

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Seven Oaks

Asheville, Buncombe County, BN0654, Listed 8/13/2015

Nomination by Alex Cord and Clay Griffith

Photographs by Clay Griffith, April 2015



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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Seven Oaks

Other names/site number: Atkinson House

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 82 Westwood Place

City or town: Asheville State: NC County: Buncombe

Not For Publication: n/a Vicinity: n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B XC ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</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>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Italianate

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Brick

Wood/shingle

Asphalt

Metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The 1870s house known as Seven Oaks is a one-story Italianate-style brick dwelling with a triple-A gable roof, interior brick end chimneys, and an attached full-width, hip-roof porch. It is unclear when the house was first referred to as Seven Oaks, but several large oaks remain on the property and at least one other has been taken down in recent years. Located in West Asheville along the route of the old Western Turnpike (present-day Westwood Place), the house was originally accompanied by 150 acres that were gradually subdivided; it now occupies a relatively flat 1.35-acre corner lot on the west side of the street. Westwood Place is now a wide street in a shady, densely developed, early twentieth-century neighborhood. The house is set well back from the street, but most of the acreage is located at the rear of the structure. A low, stone retaining wall with cast stone coping extends along the sidewalk on the eastern edge of the property. Three concrete steps are positioned at the center of the wall, but the walkway leading to the porch is now only a worn groove in the lawn. Stands of mature trees, including oak and pine, are located along the north and south sides of the property. A gravel driveway enters the property from Seven Oaks Road on the south side of the house and extends to the northwest behind the house, where there is an open, gravel parking area. A brick sidewalk leads from the gravel drive to concrete steps on the south end of the porch.

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Narrative Description

Seven Oaks, 82 Westwood Place

Contributing building

1870s, ca. 1890 ca. 1920, 1950s, 2014

Exterior

Built in the 1870s, Seven Oaks is a one-story Italianate-style brick dwelling constructed of handmade brick and capped by a triple-A side-gable roof with deep eaves. The house was originally built with a one-story gable-roof rear ell extending from the north end of the structure and a detached kitchen located to the south of the ell. The kitchen appears to have been joined to the house ca. 1920, based on Sanborn maps from 1917 and 1925. Laid in irregular American bond, the house features interior brick end chimneys, an interior center chimney, an asphalt-shingle roof, cornice returns, and segmental-arched door and window openings.

The nine-bay façade (east elevation) is composed of three single-leaf entry doors topped by transoms and flanked by single four-over-four double-hung wood sash windows set within molded frames. The entry doors are four-panel and have single-light arched transoms; the current owners replaced the center door, which was badly deteriorated, with a historic two-light-over-two-panel door from elsewhere in the house. The façade displays penciled mortar joints. An attached full-width hip-roof porch is carried on Tuscan columns. It is bracketed by heavy scrollwork beneath modillions. The porch has a concrete slab floor on a brick foundation. The metal roofing was replaced in 2014. Set within a segmental-arched opening, a louvered vent in the center front gable is hinged to provide access to the attic.

The north elevation consists of six bays with each pair of single four-over-four windows lighting one of the three interior rooms along this side of the house. The south elevation, which includes the formerly detached kitchen, has a shallow recessed bay containing a small three-over-three window that indicates where the kitchen was attached to the rear of the house. The detached kitchen originally contained both the kitchen and servants' room, which were divided by an interior fireplace and chimney. It stood at a lower elevation than the floor level of the main house. When the kitchen was connected to the house, it appears to have been remodeled with additional brick courses to raise the height of the walls and the construction of a continuous gable roof linking to the main block. When the floor of the north ell was extended along the rear of the house, the floor level of the servants' room was changed to match. Two segmental-arched four-over-four windows were repositioned to illuminate the former servants' room and indicate the change in floor level. A single four-over-four window with a flat rowlock-course lintel, which was likely added in the mid-twentieth century, provides light to the kitchen; the lower level of the window reflects the original floor height in the kitchen. A large sixteen-light window, also a mid-twentieth-century addition, is located on the west elevation of the kitchen. The gable end of the ca. 1920 roof on the kitchen ell is covered with wood shingles.

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In addition to the kitchen ell, the rear elevation consists of the gable-end of the original 1870s rear ell to the north, a ca. 1890 hip-roof kitchen addition on the south side of the ell, and a recessed glazed wall linking the kitchen addition with the kitchen ell and servants' quarters. The original ell features a central door and segmental-arched transom flanked by single-pane picture windows that were likely added in the 1950s. The kitchen addition has a single segmental-arched four-over-four window on its rear elevation. Single-leaf solid wood doors beneath the door of the ell and the window of the kitchen addition provide access to the crawl space. Between the kitchen addition and the servants' room, and recessed from the west elevation approximately four feet, is a glazed wall roughly ten feet wide that encloses a formerly open porch. The recessed bank of windows and a glazed multi-light door were added in 2014 to enclose the space. The central doorway is topped by a six-light transom and flanked on either side by a fifteen-light casement with nine-light casements located above. A wood deck was also added to the house in 2014, with a low landing located at the enclosed porch and a short run of steps rising against the rear wall of the house to a covered deck at the same floor level as the north ell. The gable roof, with wood shingles in the gable end, is supported on square wood posts and attached to the rear ell.

Interior

On the interior, the house is defined by the three formal rooms of equal size across the front of the house. In other nineteenth-century dwellings found in Asheville, the central space typically served as a hallway but here it serves as a full room with a central single-leaf entry door on the east elevation and a brick fireplace on the opposite (west) wall. The flat brick fireplace surround is likely a twentieth-century alteration and is capped by three corbelled courses supporting a brick mantel shelf. Two single-leaf doors flank the fireplace, with the north door opening into a hallway to the former 1890 kitchen. The door on the south side of the fireplace, which has been blocked with a built-in bookcase added in 2014, formerly opened into a bedroom that was added in the mid-twentieth century between the 1890 kitchen addition and the servants' room. The central room retains its picture molding, tall baseboards, molded door surrounds, and early twentieth-century hardwood floors. The single-leaf front entry door, composed of two lights over two panels, was reused from elsewhere in the house and replaced the severely deteriorated original door. Crown molding was added to the room in 2014.

The north and south rooms of the main block communicate with the center room through very large, segmental-arched openings containing arched, double-hinged, four-leaf, four-panel wood doors. The north and south rooms are approximately mirror images of each other. In addition to the arched doorways to the center room, each outer room retains its hardwood floor, four-panel entry doors, picture molding, tall baseboards, molded door surrounds, and fireplace on the end wall. The fireplaces have wood mantels with chamfered pilasters, heavy center scroll brackets, and raised panels. The north room retains an elliptical plaster ceiling medallion with a radiating fan pattern, feather motifs, and scalloped edges; the medallion in the south room was lost due to deterioration.

A single-leaf four-panel door on the west wall of the north room opens into a room at the east end of the north ell. A shallow coal-burning fireplace on the west wall has the same mantel

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as the north and south front rooms, which suggests that it was altered from a wood burning fireplace. It is flanked on the north side by a two-tiered closet accessed through double-leaf four-panel wood doors on both levels. The room is finished similarly as the front rooms, including hardwood floors, picture molding, tall baseboards, and molded door surrounds. The room also features a molded chair rail, suggesting that it may have been used as a dining room, and the door surround opening into the front room is reeded. The ceiling had largely collapsed prior to rehabilitation in 2014, and crown molding was added to the room at that time. A single-leaf door with a transom on the south side of the room accesses the ca. 1890 kitchen addition. A single-leaf door to the south of the fireplace leads to the room at the rear of the ell, which was extensively remodeled in the 1950s as an anniversary present for the owners at that time. Covered with pine paneling (now painted), the redesign included boxed ceiling beams, a paneled fireplace surround, built-in cabinets and shelves to the north of the fireplace, crown and picture molding, and plain baseboards and door surrounds. Single-pane windows were added on the west wall flanking the single-leaf multi-light rear entry door.

An addition was made along the south side of the original ell at some point around 1890, and an open porch was attached on the south elevation of the addition. The porch was later removed, possibly around 1920, when the freestanding kitchen building was connected to the house. The addition contained a short hallway, a bathroom, a narrow butler's pantry, and a kitchen at its west end. Pine paneling was added in the kitchen in the 1950s, when the adjacent room in the ell was remodeled. A single-leaf door with a segmental-arched transom connects the two paneled rooms. The butler's pantry features two-level cabinets with double-leaf four-panel doors on either side of the room. A short hallway leading to an exterior entrance on the south elevation was shortened when the bathroom was expanded to the east during the 2014 rehabilitation of the house; the exterior doorway was infilled with brick. A six-light awning window in the bathroom opens into the enclosed porch between the kitchen addition and servants' room.

A freestanding kitchen located to the southwest of the house was connected to the house ca. 1920, with a small porch between the ells along the rear of the house. A single bedroom was built into the porch space in the mid-twentieth century, with three six-over-six double-hung windows in the west wall overlooking what is now a lower enclosed porch space. Located immediately behind the front center room, the bedroom has single-leaf five-panel doors at its north and south end entering into hallways on either side. A built-in bookcase fills the doorway located on the south side of the central chimney on the east wall and complements the bookcase in the central front room. The hallway and rooms in the south ell of the house were redesigned in 2014, with the addition of a hallway along the north wall, to provide circulation through the ell without passing through the servants' room. A bathroom on the south side of the hall, likely created when the kitchen building was attached to the house, was retained and enlarged. It displays octagonal ceramic tile floors and some original moldings. A bedroom, located beyond the bathroom on the south side of the hall, was originally a servants' room located within the freestanding kitchen. At the end of the hall, wood steps lead down to the remodeled kitchen space. The doors in the south ell are typically single-leaf wood doors with five horizontal panels. A former door to the exterior located in the kitchen displays a later five-panel configuration.

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Flat-transomed doorways in the kitchen and at the top of the stairs open into the enclosed porch, which was remodeled during the 2014 rehabilitation. The space had been enclosed prior to the rehabilitation, but the west wall has been moved outward and replaced with banks of windows surrounding the single-leaf multi-light door and tall six-light transom. The flat roof structure displays a beaded board ceiling on the interior, and the hardwood floors and baseboard moldings remain in place. The space is overlooked by formerly exterior six-over-six windows in the ca. 1890 kitchen addition, as well as from the bathroom in the north ell and the rear bedroom.

Despite alterations, Seven Oaks retains a good degree of historic integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, and association. The major alterations have occurred at the rear of the house and were typically made more than fifty years ago. The original form of three equal-size rooms across the front of the house and the north ell remain intact. The most significant change was connecting the formerly detached kitchen to the rear of the house as a south ell, which occurred between 1917 and 1925. The majority of interior alterations, both during the mid-twentieth century and the 2014 rehabilitation, took place within the later additions and in areas that had been previously remodeled. The house retains the majority of its stylistic elements, including its brick construction, segmental-arched openings, bracketed porch, carved mantels, large double-hinged segmental-arched interior doors, and moldings.

A General Statement of Archaeological Potential:

Seven Oaks is closely related to its surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the house. Information concerning land use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the property. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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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 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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1870s

Significant Dates

1870s

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed in the 1870s, Seven Oaks is a one-story Italianate-style brick house with a triple-A side-gable roof, interior brick end chimneys, and an attached full-width porch situated on a 1.35-acre parcel located at the corner of Westwood Place and Seven Oaks Road in Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina. The building was constructed with an unusual plan comprising three rooms of equal size across the front that are interconnected on the interior by large, segmental-arched, double-hinged doors. Each room also has an exterior door along the façade of the house. The house meets National Register Criterion C for its locally distinctive and finely crafted architecture. One of seven remaining nineteenth-century brick houses in Asheville, Seven Oaks includes distinctive Italianate architectural details and interior woodwork such as penciled mortar joints on the façade, bracketed porch eaves, segmental-arched windows and doors, carved mantels, and extensive molding. The period of significance is 1870s its date of construction.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Background

Following the Civil War, the growth of the town of Asheville, formed in 1791 as the seat of Buncombe County, continued slowly until the completion of the Western North Carolina Railroad to Asheville in 1880, and the Spartanburg and Asheville Railroad in 1886, led to increasing tourism and industrial development.¹ With rapid growth through the latter half of the nineteenth century, settlements around the periphery of the town also began to develop. The Western Turnpike, which had been completed in 1855 as a thoroughfare connecting Salisbury, North Carolina, to the Georgia border, was the primary vein of settlement on the west side of the French Broad River across from Asheville.²

Land that would eventually comprise the community of West Asheville was surveyed as early as 1827, by Robert Henry and his slave, Sam.³ Robert Henry came to Asheville following his service in the Revolutionary War. He went on to practice law and general medicine and was instrumental in the formation of West Asheville. After discovering warm springs in the area, Henry founded the Sulphur Springs Hotel with his son-in-law Robert Deaver in 1832. The Sulphur Springs became a popular retreat for those who came to the area seeking the

¹ Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina*, Vol. II (Raleigh, NC: Sharpe Publishing Company, Inc., 1958), 623-624. Douglas Swaim, *Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina* (Asheville, NC: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 14-16.

² F. A. Sondley, *Asheville and Buncombe County* (Asheville, NC: The Citizen Company, 1922), 164.

³ Phyllis Lang, *The History of West Asheville, Chapter 1* (Asheville, NC: The West Asheville History Project, 2004), 4. Robert Russell, *Robert Henry: A Western North Carolina Patriot* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 92-107.

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rejuvenating spring water, and the inn was continuously expanded to accommodate guests until it burned in 1862.⁴

By the mid-1880s, Henry's son, John L. Henry, had built the Silver Springs Hotel near the west end of Smith's Bridge, the crossing from Asheville, and a community bearing the name Silver Springs began to develop. In addition to the hotel, Silver Springs boasted a post office, agricultural buildings, and two stores along the French Broad River. The community's amenities served farmers and merchants who had settled along the river, as well as those who had settled further west along Haywood Road (now called Westwood Place) and Hominy Creek. Industry continued to increase throughout the 1880s with J. M. Thrash & Sons, the Asheville Ice & Coal Company, and Asheville Lumber and Manufacturing Company all locating their businesses west of the river.⁵ The town of West Asheville, originally called Silver Springs, was officially incorporated in 1889.⁶

Recognizing the potential for growth in the area, lumber baron Edwin Carrier also began buying acreage in West Asheville, including the land that contained the Sulphur Springs. Carrier built three successive hotels on the site, and the last one, known as the Belmont, burned in 1892. Around 1885, Carrier purchased large parcels of land along Haywood Road and in the surrounding area, where he began laying out streets and subdividing the land for development. With his hand already in multiple enterprises, Edwin Carrier and his business partners incorporated under the name the "West Asheville Improvement Company" during the late 1880s. The company was eventually granted sweeping powers by the North Carolina General Assembly, including those to develop lands, establish a railroad and telegraph company, erect cotton factories and woolen mills, construct hotels, dams, and streets, all of which largely shaped the evolution of West Asheville. Additionally, Carrier improved municipal services by constructing a dam along Hominy Creek to bring electricity to West Asheville in 1889. The hydroelectric facility powered the rebuilt Sulphur Springs Hotel (later known as the Belmont) and an electric streetcar, which ran from the hotel across the French Broad River to Asheville. Carrier established municipal streetcar service in West Asheville in 1910.⁷

Although the town's first incorporation dissolved in 1897, growth within the community continued to increase steadily in the first decades of the twentieth century as large land parcels were subdivided for development. It was during this time that a controversial plan to relocate Haywood Road to the south began to develop. While those in favor of the new road considered the idea of an improved main thoroughfare a benefit to all in the community, some argued that longtime residents along the old road would be displaced. Ultimately, a new route for Haywood Road was approved by the Buncombe County commissioners, and the old section of the road was subsequently renamed Westwood Place.⁸

By 1914, the population of West Asheville totaled nearly 4,000 people. Haywood Road, which had become a paved thoroughfare extending for more than a mile west and southwest of the French Broad River, boasted two churches and a mission, a bank, and a fire department. A

⁴ Russell, 92-107.

⁵ Lang, 6-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-11, 15-17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-11.

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variety of stores and businesses were located in West Asheville as well, such as West Asheville Pharmacy, Randall's Shoe Repair, a photographer, a barber shop, and grocers R. L. Pitillo and A. M. Young.⁹ West Asheville was reincorporated as a separate municipality in 1913, but it was again consolidated with Asheville in 1917 due to debt.¹⁰

Much like the rest of Asheville, West Asheville experienced tremendous growth in the years leading up to the Great Depression. By 1930, West Asheville's population had more than tripled to 15,000 people. In 1928, sixty percent of all building permits issued in the city were for development in West Asheville.¹¹ Growth came to a halt, however, as the city plunged into debt following the market crash leading up to the Depression. West Asheville weathered the second half of the twentieth century with minor growth. Revitalization efforts during the past two decades, however, have shifted West Asheville into a new era of progress.

Although it has yet to be determined who built the house at 82 Westwood Place, the property has historically been associated with several prominent Asheville families, including the Smith family, the Henry family, and the Baird and Atkinson families. During the first half of the nineteenth century the property belonged to James McConnell Smith, a prominent Asheville businessman, who operated several farms and livestock stands along the Buncombe Turnpike. Smith owned other businesses, including a general store and a downtown hotel, and built "Buck House," later known as the Smith-McDowell House, circa 1848. His son, Jesse Siler Smith, inherited some of his father's property on the west side of the French Broad River. Jesse Smith was a miller and shopkeeper, but endured failed businesses and eventually lost the property due to financial problems.¹²

James Love Henry, the youngest son of Robert and Dorcas Bell Henry, acquired the property during bankruptcy proceedings in 1869 (Deed 43/217), in conjunction with Robert R. Swepson, who sold his interest in the property in the early 1870s. James L. Henry, like his father Robert, took on a variety of professions, including newspaper editing, practicing law, and serving as a circuit court judge. He was a prominent businessman in West Asheville and amassed a large amount of property, including the Westwood Place property, which then consisted of 150 acres and stretched all the way to Smith's Bridge over the French Broad River. Henry was also instrumental in the development of the hotel, stores, and houses in Silver Springs prior to his death in 1884.¹³

James L. Henry married Mary (Mollie) Alexander of Virginia and the couple had four children. It seems most likely that the Henrys built the house now known as Seven Oaks, although it may not have originally been built as the dwelling place of the Henrys and their three servants. It appears that James L. Henry, and his wife Mary, sold the parcel containing 82 Westwood Place to R. O. and Medora Patterson in 1883 (Deed 43/206). According to census records, Patterson was an attorney, who also operated Hazel Mill in West Asheville.¹⁴ The

⁹ Ibid., 3-7.

¹⁰ Swaim, 185.

¹¹ Lang, 1-3.

¹² Jennifer Cathey, memorandum to Rob and Caroline Rodier, June 6, 2014.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 1880 U. S. Federal Census.

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Pattersons sold the property to C. E. Graham in March 1887 (Deed 58/115), but Graham resold the property two months later to Harriet N. Atkinson (Deed 59/261).

Daughter of prominent Asheville residents Israel and Mary Ann Tate Baird, Harriet Baird married Nathaniel “Natt” Atkinson in Tennessee in 1858.¹⁵ A native of McMinn County, Tennessee, Natt Atkinson was a graduate of Hiawasee College and attended Colonel Wilson’s private academy in Alamance County, North Carolina. Atkinson served as a lieutenant in the First Tennessee Calvary at the onset of the Civil War. He later raised his own company and served with the Army of the Potomac under General Lee until the end of the war. Atkinson was admitted to the bar in 1868. In 1870, he purchased the *Asheville Citizen* newspaper from Randolph Shotwell, and served as president of the Asheville, Atlanta, and Baltimore Railroad. After selling the newspaper in 1873, Natt and Harriet Atkinson returned to farming on the Swannanoa River, where they remained until 1882. Atkinson was elected to the North Carolina General Assembly in 1879. He was a renowned orchardist, cultivating more than 2,300 apple trees at their Swannanoa farm and winning various awards at exhibitions across the country before his death in 1894.¹⁶

After Natt Atkinson’s death, Harriett Atkinson continued to live in the West Asheville house through the 1910s, and Seven Oaks remained in the Atkinson family until it was sold to Walter and Lillian Bennett in August 1940 (Deed 526/343). Walter Bennett was born in 1890, and he and his wife Lillian had three sons: Frank, Walter, and Joseph. According to the 1937 Asheville City Directory, Walter Bennett was a traveling salesman by trade. Joseph Bennett eventually inherited Seven Oaks from his parents. Bennett recently sold the house to the current owners, Robert and Caroline Rodier, in May 2014 (Deed 5205/497).

Architectural Context

The middle part of the nineteenth century was a period of moderate growth in Asheville and the surrounding area. The completion of the Buncombe Turnpike in 1827 had increased accessibility, and thus commerce. By 1850 the population of Asheville was growing steadily and totaled more than five hundred people. While the number of brick dwellings was relatively small at the time, they were becoming increasingly popular throughout the second half of the nineteenth century as the wealth of the town’s citizens was boosted by trade and tourism. It is estimated that there were approximately twenty brick homes by the end of the century. Ephraim Clayton and George Shackelford were two of the leading local builders during this time period that developed regional building practices that extended beyond Asheville and into the surrounding counties.¹⁷

One of only seven brick residences surviving in Asheville from the nineteenth century, Seven Oaks is also among a small number of Italianate-style houses constructed during that

¹⁵ Charles D. Biddix, Roberta Snyder Hall, Doris Cline Ward, eds. *The Heritage of Old Buncombe County, North Carolina, Vol. II* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1987), 87.

¹⁶ James H. Cane, “Today and Yesterday,” *Asheville Citizen* (April 4, 1939). John Preston Arthur, *Western North Carolina: A History from 1730 to 1913* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1996), 453.

¹⁷ Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 260. Swaim, 69.

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period. The earliest brick dwellings include the two-story, double-pile brick house constructed, in 1848, for James McConnell Smith (NR, 1975) south of Asheville and Ravenscroft School (NR, 1978) from the 1840s. Two other antebellum brick buildings erected in Asheville have been substantially remodeled, leaving only their basic brick form and stripping away any decorative elements. An imposing two-story, three-bay, double-pile house was built by Colonel Daniel Reynolds (NR, 1984) around 1850 to the north of town. A smaller two-story, double-pile brick house was erected by the Reynolds family along the route of the Western Turnpike (present 52 Westwood Place) on the west side of the French Broad River. Located just south of Seven Oaks, the house was occupied for many years by Dorcas Reynolds (1838-1923). Built around 1850 and considered to be the oldest surviving brick house in West Asheville, the house exhibits an American bond brick exterior and six-over-six, double-hung windows. A two-story, single-bay portico was added later.¹⁸

Believed to have been built as a residence for entrepreneur James Osborne, Ravenscroft School, one of the antebellum brick structures, appears to have been derived from a design for “A cottage in the Italian or Tuscan style” published in A. J. Downing’s popular pattern book *Cottage Residences* (1842). The building, which is thought to have been built by Ephraim Clayton, differs from the published design, however, and incorporates Greek Revival details rather than Italianate. After 1856, the house was converted to the Ravenscroft School, which is affiliated with the Episcopal church. The building has undergone several renovations over the course of the twentieth century and is currently used for office space.¹⁹

Osborne’s house reflects the growing influence of seasonal residents and wealthy immigrants on the architectural character of Asheville as new residents brought the latest building trends from southern and mid-Atlantic coastal cities. The Italianate style, along with Greek Revival and Gothic Revival, was one of the three major Romantic Revival styles of the mid-nineteenth century, although the Greek Revival style was prevalent across most of the state prior to the Civil War. The Italianate style, which renewed elements of Italian Renaissance architecture, gained greater popularity in the post-war period. The style is characterized by the use of low-pitched roofs, deep eaves, heavy brackets and moldings, and arched openings.²⁰

The Rankin-Bearden House (in the Montford Area HD, NR, 1977) located just north of downtown Asheville along the route of the Buncombe Turnpike, incorporates elements of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Built around 1846, the two-story, five-bay, double-pile house has a low hip roof, nine-over-nine sash windows, and a large Greek Revival-style entrance with sidelights and a transom. The Italianate elements, which may have been added later, include the one-story decorated porch and bracketed cornice.

Fernihurst, located on the campus of Asheville-Buncombe Technical College, is another example of a nineteenth-century brick residence in Asheville. Constructed for Colonel John Kerr Connally around 1875, the two-story Italian villa-style house was built on a prominent knoll overlooking the confluence of the French Broad and Swannanoa rivers. Fernihurst takes its name

¹⁸ Swaim, 68 and 186.

¹⁹ Bishir, et al, 275. Swaim, 68.

²⁰ Swaim, 74-75. Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 281 and 286-287.

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from the Kerr family castle in Scotland, and features Italianate details such as a pedimented central pavilion, arched windows, and a Palladian motif entrance. A Tuscan-style porch with a projecting semicircular portico that carries across the façade was added by later owners Mr. and Mrs. John F. Curran in the 1930s. The interior, which has been significantly modified, originally featured parquet floors, curly poplar paneling in the dining area, rich moldings, and arched doorways.²¹

Constructed around 1865, the George T. Spears House (in the Chestnut Hill HD, NR, 1983) located at 53 Orange Street just north of downtown Asheville is perhaps most closely related to the house at 82 Westwood Place in architectural character, although it is more vernacular in style. Built for Jesse Siler Smith's sister, Jane Cordelia Smith and her husband, George Spears, the house and Seven Oaks are thought to have been constructed by the same builder. The George T. Spears House is a one-story, three-bay, central-hallway brick dwelling that features interior end chimneys, a central front gable, a rear kitchen ell, and segmental-arched openings. The original front porch has been removed. The remaining interior woodwork is quite plain and generally more vernacular in character than Seven Oaks.²²

Although the exact date of construction has yet to be determined, architectural evidence suggests that Seven Oaks was built between 1870 and 1880 during the ownership of J. L. Henry. The one-story house has a triple-A side-gable roof, American-bond brick exterior, rear ells, and two interior brick end chimneys. A full-width hip-roof porch is carried on Tuscan columns and displays scroll brackets beneath modillions. The windows are four-over-four, double-hung sash set within molded frames and segmental-arched openings. One of the most unusual aspects of the house is the floor plan, with three rooms of equal size located across the front of the house communicating on the interior through grand arched doorways, each fitted with segmental-arched, double-hinged doors. Unlike most center-hall houses of the period, each of the three rooms is accessible from the exterior and the interior finish is consistent through the three rooms, which could have been converted into a single space when the large interior doors were fully opened. The interior of the house features stylish architectural details such as carved mantels, extensive molding, and high ceilings.²³

Other examples of the Italianate style in Asheville date from the period after the railroad arrived in the 1880s. These houses represent a later period of stylistic development when the decorative components of the Italianate style were applied to increasingly irregular massing and floor plans. The J. J. Hill House at 120 Hillside Street, built around 1885, exemplifies this changing trend. The house has a T-plan form with an attached wraparound porch, low-pitched roof, bracketed eaves, and hooded windows. The Carmichael-Leonard House on Biltmore Avenue was built around 1890. It is a two-story brick dwelling with an irregular plan, circular side bay, and bracketed eaves; an attached wraparound porch has been removed. The Demens-Rumbough-Crawley House (NR, 1982) to the west of downtown is the most elaborate and eclectic examples of the Italianate style and incorporates elements of Queen Anne and Eastlake design. Built around 1890 for Peter A. Demens, a Russian-born lumber merchant, the large two-story brick house has an unusual three-story tower, elaborate porch and cornice details, and rich

²¹ Bishir 1999, 286. Swaim, 168.

²² Swaim, 69.

²³ Swaim, 69 and 187.

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interior woodwork. These later examples of the Italianate style demonstrate the shift away from a renewal of Renaissance forms and stylistic features to a more decorative application.

The significance of Seven Oaks lies in its transitional character. It represents fully neither the earlier nor later expressions of Italianate architecture in Asheville. The building's overall form, exterior brickwork, segmental-arched windows, and original detached kitchen are elements comparable to the extant dwellings of the 1840s through the 1860s, but its unusual three-room plan is not found in these earlier houses, or indeed, in the later Italianate houses, with their irregular plans. The scale and flair of the interior woodwork and ornament relate more closely to local expressions of the Italianate architecture dating from the 1880s in Asheville. The form of Seven Oaks reflects the efficient planning of the earlier Reynolds houses or the Spears House, but its stylistic elements point toward more fashionable architectural trends that arrived in earnest in Asheville with the coming of the railroad. Seven Oaks survives as a remarkably intact example of a nineteenth-century Italianate-style brick residence in Asheville.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

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 654

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.35 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

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1. Zone: 17	Easting: 356890	Northing: 3938450
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The eligible boundary is shown by a heavy solid line on the accompanying Buncombe County tax map and corresponds to Buncombe County tax parcel 9638-55-9637-00000.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The eligible boundary for Seven Oaks consists of the full 1.35-acre residual parcel historically associated with the house.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alex Cole and Clay Griffith
organization: Acme Preservation Services, LLC
street & number: 825C Merrimon Ave., #345
city or town: Asheville state: NC zip code: 28801
e-mail: cgriffith.acme@gmail.com
telephone: 828-281-3852
date: March 31, 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

The following information pertains to each of the photographs:

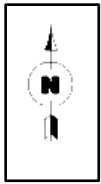
Name of Property: Seven Oaks
Location: 82 Westwood Place, Asheville, North Carolina
County: Buncombe
Name of Photographer: Clay Griffith / Acme Preservation Services
Date of Photographs: April 8, 2015 (exterior) and December 5, 2014 (interior)
Location of Digital Master: Historic Preservation Office
North Carolina Division of Archives and History
109 E. Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807

Photographs:

1. Oblique front view to northwest from Westwood Place
2. Oblique front view to southwest
3. North elevation, view to south
4. Rear (west) elevation, view to east
5. South elevation, view to northwest
6. South parlor, view to southeast corner
7. Center parlor, arched doorway, view to south
8. Center parlor, fireplace, view to west
9. Center parlor, arched doorway, view north into north parlor
10. Dining room, fireplace and double cupboard, view to west
11. Study, fireplace and built-in shelves, view to northeast
12. Enclosed porch, view to east

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.).

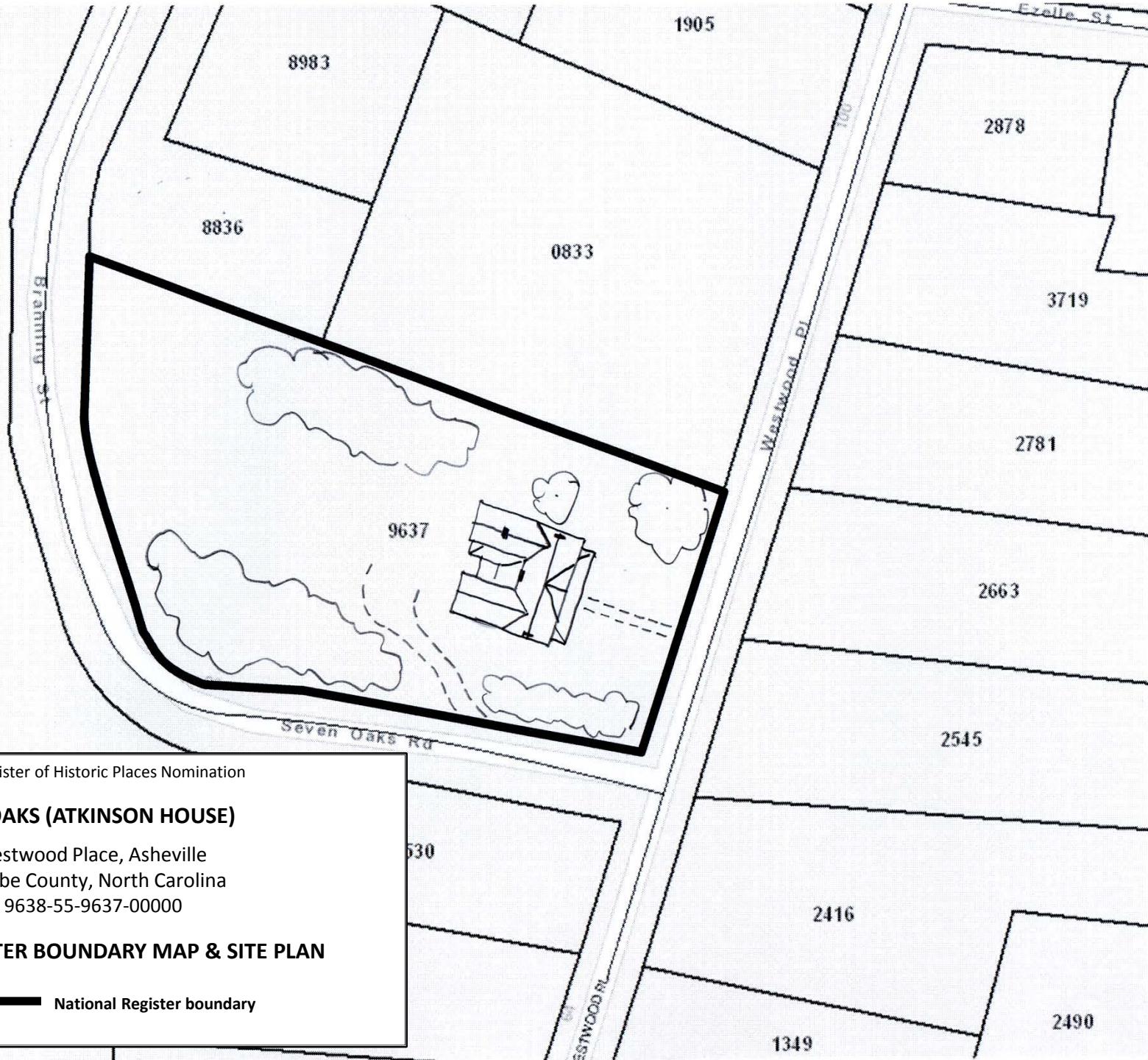
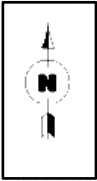
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



SEVEN OAKS (ATKINSON HOUSE)

82 Westwood Place, Asheville
Buncombe County, North Carolina

FLOOR PLAN
(Not to scale)



National Register of Historic Places Nomination

SEVEN OAKS (ATKINSON HOUSE)

82 Westwood Place, Asheville
Buncombe County, North Carolina
PIN 9638-55-9637-00000

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY MAP & SITE PLAN

 National Register boundary