

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Blake House

Arden, Buncombe County, BN0562, Listed 8/30/2010
Nomination by Terracon Consultants Inc.
Photographs by Courtney Vuturo, July 2007



Façade view



Rear view

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Blake House

Other names/site number Newington, Royal Pines; Joseph B. Pyatt House

2. Location

street & number 150 Royal Pines Drive N/A not for publication

city of town Arden N/A vicinity

State North Carolina code NC county Buncombe code 021 zip code 28704

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 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
Title State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title 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
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain:)	_____	_____

Blake 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
- private

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	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

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC; Hotel
DOMESTIC; secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival
Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: STONE: limestone
walls: STONE: limestone
STUCCO
roof: ASPHALT
other: N/A

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Circa 1850

Significant Dates

Circa 1850

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Period of Significance (justification)

See attached

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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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): BN 562

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.55
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>362387</u> Easting	<u>3926500</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

See attached

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

See attached

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lorraine Norwood, M.A, CRM Manager; Courtney Vuturo, M.A., Historian; Nancy McReynolds, MHP, Architectural Historian

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date December 15, 2009

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs: See attached

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

sdfsdf

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary and Setting

The c. 1850 Blake House is located approximately 200 feet west of Sweeten Creek Road (NC Highway 25A) in Arden, Buncombe County, North Carolina. The house stands near the center of its three-quarters-of-an-acre lot. The lot is surrounded by an early twentieth century residential neighborhood. Sycamore Drive flanks the property on the west and south, while Royal Pines Drive borders the property on the north. A mixture of dense hardwoods and residential development remains west of Sycamore Drive. The 1920s subdivision known as "Royal Pines" is to the north of Royal Pines Drive. A community park is located to the south and modern commercial development is located to the east along Sweeten Creek Road. The Blake House is currently utilized as a bed and breakfast. A small gravel lot for guest parking is located just east of the house. In addition to the Blake House, the parcel includes a c. 1985 carriage house utilized as both a personal residence and guest cottage for the bed and breakfast.

The immediate setting of the resource comprises decorative plantings and large hardwoods, some perhaps 150 to 200 years old. There is an extensive garden on the south side of the property. The property is shielded from the view of properties to the north and west by dense tree cover.

The Blake House is surrounded by decorative foundation plantings and mature trees. Extensive modern landscaping has been undertaken around the house, with a concentration around an outdoor garden located south/southeast of the main residence. The garden consists of stone pavers with a water feature and a gazebo and is heavily landscaped with numerous bushes, perennials and landscaped grasses.

A horse-shoe shaped carriage road (now Sycamore Drive and Royal Pines Drive), the apex of which faced the front of the Blake House, was the original access to the house. The carriage road connected to Old Post Road, which is now Hendersonville Road/Dixie Highway/NC 25, 1500 feet west of the property.

Exterior

The Blake House is a hip-roof, five-bay, Gothic Revival-style stone house oriented to face west. The main block of the house is a two-story, double pile mass with a single story stone ell in the rear. A 1907 addition to the Blake House is located to the north of the rear ell and includes a kitchen and a bathroom on the first floor, and one bedroom on the second floor. In the early part of the twentieth century a porch/stoop located between the main mass of the house and the 1907 addition was enclosed creating a second bathroom and hallway. Two kitchen additions (c. 1940 and 1970-1980) extend east from the 1907 kitchen.

The front (west) and rear (east) elevations of the house feature a central steeply pitched cross-gabled roof with large trefoil vents and multicurved bargeboards. The windows in the main block consist of both single and paired wood casement windows. All exterior doors and windows have limestone sills and prominent limestone drip moldings. The Gothic theme is elaborated with heavy curvilinear bargeboards and large trefoil vents in the front and rear gables. Although the hand-forged metal shutters once associated with the casement windows are no longer present, the hand-forged hooks remain. The exterior is random-coursed rough-cut stone with twenty-two inch thick walls that are held together with lime and clay mortar. There are three interior chimneys in the main block and one in the ell which feature stucco and corbelling. The sills under the Blake House are twelve-inch by sixteen-inch white oak and the floor joists are three-inch by fourteen-inch white oak. All exterior architectural elements are original to the resource. The original roof was slate but was changed to asphalt shingle at an unknown date.

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The symmetrical five-bay facade (west) has a full-length, one-story porch with a shed roof, supported by octagonal columns bracketed at their slightly flaring capitals, and a balustrade. The floor of the porch consists of slender wood boards running east and west until they reach the door where the boards were cut shorter to form a diamond pattern. The central entry consists of a historic four-recessed panel wood door, flanked by four light sidelights over which is a six-light transom. The central bay is flanked by two bays consisting of two paired three-light casement windows with two fixed lights above. The central bay on the second story consists of paired eight-light casement windows. The two bays on both sides of the second-story central bay consist of two paired four-light casement windows. Within the front gable is a decorative stonework trefoil vent and multicurved bargeboards. The porch has a stone pier foundation and is accessed by three eight-foot long stone steps carved from a single piece of stone.¹

The north elevation of the main block is similar to the south elevation. On the first floor, the westernmost window consists of paired twelve-light casement windows that extend to the floor, creating a doorway. It is flanked by six-light fixed sidelights. Three evenly spaced rectangular holes in the exterior that run the partial length of the elevation from the window towards the east may be joist pockets for a porch once located off the casement window/door. The molding around the top of the casement window/door is constructed of wood to mimic the limestone moldings elsewhere on the house. The westernmost window on the second story mirrors the first floor with paired five-light casement windows that extend to the floor, creating a doorway. There is a small wooden balcony which extends approximately three feet from this door. The balcony is a modern replacement and it has a modern lumber frame and a platform made of two by fours. The balustrade consists of round balusters, simple two by four lumber handrail and bottom rail and two square corner posts. A balcony at this location is reportedly original to the elevation.²

The asymmetrical south elevation features three bays, the most prominent feature of which is a three-sided bay window reached by three concrete steps on the westernmost bay. According to Mrs. Nancy Rice, past property owner, the bay window is a replacement for the original carriage entrance.³ However, a bay window is illustrated in the original floorplans found in A.J. Downing's Cottage Residences (1842). The Downing book and its relationship to the Blake House is described in Section 8. The second floor consists of a window with paired four-light casement windows in each bay. Stone drip moldings are above all of the windows on this elevation except for the bay window. The south entrance elevation of the stone rear ell has an off-center two-panel wood door with a three-light transom and a shed-roof porch with four simple chamfered supports with a square capital. It also features an entrance into the main block back parlor. A full-length shed roof dormer has been added to the south roof of the ell creating a half story.

The original floor plan of the house featured a single room side gabled ell extension to the main block on the east elevation. The extension has the same exterior materials as the main massing of the house and two paired three-light casement windows with two fixed lights above. The details on the main block of the house have been obscured by additions over the years. It appears to have had three bays with a gable in the central bay. Like the front façade a decorative stonework trefoil vent and multicurved bargeboards are located in the central gable. On the second floor there is one paired four-light casement window to the left of the central gable. On the right are two windows; however the window on the northernmost bay has been covered over on the interior. The other window has been filled with concrete. The drip moldings are still present over these windows. The roof of the extension has been altered to create a half story, shingle sided addition. Most of the original windows on the first floor of the east elevation on the main house have been lost due to additions. A

¹ Rizk, Estelle S. "Historic Homesites: Blake Estate." Arts Journal (Asheville, NC), Vol. 7, No 10, July 1976, page 6.

² Rice, Nancy. Telephone interview. 21 April 2009.

³ Rice, Nancy. Telephone interview. 21 April 2009.

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small rectangular vent is located right of the original gable, in the historic shed roof addition. To the right is a small window with paired three-light casement windows.

The first story of the north elevation of the 1907 addition features a door with a late twentieth-century replacement single light aluminum framed awning window with an entry to the root cellar below. The second floor features two late twentieth-century replacement fixed single light aluminium framed windows and a single light late-twentieth century replacement aluminum framed awning window. In the corner of the 1907 addition, a patch of missing stucco exposes a brick exterior. There are brick steps leading to another door sheltered by a shed roof.

Extending east from the 1907 addition are two further kitchen additions dating to 1940 and 1970-1980. The south elevation of the 1940s kitchen has a faux-rock veneer siding that was an attempt to match the original stone of the house, but the veneer is actually lighter in color than the limestone. On the north elevation of this addition, there is a stucco exterior, an enclosed fixed window and a lateral exterior chimney. The 1970s kitchen addition has board and batten plywood siding, a cross-panel wood door with nine fixed lights and a 1/1 double-hung sash window. The roof over the additions is a wood-shingled mansard that overhangs the walls.

Interior (See attached floor plans)

The Blake House design is an amalgam of two architectural styles popular in the mid-nineteenth century. The double-pile exterior is high style Gothic Revival, complete with typical Gothic Revival flourishes such as trefoil vents, while the center hall plan interior features Greek Revival-influenced interior finishes such as two-panel doors and simple and elegant post and lintel mantels.

Plaster walls throughout the interior are mixed with hair, lime and sand and were applied directly on wood lath. The plaster twelve-foot to fourteen-foot ceilings feature decorative, robust covetto crown moldings with spaced plaster shield and floral accents which are thought to date to 1850. Within the center of the ceilings are large plaster medallions of white and gold. The chandeliers have been removed and the outlets covered with plaster. The flooring consists of two-inch thick red heart-pine floorboards that run north to south throughout.

All mantels, baseboards, wainscots, window surrounds, stairs, rails, balusters, casement windows, and doors throughout the house are fabricated from walnut. The painted raised panel wainscoting features a chair rail, top stile, panel molding, vertical stile, base stile, and baseboard. Raised panel apron walls beneath the windows are found throughout the main floor. Only the rear ell room is surrounded in painted, raised-panel wainscoting. It is roughly the height of the mantel and much more simple in design with smooth top stiles, vertical stiles, base stiles, and baseboards. Each section features a square raised panel above each rectangular raised panel. Each painted mantel features simple squared shelves over traditional surrounds. The fireplace surrounds have smooth rectangular frieze boards over smooth pilasters with broader square capitals and plinths. Some of the fireplaces have modern tile work, surrounding the firebox. The baseboards are also simple in design with a wide smooth board to the floor with base cap molding on top; it ends with a block plinth at the openings. The door surrounds are smooth planks with crown molding or base cap detailing and a square block plinth at the base. Window apron walls consist of simple vertical stiles extending to the baseboard, the stiles are finished with a rectangular plinth at the baseboard. The lintels have been covered with a non-historic cornice used for concealing curtain rods. All the casement windows throughout the house feature hand-forged hooks used to unlatch and open the windows.

The front door opens to a center hall with north and south flanking parlors that are almost identical. The north parlor is currently utilized as a breakfast dining room. An opening to the south leads to the entry hall. The decorative ceiling, windows, door surrounds, and baseboards, described above, are the same in both parlors. The focal point of the east wall in both parlors is the fireplace. However, instead of the bay window seen in the south parlor; the north parlor features a set of paired casement windows which extend to the floor creating a

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door with sidelights on the north elevation in this room. The south parlor features the woodwork and flooring seen in the entry hall. Overhead there is a ceiling medallion and a modern ceiling fan. An opening to the north leads to the entry hall.

The back parlor, located in the southeast corner of the main block, is accessible from the stair hall as well as an exterior door on the east elevation. The west wall of the room features a fireplace. There is a recessed section of the west wall that historically housed built-in shelving. The east wall features two doors; one leading to the modern gift shop in the rear ell and one to the side porch. The porch door is a replacement wood nine light over a cross-panel. There is a six light transom above the door. The back parlor is thought to have been Dr. Blake's office (see Section 8).

The room in the first floor of the rear ell is currently utilized as a small gift shop for the bed and breakfast. Non-historic decorative woodwork has been placed on the ceiling of this room to mimic exposed rafters. The fireplace is the focal point of the room. It is constructed like the other fireplaces with the exception of the pilasters. Each pilaster on this fireplace surround has been covered with six decorative tiles. Five of the tiles mimic fluted column detailing while the sixth tile located on the top appears to be a lion head capital. These tiles do not appear original; it is uncommon for a room located in the rear of a house from this time period to have more decorative detailing than the front parlors.

The stair hall features a three-run, open well, wooden open-string, staircase with a balustrade comprised of turned balusters, a molded handrail and five-inch square newel posts at the base and landings. Two pendants hang underneath the third run of the stairs. At the second landing the stairs branch off to the north, east and south. The stairs to the south and north lead to the second story while the stairs to the east lead to the bedroom in the 1907 addition. With the construction of the addition, the top run of the stairs was likely altered. The current alignment of the staircase has covered the transom window over an east elevation door to the short hallway between the stair hall and the 1907 kitchen. It should be noted that the newel post appears to date to the early part of the twentieth century. However, the newel post at the bottom of the stairs appears to be in the same style as that on the staircase that leads to the attic. A fireplace similar to the others on the first floor is located on the east elevation of this room. Under the stairs is a small storage closet with a wooden two panel door. The north elevation has a doorway to the buffet room.

The buffet room features the same simple baseboards, door and window surrounds, and wide wooden floorboards that run west to east found throughout the house. The ceiling has simple crown molding and two beams that cross each other in the center. The east elevation features a blocked-up door opening with the surround still intact. The door was historically an exterior door which, based on the original floorplans, appears to have led to a small porch/stoop before it was enclosed in the early part of the twentieth century creating a restroom.

In the 1907 addition a hallway on the first floor provides access to the service areas. This area of the house was originally separate from the original house but was attached sometime in the early part of the twentieth century. The entry to the hallway from the stair hall once held a thick door with a large surround. The hinge is still present and the absent door used to swing inwards toward the stair hall. The north elevation of the hallway consists of two doors leading to two renovated bathrooms. A simple wooden swing door to the east leads to the 1907 kitchen. A pantry has been built into the south elevation of the hall.

The west wall of the men's bathroom reveals the stone exterior of the main house. The east wall of the room also shows exposed stone above the sink, indicating this wall was the west exterior wall of the historic kitchen that was once separate from the house. The enclosure of the men's bathroom joined the kitchen to the house. Between the men's bathroom and the women's bathroom is a beam and wall that serves as the entrance to the 1907 kitchen. The women's bathroom consists of tile flooring and modern wood wainscoting.

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The modern industrial kitchen consists of multiple kitchen additions that have accommodated the private residence and bed and breakfast function of the house. Upon first entering the 1907 kitchen, there is a large built-in shelving unit on the left. Straight ahead is an open stairway to the second story with a small storage closet located underneath. The closet is accessed by a two panel wood door. Across the hall to the north of the stairwell is a small room utilized for dishwashing. The north wall of this room features a historic door with a single light window over two panels. This room is the kitchen that was part of the addition constructed in 1907. East of the stair is another addition which features the cooking and preparation area of the 1940s kitchen. The west and north wall of this room are institutional in appearance. The east wall has an off-center door that leads to the 1970s kitchen. This modern addition serves as a storage area and contains the refrigerators for the kitchen. The south wall features an off-center six-light-over-panel door. There is a double-lead screen door inside the wood door. There are two closets that extend east from this room that are used for storage. The closet on the left contains a modern 1/1 double-hung sash window.

Interior Second Story

The second story features a center hall, utility closet, five bedrooms (the Dogwood, Azalea, Magnolia, Holly, and Lilac rooms), and five bathrooms, four of which are within the bedroom spaces. The stair from the first floor has four landings, the upper three leading into rooms in the rear ell, and one into the upper hall and utility closet. The lower landing leads to the shed roof addition. A stair leading to the attic is located off of the center hall. The ceiling of the hall is both flat and textured plaster. There are no crown moldings; however, the use of baseboards, wide door surrounds and simple wooden floorboards that run west to east is continued. Three wood double recessed vertical panel doors with single light transoms lead to the bedrooms off of the upper hall.

The stair to the attic comprises seventeen steps with a five-inch square newel post and turned balusters as seen on the staircase from the first to the second floor. The attic is closed off by wooden boards.

The Dogwood (SW) and Magnolia (SE) bedrooms feature wide window surrounds, simple baseboards and a fireplace. The Lilac bedroom is located in the northwest corner of the second floor. The north wall features a paired casement window/door that leads to a balcony. The crown molding within the bedroom is simple but is approximately one foot wide. The east wall of the bathroom has a wood five-panel door with its original lock for access to a staircase landing and the utility closet. The Lilac bathroom has vertical tongue and groove wainscoting surrounding the room and the window surround does not feature the raised panel wainscoting below nor does it extend to the floor like the windows found elsewhere. The single window within this room is recessed with simple vertical stiles, horizontal stile and a deep smooth sill. The Azalea bedroom is an addition in the rear ell over the gift shop. The west wall of the room reveals the exterior stone of the house. The door to the upper hall is recessed due to the twenty-two-inch depth of the stone exterior. The entry room to the Holly bedroom (1907 addition) is accessed by a landing from the stairwell. Upon entering the room, there are three steps down. A door to the north enters the Holly bathroom, a door to the east leads to the Holly bedroom and a door to the south leads to a small stair which descends to the 1907 kitchen. The east wall features a window that has been covered with concrete. There is a closet on the south wall with a five-panel wood door with its original lock. In the bathroom shower on the west wall there is an exposed section of the exterior stone. A utility closet located off the stair landing exhibits a window on the north wall that was enclosed historically, most likely with the construction of the 1907 addition that now houses the Holly rooms.

Noncontributing Building, Carriage House, c. 1985

Located on the Blake House parcel is a frame carriage house utilized as a personal residence by the property owner and guest cottage for the bed and breakfast. The carriage house is a two-story side-gable

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structure. The building features four wall dormers with 1/1 double-hung sash windows. Although the exact date of construction is unknown, the carriage house is estimated to have been constructed in 1985.

Integrity Statement

The Blake House possesses a high degree of integrity due to its retention of mid-nineteenth century double-pile floor plan, random-course rough-stone exterior, three-light casement windows, corbelled chimneys, red heart-pine flooring, and wood panel doors. Gothic-style elements, such as the steeply pitched roof with center gables and trefoil vents, decorative bargeboards, and window drip moldings remain. There have been additions on the first floor and second story extending to the east of the house; however, despite the alterations and additions, a large percentage of the house has been left intact. The Blake House remains a striking example of a Gothic Revival-style house which is relatively uncommon in North Carolina.

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8 Statement of Significance

The c. 1850 Blake House is located on a three-quarter-acre parcel of land in Arden, Buncombe County, North Carolina. The Blake House is a rare example of the Gothic Revival style not commonly seen in rural western North Carolina residences during the mid-nineteenth century. The cross gables, decorative bargeboards, and window drip moldings are stylistic elements of Gothic Revival. The two-story double-pile plan house reflects the influx of wealthy South Carolina summer tourists to the mountains of North Carolina who purchased land and constructed stylish summer homes. Local building materials, including limestone and walnut, were used in construction of the house. All exterior architectural elements are original to the resource. Although rear additions were constructed to accommodate contemporary life with kitchens and bathrooms, the Blake House today remains largely intact, retaining its fine exterior stone construction and interior woodwork of local walnut. There are few examples of mid-nineteenth-century Gothic Revival-style houses of this scale and material detail in western North Carolina. The Blake House is locally significant as a highly intact example of a mid-nineteenth-century Gothic Revival style residence in western North Carolina and meets National Register Criterion C for architecture. The period of significance is circa 1850. The exact date of construction is not known, but is thought to have occurred between 1847, when Daniel Blake sold 291 acres of land to Joseph Pyatt who built a house on the land, and 1852, when Pyatt sold the land and house back to Blake.

Historical Background

During the early nineteenth century, travel through the southeastern region of the United States, particularly through the mountainous terrain of western North Carolina, was difficult at best. The Buncombe Turnpike, promoted by western legislators, created a well-constructed road that ran south of Greenville, Tennessee to Greenville, South Carolina via Asheville.⁴ Construction began on the Turnpike in 1824 and was completed in 1828.

With the opening of the Buncombe Turnpike, many wealthy summer tourists, especially landowners from South Carolina, began making annual visits to Asheville and Flat Rock in Henderson County in an attempt to avoid the summer heat and humidity of the Low Country. Until that time, Buncombe and Henderson counties were remote and isolated from commercial markets. Wealthy South Carolina rice planter Daniel Blake was among the prominent South Carolina plantation owners who built summer homes in the mountains. Between 1827 and 1840 he acquired over 5,000 acres of land that today make up portions of Henderson and Buncombe counties.⁵

Daniel Blake was descended from a prominent South Carolina family, the founder of which, Benjamin Blake, arrived in the province in 1683 and was given large grants of land in Colleton County on which he established large plantations. Benjamin's son, Joseph Blake, became Governor of South Carolina and acquired even more property, approximately 6,000 acres, and a mansion known as Newington. Joseph's son, Daniel, was born in England in 1803 and educated at St. Johns College Cambridge. He married Emma Middleton, daughter of Henry Rutledge, however Emma died in 1853. Daniel had six children: Frederick Rutledge Blake, Francis Daniel Blake, Arthur Middleton Blake, Henry Middleton Blake, Frances Helen Blake,

⁴ Bishir, Catherine W., Michael T. Southern and Jennifer Martin. A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina. 1999), 25-26.

⁵ Buncombe County Register of Deeds.

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and Henrietta Louisa Blake. Daniel then married Helen Craig of New York in 1856 and they had three more children.⁶ Daniel Blake is listed in the 1860 Slave Census as owning 527 slaves in South Carolina.⁷

According to local tradition regarding the Blake House, Daniel Blake sold 291 acres of his land along the Buncombe Turnpike in present-day Arden to Joseph B. Pyatt in 1847. During the next few years, Pyatt built the two-story double-pile residence using local stone. In 1852 Pyatt sold the estate back to the Blake family.⁸ However, deeds were not identified at the Buncombe County Register of Deeds showing the date of sale to Pyatt or the sale from Pyatt back to the Blake family. An 1870 deed signed by Daniel Blake, his wife Helen, and son Frederick, references an 1856 pre-nuptial deed between Daniel Blake and Helen E. Craig (her maiden name) indicating that should Helen survive Daniel, she should receive \$25,000 in lieu of all claims which she might have on the estate of her husband. The 1870 deed further states that Daniel Blake grants and conveys to his son, Frederick Blake, all his lands situated in Buncombe and Henderson Counties, North Carolina; Charleston County, South Carolina; and Savannah, Georgia. After Frederick Blake acquired the Blake House, he renamed it Newington, the name of the Blake family plantation in the South Carolina Low Country.⁹ Frederick Blake was educated at Philadelphia Medical College and served in the Civil War until he was wounded at Cold Harbour. He married Olivia Middleton in 1865. Mary Chestnut's Diary from Dixie entry of December 5th describes the nuptials: "Miss Olivia Middleton and Mr. Frederick Blake are to be married. We Confederates have invented the sit-up-all-night for the wedding night; Isabella calls it the wake, not the wedding, of the parties married. The ceremony will be performed early in the evening; the whole company will then sit up until five o'clock, at which hour the bridal couple take the train for Combahee. Hope Sherman will not be so inconsiderate as to cut short the honeymoon."¹⁰ Blake and Middleton had four children: Edmund Molyneux Blake, Daniel Blake, Emma Rutledge Blake, and Eliza Fisher Blake.¹¹ During the Civil War, Dr. Frederick Blake was named captain of Company H from Buncombe County and Henderson Counties.¹² Upon the death of Dr. Blake, local family history states that Newington passed to his son, Colonel Edmund Blake, although no deeds were identified with this transaction.¹³ Deeds do show that on August 1, 1891, Dr. Frederick Blake and his wife sold the property to their daughter Eliza Fisher Blake for \$3,000.¹⁴ Eliza Fisher Blake was noted as a "spinster in Newington" in a 1924 deed which shows she sold four acres of land to James Jones of Buncombe County and six acres of land to Rose Chapman of Roscraggon, Skyland, also in Buncombe County.¹⁵ Eliza was the last Blake to occupy the house.

In May 1925, the estate was sold for \$60,000 to William I. Phillips and Estelle I. Phillips of Dade County, Florida. The William I. Phillips Company subdivided the 516-acre parcel into a planned subdivision named "Royal Pines", a name that developers hoped would conjure an image of the mountains of western

⁶ South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1900.

⁷ Blake, Tom, The Sixteen Largest American Slaveholders from 1860 Slave Census Schedules, at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ajac/biggest16.htm>. Accessed December 16, 2009.

⁸ Swaim, Douglas (ed), Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina. (Asheville: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), p. 72

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ <http://www.chestnutcottage.com/Diary%20of%20Dixie%20Columbia.htm>

¹¹ South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1900.

¹² North Carolina Genealogy <http://www.northcarolinagenealogy.net/2007/02/15/alson-and-sarah-russell-gordon/>.

¹³ Blake House. <http://www.blakehouse.com/>, accessed October 15, 2008.

¹⁴ Buncombe County Register of Deeds, book 78, deed 58.

¹⁵ Buncombe County Register of Deeds

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North Carolina. At this time, the developers changed the name of the Blake House from "Newington" to "Royal Pines", in honor of the stately pine trees lining the old carriage road. The use of the house during this time is unknown.

The Royal Pines subdivision was envisioned as a "Mountain Suburb." Print advertisements from PIC showcase the Blake House (then called Royal Pines) and state "a home in Royal Pines should be the supreme ambition of every residence and visitor in North Carolina." The Royal Pines community, according to PIC, was "intensively developed as a high class residential section from one of the Oldest and Finest Estates in North Carolina."¹⁶ The developers promised electric light and power, paved roads, a sewer and water system, and telephone service. Amenities included a casino, swimming pool, tennis courts, and parks. The developers also marketed the new subdivision through the creation of a waltz whose lyrics extolled the "wealth of wondrous beauty 'mong the Royal Pines supreme."¹⁷ The Phillips Company's ambitious plans for Royal Pines might have come to fruition had the Great Depression not settled on the country in the late 1920s and 1930s. By May 1940, the Phillips Company defaulted on its loan and the firm Parkway Properties, Inc. divided up the subdivision to the highest bidders.¹⁸

On July 10, 1940, Mr. John DuBose purchased the parcels containing the Blake House as well as two neighboring parcels, for \$2,500. DuBose then sold the Blake House property to his niece, Ms. Rainsford Fairbanks DuBose MacDowell, on July 26, 1943.¹⁹ The sale did not include the two neighboring properties DuBose acquired in the parcel auction. Ms. MacDowell and her family, who were from Gaffney, South Carolina, used the Blake House as a summer home. According to Ms. MacDowell's son, Marion S. MacDowell, the house was in a dilapidated state inside, although in good condition on the outside. The MacDowells put in new flooring, worked on the 1907 kitchen which was in disrepair and added a bath downstairs. Mr. MacDowell stated that, other than these changes, the family did not make any major alterations to the house. They used the two front parlors as gathering places for the many family members visiting there in the summer. The room behind the south parlor was used as Ms. MacDowell's bedroom and the original kitchen was used as a dining room. Mr. MacDowell remembers the three-run staircase being in its current state. He also remembers that the interior finishes such as cornice work and medallions were also present at the time the MacDowells moved in.

Ms. MacDowell lived in the house until its subsequent sale to Mr. Jonathan L. Jones on July 30, 1973 for a sum of \$29,000.²⁰ The Jones family resided in the house until it was sold in May 1980. During that time, the Jones family was active in restoring the Blake House and gave numerous interviews and tours of the property to local newspapers and magazines. One newspaper article described how workmen sanded floors, repaired and painted walls, ceilings and windows.

Between 1980 and 1990, the Blake House was bought and sold three times by various families. On June 26, 1990 the Blake House was purchased by Walter M. Rice, who opened the Bed of Rice Bed & Breakfast.²¹ On January 20, 2006, Ms. Leslie Kimball purchased the property and opened the Blake House Bed & Breakfast, which is still operating today.²²

¹⁶ William I. Phillips Company, Royal Pines Subdivision Advertisement. Undated.

¹⁷ William I. Phillips Company, Royal Pines Subdivision Advertisement. Undated.

¹⁸ Buncombe County Register of Deeds, Book 551, page 58.

¹⁹ Buncombe County Register of Deeds, Book 549, page 582.

²⁰ Buncombe County Register of Deeds, Book 1085, page 73.

²¹ Buncombe County Register of Deeds, Book 2029, page 207.

²² Buncombe County Register of Deeds, Book 4170, page 1849.

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Architectural Context

The Blake House design is an amalgam of two architectural styles popular in the mid-nineteenth century: Gothic Revival and Greek Revival. The double-pile exterior is high style Gothic Revival, complete with typical Gothic Revival characteristics such as trefoil vents, ornamental bargeboard, and pointed gables. Gothic Revival, a style most often seen in church architecture, is uncommon in residential design in North Carolina during the mid-nineteenth century.²³ The Blake House is a rare example of this architectural type. The center hall plan interior features Greek Revival-influenced interior finishes such as two-panel doors and simple and elegant post and lintel mantels.

The Gothic Revival style in residential construction developed as an outgrowth of the Romantic movement and literary interest in the medieval period. The design of Gothic Revival homes and institutional buildings of the mid-nineteenth century took its inspiration from the great cathedrals and castles of England. Those who could afford it often constructed their picturesque homes in stone and brick; however, the Gothic Revival home for the “common man” was wood-framed with factory-made architectural trim. The Gothic Revival style for both masonry and wood homes often featured a steeply pitched roof, steep cross gables, trefoil vents, and curvilinear bargeboards.

The “Rural Architecture” movement, which employed the Gothic Revival style, found its leading advocate in Andrew Jackson Downing, an American horticulturist, writer and designer, who believed that every American deserved a good home. His belief that every home should be both beautiful and functional is illustrated in his 1842 book Cottage Residences, where he writes in the preface: “In this volume, the first yet published in this country devoted to Rural Architecture, I am conscious of offering but a slight and imperfect contribution to this important subject . . .” and, he continues, Americans may hope that “at no very distant day our country residences may rival the ‘cottage homes of England’ so universally, and so justly admired.”²⁴

In Cottage Residences, Downing published the designs for ten houses, and included the plans for laying out the gardens, orchards, grounds and even described various plants to be used. His philosophy that “There is a moral influence in a country home,” can be seen in his description of the floor plans of Design II in Cottage Residences. The object in designing the cottage, he writes, is “internal convenience” due to the number of families “mainly composed of invalids, or persons of advanced years, who have a strong preference for a plan in which the kitchen, and at least one bedroom, are upon the same floor with the living rooms, and in which there is little or no necessity for ascending or descending stairs.”²⁵

Downing’s Design II, “a cottage in the English, or Rural Gothic style”, is similar to the exterior of the Blake House and to the floor plan of the two-story main block. Downing’s description of Design II calls for tall gables, “handsome verge boards” (exhibiting feathered tracery), and latticed casement windows, all of which can be found on the Blake House. Downing’s instructions for the exterior suggest that the cottage be built of brick and cement, colored in imitation of Bath or Portland stone, or quarried stone; the latter was the material of choice for the Blake House. Outdoors, the plan calls for a kitchen garden of fruits and vegetables to the rear of the house, and, in front, there is to be a picturesque carriage road, a lawn kept neatly mown, and irregular beds cut in the turf and stocked with annuals and perennials (Downing provides a list of trees, fruit trees,

²³ Swaim, Douglas (ed), Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina. (Asheville: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), p 73.

²⁴ Downing, A.J., Cottage Residences, (Wiley and Putnam, 1842), p. iv.

²⁵ *Ibid*, page 50.

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shrubs and flowers in the book). It is unknown whether the landscape plans were carried out, although there is evidence of a carriage road in old photographs. The cost of the cottage was estimated at \$2500.²⁶

While Downing's plan was the obvious source for the Blake House design, there are differences in the execution. The Blake House is five bays wide instead of Downing's three bays. Downing's arched Gothic style window in the center gable has been replaced on the Blake House with paired eight-light casement windows. There are differences as well in the floor plan. The two front parlors, the back bedroom, the three-run staircase, the center hall, the back stair hall and the two south bedrooms upstairs match Downing's floor plan. However the north bedrooms, which are shown on Downing's plan as two small bedrooms, are actually one large bedroom (now called the Lilac bedroom – see floor plans). It is not known whether this was one large bedroom originally or whether the two original bedrooms were remodeled into one bedroom. Mr. Marion MacDowell remembers the bedroom as one large room during his family's ownership of the house.

In addition, the interior is a departure from the Downing philosophy of unity. "As an example of the violation of unity of style," Downing writes, "we might refer to a number of county chapels, or churches, within our knowledge, where a Grecian portico and Gothic or pointed windows occur in the same composition!"²⁷ Downing would not have approved of the interior of the Blake House which is decidedly Greek Revival. While the nineteenth century planters may have wanted a picturesque "cottage" for their mountain summers, they obviously preferred the formality of Greek Revival as an interior showpiece for their cultivated taste. This was reflected in the ornate moldings, ceiling medallion centerpieces, and detailed trim on doorways, windows and fireplaces.

While mid-nineteenth-century Gothic Revival-style houses are rare in western North Carolina, one other exists in Buncombe County. The Wally W. Killian House in Beaverdam Valley is a Carpenter Gothic-style story-and-loft central-hall house reportedly built in 1842. The Killian House features a board-and-batten siding with slightly flared gables.²⁸ Its light frame construction is in contrast to the large massing and stone exterior of the Blake House.

During the mid-nineteenth century, wealthy planters from Charleston built their "cottages" along the Buncombe Turnpike particularly in Henderson County near Flat Rock. There they indulged in a penchant for the picturesque style promoted nationally by Downing. Resources built during the mid-nineteenth century in the picturesque style and which would have been familiar to the Blake family are the Meadows, Rugby Grange, St. John-in-the-Wilderness, and the Woodfield Inn.

Rugby Grange and the Meadows in Henderson County bear a striking resemblance to the Blake House in the use of local quarried stone and overall massing, although the styles are quite different. The Meadows (NR 1980), constructed circa 1860 near the town of Fletcher, is a two-story uncoursed limestone Italianate residence built by Robert Blake, son of Daniel Blake.²⁹ The Meadows features symmetrical façade with five bays and two bay-windows and bracket cornices beneath a low-hip roof; however, the Gothic Revival detailing seen on the Blake House is expressed in the Italianate style.³⁰

²⁶ Downing, Cottage Residences, pages 50-60.

²⁷ *Ibid*, page 28.

²⁸ Swaim, Douglas (ed), Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina. (Asheville: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), p 74.

²⁹ Cross, Jerry (ed). The Meadows National Register of Historic Places Nomination. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. 1979.

³⁰ Built Heritage of North Carolina: Historic Architecture in the Old North State.
<http://images.lib.ncsu.edu/luna/servlet/SCDRLUNA-VC-102~3>

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Rugby Grange (NR 1987) situated on the Buncombe Turnpike, is believed to have been constructed ca. 1860-1870. It is a large two-story Italianate house constructed of uncoursed limestone said to be quarried from nearby Burney Mountain (approximately four miles to the east).³¹ The house features decorative roof brackets, bay windows, a porch, and a cupola. Like the Meadows, Rugby Grange bears a resemblance to the Blake House in its use of local stone and massing, but the stylistic source is Italianate.³²

St. John-in-the-Wilderness in Flat Rock was built in 1833 as a private chapel reminiscent of an English chapel, but was conveyed to the Episcopal Church in 1836 and rebuilt in 1852 in the style of a Tuscan hill church. Its parishioners included the cream of Charleston society: the Barings, Draytons, Middletons, and Pinckneys. Old footpaths led from the church to Flat Rock estates.³³

The c. 1850-1852 Woodfield Inn, a three-story frame hotel, was built as a tavern for summer visitors. The contractor for the inn was Henry Farmer, formerly a ward of the Baring family, who built several other mid-nineteenth century structures in the area. The inn was built in the style of the popular picturesque mode of the mid-nineteenth century and the porch retains its original diagonal latticed balustrade and lattice-framed arches; but many of the picturesque flourishes have been lost on the exterior due to alterations over time.³⁴

³¹ Bowers, Sybil A. Rugby Grange National Register of Historic Places Nomination. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. 1986.

³² Built Heritage of North Carolina: Historic Architecture in the Old North State.
<http://images.lib.ncsu.edu/luna/servlet/SCDRLUNA-VC~102~3>

³³ Bishir, Catherine W., Michael T. Southern and Jennifer Martin. A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina. 1999), p. 318.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 318

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of Buncombe County tax parcel 9654.10-36-1111.000 as indicated by a heavy black line on the accompanying tax map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel is the original site of the Blake House and provides a historically appropriate setting for the resource. The nominated area includes the final 0.75 acre that has remained in continuous association with the house.
