

#### North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Peter B. Sandbeck, Administrator

Michael F. Easley, Governor Lisbeth C. Evans, Secretary Jeffrey J. Crow, Deputy Secretary Office of Archives and History Division of Historical Resources David Brook, Director

August 8, 2006

**MEMORANDUM** 

TO: Gregory Thorpe, Ph.D., Director

Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch

NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Peter Sandbeck like by Peter Sandbeck

SUBJECT: Letter Evaluation of the Parsons House, Wilkesboro-North Wilkesboro Bypass, NC 18 to US 421,

U-616, Wilkes County, ER99-9054 and NC 18-268/US 421 Business Corridor Improvements, U-

3468, Wilkes County, ER 01-9002

Thank you for your letter of July 24, 2006, transmitting the letter evaluation of the Parsons House, by Vanessa Patrick.

For purposes of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we concur that the following property is determined not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

Parsons House, (including well house and garage), and located at the intersection of US 421 and NC 16 west of North Wilkesboro, is not eligible for the National Register because it is not sufficiently distinctive architecturally or significant historically to meet the National Register criteria standards. In addition, the property has lost some integrity of setting which further diminishes its National Register eligibility.

Although this property does not meet the standards for the National Register program, this letter provides documentation that the Parson House is a recent example of log construction, subsequently framed and sheathed in clapboards to look like other Bungalows in mid twentieth century-Wilkes County.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919/733-4763 ext. 246. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr Vanessa E. Patrick

bc: Brown/McBride . County

SURVEY & PLANNING



# STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY GOVERNOR LYNDO TIPPETT SECRETARY

July 24, 2006

Mr. Peter B. Sandbeck
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4617

Dear Mr. Sandbeck:

RE: T.I.P. No. R-616, Wilkes County, Wilkesboro-North Wilkesboro Bypass, NC 18 to US 421, State Project No. 8.1761701, Federal Aid Project No. STP-268(4), WBS No. 34349.1.1 AND T.I.P. No. U-3468, Wilkes County, NC 18-268/US 421 Business Corridor Improvements, State Project No. 8.1761901, Federal Aid Project No. NHF-421B(1), WBS No. 34954.1.1

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is conducting planning studies for the above-referenced, interrelated projects included in the 2004-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (T.I.P.). The location of the two projects is illustrated in the attached Figure 1. NCDOT architectural historians delineated an Area of Potential Effects (APE) and carried out an intensive survey of historic architectural resources within its bounds. The APE surrounds the four construction alternatives (two for R-616 and two for U-3468) under consideration to include those areas that may be affected either physically or visually by new construction, as well as allow for flexibility in the design of avoidance alternatives, should such be needed (Figure 2). This letter-report presents the survey findings and evaluations according to National Register of Historic Places (NR) criteria and the applicable criteria considerations. It is prepared as a technical addendum to a combined Environmental Assessment and as part of the documentation of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. This letter-report is on file at NCDOT and is available for review by the general public.

# HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES FINAL IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION

Wilkesboro- North Wilkesboro Bypass and NC 18-268/US 421 Business Corridor Improvements

> WILKES COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA

T.I.P. NUMBERS R-616 AND U-3468
FEDERAL AID PROJECT NUMBERS STP-268(4) AND NHF-421B(1)
STATE PROJECT NUMBERS 8.1761701 AND 8.1761901
WBS NUMBERS 34349.1.1 AND 34954.1.1



The
HISTORIC
ARCHITECTURE
Group

NCDOT Historic Architecture Office of Human Environment 1583 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1583

> T 919-715-1332 F 919-715-1501 www.ncdot.org

Report Prepared By: Vanessa E. Patrick Architectural Historian

July 2006

T 919-715-1617 F 919-715-1501 vepatrick@dot.state.nc.us

#### **Summary of Findings**

NCDOT architectural historians surveyed 100% of the APE by automobile and on foot over several months in 2005 and 2006. They identified, photographed, mapped, and evaluated all structures over fifty years of age. They also pursued preliminary documentary research to establish historical and architectural contexts for the project area, as well as for the development of individual buildings and landscapes. No properties listed on the National Register, the state study list, or otherwise determined NR-eligible are located within the APE. None of the surveyed properties are locally designated or qualify for the NR under Criterion Consideration G (significance achieved during the last fifty years). Land use in the project area is predominantly single-family residential, with concentrations of commercial and industrial properties at its eastern and southern edges (NC 268 and US 421 respectively) and a scattering of other functions throughout. The 397 surveyed properties reflect this composition: fully 368 or approximately 93% are residences, and 20 commercial and industrial structures constitute an additional 5%, while the remaining 2% includes two schools (both adapted to new uses), three churches (two with cemeteries), three additional cemeteries, and a highway bridge.

In a series of consultation meetings NCDOT and HPO determined that 396 of the 397 properties recorded in the APE are not eligible for the National Register and not worthy of further evaluation (copies of the concurrence forms documenting the agreements may be found following the attached graphic materials). The remaining property (Number 3 – Parsons House) required additional investigation to judge its eligibility and is discussed below. Wilkes County has yet to benefit from a comprehensive architectural survey, but the core areas of Wilkesboro, North Wilkesboro, and Traphill were the subjects of HPO-sponsored studies during 1979 and 1980. By supplementing the results of these investigations with survey findings for nearby counties like Yadkin and Surry, field observations developed during the current project work, and information provided by such documentary sources as photographs, county tax records, and community, land use, and transportation planning studies, NCDOT architectural historians established a local lexicon for assessing the structures they encountered and recorded in the APE. The surveyed properties date to the first six decades of the twentieth century. The majority (approximately 67%) were built during the 1940s (about 31%) and 1950s (about 36%), approximately 91% between 1930 and 1960. In spite of the density of resources, the APE is architecturally and historically undistinguished according to National Register standards. Most of the numerous plainly finished, gable-end bungalows and brick-veneered ranch houses, as well as the occasional period cottage or factory building are either significantly altered or surpassed in quality by examples in the nearby downtowns or elsewhere in the region. Even the oldest structures, those predating 1930, have suffered a loss of historical integrity or are inherently unremarkable. The same characteristics argue against the establishment of any

historic districts, as does the presence in most areas of later buildings that disrupt the continuity of the streetscapes.

#### 

The Parsons House and its related structures stand on an elevated, gently slopeing site overlooking the intersection of US 421 and NC 16 west of North Wilkesboro (see Figure 2). Unlike the adjacent, associated ranch house, the Parsons House turns its back on NC 16 and faces the remnants of an earlier road (Figure 3). A paved driveway separates the two houses, and a narrow, concrete path curves between the driveway and the front porch of the older building. Several large trees shade the Parsons House, but its immediate surroundings are not consciously landscaped. The property address is 142 No. NC Highway 16 and its PIN 3848-11-1095 (Parcel Number 1505185, Wilkes County 2006 Tax Records).

The Parsons House is a one-story, gable-roofed structure of log and frame construction resting on a foundation composed in sections of fieldstone and masonry block; it is approximately 22'-6" long and 36'-0" deep (Figure 4A). The body of the house (about 20'-3" deep) is built of round, barked logs joined with roughly-cut, V-notch corners (Figure 4C). The log walls are chinked with thin, horizontally placed, sawn boards secured with wire nails and neatly daubed with cement. Circular-sawn, dimensioned lumber and wire nails are used throughout the building. Vertical furring strips are nailed to shims, which are in turn nailed to the logs, and overlain with horizontal, shiplapped weatherboarding. A continuous foundation of (mostly) dry-laid fieldstone is visible on the north elevation, while piers of fieldstone and brick appear at the south (Figure 4B).

The Parsons House is augmented by a full-width front porch and rear kitchen, both supported by masonry-block foundations and covered with shed-roofed extensions of the low-pitched gable roof. The barked, round-log plate of the three-bay, 6'-9"-deep porch is encased in a square box of one-bys, and the posts appear similarly contrived (see Figure 4C). The one-bay-deep (9'-0") kitchen addition is framed and sheathed with the same weatherboards as the original building. Its foundation extends southward beyond the building to support a concrete deck approximately 7' by 18' in dimension (see Figure 4B). The façade of the house is asymmetrical, its single doorway opening directly into the "livingroom" of a four-room plan. A second doorway is located in the rear half of the south elevation, between two exterior brick chimney stacks. The high basement of the kitchen addition is provided with a low doorway at the west, and a boarded opening beneath its easternmost bay (likely a bathroom) probably facilitates access to plumbing or other systems (see Figure 4B). Windows are four-overone, double-hung sash except in the rear (west) elevation where three-over-one versions are installed. Square vents appear near the apex of each gable end.

Window and door frames, corners and rakes are finished with plain boards. Rafter tails are exposed in the kitchen addition, and all soffits are open. The porch is provided with a boarded ceiling; interior walls and ceilings are of sheetrock. Metal gutters and downspouts, window and door screens, and the awning over the side door are among the building's newer elements. Though much weathered, the house retains vestiges of a white, ochre, and orange paint scheme and asphalt shingle roofing. If the first major period of construction produced the four-room log house, the second created the kitchen addition and quite possibly the weatherboarding, the remodelling or rebuilding of the porch, and the replacement of window sash.

Just south of the house is a 9'-square, gable-roofed wellhouse of frame construction (Figure 4D). It sits on a concrete slab, is sheathed inside and out with flush, horizontal boards, and is covered with standing-seam metal roofing. Its single, narrow door faces the house and is hung from the northwest corner post. The wellhouse is unadorned apart from traces of white, ochre, and orange paint. A gable-roofed, masonry-block, two-bay garage stands southeast of the house, aligned with the road trace and thus of a later date than the Parsons House and wellhouse (see Figure 3).

The Parsons House is currently owned by Athel D. and Katherine P. Miller, the son-in-law and daughter of its builder and original resident. The Millers themselves lived in the house from around 1950 to the late 1960s, when they built the ranch house standing immediately north of the older structure. Mrs. Miller's father, James Com Parsons, appears in the 1930 Federal Census, with his wife Cola and two young daughters, as farming rented land along Browns Road (Population Schedule for Wilkes County, Reddies River Township, p. 22B, lines 75-78). Shortly thereafter Com, with assistance from relatives and friends, constructed a log house on land his wife had inherited from her mother. 2 Also located on Browns Road in the area known as the Buck community, the land had formed part of the John Elam Bumgarner farm in the late-nineteenth and earlytwentieth centuries. During the 1930s Com and Cola Parsons operated a small, general farm on their new property. They often hosted visiting clergymen attending revivals at the nearby Buck's Arbor (now Pleasant Grove Baptist) church. Their well also attracted many people walking to and from the church along Browns Road. In 1940 Com moved his family to Maryland where he took up employment as a mill builder and operator. The Parsons returned to Wilkes County in 1945, but did not resume residence in the log house. Com and Cola

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Miller reside in the newer house and retain the log house and wellhouse as storage buildings. Mr. Miller, as well as his daughter and son-in-law Debbie and Jerry Miller, generously shared their knowledge of the buildings with the writer and facilitated a site visit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Com and Cola Parsons' elder daughter, Mozelle Parsons Nichols, published accounts of her parents and grandparents Martha (Bumgarner) and James Jefferson Parsons in the second volume of *The Heritage of Wilkes County, North Carolina*, ed. by Nancy W. Simpson (North Wilkesboro: Wilkes Genealogical Society, Inc., 1990), pp. 394-395.

transferred approximately one-and-one-half acres containing the log house to its new occupants, their daughter Katherine and her husband, over several years (see Wilkes County Deed Books 315, p. 440 (May 9, 1956); 474, p. 303 (May 8, 1967); 592, p. 532 (December 12, 1978); and 659, p. 485 (March 15, 1988). The deeds refer to "Browns" or "Old Brown's Ford" Road, that passed directly in front of the Parsons House (Figure 5). Though still delineated on the most recent (surveyed 1966) USGS topographical map of the area, this road was supplanted (north of the present US 421) by the current NC 16 by the late 1960s, as the orientation of the Millers' 1967 house demonstrates (see also <a href="www.ncroads.com">www.ncroads.com</a>).

The Parsons House does not reflect any outstanding events or trends in the local, regional, or national past (Criterion A). It belongs to the continuity of rural domestic building initiated in Wilkes County during the middle decades of the eighteenth century in support of subsistence or general farming. Its relatively recent construction date simply illustrates the persistence of this developmental pattern, as well as the proliferation of small farms in the county following the arrival of the Richmond and Danville Railroad and consequent establishment of North Wilkesboro as a regional commercial center. Similarly, the property is not associated with any notable, historic individual (Criterion B). The builder and occupants of the Parsons House number among the many county residents who engaged in agriculture and skilled trades. While the house and its associated buildings are not likely to yield any new information pertaining to the history of architecture and technology (Criterion D), it is worth noting that it demonstrates a workable blending of traditional and modern materials, methods, and design features.

Com Parsons' use of locally abundant logs and fieldstone for his house, as well as economical techniques like hanging the wellhouse door from a corner post, are as much practical responses to the constrained conditions prevailing during the Great Depression as loyalties to architectural tradition. Mozelle Parsons Nichols' description of the house implies that it originally was not sheathed, a construction sequence also indicated by the physical evidence (see footnote 2). The sawn and rabbetted weatherboards, sash windows, and masonry block of the presumed period-two building campaign suggest not only an improved prosperity, but a desire for a new aesthetic. Architectural fashion, however, was not absent entirely in the original structure. While the main entry directly into the left, front room equates with the usual arrangement in a hall-parlor house, it also was shared by many bungalows, particularly the more modest varieties, so popular in the region during the 1920s and 1930s. Likewise the four-room plan

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Observations about the development of Wilkes County are based upon J. Jay Anderson, Wilkes County Sketches (Wilkesboro: author, 1978), John Crouch, Historical Sketches of Wilkes County (1902) in New River Notes, <a href="https://www.1s.net/~newriver/nc/wilkes.htm">www.1s.net/~newriver/nc/wilkes.htm</a>, Johnson J. Hayes, The Land of Wilkes (Wilkesboro: Wilkes County Historical Society, 1962), and University of Virginia – Geospatial and Statistical Data Center – Historical Census Browser, <a href="http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus">http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus</a>.

without halls or passages owes far more to contemporary domestic design than to time-honored house types (Figure 6).

The Parsons House has suffered a loss of historic integrity in setting. The road to which it was oriented no longer functions as such. The house still faces a cultivated field, but one of different ownership. Modern highways flank its site to the west and south, and later houses have appeared to the west and north. In addition, the house and wellhouse no longer serve their original purposes and are not actively used or maintained. As in most twentieth-century log buildings. shaping and cornering is simple, even rudimentary, and not representative of the highly evolved building craft evident in older buildings like the Robert Cleveland House (built 1770s) now located in downtown Wilkesboro. Weatherboarded log buildings of various dates are not uncommon in the region: the nearby Foster Log House (south side of US 421, 0.2 miles east of SR 1152 in Wilkes County) and the Robert Wilson Mackie House in Yadkinville are but two examples. The plan and form of the house are not unusual and, indeed, may be found elsewhere in the APE, for example at 156 Browns Waugh Street (Property No. 262, built 1938) and 1212 Odell Street (Property No. 356, built 1940) (Figure 7). Thus the Parsons House, while not without interest, cannot be defended as exceptional in design or construction (Criterion C).

The Parsons House is not sufficiently distinctive architecturally or significant historically to meet National Register standards, and the property's general loss of integrity also argues against its eligibility. Property No. 3 is therefore considered not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under any criteria.

Thank you for reviewing this letter-report addressing historic architectural resources in the R-616/U-3468 project area in Wilkes County. Should questions arise, please contact me at 919-715-1617.

Sincerely,

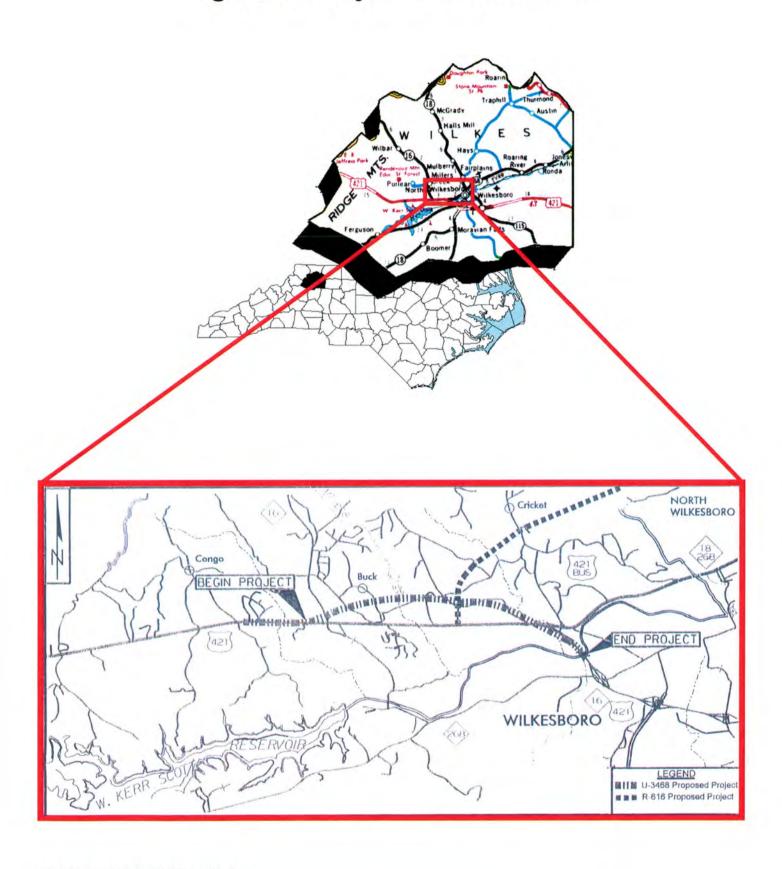
Vanessa E. Patrick Architectural Historian

Attachments

Copies: John F. Sullivan III, P.E., FHWA

Wilson Stroud, NCDOT-PDEA

Figure 1. Project Location. NTS.



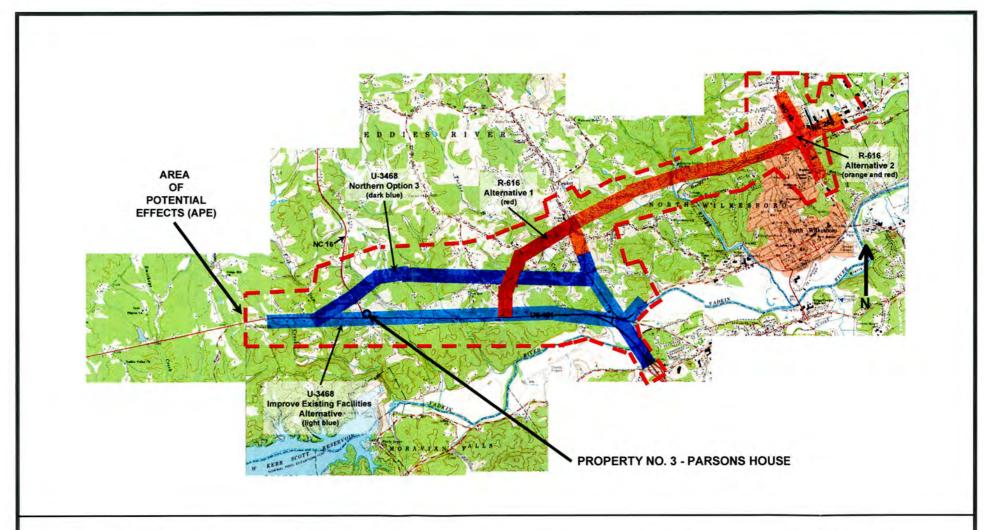
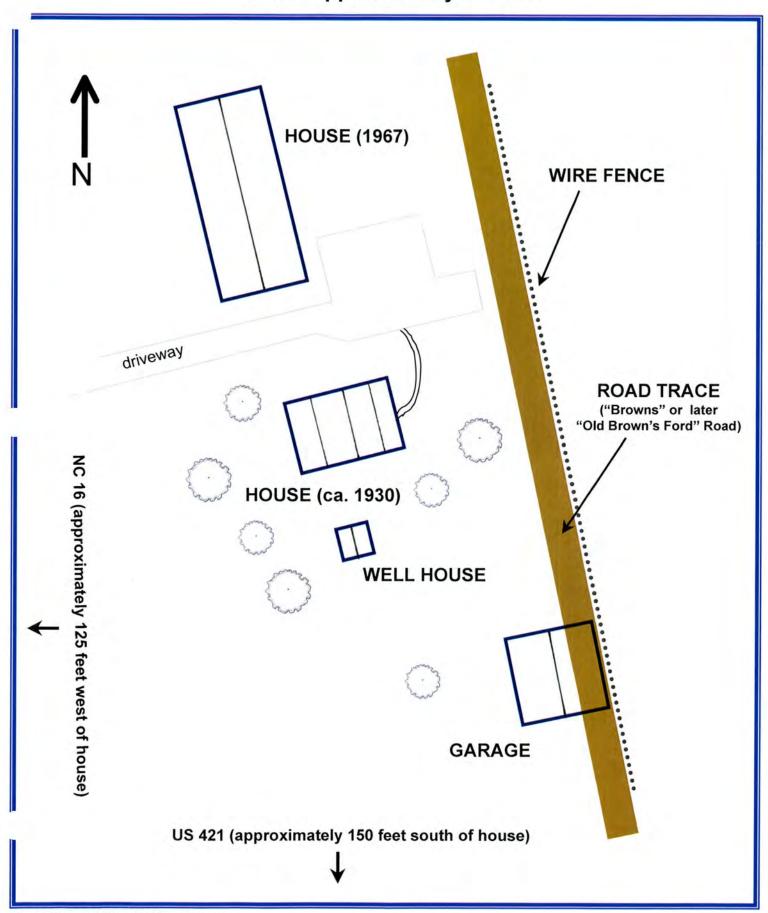


Figure 2. Area of Potential Effects for Historic Architectural Resources, including Construction Alternatives.
USGS 7.5' Wilkesboro and Purlear quadrangles. NTS.

Figure 3. Parsons House - Site Plan. Scale: approximately 1" = 22'.



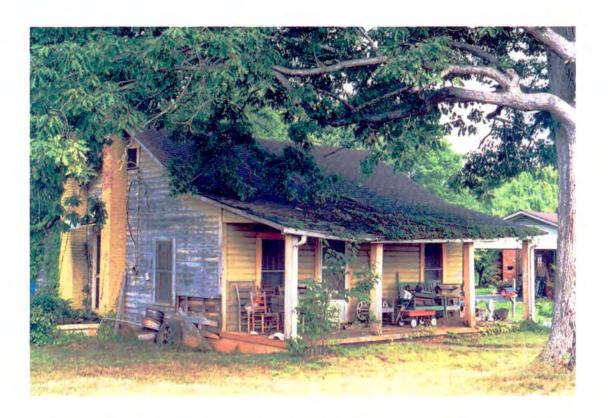


Figure 4A. Parsons House. East (main) and south elevations (above), west (rear) and north elevations (below).



T.I.P. Nos. R-616/U-3468, Wilkes County July 2006



Figure 4B. Parsons House. West (rear) and south elevations (above), detail of dry-laid stone foundation, north elevation (below).





Figure 4C. Parsons House. Detail, log plate, NE corner of porch (above). Detail of log wall, lower east corner of south elevation (below).





Figure 4D. Parsons House. Well House. North (entry) and east elevations (above), placement relative to house (below).



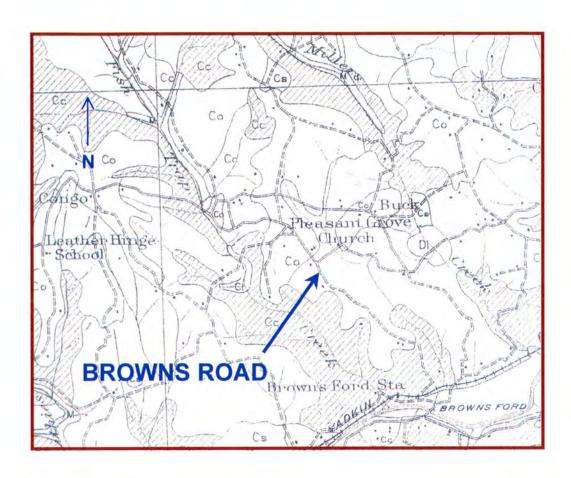
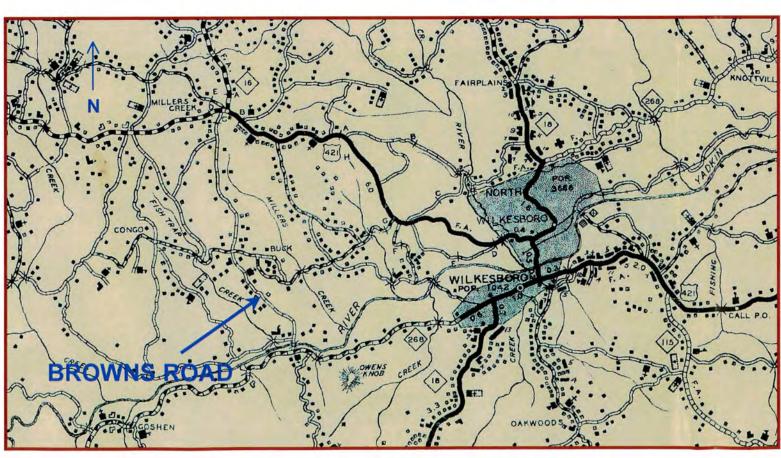


Figure 5. Parsons House. Road Configurations.

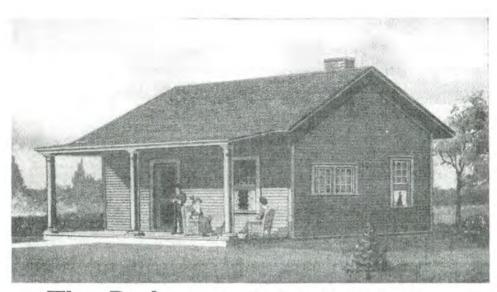
Wilkes County, North Carolina Soil Map, original scale 1" = 1 mile, U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1918 (top left). Wilkes County, North Carolina, original scale 1" = 1 mile, North Carolina Department of Highways, 1938 (bottom left). Parcel No. 1505185, 2004 Aerial Photograph, original scale 1/2" = 50', Wilkes County 2006 Tax Records (bottom right).

Road name arrow points to general location of Parsons House on 1918 and 1938 maps.





R-616/U-3468, Wilkes County July 2006



# The Rodney—A Comfortable Little Home

\$340.10

Price, No. 1, \$358.00 Cash discount, 5% Net price, \$340.10

ANY good American families are living happily and comfortably in Rodneys. Its four cosy rooms are all well arranged and its generous porch serves in a delightful way the outdoor pleasures of summer. A handsome front door with glass in upper part and embellished with mouldings would suitably fit a more costly home. The double casement window in the dining room, with English sash made to swing in appeals strongly to the housewife. All upper sash are divided into small lights.

You have your choice of two sizes in the Rodney, No. 1 is 20x22 feet over all and has four 10x8 foot

BED R. KITCHEN
10'x 8'
10'x 8'

LIVING R. DINING R.
10'x 8'
10'x 8

rooms. Price given above. No. 2 is 24x26 feet and has four 10x12 foot rooms. Price, \$426.00, cash discount 5%. Net price, \$404.70. In both designs a wide arch separates the living room from the dining room. You will be delighted should you decide to own this cottage.

Of course, you receive our famous Dollar-A-Knot siding and all the materials entering the construction are positively the highest grades found anywhere. Frosted brass oak leaf design lock sets set off the beautifully grained doors and woodwork.

In fact, you will have as finely finished a home as anyone. Two men can crect this house in four days. Most owners of the Rodney did all the work themselves, easily.

See Terms on page 2 and General Specifications on pages 12 and 13.

I am very proud of my bungalow and want to say that I received much better material than I could have bought here. It is admired by all. You may be sure when I build again you will get the order, for I saved nearly \$600 on this deal.

-S. R. Bartlett.

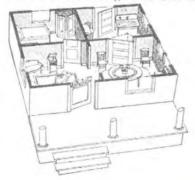


Figure 6. Four-room House. From the Aladdin Homes "Built in a Day" House Catalog No. 29, 1917 (New York: Dover Publications, reprint 1995), p. 35.



Figure 7. Property No. 356 - 1212 Odell Street (above) and Property No. 3 - Parsons House (below). Two nearly contemporary expressions of the same plan, massing, and entry placement.



T.I.P. Nos. R-616/U-3468, Wilkes County July 2006

#### CONCURRENCE FORM FOR PROPERTIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Project Description: US 421 Wilkesboro Corridor Study and NC 18-268/US 421Business Corridor Improvements

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	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	
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X	Historic architectural resources photograph review session/consultation	n
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X	There are properties over fifty years old within the project's Area of Po	otential Effects (APE), but based on the
	historical information available and the photographs of each property,	the property identified as (List Attached) is
	considered not eligible for the National Register and no further evaluate	tion of it is necessary.
×	There are no National Register-listed or Study Listed properties within	be evaluated)
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	All properties greater than 50 years of age located in the APE have been	en considered at this consultation, and based
	upon the above concurrence, all compliance for historic architecture w	
	Preservation Act and GS 121-12(a) has been completed for this projec	t.
	There are no historic properties affected by this project. (Attach any the	notes or documents as needed)
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State	Historic Preservation Officer	Date

#### County: Wilkes

### CONCURRENCE FORM FOR PROPERTIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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	There are no historic properties affected by this project. (Attach any notes or de-	ocuments as needed)	
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## CONCURRENCE FORM FOR PROPERTIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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