

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cooper, Robert Lafayette House

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 109 Campbell Street

n/a not for publication

city, town Murphy

n/a vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Cherokee

code 039

zip code 28906

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

1

buildings: garage

sites

structures

objects

1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register -0-

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official William S. Price Jr.

Date 1 August 90

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof composition shingle

other wood (trim)

brick (chimneys)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Robert Lafayette Cooper House of 1889-1891 is one of several residences built by different members of the Cooper family along Campbell Street, one of the older neighborhoods in Murphy, N.C. Sitting back on a hedge-enclosed lot at 109 Campbell St., the large, freestanding frame dwelling has been noted as "one of the only full expressions of the Queen Anne Style in Cherokee County." The Cooper House faces northeast on a regular lot with approximately 116' of street frontage and extends downward on a sloping site 174' to 116' frontage on Bault Street.

Two stories in height, the house has a roughly square, hip roofed core from which are projected a series of lower hipped and gabled masses, two octagonal cupolas, and a fanciful one-story porch with an octagonal corner terminus. The wood framed structure sits above a brick foundation and is sheathed in white painted weatherboard with decorative panels of imbricated wood shingles at gable ends and at the upper portion of one of the towers. Double-hung sash windows of generous size occur in pairs and singly, in either one-over-one or two-over-two pane form. Windows are fitted with their original louvered wood blinds at all locations where wall space permits their placement. Stained glass is found in windows at the street facade (northeast) and east elevations. Windows and doors are trimmed with plain architraves with cyma moulded caps; similarly, the cornerboards are broad and plain. A box cornice with bedmoulded architrave carries around the house and across the front porch. All roof surfaces are presently clad in grey composition shingle laid over the original wood shingles. Two simply capped red brick chimneys, set one behind the other, crown the peak of the central hipped roof. Large panels of wood lattice are found at the rear foundation, set between brick piers that rise to a height of up to ten feet as a result of the dramatic slope of the lot.

The Campbell Street facade is the most complex and elaborately articulated elevation. Massing and fenestration are asymmetrical, with the whole composition unified by a one-story porch with a rich application of decorative sawnwork typical of the Queen Anne style. The porch features a low hipped roof with a gabled central entry bay and an octagonal eastern terminus with bell-shaped roof. The balustrade is of sawn or silhouette type balusters. Square posts feature chamfered edges and rise to molding and simple brackets that support a paneled frieze with circular cutouts. At the entrance bay, the brackets are large and in an elaborate foliate

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motif and meet at a pendant in the middle of the bay. The principal entrance is a door set somewhat offcenter on the facade, flanked at the first floor by two tall windows to the east and by the octagonal corner bay to the north. The octagonal corner bay or tower rises through to the second story and then continues as a broad shingled frieze, plain at the bottom and scalloped above, that terminates in a bell-shaped roof with wood finial. Balancing out the second story portion of the tower is a gabled projection with paired windows and a tympanum with alternating rows of scalloped and sawtoothed shingles. Above the first floor door is a second story window with stained glass, added in 1903.² The front door is an original feature, with Eastlake inspired carving and applied mouldings that enframe a clear glazed pane set above two recessed wood panels. The door also retains its original screened door with spool frieze and spoked quarter-circles.

The original front porch of 1889-1891 extended across the three east bays of the facade at the first story. A slightly projecting pediment with shingled tympanum matching that of the upper gable was centrally located, aligned with and emphasizing the front door. The remainder of the porch was set under a hipped roof. Turned columns supported the porch roof. Around 1903, the porch was extended to the east and to the west. The octagonal terminus was added at this time and the turned columns replaced with the current square posts. Concurrently, the original sawn corner brackets were replaced with similar, if simplified, forms and the frieze was installed. The pedimented porch bay was rebuilt with a shallower pitch, its tympanum refigured in beaded vertical boards. As extended to the west, the porch now wraps around the base of the octagonal corner tower and terminates at the one-story hipped roofed wing at the west elevation, added at the same time (circa 1903). The handsome sawn balusters of the original porch were replicated for the alterations.

The southeast side elevation features two projecting bays: the first, a one-story rectangular bay with narrow side windows and paired windows at the broad southeast elevation; the second, a two-story, semi-octagonal bay is set under a gabled and bracketed roof projection. At the first story, the semi-octagonal bay has a large, horizontally oriented window trimmed in stained glass that lights the dining room.

Toward the rear is the kitchen wing, raised at an early date from one to two stories. It now features an exterior wood stair that allows access to a second floor apartment--a subdivision of the original single-family residence made in the 1930s.

The other side, or northwest elevation, was altered considerably in the changes of circa 1903. The original two-story projecting wing is now concealed at the lower story by a hipped roofed addition that features an

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octagonal projecting tower at its northwest corner. The diminutive tower has five of its eight sides exposed, each fitted with narrow windows, the whole crowned with a bell-shaped roof. A one-story porch with turned columns and both sawn and simple matchstick balusters was extended from the base of the wing around 1900. This porch, now screened, nearly replicates an earlier porch immediately adjacent to the west that was enclosed as a hipped roof bedroom addition of the 1930s.

Other known alterations to the exterior include: porch and house roofs were covered with composition shingles (sometime around 1950) over the original, decorative wood shingles; the central chimney, originally corbelled with recessed panels, was rebuilt in a simpler, shorter form after 1903; the second floor was converted to apartment use in the 1930s, with an exterior wood stair added at the southeast elevation; the exterior has been painted uniformly white, with green painted blinds, and red painted foundation (the pre-1900 photograph shows a polychromatic color scheme that emphasized bands of patterned shingling and other details) and the original wood picket fence at the front yard line was replaced with a privet hedge around 1920.

The interior arrangement of spaces and the quality of detailing carry out the promise of the exterior. The plan is asymmetrical, with four principal or public rooms organized about a roughly central entry-stair hall. From the front door, entry is made directly to the entry/stair hall, designed in the manner of late nineteenth century living halls. This space encompasses a broad passage, stair, and the octagonal corner tower at the north corner of the facade.

To the northwest of the entry/stair hall is a sitting room, added circa 1903 as a one-story hipped roof addition with one-story octagonal corner tower; its northwest side opens ^{to} a screened porch. On the opposite side of the entry/stair hall is a front parlor arranged en suite with a dining room. A library, since converted to use as a bedroom, is located behind the entry/stair hall.

In the back, service portion of the first floor is a kitchen with butler's pantry. In the 1930s, the porch connecting the dining room on the southeast was altered to a breakfast room, a pantry, and a small remaining porch facing the south/southwest. On the western corner, a small playroom was converted into a bathroom and a small bedroom was added in the 1930s.

Interior finishes are somewhat unusual for their variety of materials and patterns. Throughout, walls and ceilings are plastered and floors are of wood (the subflooring is heart pine). The interior was rather typical until the extensive remodelling in 1903. With the exception of the front

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parlor, each of the first floor public rooms features a different and elaborate pattern of parquetry in walnut, cherry, and oak. Wainscoting in the entry/stairhall and in the dining room is of vertical beaded boards, laid in a pattern of walnut, oak, cherry, maple, and two types of pine. In the entry/stairhall, this treatment (now covered with canvas and wallpaper) continues the full height of the walls, first and second floor. Window bays are fitted with elaborate panels of walnut spindlework. Stained wood doors are found in these rooms, with folding paneled doors (installed 1903) between the entry-stairhall and front parlor and between the library and dining room, and paneled pocket doors found between the front parlor and dining room. Electroplated Eastlake style door hardware is found throughout and numerous lighting fixtures of circa 1903 or earlier remain in place.

The entry/stairhall features a pattern of concentric octagonal rings in alternately light and dark floor boards. The stair has turned, octagonal balusters and a heavy turned newel post, all in walnut. The wainscoting that carries around the room and continues up the staircase onto the second floor hallway repeats the alternating light and dark wood colors of the floor. Windows at the octagonal corner bay are fitted with working interior blinds, stained dark, and the bay is further distinguished by an elaborate spindlework frieze. An early 20thC. light fixture is suspended from the ceiling: the fixture is a brass tube with a large dropped frosted glass globe with heavy brass collar.

The sitting room of circa 1903 repeats the decorative motifs of the entry/stairhall, but without the use of wainscoting. Woodwork here has been painted white, and the semi-octagonal corner bay is panelled in the fashion of the stair/entry hall.

The front parlor features an unfinished hardwood floor concealed beneath an original Brussels type wall-to-wall carpet. Woodwork, all dark stained, includes a corner fireplace with Neoclassical style chimneypiece featuring a mirrored and shelved overmantle above a blue-tiled fireopening installed in 1904. At the rectangular bay is a very elaborate sawnwork and spindlework frieze set within a dark stained pine surround. The windows are fitted with louvered, operable interior blinds. A circa 1903 electric fixture illuminates the room from a central location on the ceiling. The fixture is a dropped brass with 2 arms that curve off an urn-shaped finial: shades are original frosted glass with raised clear fleurs-de-lis. However, the original ceiling has been covered over by a dropped acoustical tile ceiling.

The dining room again features a vertical board wainscot of alternately dark and light woods. A long horizontal window in the semi-octagonal bay has a frieze of alternating magenta and green glass squares. The

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chandelier here dates to about 1930 and is of crystal. The chimneypiece is similar to that in the front parlor. The parquetry here is somewhat simpler than in the entry-stair hall.

The library (now a bedroom) is similar to the other public rooms on the first floor. It features a parquet floor and a Neoclassical chimneypiece.

The second floor plan repeats that of the original portion of the first floor. Here detailing is somewhat diminished, but handsome mirrored chimneypieces and other features are still in evidence. Floors are of the conventional heart pine strip flooring type. The second floor rooms were all apparently intended as bedrooms.

Alterations of 1903-1904 and, more importantly, in the 1930s, changed the original appearance of the back or service portion of the house, both in the reconfiguration of the first floor spaces and in the addition of rooms at the second floor. The original interior service stair from the kitchen was removed in 1950, although the exterior apartment stair was added in the 1930s. The first floor bathroom was added in 1903 and a second floor bathroom added in the 1930s when that space was converted to an apartment. The conversion of the second floor to an apartment involved minor additions and spatial reconfigurations among the rooms toward the back of that floor resulting in a small kitchen and bathroom. Correspondent changes in the use of some first floor spaces were made, with the aforementioned southeast porch converted into a breakfast room and a pantry, and the library converted to use as a bedroom.

A rectangular, one-story garage/shed was added about 1930 off the west corner of the house. It is free-standing and features weatherboard over wood frame construction.

¹Dockery. Marble & Log.... Page 135.

²The window does not appear in an early photograph of 1900 or before, and is mentioned in R. L. Cooper's account book of 1903.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1889-91; 1903-1904

Significant Dates
1889-1891
1903-1904

Cultural Affiliation
n/a

Significant Person
n/a

Architect/Builder
not known

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY

The Robert Lafayette Cooper House was built in 1889-1891; it was enlarged in 1903-1904 with significant elaboration of the interior detailing. It is a rare and excellent example of Queen Anne architecture in western North Carolina. In a region where vernacular forms predominate, the Cooper House's asymmetrical massing and fully realized Queen Anne detailing set it apart as the best local embodiment of its style. Imposing in its small town setting for its size, the house derives its significance from the sophistication of its irregular form and from the elaborate treatment afforded its myriad details such as bays and towers, porches, variation of window massing and design, varied and rich use of materials, and, further, from the extent to which these original and early elements and details remain intact and faithful representations of the original owner's design intentions. The house was built by Robert Lafayette Cooper as a wedding present for his wife. Cooper was quite prominent in the affairs of Murphy and the region, and the house reflected his success as a lawyer, banker, and local politician.

The significance of the Robert Lafayette Cooper House is in its architecture. The house would stand as a noteworthy example of the Queen Anne style in any setting; it stands particularly so in its setting in Murphy and Cherokee County where traditional vernacular forms prevail. While not singularly outstanding from a national viewpoint as a landmark or progressive example of its style, the house is nonetheless subtly and skillfully composed so as to exemplify the precepts of the Queen Anne style in its asymmetry and in its rich and fanciful detailing. The irregular massing of the exterior with its complex roof, multiple porches, and picturesque towers and bays is matched at the interior in the asymmetrical plan that incorporates a large and impressive entry/stair hall (a smaller

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scaled response to the grand "living halls" of the early Queen Anne mansions erected in the northeastern states beginning in the 1870s from designs by McKim, Mead & White and other avant-garde architects). Of further note is the distinction made between front or family portions of the house and rear or servants' areas--a dramatic shift from local vernacular plans and a strong statement as to the social status of the original owners. Noteworthy, too, is the use of local materials to express a national style, in this case seen in the use of multiple native woods for decorative effect on the interior, and, in more utilitarian ways, in the use of local lumber and on-site fired brick for the construction.

Robert Lafayette Cooper and wife Grace Pruden Cooper took significant roles in the design and construction of their house at 109 Campbell Street, as detailed in the extensive journals which Cooper kept. Although no architect or builder has been definitely identified, Cooper's account books note an unusually strong interest in even the smallest details of the house. In addition to R. L. Cooper's bound volumes of correspondence, an earlier account book dates the construction of the house as beginning in 1889. This account book also describes the use of lumber from R. L. Cooper's own timber lands, and the transportation of materials to the site via railroad. His correspondence also reveals that the Coopers designed and supervised the 1903-1904 remodelling of the house. For example, on May 23, 1903, Cooper wrote to the Woodward Lumber Company in Atlanta and stated that "Mrs. Cooper has had another change of heart, or rather of mind; and instead of the window ordered yesterday, she wants one like the enclosed sketch."

Cooper was born in present-day Graham County, North Carolina in 1865, educated at the University of North Carolina and, like his father, became a successful attorney. He served as mayor of Murphy in 1894, as local attorney for the Atlanta, Knoxville & Northern Railroad and the Southern Railway, as president of the Bank of Murphy, and as president of the Murphy Furniture Manufacturing Company. Cooper died at age 39 in 1904 and local obituaries note his prominence in the affairs of Murphy and the region.

Since Cooper's death, the house has passed continuously in the hands of his family: Grace Pruden Cooper inherited the house upon her husband's death; it passed in 1948 to the Coopers' daughter, Emily Cooper Davidson; and in 1985 to her son Jerry W. Davidson. Mr. Davidson continues to own the house, while his daughter, Margaret A. Davidson, lives there on a part-time basis.

Significant changes were made to the house circa 1903, and in the 1930s the house was altered by its horizontal division into two flats. The first alterations may be seen as refinements of the original design and carry out its spirit and intent. The alterations necessary to convert the house to apartments in the 1930s were similarly accomplished to respect the original design intent.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Cherokee Scout. January 26, 1985, Vol. 94, Murphy, North Carolina. Obituary of Emily Cooper-Davidson.
Cherokee Scout. July 26, 1904. Murphy, North Carolina. Obituary of Robert Lafayette Cooper.
Heritage of Cherokee County, North Carolina. Vol. I, 1987. Cooper family notes, pp. 131-132.
Cooper & Pruden family Bibles. Copies in the possession of Mr. Jerry W. Davidson, Ft. Worth, Texas.
Robert Lafayette Cooper Account & Correspondence Books. Collection Mr. Jerry W. Davidson, Ft. Worth, Texas.
Dockery, Carl, ed., Marble & Log: The History of Cherokee County. Cherokee County, North Carolina: NC Department of Archives & History, 1984.
Swaim, Douglas (NC Department of Archives & History). Letter to Ms. Margaret Davidson, August 21, 1986

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .49 acres (approx.)

UTM References

A 16 7 710 7130 38 8615 310
Zone Easting Northing
C

B
Zone Easting Northing
D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All of lot 7638 in Section 1 (block 54) of Cherokee County Tax Maps for the town of Murphy.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification The house is situated on the original city lot that fronts to Campbell Street and backs to Bault Street; the street facade faces northeast. Sides of the lot are shared with adjacent house lots at 107 and 111 Campbell. The lot was assembled from different parcels in 1889, and the present lot size and dimensions reflect those originally intended for the house. No significant changes have occurred to the lot since the erection of the house (1891-1893). The proposed boundaries, then, encompass the full extent of the original lot and

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert A. Warnock architectural historian
organization date 1/90
street & number 1514 17th Street, NW telephone 202/667-5863
city or town Washington, DC state zip code 20036

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do not infringe upon any adjacent properties. The historic integrity of the lot lines and the lot size (116' x 174') suggest that nomination of the full extent of the present lot is appropriate to the purposes of the National Register.

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The following information applies to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

- 1) Robert Lafayette Cooper House
- 2) Murphy, North Carolina
- 3) 7/1988
- 4) Margaret Davidson
- 5) Western Office, NC Division of Archives & History, Asheville, NC

- A. 6) main facade, to the southwest
- B. 6) main and northwest facades, to the south
- C. 6) northwest and rear facades, to the east
- D. 6) rear facade, to the north
- E. 6) southeast facade, to the north
- F. 3) 3/90
6) front parlor
- G. 3) 3/90
6) dining room
- H. 3) 3/90
6) floor at front door

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