

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lucas Mansion, a three-story frame house of irregular plan with an impressive two-story wraparound porch, is the chief architectural landmark of the small community of Hiddenite in Alexander County. Located on a lot of slightly less than one acre, the unusual early twentieth century structure, of Queen Anne derivation in plan and detail, dwarfs the small early-to-mid twentieth century neighboring houses that front along Church Street.

The house is believed to have reached its present form through two or perhaps three stages of construction. An early twentieth century photograph shows the house as a one-and-one-half story dwelling of roughly the same plan and roof configuration that it has today, consisting of a complex system of projecting gables intersecting a central hip roof. Local tradition recounts that the house was enlarged twice by the strange method of raising the existing stage and building a new floor beneath or between the existing floors. According to the story, the top floor is the oldest section, the bottom floor second oldest, and the second floor most recent. How this was accomplished is not altogether clear, but certain features of the structure give support to the story that it was enlarged at least once in some unusual fashion. The interior finish of the first and third floors are identical, with the second floor woodwork of a different character, and two sets of floor joists were discovered beneath the second floor during restoration.

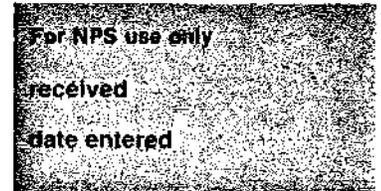
The house roughly follows a cruciform plan, though the plan varies from floor to floor, and overall the house is characterized by irregularity of form, plan, and detail. It rests on a system of brick piers, with latticework connecting the piers along the perimeter of the porch. It is covered with plain weatherboards, with narrow corner posts framing the elevations. The complexity of the plan is enhanced by the two-story porch which completely envelopes the structure on all sides. The porch is supported by turned posts with scrollwork brackets, with a balustrade featuring turned balusters and molded handrail connecting the posts on both levels. The first story porch includes a spindle frieze above the brackets. The second level features hinged gates at points along the balustrade, which reportedly served as access points for furniture and art objects too large for the narrow interior stair, and which were hoisted to the second level through the porch.

Windows vary in size, configuration, and location. Major first floor windows and all third floor windows are of one-over-one sash, in simple frames, and all with shutters with moveable louvers. Second floor windows and secondary first floor windows are small square casement windows, set high in the wall, also shuttered. Exterior doors are distributed irregularly on both levels, and all are glazed. Double French doors provide entry to the first level centered on the north and south elevations with an identical door directly above the first on the north side opening out to the second floor porch. Secondary doors open at various points elsewhere on the two levels.

The roof is clad in standing seam tin, with tin shingles covering the porch roof. A tall interior chimney with corbeled cap pierces the west slope of the main hip of the roof. A smaller kitchen flu protrudes from the east slope opposite.

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The interior plan is highly irregular, with little relation between room arrangements from one room to the next. The first floor plan contains no central hall, and consists of several rooms of varying size adjoining each other in a seemingly haphazard fashion. The second and third floors contain irregular central east-west hallways, with private access to rooms of irregular shapes and sizes off the halls.

Interior walls are finished with horizontal tongue and groove sheathing. Some rooms contain vertical board wainscoting. Door and window frames of the first and third floor levels are symmetrically molded, with identical profiles and plain corner blocks. Second floor door and window frames, also symmetrically molded but with a different profile, have oversized corner blocks with rondels. Interior doors on all levels are of the five panel milled type, with pairs of vertical panels above and below a central horizontal one. Mantels vary in form, with reeded pilasters and wide friezes adorned with reeding, diamond center plates, and other devices. The open stair rises through the southwest rooms on all three levels; this features molded handrail, turned balusters that resemble those of the porch, and turned newels. One of the finest features for the interior is the excellent wood graining that appears on doors and much woodwork throughout the building, though some of the woodwork has been painted white.

No outbuildings or other support features remain on the property.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 1900, ca. 1928 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lucas Mansion in Hiddenite has a history and architectural form that are unique to Alexander County. The three-story, twenty-two room structure, with its elaborate porches, reflects an early twentieth century prosperity not prevalent elsewhere in the county. Beginning as a one-story structure built ca.1900, the house was enlarged to its present size between 1910 and 1928 by James Paul Lucas, a South Carolina native and international diamond merchant. "Diamond Jim," as he was popularly called, amassed considerable wealth from his business and turned much of it into enlarging and furnishing his home which far surpassed the economic growth and development of the community. He retired from the diamond trade about 1929 and moved into his Hiddenite home for the remaining twenty-three years of his life. In his business travels he had made acquaintances with some of the country's most noted celebrities, many of whom visited his home. Over the years he had collected hundreds of items, including gifts from famous international figures. The Lucas Mansion became a veritable museum and the object of local curiosity. Lucas died in 1952 and the house became a summer home and hunting lodge for out-of-state owners. In 1981 Mrs. R.Y. Sharpe of Winston-Salem purchased the property. Plans are underway to restore the Lucas Mansion and adaptively convert it for use as a cultural center and museum.

Criteria assessment:

- B. Associated with the life of James Paul ("Diamond Jim") Lucas, a successful businessman of wide reputation who made Hiddenite, North Carolina his permanent home.
- C. Embodies the form, ornament, and character of an unusual and expansive private residence of the early twentieth century in the western Piedmont of North Carolina, featuring an especially notable two-story wraparound porch.

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The three story, twenty-two room Lucas Mansion in Hiddenite started out as a one story structure built around 1900. Two major alterations between 1910 and 1928 brought the house to its present configuration. For its location the mansion bears an architectural uniqueness born of the prosperity of its owner, a prosperity not really enjoyed by the town in general. Although Hiddenite grew large enough to be incorporated in 1913 (the charter was repealed in 1919), the town never reached the heights promised by the discovery of precious stones, one of which gave its name to the community.¹ Development of the Lucas Mansion far exceeded the economic growth of its geographical location and reflects exclusively the wealth of its long-time owner, James Paul Lucas. Lucas, however, did not build the oldest portion of the house.

Local tradition maintains that the original one story house was built about 1900, but no records were found to establish an exact date.² Sometime between 1900 and 1906, W. F. Hollar moved from Watauga County to Hiddenite. He was living in the house and operating a store on the property by August 5, 1907.³ How long before that time he had moved into the house is uncertain; so is the question of whether or not he was the builder. He sold one and a half acres, "being the dwelling and store lots" to A. G. Matlock on the above date. The selling price of \$800 suggests that the improvements were modest.⁴ From Matlock the property passed briefly through ownership of M. F. Patterson who sold it to James P. Lucas on December 12, 1908.⁵

James Paul Lucas was the son of James S. and Sallie Lockhart Lucas of South Carolina.⁶ While in his early teens he became a "news butch" on a South Carolina train. At age nineteen he undertook a job as a "walking stick and umbrella salesman." A few years later he entered the diamond import business which was to bring him considerable wealth and an international reputation. He was first employed as a salesman by Samstag and Hilder Brothers of New York and rose to the position of general manager of the firm.⁷ As the end of the twentieth century's first decade approached, Lucas was well established in the business and had traveled throughout the United States and to all parts of the world. His success in the diamond trade earned him the nickname of "Diamond Jim Lucas."⁸ His first association with Hiddenite came when he visited the nearby Sulphur Springs health resort. Lucas liked the countryside and decided to buy land for his retirement years.⁹

Shortly after purchasing the house and lots in Hiddenite, "Diamond Jim" brought his parents from Blacksburg, South Carolina to live in the old Hollar house.¹⁰ His father, James S. Lucas, was born in 1842 and enlisted for Confederate service on May 1, 1861, in York District, South Carolina. On June 4, 1861, he was mustered into the Fifth Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers where he served in the band.¹¹ He also saw considerable action, eventually rising to the rank of captain. According to the family, the elder Lucas's band was selected to provide ceremonial music at the surrender at Appomattox.¹² Sallie Lucas, who for some years ran a millinery store across the street, died in 1929 but James S. lived until April 27, 1940 when he died in his 98th year.¹³

James Paul Lucas remained active in the diamond business for nearly two decades after moving his parents to Hiddenite. He maintained offices in New York and California but often visited his parents. Sometime between 1910 and 1928, Lucas had the house enlarged twice. The first change called for moving the original house to the side and constructing a new first floor upon which the original house was placed to form a two story structure.

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Later the second story (original house) was raised while a new second story was inserted. Presumably, the porches and railings were added at that time as were the house's own electric power plant and water system.¹⁴ Thus, the top story is the oldest part of the house; the first floor is the second oldest; and the middle story forms the youngest portion. All of this took place while the parents of James Paul Lucas were residing in the house. Several people then living in Hiddenite recall the unusual method of enlarging the Lucas Mansion.¹⁵

"Diamond Jim" retired to his Hiddenite home about 1929. He had never married and his niece Ethel Pedings, whose husband John T. Pedings had died the year before, moved to the Lucas Mansion to serve as hostess for Jim and his parents. She remained in the Lucas household for twenty-three years in the capacity of hostess, house manager, and receptionist. Lucas relived the old southern life in his Hiddenite home and entertained in the finest traditions of the Old South. He was a friend of presidents (particularly Harry S. Truman), bankers, industrialists, and political leaders. Mrs. Pedings stated that he entertained almost everybody of any importance except the president.¹⁶

Lucas was an avid collector and the items numbered in the hundreds. Gifts came from world renown personalities such as Baron Rothschild (two canes) and General Pershing (World War I helmet). Other items included a pipe believed to have belonged to Czar Nicholas of Russia, clothes worn by Buffalo Bill, boxing gloves of John L. Sullivan and James J. Corbett, and a baseball mitt autographed by John McGraw. A special clock collection (150 pieces) included an 1804 model and one that ran for 400 days on a single winding. Diamonds up to sixteen carats, antique guns, and numerous other artifacts were included. With such valuable furnishings, security was paramount. A hedge and fence completely surrounded the house and the gate was always locked. Admittance was gained by ringing a bell to call someone to the gate. Prowlers were discouraged by the presence of large dogs not at all hospitable to strangers.¹⁷

In addition to the homeplace, Lucas purchased other property in Alexander County whereon he raised Jersey cattle and race horses. A devotee of bird hunting, he often invited friends to hunt on his lands using the thoroughbred dogs he had raised. A number of prize ribbons in his collection attested to the quality of show animals he bred.¹⁸

James Paul Lucas lived in his Hiddenite home for over twenty years. Slowly his health began to fail and a week before his death on July 15, 1952 he was taken to Davis Hospital in Statesville. His body was returned to Hiddenite where he was buried beside his parents in the town cemetery. He was seventy-three at the time of his death.¹⁹ Much of his land and money had been lost in the depression, and the items in his extensive collection were sold at public auction in Hickory.²⁰ As executor of his estate, the First National Bank of Catawba County filed a plea with the court for permission to sell the homeplace to defray the cost of outstanding debts.

The public auction was held in the autumn of 1952. On October 11, Howard D. and Flora Sharpe of Belmont, Massachusetts and W. R. and Lois Thomas of Miami, Florida became the highest bidders for "the homeplace of the late James Paul Lucas."²¹ The Thomas family used the Lucas Mansion as a summer home for many years. Even after the death of her husband Mrs. Renn Thomas (a niece of James Paul Lucas) returned for summer vacations to

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Hiddenite where she was joined by other members of the family. Howard Sharpe preferred to use the home as a hunting lodge and often brought his northern friends to Hiddenite for sport and competition.²²

For a few years, the house stood vacant; encroaching vines, underbrush growth, and the elements of nature threatened its continued existence. In 1981, Mrs. R. Y. Sharpe, a native of Hiddenite but now living in Winston-Salem, purchased the house and grounds from its out-of-state owners. Mrs. Sharpe fondly remembers the "golden days" of the Lucas Mansion and plans to restore its original appearance while adapting it to serve as a historical/cultural museum and learning center for Alexander and surrounding counties.²³

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FOOTNOTES

¹William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 225; Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 4 vols., 1958-1965), IV, 1693; and Pamela Simon, "History Long, Colorful for Alexander County," Statesville Record and Landmark, 100th Anniversary Edition, April 8, 1974.

²Researcher's interviews with Mrs. R. Y. Sharpe, May 7, 1981, and Mrs. Ethel Pedings, May 18, 1981, hereinafter cited as Sharpe and Pedings interviews respectively. Mrs. Pedings related a local story that the house was built for a prospective bride but the marriage never took place and the house was sold without being lived in. No evidence to confirm the story was found.

³In 1900 Hollar was living in Watauga County. See Eleventh Census of the United States, 1900: North Carolina - Watauga County, Population Schedule, E. D. 132, Sheet 11, Line 70. The index for the 1900 census showed no other W. F. Hollar in North Carolina. In 1906, W. F. Hollar of Alexander County, bought approximately one-half acre of land adjoining the Lucas House property. See Alexander County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Alexander County Courthouse, Taylorsville, Deed Book Q, 105, 106, hereinafter cited as Alexander County Deed Book. The store and dwelling were mentioned in the deed from Hollar to A. G. Matlock, August 5, 1907. Alexander County Deed Book S, 30.

⁴Alexander County Deed Book S, 30.

⁵Patterson owned the property for nine months. See Alexander County Deed Book S, 460, 385.

⁶Statesville Landmark, July 17, 1952, hereinafter cited as Landmark.

⁷Jeanette St. Clair, "Lucas House Is Landmark in Hiddenite," The Taylorsville Times, July 1, 1976, hereinafter cited as St. Clair, "Lucas House."

⁸Pedings interview; and St. Clair, "Lucas House."

⁹Sharpe interview.

¹⁰Sharpe and Pedings interviews.

¹¹A. S. Sally (comp.), South Carolina Troops in Confederate Service (Columbia: The State Company, 3 vols., 1930), III, 10.

¹²Pedings interview.

¹³Sharpe interview; and Pedings interview.

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¹⁴ St. Clair, "Lucas House"; Pedings interview; and Sharpe interview.

¹⁵ Sharpe and Pedings interviews.

¹⁶ Pedings interview.

¹⁷ St. Clair, "Lucas House."

¹⁸ St. Clair, "Lucas House."

¹⁹ Landmark, July 17, 1952; and Pedings interview.

²⁰ Sharpe interview; and researcher's interview with W. N. (Red) Watt of Taylorsville, May 20, 1981.

²¹ Alexander County Deed Book 46, p. 232.

²² St. Clair, "Lucas House" and Pedings interview.

²³ See proposal of Charles A. Phillips, architectural conservation consultant, for the Lucas House Project, April 27, 1981. Charles and Laura Phillips have been employed by Mrs. Sharpe to serve as consultants for the restoration and adaption of the Lucas House. Copy of proposal in Lucas Mansion File, Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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Alexander County Records

Deeds
Vital Statistics
Wills

Interviews

Mrs. R. Y. Sharpe, May 7, 1981
Mrs. Ethel Pedings, May 18, 1981
W. N. (Red) Watt, May 20, 1981

Phillips, Charles A. Proposal for Lucas House Project (April 27, 1981) Report filed in Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Powell, William S. The North Carolina Gazetteer. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

St. Clair, Jeanette. "Lucas House Is Landmark in Hiddenite." The Taylorsville Times, July 1, 1976.

Sally, A. S. (comp.). South Carolina Troops in Confederate Service. 3 vols. Columbia: The State Company, 1930.

Sharpe, Bill. A New Geography of North Carolina. 4 vols. Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1958-1965.

Simon, Pamela. "History Long, Colorful for Alexander County." Statesville Record and Landmark, 100th Anniversary Edition, April 8, 1974.

The Statesville Landmark, July 17, 1952.

United States Census Records. Census of 1900: North Carolina - Watauga County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre.

Quadrangle name Hiddenite, NC

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	7	4	9	1	7	2	0	3	9	7	3	4	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is a lot of less than one acre measuring approximately 160' square, bordering Church Street on the west and other privately owned parcels on the south, east, and north, and is all the property that remains in association with the Lucas House.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Jerry L. Cross, Researcher

name/title Michael T. Southern, Restoration Specialist
Survey and Planning Branch

organization Archeology and Historic Preservation Section date June, 1981

street & number NC Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street telephone (919) 733-6545

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *John F. Little*

Deputy title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 9, 1981

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

