

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property Mount Vernon Springs Historic District
 historic name
 other names/site number

2. Location
 street & number SR 1134 and SR 1135 N/A not for publication
 city, town Bonlee vicinity
 state North Carolina code NC county Chatham code 037 zip code 27344

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>23</u>	<u>6</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>3</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>7</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>33</u>	_____ objects
			<u>6</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Chatham County Multiple Resource Nomination

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register -0-

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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. See continuation sheet.

William S. P... Jr.
 Signature of certifying official Date 30 Sep 87
 State Historic Preservation Officer
 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

 Signature of commenting or other official Date _____
 State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding

Education/Education-related housing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Gothic

Other: Vernacular Domestic Victorian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

wood

roof tin

other asbestos

asphalt

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located in the rolling hills of western Chatham County, the Mt. Vernon Springs Historic District, consisting of 122.33 acres of land, includes land situated along both sides of SR 1134 and SR 1135, where most of the buildings are located, as well as substantial amounts of surrounding farm land and forest which gives the community a sense of rural isolation. There are nine principal contributing buildings including the oldest building in the district: the Female Dormitory of the Baptist Academy (#7), built in 1855; the Mt. Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church (#1), built in 1885; the oldest dwelling in the district, the John C. Kirkman House (#3), built c. 1877, and six other late nineteenth and early twentieth century dwellings. There are two contributing tenant houses, numerous contributing outbuildings, and six noncontributing buildings. The district also has three contributing sites: the Mt. Vernon Springs (#6), the Baptist Academy Cemetery (#8), and the Mt. Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church cemetery (#1a).

The Presbyterian Church (#1) anchors the eastern end of the district at the juncture of SR 1134 and SR 1135. The Mt. Vernon Springs community gets its name from the mineral springs (#6) located at the western end of the district. A majority of the houses, set a short distance from either of the two main roads, are surrounded by woods and open farm land. They stand in groves of old oak, magnolia, pine and dogwood trees and some are located at the end of long tree-lined drives. Most have at least two late-nineteenth-century outbuildings, including a smokehouse; a chicken house; and, in some cases, a well/meat house; and a corn crib, all informally placed just behind the main house.

The oldest building in the district is the Female Dormitory of the now defunct Mt. Vernon Springs Baptist Academy (#7), built in 1855. It is a three-bay-wide frame I-house of vernacular Greek Revival design. The oldest dwellings in the district, the John C. Kirkman House (#3), built c. 1877; the Robert P. Johnson House (#4), built c. 1883; and the John M. Foust House (#11), built c. 1881, are typical of houses constructed in Chatham County during the late 1870's and early 1880's. They are greatly intact, simply finished, two-story, single-pile, gable-roofed structures with two-story rear ells. These houses are weatherboarded frame buildings with exterior end or interior chimneys and standing seam metal-covered gable roofs. They all have a center-hall plan except for the John M. Foust House (#11), which has the original hall-and-parlor plan. The hall-and-parlor plan was found in Chatham County houses as late as the 1890's, but the single pile center-hall house is typical of post-

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Civil War housing in the county. Probably influenced by the Female and Male Dormitories of the Mt. Vernon Springs Baptist Academy, these houses are unique in Chatham County for their retarditaire Greek Revival characteristics such as sidelights, a wide frieze, and narrow corner pilasters.

By the 1880's and 1890's the nationally popular Gothic Revival and Queen Anne styles began to influence the vernacular architecture of Chatham County buildings. Constructed in 1885, the Mt. Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church (#1) with its stained glass lancet windows and a two-stage bell tower, is typical of the Gothic Revival style found in religious buildings in Chatham County. The so-called "triple-A" form, characteristic of the Gothic Revival style for domestic buildings, was especially widespread in the county. This influence is seen in the J. A. Houston House (#12), built in the 1890's, and the Leon Lane Tenant House (#5g), built c. 1896. One of the largest and most fashionable houses in the district, the Leon T. Lane House (#5), built in 1896, has some Queen Anne style characteristics such as asymmetrical massing and decorative sawn work on the doors.

Inventory List

1. Mt. Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church, 1885, Contributing

The Mt. Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church consists of the original gable front, rectangular-shaped frame block (1885) and a small rear frame wing with double-hung two-over-two sash windows and plain surrounds (c. 1900). A modern cement and brick wing is attached to the east side. The original building retains its Gothic Revival style features, including a double leaf entry crowned by a Gothic arch with intersecting tracery, tall lancet windows with stained glass, and a two-stage bell tower with tall louvered Gothic vents. The chapel interior, modernized in the 1960's, retains the original highly ornate brackets which highlight the chancel opening.

- a. A graveyard, located just behind the church, has approximately two hundred and fifty gravestones dating from 1886 to the present. The graveyard is bordered by woodlands. (site) Contributing

2. Wilber Porter House, 1962, Non-Contributing

The Wilber Porter House is a modern, one-story, brick, ranch-style house.

3. Dr. John C. Kirkman House, c. 1877, Contributing

The Dr. John C. Kirkman House consists of a small, two-story, gable-roofed, single-pile frame block and rear one-story, gable-roofed ell addition. The house's three-bay-wide asymmetrical facade, defined by the original center-hall plan, has the original entrance with a four-panel door and five-paned

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

sidelights. Exposed rafters and the original scalloped bargeboards running along the edge of the roof in the main block give the house a Downingesque cottage quality. The windows on the first floor of the main block have the original six-over-nine sash windows. The second floor of the main block and the rear ell both have six-over-six sash windows. A common bond brick exterior end chimney with diagonal brick patterning at the shoulders is similar to the chimney found at the John M. Foust House (#11). The shed-roofed, early-twentieth-century porch with plain square-in-section posts replaces an earlier, more elaborate porch which was characterized by turned posts. A one-story, three-sided projecting bay on the north side of the house, c. 1900, has two-over-two sash windows.

The well-preserved, simple vernacular interior of the house with its center-hall plan retains the original eight-inch horizontal board sheathing, plain surrounds, simple mantels and four- and two-panel doors.

a. Corn Crib, c. 1900, Contributing (structure)

The gable-roofed frame corn crib with a board-and-batten door is located on the north side of the house.

b. Chicken House, c. 1900, Contributing (structure)

The frame chicken house, located just beyond the corn crib has a board-and-batten door and a shed roof.

4. Robert P. Johnson House, c. 1883, Contributing

The original two-story, single-pile block and one-story rear ell of the Robert P. Johnson House, featuring six-over-six sash windows and a common bond brick chimney, is slightly later and larger than the Dr. John C. Kirkman House. A two-story front ell, built in the 1910's, has two-over-two sash windows. The gabled end of the front ell has decorative shingled siding and a diamond-shaped, louvered vent. A front wrap-around porch, also dating from the 1910's, has turned posts and ornate brackets. The original front entrance has double-leaf paneled doors and sidelights. The center-hall plan interior of the house, like the Kirkman House, is modestly finished with eight-inch board sheathing, plain surrounds, four-panel doors and simple mantels.

a. Well/Meat House, c. 1900, Contributing

The frame well/meat house, located just behind the house, has an extended front-gable roof forming a porch which is supported by square-in-section posts. The building has vertical board doors.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

5. Leon T. Lane House, c. 1896, Contributing

The Leon T. Lane House, one of the most exuberant frame Victorian houses in the district with its asymmetrical cross-gable roof shape, is comprised of the original two-story, L-shaped main block and a large two-story rear ell. The house features double-hung, four-over-four sash windows and Queen Anne style doors with elaborate sawn work. Like some of the other houses in the district, it exhibited classical elements such as a wide frieze and pilastered corner boards. Both the exterior end chimney and the interior chimney are of common bond brick. Two three-sided projecting bays and a wraparound porch with turned posts and sawn brackets were added when the house was remodeled in the 1920's. The house's exterior appearance was slightly altered in the 1950's when the side sections of the front porch were enclosed and brick bases replaced the lower portion of the original porch posts. The well-finished interior with its center-hall plan has the original tongue-and-groove wainscoating and Victorian mantels. Colonial Revival mantels and a quarter-turn stairway with heavy paneled newels date from the 1920's remodeling.

a. Carriage House/Garage, c. 1896, Contributing

This well-finished frame building has a pressed tin-covered hipped roof. The building features double-leaf board-and-batten doors with round windows (purchased by Mrs. Jack Foust Lane in 1930 in Wilmington, NC) and an elaborate metal vent with a lightning rod (c. 1930) which is similar to the one found on the stables/dairy barn (#5e). Now covered with asbestos siding, the carriage house has an early-twentieth-century frame shed addition on either side.

b. Smokehouse, c. 1896, Contributing

This frame smokehouse has a front gable end with wide eaves. Later converted to a storage house, it now has asbestos siding, six-over-six sash windows, and a paneled door with panes of glass above.

c. Corn Crib/Chicken House, c. 1896, Contributing (Structure)

A frame corn crib/chicken house, covered with german siding, has a pyramidal roof covered with pressed tin, and a board-and-batten door.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

d. Playhouse, c. 1896, Contributing

A well-finished frame playhouse with a gable roof has four-over-four sash windows, a paneled and glass door, and an engaged porch with chamfered posts.

e. Leon T. Lane Stables/Mayfair Dairy Barn
c. 1896 and c. 1930, Contributing

The Leon T. Lane Stables/Mayfair Dairy Barn, surrounded by open fields, occupies a central and very visible spot within the Mount Vernon Springs District. It is particularly notable for its large size and conjoined plan of an earlier gable-roofed frame stable (c. 1896) and a later gambrel-roofed frame dairy barn (c. 1930). The stable, constructed of heavy timbers, has a cross-gable roof, six-over-six sash windows in the first floor, windows with twelve panes of glass each on the second floor, and a large transverse passage. The dairy barn has a large central passage and a wonderfully rare octagonal-shaped, board-sheathed, frame silo topped by two gable-roofed dormers and a decorative standing vent/lightning rod.

The interior of both barns is completely intact. The older stables feature large chamfered support posts, the original board sheathing, the original horse stalls and troughs, and paneled doors with the original hardware. The later dairy barn has cow stalls and troughs on either side of the central passage.

f. Feed Storage House, c. 1930, Non-Contributing

This small frame outbuilding has a gable roof with heavy support brackets. It has two board-and-batten doors on its gabled front.

g. Leon T. Lane Tenant/Rental House, c. 1896, Contributing

This rectangular-shaped, one-and-one-half-story, triple-A frame house has a steeply pitched cross-gable roof with cornice returns and an interior chimney. The original hip roof porch with robustly turned posts and sawn brackets, defines the three-bay facade which has four-over-four sash windows flanking an entrance with a paneled door. Each gable end has a four-over-four sash window.

h. J. Foust Lane Tenant House/Troy S. Brooks House, c. 1930s,
Non-Contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

This small, one-story, gable-roofed, L-shaped plan, frame house has an interior chimney and double-hung four-over-four sash windows with unusual mitered surrounds.

i. Well/Meat House, c. 1900, Contributing

The well/meat house, located behind the Leon T. Lane Tenant/Rental House, is similar to the one located behind the Johnson House (#4). It is covered with asbestos siding.

6. Mount Vernon Springs, Contributing (site)

The Mount Vernon Springs waters flow from two taps set in a concrete cistern built in 1907. A spring house (1880s) once stood at the site. In 1978 local residents cleared a small area for a park and erected a wooden sign with the name "Mt. Vernon Springs." A short distance from the spring is a small concrete bridge, c. 1890s.

7. Female Dormitory of the Mount Vernon Springs Baptist Academy, c. 1855, Contributing

The Female Dormitory of the Mount Vernon Springs Baptist Academy is a greatly intact, two-story, single-pile frame structure with a two-story rear ell. The symmetrical three-bay-wide facade has a centered entrance with sidelights. The exterior is well finished with heavily fluted corner boards, nine-over-six sash windows with mitered surrounds and a tall exterior end chimney with the same patterned shoulders as the Kirkman House (#3) and the Foust House (#11) chimneys. A massive two-story pedimented portico (c. 1920) replaces an earlier two-story portico. It has large square-in-section columns with brick bases and a pediment with square sided shingles and a circular louvered vent.

The well-preserved interior of the Female Dormitory, laid out in a hall-and-parlor plan, retains the original tall baseboards with recessed panels, molded window surrounds, six-paneled doors, and Greek Revival mantels with fluted pilasters. A replacement stairway dating from c. 1920 (in the same position as the original one) has simple square balusters and a heavy square newel.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

a. Smokehouse, late nineteenth century, Contributing

A frame smokehouse with a gable roof and a plain board door.

b. Cow Barn, early twentieth century, Contributing

This cow barn consists of a large two-story, gable-roofed frame structure with a shed on either side.

c. Corn Crib, early twentieth century, Contributing (structure)

A gable-roofed, frame corn crib with open sheds on either side and a board-and-batten door.

d. Cow Barn, early twentieth century, Contributing

A one-story, gable-roofed, frame cow barn with a large opening at each gable end.

8. Mount Vernon Springs Baptist Church Cemetery, c. 1855, Contributing (site)

Located near the site of the Mount Vernon Springs Baptist Church (now destroyed), this graveyard contains some thirty-five gravestones dating from 1858 to 1901, bearing names of three families: Marsh, Wrenn, and Jones.

9. Meadows House, c. early 1880s, Contributing

This small, one-story frame house consists of an earlier L-shaped block, built in the 1880s, and an early-twentieth-century ell addition on the front. There are two interior end chimneys. The older block is well finished with a wide frieze, pilastered corner boards and nine-over-six sash windows. The front ell has six-over-six sash windows and a shingled gable end with a decorative vent. A porch, now enclosed, covers the original entrance which has a four-panel door and sidelights. An early-twentieth-century, flat-roofed frame addition on the western side of the house created a garage and additional rooms. The interior retains the original pilastered mantels and plain surrounds.

10. Margaret Dixon House, c. 1940s, Non-Contributing

This modern frame home was built on the site of an older home. Its size, shape, setback and materials allow it to blend with the surrounding environment.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

a. Garage, c. 1940s, Non-Contributing

11. John M. Foust House, c. 1881 and c. 1910, Contributing

Similar to the Kirkman House (#3) and the Johnson House (#4), the John M. Foust House consists of the original two-story frame block and a two-story rear ell. The house is finished with pilastered corner boards, a wide frieze, six-over-six sash windows with mitered surrounds, exposed roof rafters and an exterior end common bond brick chimney. C. 1910 John M. Foust built a one-story side wing, a front wraparound porch, and rear shed and porch additions. A low stone wall, constructed in the 1920s, separates the house from a driveway that curves in front of the house. The interior retains the original hall-and-parlor plan, eight-inch horizontal board sheathing, five-panel doors and post-and-lintel vernacular mantels. A replacement quarter-turn stairway (c. 1910) with a heavy turned newel and turned balusters is located along the rear wall of the hallway in the same position as the original stairway.

a. Garage, c. 1910, Contributing

This gable-roofed frame garage, covered with weatherboard, has a large opening on one side.

b. Log House, date unknown, Non-Contributing

This one-story, gable-roofed log house with an attached shed-roofed front porch was moved by Doris McCracken in 1976 from Moore County to its present location behind the John M. Foust House (#11).

12. J. A. Houston House, 1880s, Contributing

The original appearance of the J. A. Houston House has been altered by aluminum siding; however, it retains its original shape, hall-and-parlor plan, and some of its original interior finish such as pilastered mantels and five-panel doors. It consists of a one-and-one-half-story main block and rear ell. It is characterized by a steeply sloped gable roof, boxed cornice, and six-over-six sash windows with mitered surrounds and two interior brick chimneys.

a. Smokehouse, 1880s, Contributing

A gable-roofed frame smokehouse, located just behind the house, has a single board-and-batten door.

b. Chicken House, c. 1900s, Contributing (structure)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 8

A shed-roofed frame chicken house is located just behind the house.

13. W. P. Lane House, c. 1900, Contributing

The W. P. Lane House is a three-bay-wide, one-story frame house with a pyramidal roof. It features a single-leaf entry with sidelights, pilastered corner boards, a wide frieze, six-over-six sash windows and a later front shed porch. The interior, much remodeled in the 1940s, still retains the original doors with two vertical panels each.

a. Smoke House, c. 1900, Contributing

A gable-roofed frame smoke house with a board-and-batten door.

b. Equipment Shed, c. 1900, Contributing (structure)

This shed-roofed frame building is open on one side.

c. Well House, c. 1900, Contributing

A shed-roofed well house with a single vertical board door.

d. Chicken House, c. 1900, Contributing (structure)

A gable-roofed, rectangular-shaped, frame chicken house has vertical board doors and a narrow horizontal opening along one side.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Entertainment/Recreation

Education

Period of Significance

c. 1855-1920

Significant Dates

1855

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The primary significance of the Mount Vernon Springs Historic District, a rural village in piedmont Chatham County, North Carolina, is under Criterion C. Located in a rural setting containing almost no modern intrusions, Mt. Vernon Springs contains nine architecturally significant buildings dating from 1855 to the early twentieth century. The village grew up near a locally famous mineral spring. The oldest building, the Female Dormitory of the Mount Vernon Springs Academy, built in 1855, is a two-story weatherboarded three-bay-wide I-house which is one of the finest and most intact examples of vernacular Greek Revival style architecture in Chatham County. Documentary photographs taken in 1975 of the now-demolished Male Dormitory, also built in 1855, indicate that it had the same basic form, but was five bays wide, with wide pilasters between the windows and a similar Greek Revival entrance. Another significant early building is the Mount Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church, a well-preserved 1885 Gothic Revival style building typical of late nineteenth century Chatham churches. The three oldest houses in the district, the Kirkman House, c. 1877, the Johnson House, c. 1883, and the John M. Foust House, c. 1881, are frame I-houses with retarditaire Greek Revival details such as sidelights, wide frieze boards and corner pilasters, probably influenced by the Academy dormitories. The diminutive scale and scalloped bargeboards of the Kirkman House reflect the influence, as well, of the cottage style popularized by A. J. Downing in the mid-nineteenth century. Mount Vernon Springs is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion A because of its significance in two historic contexts, education and resort life, both discussed in the Chatham County Multiple Resource Nomination listed in 1985. Mount Vernon Springs was intended for inclusion in this Multiple Resource Nomination, but is a late submission because of time and funding restraints. In the cover form, section 8, page 13, the district's significance in Chatham County education is clearly stated. Public schools of the mid-nineteenth century were quite plain, while the private schools were stylish and well-built structures. Baptist historian George Washington Paschal, who attended Mount Vernon Springs Academy (founded 1855) in the 1870s, described it as the "best-equipped" of all the Baptist academies in the state. It continued to offer high-quality education into the early 1900s. The choice of location near the well-known mineral springs resort was ideal. As Paschal remembered it, the male academy was "... a stately structure, large

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

enough to accommodate 100 students" and the female academy, separated from the male school by several hundred yards, was equipped with "...pianos, and palettes and paints and brushes...."¹ In the cover form, section 8, page 24, the district's significance as a resort is clearly stated in the following quote:

... in a number of instances, individual entrepreneurs strongly influenced the form and shape of town growth.... In 1881, after John M. Foust had "taken the cure" with the Mt. Vernon Springs mineral waters, he purchased the lodge and the springs and "carried out a program of enlargement and improvements which placed Mount Vernon among the major mineral springs resorts of the state." He added two extensive wings, each with a two-story piazza, to the hotel as well as a latticed pavilion at the springs. Later other structures were built before the springs passed its heyday in the 1920s. For a community which at that time had no more than fifteen scattered houses, this hotel with its attendant hustle and bustle had a major impact, social, commercial, and architectural.²

The hotel stood just east of the spring until its demolition in 1981.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although what is now western Chatham County was settled during the middle of the eighteenth century when the area was still part of Orange County, the small farming community of Mount Vernon Springs did not begin to develop its present form until after the Civil War. The prosperity of this small agrarian village coincided with the growing popularity of the mineral spring. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the spring became a major North Carolina health resort, new homes and churches were constructed and many of the community's older homes were expanded or remodeled. Even though the popularity of Mount Vernon Springs as a resort area declined after the First World War, the community still provides an excellent picture of the physical and social evolution of the small resort and farming village of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in North Carolina.

The area around Mount Vernon Springs was first settled by Quakers about 1750.³ According to local tradition, a Quaker meeting house was erected there in 1751⁴ and "A considerable number of Quaker homes were...built in the surrounding county...."⁵ This settlement, often referred to as Napton, disappeared due to the migration of many of these staunchly antislavery Quakers⁶ to such free states as Indiana during the early years of the nineteenth century.

These first settlers were originally attracted to the area by the availability of good farmland. However, the mineral spring located near where they built their homes quickly became an important consideration. The spring, initially used by the area's Indian population to cure a variety of illnesses, was used by white settlers as early as 1817.⁷ During the early nineteenth century it was known by such names as Indian Springs,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Quaker Springs, Dixon Springs, Healing Springs, and Mineral Springs, and by 1837 was being promoted as a health resort. Operated by William Bowen, a local farmer and merchant who lived a few miles to the northwest, this resort consisted of a modest hotel that housed visitors who came to drink the spring's healthful waters.

According to community tradition, the area adopted its present name in the early 1850s when John Washington, a relative of George Washington, moved to the vicinity. The name Mount Vernon Springs was taken from the name of the first president's famous plantation house. The springs continued to be an attraction, albeit a modest one, through the 1840s and 1850s. The lack of good facilities and adequate transportation kept the springs from becoming a major commercial proposition.¹⁰

The Mount Vernon Springs Academy was founded in 1855. The school was established by the Sandy Creek Association, composed of Baptists in Chatham and surrounding counties. The school consisted of separate male and female academies. Baptist historian George Washington Paschal, who attended Mount Vernon Academy, wrote that it was "an excellent school," while the Biblical Recorder, the state's Baptist newspaper, wrote in 1858 that the community was "one of the most favorable locations for a flourishing school in all the State." The school first opened for classes on January 1, 1856. Virginia Royster was in charge of the Female Academy, while R. P. Jones, an 1854 graduate of Wake Forest College, was principal of the Male Academy. The Reverend T. S. Yarboro became principal of both schools later in the 1850s. Despite this early change in leadership and a serious debt problem, the two schools had about one hundred students at the advent of the Civil War, about two thirds of whom were male. The school closed during the hostilities, except for a brief period in 1863-1864 when it reopened. The Academy was located just north of the springs on land purchased by the trustees from Abner Marsh.¹¹ The only two buildings known to have been constructed were the Male and Female Dormitories, both built about 1855.

At the onset of the Civil War, Mount Vernon Springs consisted of a small but "prosperous and industrious farming community of good character," a young but well-respected academy, and a relatively undeveloped mineral spring complex.¹² This continued to be the case in the years immediately following the war. The Academy reopened in 1865 under the principalship of A. J. Emerson, who was also a graduate of Wake Forest. He operated the school until 1871 when C. S. Siler took over as principal. The small farming community slowly recovered from the trials of war and reconstruction through the 1870s.¹³

Mount Vernon Springs experienced its major period of prosperity between 1881 and 1920. The catalyst for this period of growth was the arrival of John M. Foust and his subsequent development of the springs. According to local tradition, Foust (1852-1920), a native of Randolph County, visited the springs around 1880 with an undisclosed ailment. The waters cured his ailment in such a persuasive manner that Foust purchased the spring and the small hotel. He greatly enlarged the hotel which eventually had over 50 rooms, built a small cottage on the grounds, and a larger house for himself and his family.¹⁴

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Foust's venture was highly successful for a number of reasons. One reason was the reputed high quality of the water. According to one source: "its waters...were thought to have almost miraculous curative properties, especially for consumptive patients."¹⁵ Foust claimed the waters were "especially good for the kidneys, stomach troubles, teething babies, nervous and run-down men and women and are too well known to need a lengthy description." Foust's claims were part of an aggressive advertising and promotional campaign that put the name of the springs before the public throughout the Carolinas. The springs also benefited from the post-war expansion of Chatham's railroad system, in particular the establishment of stops at nearby Ore Hill and Siler City on the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway in the middle 1880s and the formation, also in the middle 1880s, of the Pittsboro Railroad Company. Most rail visitors to the springs came to Ore Hill and were then transported to the hotel by horse-drawn carriage. Foust became one of the county's most successful businessmen, and despite not being a native of the county, represented it in the 1891 North Carolina General Assembly.¹⁶

Mount Vernon Springs was more than just a place to treat physical ailments. Like other such springs, it was also a social gathering place, providing a vacation spot for local families, northern visitors, and courting couples. With this in mind, Foust's resort boasted both formal and square dancing, a pavilion, sumptuous dining, and facilities for bowling, tennis, swimming, and croquet. By the end of the nineteenth century, Mount Vernon Springs had become a well-known resort, with as many as four trains daily delivering visitors. Its mineral water was¹⁷ so well known that it was bottled at the springs and sold throughout the Carolinas.

The development of the springs stimulated growth in the community. A post office was established at the springs in 1882, while later in that decade a newspaper, the Star, was established in the community. The Star was edited by Robert Perleyman Johnson, one of several community notables who built substantial homes during this period. R. P. Johnson received an M.A. degree from Wake Forest in 1879. He then moved to Chatham County, where at various times he was principal of Mount Vernon Springs Academy, principal of the Thompson School in Siler City, superintendent of Chatham County Schools, and moderator of the Sandy Creek Association. Other houses built during this period were those of physician John Calhoun Kirkman (1834-1916) and Joseph A. Houston, owner of 312 acres and one of the community's largest farmers. Houston and his wife Margaret were influential in the mid 1880s founding of the Mount Vernon Springs Presbyterian Church, the sanctuary of which was built on land donated to the congregation by John Foust.¹⁸

While Mount Vernon Springs was prospering as a resort area, the nearby community of Ore Hill, through which the tracks of the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad ran, also experienced renewed vitality. Ore Hill's mineral deposits, which had been used during the Revolution and the Civil War, were being utilized by the state's first steel mill in Greensboro by the latter part of the century. In particular,¹⁹ large scale mining operations were conducted in Ore Hill in the early 1890s.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

By the end of the nineteenth century, Mount Vernon Springs had a population of about one hundred and possessed a general store, two blacksmiths, and a second church, in addition to the post office, doctor's office, and academy previously mentioned. One of the leading community residents during this period was Leon Lane, whose house dates from circa 1896. Lane was a farmer and politician, who was sheriff of Chatham County, from 1910 until 1920 and served one term, 1921, in North Carolina's General Assembly.²⁰

Mount Vernon Springs maintained its popularity into the early years of the twentieth century. Gradually patrons of mineral springs lost faith in the healing powers of the waters as twentieth century medical belief challenged their efficacy. The development of the automobile and its expanded transportation opportunities further eroded the popularity of the springs. The death of John Foust in 1920 marked the end of the major period of importance for the springs. His family attempted to operate the springs for a period before closing the hotel in the early 1930s. By this time, the Academy had been closed for about two decades. Thus the community reverted back to its early status as a modest farming community.²¹

Since its decline as a major resort area, the Mount Vernon Springs area has been moderately affected by the loss of significant properties, as well as the construction of intrusive structures. The Mount Vernon Springs Hotel and its surrounding buildings have been demolished and the Mount Vernon Springs Academy Male Dormitory has burned in recent years. Only two modern homes have been constructed in the community, however, and few modern additions or enclosures have been undertaken. The community today provides an excellent picture of the development of a small rural resort and farming village in North Carolina during the nineteenth century.

Although the Academy and the farming community are important components of the area's history, the Springs and the associated resort complex, represented in the district by the John Foust house, is the center of Mount Vernon Springs' primary historical significance. Particularly in the period from 1881 to 1920, when the resort was at its peak, the springs and John Foust's resort hotel combined to give Mount Vernon Springs a distinctive historical identity and importance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

- ¹ George Washington Paschal, article in North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. XVIII (No. 1, 1951), cited in Wade H. Hadley, Jr., and others, Chatham County, 1771-1971 (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1971), 277-279, hereinafter cited as Hadley, Chatham County.
- ² Hadley, Chatham County, 197; and "A Chapter in our History and Heritage is Fading Away But...Nature's Clear Mineral Springs Continue to Flow," Chatham Record, August 5, 1976.
- ³ Hadley, Chatham County, 197.
- ⁴ Hadley, Chatham County, 232.
- ⁵ Hadley, Chatham County, 5.
- ⁶ Letter from Mrs. Samuel Rees, June 15, 1977, Dowd Family History, Rees Collection, Wrenn Memorial Library, Siler City, N.C.
- ⁷ Hadley, Chatham County, 197.
- ⁸ Hadley, Chatham County, 197; George Washington Paschal, History of Wake Forest College (Wake Forest, N.C.: Wake Forest College, three volumes, 1935-1943), I, 326, hereinafter cited as Paschal, History of Wake Forest College.
- ⁹ Sanford Herald, February 1, 1975.
- ¹⁰ Hadley, Chatham County, 196; Paschal, History of Wake Forest College, I, 326.
- ¹¹ Paschal, History of Wake Forest College, I, 326-329.
- ¹² Paschal, History of Wake Forest College, I, 326.
- ¹³ Paschal, History of Wake Forest College, II, 420.
- ¹⁴ Hadley, Chatham County, 197; Chatham News-Record, August 5, 1976; Chatham County Deed Book BG, p. 255. Foust paid \$1,250 for 190 acres in 1881 to Lizzie Andrews.
- ¹⁵ Paschal, History of Wake Forest College, I, 326.
- ¹⁶ Hadley, Chatham County. 162-164. 438; Greensboro Daily News, April 14, 1920.
- ¹⁷ Chatham News-Record, August 5, 1976; News and Observer (Raleigh), September 1, 1963; Interview with Bernice Foust, June 17, 1983. ...Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Chatham County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

¹⁸ Paschal, History of Wake Forest College, II, 425-426; News and Observer, September 19, 1924; Hadley, Chatham County, 198; Chatham County Deed Book DV, p. 6; Book DV, p. 7; Book DV, p. 11; Chatham County Will Book G, p. 571.

¹⁹ Ray Manieri, "The North Carolina Iron and Steel Company: An Early Attempt at Industrial Development in Greensboro," Greensboro Magazine, October-November, 1983, 24.

²⁰ Levi Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory, 1896 (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896), 172-180; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Chatham County, North Carolina, Population Schedule; News and Observer, November 3, 1941.

²¹ News and Observer, September 1, 1963; Hadley, Chatham County, 198-199; Chatham County Will Book H, p. 219.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9-10 Page 1

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-

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 122.33

UTM References

A

1	7
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6	4	0	3	5	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	9	4	7	7	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

1	7
---	---

6	4	1	0	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	9	4	7	2	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

C

1	7
---	---

6	4	1	2	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	9	4	6	5	9	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

D

1	7
---	---

6	4	0	9	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	9	4	6	4	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Mount Vernon Springs Historic District, consisting of 122.33 acres of land, includes the following parcels of land from Chatham County Tax Map #8669: 8315; 7087, the northwest section (3.6 acres) of 1683; 7222; 7415; 1350; R. G. Hancock Heirs (25.00 acres); 6133; 0685; 4130; 6170; 9152; 7540; 3299 and 2769.

See continuation sheet

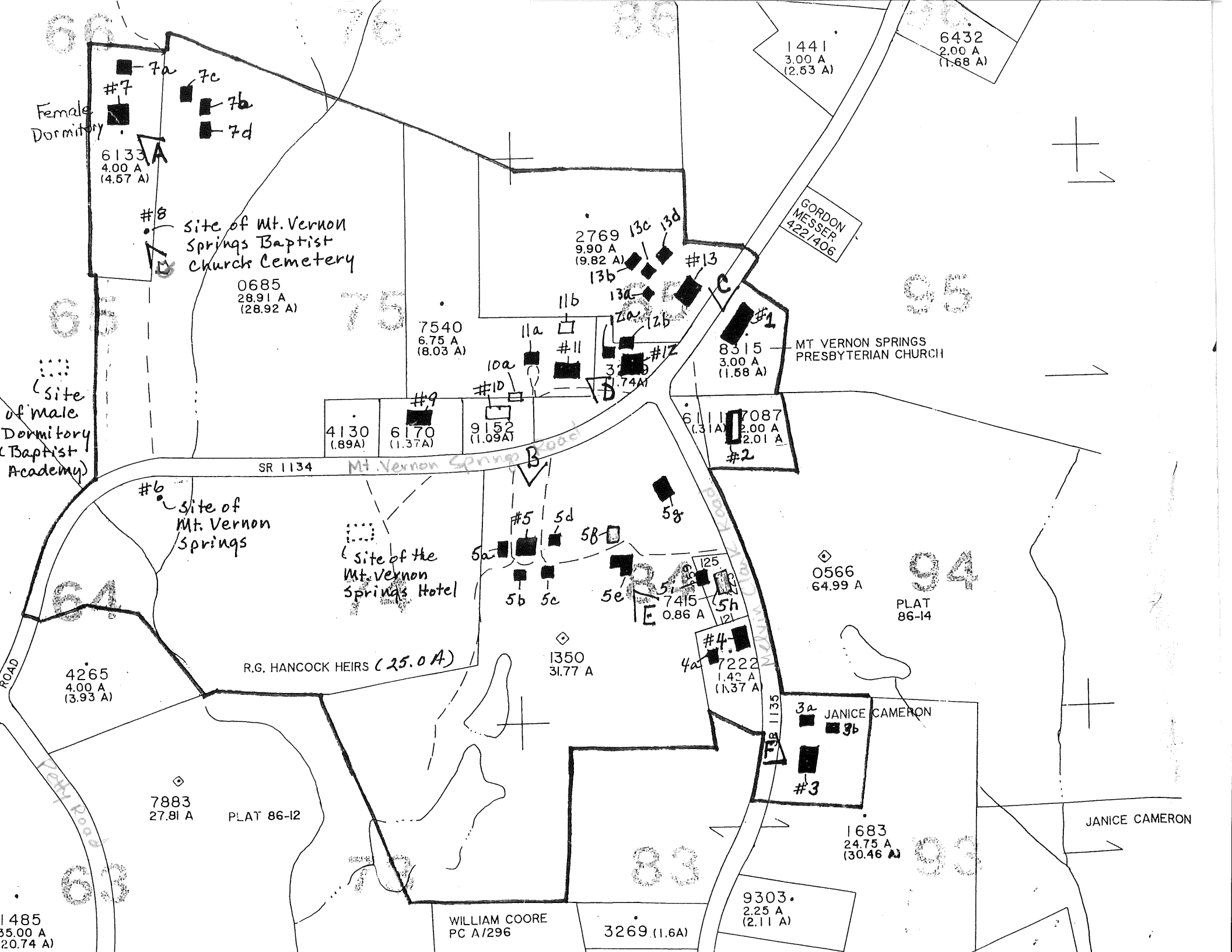
Boundary Justification

Mt.Vernon Springs Historic District includes all buildings and their surrounding land which are associated with the period of significance c. 1855-1920. The boundaries follow the property lines of parcels of land as drawn on the Chatham County Tax Map #8669, in all cases except for parcel #1683 where only the northwest corner, 3.5 acres of open farm land surrounding the Dr. John C. Kirkman House, is included. The remainder of the property associated with the Kirkman House is now in woodland and does not contribute to the significance of the house.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cindy Craig, Jim Sumner, Rachel Osborne, Ray Manieri
organization NC Division of Archives and History date 1985-1987
street & number 109 East Jones Street telephone (919) 733-6545
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27611



Female Dormitory

Site of Mt. Vernon Springs Baptist Church Cemetery

Site of Mt. Vernon Springs

Site of the Mt. Vernon Springs Hotel

GORDON MESSER 422/406

MT VERNON SPRINGS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JANICE CAMERON

JANICE CAMERON

SR 1134

Mt. Vernon Springs Road

SR 1135

1485 35.00 A (20.74 A)

4265 4.00 A (3.93 A)

7883 27.81 A

PLAT 86-12

0685 28.91 A (28.92 A)

4130 (.89A)

6170 (1.37A)

9152 (1.09A)

7540 6.75 A (8.03 A)

2769 9.90 A (9.82 A)

8315 3.00 A (1.58 A)

6111 2.00 A (2.01 A)

0566 64.99 A

PLAT 86-14

1350 31.77 A

7222 1.42 A (1.37 A)

1683 24.75 A (30.46 A)

9303 2.25 A (2.11 A)

WILLIAM COORE PC A/296

3269 (1.6A)

6432 2.00 A (1.68 A)

1441 3.00 A (2.63 A)

95

94

83

93

66

76

86

65

75

64

63

