

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name White-Meyer House  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1624 Crescent Place, N.W.  not for publication N/A  
city, town Washington  vicinity N/A  
state District of Columbia code D.C. county N/A code 001 zip code 20009

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Carol P. Thompson 3 December 1987  
Signature of certifying official State Historic Preservation Officer Date

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:)

Patrick W. Adams 1/20/88  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Organizational

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Brick

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roof Steelother Limestone

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The White-Meyer residence at 1624 Crescent Place is situated on approximately one and one-half acres atop Meridian Hill. It is a large-scaled forty room brick mansion that is surrounded by landscaped grounds. The building is three stories in height, seven bays wide and its third floor is recessed behind a brick and limestone parapet. A rectangular porte cochere on the principal facade (north) adds to the boldly defined and symmetrical appearance.

The house occupies lots 806 and 808 within square 2568 and is bordered by Crescent Place on the north, Sixteenth Street on the east, Belmont Street on the south, and Meridian House on the west. The lot shape is an irregular rectangle (437'10" on the south, 170'2" on the east, 484'2" on the north and 180' on the west) that has been ordered and formalized by a continuous brick retaining wall, which provides a heightened level landscaped setting. The east garden which borders 16th Street is separated from the house with brick stairs, retaining walls and a wrought iron gazebo with copper roof. A variety of plantings including hemlock, English ivy, magnolia, locust, maple and oak can be found throughout the garden.

At the entrance to the property on Crescent Place, the enclosure walls are accented by limestone Tuscan Doric pylons which support wrought iron gates approximately 11' high. A lion mask fountain above a sarcophagus basin, both of limestone and set in a retaining wall and balustrade, greet each visitor to 1624 Crescent Place. The upper portion of the house can be seen from the entranceway and provides a magnificent sight of the imposing scale of the property. The five limestone capped brick chimneys accentuate the horizontal structure.

The approach to the house features a concrete elliptical driveway with limestone curbing. This leads to a central pavilion and porte cochere flanked by eight paired and pedestalled columns supporting full entablature and balustrade. Five limestone risers lead from the porte cochere to the vestibule. The parapet balusters, cornice, porte cochere, loggia and decorative trim are all limestone.

**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  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1910-1929  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1910  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

White, Henry  
Meyer, Eugene and Agnes E.

Architect/Builder

Pope, John Russell  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

The White-Meyer house is an important element along Washington's famous Sixteenth Street, and is significant for its association with its occupants and the excellent revivalist architecture of the noted American architect John Russell Pope. The house attained landmark status in 1964 when it was listed on the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Places.

The wide boulevard stretching for seven miles from the White House to the border of Maryland, is known as Sixteenth Street. This street is the geographic meridian of the City of Washington as it was originally laid out by Pierre L'Enfant. Sixteenth Street was briefly called The Avenue of the Presidents by an Act of Congress in 1913, at the urging of Mary Foote Henderson, the great Sixteenth Street/Meridian Hill advocate; but when she was out of town in July, 1914, Congress returned the street to its original name.

The section of 16th Street which covers Meridian Hill lies between Florida Avenue and Columbia Road. The site of an important farm in the early 1800's, the area remained rural farmland until the late 1880's and wasn't even paved until 1900. During the Civil War, Meridian Hill housed the Massachusetts Brigade and the New York 77th Regiment. One of the more colorful individuals who lived on Meridian Hill was Joaquin Miller, known as the Poet of the Sierras. He was a "free spirit" of the old West having been a horse thief, journalist, lawyer, judge, world traveler and poet. The cabin he built near the present juncture of Crescent Place and Belmont Street in 1883 was moved to Rock Creek Park in 1912.

The first important residence on Meridian Hill was built by Senator John B. Henderson in 1888 at 16th Street and Florida Avenue. Known as Boundary Castle (the earlier name of Florida Avenue was Boundary Avenue), it became home to the Senator and his

See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Commission of Fine Arts, Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. I. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1978.

Conroy, Sarah Booth, "Sweet Sixteenth", The Washington Post, Washington, D.C., August 28, 1987, Weekend Section, pp.52-54.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

D.C. Historic Preservation Office

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property One and one-half acres

### UTM References

A 

1	8	3	2	3	2	9	0	4	3	0	9	6	0	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

Begin at the southwest corner of 16th Street and Crescent Place, N.W., proceed west on Crescent Place to Meridian House, south along the boundary with Meridian House to Belmont Street, east along Belmont Street to 16th Street, and north along 16th Street to the point of origin at the southwest corner of 16th Street and Crescent Place, N.W. The nominated property is marked with a heavy black line on the sketch map of the site.

See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The White-Meyer House and its grounds occupy all of lots 806 and 808 within square 2568 in Northwest Washington.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marilyn Zuckerman, Development Officer

organization Meridian House International date October 23, 1987

street & number 1630 Crescent Place, N.W. telephone (202) 667-6800

city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20009

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Wrought iron balcony railings with brass knobs and center estucheon enhance the six 12 over 12 double hung windows on the first floor. The window architraves have overtablet flanked by scrolls to support cornices.

The south facade, set approximately 20 feet above Belmont Street, consists of a loggia with paired columns leading to a terrace which overlooks the city. Its quarry tile floor, portrait plaques and stone niches for pedestals are among the ornamental details which characterize this elegant mansion. Above the loggia, a balcony with an exceptional view of downtown Washington is reached from a tripartite entrance from the master bath.

The original interiors were mostly Georgian in style. Several fine mantels, likely English originals, were installed. The first floor includes floor-length windows or French doors, oak parquet floors and high mahogany doors (11'4") which separate the chambers from the hall.

The half circle shaped vestibule is entered from the port cochere through black enameled Adamesque cast iron grill work doors backed by glass panels. The vestibule, which is more like an enclosed porch than an interior space, leads through a paneled wood double door into the entrance hall. This hall is one of the two largest spaces in the house. Its high mahogany doors lead to the dining room, library and sitting room. A cased opening and false doorway on the west wall provide the symmetry for which John Russell Pope was known. The floor is composed of cast stone squares laid diagonally and connected by black slate squares. An inner border of black slate within a cast stone outer border and black slate baseboard, creates a most attractive effect.

The sitting room, which opens into the drawing room, was considerably remodeled in 1934. Originally, it reflected the era of George I and II. It was used to handle secondary circulation between the hall, drawing room and library.

The largest room in the house is the drawing room. It has floor length windows on three sides, and its exposure is generally eastern. It is an ideal place for gatherings with its light and airy quality and large size.

The library, with its walnut panels and bookcases inspires

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thoughts of study and reflection. It is one of two rooms opening onto the loggia and terrace with its view of Meridian Hill Park and Belmont Street.

The dining room and stair hall complete the public rooms of first floor. The dining room also opens to the terrace, and in fact makes use of this southwest exposure by seeming to incorporate the outdoor space into the room. The stair hall consists of a dramatic semi-octagonal stairway modelled on early 19th century English prototypes.

A small office and pantry are also located on the first floor. The office is paneled similarly to the library and is an intimate room suitable for private discussion.

The second floor consists of bedrooms used by the White family, a small sitting room, a guest room, a servant's room, a linen room, two baths, and a dressing room which opens onto one of the house's more unusual features, a second floor loggia and terrace. This terrace provides a magnificent view of the city including the Capitol, Washington Monument, Meridian Hill Park and downtown skyline. Large windows with multiple exposures in many of the rooms give a light open feel to the space. Fireplaces with marble chimneypieces and detailed plaster work on walls and ceilings carry the elegance of the downstairs public rooms to the family quarters. Servant quarters were located on the third floor.

The White-Meyer House is similar in scale, craftsmanship, and style to that of the neighboring buildings along the Sixteenth Street corridor that form a distinct international community comprised of embassies, chanceries and diplomatic organizations. Despite changes in ownership and usage over the years, the house retains much of its original detail and ornament and has its architectural integrity intact.

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Integrity Clarification

On December 18, 1987, a fire consumed all of the woodwork in the first floor library of the White-Meyer house. The loss consisted of destroyed bookcases, broken windows and smoke damage.

The restoration of the library was near completion when the fire occurred. Substantial documentation, in the form of photographs and drawings, as well as actual sections of the cabinetwork survive. The library will be completely replicated employing materials and craftsmanship that will result in an identical reproduction of the original.

The White-Meyer House was nominated to the National Register by the D.C. State Historic Preservation officer on December 3, 1987. When the library is completely replicated, the architectural and historical integrity of the White-Meyer House will be substantially intact. Presently, the property meets the National Register criteria for which it was nominated by the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer.

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wife, Mary Foote Henderson, who crusaded for the development of the area. Mrs. Henderson wanted the area to become the most fashionable in town and toward this end she purchased blocks of real estate, built residences to sell as embassies, and promoted the construction of Meridian Hill Park.

Other projects Mrs. Henderson envisioned for Meridian Hill which did not materialize were the creation of a new, grand scale Presidential Mansion; location of the Lincoln Memorial as designed by John Russell Pope; and location of the Jefferson Memorial. Although she did not succeed in all her endeavors, Mrs. Henderson created great interest in the neighborhood. Many churches and embassies did locate here and magnificent residences for some of Washington's most prominent citizens, such as the Laughlin and White residences, were constructed. Meridian Hill Park is a beautiful Italianate garden known for its poured concrete sculpture.

The land at 1624 Crescent Place was purchased by Henry White in 1910 from Richard and Ellen Dubois who had owned and lived on the property from approximately 1875 until it was sold in 1910. Mr. White was concluding a 30 year diplomatic career and was retiring as U.S. Ambassador to France. He secured the services of architect John Russell Pope to design a residence for himself and his wife, Margaret Rutherford White.

Mr. and Mrs. White moved into the house in 1912. Although Henry White had retired from the diplomatic service, he was still involved in affairs of state. His career included service in Vienna, London, Italy and France. After retirement, he represented the United States at the signing of treaties, settlement of international disputes and at important international conferences. He was influential in activities during World War I and in fact in 1917 lent his house to the mission from France, headed by Marshall Joffre and M. Viviani. Here, military and naval cooperation between the U.S., France and Britain was established; the plans made at 1624 Crescent Place were later implemented on the battlefields of Europe. These events bespeak the historic importance of the building.

After Mrs. White's death, Henry White leased the house in 1918 to Senator Peter Goelet Gerry of Rhode Island. Senator Gerry was the great grandson of Elbridge Gerry, a signer of the Declaration of



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Independence, governor of Massachusetts and Vice President under Madison.

In 1920 Henry White married Emily Vanderbilt Sloane and returned to 1624 Crescent Place. The house once again became the scene of diplomatic and political entertaining. President Warren Harding often dined there; Clemenceau was a house guest in 1922; and Lord Robert Cecil stayed in 1923 and 1925. Henry White died in 1927, leaving the house to his son, John Campbell White, also a diplomat.

John White purchased additional lots extending the property to 16th Street between Belmont Street and Crescent Place. He leased the house in 1929 to Eugene Meyer, who was then head of the Federal Farm Labor Board. In 1934, Mr. Meyer purchased the house and had it remodeled by Charles A. Platt, architect of the Freer Gallery. At this time Mr. Meyer, who had been a financier with interests in railroads, copper, oil and automobiles, was publisher and editor of The Washington Post.

Eugene Meyer died in 1959, but both before his death and after, the Crescent Place house was a gathering site for the political elite of Washington. His wife Agnes, a newspaper correspondent, art collector and social reformer continued the Meyer involvement with Washington society. Among guests who frequented the house were Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and Senators Robert and Edward Kennedy. Eleanor Roosevelt spent many nights there and Adlai Stevenson and Mayor Walter Washington were also guests of the Meyers.

Upon Agnes Meyers' death in 1970 the house became the property of the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation. It was leased to the Antioch School of Law in 1972 and was purchased in 1987 by Meridian House International (MHI), a non-profit educational and cultural institution promoting international and cross-cultural understanding. Since 1960, MHI has occupied 1630 Crescent Place, the former Laughlin residence which is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. MHI plans a major renovation and restoration project for 1624 Crescent Place which will be joined with its current property to form an intercultural campus offering cross-cultural training, exhibitions, lectures, community activities and office space for the many programs of MHI.

The White-Meyer House remains an excellent example of early 20th

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Century revivalist architecture. The high surrounding walls allow the house to capitalize on its dramatic site, and add to its overscaled nature. The large brick residence, with its formal and symmetrical facades is stylistically within the realm of Georgian revival while it displays a range of elements that refer to the Italian Renaissance, such as the Tuscan Doric detail of the loggia. The White-Meyer House, together with Meridian House to its west, forms an entire city block of Meridian Hill with a unique Pope-designed entity.

The architect for 1624 Crescent Place was John Russell Pope (1874--1937). Mr. Pope obtained his architecture degree from Columbia University and was responsible for the design of many prominent buildings in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. In addition to the White-Meyer house, Mr. Pope designed the Laughlin House, now Meridian House International right next door on Crescent Place. He was instrumental to Washington's reputation as a city of monuments, designing the Jefferson Memorial, the National Gallery of Art, the National Archives and the Scottish Rite Temple, among other buildings. The Temple was a major component of the development of Sixteenth Street.

Mr. Pope achieved prominence throughout the United States having designed residences, buildings and monuments in Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Kentucky, Maryland and elsewhere. He was awarded the Medal of Honor from the Architectural League of New York in 1917 and the Gold Medal Award from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1919. The significance of John Russell Pope's contribution to the development of Washington is well documented. Meridian House International, which is adjacent to the White-Meyer House and also designed by Pope, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Extensive remodeling was done in 1934 by the Meyer family. Under the supervision of William Platt, son of the architect Charles A. Platt who had designed the Freer Gallery, the architectural ornament was simplified in many of the house's public and private rooms. The most drastic change was the removal of columns and entablature from the reception hall.

When occupied by the Antioch School of Law in 1972 fire code requirements caused additional remodeling to be done, such as the construction of a fire escape on the exterior east wall of the

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building. Lighting fixtures were replaced and other interior changes were made.

Despite a period of neglect in recent years, the house still retains much of its original detail and character. No major structural changes have been made and the magnificent detail of the building remains. The renovation planned by Meridian House International has been designed by the noted restoration architect Belinda Reeder, and will restore the house to as much of its original design as possible. The ceilings, floor and walls throughout the first floor will be thoroughly repaired, cleaned and refinished and all doors, windows and beautiful period hardware will be restored to full operation.

Although the Meridian Hill area went through a period of neglect in the mid-20th century, it has been revitalized with the help of historic preservation initiatives, development of new and renovated housing for District residents, and the creation of the exciting multi-ethnic neighborhood of Adams Morgan with its variety of restaurants, cafes and shops. Already listed on the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites, recognition of the White-Meyer House as a national historic site will add to the significance of the area and allow a sense of its historic development to coexist with its new ambience.

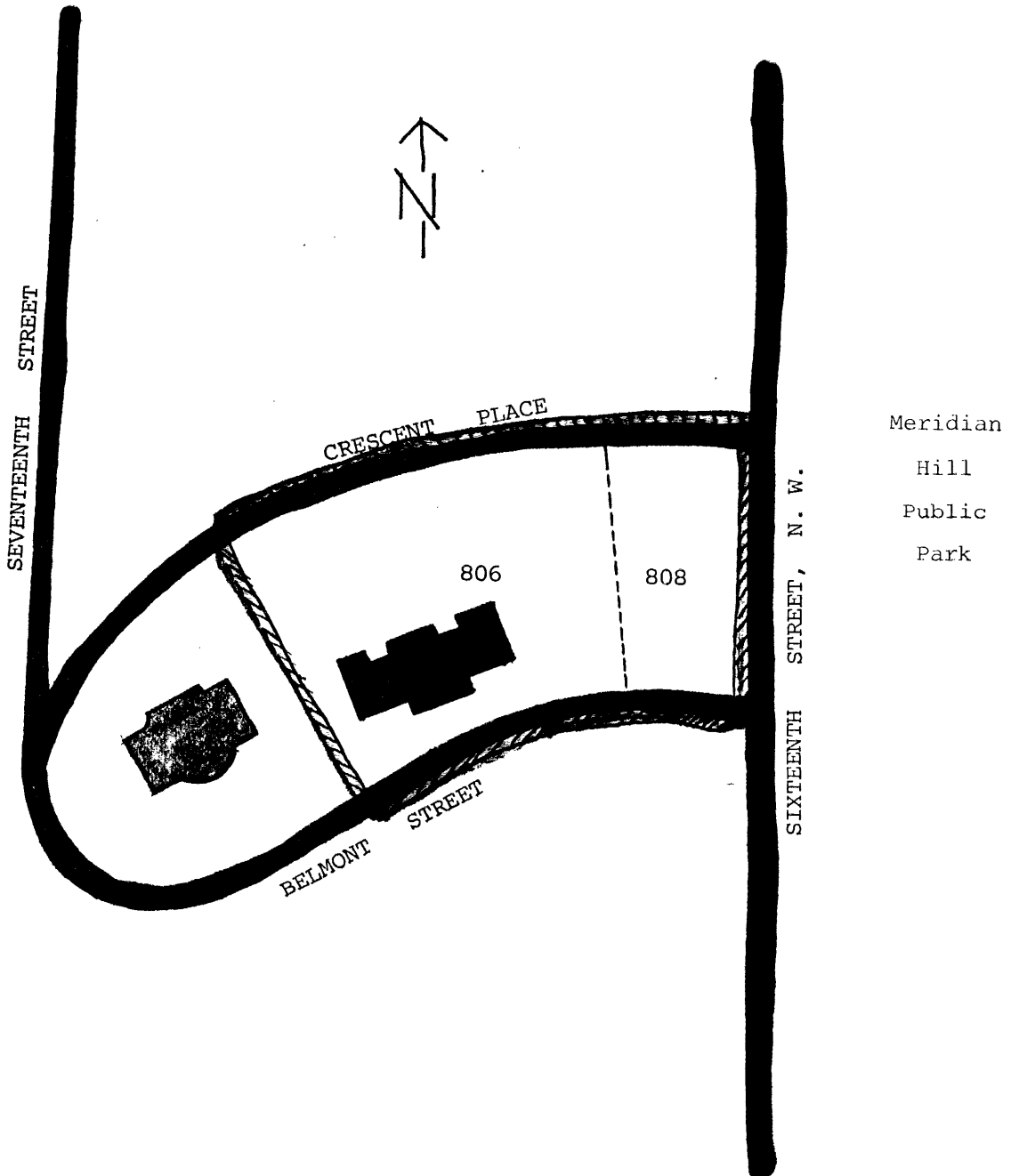
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DETAIL OF USGS MAP

refer to Section 10  
for UTM coordinates

