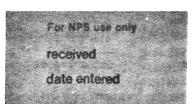
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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



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Category district _X building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered	Status occupied unoccupiedX work in progress AccessibleX yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park X private residence religious scientific transportation other:
4. Own	er of Proper	ty .		
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7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The 1928 Tate House is a residential but fully-developed and sophisticated Colonial Revival residence designed by New York architect Electus D. Litchfield who incorporated "modern" 1920's amenities into a traditional Georgian and Federal-era design. The house sits on a low rise near the center of a large, nearly-three-acre lot along the north side of West Union Street in the western Piedmont town of Morganton, seat of Burke County (N.C.). West Union is characterized by substantial late-Victorian (primarily Queen-Anne) and early-20th-century houses. The street was the location for the homes of the professional upper-class of Morganton, many of whom built architect-designed, brick, Colonial Revival structures.

The house is fronted by an expansive, sloping lawn and is flanked by a mix of large deciduous shade trees. A driveway follows the eastern edge of the property and is bordered by a granite-block retaining wall (new) and a row of evergreen trees on the east. The drive leads to a 1928, 2-bay garage, compatible in style and materials to the main house. The stone used in the recently installed granite-faced walkways, patios and terraces is also nearly identical to the masonry material of the house. (The stone for this new work was taken from the same Mt. Airy, N.C., quarry as the original material was 56 years earlier.) The only other structure on the site is a small, dilapidated frame "pony-shed" standing at the back of the property.

The main block of the house is a 2-story, gable-sided, $52' \times 33'$ rectangular mass with symmetrical 5×2 -bay fenestration. A 2-story, 2×2 -bay gabled wing projects from the east side of the main block and is recessed on the facade but is flush with the main block on the rear elevation. Both the wing and main block are constructed of irregularly-coursed, rock-faced granite blocks flecked with mica, feldspar and quartz. This stone was taken from the quarries of the North Carolina Granite Corp. at Mount Airy (N.C.). Identical granite masonry work is also used for the unshouldered, exterior chimneys standing at the center of each gable end of the main house and wings.

The foundation is slightly raised on all sides except on the northeast corner where the grade level falls off and the cellar is fully exposed and accessible through an outside door. The main and wing roofs are slate-shingled and terminated at the eaves by copper-lined box-gutters (the downspouts and joint boxes are also copper). The boxed cornice, running across the eaves and raking along the gables, consists of a molded fascia and a soffit embellished with mutule blocks drilled with "guttae"-like holes, above a narrow denticulated frieze board.

The window fenestration is generally regular, symmetrically arranged in five bays around the central entry on the facade. The majority of the windows consist of dougle-hung 9/9-sash (with ovolo muntins) recessed in rectangular openings topped by flat arches made up of granite voussoirs and a central keystone. Louvered wooden shutters are held back by S-shaped wrought-iron latches.

The facade (south) is dominated by a central entry consisting of an arched-topped opening finished with panelled reveals and intrados. Recessed within this opening is a raised-panel door flanked by 3/4-length sidelights and topped by an elliptical fanlight. The fanlight is divided by muntins creating a radiating pattern. The entryway is sheltered by a semi-circular, flat-roofed portico supported on two

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Roman-Doric wooden columns and two flat pilasters. The columns and pilasters have torus-molded capitals and square wooden bases which rest on a three-tiered, semi-circular, granite porch. The portico has a three-part entablature including a denticulated cornice. Parts of this portico have been substantially rebuilt recently, but accurately duplicate the original fabric.

Three gabled dormers are regularly spaced across the roof and are embellished with molded box-cornices, corner pilasters and 6/6-sash windows under round arches. The eastern wing is fronted by a shed-roofed porch supported on three Roman-Doric columns similar to those on the central portico; the space below the porch railing is filled by widely spaced, diamond-patterned latticework (partly rebuilt). The east and west gable-end elevations are relatively unadorned save for the raking cornice, the windows flanking the chimneys at each floor level and a pair of small, quarter-round attic lights on the west elevation.

The rear (north) elevation is composed of an irregular-spaced fenestration pattern dictated by the interior room arrangements. Two dormers, identical to those on the facade, pierce the roof of the main block. The rear of the wing consists of two bays, the inner one of which has a kitchen door sheltered under a shed-roofed, glass-enclosed porch which is detailed similarly to that on the wing facade; the cellar door lies under this kitchen porch. The rear elevation of the main block is made up of three main bays on the first level — the rear entry of the central hall flanked by a slightly-bowed library window on the left and a projecting, 2-tiered sleeping porch on the right. The library bay-window is composed of three sections containing 9/9-sash windows above panelled spandrels, the whole arrangement set in a slightly recessed bay with a segmentally arched top. Three 6/6-sash windows lie above this bay-window on the second floor.

A semi-circular portico, slightly smaller but similarly detailed as that on the facade, shelters the rear, glass-panelled, center-hall entry door which lies under a semi-circular, louvred fanlight. Above this porticoed entry is a large double-hung, stairway-landing window with an arched top. The west-end bay lies under a pedimented, two-tiered porch, originally open on the ground-level and screened-in on the upper sleeping-porch level, but now enclosed with new casement windows on both levels. The cornice on this projecting porch is detailed similarly to that on the main house except for a wider frieze board; the porch itself is supported on six two-floor-height square posts with molded caps. The porch shelters a double-leaf French door -- which leads to the parlor -- and is topped by a semi-circular fanlight with radiating muntins. A new glass-panelled door provides access to the porch at ground level on the pedimented end. Extensive terrace and patio areas lie adjacent to the house on the rear and west ends. These are recent additions, but in materials and quality of workmanship are very compatible with the house.

The interior is generally characterized by restrained Classical detailing, most elaborate in the center-hall, parlor and dining room. The first floor follows a modified Georgian plan with a parlor on the left of the center-hall, and dining-room (front) and library (rear) on the right. The wing is mostly relegated to service space -- the kitchen, pantry, servant's stairway, etc. The second-floor plan is centered

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around a long, transverse hall flanked by bedrooms of various sizes. All the interior walls are plaster (or, in some cases, plasterboard replacement), generally trimmed with a wide, flat baseboard with a molded top-edge. Most of the doors consist of six raised panels — the top two much shorter than the bottom four — and have small, round brass knobs. The door and window casings are composed of wide, applied-moldings with a complex profile. Most of the windows are set in deep, splayed openings finished with panelled reveals. Some of the aforementioned woodwork is newly installed, replacing deteriorated material, but closely matches the original.

The wide, central hall is dominated by a grand, cantilevered oak staircase which turns in a 180-degree ellipse against the rear wall. The hallway is delineated into two spaces at mid-point by an archway springing from fluted pilasters. Hallway doors leading to the parlor and dining-room are topped by relatively simple triangular pediments with molded edges and set on a wide Echinus frieze. A denticulated wooden crown-molding runs around the hallway ceiling, and is also seen in the parlor and dining room. The open-string stairway has a molded rail supported on attenuated, turned balusters (two per tread) and is terminated by a turn-out on a slender Federal-style turned newelpost.

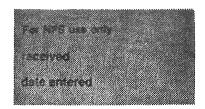
The west parlor is highlighted by deeply-set windows with splayed panelled reveals, double-leaf French doors leading to the rear porch and gable-end patio, and a wide, Classically-inspired mantelpiece set at the center of the gable-end hall (this is a replacement). The dining-room mantel has been replaced by a "Franklin"-type wood stove enframed by a new, bolection-molded, marblized surround.

The kitchen space has been completely modernized and now occupies a space once consisting of a pantry, servants' dining-room and the smaller original kitchen. The second-floor detailing is generally much simpler, except for a fireplace -- set at a 45-degree angle -- in the corner of the southwestern bedroom, fronted by a Classically-detailed mantelpiece. One of the original five bedrooms has been converted to a large bathroom which serves the master bedroom now occupying most of the eastern wing. The two front bedrooms and the open attic space have been recently finished with well-crafted, floor-to-ceiling cedar panelling on the walls.

The cellar is still divided into spaces once used as wood storage, preserve-storage, a boiler room and a three-tub laundry room. The original granite-block garage has a gabled slate roof, boxed cornice, and 6/6-sash windows along the sides; the facade consists of twin folding, wooden doors set under segmental arches. Flanking wood porch wings with roof balustrades are new additions. During Frank Tate's day, he always kept Packard automobiles here.

Presently, the house is undergoing a thorough restoration on both the exterior and interior by the present owners. This effort is one of several being undertaken along "revitalized" West Union Street.

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Note on Condition and Integrity of Building Prior to 1983-85 Rehabilitation and on Results of Rehabilitation

Prior to the rehabilitation project undertaken by the current owners, R. M. and Pamela Bennett, in 1983-85, the Franklin Pierce Tate House was basically intact, with all original materials still in the house; but it was in a deteriorated state, the product of years of under-maintenance. The front and rear entrance porticos and major exterior cornices displayed water damage in the form of general loss of paint integrity and extensive areas of rotted wood. Although the state of disrepair extended to the interior of the house, the damage to original materials there was limited to "falling plaster" and isolated areas of water damage associated with rainwater drainage problems on the building's exterior as well as plumbing problems. The building's grounds were similarly unkempt but still reflected the original landscaping as executed, with no significant changes. A frame "pony shed" at the back of the property was in a delapidated and unsalvageable state.

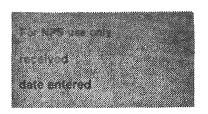
In general the recent rehabilitation project sought to maintain and enhance the original character of the house. Major alterations were limited to the property's land-scaping and a rear porch wing. Other changes were, for the most part, minor and affect the building's character only subtly. There is no question but that the quality of the work done during the rehabilitation is high, in keeping with the original construction.

A series of walls, stairs, and patios were added to the property's landscaping during the rehabilitation, the overall effect of which is to give the grounds a more formal and monumental character. The driveway was widened and lined with a low granite wall, which acts as a retaining wall on the high side against the lawn. A monumental, semiellipse forms an entranceway onto the property. A grandly sweeping stairway rises from the enlarged parking area to the side of the house. Two paved patios were created to the rear of the house, one rectilinear, another with low curving walls. All the new stonework was executed with Mt. Airy granite that closely matches the original stonework. Several mature trees were removed from the front lawn to open the view to the house.

The building owner points out that landscaping plans developed for the property in 1927 by E. S. Draper of Charlotte were never executed and that the recent work is in keeping with the character of these unexecuted plans. The owner has been told it was the cost of the 1927 landscaping scheme which prevented its implementation.

The major change to the house itself during the rehabilitation involved the closure of a rear porch wing with a stone knee-wall and casement windows. Other minor and service areas on the interior were considerably remodeled, including the kitchen and a ground-floor "den." Much original material was removed from the house's major ground-floor spaces, but for the most part it was replaced with new material that reproduces the original. This would include ground-floor doors and moldings and some interior woodwork associated with the entrance composition. Other changes would include the loss of delicate muntin patterns in the entrance fanlight and sidelights, loss of a chairrail in the entrance hall, and the replacement of original mantels. The original

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mantel in the dining room was a federal style antique thought to have been taken from an early Burke County house. It was not the mantel that had been designed for the room by architect Litchfield and, according to the present owners, was not the correct size for the chimney. It was replaced with a bold bolection-molded, marblized surround.

While the removal and replacement of so much original material in the house is of concern to the State Historic Preservation Office and must be considered not in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects, one must here balance that concern with a realization that the overall character of the house is little changed and the quality of the work exceptionally high.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899 X 1900-	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agricultureX architecture art commerce communications	community plans conservation economics education engineering		religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	Ruilt 1928	Builder/Architect	Electus D. Litchfield,	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The 1928 Franklin Pierce Tate House is an excellent example of the Georgian Revival style, designed by New York Architect Electus D. Litchfield, and executed in Mount Airy (N.C.) granite. The residence is prominently sited on a large lot on West Union Street, the preeminent residential neighborhood of the western piedmont town of Morganton, seat of Burke County. For its time and place, the house was a restrained, yet perhaps the most eloquent and architecturally-sophisticated example of the Colonial Revival, the style of choice by Morganton's entrepreneurial class of the 1920s. It is associated with Franklin Pierce Tate, prominent Morganton banker and cotton-mill president, and his wife Martha Thomason Tate, principal at the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton.

Criteria Assessment:

- B. Associated with Franklin Pierce Tate (1867-1937) whose careers in banking, real estate, engineering and textile manufacturing typified the multi-faceted venture-of Morganton's successful entrepreneurial class of the early 20th-century, and his wife, Martha Thomason Tate (1882-1974) who was principal of the North Carolina School for the Deaf from 1918-22 and 1937-48. Both were descended from distinguished North or South Carolina families.
- C. With its impressive stone massing and finely-crafted details, the Tate House embodies one of the finest examples of Colonial Revival architecture in Morganton; it is the design of New York architect Electus Litchfield who was known for his Colonial Revival residential works.

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The 1928 Tate House was built for Franklin Pierce Tate (1867-1937), a prominent Morganton banker and mill-owner, and his wife Martha Thomason Tate (1882-1974), who was principal at the North Carolina School for the Deaf. Frank Tate was born on October 30, 1867, the first of ten children of Colonel Samuel McDowell Tate and his wife, Jennie Sophronia Pearson. The Tate ancestors had come to Philadelphia in 1763 from County Derry, Ireland, and subsequently moved to Burke County, in the western piedmont of North Carolina, in 1789.

Tate's father Samuel had a distinguished life, serving as a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army, as a president of the Western North Carolina Railroad, a representative in the State Legislature (1874, 1880, 1882 and 1884) and appointed as State Treasurer of North Carolina in 1892. Colonel Tate was also largely responsible for the establishment of the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton.

Frank Tate spent his childhood at The Cedars, his family's c.1850 in-town Greek Revival mansion, and received his early education at the c.1875 "Cottage", a Victorian-era brick building erected directly behind The Cedars as a family "schoolhouse" where a Miss Maria Cousins was the childrens' private teacher. His higher education consisted of two years (1888-90) at Davidson College after which he worked as a surveyor under William Walton (1850-1929), a civil engineer who was a descendant of a Morganton plantation family. Tate was involved primarily in railroad surveys in western North Carolina. Later, he became known as a construction engineer, working on many railroad and textile-mill projects in Kentucky and North Carolina including the construction of the Erwin Mills at Dunn (N. C.).

In 1920, Tate retired from engineering and thereafter was connected with a variety of banking, real estate and textile-manufacturing ventures. In this respect, he was like numerous of his Morganton peers who made their money during the relatively prosperous 1920s, often involved together in several enterprises at one time. Tate was a director, and later a vice-president (1920) of the Bank of Morganton (established 1904) until it was bought out by the First National Bank of Morganton in 1929. He also became a director of the First National, established in 1900 as a national bank which incorporated the earlier Burke County Bank, all which was later bought out by Wachovia. Tate advised on the investment of funds for the institution.

In addition, he was connected with the Morganton Insurance and Realty Company, incorporated in 1909, serving as president for several years. This organization was involved in local real estate development as well as insurance (representing as many as 17 companies in 1964.) In 1930, Tate became president of the Alpine Cotton Mills, one of the largest textile manufacturers in Burke County, and served in that position until his death in 1937. This mill was formed out of the old 1888 Dunavant Cotton Mill, the first of its type in the county. The business went bankrupt in 1896 with Frank Tate as receiver, and was later reorganized with Tate's father becoming one of the three stockholders of the new enterprise. 10 By 1920, the business had two mill buildings, 250 employees and 10,440 spindles producing cotton yarn which was sold throught the Erwin Yarn Agency in Philadelphia. With the onslaught of the Depression, the mills shut down for some time in 1930 until they were reopened under Tate as president.11 Although he normally visited the mills daily, Tate was not involved full-time in the day-to-day operations.

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On June 28, 1922, Tate married Martha (Pattie) Evelyn Thomason (1882-1974) in New York City. He had met his future wife in Morganton where she had come in 1918 to serve as principal at the North Carolina School for the Deaf (NCSD). Mrs. Tate's family was from Spartanburg, S. C. where she was born on September 18, 1882, the daughter of Whiteford Smith Thomason and his wife, Idalia (Walker). 12 Her maternal grandfather, Newton Pickney Walker, had founded the South Carolina School for the Deaf near Cedar Springs, S. C. in 1855, initially a private deaf school and later a state institution. A member of the Walker family has served as the school's supervisor until $1981.^{13}$ After graduating from Converse College in 1900 (as the school's youngest graduate at 18), Martha received her teacher's training at the SCSD, at that time supervised by her uncle. For a number of years she taught the deaf at the state schools at St. Augustine (Fla.) Philadelphia, Newark (N.J.), Providence (R.I.), and the Lexington Avenue School in New York City. 14 During this time she was at the "cutting edge" in the development of the rhythm method whereby deaf students learned music through vibrations; for this work, she received an honorary degree from Converse College. In 1918, Martha was recruited by Edward McKee Goodwin, Superintendant at the NCSD, to be the principal of the school, a position she held until her marriage to Frank Tate in 1922.16

The Tate's built their home along West Union Street on a large lot which was purchased in 1924 from a business acquaintance, E. D. Alexander. The West Union had become the preeminent residential neighborhood in Morganton, and the preferred location by the "nouveauriche" business-class. Mrs. Tate had admired the domestic designs of architect Electus D. Litchfield (1872-1958) illustrated in Country Life magazine and the Tates commissioned him to design their house. Litchfield was a rather well-known New York City-based architect who designed primarily in the Colonial Revival and Neo-Classical styles. He had worked under the firm of Carrere and Hastings and later as a partner with Austin W. Lord and J. Monroe Hewlett (8 years) and Tracy and Swartwout (5 years), all of whom were "graduates" of the office of the renowned McKim, Meade and White. In 1926 Litchfield established his own practice, later taking a partner, Pliny Rogers. Litchfield was responsible for such notable works as the Denver Post Office, St. Paul Public Library and the Washington (D.C.) National Armory. In addition, he frequently wrote articles for Country Life.

After several design revisions, work was begun on the Tate house in 1927 under the supervision of a Philadelphia contractor (name unknown). The house was constructed of granite from the Mount Airy quarry of the North Carolina Granite Corporation, still in continuous operation since 1890. The masonry-crew supervisor was a Danny (Dante) Martin, an Italian who had worked on the Lake James hydroelectric dam in Burke County, and later on the Blue Ridge Parkway project. The house was completed in less than one year, in 1928, and the Tates moved from their rented house across the street.

Besides the Tates, the house (which was sometimes referred to as "Surrystone") accommodated an extended family including Mrs. Tate's brother, Frank Thomason, and mother, Idalia Thomason, and a servant, Maude Bradshaw. Both Tates continued actively involved in community and public affairs, Frank serving as chairman of the Democratic Committee of Burke County (1920s), charter member of the Morganton Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis, a 32nd - degree Mason, and elder at the First Presbyterian Church. He was one of five men appointed in 1927 by Governor Angus W. McLean to formulate a state budget. Martha Tate was a member of the Morganton City School Board and president of the women of the Church (Presbyterian).

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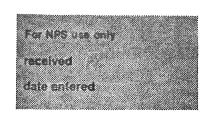
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Frank Tate died at age 70 of a heart attack on Christmas Eve, 1937, after a period of semi-retirement. He was eulogized as "though inclined to be a conservative, he was at the same time liberal in his views and democratic in his ideas of life and living." After his death, Martha Tate returned to the NCSD where she served as principal from 1937 to 1948, and later on the school's board of directors. When she died in 1974, she was described as "representing...the mixed traits of a bulldozer and a gracious Southern lady," combining an aggressive personality with an endearing humaneness. 28

The house continued to be occupied by the Tates' only son Samuel and his English wife, Mary (Keeble). Samuel McDowell Tate was born in 1923 and educated at the Asheville School for Boys, and later at Davidson College and the University of North Carolina where he received a law degree. He also served in Europe during World War II where he was both wounded and captured. Sam Tate later began his own law practice in Morganton, a career which was culminated by his election as a judge of the 25th District Court in 1974, serving Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. He has also served as president of the Burke County Bar Association, treasurer of the Burke County Democratic Committee and held all the various offices of the organization of the North Carolina State District Court Judges.

The Tate House was sold to R. M. and Pamela Bennett, the present owners, in 1983; the Bennetts are currently undertaking an extensive and accurate restoration of the house, as well as substantial upgrading of both the grounds and amenities.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ The National Cyclopedia of American Biography. (Jas. T. White and Co., 1950) Vol. XXVI, p. 87. Also: The Heritage of Burke County. (Morganton, N.C.: Burke County Historical Society, 1981). p. 424.

² Heritage, p. 424.

³ Heritage, p. 424; American Biography, p. 87.

⁴ from undated notes of recollections of Miss Sue V. Tate; in Tate biographical file at Morganton Public Library, n. p.

⁵ Heritage, p. 455.

⁶ Morganton News-Herald, Dec. 31, 1937 obituary of Frank Tate, p. 1.; also American Biography p. 87.

North Carolina County, 1777-1920. (Morganton: priv. pub, 1977). p. 162.

⁸ Phifer, pp. 160, 162; American Biography, p. 87.

⁹ News-Herald, March 27, 1964; Phifer, p. 165.

Phifer, p. 244-245. News-Herald, Dec. 31, 1937, p. 8; American Biography p. 87.

¹¹ Interview with Samuel McDowell Tate, Frank Tate's son; on June 6, 1984 at Morganton, N.C. also; News-Herald, May 13, 1920, pp. 62-63.

Heritage, p. 419; News-Herald, July 22, 1974, n.p.; American Biography, p. 87.

¹³ Sam Tate interview; News-Herald, July 22, 1974.

News-Herald, July 29, 1974; Tate interview.

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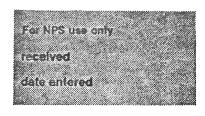
¹⁶ Heritage, p. 202.

Burke County Deed Book B-5, p. 257.

¹⁸ Tate interview.

^{19 &}quot;Reminiscences of of an Architectural Practice", The American Architect, Vol CXX, No. 2376, Sept. 14, 1921, pp. 178-180. Also: Architectural Record Vol 113, No. 1, January 1953, p. 284.

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Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey. <u>Biographical Dictionary of American Architects</u>. (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1970). p. 524; also <u>Architectural Record</u>, p. 284.

²¹"House for Frank P. Tate Esq.", set of blueprints by Electus D. Litchfield; dwg. no. 102, Feb. 16, 1927; revised. Also Tate interview.

²² Tate interview.

²³ Tate interview.

American Biography, p. 87.

²⁵ Index to Vital Statistics, Deaths (1913-1945), Burke County Courthouse, p. 83.

²⁶ News-Herald, Dec. 31, 1937. p. 24.

²⁷ News-Herald, July 22, 1974, n.p.

²⁸ News-Herald, July 29, 1974, n.p.

²⁹ News-Herald, Ap. 24, 1968, n.p.

³⁰ Tate interview.

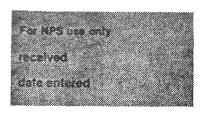
³¹ Burke County Deed Book 644, p. 359, Oct. 10, 1983.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geograph	ical Data			
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List all states and counties tate N/A	for properties overla code	apping state or county	county boundari	es code
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lty or town Asheville			state North C	arolina 28805
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