

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Smith-McDowell House

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

283 Victoria Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Asheville

VICINITY OF

11th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Buncombe

021

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Unoccupied

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Institute

STREET & NUMBER

Victoria Road

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Asheville

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Buncombe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Asheville

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Smith-McDowell House is a two-story, five-bay, brick house with a two-tier porch across the front, covered by a shed extension of the main roof. It stands on a partially raised basement. The brick walls, laid in Flemish bond, are sheltered by the wide overhang of the roof which is supported by undercut exposed rafters. Each of the three-bay gable ends has a pair of interior end chimneys with molded caps and flue extensions. The house has two-over-two sash and the window frames are quite simple with rounded molding throughout. There are fixed louvered blinds at the windows. The two-story porch has twelve fluted columns, six at each level. They are linked by a balustrade with a rounded handrail supported by slender, square balusters resting on a rounded base which rises to a "V" shaped ridge. In the central entrance at the first floor are recently installed double doors which are flanked by long, vertical sidelights and surmounted by a large fanlight. The roof is covered with gray slate shingles. A one-story semicircular sun room covers most of the first-floor east gable end. It has a double door with six Queen Anne style windows flanking either side. At the rear of the house are two brick additions; to the south is a two-story three-bay square section with a flat roof; to the north is a one-story, two-bay wing with gable end set to the main block. At the point where the one-story wing joins the main block a side entrance has been added to accommodate vehicular traffic. The transition between the two sections is covered by a one-story parapeted wall from which a flat-roofed Neo-Classical style porch projects. The porch is supported by paired Ionic columns. Separated from the doorway by the flat roofed porch is a small fanlight.

The center-hall plan is two rooms deep and the first floor has been remodeled in Neo-Classical style. The stair, which rises along the north wall of the hall, consists of tall, slender turned balusters supporting a delicately molded, ramped handrail. The stair begins at a low landing which is entered from the side; it rises to another landing about halfway up. At this landing the balustrade bows outward in a pulpit-like effect and then continues upward in a straight run. The more interesting of the Neo-Classical mantels is a three-part, Neo-Federal style one. It has paired fluted colonnettes with Corinthian capitals supporting the molded shelf. The center tablet contains a Greek krater with tassel. The secondary mantels are quite plain, having two-stage symmetrically molded pilasters supporting an open frieze which has a molded strip where it joins the unadorned shelf. There are door architraves which match the mantel pilasters. These architraves have large geometrically faceted corner blocks containing diamond shaped patterns. Along the stairwell in the attic is a heavy Federal style balustrade which appears to be original to the house. Also the door frames in the attic appear to match the exterior window frames indicating that perhaps only the sash was changed when the house was remodeled.

To the southwest of the house is a low, two-story brick building which has a four-stage corbeled cornice. The brick is laid in five-over-one common bond and has only one opening on the front (east) side and otherwise unbalanced fenestration. To the northwest of the house is a one-story-with-loft, stone and wood barn which appears to have been built in the early twentieth century; the era which seems to mark a general renovation of the house.

B SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Smith-McDowell House is a large, impressive dwelling with Flemish bond brickwork and a two-tier porch engaged beneath an extension of the main roof. Said to have been built in the 1840s and thus to be the oldest house surviving in Asheville, the house was constructed for James M. Smith who provided it to his son John P. Smith. The elder Smith was among the wealthiest and most influential men in the antebellum days of Asheville, engaging in a wide variety of enterprises. The ambitious house reflects the confident spirit of the early and mid-nineteenth century entrepreneurs who stimulated the economic development of far western North Carolina.

The Smith-McDowell House was built during the 1840s for James McConnell Smith on land lying at the confluence of the Swannanoa and French Broad rivers in present-day Asheville. Local tradition has it that the house is Asheville's oldest surviving structure, and no older ones have been recorded.

James M. Smith was born at the future site of Asheville on June 14, 1787. He was the second child of Colonel Daniel Smith, a native of New Jersey and a Revolutionary soldier, and Mary Davidson Smith, daughter of Major William Davidson of Swannanoa. An inscription on Smith's gravestone declares that he was the "FIRST CHILD OF WHITE PARENTAGE BORN WEST OF THE ALLEGHANY IN THE PRESENT STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA. . . ." He was married in 1814 to Mary (Polly) Patton, daughter of Colonel John Patton of Swannanoa, and became the father of at least nine children.

Smith soon began acquiring large tracts of land in Buncombe County. In 1826 he purchased from his brother Daniel Smith, Jr., a 123-acre tract "on Swannano river" adjoining the lands of his father-in-law. In 1832 he acquired from Moses Smith (probably another brother) a 485-acre tract lying "on both sides of French Broad river at the mouth of Swannano. . . ." These two tracts were to serve Smith as farmland for the remainder of his life and it was here that he built the brick house which stands today at 283 Victoria Road in the city of Asheville.

No evidence could be found to suggest that Smith ever lived in the brick house. He appears to have resided in the heart of the town of Asheville. It is likely that he had the dwelling built for his son John Patton Smith, as he devised "the Col. Daniel Smith farm & the new brick house near the road . . ." to the younger Smith in his will.

James M. Smith was by any measure one of Asheville's wealthiest and most successful men. In the early 1830s he owned and operated a ferry across the French Broad River and later built and operated the first bridge (a wooden one) across that watercourse. He was

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the proprietor of the Buck Hotel, Asheville's third such facility, and is believed to have built it, probably during the 1840s. The wooden structure became an Asheville landmark and survived under various names and proprietors until 1907. Smith also engaged in several mercantile enterprises, often in partnership with various sons-in-law. The most notable of these was the firm of Smith & McDowell, which maintained a store directly across Asheville's main street (now Patton Avenue) from the Buck Hotel. Smith's partner in this firm was W. W. McDowell, husband of Smith's daughter Sarah Lucinda and later owner of the Smith-McDowell House.

The 1850 census lists James M. Smith as a merchant and hotel keeper and credits him with the ownership of real estate valued at \$30,000. The 1850 slave schedule indicates that Smith was the owner (either directly or through an agent) of sixty-six slaves, making him Buncombe County's leading slaveholder. The agricultural schedule places a cash value of \$35,000 on his farmland and the industry schedule reveals that he also operated a tannery which processed "1600 upper and sole leather hides per year worth \$2,000." An inventory of Smith's estate indicates that at the time of his death he was the owner of tangible personal property worth at least \$53,234.43, with cash on hand alone amounting to \$9,844.99.

Smith's will provides possibly the clearest overall picture of his great wealth. He devised to his children or their heirs (his wife had died in 1853) parcels of real estate in Asheville (including his hotel, storehouse, barn, and stables) and in Buncombe County (including his tanyard and toll bridge); a large number of slaves; furniture; livestock; farm implements; and a gold mine in Georgia which he apparently owned outright. Despite his wealth and his connection by marriage to the prominent Patton family, Smith apparently took little interest in politics. He was elected in 1849 to Asheville's newly-created board of commissioners (and was subsequently named chairman of that body). This was the only elective office he ever held.

James M. Smith died May 18, 1856, at the age of sixty-eight. As noted earlier, he willed to his son John Patton Smith the brick house at the confluence of the Swannanoa and French Broad rivers. John P. Smith died intestate and without issue (he was apparently not married) the following year. In June, 1858, the property was put up for public auction by virtue of a decree issued by the Buncombe County Court of Equity. High bidder for the property was John P. Smith's brother-in-law (and former business partner of James M. Smith) William Wallis McDowell, who paid \$9,610 for a 315-acre tract "lying on the east side of French Broad river and North side of Swannanoa river including the cane break farm." This is the first and only reference to the former Smith farm tract by that name.

W. W. McDowell, grandson of Revolutionary hero Major Joseph McDowell, was born in 1823 at Pleasant Gardens in present-day McDowell County. He moved to Asheville in 1845 and the following year married Sarah Lucinda Smith, fifth daughter of James M. Smith. In addition to forming the mercantile enterprise in partnership with his father-in-law,

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McDowell served as a cashier in the Asheville branch of the Bank of Cape Fear.

McDowell was one of four men incorporated by the General Assembly in February, 1861, as the "Buncombe Riflemen," one of North Carolina's first volunteer infantry units. (The unit had actually been organized in December, 1859, in response to the John Brown raid on Harper's Ferry.) McDowell formally enlisted at the age of thirty-eight and was appointed captain of the volunteers, who after Fort Sumter became Company E of the First North Carolina Volunteers, or the "Bethel Regiment" (so named for its participation in that engagement). In the early summer of 1862 the First Regiment was made a part of the new Sixtieth Regiment, which had been organized by W. W. McDowell's brother Dr. Joseph A. McDowell. W. W. McDowell was named captain, and later major, of this regiment.

Poor health compelled McDowell to return to Asheville before the end of the Civil War. He and his wife continued to reside in the brick house until April, 1881, when they sold it to Alexander Garrett for \$11,000. (W. W. McDowell died in Asheville June 22, 1893, and his widow died there in 1905.) Alexander Garrett apparently rented the house to Robert U. Garrett for a time and in January, 1891, sold it outright to him. At this time the house was said to be "in the Town of Victoria." (This small village was merged into the city of Asheville in 1905.) In the twentieth century the house had a number of owners, including C. Brewster Chapman (1913-1920) and Herman A. Gudger (1920-1949). During this period remodeling was done and the sun porch and side entrance added, most likely during Chapman's ownership. In 1951, the place was sold to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh for \$15,000; it was used as the site of a Catholic high school for a number of years. The house was recently sold by the diocese to the Asheville-Buncombe Technical Institute, which has leased it to the Western North Carolina Historical Association. The group seeks to renovate the house and use it for headquarters for the Western North Carolina Heritage Center.

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- Asheville Spectator. Death notice, December 14, 1853.
- Buncombe County Records, Buncombe County Courthouse, Asheville, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Court Records, Estate Papers).
- Buncombe County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Court Records, Estate Papers).
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- Digges, Charles A., Jr. Historical Facts Concerning Buncombe County Government. /Asheville/: By the Author, 1935.
- Dixon, Elizabeth Williamson, comp. The Davidson and Allied Families Originating in North Carolina. Gastonia: William Gaston Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1956.
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- McDowell, Frances Arthur. "OLDEST HOUSE IN ASHEVILLE LOCATED AT 283 VICTORIA ROAD KNOWN AS THE SMITH OR McDOWELL HOME: A Brief Sketch Prepared in connection with the course, 'Research in Local History and Biography, Materials and Method' taught by Dr. Harley E. Jolley at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Institute Sept. 1973-Jan. 1974."
- Menarin, Louis H., comp. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster. Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, Vol. III, 1971.
- North Carolina Presbyterian (Wilmington). Obituary notice, July 6, 1893.
- Private Laws of North Carolina, 1848-1849. c. CXXV.
- Private Laws of North Carolina, 1860-1861. c. 99.
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- U. S. Census Office. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Buncombe County, North Carolina.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arthur, John Preston. Western North Carolina: A History. Raleigh; Edward Buncombe Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914.
Asheville Citizen. Obituary notice, December 14, 1949; "Historical Group To Consider Restoring Smith-McDowell House," June 14, 1974.
Asheville News. Advertisements, February 28, October 23, 1856; death notice, December 24, 1857.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	3,5,9,9,0	3,9,3,7,5,0,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by Robert Topkins, survey specialist; architectural description by Charles Greer Suttlemyre, Jr., survey specialist

ORGANIZATION

Division of Archives and History

DATE

11 July 1975

STREET & NUMBER

109 East Jones Street

TELEPHONE

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Bruce Van Dargatz

TITLE Deputy

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 11 July 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

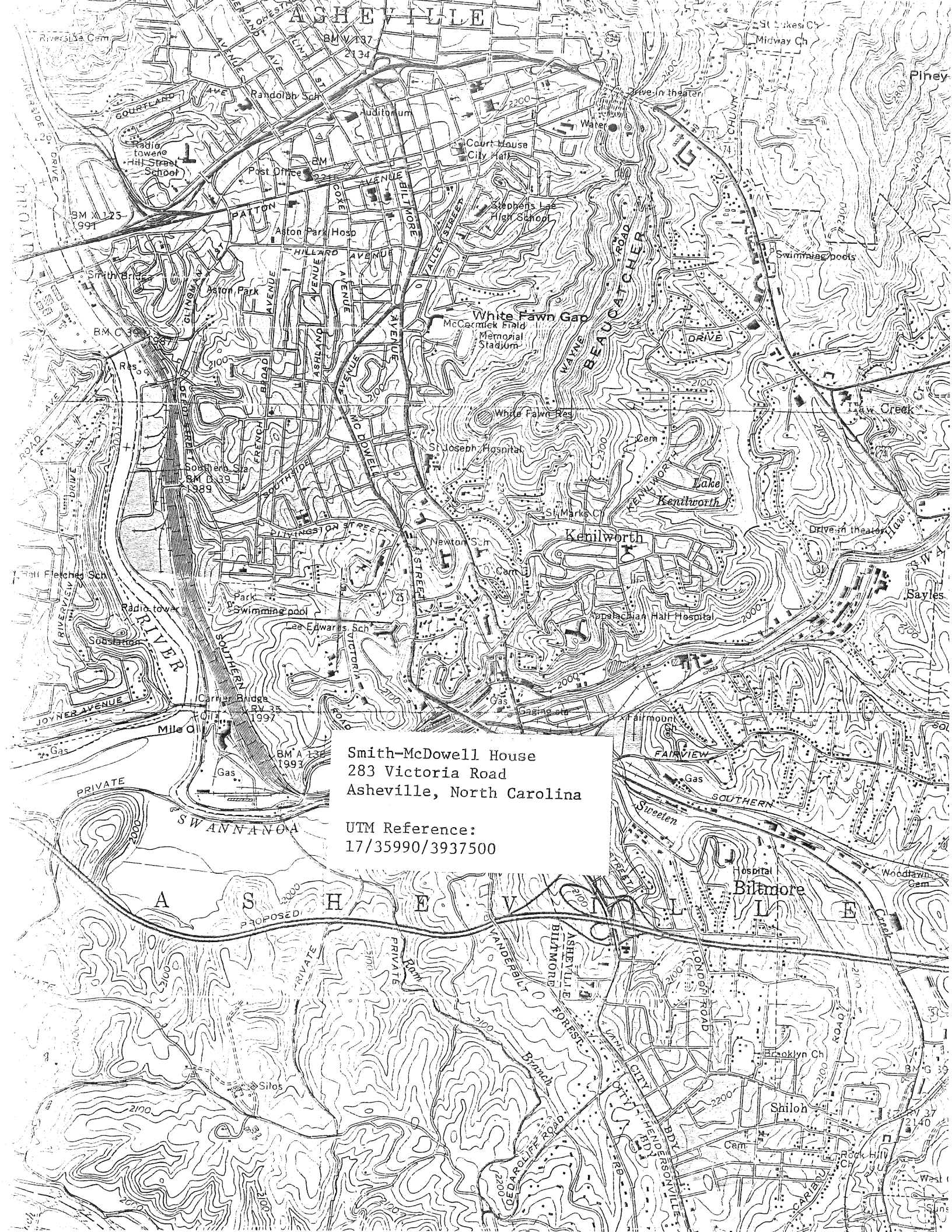
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Smith-McDowell House
283 Victoria Road
Asheville, North Carolina

UTM Reference:
17/35990/3937500

