom and center hall. Unlike the living room, the ballroom does not have chair rails. The projecting fireplace features a mantelpiece that is slightly more elaborate than the one found in the living room, though it is not ornate. The mantelpiece consists of two sections: a lower section containing a mantelshelf supported by curved legs, and an upper section containing a mirror and lintel supported by squared legs. The walls are painted dark green and the baseboards, crown moldings, ceiling, and window and door surrounds are painted white. A hanging cylindrical light and recessed circular lights illuminate the ballroom. A door opening on the south wall leads to the bar room.

The bar room on the west side of the passageway features drywalls that are painted olive green. An opening on the east wall of the bar room provides access between the bar room and passageway. A six-cross-panel

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wood door on the south wall leads into the commercial kitchen. An exterior secondary entrance on the west wall provides egress. The baseboards, chair rails, cornices, and ceiling are painted white. A narrow brick-veneered wall occupies the center of the south wall. The circa-1950 hotel street sign, which reads "MAGNOLIA HOUSE / MOTEL," is framed in a wood casing on the east wall. An L-shaped wood countertop abuts and stands perpendicular to the east wall. The center section of the south wall is slightly recessed and is clad with brick veneer.

The dining room on the east side of the passageway features a chimney breast on the south wall. An opening on the west wall provides access into the dining room from the passageway, and a secondary exterior entrance on the south wall gives egress. The chimney breast contains a non-functional fireplace with a plain mantel that features a molded mantelshelf supported by fluted columns, a tile hearth and firebox surround, and a masonry-block firebox. The chimney breast wallpaper is decorated with reed and flower motifs. The wall, baseboards, chair rails, mantelpiece, and cornices are painted teal, and the ceiling is painted white. A hanging sunburst light illuminates the room.

The bathroom on the south side of the service hall has tile flooring and wainscoting with stone cap. The tiles are brownish red, and the plaster on the walls above the wainscot is painted beige. The two utility closets along the service hall have wood floorboards and plastered walls.

The commercial kitchen, installed during the 2022 renovation and occupying the southwest section of the house, features tile floors and walls. The floors, walls, crown moldings, and ceiling are white. The kitchen is equipped with commercial fridges and freezers, burner ranges and fryers, warming stations, compartment sinks, and food preparation tables. Rectangular lights illuminate the kitchen.

Second Floor

The second floor contains six bedrooms and three bathrooms. The bedrooms are currently utilized as four bedrooms, a lounge, and a sitting room. Finishes include heart pine floors, painted walls and ceilings, molded wood baseboards, molded and fluted window and door surrounds with corner blocks, and cavetto wood crown moldings. All interior doors are six-cross-panel doors. The central hallway and passageway are distinguished by a molded chair rail. The walls, ceiling, and woodwork were painted during a 2022 interior renovation. Also, during this renovation, several of the rooms were given special names to honor famous visitors or associations with historic places, such as "The Carlotta," which is a tribute to female singers who were guests at the hotel while performing at the nearby Carlotta Club, a popular venue on the Chitlin Circuit.

The stairway in the stair hall leads up to a stepped landing along the east wall of the stair hall. The stepped landing is three steps lower than the second floor and has a tile floor. A bathroom with a six-cross-panel door and obscure glass transom is on the east side of the landing. This bathroom has a tile floor and wainscoting with a decorative wainscot cap. The tile floor is composed of geometric, square tile insets. The wainscot tile is white in color. The plaster above the wainscot cap is painted dark green. The stairway continues up from

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the landing for three steps to a wood landing along the north wall of the stair hall. The landing continues to a central hallway on the second floor which runs north-south like the first-floor center hall.

The central hallway is flanked by the “Carlotta” guestroom and the stair hall on the east side and the “Baldwin” guestroom on the west side. A door at the north end of the central hallway leads into “Carter G’s Lounge.” An angled passageway continues from the south end of the central hallway to a rear exit door at the south end of the house that leads out to a fire escape. “The Legends” guestroom and “Kind of Blue” guestroom along the passageway are a step lower than the central hallway and its flanking rooms. The passageway steps down again where its east wall angles inward near the rear of the house which contains a common bathroom and a private bathroom.

“Carter G’s Lounge” on the second floor is above the sunroom and spans the length and depth of the enclosed wraparound porch in the north end of the house. A door at the north end of the central hallway provides access to the lounge. The room is distinguished by its ribbon of eight-over-eight and cutaway northwest corner. The walls are painted dark blue in wavy strokes. The baseboard, door, window and door surrounds, crown moldings, and ceiling are painted white.

The “Carlotta” guestroom at the northeast end of the central hallway has a door on its west wall and a chimney breast on its south wall. The mantelpiece in the chimney breast consists of two sections: a lower section containing a mantelshelf supported by curved brackets, and an upper section containing a mirror and a mantelshelf supported by columns. A closet with a narrow door is east of the chimney breast. The baseboards, walls, window and door surrounds, and crown moldings are painted pink. The mantelpiece is painted white.

The “Baldwin” guestroom on the west side of the central hallway has a door on its east wall and a false chimney breast on its south wall. This bedroom has a grayscale geometric-patterned fabric wall covering. The baseboards, window and door surrounds, and crown moldings are painted black, and the ceiling is painted white.

“The Legends” guestroom on the east side of the passageway has a door on its west wall and a false chimney breast on its south wall. This bedroom has a blue and green geometric-patterned fabric wall covering, and brown wallpaper covers the false chimney breast. The baseboards, window and door surrounds, crown moldings, and ceiling are painted white.

The “Kind of Blue” guestroom on the west side of the passageway is a suite. It has an entrance door on its east wall and a false chimney breast and sitting room door on its south wall. The baseboards, window and door surrounds, crown moldings, and ceiling are painted white, and the wall is painted blue. The sitting room door is on the south wall and leads into a sitting room. A portion of the sitting room’s west wall projects into the room, likely a false chimney breast. The baseboards, door surround, crown moldings, and ceiling are painted white, and the walls are painted baby blue. A bathroom door on the sitting room’s south wall leads

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into a bathroom with tile floor and wainscoting; blue plastered wall; and white window surround, crown moldings, and ceiling.

The bathroom on the east side of the passageway has a door on its west wall, a smooth brick shower room against the west wall near the north end of the bathroom, and a closet at the northwest end of the bathroom. The bathroom has a tile floor, white baseboard, tile wainscoting, molded wainscot cap, and plastered walls.

Building Evolution

The Magnolia Hotel was constructed in 1889 as an Italianate-style single-family dwelling. As shown in an 1891 *Bird's Eye View of Greensboro* illustration, the building consisted of a two-story, L-shaped main block with a three-story tower and small porch on the north, or main, elevation and a one-story rear wing with a small porch (Figure 1). The 1907 Sanborn fire insurance map indicates that the dwelling also featured two one-story bay windows on the main block, a second one-story rear wing, and three one-story porches. A small, gable roof carriage shed was located along Pearson Street, later renamed Plott Street. A small one-story dwelling, likely a servant's quarters, with a porch was in the southeast corner of the parcel (Figure 2).⁶

⁶ Burleigh Lithographing Establishment, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1891* (Madison, WI: Ruger & Stoner, 1891); Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1907), 24.

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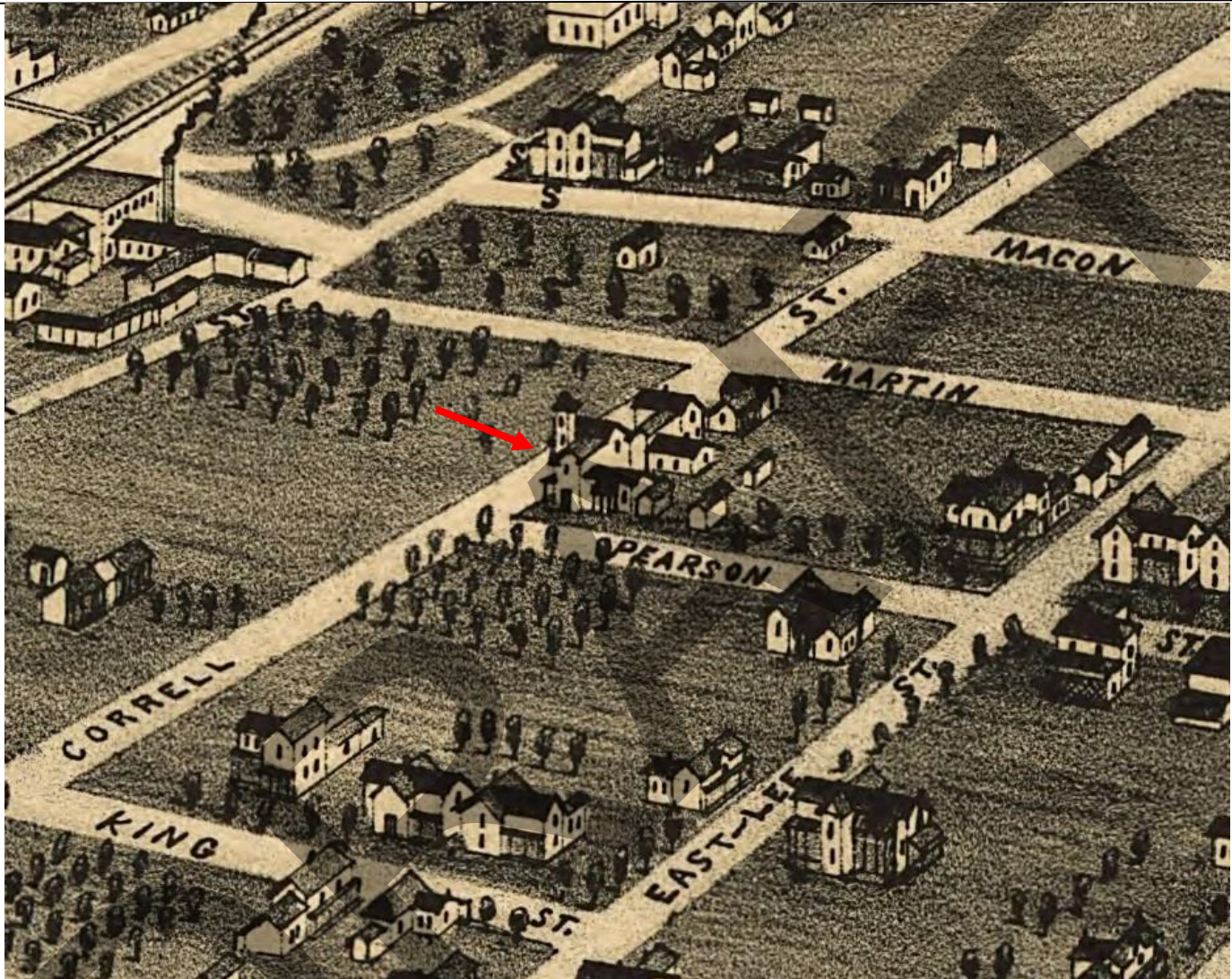


Figure 1. Illustration showing the Magnolia Hotel in 1891, looking northeast
(Source: Burleigh Lithographing Establishment 1891).

In 1915, the dwelling was significantly transformed with a renovation that removed the three-story tower and expanded the L-shaped main block into a rectangular block with a two-story projecting bay on the east elevation. The small porches were removed and replaced with a one-story wraparound front porch with a projecting entrance bay at the main entrance on the north side. A one-story rear wing was added to the south elevation. Additionally, the detached carriage shed was converted into an automobile garage and a privy was built behind the garage. The small dwelling at the southeast corner was demolished. In 1926, a two-story,

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hip-roofed duplex was constructed in the southeast corner of the parcel with the address of 725–727 Pearson Street (Figure 2). In 1936, the dwelling was damaged by a deadly tornado.⁷

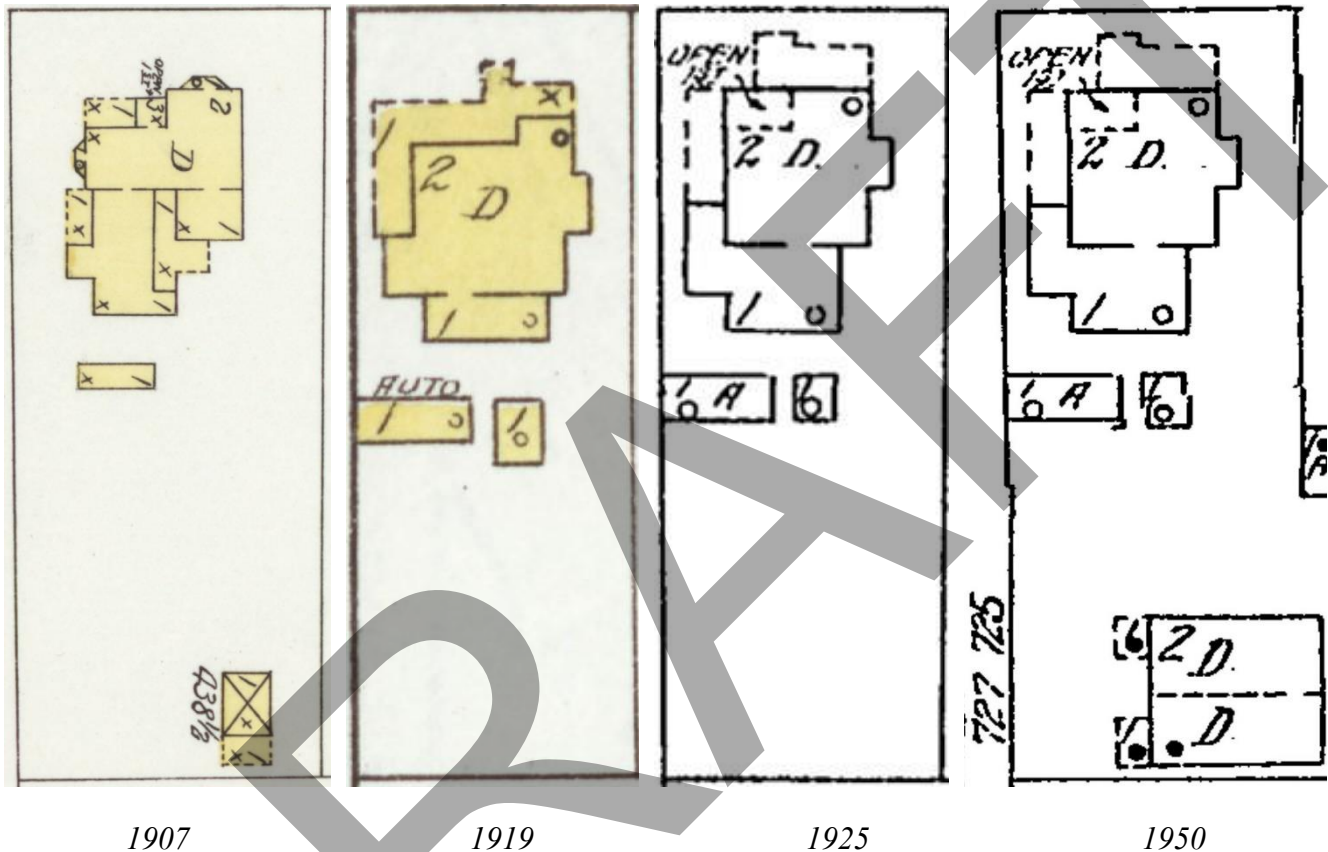


Figure 2. Sanborn maps showing the evolution of the property from 1907–1950
(Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company).

Soon after Arthur Gist and his wife Louie Gist acquired the single-family dwelling in 1949, they converted it into an owner-occupied tourist hotel known as the Magnolia House. It was also known as the Magnolia House Hotel, Magnolia House Motel, and Magnolia Hotel. The husband-and-wife team operated the building as a bed-and-breakfast type tourist hotel through 1971, with Louie Gist and her son Herman Gist continuing operation of the hotel for a few years after Arthur Gist died in 1966. In the 1950s and 1960s, Arthur Gist undertook several renovations, including enclosing the south end of the wraparound porch in the fall of 1952 and increasing the height of the rear wing to two stories. The brick enclosure housed hotel support services, and the second floor of the rear wing accommodated additional hotel bedrooms. Arthur Gist was a brick mason and builder who most likely completed most of these renovations himself.⁸ In the spring of 1960,

⁷ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1919), 11; Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1925), 45.

⁸ "Building Permits," *Greensboro Record* (Greensboro, NC), October 22, 1952, 8.

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Arthur Gist acquired a building permit to repair fire damage at a cost of \$1,000.⁹ The extent of the fire damage is unknown; however, the northeast corner of the building was covered with brick veneer until the late 1990s, which may indicate that part of the house was renovated after the fire.

Renovations undertaken in the early and mid-twentieth century resulted in the building having varied roof and wall planes. Since the early 1960s, the building's overall form has not changed. The detached garage was demolished between 1959 and 1968 and replaced with on-street parking. The two-story duplex at the south side of the parcel was converted into a storage building and subsequently demolished around 1996.¹⁰

After Herman C. Gist closed the hotel around 1971, the building was used as a boarding house for a while before it fell into disrepair due to vacancy and neglect. In 1995, Samuel P. and Kimberly Pass acquired the property. Over the course of the next three decades, the Pass's returned the Magnolia Hotel to its appearance during its use as a *Green Book* tourist hotel. Renovations undertaken between 1995 and 2022 include exterior and interior material replacements such as cementitious siding, window sashes, entrance doors, interior woodwork, flooring, and drywalls. The interior remodeling also included new interior trims, light fixtures, bump outs, and commercial kitchen. The interior retains its overall spatial arrangement, corridors, and circulation pattern as well as many character-defining features such as mantels and trim.

Contemporary changes to the Magnolia House do not adversely affect the integrity of the building from the 1955–1961 period of significance. Recent renovations were completed in a historically appropriate manner and resulted in the restoration of many of the original features. The building looks much like it did during its use as a tourist hotel listed in the *Green Book*. Therefore, the Magnolia Hotel is classified as a contributing building within the boundary of the nominated property.

Stone Yard Fence (1915–2012) [Structure—Contributing]

The stone yard fence is constructed of rough-hewn, irregular-coursed granite with mortar joints. Local stone worker Andrew Leopold Schlosser, an immigrant from Austria, is attributed with construction of the fence with granite quarried in Mount Airy, North Carolina. The section of the yard fence lining the north and west sides of the property is around two feet tall and is capped by a course of alternating header and soldier granite blocks. The header granites are rough cut and thicker than the soldier granites. On the northern three-quarters of the east side of the parcel, the stone yard fence transitions into a roughly seven-foot-tall stone fence with stone square posts and pilasters. Around 2012, the original stone yard fence along the east boundary was altered with the addition of the seven-foot-tall stone fence constructed of granite to match the original retaining wall. The construction style and materials indicate that the stone yard fence was built when the house was renovated in 1915.

⁹ "Building Permits," *Greensboro Record*, April 28, 1960, 49.

¹⁰ Nationwide Environmental Title Research (NETR), historic aerial photograph 1955, 1959, 1968, 1982, 1999, <https://www.historicaerials.com>.

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The stone yard fence is classified as a contributing structure within the boundary of the nominated property since it was present during the 1955–1961 period of significance. Although a section of the retaining wall along the east side of the parcel was altered in 2012, most of the granite structure appears as it did during the period of significance.

Street Sign (2022) [Object—Contributing]

Located in the northwest corner of the property along Gorrell Street is a metal street sign erected in 2022. Painted with a dark blue powder coat, the T-shaped sign is approximately 24 inches tall, 60 inches wide, and 8 inches deep. Set approximately 3 feet back from the street, the overall height of the sign is approximately 6 feet. Supported by a cylindrical metal pole, painted moss green, the double-sided sign has two magnolia flower motifs painted in the lower corners—four in total—and back-lit lighting that reads:

*Magnolia House
Motel*

The original metal street sign, which has corroded due to weathering, is framed inside the house. The current sign is an exact replica of the original street sign, which Arthur and Louie Gist erected around 1950, soon after opening the Magnolia Hotel, then called Magnolia House Motel.

The street sign is classified as a contributing object within the boundary of the nominated property since it is an exact replica of the circa-1950 street sign that operated during the property's use as tourist hotel listed in the *Green Book*.

Privacy Fence (2022) [Structure—Noncontributing]

Surrounding the south half of the property, including the rear yard space, the privacy fence was installed in 2022 to replace a chain link fence. The privacy fence, constructed of vinyl panels, bounds the south side and the southern quarter of the east side of the parcel. Vinyl posts are positioned along the west side of the parcel at the site of the posts that supported the chain link fence. Gates provide vehicular access in the southwest corner of the parcel along Plott Street, at the site of the original driveway to the rental duplex.

The privacy fence is classified as a noncontributing structure within the boundary of the nominated property since it was constructed outside the 1955–1961 period of significance.

Integrity Statement

To be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a resource must possess sufficient integrity from the period of significance. The seven aspects of integrity are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The following section describes the integrity of the Magnolia Hotel.

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Location: The Magnolia Hotel retains its original location at the intersection of Gorrell Street and Plott Street in southeast Greensboro.

Design: As a result of the renovations completed from 1995 to 2022, the Magnolia Hotel appears much as it did during its use as a Black tourist hotel during the 1950s and 1960s. The building retains the original Italianate-style character-defining features from the 1889–1915 period as well as most of the additions and alterations completed in the 1950s by Arthur Gist. The form of the building has undergone nominal changes since the 1955–1961 period of significance, but retains the configuration of the primary interior spaces, materials, and room uses from that period. During the years-long renovation, many of the historic character-defining elements were restored or replicated using authentic materials such as rough-hewn granite and reclaimed heart-pine lumber.

Setting: The setting of the Magnolia Hotel was impacted in the 1960s by the construction of South Murrow Boulevard, a four-lane, depressed highway along the west side of the property, and by the removal of the grassy front lawn in the contemporary period. The highway was constructed during the 1955–1961 period of significance, however, and other elements of the front lawn remain, including a mature magnolia tree, a granite yard fence, and a replica of the mid-twentieth-century neon sign advertising the hotel. The hotel retains its larger overall setting and visual connection with surrounding residences and Bennett College two blocks to the east. The visual connection to Bennett College, a historically Black university that serves as the centerpiece of the surrounding neighborhood, contributes to the hotel's historic sense of place. Additionally, the hotel serves as the northeast anchor in the South Greensboro Historic District.

Materials: The Magnolia Hotel retains many of the original materials from the 1955–1961 period of significance, such as the decorative woodwork, tripartite bay windows, window sash configurations, and extensive use of rough-hewn granite stone. Materials that could not be restored were replaced with period-appropriate and in-kind materials that replicate the originals.

Workmanship: The Magnolia Hotel retains its workmanship from the 1955–1961 period of significance. This is particularly evident in the exterior, which retains original character-defining architectural features such as decorative eave brackets with pendants, gable trim, granite chimneys and porch supports, and granite yard fence and entrance stairs. Although the interior floor plan has been somewhat altered, the overall room layout and circulation pattern remain.

Feeling: The Magnolia Hotel retains a palpable sense of feeling, which conveys the role the building played as an African American safe place during the *Green Book* era. The property conveys the sense of place that existed during the period of significance due to the well-preserved exterior and details such as the replica of the original street sign that advertised the hotel during the period of significance. Due to the attention to detail and sensitivity to retaining original materials and elements maintained whenever possible during the 1995–2022 renovations, the building retains an intangible spirit of place, which connects the building's use

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as a *Green Book* resource to the present. This intangible feeling together with the tangible physical features evokes a distinctive place that connects the past to the present.

Association: The Magnolia Hotel retains its tangible association with the use of the property as a hotel during the Jim Crow era in the 1950s and 1960s. The physical features that were present during the 1955–1961 period of significance, such as the open porches, sunroom, interior room arrangements, and street sign, remain extant, connecting the past and present. In 2022, the Magnolia Hotel reopened as a hotel with a restaurant and special events venue that is proudly branded and marketed as a *Green Book* property.

The Magnolia Hotel retains many essential physical features and its integrity with regards to location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as one of the best-preserved *Green Book* resources in North Carolina. Due to a multi-year renovation dedicated to returning the building to the way it looked and functioned as a *Green Book* tourist home, the Magnolia Hotel continues to look, feel, and operate much as it did during its 1955–1961 period of significance.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

N/A

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Social History

Period of Significance

1955–1961

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Donnell, John Denney, Jr.

Schlosser, Andrew Leoport

Gist, Arthur Taswell, Sr.

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Statement of Significance Summary

The Magnolia Hotel is eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A for its local significance in the areas of “Ethnic History: Black” and “Social History” from 1955 to 1961. The Magnolia Hotel was one of 14 businesses in Greensboro listed in the *Green Book* between 1938 and 1967. Arthur T. Gist and his wife Louie E. Gist owned and operated the Magnolia Hotel. The period of significance for the Magnolia Hotel is defined as 1955–1961, the six-year span during which the Gists advertised the Magnolia Hotel in the *Green Book*. Today, of the 14 *Green Book* resources in Greensboro, only 3 are extant: the Plaza Manor Hotel (GF9645) at 511 Martin Street, the Harris East End Gulf Service Station (GF9646) at 2011 East Market Street, and the Magnolia Hotel.

The Magnolia Hotel was originally listed in the NRHP in 1991 as a contributing resource within the South Greensboro Historic District. This locally significant residential district was listed in the NRHP under Criterion A for significance in community planning and development and Criterion C for architectural significance with a period of significance from 1880 to 1941.

The Magnolia Hotel meets registration requirements for the Domestic Lodging property type as identified in the “Historic *Green Book* Resources in North Carolina, 1938–1967” MPDF.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Arthur and Louis Gist operated the Magnolia Hotel as an owner-occupied hotel from 1949 to 1971 in an Italianate-style dwelling constructed by a white grocer and his wife in 1889. Perhaps the first of its type to open in Greensboro, the hotel was known as the most prestigious tourist lodging for Black travelers in the city. During the Jim Crow era, the Magnolia Hotel served as a safe place for a wide variety of Black travelers as well as an anchor in the city’s Black community. The upscale establishment hosted social events and private meetings, including some associated with the civil rights movement. Members of the Gist family were also community leaders and involved in the civil rights movement. The Gists advertised the business in the *Green Book* from 1955 to 1961 under the name “Magnolia Hotel.” The property was also known as the “Magnolia House” and the “Magnolia House Motel.” In addition to the *Green Book*, the Gists advertised the hotel in other Black travel guides, including the *Travelguide* (1952) and *Go Guide to Pleasant Motoring* (1952–1954), which listed the property as the “Magnolia House: A Guest House of Distinction.”¹¹ Members of the Gist family continued to own the property until 1996.

¹¹ Nationwide Hotel Association, *Go Guide to Pleasant Motoring* (Washington, DC: Andrew F. Jackson & Associates, 1952–1959), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library, “Go, Guide to pleasant motoring,” New York Public Library Digital Collections; Leslie Nash, ed., *Travelguide* (New York: Travelguide, Inc., 1952), 76.

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The Magnolia Hotel is in east Greensboro, which was primarily occupied by white people at the turn of the twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, east Greensboro was home to many Black neighborhoods and businesses that developed around two historically Black educational institutions: Bennett College and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, better known as North Carolina A&T (GF0918; NRHP, 1988). The locations of the 14 *Green Book*-listed businesses in Greensboro mirrored the segregated residential pattern of the city, with most of the residential neighborhoods, educational institutions, and businesses on the east side of the city. All nine *Green Book* lodgings were in east Greensboro, providing accommodation to travelers, tourists, and families of college students.

White Ownership, 1889–1949

The building containing the Magnolia Hotel was originally used as a single-family dwelling for white families who owned and occupied the property from 1889 to 1949. The following is an overview of the white families who are associated with the property prior to its use as the Magnolia Hotel and evolution into an anchor in the Black community in the 1950s and 1960s.

Reed and Tiddy Families, 1889–1914

The original owner, Annie Maria *Graves* Reed (1850–1890), occupied the dwelling from its completion in 1889 until her death on May 30, 1890. Annie grew up in Randolph County where her father, Dr. Calvin Elijah Graves (1823–1868), worked as a physician at Trinity College (predecessor of Duke University). In November 1871, she married Thomas H. Tiddy (1844–1879), a marble cutter and stonemason originally from England. Rev. Braxton Craven (1822–1882), president of Trinity, married the couple. They raised one son, Thomas Calvin Tiddy (1875–1922), and two daughters, Lilian Tiddy (1874–1876) and Caroline Tiddy (1876–1877). After her husband died in Charlotte in March 1879, Annie and her son Thomas moved to Winston-Salem where she married John W. Reed (1842–1914), a successful grocer and tobacconist, in December 1886. (The Reed surname is sometimes spelled Reid.) John W. Reed was a widower with two sons, William Peeples Reed (1867–1937) and Webster Anselom Reed (b.1877), who had served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Soon after their marriage, Annie M. Reed gave birth to their son Earl Graves Reed (b.1888).¹²

¹² “Married,” *The Southern Home* (Charlotte, NC), November 7, 1871, 3; US Population Census, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880; “Thomas H. Tiddy,” Find a Grave Memorial ID 23554768, citing Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina,” Find a Grave, 2007, accessed December 12, 2024, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23554768/thomas_h-tiddy; “North Carolina Marriage Records, 1741–2011,” Ancestry.com, 2015a; “Died,” *The Southern Home*, April 4, 1879, 2; “Married,” *The Western Sentinel* (Winston-Salem, NC), December 16, 1886, 5; “Col. J. W. Reid, a Former Citizen, Dies at Memphis,” *The Sentinel* (Winston-Salem, NC), June 23, 1914, 11.

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In October 1889, Annie M. and John W. Reed moved to Greensboro with their sons Earl Graves Reed and Thomas Calvin Tiddy and purchased this Italianate-style dwelling for \$1,300 from John Denny Donnell Jr. (1859–1925) and his wife Araminta Elberta “Mittie” Donnell (1862–1907). The property had the address of 438 Gorrell Street. A month later, John W. Reed opened a grocery store in Greensboro. On January 11, 1890, he transferred his part of the property to Annie who became the sole owner of the house. Annie M. Reed lived there only a few months before she died of consumption on May 30, 1890. Upon her death she willed “my house and lot on which I now live, in the city of Greensboro, in the South East corner of the intersection of Gorrell & Pearson Streets in said city” to Thomas Calvin Tiddy along with her household furnishings and her share of financial proceeds from the Reed family’s tobacco manufacturing company. Since Thomas C. Tiddy was not yet of legal age, she designated John W. Reed—his stepfather—as his legal guardian. She bequeathed her life insurance policy to her infant son Earl Graves Reed. She was buried at the Green Hill Cemetery in Greensboro.¹³

The house was constructed by John Denny Donnell Jr., a local carpenter and builder.¹⁴ A native of Greensboro, in the late 1880s Donnell worked as a foreman for C. S. Wainman of Davis, Wainman & Company. In 1887, a newspaper noted that Donnell was a “well-known” builder and that the Davis, Wainman & Company utilized the “pick of experienced carpenters” and constructed “good houses” with the “best dressed Lumber from the mills of Davis, Wainman & Co., and other first-class facilities.” The article also claimed that the builders completed “first-class work in all the particulars of style, durability and finish, and at reasonable figures.”¹⁵ In March 1888, Donnell and business partner Adam Stewart opened the Greensboro Eagle Foundry, which manufactured castings, hollow ware, stoves, and so forth. Donnell, however, continued to build houses.¹⁶ On October 3, 1889, a newspaper noted that Donnell “will build a residence on Pearson Street.”¹⁷ Newspaper articles indicate that Donnell continued to build houses and develop property along McAdoo, Gorrell, and Martin streets through the mid-1910s.

¹³ Benjamin Briggs, “The Magnolia House: A Pivotal Point of Greensboro History,” *Preservation Greensboro*, January 19, 2021. Accessed December 13, 2024. <https://oldsite.preservationgreensboro.org/the-magnolia-house-a-pivotal-point-of-greensboro-history/>; Guilford County Deed Book 79, 1889, 341–342, DB 81, 42–43; “Annie Maria Graves Reed,” Find a Grave Memorial ID 17644876, citing Green Hill Cemetery, Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina. Find a Grave, 2007, accessed December 12, 2024, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17644876/annie_maria-reed; “North Carolina Wills and Probate Records, Vol. F, 1889–1897,” Ancestry.com, 2015b, p.49-50; US Population Census, 1880, 1900, 1910; “Col. J. W. Reid, a Former Citizen, Dies at Memphis,” 1914, 11.

¹⁴ Briggs, “The Magnolia House.”

¹⁵ “John Denny Donnell,” Find a Grave Memorial ID 9763000, citing Green Hill Cemetery, Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina, Find a Grave, 2004, accessed December 14, 2024, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9763000/john_denny-donnell; “Building Notice,” *Greensboro Daily Workman* (Greensboro, NC), September 30, 1887, 1; US Population Census, 1880, 1900.

¹⁶ “Another New Enterprise,” *Greensboro North State* (Greensboro, NC), March 29, 1888, 8.

¹⁷ “New Dwelling Houses,” *Greensboro North State*, October 3, 1889, 8.

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Records indicate that J. W. Reed retained a life estate on the property but did not remain in this dwelling. By 1900, he had moved with his son Earl Graves Reed to Chester, South Carolina, where he worked as a grocery salesman. Soon after he turned 18, in 1893, Thomas C. Tiddy left Greensboro and apparently lost touch with his family in North Carolina. By 1900, he was working as a hotel clerk in Denver, Colorado, and by 1910, he had moved to New York where he joined the US Navy. During World War I, he served on USS *Michigan* and at Naval Hospitals in Massachusetts and Colorado. In September 1918, he married Willy E. Marx. Tiddy continued to work as a shipfitter in New York until his death in December 1922.¹⁸

While living in Denver, on May 30, 1901, Thomas C. Tiddy sold the house for \$2,000 to Josiah Tiddy (1842–1909), an uncle originally from Bristol, England, who lived in Charlotte, North Carolina. On October 25, 1904, Josiah Tiddy sold the house for \$2,000 to his brother Richard Nicholas Tiddy (1835–1911) of Charlotte.¹⁹

Beginning in the late 1890s, members of the Tiddy family rented the house to Daniel Dulany DeButts (1849–1913), who worked as a traveling flour salesman and broker. DeButts lived there with his wife Francis “Fannie” Sydnor DeButts (1854–1932) and five children: Richard Henry DeButts (1875–1954), Margaret L. DeButts Trumbo (1877–1939), Sarah Earl DeButts Trumbo (1879–1949), Abram Sydnor DeButts (1891–1948), and Daniel Dulany DeButts Jr. (1898–1978). The DeButts family had moved to Greensboro from Linden, Virginia, in the 1890s. In 1900, Daniel’s household included his nephew R. Crumb (b.1882). Daniel D. DeButts and his family occupied the dwelling until 1905.²⁰

In 1907, the dwelling was occupied by Dalton Monroe Smitherman (1886–1974), an express manager, and several members of the Phillips family, including George Dalton Phillips (1877–1940), a grocer and foreman at a hardwood manufacturing company, Marvin Phillips (1888–1912), a woodworker, Jennie Phillips (d.1943), and Joseph D. Phillips, a clerk.²¹

Richard N. Tiddy died on January 24, 1911, and was buried in the Tiddy family plot in Charlotte’s Elmwood Cemetery. After his death, the property was inherited by his sister Sarah Jane Tiddy (1832–1923), who also lived in Charlotte. When Sarah J. Tiddy prepared her will in July 1913, she directed the executors of her

¹⁸ US Population Census, 1900, 1910, 1920; “World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918, Ancestry.com, 2005; “Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917–1919,” Ancestry.com, 2013.

¹⁹ Guilford County Deed Book 132, May 30, 1901, 56–58; Guilford County Deed Book 170, October 25, 1904, 473–474.

²⁰ US Population Census, 1900; “Daniel Dulany DeButts Find a Grave Memorial ID 21170755,” citing Linden Church Hill Cemetery, Linden, Warren County, Virginia, Find a Grave, 2007, accessed December 12, 2024, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/21170755/daniel_dulany-debutts; “Mr. Daniel D. DeButts,” *The Greensboro Patriot* (Greensboro, NC, February 13, 1913, 1; Greensboro City Directory, 1903, 1905. Although the DeButts family only rented the house for a short time, from around 1900 through 1905, the house was known as the DeButts House for many years.

²¹ Greensboro City Directory, 1907.

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estate to sell her property in Charlotte and Greensboro and to distribute the financial proceeds to her family members, including \$500 to her nephew Thomas C. Tiddy. For reasons unknown, she changed her mind and decided to sell this house in 1914.²²

John T. and Nina Plott, 1914–1949

On September 16, 1914, Sarah J. Tiddy sold the house for \$3,000 to John Tobias Plott (1882–1938) and his wife Sarah Nina *Starr* Plott (1883–1953). (At the time, the street address had changed to 442 Gorrell Street.) A native of Rowan County, North Carolina, John T. Plott worked as a highway and railroad grading contractor. John Plott ran his business from an office in the dwelling. He also dabbled in real estate development and operated rental properties around the city. In 1920, his household included his wife Nina and three children: Mildred Frances Plott (1902–1972), Shuford Tobias Plott (1904–1962), and Virgie Plott (1908–1982). In the 1920s, John and Nina Plott constructed a two-story duplex in the southeast corner of the parcel. The couple earned extra income by renting the duplex.²³

In May 1915, the city granted John T. Plott a permit for undertaking a substantial renovation, valued at \$1,500, to the two-story dwelling.²⁴ The renovation resulted in a reconfiguration of the building form from an L-shaped two-story building with a three-story entrance turret to a two-story building with a rectangular main block surmounted by a hipped roof with a flat platform decorated with a railing, creating a widow's walk. Plott added a one-story wraparound front porch supported by a combination of Tuscan columns, granite posts, and battered granite columns. A second-floor enclosed porch was added above the main entrance. The entire house exhibited decorative eave brackets and trim. Additionally, a granite wall was added around the perimeter of the parcel (Figure 3).

According to oral history, Andrew Leoport Schlosser (1863–1943), a local stone worker, completed the stonework of the wall, entrance steps, and porches using granite quarried in Mount Airy, North Carolina. Schlosser immigrated to the Greensboro in June 1900 from Solivar near Prešov in Austria (current day eastern Slovakia). He lived with his family at 704 Keogh Street. In 1916, a client named H. R. Scott

²² “Richard Nicholas Tiddy” Find a Grave Memorial ID 34062303, citing Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Find a Grave, 2009, accessed December 16, 2024, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34062303/richard_nicholas_tiddy; “North Carolina Wills and Probate Records,” Vol. S-T, 1920–1927, 413–414.

²³ Guilford County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 265, 1914, 332; Greensboro, North Carolina, City Directory, 1915; US Population Census, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940.

²⁴ “Residential Sections are Growing Rapidly: Great Number of Homes of the Better Class Built Here in the Past Year, Permits for 15 Days,” *Greensboro Daily News* (Greensboro, NC), May 18, 1915, 5.

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published a notice in the newspaper stating, "The work he has done in the construction of my residence, walks and yard fence, is of the most substantial character, and generally admired."²⁵

In March 1925, John T. Plott was forced to declare bankruptcy due to financial liabilities of \$100,000, as the result of a road project undertaken in western North Carolina. Five properties that he owned in Greensboro were foreclosed upon and sold at public auction, including the Hudson Grocery Store, offices, and rental houses. The sale of his assets amounted to \$60,000.²⁶ Plott continued to sell undeveloped land through the end of 1925 to pay his creditors. On March 5, 1925, the Plotts were forced to take out a second mortgage on the property with Atlanta Bank & Trust. In September 1925, Nina Plott advertised a five-room furnished apartment to rent within their home. After her children married and moved out, she continued to rent rooms within the dwelling.²⁷



Figure 3. Photograph of the dwelling after the renovation by John and Nina Plott, 1921
(Source: Briggs 2021).

²⁵ Briggs, "The Magnolia House;" "Andrew Leoport Schlosser," Find a Grave Memorial ID 106942418, citing Forest Lawn Cemetery, Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina, Find a Grave, 2013, accessed December 13, 2024, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/106942418/andrew_leoport-schlosser; "Notice," *Greensboro Daily News*, April 30, 1916, 5; US Population Census, 1910, 1920.

²⁶ "J. T. Plott Property is Sold at Auction," *Greensboro Daily News*, March 24, 1925, 7.

²⁷ "For Rent," *Greensboro Daily News*, September 8, 1925, 17; Guilford County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 467, 1925, 417.

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In January 1926, John T. Plott secured a permit to construct a 12-room rental duplex in the southeast corner of the parcel. The two-story frame dwelling cost \$7,000 and had the address of 725–727 Pearson Street (see Figure 2).²⁸ John T. and Nina Plott rented rooms in the duplex to bring in extra income while litigation against John wound its way through the federal courts. John T. Plott’s legal issues were not resolved until October 1928.²⁹ In 1930, he operated a bottling plant. That year, the dwelling was valued at \$12,000. In the 1930s, John T. Plott operated a real estate business and owned about a dozen rental houses, including the duplex on Pearson Street, as well as several businesses around the city. He also rented seven rooms in his own home. In late 1937, he began divesting his immense real estate holdings and listed for sale his rental properties, two service stations and a barbecue stand on Highway 10, the three-story General Greene Hotel, 187 acres of timberland, and a 79-acre farm outside the city.³⁰

On April 2, 1936, a deadly, nighttime tornado left an 11-mile-long path of destruction on the south side of Greensboro, ending east of Bennett College. The F4-rated tornado struck at 7:14 p.m. The 400 and 500 blocks of Gorrell Street were possibly the hardest hit residential areas in the city, with “13 homes reduced to almost one solid mass of debris” and automobiles overturned. “Small buildings were swept away and carried for blocks,” wrote a reporter. “Houses were wrecked as roofs were torn loose and chimneys were toppled.” The storm killed 14 people—including three at 406–408 Gorrell Street—injured 144 others and left over 500 homeless.³¹ During the tornado, Nina Plott stated that the storm “kept her whirling round and round dizzily in one spot” and “she herself spun like a top.”³² The tornado caused \$2,000 in damage to the Plott house, including the roof and windows.³³

On February 4, 1938, John T. Plott died after being struck by an automobile in the 300 block of West Lee Street, where his parents lived. He was 55 years old. His funeral was held at the First Reformed Church in which he and his wife were actively involved. He was buried at the Green Hill Cemetery.³⁴ News of his death made front-page news in local newspapers. Maurice J. Michael, a traveling salesman from Charlotte

²⁸ “Moore Company Gets Permit for Office,” *Greensboro Daily News*, January 12, 1926, 2.

²⁹ “Demurrer Sustained in \$72,400 Lawsuit: Plaintiff Loses Out in Federal Court Here in Surety Vs. Plott Litigation,” *Greensboro Daily News*, March 4, 1928, 11; “Judge Hayes Upheld in J. T. Plott Case,” *Greensboro Daily News*, October 17, 1928, 2.

³⁰ “Houses For Sale,” *Greensboro Daily News*, September 20, 1937, 13; “Business Places,” *Greensboro Record* (Greensboro, NC), October 2, 1937, 10; US Population Census, 1930.

³¹ Briggs, “The Magnolia House;” “Storm Death Toll Reaches 12: More Than 100 Suffer Injuries in Catastrophe,” *The Greensboro Record*, April 3, 1936, 1, 18; “13 Dead and More Than 500 Homeless Here,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 4, 1936, 1, 12. The storm was part of an outbreak of destructive tornados in the South that killed over 175 people.

³² “Queer Quirks of Tornado,” *The Greensboro Record*, April 4, 1936, 9.

³³ “Permits For Month Reach Large Total,” *Greensboro Daily News*, April 28, 1936, 16.

³⁴ “John Tobias Plott Dies from Injuries: Local Contractor Becomes First Traffic Fatality of City in 1938,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 5, 1938, 16.

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and the driver of the automobile, was charged with manslaughter. Nina Plott filed a \$75,000 lawsuit against Michael and his employer for wrongful death.³⁵

Nina Plott continued to live in the dwelling and rented furnished rooms in the duplex. Renters had diverse working-class occupations, including stenographer, bookkeeper, insurance agent, druggist, machine operator, laundry worker, tobacco worker, carpenter, pipe fitter, and truck driver.³⁶ The diverse occupations of the renters during 1930s and 1940s reflect the commercial and industrial growth of Greensboro as well as residential patterns in the city.³⁷

In the early twentieth century, the development of white neighborhoods in southern and southeastern Greensboro was confined and limited by the presence of Black neighborhoods in southern and eastern Greensboro.³⁸ This dwelling was located at the northeast corner of the white-exclusive south Greensboro neighborhood established around 1880. A city ordinance enacted between 1914 and 1929 prohibited African Americans from living on streets that were majority white, reinforcing housing segregation practices in the city. Warnersville, a Black neighborhood dating to the late 1860s, flanked south Greensboro to the west. African American suburbs in east Greensboro bounded south Greensboro to the east. Following the Second World War, south Greensboro shifted from being exclusively white to exclusively Black. Lowering housing prices in the post-war era made houses more affordable to veterans and African Americans. Thus, by 1950, Gorrell Street had turned into a majority Black neighborhood.³⁹

Gist Ownership, 1949–1996

On August 15, 1949, Nina S. Plott sold the property at 442 Gorrell Street to Arthur Taswell Gist Sr. (1888–1966), an African American brick mason.⁴⁰ Arthur Gist's household included his wife Louise E. "Louie" Gist (1908–1986) and three children, Herman Colridge Gist (1923–1994), Arthur Taswell "Buddy" Gist Jr. (1925–2010), and Annie Lou Gist (1926–1999). Arthur Gist and his family had moved to Greensboro around 1947 from Spartanburg, South Carolina, seeking better work opportunities and to be near Arthur Gist Jr. who had moved to Greensboro in the early 1940s to attend North Carolina A&T. A native of South Carolina and a veteran of World War I, Arthur Gist Sr. worked as a brick mason. Louie Gist, who had two years of college

³⁵ "Michael Case Going to Superior Court," *Greensboro Daily News*, March 17, 1938, 14.

³⁶ Greensboro City Directory, 1928–1949; US Population Census, 1930, 1940.

³⁷ Briggs, "The Magnolia House."

³⁸ Marvin A. Brown, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1880–1941," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), Section E, 30.

³⁹ Brown, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Greensboro," Section E, 28.

⁴⁰ Guilford County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 1289, 1949, 449.

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education, worked as a seamstress. In 1949, Louie Gist managed the Colonial House Restaurant, a Black-owned business at 436 East Washington Street. Her son Herman Gist also worked at the restaurant.⁴¹

Soon after acquiring the property, Arthur Gist Sr. and Louie Gist opened a tourist home in their dwelling, which they named the “Magnolia House.” Louie Gist operated the tourist home, while Arthur and his son Herman worked as bricklayers for a contracting company. Louie Gist was widely admired for the home-cooked meals she served at the Magnolia House, then a bed-and-breakfast guest house also known as the “Magnolia House Motel” (Figure 4). After serving in the US Navy during World War II, Arthur Gist Jr. continued his studies at North Carolina A&T; he graduated in 1947. Two years later, in 1949, he moved to Harlem where he worked as a waiter at the Hotel Teresa and later as an automobile dealer. Annie Lou Gist worked as a schoolteacher while attending Bennett College in the late 1940s.⁴²



Figure 4. Photograph of the Magnolia House Motel, circa 1955
(Source: Briggs 2021).

⁴¹ Ancestry.com 2005, 2011; Briggs, “The Magnolia House;” Greensboro City Directory, 1949, 265, 932; US Population Census 1900, 1930, 1940; Stacey Krim, “Buddy Gist, the Man Behind the Miles Davis Trumpet,” *Spartan Stories*, Tales from the UNCG University Archives, February 24, 2014, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://spartanstories.uncglibraries.com/buddy-gist-the-man-behind-the-miles-davis-trumpet-2/>. From 1947 to 1949, the Gist family lived at 303 North Beech Street (no longer extant), a few blocks west of the North Carolina A&T campus. The Colonial House Restaurant (no longer extant) was two blocks north of the Magnolia House.

⁴² US Population Census, 1950; Greensboro City Directory, 1950, 210, 347; Greensboro City Directory, 1951, 211. The 1950 census shows Arthur Gist Jr. living in a boarding house at Philadelphia.

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The 1950 Greensboro city directory listed three hotels—including the Magnolia House—and seven boarding houses serving Black people. Greensboro was also served by at least five tourist homes for Black travelers, including several that advertised in Black travel guides. In 1950, the *Green Book* listed tourist homes operated by L. W. Wooten, James B. Blount, Mrs. E. Evans, Mrs. Lewis, and T. Daniels.⁴³

Green Book Hotel

From 1955 to 1961, Arthur and Louie Gist advertised the Magnolia House in the *Green Book* as a hotel under the names “Magnolia” and “Magnolia Hotel.” In the 1957 issue, Victor H. Green gave the Magnolia Hotel a star, which designated businesses that he personally recommended (Figure 5). It was the only *Green Book*-listed business in North Carolina that received Green’s coveted star rating in 1957.⁴⁴

Greensboro	
★MAGNOLIA HOTEL	442 Gorrel St.
Plaza Manor Hotel	511 Martin St.
Legion Club Hotel	829 E. Market St.
T. Daniels Tourist Home	922 E. Market St.
Mrs. Lewis Tourist Home	829 E. Market St.
College Motel.....	U. S. Hwy. 29 North at Stanley St.

Figure 5. Listing for the Magnolia Hotel in the 1957 issue of the *Green Book*
(Source: Green 1957, 46).

Famous Guests

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Magnolia Hotel earned a reputation for being an upscale establishment that catered to more affluent travelers, including Black entertainers, musicians, singers, and comedians. During the Jim Crow era, the Magnolia Hotel provided a safe place for its guests, many of whom were traveling the “Chitlin Circuit” through the South and Midwest. While on tour, they would often stay at hotels and tourist homes advertised in the *Green Book*.

⁴³ Greensboro City Directory, 1950, 309, 344, 833, 862; Victor H. Green. *The Negro Motorist Green Book: An International Travel Guide* (Leonia, NJ: Victor H. Green & Company, 1950), 62.

⁴⁴ Victor H. Green, *The Negro Traveler’s Green Book: The Guide to Travel and Vacations* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1955), 53; Victor H. Green, *The Negro Travelers’ Green Book: The Guide to Travel and Vacations, Fall 1956* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1956), 45–46; Victor H. Green, *The Negro Traveler’s Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1957), 46; Alma D. Green, *The Travelers’ Green Book: Guide for Travel & Vacations* (New York: Victor H. Green & Company, 1959), 51–52; 1960, 73; 1961, 68. In 1956, Green gave a star recommendation to the Magnolia Hotel in 1956, 1957, 1959, 1960, and 1961.

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Some of the famous guests that stayed at the Magnolia Hotel include James Brown (1933–2006), Ray Charles (1930–2004), Lionel Hampton (1908–2002), Louis Armstrong (1901–1971), Count Basie (1904–1984), Otis Redding (1941–1967), Lena Horne (1917–2010), Little Willie John (1937–1968), Ike Turner (1931–2007), Tina Turner (1939–2023), Sam Cooke (1931–1964), Joe Tex (1935–1982), Ruth Brown (1928–2006), and members of the band of Duke Ellington (1899–1974).⁴⁵

While living in Harlem in the 1950s, Arthur Gist Jr., who went by Buddy Gist, frequented the Birdland Jazz Club where he befriended several celebrity performers such as Count Basie, John Coltrane (1926–1967), and Miles Davis (1926–1991). Gist and Davis became lifelong friends (Figure 6). While touring, Davis would often stay at the Magnolia House. Buddy Gist also became friends and a business partner with Jackie Robinson (1919–1972), who desegregated major league baseball in 1947 when he played for the Brooklyn Dodgers, and civil rights activist Malcolm X (1925–1965). In the 1960s, Gist founded the Mt. Kilimanjaro Coffee company with Davis, Lena Horne, and others as investors. Although Buddy Gist did not live in the Magnolia House during the 1950s and 1960s, he visited often and brought his celebrity friends and acquaintances with him.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Nancy McLaughlin, "History Next Door," *News and Record* (Greensboro, NC), July 10, 2011, 8; "Historic Magnolia House History," The Historic Magnolia House, accessed October 3, 2024, <https://www.thehistoricmagnoliahouse.org/green-book-hotel-history>; "Distinctive Destinations: The Historic Magnolia House," National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2024, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://savingplaces.org/distinctive-destinations/the-historic-magnolia-house>; "North Carolina Civil Rights Trail: Magnolia House (1949)," North Carolina African American Heritage Commission, 2024, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://aahc.nc.gov/programs/nc-civil-rights-trail/nc-civil-rights-virtual-trail/magnolia-house-1949>.

⁴⁶ Briggs, "The Magnolia House;" Dioni L. Wise, "A fan and friend of jazz, 'Buddy' Gist, 84, dies," *Greensboro News & Record*, April 20, 2010, 3; "Arthur 'Buddy' Taswell Gist," *Greensboro News & Record*, April 22, 2010, 10; Krim, "Buddy Gist." In the 1960s, Davis gifted Buddy Gist the famous trumpet he used in 1959 during recording his *Kind of Blue* album; in 2001, Buddy Gist gifted the trumpet, then valued at \$1.6 million, to the School of Music at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. The name of Davis's 1968 album *Filles de Kilimanjaro* refers to Buddy Gist's Mt. Kilimanjaro Coffee company. In the 1970s, Buddy Gist also befriended celebrities such as Sidney Poitier and Muhammad Ali.

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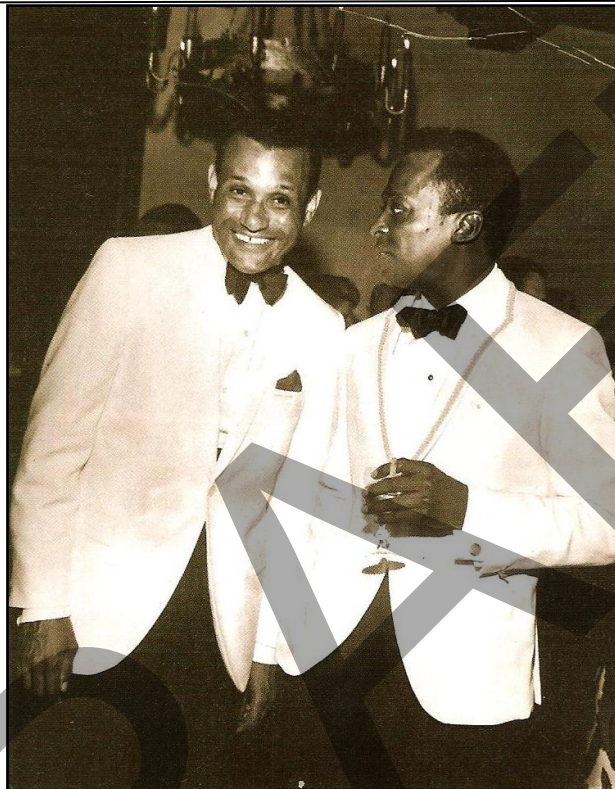


Figure 6. Photograph of Arthur Gist Jr. (left) and Miles Davis, n.d.
(Source: Briggs 2021).

Scholars, lecturers, and civil rights leaders stayed at the Magnolia House when visiting nearby Bennett College and North Carolina A&T. Some of the best-known scholars who stayed at the hotel include author and activist James Baldwin (1924–1987), historian and author Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950), and poet and activist Lorenzo “Logie” Meachum (1952–2018). Prominent professional athletes that stayed at the hotel include baseball player Satchel Paige (1906–1982) and boxer Ezzard Charles (1921–1975).⁴⁷

The who’s-who list of famous guests from a variety of backgrounds conferred on the Magnolia House an aura of glamour and glitz during the *Green Book* era.

Community Anchor

In addition to providing lodging for travelers, in the 1950s and 1960s the Magnolia House was a popular social and meeting space for residents and organizations. Social and political clubs that held events at the

⁴⁷ “Distinctive Destinations,” National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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Magnolia Hotel included the Guilford County Democratic Club, the Metropolitan Council of Negro Women, and the John H. Jeffreys Barracks No. 748 of World War I Veterans. In March 1957, the Guilford County Democratic Club held its annual meeting at the hotel, setting up a program called the two-year educational plan to inform young African American citizens of the importance of voting and participating in local and state governments. During the club's annual meeting at the hotel in May 1958, its members elected Arthur Gist Sr. as treasurer.⁴⁸

Louie Gist also provided dining service at the Magnolia Hotel. In 1951, her kitchen received a Grade A rating from the Guilford County Health Department.⁴⁹ Local corporations also held special events at the Magnolia Hotel, such as the Piedmont Natural Gas Company which in 1957 held a Christmas party at the hotel for its Black employees.⁵⁰ Employment recruiters also held events at the Magnolia Hotel, where they recruited college-age African American men and women to work as travel agents.⁵¹

Civil Rights Movement Association

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Magnolia House hosted meetings of civil rights movement organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which was the driving force behind the Freedom Rides in the summer of 1961.⁵²

While attending Bennett College in the mid-1940s, Annie Lou Gist became involved with the NAACP. After graduation she moved to New York where she earned a master's and a doctorate in education from New York University. In 1953, Howard University hired her as an instructor in the Department of Physical Education for Women. Upon graduating from New York University in April 1956, she worked as an assistant professor of physical education at Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia.⁵³

During her summer vacation at Magnolia House in 1957, Annie Lou Gist—then known as Dr. Ann Gist—assisted the Greensboro Chapter of the NAACP to desegregate the whites-only swimming pool and public library in Greensboro. On June 20, 1957, Dr. Gist and her friend J. Everett, a student at Bennett College, attempted to desegregate the whites-only Lindley Park Swimming Pool, a \$200,000 facility that opened in

⁴⁸ "Club Plan Urges Negroes to Vote," *Greensboro Record*, March 21, 1957, 13; "Huntley Chosen," *Greensboro Record*, May 13, 1958.

⁴⁹ "Grade A Ratings Given 174 Cafes in Guilford," *Greensboro Record*, June 13, 1951.

⁵⁰ "Service Awards Given," *Greensboro Record*, December 12, 1957, 29.

⁵¹ "Salesmen, Salesladies, Agents," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 5, 1960, 34.

⁵² "Magnolia House (1949)," North Carolina African American Heritage Commission.

⁵³ Briggs, "The Magnolia House;" "Gets Doctorate," *Greensboro Record*, April 16, 1956, 17; "The Hilltop, Howard University," *The Bennett Banner*, March 1, 1953, 2; Jo Spivey, "Sit-ins...The time had come," *Greensboro Record*, May 16, 1979, 8. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dr. Ann Gist served as the head of health education departments at Bishop and Pan-American colleges in Texas and at Southern University in Louisiana in the late 1960s. She returned to Greensboro in 1977.

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1956. The pool director, J. E. Bryson, met with the two women and informed them that the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission had adopted a policy that segregated swimming pools, and then referred them to the Nocho Park Pool, a much smaller facility built for Black residents in the 1930s at Windsor Center. News of this incident soon grabbed the public's attention. Dr. Gist, Everett, and Bryson told journalists that there was no disorderly conduct, and that everyone involved was polite and orderly.⁵⁴

In the following days, segregationists targeted Dr. Gist and her family with a bomb threat. Several phone calls with threats of violence were made to the Magnolia Hotel.⁵⁵ The threats led the Greensboro Chapter of the NAACP, chaired by Edwin R. Edmonds, to respond. On June 27, 1957, the Greensboro chapter presented a petition to the Greensboro city council requesting desegregation of the whites-only swimming pool and public libraries. Among the petitioners were Dr. Gist and her parents Arthur and Louie Gist.⁵⁶

In July 1957, the Greensboro Public Library's board of managers issued a statement of policy that declared the library desegregated.⁵⁷ The city council, however, refused to desegregate the whites-only public swimming pool at Lindley Park. Mayor George H. Roach and council members passed the continuing segregation resolution without comment or discussion. Instead, city council voted to reconsider the issue before the 1958 summer season, claiming that desegregating swimming pools for the rest of the 1957 season would damage race relations and the public peace.⁵⁸ The issue of desegregating public swimming pools continued for the remainder of the summer season.

In October 1957, the Greensboro chapter of the NAACP decided to no longer pursue desegregating the Lindley Park Swimming Pool in the interest of general welfare and to focus their efforts on equal employment and other issues. The decision to withdraw their petition to desegregate the whites-only swimming pool was a response to the city council's consideration of proposals to close the city-sponsored recreation programs and sell the two public swimming pools. NAACP leaders noted that the city council's position closely resembled those who wanted to close public schools rather than to integrate them.⁵⁹

In a jam-packed public hearing in late October 1957, hundreds of white residents urged the city council to sell the public swimming pools while Black residents urged the city to keep them open on a "voluntary segregated basis." Instead of desegregating the public swimming pools, the city council voted 7-1 to sell

⁵⁴ "Pool Denies Admission to Negroes," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 20, 1957, B1; Spivey, "Sit-ins," 8.

⁵⁵ "Family of Negro is Threatened," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 21, 1957, 19; "Threats Reported," *Greensboro Record*, June 21, 1957, 13.

⁵⁶ "Segregation at Pools is Hit: Negroes Seek Admission," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 28, 1957, 21.

⁵⁷ James Ross, "Libraries Open to Negroes Here," *Greensboro Daily News*, July 16, 1957, 1.

⁵⁸ "Seeks Good Relations: City Council Explains Segregation at Pools," *Greensboro Daily News*, July 18, 1957, 17.

⁵⁹ Dorothy Ann Benjamin, "City NAACP Leaders Withdraw Bid for Desegregation at Lindley Pool," *Greensboro Record*, October 16, 1957, 17.

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both pools at Lindley Park and at Nocho Park. In November 1957, the Greensboro Swimming Association announced that it would raise funds to purchase the swimming pool at Lindley Park. In June 1958, the city sold the pool at Lindley Park to local businessmen who reopened it as a whites-only private swimming pool. In August 1959, the city sold the pool at Nocho Park to the Martha and Spencer Love Foundation, which leased it to the Hayes-Taylor YMCA for use as an integrated facility.⁶⁰

Post-Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Civil Rights Act of 1964—the most comprehensive civil rights legislation since the Civil Rights Act of 1875—mandated equality in access to public accommodation, provided for desegregation of schools and other public facilities, and made employment discrimination illegal. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the act into law on July 2, 1964. The desegregation of facilities and services led to the physical transformation of Black spaces as they became part of an integrated landscape. Many Black resources were altered to serve shifting needs, while some were abandoned. After the integration of public accommodations, Black travelers had more lodging options that were previously unavailable to them. Many white travelers did not wish to stay at Black-owned facilities. Soon, many African American hotels and motels, such as the Plaza Manor Hotel, closed due to the lack of customers and were converted into boarding houses or apartments.

Additionally, urban renewal projects in the 1960s resulted in the displacement of thousands of residences and businesses, ushering in a period of decline and disinvestment. In the 1960s, East Market Street—a thriving Black commercial and entertainment district—was widened from two to six lanes, cutting off Bennett College from North Carolina A&T and their surrounding neighborhoods from one another.

Additionally, in the mid-1960s the city demolished hundreds of buildings along Pearson Street for construction of the Murrow Boulevard—a four-lane divided and depressed highway—along the west side of the Magnolia Hotel. Gorrell Street was replaced with a bridge that spanned the highway in the northwest corner of the parcel containing the Magnolia Hotel. In 1967, the city renamed a two-block section Pearson Street on either side of Gorrell Street to Plott Street in honor of John T. Plott, who owned the Magnolia Hotel property from 1914 until his death in 1938.⁶¹

By 1964, Arthur Gist Sr. and Louie Gist had moved to 605 East Bragg Street one block south but continued to operate the Magnolia Hotel as a tourist home. When Arthur Gist Sr. died on September 3, 1966, his son Herman C. Gist, who lived in the Magnolia, took over operation of the business. A graduate of North

⁶⁰ “Council Will Sell Swimming Pools at Public Auction,” *Greensboro Daily New*, November 19, 1957, 13; “Pool Action ‘Revenge’ City’s NAACP Head Says,” *Greensboro Record*, November 19, 1957, 17; “Date Set for Pool Reopening: Fees Hiked Five Cents,” *Greensboro Daily News*, June 10, 1958, 13; “Operation is Cleared for Nocho Pool,” *Greensboro Record*, October 23, 1959, 13.

⁶¹ “Greensboro To Name Street for Murrow,” *Greensboro Daily News*, March 16, 1967, 13.

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Carolina A&T, Herman C. Gist had completed post-graduate work at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. In the 1970s he was involved in several community organizations and later served in the North Carolina house of representatives from 1983 to 1994. Herman C. Gist closed the Magnolia Hotel around 1971 and moved to 503 High Street where he lived until his death on March 4, 1994. Herman Gist converted the hotel into a boarding house which closed in 1980; however, by the time Louie Gist died on September 20, 1986, the Magnolia Hotel had fallen into disrepair. In 1991, the house was listed in the NRHP as a contributing resource within the South Greensboro Historic District.⁶²

Renovation, 1995–2022

On July 13, 1994, Grace C. Gist inherited the Magnolia House from her husband. One year later, on August 23, 1995, she sold the property to Samuel P. Pass and his wife Kimberly Pass, who lived nearby on Martin Street.⁶³ At the time, the building was long vacant and dilapidated. Sam Pass, a graduate of North Carolina A&T and employee of FedEx, stabilized the building before initiating a multi-phase renovation project with the goal of returning the building to its 1949 appearance when it first opened as a Black tourist home. From 1995 to 2007, Sam and Kimberly focused on the exterior and interior structural work (Figure 7). “This is a museum. It’s a historic place,” said Pass to a reporter in 1999. “It is our intention to put this on the tourist scene for Greensboro, for people to see and know.” Pass told the reporter that he intended to renovate the Magnolia Hotel as a bed-and-breakfast inn and memorial to the Gists. “We aren’t just going to try; we’re going to do it,” concluded Pass. “I’ve dedicated my life to this.”⁶⁴ To complete the project, they created the Magnolia House Foundation, a nonprofit organization, and applied for public grants and private donations to assist in funding the renovation.⁶⁵

⁶² Brigg, “The Magnolia House;” Dana Terry and Frank Stasio, “Reimagining The Historic Magnolia House Motel,” *North Carolina Public Radio*, June 5, 2018, accessed December 16, 2024, <https://www.wunc.org/show/the-state-of-things/2018-06-05/reimagining-the-historic-magnolia-house-motel>; Greensboro City Directory, 1970, 271; 1971, 262. The dwelling at 605 East Bragg Street is no longer extant.

⁶³ Guilford County Deed Book 4222, July 13, 1994, 1134; Guilford County Deed Book 4334, August 23, 1995, 1627.

⁶⁴ Donald W. Patterson, “The Magnolia may bloom again,” *Greensboro News & Record*, July 17, 1999, 45, 49.

⁶⁵ Natalie Pass Miller, interview with Pofue Yang, August 26, 2024; Donald W. Patterson, “The Magnolia may bloom again.” *Greensboro News & Record*, July 17, 1999, 45, 49.

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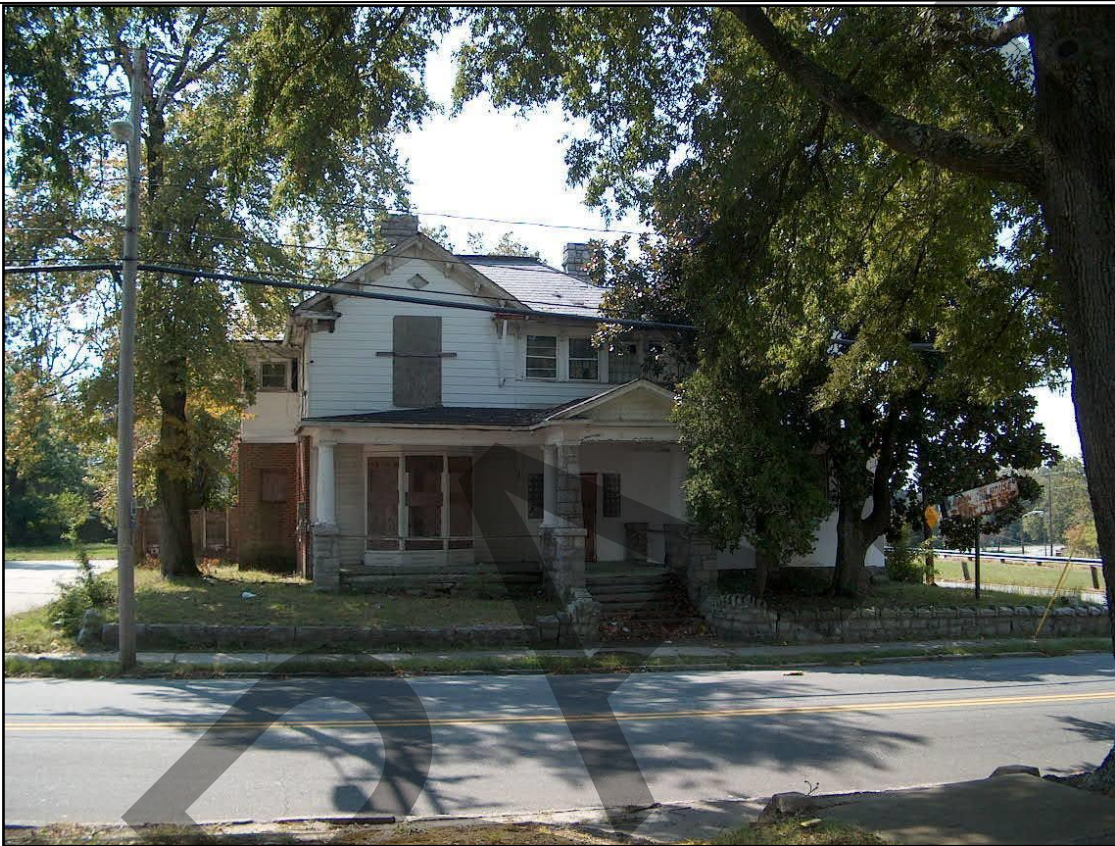


Figure 7. Photograph of the Magnolia Hotel, looking southwest, circa 1999
(Source: Terry and Stasio 2018).

From 2007–2012, Sam and Kimberly Pass focused on the interior and hired local woodworker Pete Williams to restore the mantels, trim, and flooring. They hired local architect Clinton Eugene Gravely, AIA (b.1935) to manage the renovation. A native of Reidsville whose father and grandfather were contractors, Gravely earned a degree in architecture from Howard University in 1959. Gravely worked for Edward Loewenstein (1913–1970), a prominent modernist architect in Greensboro, before opening his own firm in 1967.⁶⁶ Loewenstein was the first white architect in North Carolina to hire Black architects. Gravely’s renovation plan for the Magnolia House restored as many original elements as possible and replaced others in-kind. For instance, the granite quarried from Mount Airy was used to repair and extend the original granite fences and

⁶⁶ “Clinton Eugene Gravely, AIA (1935–),” *NCModernist*, 2024, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://www.ncmodernist.org/gravely.htm>; Ross Howell Jr., “The Wright Stuff,” *O. Henry Magazine*, September 28, 2016, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://ohenrymag.com/the-wright-stuff/>. Gravely has completed nearly 900 commissions, including some 100 churches, the library at North Carolina A&T, the Greensboro International Civil Rights Museum, and several modernist dwellings.

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interior woodwork was restored using reclaimed heart pine lumber.⁶⁷ In 2011, Preservation Greensboro presented Sam Pass with a preservation award for his efforts in renovating the Magnolia Hotel, which opened for business in 2012.⁶⁸ In 2018, Sam and Kimberly Pass's daughter, Natalie Pass Miller, returned to Greensboro from Atlanta, Georgia, to assist with finishing the years-long renovation. In 2021, Miller hired local interior designers Gina Hicks and Laura Mensch to complete a dramatic interior renovation. Natalie Pass Miller and her husband Devin Miller reopened the Magnolia Hotel as a full-service boutique hotel, living museum, and special event venue in December 2021 with some renovation work continuing into 2022 (Figure 8).⁶⁹



Figure 8. Photograph of the Magnolia Hotel, looking southeast, 2022
(Source: Hunt 2022).

⁶⁷ Natalie Pass Miller, interview with Pofue Yang, August 26, 2024; Nancy McLaughlin, "Daughter helps restore historic North Carolina house," *Washington Times*, December 29, 2019, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/dec/29/daughter-helps-restore-historic-north-carolina-hou/>.

⁶⁸ Ashley Wahl, "The House That Soul Built," *O. Henry Magazine*, February 2012, 56–61.

⁶⁹ Cynthia Adams, "The Magnolia Network," *O. Henry Magazine*, January 30, 2022, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://ohenrymag.com/the-magnolia-network/>.

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In 2022, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express awarded the Magnolia Hotel with a \$40,000 grant to assist in its preservation. The same year, the Magnolia Hotel became the first *Green Book* hotel inducted into the National Trust’s Historic Hotels of America program. In 2023, the National Trust selected the Magnolia Hotel as one of the Top 25 Historic Hotels of American in Film and Television History for its role as a representative Green Book tourist home as featured in the Academy Award-winning film *Green Book* (2018) directed by Peter Farrelly. The hotel was also chosen due to the number of actors and celebrities that were guests, such as Lena Horne, Tina Turner, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, James Baldwin, and Jackie Robinson.⁷⁰

Summary

In summary, the Magnolia Hotel is a well-preserved building associated with the historic *Green Book* resources in North Carolina. The distinctive building retains sufficient architectural integrity from the period of significance (1955–1961) to be identified as a historic *Green Book* property. The Magnolia Hotel is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A as the best-preserved *Green Book* resource of its type remaining in North Carolina. The property retains the original hotel building and landscaping elements such as granite yard fences as well as a replica of the iconic metal street sign with Southern Magnolia flower motifs that advertised the hotel during the *Green Book* era.

The Magnolia Hotel is an important example of the Domestic Lodging property type as documented and described in the “Historic *Green Book* Resources of North Carolina, 1938–1967” MPDF. Located near Bennett College and North Carolina A&T, notable HBCUs, the hotel is associated with several themes identified in the MPDF such as women’s history and civil rights activism. Serving as a distinguished destination for Black travelers, the hotel was frequented by a litany of famous singers and entertainers who performed on the Chitlin Circuit as well as other dignitaries, scholars, and celebrities. The hotel is also associated with urban renewal and played a leading role in the movement to preserve *Green Book* resources in North Carolina. The hotel meets the requirements established in the MPDF for the Domestic Lodging property type since it was a tourist hotel advertised in the *Green Book* between 1955 and 1961.

⁷⁰ Maria C. Hunt, “Experience the Historic Magnolia House Once Again,” *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, October 26, 2022, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://savingplaces.org/stories/historic-magnolia-house>.

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Magnolia Hotel

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Name of Property

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- _____. "Family of Negro is Threatened." June 21, 1957.
- _____. "Segregation at Pools is Hit: Negroes Seek Admission." June 28, 1957.
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Magnolia Hotel

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	State Historic Preservation Office
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): GF0785 (Magnolia House)			

Magnolia Hotel

Guilford County, North
Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.40 USGS Quadrangle Greensboro, NC

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (These coordinates should correspond to the corners of the property boundary. Add additional coordinates if necessary. Enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Datum if other than WGS84:

A. Latitude: 36.066593 Longitude: -79.793698

B. Latitude: 36.00659 Longitude: -79.783458

C. Latitude: 36.066039 Longitude: -79.783336

D. Latitude: 36.066046 Longitude: -79.783697

Verbal Boundary Description

The NRHP boundary for the Magnolia Hotel includes the L-shaped 0.4-acre parcel (PIN 7864834924) located in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Gorrell Street and Plott Street. The boundary begins at the northwest corner of the property and continues 70 feet south along the granite retaining wall lining the sidewalk along Plott Street to the southwest corner of the parcel and continues east 113.4 feet to the southeast corner of the parcel. From there, the boundary continues 34.5 feet north to a point before continuing west 34.08 feet to the south terminus of the granite fence. The boundary then continues north 106 feet along the granite fence to the northeast corner of the parcel and then continues west 148.79 feet along the granite retaining wall where it terminates at the original point. The NRHP boundary does not encompass the concrete pedestrian sidewalks that run along the north and west sides of the parcel.⁷¹

The south side of the parcel abuts the W. S. Witherspoon House (GF6841; NRHP, 1991) at 729 Plott Street. The east side of the parcel abuts the property at 444 Gorrell Street.

Boundary Justification

The NRHP boundary includes the parcel at 442 Gorrell Street that contains the building and support structures and objects associated with the Magnolia Hotel. The boundary includes all the historically significant resources and associated land from the 1955–1961 period of significance.

⁷¹ Guilford County Deed Book 6398, page 494. The parcel boundary is based on a survey map prepared by Wayne L. Stutts dated August 22, 1995.

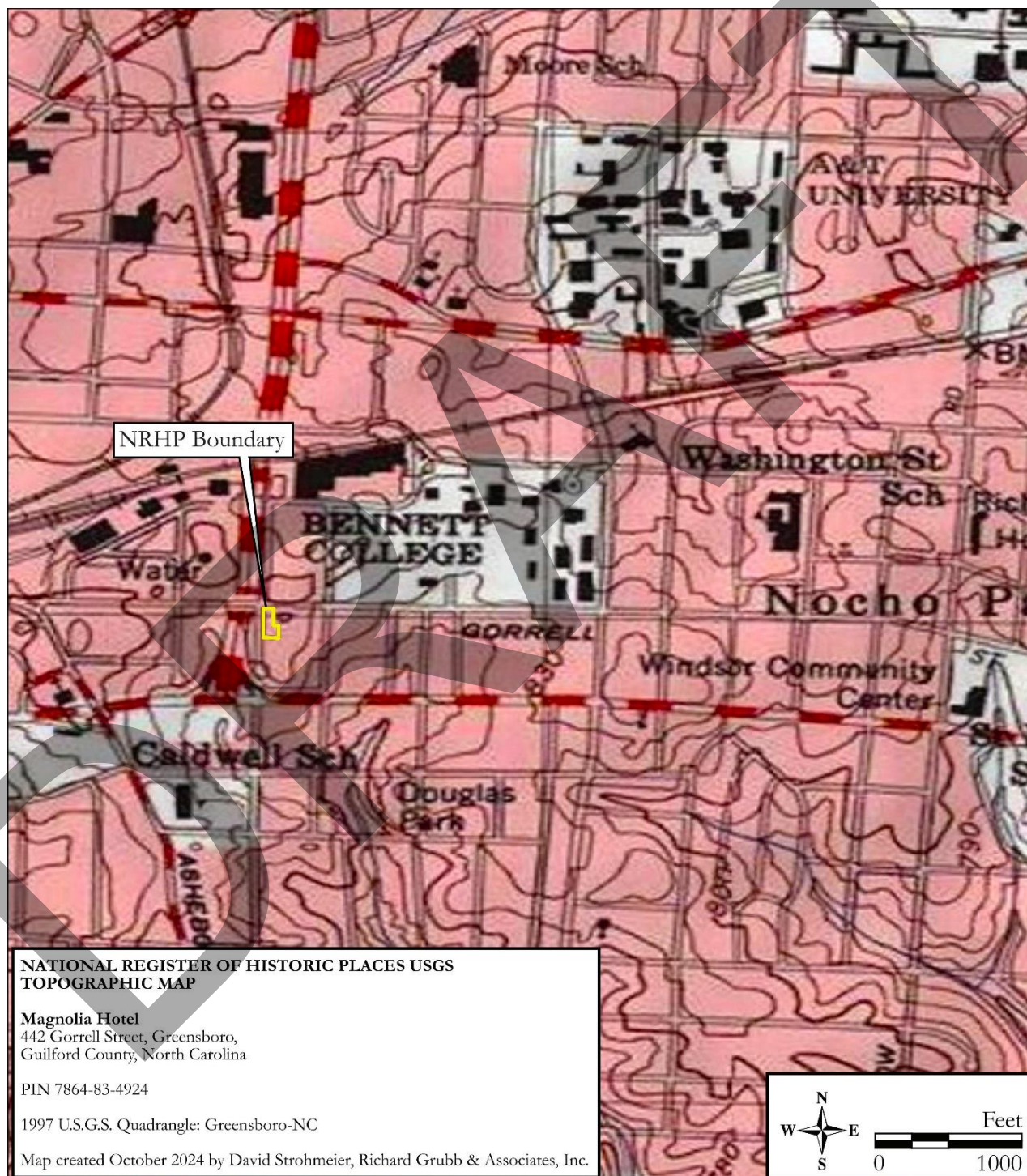
Magnolia Hotel

Guilford County, North
Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

USGS Topographic Map



Magnolia Hotel

Guilford County, North
Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Boundary Map



Magnolia Hotel

Guilford County, North
Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name Pofue Yang and Robbie D. Jones

Organization Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.

Street & Number 525 Wait Avenue

Date January 7, 2025

City or Town Wake Forest

Telephone 909-238-4596 ext. 404

E-mail pyang@rgaincorporated.com

State NC Zip Code 27587

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Photographs** (refer to North Carolina Historic Preservation Office National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints. Photos should be submitted separately in a JPEG or TIFF format. Do not embed these photographs into the form)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. can be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps. They can also be embedded in the Section 7 or 8 narratives)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page 49

Magnolia Hotel

Name of Property

Guilford, North Carolina

County and State

**Historic Green Book Resources in North
Carolina, 1938–1967**

Photo Log

Name of Property: Magnolia Hotel

City or Vicinity: Greensboro

County: Guilford

State: North Carolina

Photographer: Pofue Yang

Date Photographed: July 24, 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 21: Magnolia Hotel, façade (north) elevation; view facing south.
- 2 of 21: Magnolia Hotel, façade (north) and east elevations; view facing southwest.
- 3 of 21: Magnolia Hotel, east elevation; view facing west.
- 4 of 21: Magnolia Hotel, façade (north) and west elevations; view facing southeast.
- 5 of 21: Magnolia Hotel, west and south elevations; view facing northeast.
- 6 of 21: Magnolia Hotel; view facing northeast.
- 7 of 21: Magnolia Hotel, south elevation; view facing northwest.
- 8 of 21: First floor, center hall; view facing south.
- 9 of 21: First floor, sunroom; view facing southwest.
- 10 of 21: First floor, ballroom; view facing south.
- 11 of 21: First floor, living room; view facing northeast.
- 12 of 21: First floor, stair hall; view facing southeast.
- 13 of 21: First floor, center hall; view facing north.
- 14 of 21: First floor, corridor; view facing south.
- 15 of 21: First floor, dining room; view facing southeast.
- 16 of 21: First floor, bar; view facing southeast.
- 17 of 21: Second floor, lounge and bedrooms at the north end of the hallway; view facing north.
- 18 of 21: Second floor, hallway; view facing south.
- 19 of 21: Second floor, lounge room; view facing northwest.
- 20 of 21: Second floor, bedroom; view facing northwest.
- 21 of 21: Second floor, passageway at the south end of the hallway; view facing south.

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National Park Service

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Magnolia Hotel

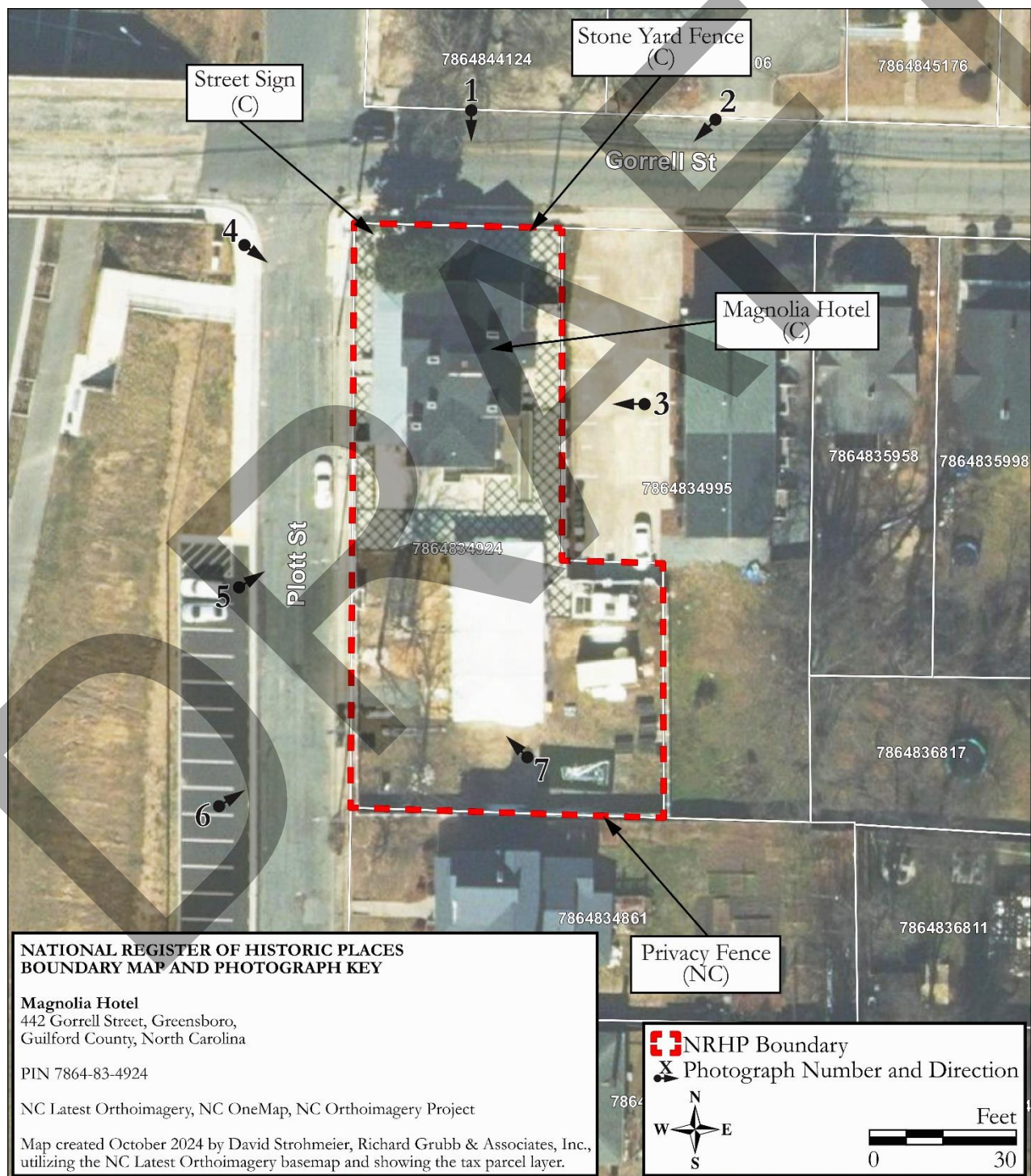
Name of Property

Guilford, North Carolina

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**Historic Green Book Resources in North
Carolina, 1938–1967**

Site Plan / Photo Key Map (Exterior)



United States Department of the Interior
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Magnolia Hotel

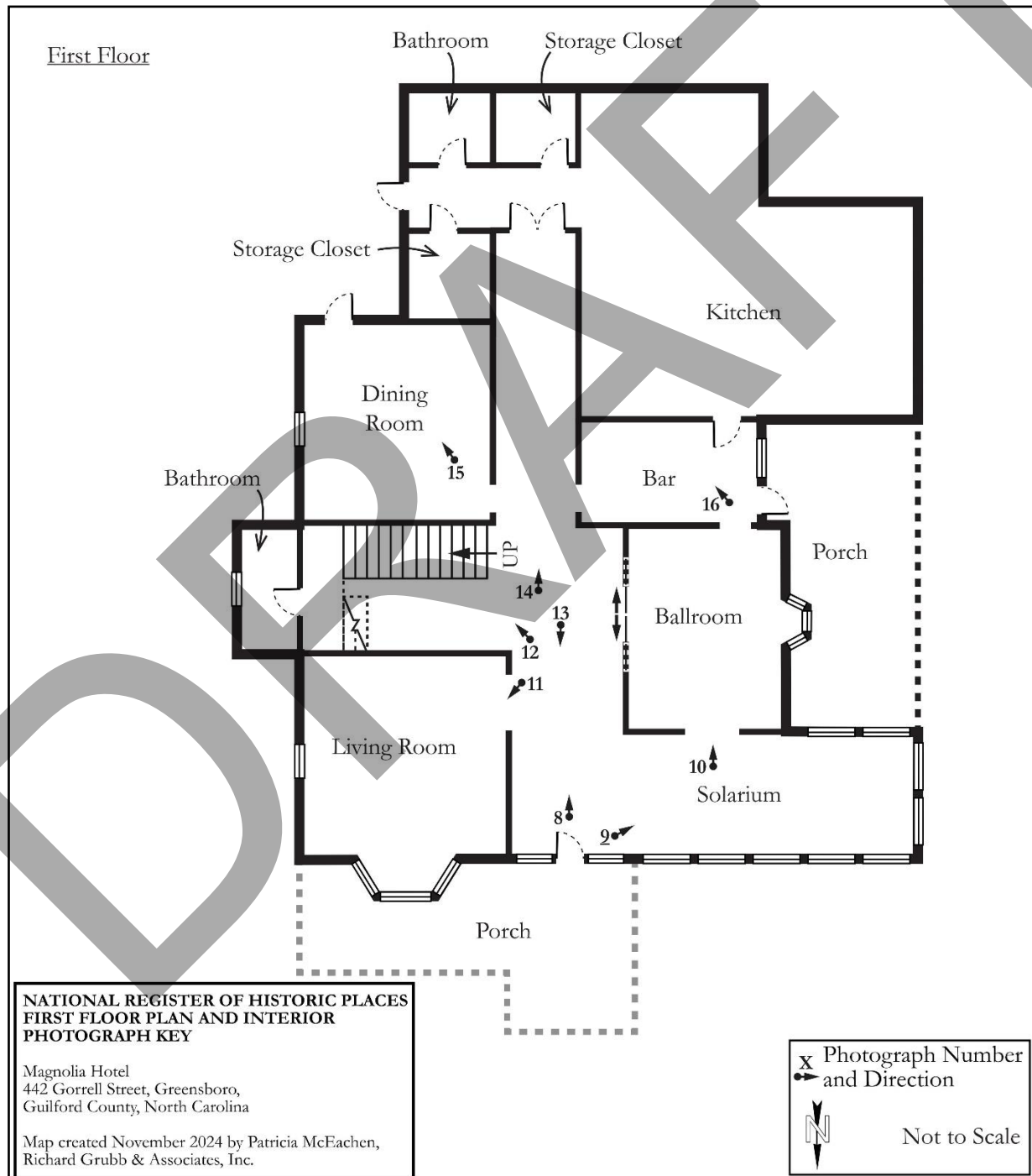
Name of Property

Guilford, North Carolina

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**Historic Green Book Resources in North
Carolina, 1938-1967**

Floor Plan and Photo Key Map (Interior)



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Magnolia Hotel

Name of Property

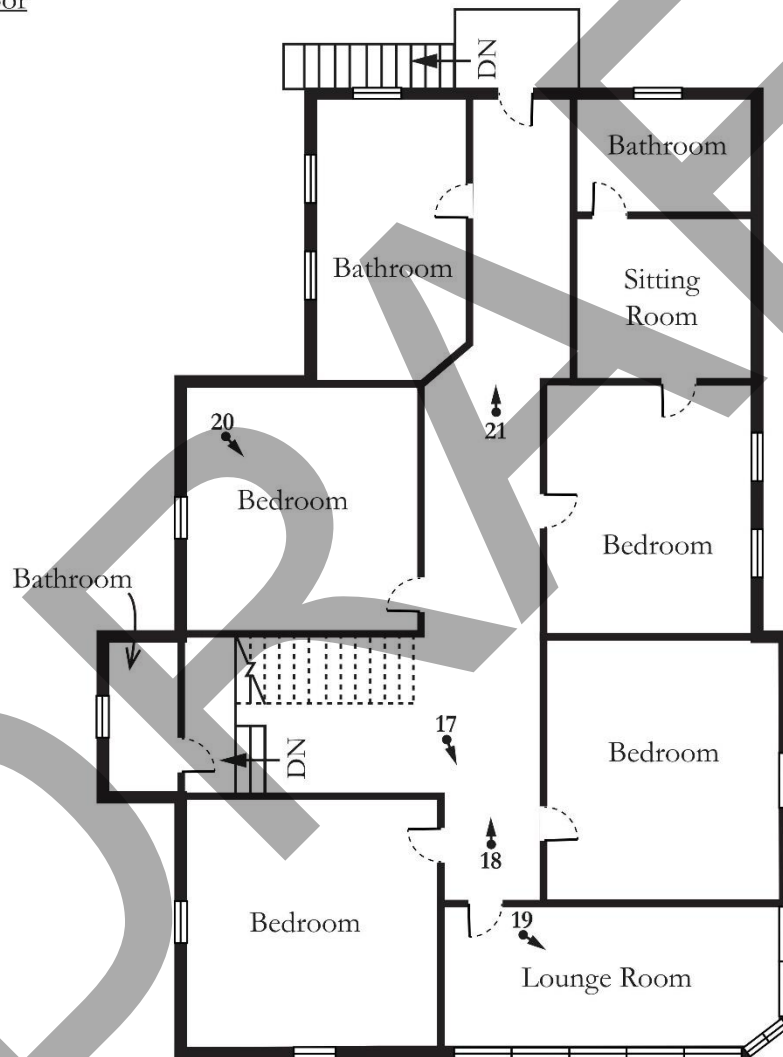
Guilford, North Carolina

County and State

Historic Green Book Resources in North
Carolina, 1938-1967

Floor Plan and Photo Key Map (Interior)

Second Floor



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES SECOND FLOOR PLAN AND INTERIOR PHOTOGRAPH KEY

Magnolia Hotel
442 Gorrell Street, Greensboro,
Guilford County, North Carolina

Map created November 2024 by Patricia McEachen,
Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.

X Photograph Number
and Direction



Not to Scale

Property Owner(s):

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office)

Name Urban Magnolia Development LLC

Street & Number PO Box 5817 Telephone 336-617-3382

City or Town Greensboro State/Zip NC/27435