

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Thomas Wadley Raoul House**

Asheville, Buncombe County, BN0255, Listed 1/28/2006  
Nomination by Samuel A. Bingham, III  
Photographs by Samuel A. Bingham III, unknown date



Entrance facade



Golf course facade

**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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name   Raoul, Thomas Wadley, House    
other names/site number   Raoulwood  

**2. Location**

street & number   394 Vanderbilt Road   N/A  not for publication  
city or town   Asheville   N/A  vicinity  
state   North Carolina   code   NC   county   Buncombe   code   021   zip code   28803  

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
  North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources    
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, explain	_____	_____

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Name of Property

Buncombe County, North Carolina  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	Buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
2	1	Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

#### Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

LANDSCAPE/garden

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

LANDSCAPE/garden

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Tudor Revival

Craftsman

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco

roof Slate

other brick

wood

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attached sheets

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Name of Property

Buncombe County, North Carolina  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1923

**Significant Dates**

1923

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder:**

Parker, Charles N. (architect)  
Merchant Construction Co. (Builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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

Name of repository:

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Name of Property

Buncombe County, North Carolina  
County and State

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 3.53 acres

**UTM References**

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Datum NAD 1983

1	<u>17</u>	<u>360387</u>	<u>3933177</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Samuel A. Bingham, III (owner)  
organization N/A date February 20, 2006  
street & number 394 Vanderbilt Road Telephone 828.274.1309  
city or town Biltmore Forest state NC Zipcode 28803

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**Additional Documentation**

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submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Sam & Janet Bingham, Kathleen & Leslie Stroh, Thomas & Sara Bingham, the Estate of Jane R. Bingham  
street & number 394 Vanderbilt Road telephone 828.274.1309  
city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28803

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Thomas Wadley Raoul House is a large two and one-half story, ten-bay Tudor Revival-style home with irregularly massed rectangular plan. Comprising approximately 6,000 square feet of floor space, it is located 394 Vanderbilt Road in Biltmore Forest, an independently incorporated suburb adjoining Asheville in Buncombe County, North Carolina. The Asheville mailing address in Section 1 is due to the fact that Biltmore Forest is served by the south Asheville post office.

The property includes the main house, referred to here as "Raoulwood" as it is known locally, a servant's cottage, and a four-bay garage. Raoulwood was also the childhood home of the preparer of the nomination, Samuel Bingham, Raoul's grandson, who has included personal recollection and family oral history in his research.

The main house stands on three and a half acres of land in two surveyed lots on a low ridge that rises thirty to forty feet above Vanderbilt Road to the west and the Biltmore Forest golf course to the east. Originally, the property included a third lot of one and one tenth acres facing Vanderbilt Road. This was sold in 1976 to a family friend, Earnest Hamill, who built a one-and-a-half-story, three thousand square foot brick and wood residence consisting of a main house and guest house connected by a covered breezeway/car port. Hamill's widow recently donated it to the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, while retaining life estate. The Hamill house stands on the site of a former four-stall stable of cribbed log construction, demolished in the 1950's. It shares with Raoulwood a 200 yard long curving driveway almost entirely located on the two lots still associated with Raoulwood. The formal driveway ends in a figure-of-eight before the sheltered entry on the long northwest front of the main house, although a service extension of the driveway continues parallel to the house and curves around a four-bay garage (non-contributing) to rejoin the main drive on the back side of the figure-of-eight. Also on the property is a servant's cottage (contributing) built originally for a groom/chauffeur and located across the driveway from the front entrance and behind a screen of rhododendron and Norway spruce.

## Exterior

Relatively narrow (twenty to thirty feet) in relation to its length (ninety-two and one-half feet), the main house is oriented on a northeast-southwest axis so that the open porch on the southwest end faces directly toward Mount Pisgah. This Blue Ridge landmark is currently obscured by the growth of trees on adjacent properties, but once served as the backdrop for a 200 yard *allee* of lawn edged by dogwood and rhododendron. The *allee* is located parallel to and south of the driveway. The long southeast elevation faces the golf course of the Biltmore Forest Country Club across a one and one half acre lawn.

Exterior walls are hollow tile for the first story, but stick construction above that. Exterior walls consist of textured stucco cladding, with vertical half timbering throughout the second floor. Following a fire in the top story in 1990, the framing was reinforced in several places and plumbing and wiring was brought up to code. Interior walls are lath and plaster over wood framing. Flooring on the ground floor is oak. In the upper

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

stories it was originally all quarter-sawn heart pine, although the second story hallway and most of the top story were finished in oak following the fire. The slate tiled roof is comprised of steeply pitched, side-gabled main roof broken by hipped roofs at either end. The slate roof utilizes the saddle hip roof joint with open valleys and original copper guttering throughout. Since 1990 several skylights have been installed flush with the roof slope. Where there are vergeboards, they are plain.

The main block of the front, northwest, façade contains a somewhat simple plain entrance porch sheltered by an overhang supported by heavy arched timber brackets. The front door is a relatively plain eight panel wooden door and original screen, flanked by two six pane casement windows with simple red brick sills. Adding to the richness and complexity of the façade design are a pair of nested gables to the right of the entry and a leaded three-sided oriel window topped by a curved eyebrow roof. The oriel window lights a landing in the main staircase on the interior. The two off-set gables are finished with heavy dark wood frames and vertical timbers. The top projecting gable has a single centered six over six double hung window. The lower cross gable projects slightly further and contains a set of two double hung six over six sash windows. At the right, southwest, end of the major block is an off-set, straight chimney comprised of red brick, American stretcher bond with decorative crowns.

The southwest elevation, which is setback from the front wall of the house has a recessed porch under the main roof line of the house. It is open on two sides, facing Mount Pisgah and the Donald Ross golf course. The other side is enclosed by the wood trimmed casement windows that provide a modicum of privacy from the more public front. Double French doors flanked by fixed full-length multi-pane windows open from the living room onto the porch and its stone floor. The porch is supported by plain stucco clad square columns with inverted and notched heavy timber lintels spanning the two open sides. Above the end porch is a sleeping porch set within a hipped dormer. Designed as an open-air space, it allowed Thomas Raoul to treat his tubercular lungs to pure mountain air in all seasons according to the common wisdom of the 1920s. The porch has banks of casement windows on three sides. The casements now on the southwest, Pisgah-facing, elevation replaced a single four-and-a-half by ten foot screen when the room was winterized in 1954, following Raoul's death in 1953.

The southeast, golf course façade is more straightforward in its composition but it has some interesting features including a hipped roof and a large projecting semi-hexagonal bay, roughly centered in the second story and supported by curved brackets. A bank of three six over six wood-trimmed, double-hung sash windows are set in the middle of the bay. Directly beneath is a flush entranceway with original screen doors and ten pane double doors that are entered by an understated stone stoop. To the immediate right a slightly recessed pair of ten pane French doors open onto a large stone terrace and lead directly into the main entrance hallway. To the right of this, is a two story projecting bay with a side entrance opening onto the terrace from the dining room through another pair of ten pane doors. This bay also has a large half-hipped roof with a bank of three six over six double hung sash windows centered there. Arched diagonal timbers braces (non-structural) adorn the sides of this block on the second floor.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

To the right and attached to this projecting bay is a second story balcony/porch. The porch roof is supported by boxed timber columns flanked by arched brackets, supporting a bracketed eave. The handrail is flat and unadorned. Since a renovation of the kitchen in 1975, this balcony overlooks a brick patio and garden, visible and accessible from the kitchen through a bank of sliding glass doors and floor to ceiling windows below the balcony. Originally in this space, three six over six double hung windows above a boxwood and arbor vitae hedge lit a laundry and servants' bathroom.

The northeast end of the house, containing the kitchen is the most utilitarian and least public portion of the house. The first floor exhibits an exterior door with no overhang. To the right is a slightly recessed plain stucco panel that covers what was a small screened mud room leading to old kitchen. There are two six over six double hung sash windows with red brick sills on either side of the door. Atop is a wide hipped gable dormer with a bank of four six over six sash windows. A service door to the basement stairs and a curved concrete coal chute is located at this end of the house. A screen of rhododendron and hemlock pierced by a service road partially hides these features, as well as the garage, from the view from the main entrance.

## Interior

The front door on the northwest façade opens on a wide hallway that extends the width of the house to the golf course façade. The main hall walls here are rough stucco, painted white. Hewn beams accent the nine-foot high ceiling. Six wrought iron lamp sconces accentuate the rustic ambiance. Immediately to the right, two steps lead up to a landing for the main staircase and beyond to a small study with a fireplace and eight foot high ceiling. Four steps lead down to a lavatory under the main stairs. The main stairs lead up to a second landing at the oriel window level and turn back and run up to the upstairs hall. The staircase has an open newel plan with squared starting newel and turned balusters, repeated in the balustrade that separates the upstairs hall from the stairwell.

Farther along the main hall, another wide pair of steps lead down to the right through a five foot wide, opening to the living room (eighteen by twenty-five feet plus a small alcove with another leaded glass semi-bay window). Glass doors open southwest onto the sitting porch and southeast onto the lawn. The ten foot height of the cove ceiling is accentuated by dark, hewn beams (non-structural). Again, rough stucco walls add a touch of rustic informality to an otherwise formal room. Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves cover the whole wall flanking the entrance and continue half way down the adjacent northeast wall to a wide fireplace. The laying of the mottled hand-made brick of the generous surround includes a flat arch with a raised keystone. Panels on either side and a recessed shelf above, all in dark wood add to the rustic Craftsman aesthetics. The brick fireplace is flanked by dark wood panels and topped by a matching shelf.

Across the hall from the living room steps, another pair of glass doors leads to the dining room. The dining room is the most formal room and most exhibits the decorating tastes of Mrs. Raoul. This room exudes a classical style. The walls, a heavy ceiling molding found nowhere else in the house, and fireplace mantelpiece are painted white. The brick fireplace and hearth are painted black. The plastering is smooth. The lamp sconces are brushed gold.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

The service area at the northeast end of the house once included a butler's pantry, the main kitchen, a cold pantry, a laundry, a servant's bathroom, a large storage closet, and a "mudroom" entry. In 1978, the kitchen, mudroom, storage closet, servants bathroom and laundry were combined, a new laundry/lavatory created, and glass doors to a new patio/garden were added in the southeast wall. The flue that once supported a wood-burning stove awaits some modern alternative. The butler's pantry and the kitchen retain their Craftsman-style glass-covered cabinets and drawers. And the call box with its numbered magnetic arrows is still connected to a working system of bells throughout the house.

A servant's back staircase located between the main hall and the service area runs from the first floor to the attic and has a dog-legged plan. An interesting feature in this stairwell is a glass wall panel that once contained a faucet and a canvas fire hose.

On the second floor is a central hall that runs from master bedroom suite at the southwest end to a bedroom over the service area, giving access to three more large bedrooms, a sewing room, one bathroom and several closets. The master bedroom itself opens through glass doors onto the sleeping porch. The master bedroom, sleeping porch and the adjoining bathroom form a suite, complete with a classically-inspired mantelpiece.

Originally, another door opened directly from the master suite to the adjacent bedroom at the top of the stairs so the expanded ensemble could function as a separate apartment.

The bedroom at the top of the stairs and two others, one with a fireplace, also connect one to another through bathrooms, as well as from the hall. Before the post-fire restoration one closet had door that opened onto the hall and another that opened opposite a bathroom. Presumably the arrangement would allow a guest in the sewing room to access the bathroom through the closet from the hall without disturbing anyone sleeping in the connecting bedrooms, but it was never used, except by children playing hide and seek. After the fire the closet was turned into a vanity nook for the bedroom at the top of the stairs.

A fourth bathroom now also opens off the upstairs hallway just before it terminates in a bedroom occupying the northeast-facing hipped dormer at the end of the house. This was converted from a servant's bedroom during restoration following the fire in 1990. Part of this space was also restructured to accommodate a wheelchair-capable elevator from the butler's pantry below. The elevator has never been installed, and the space is used as a closet.

Before the 1990 fire the top floor was an unfinished storage area except for one servant's bedroom at the top of the back stairs. Following the fire, the whole top floor was reconfigured to include a full bathroom, a large recreation room, and another large bedroom. The ceiling was finished out to the rafters, cathedral style, and several skylights added, as previously mentioned. A small unheated, unfinished storage space remains at the southwest end.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

The original bathroom tiles and accoutrements, casement fittings, moldings, window sashes doors, door knobs, and many light switches and screen doors remain intact throughout the house.

## The Servant's Cottage, 1923 (contributing)

A weatherboard, frame servant's cottage measuring eighteen by twenty-four feet was built at the same time as the main house. It is a one story, side gable house, with a front gabled center porch. It exhibits bracketed eaves, plain vergeboard, and stuccoed gable ends with small vertical timbers and louvered gable vents. The gables above the clapboards on both ends are rough stucco accented by a decorative "king post." Originally painted brown to match the half-timber trim of the main house, it is currently barn red. The interior consists of a bedroom, entry "parlor," kitchen, closet and bath oriented around a central chimney. The parlor contains a fine Craftsman-style fireplace with mantle oriented obliquely across one corner of the room. The chimney contains flues for a wood heater in the main room and a wood stove in the kitchen.

## The Garage, 1963 (Non-contributing)

The original garage had two open bays plus tool shed with large side-hinged doors. It was a frame, clapboarded building. An inventory of architectural drawings<sup>1</sup> by Erle Stillwell, who was Charles Parker's contemporary, peer, and later colleague in the firm of Six Associates, contains reference to drawings on vellum for "Alterations to Residence, Mr. Thomas W. Raoul" and "Garage for Mr. Thomas W. Raoul." The drawings themselves are undated but the file in which they were found contains material from the period 1924 to 1927. The drawings themselves are not accessible to the public, and there is no evidence that they relate to anything that was ever built. In any case, the original garage was pulled down in 1963 and replaced by a similar four bay clapboard structure that slightly extends the footprint of its predecessor.

## Landscaping

Although definitive documentation is lacking at present, the current owners of the Thomas Wadley Raoul House, Raoul's grandchildren, claim that Olmsted disciple Chauncey D. Beadle personally laid out and oversaw the plant planting of the grounds of Raoulwood.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the original design remains clearly

<sup>1</sup> *Inventory of Architectural Drawing Collection of Erle Stillwell*; Collection located at Harley-Ellis Architects, Asheville, North Carolina; Inventory compiled by Sybil Argintar Bowers for The Hendersonville Historic Preservation Commission; Hendersonville, North Carolina, October 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Preparer's note: The bulk of Raoul's correspondence and original plans for the house were lost in the fire that burned the top story in 1990, but the claim that Beadle did the landscaping is almost certainly correct. The two surviving heirs who grew up at Raoulwood and whose memories pre-date Beadle's death in 1950, Samuel Bingham and Kathleen Bingham Stroh, both remember Chauncey Beadle as a frequent visitor and visited him with their grandfather. They also recall their grandmother complaining into the 1960's that she found Beadle's plantings of *Arbor Vita* and Norway spruce "lugubrious." They also remember their mother's complaint that the formal garden Beadle had laid out in the shade and surrounded with boxwood hedges was a terribly difficult place to grow flowers. Raoul worked closely with Beadle throughout the concurrent planning and creation of Biltmore Forest, and it is virtually inconceivable that he would have engaged anyone else to lay out his own grounds. The plantings are characteristic of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

evident, if compromised by time. As mentioned, regrowth of trees beyond the property have obscured the view of Mount Pisgah. The trimmed boxwood hedges that once defined a small formal garden in the middle of the *allee* were removed when the shade from maturing oaks alongside it made gardening increasingly difficult.

The curved drive and “natural” asymmetric relationships of native plantings and the oblique approach to the house create a focused context for its rambling ambiance. The crowns of tall trees – white pine, hemlock, Norway spruce, and oak – which shade the drive as it curves up from Vanderbilt Road are balanced at ground level by ivy, *vinca*, and *arbor vita*, and lit by a middle story of native white dogwood and redbud in the spring and the red of sourwood in the fall. The first view of the house from the drive falls on its south corner where eaves, gables, windows and chimneys display their maximum complexity, the more striking for appearing higher on the hill and flanked by masses of native rhododendron, which blooms from mid May long into high summer. Original boxwoods punctuate the front entrance and the several French doors that give access to the house.

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Beadle’s work elsewhere. Nevertheless, a search through the almost daily memos between Beadle and Raoul, held in the archives of the Biltmore Estate, turned up only one probably related to Raoulwood. Unfortunately a referenced enclosure, which might well have been a blueprint or sketch of Beadle’s design for the grounds, was not in the archive. Addressed to Mr. T.W. Raoul, President, Biltmore Estate Company and dated November 18, 1922, the full text reads, “Dear Sir:- Please note the elevation on the arbitrary base of 100 on proposed Servants House which we staked out together a few days ago. Truly yours, -Signed C. Beadle” (Biltmore Company Archives Department; Nurseryman Letter Book Vol. 60, Mar. 1922 – June 1923, #545)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Summary

The Thomas Wadley Raoul House, designed by Charles N. Parker and built in 1923, is significant under Criterion C as an excellent local example of the Tudor Revival style as influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. The landscaping, featuring native plants, a curving, oblique approach and generous, irregular lawns also reflects the school of naturalistic park design popular at the time. Thomas Raoul was a community leader and developer during Asheville's florescence as a resort and health destination in the years following the construction of George Vanderbilt's Biltmore House in 1895. By the turn of the century the small city in the mountains had become a center of the Arts and Crafts movement, which left its mark on all Raoul's projects. His first development, The Manor Hotel and Albemarle Park, begun in 1900 were listed in the National Register in 1978. Raoulwood, as the property was named by its owner, is prominent among the early residences that set the architectural style for his next project, Biltmore Forest, launched in 1920 to become Asheville's most upscale suburb developed in the age of the automobile.

### Historic Background

Thomas Wadley Raoul's grandfather, William Wadley, first achieved prominence as head of railroads for the Confederacy during the Civil War, experience that Wadley and his son-in-law William Greene Raoul turned to fortune during Reconstruction as organizers of the Central of Georgia Railroad. In 1886, William Raoul became chief executive of the Mexican National Railroad Company which a group of investors, mostly Englishmen, had organized to salvage a bankrupt attempt to build a rail line from Laredo, Texas, to Mexico City. He would later extend the line to Veracruz.

In 1886 William Raoul had bought a farm on Charlotte Street in Asheville as a family retreat from the Georgia heat. In 1897 he and his fourth child, Thomas, launched a plan to develop a resort hotel and residential community on the site of the farm. Thomas, twenty-one at the time, had recently contracted tuberculosis, and wanted to live, if he had the luck to live, in Asheville for health reasons.

The Raouls had considerable experience in construction and development from their railroad ventures and had recently engaged New York Architect Bradford Lee Gilbert to build them a grand house in Atlanta.<sup>3</sup> Between 1897 and his death in 1911, Gilbert and the Raouls collaborated on building the rambling Shingle Style Manor Hotel and the cottages of Albemarle Park.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The house at 708 Peachtree Street, completed in 1892, later became the offices of the Red Cross in Atlanta. Tragically it burned just before being opened to the public after a long but successful campaign to restore and preserve it. A previous Raoul house at 848 Peachtree Street St. in Atlanta/Fulton County, was listed on the National Register in 1986 as The Capt. William G. Raoul House.

<sup>4</sup> After a long public campaign, the Asheville Preservation Society saved the hotel from demolition and in succeeded in establishing The Manor and the cottages as a small historic district listed in the National Register in 1978.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

In their book *The Manor and Cottages*, architectural historians Jane and Richard Mathews described a relationship both aesthetic and personal. “Working with the Raouls allowed Gilbert to be more playful in his designing and gave him the freedom to experiment with different styles – Dutch Revival, Half Timber Tudor, and the Shingle Style, which was at the height of its popularity at the time.”<sup>5</sup> Much of the playfulness was, in the spirit of the age, permutation on Arts and Crafts themes.

To landscape their Manor/Albemarle Park project, the Raouls engaged Samuel Parsons, Jr., of New York. Turn-of-the-century Asheville was, however, awash in architectural talent, craftsmanship and energy fed by the people and ideas drawn to the area in the wake of George Vanderbilt’s construction of Biltmore House 1890-95. Vanderbilt’s design team of Frederick Law Olmsted, Richard Hunt and Richard Sharp Smith delegated many details and most of the oversight of the construction to assistants and collaborators, several of whom stayed on in the area after completing their work on the Biltmore Estate.

Thomas Raoul sold The Manor in 1920 to focus his accumulation of knowledge and experience on a new venture, Biltmore Forest, an upper-class suburb that would create “a community where persons of moderate means could build homes that would embody on a smaller scale the same ideals which had actuated Mr. Vanderbilt in the creation of Biltmore Estate.”<sup>6</sup> He built his own house to demonstrate what that meant. The new dominance of the automobile had created fresh opportunities for genteel, semi-country living, and capital had begun to inflate a real estate bubble that would transform the city before bursting, catastrophically, at the end of the decade.

Thomas Wolfe immortalized the spirit of this era, including the failure of the banks and the suicide of the mayor in *You Can’t Go Home Again*. F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald made cameo appearances. A neo-gothic “skyscraper” replaced Wolfe’s father’s tombstone shop on Asheville’s main square. Charles Parker created the Gothic-inspired Grove Arcade (NR, 1976) in ivory terra cotta not far away. Art Deco Master, architect Douglas Ellington, started his long career in Asheville with a church and a new city hall. But the biggest impact fell on the countryside around the city as developers pushed out in every direction. The elite of the hour settled in Biltmore Forest.

Raoul and three partners, Junius Adams, William Knight, and Burnham Colburn, all, like Raoul, monied non-natives, began their new venture with the support of George Vanderbilt’s widow, Edith, who wanted not only suitable neighbors but also profit from her late husband’s vast lands. Junius Adams, as her legal representative, had already arranged the sale of 87,000 acres to the U.S. Forest Service (after harvesting the timber). Biltmore Forest made further use of her remaining domain.

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<sup>5</sup> Jane Gianito and Richard A. Mathews, *The Manor and Cottages: Albemarle Park, Asheville, North Carolina – A Historic Planned Residential Community*. p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ramsey, D. Hiden, *The Story of Biltmore Forest*, from the Forward.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

As chief executive officer of the new company, it was Raoul who engaged the designers and contractors, personally oversaw their work, and whose name remains most prominently associated with Biltmore Forest.

The National Register nomination for a house built by Raoul's partner, Junius Adams, describes the venture thus:

In broad terms, the ideals expressed in the company's promotional literature reflected an emerging conception of the suburb's role in American life. As was typical of early twentieth-century suburbs, Biltmore Forest was designed to be a residential-only neighborhood<sup>7</sup> situated on the periphery of the city, separate from the central downtown business district and zones of industry. "Biltmore Forest is not a city," the company's promotional literature claimed, "Neither is it a suburb. It is a sanctuary of the retired businessman and the active leaders of the professions and of industry who wish to escape...the tumult, unsightliness and neurotic life of the modern city." As such it embodied a changing conception of what affluent Americans considered "a good place to live." For the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, Asheville's urban landscape had resembled a patchwork of intermingled residences, businesses, and public buildings in a pattern typical of the preindustrial city. But after the arrival of the Western North Carolina Railroad in 1880 set in motion the forces of industrialization and urbanization, land use patterns began to change rapidly. By the 1920's the process had divided the community into clearly-defined districts of retail shops and white-collar businesses, factory and industrial areas, and residential neighborhoods. As Thomas Hanchett has written of suburbanization in southern cities, "Affluent buyers showed a decided preference for residential areas away from African Americans and, as critically, away from factories and workers." No longer were the well-to-do content to live on city blocks that included persons of all incomes, blacks as well as whites, and quite often a mix of workplaces, retail shops, and houses. Biltmore Forest thus illustrated in microcosm one dimension of the process of suburban development, which played a crucial role in reshaping the face of the American city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup>

Even before the first lots were sold, work began on the central feature of the new community – the Biltmore Forest Country Club with world-class golf course designed by Donald Ross and club house by Baltimore society architect Edward L. Palmer. The Club rapidly became the place to see and be seen in Asheville, according to local historian David Bailey.

As months passed, many celebrated personalities mingled with other guests at the club and with members such as General Pershing, respectfully known to men who served under

<sup>7</sup> In fact, a small area near the town center was zoned commercial and nationally-recognized architect and silversmith William Waldo Dodge designed several cottages as shops. His own silver shop and studio, however, was the only one to actually house an enterprise.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel J. Vivian, Judge Junius G. Adams House National Register nomination, 2001, p 8-11.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

him as "Black Jack." Champion Bobby Jones arrived from Atlanta with his happy bride to begin their honeymoon.

John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and his son were frequent visitors...the great oil magnate leaving club managers shiny dimes as he did everywhere he went. Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone were among many notable industrialists, along with Charles Schwab, the famous steel baron. Chief Justice of the United States, William Howard Taft, paid a visit. So did the First Lady, Grace Coolidge...

After his party nominated Al Smith for President, he and political advisors wanted to sit down and map strategy.... In August the Smith entourage left the heat of Pennsylvania Station by private railway cars and arrived at Biltmore for a week-long conference, the club being taken over for that purpose by special arrangement.<sup>9</sup>

Biltmore Forest has retained its status as an elite address thanks to decisions implemented by Raoul and his partners at the beginning. These include the park-like layout of roads by Olmsted's associate, Chauncey Beadle, the swan-necked lampposts and wrought iron street lights, parks and public open spaces, an architectural review process, codes governing lot sizes and setback, and the golf course. To defend the integrity of the community, the founders incorporated Biltmore Forest as a town with its own police force, fire department, zoning, and taxes.

Virtually the only changes in the original plan have been a small section rezoned for condominiums in response to the desire of many older residents to down-size their housekeeping responsibilities, and increased restrictions on pets and horses.

To a considerable degree, the exclusivity of Biltmore Forest guaranteed the continuity of its style. Lot prices beginning at \$5,000 and required minimum construction costs ranging from \$7,500 for the smallest lots to \$25,000 for the larger closed it to all but the comfortably well-off. The four partners tapped their own resources to the limit in capitalizing the company and then proceeded to build the grandest houses they could with fortunes that were now largely paper. Nevertheless, in the six years following its conception in 1920 over one hundred homes were completed or under construction and over 300 acres sold. Then, in 1927, hardly a year after the Florida Real Estate Bubble burst, buyers stopped coming to Biltmore Forest.

Cracks soon opened up within the partnership. After the Depression struck with full force in 1929, and all the local banks failed, Biltmore Company partners Adams and Colburn lost their grand houses, and a bitterness that their descendants remember to this day replaced their friendship. Edith Vanderbilt (now married to Sen. Peter Gerry of Rhode Island) bought back much of the undeveloped land to keep the company afloat. The Knights stayed on under much-reduced circumstances, dividing their time between

<sup>9</sup> David Coleman Bailey, *Fashionable Asheville, Vol. I 1880-1930*, Privately published, Asheville 2004.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

Florida and Asheville. For several years the Raouls leased their house to a family from New York from September to May and wintered in an old farmhouse off a dirt road in an undeveloped corner of Biltmore Forest.<sup>10</sup>

The Asheville real estate market did not fully recover until the late 1970's, and Biltmore Forest developed slowly compared to many other areas around Asheville, because few could afford it. Of the four partner's houses, Raoulwood remains the only one that has not undergone extensive renovation. Bathrooms, including tiles and most of the fittings are original, as are doors, casement hinges, light fixtures, kitchen cabinets, moldings, and window sashes. Much of the planting on the grounds dates back to the time of construction.

## Architectural Context

The Tudor Revival style was one of several English-influenced styles that became especially popular in Asheville during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like the Shingle, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles, it appealed to buyers seeking homes in the city's fast-growing suburban neighborhoods.

The Tudor Revival became popular across the nation during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest examples date from the 1890s, but the style reached the height of its popularity in the 1920s and early 1930s. Although its name alludes to the architectural characteristics of early 16<sup>th</sup> century Tudor England, the style drew inspiration from a variety of late Medieval antecedents of varying scale and form ranging from thatched-roof folk cottage to grand manor houses. Few Tudor Revival houses were actually modeled on Medieval English examples; American architects freely incorporated elements of the Craftsman, Stick, and Queen Anne styles. The character-defining features of the style included steeply-pitched roofs, front-facing gables, false half-timbering, massive chimneys, and stucco, masonry, or masonry-veneered walls. Tudor Revival houses carried in scale from modest cottages to large, landmark mansions. It was used for a large proportion of early 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban houses across the nation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Preparer's note: Thomas Raoul (1886-1953) lived at Raoulwood from its construction in 1923 until his death. His daughter, Jan Raoul Bingham moved back to Raoulwood in 1946 with her husband and two children, Samuel, who prepared this nomination, and his sister Kathleen. Their brother, Thomas Wadley Raoul Bingham, was born in 1954. Our grandmother, Helen Doyle Raoul, remained there until her death in 1962. My other's sister, Kathleen Raoul, an unmarried school teacher spent her summer vacations at Raoulwood and lived there in retirement from 1979 until her death in 1989. Jane Bingham's three children all lived elsewhere following graduation from college and marriage but returned frequently for extended periods. Since the death of Jane Bingham in 2001 Raoulwood has been the principal residence of Samuel Bingham and his wife and is seasonally occupied by his sister Kathleen, both Thomas, and their families. Sam Bingham, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel J. Vivian, Junius Adams House National Register nomination, p. 15-16



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

To set the architectural style for Biltmore Forest, the four founding partners all engaged the best local architects they could find. Knight actually built two houses, the first designed in the Spanish Colonial style by Erle Stillwell. The second, which he named Knightshade, is a small but fanciful Old World French residence by William Waldo Dodge. Set in a dark grove of towering hemlock and white pine, it features slit windows, a conical turret, carved doors and wrought iron fixtures that make it one of the most distinctive houses in Biltmore Forest. The other three partners all built variations on the Tudor theme on the golf course within sight of each other. Colburn chose English-born Richard Sharp Smith to create a very formal and very English manorial complex with several large outbuildings that he christened Greystone Court. For their mansions, Adams and Raoul both tapped Charles N. Parker.

Charles N. Parker was one of several architects who shaped Asheville during its boom years before the Depression. Parker came to Asheville in 1904 from Ohio to polish his skills by working as a draftsman under Richard Sharp Smith. Daniel Vivian's National Register nomination for the Adams House has this to say about the provenance of Parker's art:

Asheville owed a great deal to the influence of Richard Sharp Smith, the first highly-trained professional architect to work extensively in western North Carolina. The English-born Smith came to Asheville to serve as the supervising architect for the construction of Biltmore House and in 1895 established his own practice in Asheville. His earliest work introduced a variety of English architectural traditions to the community. He designed more than two dozen buildings in Biltmore Village, where he employed pebbledash stucco and half-timbering to invoke an English feeling. For the Young Men's Institute Building at the corner of South Market and Eagle Streets, Smith used his favored "English cottage" forms in the design of a building with a civic role. Zealandia, a sprawling Tudor Gothic mansion atop Beaucatcher Mountain built for New Zealand-born diplomat and businessman Philip S. Henry, showcased Smith's skill in designing an English-style manorial residence<sup>12</sup>...

...If Smith was largely responsible for introducing English architectural influences to Asheville, Parker carried on the tradition after working under Smith early in his career. Parker was a native of Hillsboro, Ohio. He moved to Asheville in 1904 and worked as a draftsman for the firm of Smith and Carrier before establishing his own architectural practice in 1918. Parker focused on designing houses for Asheville's lucrative residential market but became best known as the architect of the Grove Arcade (NR 1976), a massive commercial building built in the late 1920's on Battery Park Avenue. The Arcade, a reinforced concrete and steel structure covered in ivory-glazed terra cotta, was designed to serve as the base of an office tower, but the Depression halted the project before it was completed.

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, Zealandia was built by a previous owner named Brown, an American who had made a fortune in wool in New Zealand. Parker designed a major addition for Henry, an English-born diplomat. The original Zealandia building was later torn down by Henry's English son-in-law, Brig. Gen. Machonachie. Smith's addition still stands.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

Parker's architectural vocabulary included all the elements that characterize the Tudor Revival style - tall chimneys, steep slate roofs of many levels, cross gables, stucco, half-timbers, stone veneers and patterned brickwork, and bay windows.

The Raoul House sits obliquely on its lot; the gabled and hipped roof is the highlight of the design; and its rather open floor plan is full of light. Rising over its acre and a half of unobstructed lawn running seamlessly into the thirteenth fairway, the long southeast façade was for years the only structure clearly visible from the porches of the country club. Also, the grounds were laid out to create a sense of discovery and anticipation as the long, curving wooded drive approaches the house from an angle rather than straight on. The house is gradually revealed to the visitor as they enter the property from Vanderbilt Road.

The picturesque qualities of the landscape are carried through in the house design. The steeply gabled slate roof is remarkably complex, with a variety of roof heights and shapes and overlapping gables. Dormer windows of various sizes and roof shapes punctuate the high roof, and the eyebrow oriel window next to the entrance is a distinct feature of the house. On the southeast side the roof only covers the top story, allowing the highly fenestrated façade to take full advantage of the sun. On the opposite, northwestern side the roof sweeps down through a cascade of dormers, overhanging eaves, and gables from the ridge line all the way down to the front door shelter. Also, the large overall size of the Raoul House is not immediately apparent due to the consciously-designed lower-roofed sleeping porch and service wings, flanking the taller, main section. They create the impression of a large cottage that has grown in size over time.

Raoul and his wife Helen entertained more extensively than Adams, Colburn or Knight<sup>13</sup>, and explicitly had their house and grounds laid out to accommodate big parties. The ground floor suite of dining room, entrance hall, living room and sitting porch are big, connected spaces that can function as a single unit opening onto the vast lawns. Especially on the ground floor of Raoulwood there is a conspicuous attempt to connect indoor and outdoor spaces both visually and physically. Helen Raoul used to say that the construction foreman remarked on first seeing the blueprints, "Hell. This house ain't nothing but windows." One's first sight on entering the front door is not sumptuous décor but a mountain view over the lawn through forty panes of glass at the opposite end of the hall.

Raoul's substantial investment in the development of Biltmore Forest resulted in some economizing in the level of finishwork in the house. The old-growth heart pine flooring of the upper floors, now vastly more valuable than the oak in the more public rooms, but then a way to cut costs by skimping where no one would see. The top floor was left unfinished except for a small servant's room, and the roof remained covered with tarpaper for nearly ten years until Raoul sold another Biltmore Forest property that he had bought as an investment at the outset of the enterprise.

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<sup>13</sup> Preparer's note: This observation is based on the personal recollections of the preparer and his sister, Kathleen Bingham Stroh who remember all four of the founding partners well, particularly Adams, Colburn, and Raoul, and remain close to their descendants, Elizabeth Colburn Williamson, who still lives in Biltmore Forest, and Junius G. Adams III who lives in nearby Polk County.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

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In terms of style the interior of Raoulwood reveals a broader range of influences, including the Arts and Crafts movement and American nineteenth century classical design. The first sign of this appreciation for combining earlier styles was at the main entrance off the drive. Beside the front door, Raoul placed two chairs pegged together from hand-split oak that he made himself. On the interior, wood beamed ceilings, rough stuccoed walls, and brick fireplace surrounds continue the English or Tudor theme, while smaller scale details, such as the handmade wrought iron wall sconces in the hall and the staircase treatment, are clearly in the tradition of the Arts and Crafts movement in Asheville. The dining room and the master bedroom feature mantelpieces, woodworking, a color scheme in the American classical mode.

The large open rooms in the expansive Raoul House also reflect the shift from the Victorian preference for parlors and smoking rooms as a focus of the social life of the well-to-do to the prototypical Arts and Crafts house with a single, family-friendly living room. Raoul, who had overseen the construction of thirty Arts and Crafts single family homes in Albemarle Park at the turn of the century, took the dimensions, rough brick fireplace, and cove ceiling with its hewn beams, from the living room of Milfoil Cottage there and reproduced them at Raoulwood. He also tripled the extent of built-in bookshelves, another Arts and Crafts fully-integrated house design feature.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 15

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 16

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 17

Thomas Wadley Raoul House  
Buncombe County, North Carolina

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## GEOGRAPHIC DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description

The property comprises two lots in the Town of Biltmore Forest, both identified on the attached "Survey for the Estate of Jane R. Bingham" as: DB 1885 PG 561 under the name of JANE RAOUL BINGHAM ETAL.

On Buncombe County tax maps, these are identified by PIN nos. 9646-70-78-0035.000 and 9646-07-68-7002. The acreage is shown respectively as 1.15 acres and 2.38 acres.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the property at 394 Vanderbilt Road encompass the remaining intact acreage associated with the Thomas Raoul House.