

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Richard Sharp Smith House**

Asheville, Buncombe County, BN1931, Listed 1/22/2009

Nomination by Clay Griffith

Photographs by Clay Griffith, August 2008



Overall view from street



Entrance and side elevations

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Smith, Richard Sharp, House  
other names/site number Stoneybrook

2. Location

street & number 655 Chunns Cove Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Asheville vicinity N/A  
state North Carolina code NC county Buncombe code 021 zip code 28805

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Smith, Richard Sharp, House  
Name of Property

Buncombe County, North Carolina  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	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-family dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single-family dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Bungalow/Craftsman  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone  
roof Asphalt  
walls Stone  
Other/pebbledash  
other Wood/shingle  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Smith, Richard Sharp, House  
Name of Property

Buncombe County, North Carolina  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**  
(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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

- Previous documentation on file (NPS):**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
  - previously listed in the National Register
  - previously determined eligible by the National Register
  - designated a National Historic Landmark
  - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
  - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Architecture**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1902-1903  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
Smith, Richard Sharp - architect  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Primary Location of Additional Data**
- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:  
Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC  
Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, NC

Smith, Richard Sharp, House  
Name of Property

Buncombe County, North Carolina  
County and State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 2.4 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 17 362410 3942830  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Clay Griffith

organization Acme Preservation Services date March 7, 2008

street & number 825-C Merrimon Ave., #345 telephone (828) 281-3852

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28804

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

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

**Additional items**

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

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### Property Owner

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

name George and Teresita Finch

street & number 655 Chunns Cove Road telephone (828) 251-1983

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28805

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

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### Section 7. Description

Designed and built in 1902-03 for the family of local architect Richard Sharp Smith, the Smith house is located at the head of Chunns Cove, east of downtown Asheville, North Carolina. The house and its residual 2.4-acre tract are located on the south side of a private road that extends from the end of the state-maintained Chunns Cove Road. The property is roughly bordered on the north side by Ross Creek, which bisects the narrow valley of Chunns Cove, and a spring branch that runs through the middle of the property on the south side of the house. A paved driveway extends along the north side of the property, parallel to Ross Creek, and encircles the house. A stone retaining wall defines a small landscaped area directly in front of the house that is surrounded by the driveway. Another stone retaining wall runs along the east side of the driveway behind the house. The stone walls were laid in 1999 and 2000, replacing earlier retaining walls constructed with railroad timbers. A garage located southeast of the house was built in 1994 by the current owners. The garage stands on approximately the same location as the Smith's original carriage house, which no longer stood by the 1990s. A small workshop built around 1957 stands to the east of the house. The current owners have improved the spring branch to the south of the house, defining its course with stone linings and filtering pools.<sup>1</sup>

The Richard Sharp Smith House, known as "Stoneybrook" according to Smith's daughters, is a one-and-one-half story dwelling of stone masonry construction bearing the hallmarks of Smith's unique design sensibility, although it is more rustic in character than his residential designs for Biltmore Village or other Asheville neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> The foundation and exterior walls are constructed of uncoursed dry-stacked stone, and the house is topped by a side-gable roof covered with composition shingles. According to Smith's son, Richard Jr., the architect enjoyed experimenting with new materials and the original roofing for the house was composition shingles, one of the first instances of their use in the region.<sup>3</sup> Due to financial reasons two hip-roof dormers on the front of the house and a shed-roof dormer on the rear were not added until a few years after the house was completed. A prominent front-gable bay projects from the façade and opens onto an uncovered concrete terrace. The projecting bay contains the single-leaf front entrance door of rough hewn chestnut featuring three slender vertical panels topped by small leaded-glass lights, original hardware, and decorative square metal studs. The large front window, originally consisting of four multi-paned leaded-glass windows, now contains a five-part Anderson casement window installed in the late 1970s. The gable end is

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<sup>1</sup> The Richard Sharp Smith House faces approximately twenty degrees south of west, but herein for descriptive purposes the front is identified as the west elevation. Similarly the two sides are referred to as the north and south elevations, and the rear is designated the east elevation.

<sup>2</sup> *Asheville Citizen-Times* (July 23, 1957).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Sharp Smith Jr. (1914-2000), son of the architect, visited with the current owners in the mid-1990s and recounted a number of details about living in the house when he was a child. Some of these details, which have been subsequently incorporated into the written description, were communicated to the author by the owners, George and Teresita Finch, on August 16, 2006.

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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

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faced with pebbledash stucco and features paired leaded-glass windows and decorative purlin brackets supported on carved diagonal braces. Two interior stone chimneys rise above the roof line of the house—one located at the south side of the house and the other to the north of the front gable bay. The other window groups on the façade flanking the center bay were also replaced in the late 1970s, including the four-part window that lights the dining room. The missing leaded glass windows were removed in the 1950s and replaced with common wood-frame sash that were replaced again around 1978 or 1979. All of the window openings are framed with thick concrete sills, which are composed of a concrete layer over brick soldier courses.

The north side elevation of the house contains two pairs of original first-story leaded-glass casement windows. An original three-part leaded-glass window is positioned in the gable end, which is covered with pebbledash stucco and features decorative purlin brackets. Due to the slope of the site, a single-leaf door to the crawl space is located on this elevation. The rear of the house (east) is relatively plain with an attached partial-width shed-roof porch. The porch roof extends to shelter the rear entrance and an enclosed storage room and is supported by a thick square post. The storage room is accessed by a single-leaf wood door with diagonal stiles and triangular panels positioned above and below the lock rail. The replacement casement windows on the rear appear as singles or in groups of three or four. A low shed-roof dormer rising from the rear roof slope is finished with wood shingle siding and contains two pairs of small leaded-glass windows. The south side elevation is punctuated by the stone chimney stack rising through the pebbledash stucco in the gable end, which contains an original single sixteen-light wood window to the side of the chimney and decorative purlin brackets. The south gable end window is not leaded glass due to the fact that the south elevation was rarely seen by visitors until after a circular driveway was completed in the mid-twentieth century. On the first story two groups of three windows flank the chimney, including one group of replacement casements at the southeast corner and a group of original horizontal windows located at the southwest corner.

The interior is arranged around a central living room with a prominent dual-hearth fireplace, which also serves the dining room that lies on the other side. The main entrance opens into a small vestibule and provides access to the living room and a closed stair to the second story. A four-foot wide door with diagonal stiles, triangular panels, and original hardware opens into the living room. The living room features a beamed ceiling, and a nook in the projecting bay contains built-in bench seating. A large stone fireplace stands at the north end of the room and includes a solid oak mantel that was added by the current owner in 1994. Original walls flanking the fireplace and dividing the living room from the dining room were removed in the late 1970s to allow for more open circulation. The kitchen, breakfast area, and a small bathroom are located to the east of the living and dining rooms. A single-leaf door opens from the dining room into the updated kitchen at its north end; a double-leaf door connects the living room and breakfast area. The living room, dining room, kitchen, and breakfast area are finished with hickory flooring, which was installed over the worn heart pine floor; however, the original pine flooring remains in the vestibule and first-story bedroom. The flooring in the kitchen and breakfast area was installed around 1980, and the current owners installed similar floors in the living and dining rooms in 1996 to match.

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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

From the south end of the living room a single-leaf door opens into a large bedroom that extends the full depth of the building. A triangular fireplace with two fireboxes—originally a double-hearth corner fireplace—projects into the room, which was originally designed as two rooms; ghost marks from the removed center dividing wall are visible on the stones of the fireplace. The fireplace openings are formed by segmental arches with clearly defined keystones and voussoirs. The room at the southwest corner of the house was Smith's office, where he kept a drawing cabinet positioned beneath the narrow, horizontal windows on the south wall. Though small in size, the original room at the southeast corner opened into a large bathroom and utility room. From the single-leaf door, a narrow passage is flanked by a double vanity on one side and a large closet on the other. A bathroom with toilet and tub are located at the end of the short passageway.

The second-story bedrooms are accessed from the stairway entered through the front vestibule. Due to a lack of money the second story was not originally finished at the time work on the house was completed. According to Smith's son, it was several years before the upper story was finished and the dormers were added. A single-leaf door with diagonal stiles and triangular panels opens into the stair, and at its upper end the stair empties into a transverse hall and a small landing lit by leaded-glass windows in the rear dormer. Original pine flooring remains in place throughout the second story except for the bathroom where ceramic tiles have been installed. Original five-panel single-leaf doors also remain throughout the second story. All of the rooms have sloping ceilings, window nooks, and other idiosyncrasies due to their location. A bathroom is located on the east side of the hall under the rear dormer, while the room across the hall fills the space created by the projecting front gable. A large bedroom occupies the north end and features a dormer window on its west side and a bathroom and closets along the east wall. Another bedroom is located at the south end of the hall. All but one of the original leaded-glass windows remain in place on the second story.

The garage that stands to the southeast of the house was constructed by the current owners in 1994. According to Smith's son, the garage was erected in approximately the same location as the original carriage house that was built for the house. The one-and-one-half story, two-bay, front-gable roof, frame garage rests on a concrete block foundation, is topped by an asphalt shingle gable roof, and is sheathed with board-and-batten siding. The gables flare outward slightly at the ridgeline to mimic the roof design of the main house. Two metal roll-up garage doors are located in the narrow north end of the building, along with a pair of casement windows in the second-story gable end. An exterior wooden stair rises on the east side of the garage to a landing sheltered by an attached shed-roof porch and a single-leaf door to the upper-story room. The west side of the garage features a hip-roof dormer with paired casement windows and a single-leaf door to the garage area.

The one-story concrete block shed, built around 1957, appears to have been part of a fenced dog kennel. The original flat-roof structure features a number of small openings along the south side that probably opened into individual dog runs. The current owners renovated the building in the 1990s, adding a gable-roof, open shed on the south side, board-and-batten siding, new stairs to the single-leaf entry on the west end, and a new wood deck.



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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

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### Statement of Significance

#### *Summary*

Located at the head of Chunns Cove to the east of downtown Asheville, North Carolina, the Richard Sharp Smith House was designed and built as the private residence of Smith, an important local architect, and his family in 1902-03. The English-born and trained Smith came to Asheville in 1889 as the supervising architect for the construction of Biltmore Estate. After completing that project, Smith remained in Asheville, established an architectural practice, and became the most prominent and prolific regional architect in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Richard Sharp Smith's architectural legacy left an indelible mark on the visual character of Asheville's built environment, especially his contributions to the residential fabric of the city. Smith's house designs, which can be seen throughout Asheville, effortlessly brought together elements of various architectural styles in a distinctive idiom, with Smith confidently incorporating multiple materials, layered wall planes, surface textures, and colors to create the overall character of his buildings. The Richard Sharp Smith House meets National Register Criterion C as an important example of Smith's personal architectural style, which incorporated elements drawn from his work at Biltmore, popular architectural styles, the Arts and Crafts movement, and vernacular English architecture. The period of significance for the Smith House extends from 1902-1903, when the house was constructed.

#### *Historical Background*

The North Carolina General Assembly officially formed Buncombe County in 1792 and carved it out of land from Burke and Rutherford counties, land that was occupied by the great nation of the Cherokee long before European settlement. In December 1792, the state legislature charged a commission with fixing the center of the new county and locating a site for the courthouse, jail, and stocks. The commissioners chose a site on a plateau where two Cherokee trading paths intersected and a few settlers had already erected log structures for residence and commerce; the location is now a portion of Pack Square in downtown Asheville. Initially referred to as Buncombe Courthouse, the county seat was called Morristown before the name Asheville became official in 1797, when the village was incorporated. The site of the new town overlooked the French Broad River to the west and was framed by Town and Beaucatcher mountains to the east.<sup>4</sup>

The arrival of the Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR) in October 1880 marked the beginning of an era of prosperity in Asheville and Buncombe County that continued nearly unabated for the

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<sup>4</sup> John Ager, "Buncombe County: A Brief History," in *Cabins & Castles: the History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina*, Ed. by Douglas Swaim (Asheville: City of Asheville, County of Buncombe, and North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981), 9-13.

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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

next fifty years. The population of Asheville skyrocketed from 2,690 in 1880 to 10,235 in 1890 and topped 50,000 by 1930. Although travelers had been braving the journey to Buncombe County throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century, particularly for the region's sanatoria, the railroad made the area more accessible and by 1890 Asheville boasted 50,000 visitors annually. One of the most important early visitors to Asheville in the late nineteenth century was George W. Vanderbilt, who began acquiring land to the south of Asheville, "as far as the eye could see," in 1888. The scholarly and artistic-minded George Vanderbilt, youngest son of railroad magnate William Henry Vanderbilt and the grandson of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, showed little interest in business, but inherited a sizable fortune from his father and grandfather, which he put into building his palatial Biltmore Estate (NHL, 1963) outside Asheville. Vanderbilt asked architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to help plan the estate. Hunt was considered the dean of American architects and the first American architect to study at the influential Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Hunt maintained close ties to the Vanderbilt family and designed a number of New York mansions and Newport cottages for members of the family.<sup>5</sup>

Around the same time that Vanderbilt began thinking of building an estate in Asheville, Richard Sharp Smith, an Englishman born in Yorkshire, started working for Hunt in his New York office. Richard Sharp Smith (1852-1924) received his first architectural training in the office of a cousin, George Smith. After working for various architects in Manchester, Smith immigrated to the United States in 1882, and took a position with the Reid Brothers, architects in Evansville, Indiana. In 1883 Smith moved to New York City and joined Bradford L. Gilbert's office, where Smith spent most of his time supervising the design and construction of railroad stations. In 1886 Smith joined Richard Morris Hunt's office, working on various projects for the firm until he was assigned to the Biltmore project in 1889.<sup>6</sup>

Hunt sent Smith to Asheville to supervise construction of Biltmore House and other buildings on the estate. Despite the distance between Hunt's office in New York and the Biltmore project, Smith's work for Hunt was monitored through weekly reports and frequent letters between the two architects, and Smith's contribution to the overall design and conception of the estate were secondary to that of Vanderbilt, Hunt, and Olmsted. As early as 1892, however, George Vanderbilt began asking Smith to design additional buildings for him, including the Young Men's Institute (NR, 1977) in Asheville and a series of rental villas on Vernon Hill across the Swannanoa River from Biltmore. Of the five houses built, only Sunnicrest, the largest of the group, survives. Vanderbilt also entrusted Smith to design a range of buildings for the manorial village (Biltmore Village Cottages and Commercial Buildings, NR, 1979) that lay outside the entrance to the estate. Following Hunt's death in 1895 and completion of the Biltmore project, Smith left the Hunt firm and

<sup>5</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 287-292. Swaim, 40-42.

<sup>6</sup> *Asheville Times* (February 8, 1924). John Hardin Best, Kate Gunn, and Deena Knight, eds, *An Architect and His Times, Richard Sharp Smith: A Retrospective* (Asheville, NC: Historic Resources Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County, 1995), 8-13 (hereinafter cited as *An Architect and His Times*). Swaim, 42, 82-83.

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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

established his own practice in Asheville. By the time he started out on his own, Smith had already earned a regional reputation for his distinctive English-influenced Craftsman and period revival style residential designs, which drew from Biltmore's vocabulary of brick, pebbledash, and heavy timbers. He quickly became one of the most prominent and prolific local architects, and over the course of his nearly thirty-year career in western North Carolina he executed a tremendous body of work that included courthouses, churches, schools, hotels, major commercial buildings, residential cottages, and large period-revival mansions.<sup>7</sup>

While working at Biltmore, Smith met Isabella Cameron of Scotland, a member of the Vanderbilt's household staff. They married and had four children—two girls, Emily and Sylvia, and two boys, Hampden and Richard Jr.<sup>8</sup> The strong English influence in Smith's architecture was an extension of his personality. Though he never returned to England after moving to Asheville, Smith remained an English gentleman in his demeanor and appearance—tailored tweed suits, English walking caps, and cane. Smith was a devoted Episcopalian and a member of the vestry at St. Mary's Episcopal Church (NR, 1994), which he designed in 1914. He was an active member of the Scottish Rite and the British American Club, and he advocated for the formation of the North Carolina chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Smith was also an avid outdoorsman, which may help to explain, in part, the distant location of his home in Chunn's Cove. The family owned both a horse and carriage and an automobile, but Smith frequently walked the three miles over Beaucatcher Mountain from his house to his downtown office.<sup>9</sup>

In September 1902, Richard Sharp Smith purchased an option for twenty-seven acres of land at the head of Chunn's Cove, a few miles east of downtown Asheville, North Carolina. Smith closed on the property in October of that year, paying \$1,000 cash to Kate Hambrick for the land (Buncombe County Deed 125/350), and it was on this property that Smith designed and built a country house, "Stoneybrook," for his family. Prior to this the Smith's appear to have been living in rented houses near downtown Asheville and in the Montford neighborhood north of downtown. In the 1902-03 Asheville city directory the Smith residence is listed as 8 Blake Street in Montford, but in the subsequent 1904-05 directory, their residence is given as Chunn's Cove.<sup>10</sup>

Two months before buying the Chunn's Cove property, Smith wrote to G. D. Miller asking what price he would want for a 3.1-acre parcel that would allow Smith "to straighten out the line" and "be much easier

<sup>7</sup> Swaim, 82-83. Vertical files, North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC.

<sup>8</sup> The Buncombe County Register of Deeds office does not contain a marriage license for Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who were married at some point between 1895, when they reportedly met at the opening of Biltmore, and 1899, when they are first listed jointly in city directories.

<sup>9</sup> *Asheville Times* (February 8, 1924), *Asheville Citizen* (February 9, 1924), and *Asheville Citizen-Times* (July 23, 1957). *An Architect and His Times*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Buncombe County Register of Deeds and Asheville City Directories.

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Smith, Richard Sharp, House, Buncombe County, NC

to fence” should he decide to buy the property from Mrs. Hambrick. There is no further documentation of Miller selling land to Smith, so it is assumed that no deal between the two men could be agreed upon. In May 1904, however, Smith purchased an additional tract of approximately seven acres from Nancy Jane Townsend (Deed 135/166). Both tracts were later maneuvered solely into Mrs. Smith’s name (Deeds 175/171 and 175/172), presumably to keep it separate from the assets of Smith’s architectural practice.<sup>11</sup>

At the time Smith was designing the house for his family, the upper end of Chunn’s Cove was largely undeveloped. Area craftsmen constructed the Smith House using local stone for the foundation, exterior walls, fireplaces, and chimneys. Samuel Isaac Bean, who had worked with Smith at Biltmore, served as the stonemason. Smith and his family moved into the Chunn’s Cove house in 1903. For several years after the house was completed, access by horse-drawn carriage was limited to about eight months out of the year due to the condition of Vance Gap Road over the mountain. During periods when the road was impassable, the family rented a house in town. According to Smith’s son, Vance Gap Road became a popular scenic drive in the early twentieth century and terminated at the base of driveway of the family’s Chunn’s Cove house.<sup>12</sup>

Richard Sharp Smith’s architectural practice took off rather quickly following the completion of Biltmore in 1895, beginning with work for George Vanderbilt’s Biltmore Village. Smith designed residences, offices, and an infirmary utilizing pebbledash stucco, half timbering, brick accents, and cottage forms that came to be closely associated with Smith’s distinctive architectural style. Among his early commissions, independent of Vanderbilt, Smith designed a number of houses in the Montford (NR district, 1977) and Chestnut Hill (NR district, 1983) neighborhoods north of downtown Asheville. In particular the Annie West House, designed in 1900, on Chestnut Street features Smith’s continued use of pebbledash stucco, half timbering, and diamond-pane windows on a multi-gabled residence outside of his work in Biltmore. Several exemplary designs on Montford Avenue—including the Ottis Green and Dr. Charles S. Jordan houses, both ca. 1900—show Smith combining the pebbledash and half-timbered effects with other elements from the Craftsman and Colonial Revival styles.

In the first few years of his practice Smith designed more than sixty structures in and around Asheville, as well as the neighboring counties of Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania. His first clients included many prominent families. The James H. White House (NR, 1989) in Marshall, county seat of Madison, was built in 1903 on a terrace overlooking the small riverside town. White was a tobacco businessman, newspaper publisher, postmaster, banker, and clerk of court, who later influenced the selection of Smith to design the Neoclassical-style Madison County Courthouse (NR, 1979) in 1907. In 1905, Smith designed the Neoclassical-style Henderson County Courthouse (NR, 1979) in Hendersonville, and due to the popularity of his work at the time, he was asked to update several nineteenth-century houses in the summer colony of Flat Rock (NR district, 1973), frequently adding his signature pebbledash stucco and half

<sup>11</sup> Buncombe County Register of Deeds. R. S. Smith to G. D. Miller (August 23, 1902), Letterbook, vol. 3 (North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC).

<sup>12</sup> Finch, personal communication.

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timbering to the existing structures. In neighboring Transylvania County, Smith provided designs for a few modest buildings, but his influence was demonstrated with the use of pebbledash stucco as an exterior finish on several substantial residences, including the William E. Breese Jr., House (NR, 1983) and the Everett Moffitt House.

In Asheville, Richard Sharp Smith worked on designs for a wide range of buildings and structures that greatly shaped the physical appearance of the downtown area in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1896, Smith designed the Vance Monument, a granite obelisk located on the public square and erected in honor of Zebulon B. Vance. A devout Episcopalian, Smith produced a substantial number of church designs. These ranged from the restrained Gothic Revival style of St. Mary's Episcopal Church (NR, 1994), where he served as a member of the vestry, to the more bold expression of Hopkins Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, with its asymmetrical façade and tall corner tower. Smith collaborated with internationally-known architect-engineer Rafael Guastavino on the design for the Basilica of St. Lawrence (NR, 1978) in downtown Asheville. Having previously worked together at Biltmore, Smith and Guastavino planned the spacious and opulently finished structure in the Spanish Baroque Revival style. Built between 1905 and 1909, the church features a great self-supporting tiled dome over the sanctuary.

In addition to residential and church designs, Smith's other early projects included commercial buildings, clubs and lodges, and public school buildings. In 1906, Smith formed a partnership with Albert Heath Carrier, a Michigan-born engineer whose family had moved to Asheville in 1884, and together the Smith & Carrier firm worked on more than 700 projects from its inception until Smith's death in 1924. Smith & Carrier designed the Legal Building in 1909 on the south side of Pack Square. The five-story Renaissance Revival-style office building utilized reinforced concrete construction, one of the first applications of this construction method in Asheville. The firm designed the Scottish Rite Cathedral and Masonic Temple in 1913, a striking four-story brick building with a two-story limestone portico framed by paired Ionic columns. Located directly across the street, the Eagles Home, a three-story brick structure completed in 1914, features a two-story, low-relief limestone classical portico. The firm also designed the four-story reinforced concrete Elks Home, erected in 1915, on Haywood Street. The six-story Loughran Building, one of Smith & Carrier's last projects, stands on the corner opposite the Elks Home. Built in 1923, the Loughran Building features a restrained classical composition of glazed terra-cotta over a steel frame. Together Smith and Carrier formed an incomparable partnership, capable of handling nearly any project and influencing architectural design throughout the region into the mid-1920s.

Following the death of Richard Sharp Smith in 1924, Mrs. Smith and the children continued to live in the house in Chunn's Cove for a few years despite apparent financial strain. In 1926, Mrs. Smith sold the property to Walter Westwood (Deed 363/28), who later failed to pay the taxes and defaulted on his loan. On July 18, 1928, the property was auctioned at the courthouse and Mrs. Smith was able to buy back the house with a high bid of \$10,000 (Deed 395/480). Although she repurchased the property, it is uncertain whether she ever returned to live in the house. She negotiated the sale of 3.5 acres, along with a right-of-way easement and water rights, to Vern Johnson in December 1929 (Deed 409/533). Mrs. Smith sold the

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remaining property to Edwin and Lorraine Spencer in 1932 and moved to the Chestnut Hill area of Asheville (Deed 445/563). Mrs. Smith remained in Asheville until her death in 1966.<sup>13</sup>

After Mrs. Smith sold the property in 1932, ownership has changed a number of times, but the property has remained a private, single-family residence. After passing through a succession of owners in the 1930s and 1940s, the property was purchased by William and Irene Besser, who resided in the house from 1957 until 1978. The Bessers were responsible for several changes to the property including the construction of the concrete block shed behind the house. The Bessers sold the property to an investment company that held the property for approximately six months before selling the house to Lawrence and Beverly Wetsel in April 1979. The Wetsels occupied the house for nearly ten years but sold the property to Kimberly and Alice Cook in 1989. The Cooks owned the property for five years before it was sold to the current owners, George and Teresita Finch. During their ownership, the Finches have worked to preserve and maintain the historic character of the property and sought input from Smith's surviving children and grandchildren. The current owners built a new garage in 1994 on the approximate location of the original carriage house, which no longer stood by the 1990s.

### *Architectural Significance*

The influence of Richard Sharp Smith's architecture in Asheville and western North Carolina during the first quarter of the twentieth century cannot be overstated. In the first five years of his private practice, from 1896 to 1901, Smith had more than sixty commissions, including designs for, or supported by, George Vanderbilt. As documented in the 1901 publication, *My Sketch Book*, Smith's clients included many prominent civic leaders and businessmen in Asheville, Hendersonville, Flat Rock, and Brevard. Smith teamed with Albert Heath Carrier in 1906 to form a large regional practice, and the Smith and Carrier firm was responsible for more than 700 commissions throughout the region until Smith's death in 1924.<sup>14</sup>

In his architectural practice, Smith, both individually and in partnership with Albert Carrier, designed a variety of building types from major public buildings to domestic additions and outbuildings and worked in a wide range of styles including Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, and Craftsman. In the period from 1900 to 1920, Smith was responsible for virtually every major structure in downtown Asheville and helped to define the visual character of the city in his time. Drawing from his experience working at Biltmore, Smith was the man most responsible for introducing and popularizing English architectural models in Asheville. Born and professionally trained in England, Smith designed more than two dozen buildings in Biltmore Village (NR multiple resource area, 1979), employing pebbledash stucco, brick, and half-timbered

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<sup>13</sup> Buncombe County Register of Deeds and Asheville City Directories.

<sup>14</sup> See Samuel J. Fisher's catalog of Smith's designs in *My Sketch Book* (Asheville, NC: Samuel J. Fisher, 1901). *Asheville Citizen* (September 29, 1912).

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exteriors to invoke an English feeling. Smith designed the Young Men's Institute, at the corner of Eagle and Market streets in downtown Asheville, utilizing an English cottage form on a civic building. He went on to design numerous public and commercial buildings, churches, and domestic structures in Asheville neighborhoods such as Montford, Chestnut Hill, and Grove Park (NR district, 1989).<sup>15</sup>

The majority of Richard Sharp Smith's residential work represents his own distinctive style, an amalgamation that drew from the vocabulary of materials used at Biltmore, English cottage forms, and characteristics of the Tudor Revival style, one of several popular styles influenced by English architecture. The Tudor Revival style—like the Shingle, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles—became popular across the country in the early twentieth century and appealed to buyers in Asheville's fast-growing neighborhoods and suburbs. The earliest examples of Tudor Revival architecture in the United States date from the late nineteenth century, and the style achieved widespread popularity in the 1920s and early 1930s. Although the name alludes to sixteenth-century Tudor England, the style derives primarily from Medieval English prototypes, mixed with eclectic American expressions and materials. Tudor Revival-style houses are generally united by an emphasis on steeply pitched, front-facing gables, and typically incorporate decorative half-timbering, grouped multi-pane windows, prominent chimneys, and stucco, masonry, or masonry-veneered walls. The use of masonry walls for Tudor Revival-style houses was a variant more common in the United States than in England. The work of Richard Sharp Smith heavily influenced the use of the Tudor Revival style in Asheville, especially the vernacular English character created through the use of pebbledash stucco, brick, and half-timbering for exteriors and his elegant but comfortable interiors.<sup>16</sup>

Smith's residential work combines elements of the Tudor Revival with the more elegant and refined characteristics of the Craftsman style, an extremely popular architectural style that grew out of the Arts and Crafts movement which spread from England to the United States in the late nineteenth century. Gustav Stickley's *The Craftsman* magazine (1901-1916) became the chief disseminator of Arts and Crafts beliefs in the United States, and his company, Craftsman Workshops, produced furniture that promoted design unity of both house and furnishings. He published house designs—complete working drawings and specifications—in *The Craftsman* that could be ordered from the company. Craftsman houses, as they came to be known, represented the Arts and Crafts ideal of vernacular revival, honest expression of structure, responsiveness to site, and the use of local materials for comfortable domestic architecture that provided “the proper atmosphere for the pursuit of the simple life.” The Arts and Crafts movement and Craftsman style in Asheville was made popular through resort architecture, especially the design and furnishings of the Grove Park Inn (NR, 1973), built in 1913. In residential architecture, the Craftsman style often employed wood or shingle siding (frequently in combination), unenclosed eave overhangs with exposed roof rafters, decorative

<sup>15</sup> Bishir, 263-264. Also see *An Architect and His Times*, 8-9. David R. Black, *Historic Architectural Resources of Downtown Asheville, North Carolina* (Asheville, NC: City of Asheville and North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives & History, 1979), 9-10, 23-24.

<sup>16</sup> Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 355-358.

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beams or braces in gable ends, and square or tapered porch posts supported by piers extending from above the porch floor to ground level without a break. Doors and windows also typically contained a distinctive glazing pattern with multi-pane areas across the top or multiple lights over a single pane in double hung sash.<sup>17</sup>

The Smith House in Chunns Cove embodies many of the attributes seen in his residential architecture. The overall rustic character of the house results from the substantial stone walls paired with other materials—pebbledash stucco, leaded glass, and heavy timbers—and also relates to the wooded site. Though many of Smith's designs utilized pebbledash stucco, often accented by red brick, to provide its distinctive stylistic qualities, for his own house the pebbledash is kept secondary to the dominant stone masonry walls and foundation. The form, massing, and plan of the house are also relatively restrained in comparison to the more lively forms and complex roof lines of his Tudor and Colonial Revival-influenced designs. The quiet forms and rustic character of the house—the home of his family—most likely exist as an expression of Smith's personality and his family life. The house is comfortable and not excessively large; it is practical with a clear sense of order and propriety, much like the man himself.

The Richard Sharp Smith House retains a high degree of integrity though there have been some changes and updates made to the property. The most obvious changes are the replacement windows—modern single-pane sash that fill the original openings. During the Besser's ownership a number of the original leaded glass windows were removed, sold, and replaced with common wood sash, which was replaced in the late-1970s. The current owners, however, had the surviving leaded glass windows on the north side of the house carefully restored in the 1990s. Other changes from the late 1970s include hickory flooring over the original pine kitchen floor, removal of walls flanking the fireplace and dividing the living and dining rooms, and removal of an interior wall in the first floor bedroom. The current owners also installed hickory flooring over the original, worn pine floor in the living and dining rooms in 1996. The overall form, massing, exterior materials, doors and hardware—along with nearly half of the original windows and the majority of second-story interior finishes—remain largely intact and clearly convey the important characteristics of Richard Sharp Smith's original design for his personal residence, an ideal respite in his active life and busy career.

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<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, World of Art Series (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1991), 107, 122-124, 141-142. Also see Bishir, 59-60, 69-73.



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### **Geographical Data**

#### *Verbal Boundary Description*

The nominated property for the Richard Sharp Smith House contains the full extent of Buncombe County tax parcel 9659-06-49-2579. The 2.4-acre parcel contains all of the buildings, driveways, and landscape features associated with the Smith House at the head of Chunns Cove. The property boundary is described in Buncombe County Deed Book 1783, page 330 and is shown by a heavy line on the accompanying tax map and site plan.

#### *Boundary Justification*

The nominated property includes the full parcel historically associated with the house designed and built by Asheville architect Richard Sharp Smith for his family home.

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### Photograph Index

All photographs of Richard Sharp Smith House at 655 Chunn's Cove Road in Asheville, North Carolina, by George Finch in November 2007. Digital images kept at the Survey and Planning Branch of North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh, North Carolina.

1. Facade, looking northeast
2. Oblique front view, looking north
3. Oblique rear view, looking south
4. Northwest elevation, looking southwest
5. Interior – living room, looking to entrance vestibule
6. Interior – living room fireplace, looking into dining room
7. Interior – first story bedroom fireplaces
8. Interior – second story bedroom in front gable
9. Garage – northwest elevation, looking southeast
10. Shed – south side elevation, looking north