

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Jefferson Standard Building

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Northwest corner Elm and Market streets

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF

6th

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Guilford

CODE

081

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

__PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company

STREET & NUMBER

Box 21008

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

STATE

__ VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Guilford County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jefferson Standard Building, a seventeen-story, steel frame structure with brick exterior walls sheathed with granite and terra cotta, presides confidently over downtown Greensboro at the heart of the city, the summit of Elm Street's gentle rise.

The rich decorative scheme, designed to reinforce the verticality and sheer size of the structure, is an exotic combination of Classical, Romanesque, Gothic and Art Deco elements. The building is U-shaped in plan, with the light well opening on the Elm Street side. As a result the building has a twin towered effect even though an unbroken, 186-foot facade presents itself to Elm Street at ground level.

The building's exterior is distinguished by the rich, complex, and highly plastic decorative treatment of the Elm and Market Street facades. The "towers" of the building rest on a base containing the ground floor, mezzanine, and entrance halls. The second floor functions visually as a unit upon which rest the third through thirteenth floors. The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth floors of each tower form a visual cap. The seventeenth floor appears to be a penthouse from the street. These are the ornamental zones of the exterior. The design seems to have been conceived in the base-shaft-capital tradition that prevailed in earlier skyscraper design. Though by the 1920s it was no innovation, it was a novelty in Greensboro.

The principal entrance to the building (Elm Street) is a round-arched opening in the center of the facade. The molded archivolt and voussoirs of the granite arch are decorated with water-leaf and bead-and-reel ornament, and rest on a plain base. The reveals of the arch are decorated with an elaborate scheme of urns, rams' heads, and foliated scrolls. Above is a Corinthian scroll keystone decorated with two types of cable molding and other ornament.

The opening itself is now filled with large glass panels and three stainless steel doors, frames, and muntins, added in the early 1950s. Early photographs of the building show that the opening was not enclosed. The opening itself is set in a frame of panels and molded triangular projections, one on each side, which function visually as pilasters. Inside the now enclosed opening are three granite arches forming a tall, narrow vestibule. The arches themselves frame thermal windows. Below are wooden spandrels designed as full entablatures with dentil cornices, and friezes decorated with medallions and sheaves of foliage. The original revolving door which opened into the lobby has been replaced with conventional single-leaf doors.

Carrying across the center bay and the four bays to the left is a full but unacademic entablature. The frieze above the center bay is differentiated by a molding formed by sheaves of foliage with a medallion of similar foliage in the center above the keystone.

Three of the four bays to the left of the entrance are large arched openings filled with metal frame windows which are decorated with a classically inspired entablature. The frieze of the entablature, broken into three parts to carry the line of the muntins through the spandrel, is decorated with garlands of foliage. (The last opening was originally a secondary entrance into the building. Documentary photographs suggest that the door surround was a heavy bolection molding with an elaborate decoration above. It has since been removed and the entrance moved to the adjacent bay.) The decoration of this bay with

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an Art Deco flavor was added in the 1950s when the alterations were made to the main entrance.

Unlike the left side of the portal, which is a plain granite ashlar veneer, to the right side is a six-bay granite and cast-iron commercial facade. The bays are separated by thin cast-iron pilasters terminating at the frieze of a modified entablature, which is crested with a symmetrical profile of rectilinear and curvilinear panels, scrolls, and foliated ornament. The original plate glass windows with their metal, decorated spandrels have been altered, but the paneled upper portion of the cast-iron spandrels and the upper windows with their horizontal emphasis are still extant. This right hand section of the Elm Street facade extends about two bays beyond the main block. The divisions of the bays do not relate visually to the divisions of the upper floors, and the difference is reinforced by the changes in scale and materials from the opposite side. A rendering made by the architect in 1920 did not show this cast-iron store front inserted in the building's facade, an indication that the executed plan was not the architect's original intention. The cast-iron front appears in a 1924 photograph, so it was evidently original. The curious extension of the ground floor was explained by the architect himself, C. E. Hartmann, who said that the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company intended to erect a third "tower" when the land could be acquired. This addition was never built, and the present Wachovia Bank and Trust Building stands on the site.

Unifying the disparate treatments of the two sides of the facade is the strong handling of the focal point of the facade. The entrance portal and one bay on each side (the width of the light well) are capped by an elaborate terra-cotta frontispiece filling the space between the two towers on the second floor level. The center portion consists of (molded, triangular projecting clustered colonnettes) on the flanks with "capitals" that are ornamented with molded neck bands and a projecting embellishment above. Between the windows, their plain surrounds, and sash, and within the bays are intermediate cable colonnettes. Crowning the frontispiece is a triangular panel containing an elaborate cartouche inscribed with the date "1922," heavy swags of fruit and foliage, panels containing the words "Protection" and "Security," and Art Deco type finials. On the peak of the panel is an enlarged copy of Houdon's bust of Thomas Jefferson. These carry a frieze inscribed with the owner and builder of the structure, the "Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Co."

The system of bay division ornamentation continues around the building at the second floor level in the same manner, except that in place of the inscription are cartouches, decorated with profiles of American Indians flanked by swags.

The Market Street facade is similar to the Elm Street facade in decorative treatment but not in massing. Rather than a deeply recessed light well and towers, the building presents a sheer wall rising seventeen stories from the street. At the street level there were originally two entrances into the building. The principal entry, virtually a copy of the Elm Street entrance but without the elaborate frontispiece, is still extant. The secondary entrance (in the third bay from the corner) which probably matched the original

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design of the secondary Elm Street entrance, has been removed. (These secondary entrances opened into the lobby of the Atlantic Bank and Trust Company, while the main and more elaborate entrances opened into the principal public access corridors.) The last (southernmost) bay on the Market Street facade differed from the others in that its frame was trabeated rather than arched and contained some cast iron around plate glass windows. Presumably it, too, like the similar though larger cast-iron section of the Elm Street side, was commercial rather than administrative space.

Springing from the elaborate decorative band at the second-floor level are the two "towers." The vertical emphasis, rather than the horizontal, is the decorative theme. There are three major bays on the Elm Street facade of each tower framed by clustered piers which rise uninterrupted through the thirteenth floor. Each bay is subdivided once by a thin, single pier. The spandrels across the windows are decorated with diamond shaped panels ornamented with rosettes. On the Market Street side there are seven bays identical to those on the Elm Street side.

At the thirteenth floor the piers are interrupted by a horizontal band that emphasizes and expands the molding profile of the piers, and adds a more plastic series of decorations to the spandrels. This band separates the piers of the lower floors from the fourteenth through sixteenth floors where the piers continue until their termination at the sixteenth in round arches. At the springing point of each of these major arches the cluster of piers divides to form the frames of the arches. In the spandrels of the arcading are elongated cartouches decorated with figures with ribbons spilling out in the available space on each side. The secondary divisions form narrower arches within the major ones and are outlined by simple but bold, thick, moldings. Within the tympana of the large arches are bull's eye windows and paneled spandrels. In the tympana of the smaller arches are ornamented cast-iron panels. The spandrels between the fourteenth and fifteenth floors are also cast-iron, a scheme which gives this zone an interesting mix of terra cotta and iron.

The major cornice of the building, below the penthouse, consists of a narrow but heavy band of arcading supported on consoles. The spandrels feature raised triangular panels. Below is a band of beadlike molding; above, an abbreviated entablature with nontraditional moldings and plain frieze. The penthouse is set back to permit a relatively narrow promenade paved in colorful orange tile. The walls are decorated with a variation and continuation of the ornament found on the third through thirteenth floors. An elaborate system of finials and cupolas (two cupolas on each tower on the Elm Street front) once capped the building, but they were recently removed when the terra cotta began to deteriorate. Facing Elm Street are large, molded scroll consoles set on end balancing the penthouse on each "tower" and screening the promenade from the street.

The south and west walls were not decorated with terra cotta ornament. Their plain brick surfaces strongly contrast with the plasticity of the east and north walls. Evidently the south side was thought of as the rear, requiring no ornament, but the brick of the west wall was considered temporary, awaiting the construction of the third tower.

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All interior partition walls of the building are constructed of terra cotta block. The plan of the ground floor consists of a long narrow center hall (or lobby as it is called) leading from the Elm Street entrance to a rear transverse hall forming a T. Commercial spaces open from these halls filling the remaining space of the ground floor and forming two interior streets. At the intersection of the two halls is the bank of four passenger and one freight elevator, the doors of which, though not original, are mahogany with vertical strips and frames of brass.

Above the elevator doors are bas-relief terra cotta plaques executed by Arthur Keck, a minor sculptor who at the time, according to Charles Hartmann, was chief molder for the Federal Terra Cotta Company. The iconography of the panels is particularly interesting. The center panel is the trademark of the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company developed by P. D. Gold, a founder of the company, in 1907. Gold altered and simplified Trumbull's picture of the signing of the Declaration of Independence to contain the company slogan "A Jefferson Standard Policy is a Declaration of Independence for the Family." To the left is a panel showing the Guilford County Courthouse, demolished to make way for the Jefferson Standard Building. To the right is a view of Elm Street. On the extreme left is the seal of the state of North Carolina, on the extreme right the seal of the city of Greensboro, both on a field of daisies.

The center hall leading to the elevator bank as well as the transverse hall is divided into bays defined by segmental arches, supported by pilasters. Between the pilasters were windows and entrances to the bank and five shops which occupied the rentable space on the ground floor. Later alterations in keeping with the original design replaced much of the glass with solid panels and brass-framed showcases. Further variety was achieved through color: White marble panels were framed in black in the bases beneath the windows and showcases, on the faces of the pilasters, and in the soffits of the segmental arches. On the pilasters where the black frames abut the panels are heavy roll moldings. The floors are laid in alternating squares of black and white marble, the whole within both black and white borders. The segmental-arched ceiling is laid in large white tiles arranged in a herringbone pattern. Through the Ages, the trade publication of the marble industry, reported that the floor tiles were "White Alabama" and "Belgian Black" marbles. Wall marbles were identified as "Rosetta" and "Black and Gold."

In the center hall are two skylights. Though now closed, the original iron grillwork is still in situ. The present light fixtures are handsome but not original.

To the left of the elevator bank, a heavy spiral marble staircase with a solid, massive, marble balustrade leads from the ground floor to the mezzanine. Above the mezzanine level the stairs continue to the top floor in a series of dog-legs of strictly utilitarian design. Next to the staircase is a notable, partially brass letter box manufactured by the Cutler Mail Chute Co. of Rochester, New York. It is a veritable catalogue of classical ornament, featuring water-leaf, talon, bead, bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and fasces moldings.

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The Atlantic Bank and Trust Company's quarters in the building had a more classical flavor than the access corridors. There were a series of arches supporting a mezzanine, and the details were more academic. The ceiling was decorated with octagonal coffers. Particularly noteworthy were the customer writing tables in the center of the room. They were designed by the architect and executed in bronze, with legs made in the shape of sea horses or dragons and marble tops. The bank, later occupied by the North Carolina National Bank (NCNB), was heavily remodeled, and the tables destroyed. Vanstory's Clothing Company, which occupied the corresponding space on the opposite side of the hall, was not as elaborate as the bank, and it, too, has undergone heavy alteration.

The upper office floors, which the company advertised by the slogan "Every office an outside one," are simpler and more straightforward. U-shaped corridors follow the shape of the building; from the corridors open single offices and suites separated by plastered, terra cotta partition walls. That every office had an outside window was one of the virtues of the plan and a strong drawing card for tenants. A number of the halls still contain their original plaster and marble walls, plaster cornices, and floors laid with white fields of small, square-shaped tiles with irregular edges and border bands of colored tiles. Of interest is the oak-paneled, corporate boardroom. Strips of small panels are arranged in alternating rectangles and squares. The latter are raised in a pyramidal shape.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

1922-1923

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Charles C. Hartmann

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Jefferson Standard Building, a seventeen-story office building decorated with exuberant Classical, Romanesque, Gothic, and Art Deco ornament, is Greensboro's most prominent commercial landmark, and was said to be the tallest and largest office building in the South upon its completion in 1923. This granite and terra cotta tower, with lavish use of marble and brass on the interior, is one of the few examples in North Carolina of the opulent skyscrapers that are the monuments of pre-Depression prosperity. The well-maintained building, the home office of the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, is still the pride of the company and of Greensboro.

The Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company was founded in Raleigh in 1907 by a group of North Carolina businessmen who felt the need for a "strong, southern life insurance company." The name of the new company and its slogan "A Jefferson Standard Policy is a Declaration of Independence for the Family" reflected the founders' Southern patriotism. The company was an immediate success, and in 1912 merged with the Greensboro Life Insurance Company and the Security Life and Annuity Company and moved to Greensboro. As it continued to grow, the firm occupied rented quarters in a number of office buildings, and began to plan construction of their own headquarters. On May 2, 1917, the company was the highest bidder at the public sale of the 1872 Guilford County Courthouse and site on the busiest intersection in town, on the northwest corner of Elm and Market streets, and paid \$171,000 for the property. Charles C. Hartmann, a young architect in the New York firm of William L. Stoddart, noted hotel designer, was supervising the construction of a Greensboro hotel at this time and caught the eye of Julian Price, vice president of Jefferson Standard. Price offered Hartmann the architectural commission for the new Jefferson Standard headquarters if he would move to Greensboro and set up practice, and Hartmann accepted.

Julian Price, president of the company from 1919 to his death in 1946, was the driving, dynamic force behind the steady growth of Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company during this period. Price, from Virginia, had worked as a telegraph operator, train dispatcher, and tobacco salesman before joining the staff of the Greensboro Life Insurance Company (which merged with Jefferson Standard) in 1905. His vision and perseverance were largely responsible for the erection of the Jefferson Standard Building, and through his active participation in economic and cultural affairs, in the shaping of modern Greensboro.

Hartmann practiced architecture in Greensboro from ca. 1920 to his retirement in the mid-1960s, and designed a large number of Greensboro's twentieth century landmarks, including the Guilford Building, the Northwestern Bank, the Central Fire Station, and many of the most substantial residences. Hartmann admired Stanford White, for whom he moonlighted at the beginning of his career, more than any other architect. Hartmann's buildings

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represent the same Beaux Arts monumentality in Greensboro that White's buildings have come to represent throughout the United States.

The skyscraper design for the building evolved through economic necessity: the original low rise concept was stretched to include enough extra office space to provide income to pay off the cost of construction. The design, which included space for shops in the basement and on street level, and a penthouse containing an employees' restaurant, private dining rooms, dance floors, and an outside promenade, where clear weather conditions affords a sixteen-mile view, reflected this era of corporate beneficence. The eclectic styling of the skin of the steel frame building, which is a blend of medieval and classical motifs, reflects Hartmann's training in a Beaux Arts atelier in New York City in the early years of the century and his work under Warren and Wetmore, New York architects, on Grand Central Station between 1903 and 1913. The George A. Fuller Construction Company of Washington and New York were employed as contractors, and following the demolition of the courthouse the \$2,500,000 building was begun in the summer of 1922. With the exception of the Mount Airy granite sheathing of the first two stories, the building materials came from outside North Carolina, for product prices within the state became noncompetitive when building suppliers in North Carolina united to raise their prices upon learning of the upcoming mammoth construction project.

Soon after its completion on October 1, 1923, the "city within a city," the largest and tallest office building in the South, contained 129 Businesses and 1,000 employees. The first floor housed one of the state's largest banks, a department store, railway ticket office, florist shop, jewelry store, smoke shop, and barber shop. By 1924 Jefferson Standard occupied the top six floors, as it continues to do today. The construction of the building was a strong stimulus to the Greensboro economy, but predictions by 1920s prophets that Greensboro would become a leading Southern business city proved overly optimistic. The Jefferson Standard Building is still the tallest and most pretentious structure in town, with a recently erected steel and glass bank tower its only rival. Downtown Greensboro, like many other central business districts, is becoming a corporate and institutional center as its retail businesses relocate in suburban shopping centers. Although the Jefferson Standard offices are still fully occupied, the shops at street level and the dining and entertainment facilities in the penthouse no longer function.

¹Gold, P. D. "In the Beginning . . .," The Jeffersonian, August, 1957. p. 2.

²Stokes, Ruth Little-, and Smith, McKelden. Interview with Charles C. Hartmann in Greensboro, October 23, 1975.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arnett, Ethel Stephens. Greensboro, North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955.

"Downtown Development 1922-1923," Life in Jefferson Standard. January, 1964.

Gold, P. D. "In the Beginning . . .," The Jeffersonian. August, 1957.

Guilford County Records, Guilford County Courthouse, Greensboro, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/4 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	6 0 8 7 4 5	3 9 9 2 5 0 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by Ruth Little-Stokes, survey specialist; architectural description by McKelden Smith, consultant.

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Division of Archives and History</u>	<u>29 December 1975</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>109 East Jones Street</u>	<u>919/829-7862</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Raleigh</u>	<u>North Carolina</u>

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

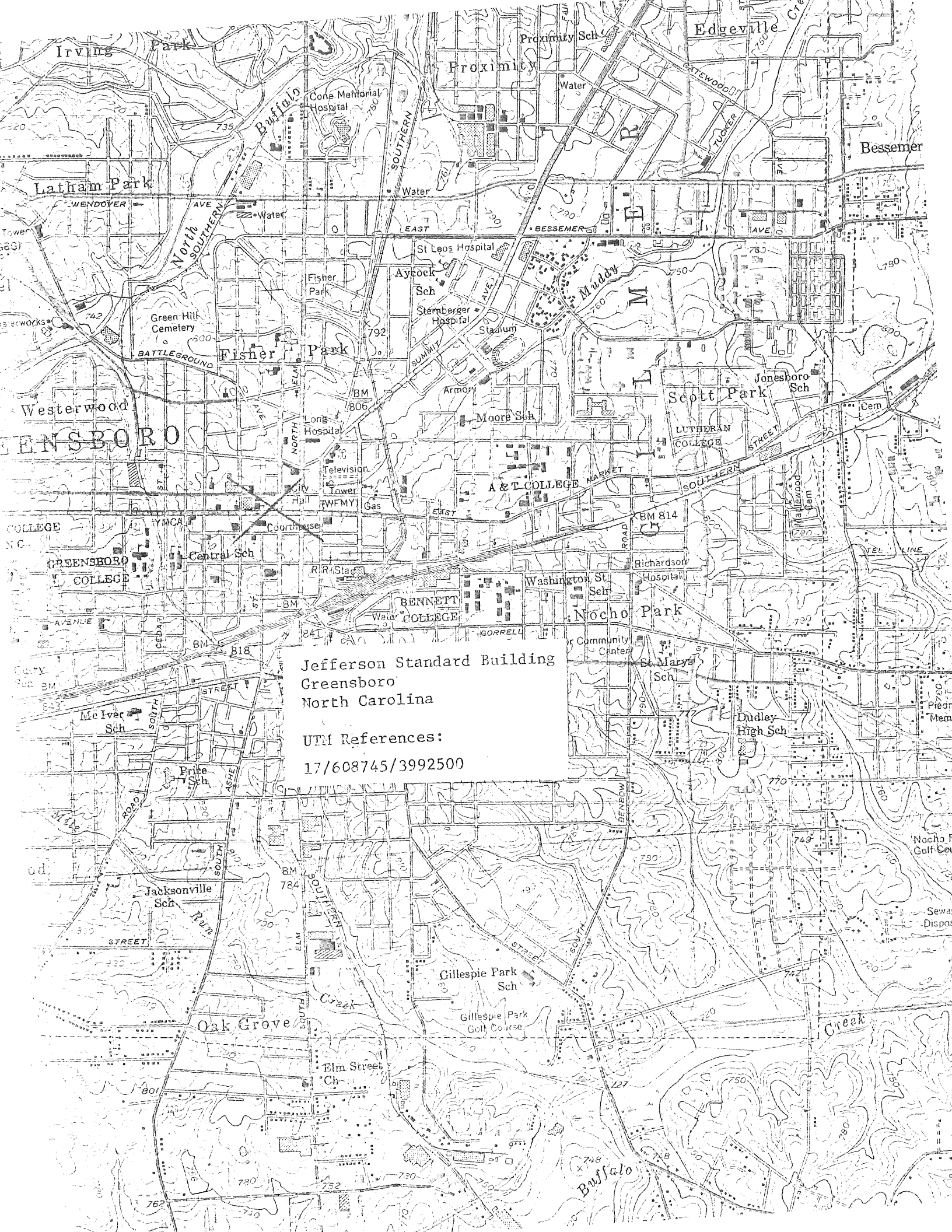
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *L. E. Jim*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 29 December 1975

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	



Jefferson Standard Building
Greensboro
North Carolina

UTM References:
17/608745/3992500