

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 any 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 Brigman-Chambers House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number North side SR 1003, 0.6 mi. west of junction with SR 2118 (1006 Reems Creek Road) not for publication N/A

city or town Weaverville vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Buncombe code 021 zip code 28787

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] SHPO 4/00/04
Signature of certifying official 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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
____ entered in the National Register ____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
____ determined eligible for the National Register ____ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
____ determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
____ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
____ other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Brigman-Chambers House
Name of Property

Buncombe Co., 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 the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	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)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling
Domestic secondary structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: I-house

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
roof metal
walls weatherboard
log
other stone

Narrative Description

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

Brigman-Chambers House
Name of Property

Buncombe Co., 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

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

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

ca. 1880

Significant Dates

ca. 1880

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Morris, Fabe

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: Western Office, Archives and History

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

Summary

The Brigman-Chambers House consists of a ca.1845 one-and-one-half story, two-room, half-dovetail log house and a ca. 1880 I-House with Queen Anne influences. The house was originally tied to several hundred acres in Reems Creek, but through the years the land was sub-divided. Recently the adjacent land has been developed into a new subdivision

The nominated property is 0.991 acres and includes the main house and the well house. The property is located in the valley of Reems Creek, which runs in an east-west direction north of Asheville and was one of the first areas of the county to be settled. The house is set back from the road on a slight hill with the front of the house (the I-House section) facing northeast and the southeastern side of the house facing Reems Creek Road (SR 1003). Across Reems Creek Road is a large wooded area. The entry road to the Brigman-Chambers House, delineated by new stone piers, is also the main entry road to the adjacent new subdivision to the northwest, clearly visible to the rear of the Brigman-Chambers property. This entry road runs to the north side of the house, with a gravel drive and parking area to the south, located on the north side of the house. A new split rail fence delineates the entry to the house and divides the upper gravel parking area from the gravel drive below. A flagstone walkway leads from the gravel drive to the rear entry of the house. Across from the house, on the north side of the entry road, is a steep grassy hillside. The land immediately surrounding the Brigman-Chambers house consists primarily of an open, gently rolling lawn interspersed with deciduous and evergreen trees and some smaller shrubs. Foundation plantings are located along the southeast and northeast elevations. To the northwest of the house, and outside of the nominated area, is a small creek and a new cabin set in an open lawn area. The newest additions to the Brigman-Chambers House are on the northwest side, attached to the end of the central log portion.

1. Brigman-Chambers House. Contributing. ca.1845; ca.1880

Exterior

The earliest part of the house is the Brigman log house, which originally was a freestanding one-story-plus-loft structure that now constitutes most of the first story of the rear ell. The loft was expanded to a framed half-story in a 1930s remodeling and was expanded again, to a full story, in the most recent renovations.¹ To the northeast of the log house is the late nineteenth-century I-House addition and to the southwest, the rear of the ell, is the ca. 1960 and 2000 addition.² Original logs of the house are exposed on the northwest and southeast first floor walls. It appears, based on the 1979 architectural survey of Buncombe County, that these logs may have been covered with weatherboard in later years, but they had been removed by the time the current owners bought the property.³ Both the I-House and the more recent additions are covered with weatherboards siding. A side gable roof covered in standing seam metal and

¹ Interview with Debra Bussey, current owner, by Sybil A. Bowers, 9 September 2002.

² The ca. 1960 one-story kitchen wing was made by a previous owner and the current second story was made by the current owner. Interview with Debra Bussey, current owner, by Sybil A. Bowers, 9 September 2002.

³ See "Brigman-Chambers House" survey file, Department of Archives and History, included with the working file.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

with returns tops each unit of the house except for a small second story shed-roofed addition at the rear of the I-House. Most of the foundation consists of brick piers with lattice in between.

The front of the house (northeast) is the ca.1880 I-House addition. This elevation is three bays wide, with a two-tiered attached porch and an entrance on each level. The lower, hip-roofed porch shelters two-over-two windows and a central two-light-over-panel door and has beveled posts, sawn work brackets in a delicate tracery pattern, a ca. 2000 replacement two-by-two inch balustrade, and beaded board ceiling. The upper, gable-front portico projects from the central entrance bay to create a prominent element in the center of the main facade. Deep molded cornices create a pediment faced in sawtooth shingles framed on the sloping sides with a frieze of vertical boards; at the apex, there is a rectangular louvered vent in a pointed-arch frame. Two-over-two windows flank this porch, which shelters a door with two arched lights over a panel. The second-story porch features the same beveled posts, sawn brackets which are less detailed than those below, and beaded board ceiling. Unlike the first-floor porch, however, the upper portico has an intricate sawn-work balustrade in an overlapping pattern of ovals, original to the house.

The northwest elevation gives the best view of the complete architectural changes of the house with the log house in the center, the late nineteenth-century I-House addition to the northeast, and the ca.1960/2000 addition to the southwest. The I-House section has a stone dry-stack, single-shoulder chimney in the middle of the weatherboard wall. On both sides of the chimney on both floors are two-over-two windows. Adjacent to the I-House section, to the southwest, is the log section of the building. At the juncture of the log and frame wing and the I-House, a tall square, stuccoed, interior stack rises from the massive stone chimney built at the exterior gable end of the log house. The first floor features exposed twelve-to-fourteen inch logs with concrete chinking and one two-over-two window, which is a ca. 2000 replacement of a door. The first-floor porch is in its original location, with replacement rough sawn square posts and two-by-two inch rough sawn balustrade. The original floor planks of variable widths and the plank ceiling are intact. From the porch there are doors into all three sections of the house. The roof overhang above this porch was eliminated in the recent renovations, during which the second-story porch and balustrade were added. The second floor, the raised original loft area of the log house, has period two-over-two windows and a period door that were added by the current owners. At the northeast end of the second-story porch is the small shed-roofed wing where a bath was added in the recent renovations. At the southwest end of this elevation is the two-story single bay of the ca.1960/2000 addition on a concrete block foundation. The first floor has a one-over-one window, and the second floor has a two-over-two window. The first floor of this section was added ca.1960, and the second floor was added by the current owners.

The southwest elevation of the house is mostly the late twentieth-century addition and is the simplest of the views. It is two bays wide with one-over-one windows on the first floor and a single two-over-two window on the second.

The southeast elevation, like the northwest elevation, provides a view of the changes that took place in the house through the years. The southwest corner is the late twentieth-century addition. As on the northwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

side, the log house section of the building is exposed logs on the first floor and weatherboards on the second. The attached porch is constructed of rough sawn materials with plain brackets and is covered by a shed roof with exposed rafter ends. The balustrade is two-by-two inch with a flat top rail. This section is three bays wide, with two-over-two windows on either side of a door with square stained glass panes on the upper half and a recessed panel with applied ornamentation below, probably added when the ca.1880 I-House addition was built. The second floor has period two-over-two windows installed recently. The I-House section of this elevation is one bay wide with a polygonal window bay on the first floor and a two-over-two window above. Beneath the windows of the polygonal bay there are recessed panels of flush boards on the diagonal. Like the pediment of the upper front porch, the gable end with returns is sheathed in sawtooth shingles and framed in a frieze of flush boards.

Interior

The first floor of the rear wing (the log house portion of the building) appears to have originally been two rooms, but the construction of the wall between rooms is unknown. There is some evidence of nail holes between the current door and window (former door) on the northwest wall, but by the time the current owners bought the property the original floor boards had been removed, so there was no shadow line to confirm the exact placement of a partition wall. However, the assumption that there originally were two rooms is due to the fact that there were two doors opening into the house from the northwest porch. The door on the west side of the room was changed to a two-over-two window by the current owners (see Exhibit A, floor plan). Stairs to the loft, originally located in the southwest corner, were removed when the loft was expanded into a full second floor; the current owners added new stairs in the northwest corner of the room. The log section features a plain mantel with original stone fireplace surround and hearth. Current owners installed the plank board floor and beaded board ceiling. The walls are the exposed twelve-to-fourteen inch logs of the structure with concrete chinking.

To the northeast of the log portion is the ca.1880 I-House addition with more elaborate woodworking and craftsmanship typical of the Queen Anne style, but also reflective of vernacular carpentry in the simplification of architectural details. When the I-House was added to the log house, the exterior chimney on the southeast wall of the log house was encased within the new structure, provided space for closets or small rooms on both sides of the chimney (see Exhibit A, floor plan). The layout of the ca. 1880 portion of the house is typical of an I-House, with two rooms over two rooms and a central hall with stairway (see Exhibit A, floor plan). The first floor of the I-House addition has similar features throughout the two rooms and hallway, including wainscot with beaded boards of varying widths, baseboards and chair-rails of beaded board laid on the horizontal, and plaster walls and ceilings. Door and window casings have fluted boards and beaded board corner blocks. The floors are pine planks that have been recently cleaned and waxed. Doors throughout are either four- or five-panel. The southeast parlor has a notable plaster ceiling medallion, the window bay, and a wooden mantel with vertical and horizontal beaded boards and scroll brackets. The northwest parlor has the same fireplace as the southeast parlor. The I-House staircase continues the wainscot of the hallway. The newel post has similar detailing to the porch posts, and the stairs have original beveled banister and two-by-two inch beaded board balusters.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 4

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

The upstairs of the I-House addition also has Queen Anne details in the woodworking. The walls and ceiling are beaded boards of variable width, and the baseboards are horizontal beaded board. The door casings have a concave profile and have beaded board corner blocks, the same as downstairs. The floors are pine plank, the same as the downstairs. The original door to the upstairs porch has two arched lights over two panels. The upstairs bedroom fireplaces have their original wooden mantels with fluted pilasters and horizontal beaded boards. There are no scrolled brackets on these mantels, and new tile has been added at the fireplace surrounds and hearth by the current owners.

On the second floor, there is a clear distinction between the ca.1880 I-House addition and the space above the log house, the former loft space that has been renovated to a full second story. There are two steps at the southwest end of the hall in the I-House section that lead to the upper level of the rear wing. Here, the walls are plaster and door casings are fluted boards with bulls-eye corner blocks, all added by the current owners. The pine plank flooring is the same as the I-House section.

At the far end of the rear ell, the southwest addition originated as a one-story, shed roof wing built ca. 1960, but has recently been renovated and modified to be a kitchen and laundry area on the first floor with an added bedroom and bath on the second floor. The kitchen/laundry area is connected the main room of the log house by a doorway that was widened by the current owners. On the second floor, the bedroom floorboards match the rest of the upstairs. A wooden mantel, two-over-two windows, and door casings match those in the hall.

2. Wellhouse. Non-contributing. ca.1880; 1940s; 2000

The wellhouse, located just north of the house, is a small one-story structure originally built ca. 1880 along with the I-house addition to the log house. It was modified in the 1940s into a structure with a shed roof and no windows. In 2000, the current owners remodeled the structure to its present form. It now features a side-gable roof with return eaves, standing-seam roofing, and weatherboard siding to match the house. The recently added windows are one-over-one. The building has the original panel door and stone foundation, some of which has been stuccoed.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

Summary

The ca. 1880 Brigman-Chambers House is one of only a handful of late nineteenth-century I-Houses remaining in the Reems Creek/Flat Creek/Weaverville area of Buncombe County. It is notable under Criterion C in the area of architecture because it displays both typical features of the form and period as well as distinctive decorative exterior sawnwork and interior woodworking designed and executed by local builder Fabe Morris. The I-House was added on to a ca. 1845 log house that was incorporated in the final composition as the lower level of the rear ell. While the log portion of the house has been changed through the years, it is still important historically as documentation of the architectural changes of a farmhouse through the mid to latter part of the nineteenth century. The house is known locally for its association with the Brigman and Chambers families, local farmers and land speculators and some of the earliest settlers in Buncombe County, and for its association with local builder Fabe Morris.

Historic Background

When it was formed in 1792, Buncombe County encompassed land that is today recognized as Henderson, Madison, Haywood, Jackson, Transylvania, Macon, Swain, Clay, Graham, and Cherokee counties. The early settlers of Buncombe County were strong and resourceful, persevering through frontier hardships and using the timber, land, and food that their environment provided.⁴ Wealthy settlers acquired large tracts of land in the fertile valleys of Buncombe County. Poor settlers were left with the less fertile ground and hillsides. This land discrepancy perpetuated the class differences among the settlers. Falling in between the wealthy and poor were middle class families – settlers with tools and goods to establish a farm, but no great wealth.⁵

The mountainous area made travel very difficult. By 1827 the Buncombe Turnpike connected the county to other areas – namely South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. Before the Turnpike was complete, goods from outside of Buncombe were expensive and trade was mostly within the valleys where the settlers established themselves.⁶

The Reems Creek valley, settled in the late eighteenth century, was among the first areas settled in Buncombe County. Reems Creek was home to several early county officials, including the first court clerk, sheriff, and two of the first judges.⁷ The early county court was responsible for much of the county affairs. In its first year, 1792, the county court ordered men to build a road from the “wagon ford of Rims creek [sic]” to a road from Turkey Creek. Included in the list of men were John Weaver, Jacob Waggoner,

⁴ Douglas Swaim, *Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina*, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981, 11.

⁵ Swaim, *Cabins and Castles*, 12.

⁶ Swaim, *Cabins and Castles*, 11.

⁷ Roberts, Minnie Brank. *Recollections*, April 1930., Newspaper File Collection, vol. 31, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

and John Chambers.⁸ Thus, as early as 1792 the Chambers family was established in Buncombe County. Listed among the early inhabitants of Buncombe County in the 1800 Census were both Brigman (Brigman in this record) and Chambers families.⁹

As early settlers of Reems Creek, the Brigman and Chambers families were farmers and land speculators, depending on their land to sustain them. Buncombe County deed records show that individuals in both families bought, sold, and held many tracts of land, large and small. Between the 1830s and 1860s, John Brigman is listed as acquiring several tracts of land ranging in size from eighty acres to 5,000 acres. These properties were in various areas including Big Ivy, Little Ivy, Newfound Creek, Flat Creek, the North Fork of Swannanoa, and Reems Creek.¹⁰ Although deed records do not indicate when Brigman built his home, it is likely that this is the period when he built the log house along Reems Creek Road.¹¹ Such houses were common from settlement until as late as the twentieth century so it is difficult to know the exact construction date. However, by 1850, John Brigman and his family included a wife, at least five children ranging from age five to sixteen, and one other female relative living with the family in Reems Creek. It is likely, based on the size of his family, that he built the two-room log house ca. 1845 when his children were small.¹²

Due to the limited population in the area, the Brigman and Chambers families were inevitably connected, as evidenced by the marriages between the families. John and Joseph Chambers, sons of William Chambers, both married Brigman women. Although records are limited, it is clear that John and Joseph Chambers married daughters of John Brigman.¹³ John G. Chambers married Catherine Brigman, and later John Chambers became the administrator of John Brigman's land.¹⁴ Joseph B. Chambers married John Brigman's daughter Lucinda, or Lou, on December 31, 1862.

Deed records indicate that on October 28, 1869, Joseph B. Chambers acquired the land with the log house in Reems Creek from John Brigman, but the deed was not recorded until March 14, 1893. The property in 1869 contained 300 acres, and the purchase price was \$5,000.¹⁵

⁸ F. A. Sondley, *A History of Buncombe County, North Carolina*, Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company Publishers, 1977; Douglas Swaim, *Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina*, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981, 11.

⁹ US Census, 1800.

¹⁰ Buncombe County Index of Grantees, pre-1924, Record of Deeds.

¹¹ *Historic Places* collection, Folder 9, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC; Buncombe County, NC, Record of Deed.

¹² US Census, Buncombe County, NC, 1850.

¹³ Buncombe County birth, death, and marriage records give little information about the families, but other sources including deeds, censuses, and obituaries give evidence of the relations.

¹⁴ "J.K. Chambers" obituary, *Asheville Times*, 5/12/1938.

¹⁵ Buncombe County, NC, Record of Deeds, book 85, page 355.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

By 1880, Joseph Chambers had a household of nine, with seven children ranging in age from one to eleven.¹⁶ It is likely, then, that it was about this time, when his family had increased in number, he added the I-House to the front of the ca.1845 log house, providing more space for his growing family. Fabe Morris, a carpenter who married one of Joseph Chambers' daughters, is credited as the builder.¹⁷

After Joseph Chambers died, the land was divided among the children. Some sections were sold, some were kept, but the land was no longer a large tract. Doak (or Doke) Chambers, born in 1879 to Joseph and Lucinda, acquired fifty acres and the house in 1915.¹⁸ In 1947, Doak and his wife Ida Chambers split the land, giving it to their daughters, Annie Belle Chambers and Blanche I. Edmonds, whose land included the house.¹⁹ In 1999, the estate of Blanche Edmonds, administered by William H. Edmonds, was deeded to Hawks Landing LTD. The house, which was sold for salvage and destined for demolition, was acquired by the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County, Inc. and then sold to the current owners, Richard and Debra Bussey, with design covenants in August of 1999.²⁰ At the time the Busseys purchased the property, dismantling of the house for salvage had already begun, but enough of the structure remained to renovate it to its current condition.

Architectural Context

The I-House building form, dating from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, was prominent in the American landscape from the Chesapeake Tidewater in Maryland, through Virginia, and on into the mountains of North Carolina.²¹ Typically, the form, two stories, one-room-deep, and at least two rooms wide, was of frame construction with a side gable roof, brick end chimneys, and various appendages including one or two-story porches and rear ells. Variations included brick construction and hip or gambrel roofs.²² On both floors, the plan was typically center hall, with the two flanking rooms of equal size. Sometimes the flanking rooms were of unequal size. Other I-House plans included the hall-parlor and side-hall, the latter found more commonly in Virginia.²³

The most typical North Carolina I-House has a center hall with flanking symmetrical rooms, side gable roof, and exterior end brick chimneys. The I-House, along with a few other basic house types such as the one-story, one-room-deep form, remained prevalent from the coast to the mountains for well over a century, probably due to the fact they were easy to construct. They prevailed as building traditions were

¹⁶ Buncombe County Census, 1880.

¹⁷ *Historic Places* collection, Folder 9, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC.

¹⁸ Buncombe County, NC, Record of Deed, book 199, page 284.

¹⁹ Buncombe County, NC, Record of Deeds, book 643, page 448 & 450

²⁰ Buncombe County, NC, Record of Deed, book 2074/ page 377, book 2074/ page 405, book 2160/ page 290.

²¹ Glassie, Henry, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980, 64.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 4

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

passed from generation to generation, slow to change.²⁴ The I-house, so called, some say, because it is tall and narrow when viewed from the end, was modified with full-width front porches, either one or two stories, and a rear shed or ell.²⁵ Until the mid-nineteenth century, most I-Houses had minimal ornamentation. According to architectural historian Doug Swaim, “The basic form of the typical eighteenth and nineteenth century vernacular house—its plan and height—was determined by local folk tradition. Its proportions and decorative features, however, generally depended upon the latest popular architectural style to arrive in the countryside.”²⁶ Throughout its building history, the rural I-House denoted “agrarian prosperity and respectability,” making it a favored choice for the farmstead.²⁷

In Buncombe County, the I-House building tradition was much the same as throughout the rest of the state, consisting most commonly of a center hall plan, side gable roof, exterior end or sometimes interior brick or stone chimneys, front porches, and rear ells or shed rooms.²⁸ Some roof forms in the county are triple-A (side gable with projecting center front gable) or hip, but these are the exceptions. While it is unknown exactly how many I-Houses were constructed in Buncombe County from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, this house type was one of the most common. However, only about thirty dating from ca. 1800 to ca. 1900, the period of the Brigman-Chambers House, remain standing.²⁹ Of these, the majority are quite plain, with typical features such as an ell or shed addition to the rear and a variety of porch types, including attached full-width porches of one or two stories, central two-tiered porticos, and wraparound verandas.³⁰ The exceptions have elaborate bargeboards or vergeboards, decorative gable ends, or scrollwork on porches. Some of the more elaborately detailed of the county’s surviving late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century existing I-houses include the Millard Roberts House (ca. 1897, Jupiter vicinity) with highly decorated gable ends, window hoods, and interior woodwork; the Josh Roberts House (ca. 1895, Jupiter vicinity) with scrollwork porch brackets and raised panel porch posts; the Adolphus A. Reynolds House (late nineteenth century, Leicester vicinity) with a cresting waves pattern in the bargeboards and an unusual x-pattern in the upper porch; and the Nolen House (ca. 1900, Sandy Mush) with elaborate vergeboards.

The Brigman-Chambers House, in Reems Creek, is one of only six remaining late nineteenth-century I-Houses in the north-central area of the county which includes Flat Creek, Reems Creek, and Weaverville. The other five houses are the Joseph P. Eller House (ca. 1880, Flat Creek); the Wiley Chambers House (ca. 1895, Weaverville vicinity); the Wagner House (late nineteenth century, Beech Community vicinity); the Weaver-Weaver House (ca. 1871, Weaverville vicinity); and Sunnycrest (1878, Reems Creek). Of

²⁴ Douglas Swaim, ed., *Carolina Dwelling*, Raleigh, North Carolina: Student Publication of the School of Design: Volume 26, 1978, p. 29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

²⁸ Survey files, Western Office, Archives & History, Asheville, North Carolina.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

these half-dozen house, the Brigman-Chambers House, the Joseph P. Eller House, the Wiley Chambers House, and Sunnycrest display any degree of decoration. The Brigman-Chambers House is notable for its beveled porch posts, scrollwork brackets and balustrade on the front two-tier porch, much like the Eller House which has the same beveled posts, intricate cutwork balustrade on the second story porch, and wave pattern bargeboards. The Wiley Chambers House has decorative vergeboards, and Sunnycrest has shingled gable ends like the Brigman-Chambers House. While it is not documented at the present time, it is likely that Fabe Morris, the builder of the Brigman-Chambers House, also built the nearby Eller House, as some of the architectural detailing is quite similar.

The Brigman-Chambers House is representative of late nineteenth-century I-Houses of Buncombe County and the rest of the state in its frame construction, roof form, attached front porch, and rear ell, yet it also stands apart in the stylishness of its porch with decorative shingles and sawnwork, the detailing of one gable end with ornamented gable and polygonal window bay, and its Queen Anne-influenced interior woodworking. The incorporation of a pre-existing log house on the site as the rear ell also distinguishes the house.

Despite many changes over the years to the rear ell of the Brigman-Chambers House, it remains clear that its log section originated as a free-standing one-story, two-room house, a typical early dwelling in much of western North Carolina. Due in part to the lack of sawn lumber, the abundance of timber, and cultural preferences, log houses were the norm for settlers of Buncombe County. Farmers needed wood to build shelter, and they needed to clear land for farming, so it made sense to use the felled timber for construction. "Log construction remained standard in rural Buncombe County on into this [the twentieth] century," but the forms of the buildings became much more refined through the years, changing from temporary cabin shelters to more substantial log dwellings such as the house built by the Brigmans around 1845.³¹

There were several forms of log construction, varying in plan and corner joints. Plans of log houses in Buncombe County include single-pen one room and hall-parlor plans for smaller houses and larger double-pen buildings arranged in saddlebag configurations or the less common dogtrot. A two-room house would often have two separate entries leading into each of the two rooms. Nearly all log houses had half-dovetail notching, stone chimneys, and lofts that were accessed via "narrow, tight turning stairs," some of which were boxed.³² The log house built by the Brigmans is no exception to the norm, originally having two rooms with two separate entries, a loft, and construction of exposed twelve-to fourteen-inch logs joined with half-dovetail joints. The loft was originally accessed by tight turning stairs in the southwest corner of the cabin and an exterior end chimney was built of stone, and later stuccoed.

³¹ Swaim, *Cabins and Castles*, 54.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9, 10 Page 1

Brigman-Chambers House
name of property
Buncombe, North Carolina
county and state

Bibliography

Buncombe County, NC. Record of Deeds.

Buncombe County Architectural Survey, Western Office, Office of Archives and History, Asheville.

Glassie, Henry. Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980.

Historic Places collection, Folder 9. Pack Memorial Library. Asheville, NC.

“J.K. Chambers” obituary. Asheville Times, 5/12/1938.

Roberts, Minnie Brank. Recollections, April 1930. Newspaper File Collection, vol. 31. Pack Memorial Library. Asheville, NC.

Sondley, F.A. A History of Buncombe County, North Carolina. Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company Publishers, 1977.

Swaim, Douglas, ed. Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981.

Swaim, Douglas, ed. Carolina Dwelling. Raleigh, North Carolina: The Student Publication of the School of Design: Volume 26, 1978.

US Census, 1800-1880.

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property, lot 1A, are indicated on the accompanying survey map. The lot is a portion of tax parcel 9763.03.30.7063.

Boundary Justification

The lot is all of the land both currently and historically associated with the Brigman-Chambers House.

BRIGMAN-CHAMBERS HOUSE
 WEAVERVILLE, NC, BUNCOMBE COUNTY
 FLOOR PLAN SKETCH

EXHIBIT A
 NORTH



