

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Ravenscroft School

AND/OR COMMON

Chateau Nollman

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 29 Ravenscroft Drive

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Asheville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

11th

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Buncombe

CODE

21

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Asheville Acceptance Corporation

STREET & NUMBER

555 Merrimon Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Asheville

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 28804

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Buncombe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Asheville

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Architectural Resources of Downtown Asheville

DATE

1977-1978

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Survey and Planning Branch, Archeology & Historic Preservation Section

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on a rise on the west side of Ravenscroft Drive, the Ravenscroft School building is surrounded by slightly less than an acre of land, the remnant of a 13½-acre plot at the foot of Church Street. The current line of Ravenscroft Drive parallels the original semi-circular driveway up to the house, although the grade has been lowered. Initially a suburban location, the setting of the building is now 1920s residential fabric and, at the rear, used car lots and commercial buildings.

Originally a residence, the school building is a two- and three-story structure of five course common bond red brick. The earliest portion, judging from an 1851 Bird's Eye view, is the squat, three-story, pyramidal-roofed tower and the projecting two-story rectangular wings with gable roofs that flank it. In elevation, this massing closely resembles Design IX, "A Cottage in the Italian or Tuscan Style" in the 1842 edition of A. J. Downing's Cottage Residences, Rural Architecture & Landscape Gardening, the principal difference being that the Ravenscroft building is executed in the Greek Revival style rather than the Italianate of the John Notman-designed residence. Although rare, there are other examples of this design extant in North Carolina, notably the 1850s Jacob Holt House in Warrenton. Of particular interest is the quality of the detail on the Ravenscroft building, well-executed and considerably more academic and correct in type than is common in the western half of the state, but not entirely sophisticated in its proportions or handling.

The square tower is the central focus of the house. On its ground level is the main entrance to the building, a formal doorway that is square in proportion consisting of two large, symmetrically-molded pilasters with Doric anta capitals supporting a bipartite architrave, between which is a wide, two-panel door flanked by four-light sidelights flanked in turn by quarter and full reduced versions of the outside pilasters. These inner pilasters support a molded transom bar surmounted by a nine-light transom window. The doorway is repeated on the second floor of the tower, with a shouldered architrave replacing the outer pilasters, and with the inner pilasters and transom intersecting in hollow-square blocks. The third level of the tower has a triple window with a broad, shallow pediment architrave and a central six-over-six sash window flanked by a narrow two-over-two sash windows. The cornice of the tower has as do the other cornices of the original building, a narrow Greek Doric frieze composed of triglyphs and metopes with guttae.

Each of the flanking pavilions is one bay wide on the front elevation and two bays wide on the outer elevations. The gable roofs of these pavilions are expressed at the front ends as rather steep triangular pediments, the raking eaves containing metopes and the horizontal cornices a frieze identical to that of the tower. The tympana are flush-sheathed. The windows of these pavilions have six-over-six double-hung sash, wooden lug sills and deep, white-painted wood lintels. Originally, each window sported a pair of blinds. Each pavilion has a panelled interior chimney with stove cap on its outside wall.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

Most of the front porch appears to be an early twentieth century reworking and extension of the original porch or entrance portico. The 1851 Bird's Eye view and a photograph in the 1892 city directory show a small porch or portico of the same height as the existing one, but only as wide as the distance between the flanking pavilions. The 1892 photograph indicates that there were two pairs of Doric antae at the front of the porch, and ghost marks on the house show that there were anta pilasters also at the intersection of each side pavilion and the tower, and at the inner corner of each pavilion. The balustrade above the porch seems to be an original feature.

There have also been several structural additions to the original plan of the house. Probably the earliest is a two-story brick wing attached at the northwest corner, one bay wide and two deep, covered with a pyramidal roof. It is likely that this wing dates from within twenty years of the house's construction, since it copies the detailing of the original house closely, except that there is a single exterior door with transom on the first floor of the east elevation, and the second floor windows of the side elevation do not have expressed lintels.

Another addition, probably from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, is attached to this wing at the rear. This gable-roofed, five-course common bond brick structure runs parallel to the front of the house and is two bays deep and four long. None of the six over six sash windows has expressed lintels. The north gable end is corbelled on the raking eaves and returns to form a pediment that echoes those of the front pavilions, even down to mutule-sized brick blocks. This corbelled mutule course is also followed around the west elevation of the building at the cornice line. There is a basement below this wing reached by a two panel door on the west elevation.

Between the rear brick wing and a large frame one on the southwest corner is a small brick infill section, basically one bay. Probably late nineteenth century in date, its orange common bond brickwork has dark header courses and a corbelled cornice. The rear entrance to the house at the main level is through this section.

The frame addition referred to above is a two-story, hipped-roofed rectangular wing attached to the southwest corner of the original house. This flimsily-constructed section, dating about 1920, is currently being demolished. There are two other small frame additions to the house, both one story and twentieth century, one on the gable end of the northwest wing, the other attached to the center, west side.

The basic interior plan of the house is expressive of the exterior elevations and massing, although there have been a number of subdivisions and redivisions over the building's history. The central hall of the plan is three rooms stacked on top of each other with a stair at the west side, and the side pavilions have large rectangular rooms on both floors.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Despite room subdivisions, the interior detailing of the original portion of the house is substantially intact and unusually embellished for western North Carolina Greek Revival houses. The rooms are decorated with a heavy Greek Revival ornament including wide, symmetrically-molded architraves with cast and gilded plaster acanthus on the first floor doorway. Doorways into the side wings from the entrance hall also have panelled soffits and jambs. The doors themselves are wide, two panels with applied moldings. The stair, which rises on the north and west sides of the central tower, has turned balusters and robust, square-in-section panelled newell posts.

Mantels in the original portion of the house vary in design; some are only versions of the standard Greek Revival mantelpiece composed of pilasters with a wide breast and shelf, while others are more architectonic in character, with the breast made up of a bipartite architrave and frieze, and the shelf loaded with a full complement of narrow cornice moldings.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built during the 1840s as a residence, the Ravenscroft School building is, for western North Carolina, an unusually academically-detailed example of the Greek Revival style, complete with pegged modillions and triglyphs and interior door surrounds with acanthus corner blocks. Its massing, apparently derived from a plate of an Italianate house design in one of A. J. Downing's pattern books, is equally uncommon in its use of a recessed three-story central tower with flanking pedimented pavillions.

In 1856 the Reverend Jarvis Buxton, rector of Trinity Parish in Asheville, announced the opening of the Ravenscroft School for Boys in the house, located on 13½ acres off Church Street. The Episcopal State Convention had established the school in 1855 to serve as the diocese's boys' theological and classical college and as a memorial to Bishop John Stark Ravenscroft. Reverend Lucian Holmes served as the headmaster from 1861 to 1864, when the Civil War forced the school's closing. After the war the Ravenscroft Associate Missions and Training School was opened in the building, allowing young men to train for the ministry under Reverend Buxton. A new building was erected for the training school in 1887 and the Diocesan convention re-established the boys' school in the house. The school closed around the turn of the century, and the building was used as a boarding or rooming house until 1977. Although the house is currently threatened with demolition, efforts are being made to acquire it and preserve it through an adaptive reuse.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. The Ravenscroft School was an important landmark in the development of church-related schools in western North Carolina, and of the development of Episcopal secondary schools in North Carolina.
- C. The building itself is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival domestic architecture in western North Carolina.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Asheville, like other North Carolina towns, was dependent in the nineteenth century on private schools and academies to educate its young. Many of Asheville's early schools were church oriented, with the Presbyterian influence the strongest. The community had a school as early as 1793 when attorney Robert Henry opened his Union Hill school. Of considerable influence in ante-bellum Asheville was the Newton Academy, founded by Presbyterian minister George Newton in 1797. The city also had a school for young ladies, founded by Samuel Dickson, also a Presbyterian minister, in 1835.

The Protestant Episcopal Church began to make its influence felt in Asheville in the middle part of the nineteenth century. Trinity Episcopal church, established in 1847, was Asheville's first Episcopal church.² In 1854 Jarvis Buxton, the rector of Trinity, was picked by the diocesan convention of North Carolina to be headmaster for a proposed new Episcopal school to be located in Pittsboro. Buxton had taught at the church school located in the mountain community of Valle Crucis and possessed a reputation as an educator. The members of Trinity, loath to lose the services of its popular minister, made a counter proposal to the church to locate the school in Asheville. The offer was accepted and the school opened in 1856. The Ravenscroft Institute was named for John Stark Ravenscroft, the first Bishop of the North Carolina Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Pittsboro was abandoned as a site for an Episcopal school.

The expressed aim of Ravenscroft Institute was "not only to furnish facilities of study to older youth who might have the ministry directly in view, but also to educate the boys of the Church in the method of the Prayer Book and in all Christian culture."⁴ Bishop Thomas Atkinson viewed the school as an attempt to solve two problems that had long vexed the church in North Carolina: the lack of a home grown ministry and the unpopularity of the church with the young, particularly those of the laboring class.⁵ Classical curriculum was mixed with theological studies at Ravenscroft.

Jarvis Buxton remained the headmaster of the school until 1861, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Lucien Holmes. Holmes was only able to keep the school open until 1864, when it closed under the enormous pressures of the Civil War.⁶ After the war's conclusion the institute was slow in reopening. The Episcopal church was impoverished, as was most of the South. With this in mind Bishop Atkinson revived Ravenscroft on a less ambitious scale. The school was reopened as a theological school, where postulants and candidates for the ministry were received and instructed. The first principal was the Reverend George T. Wilmer. Wilmer left to become a professor at William & Mary and was replaced by Reverend F. J. Murdock, who was replaced in 1872 by Reverend Dr. D. H. Buel.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The theological school was only moderately successful. Although it did train at least fifteen young men for the ministry, the school was disappointing to its founders for the reasons articulated by Joseph Blount Cheshire:

Unfortunately for the Theological School, the Principal of Ravenscroft left solitary and alone, has been made to centre in himself, the contrariant and incompatible offices pertaining to an Associate Mission that covers an extensive field, with those pertaining to a training school for the ministry that demands a constant presence; or as the case is pathetically presented by himself in his report of 1881 -"The Principal of Ravenscroft, feeling as he did the weight of the great Mission work which the Bishops have felt compelled to lay wholly upon him for the want of other laborers, and how it utterly prevented the requisite devotion of time and effort to the training school, has for several years not encouraged the many applications from candidates that have been coming to him."

In 1886 it was decided to revive the plan for a Diocesan School for boys, and to use the Ravenscroft building for that purpose. The struggling ministerial training school was moved to a nearby building, most of the cost of which was donated to the Diocese by John Schoenberger, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a friend of Bishop Theodore Lyman.¹⁰

Following this reorganization of the boys school the first headmaster was Henry A. Prince. He was soon replaced by Haywood Parker of Asheville. He in turn was replaced in 1889 by Ronald McDonald, an Englishman educated at Oxford, and son of George McDonald, a popular author of the period.¹¹ The 1894-95 Asheville City Directory carried an advertisement for the school as a preparatory boarding and day school for boys, with an annual board and tuition of \$300. Tuition minus board was \$80 per annum, or \$15 per month. Testimonials from Bishop Lyman praised McDonald as having come to Asheville "with the highest testimonials from some of the best educators in England and our own country," and the school as "one of the most valuable institutions for Christian training and sound learning which has ever been inaugurated in our state."¹²

However, in spite of its virtues, Ravenscroft was now facing competition from public schools. Although authorized by the legislature in 1840, public schools did not come to Asheville until the late 1880s. Within a few years they had improved to such an extent that they forced the closure of Ravenscroft in the late 1890s.¹³ In the early part of the twentieth century the Ravenscroft property was subdivided and sold.¹⁴ The property ended up in the hands of Mrs. L. N. Buckner, and after her death in 1941 it was sold to the Investors Service Corporation.¹⁵ In 1943 the Corporation sold the property to W. H. Nollman and Nettie Nollman, who used the house for boarding purposes.¹⁶ The current owner of the property is the Asheville Acceptance Corporation.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

¹ Joan and Wright Langley, Yesterday's Asheville (Miami: E. A. Seaman Publishing Company, 1975), 19; Guion Griffis Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 285; John Preston Arthur, Western North Carolina: A History (Raleigh: Buncombe Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914), 421-425.

² Wanda Engle Stanard and Emily Shuber Carr, Trinity Episcopal Church: One Hundred and Twenty Fifth Anniversary, 1849-1974 (Asheville, Trinity Episcopal Church, 1974), 17-18.

³ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942; Journal of the 42nd Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in North Carolina (Fayetteville: Edward J. Hale & Son, 1858), 35. In his contribution to the convention journal Jarvis Buxton mentions that Ravenscroft was in debt and that when the debt was repaid "the property is required to be made over to the trustees of the Diocese." At this time Buxton owned the 13½ acre plot, having purchased 11 acres of it from William Patton in 1853 and 2½ from J. N. Osbourne in 1854 (Buncombe County Deed Book, 27-435). Buxton sold the property to the Diocese in 1863 for \$1731 in the above mentioned deed.

⁴ Joseph Blount Cheshire, Sketches of Church History (Wilmington: Wm. L. DeRosset, Jr., 1892), 309, hereinafter cited as Cheshire, Sketches.

⁵ Cheshire, Sketches, 309-310.

⁶ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942.

⁷ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942; Cheshire, Sketches, 310.

⁸ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942; Cheshire, Sketches, 310.

⁹ Cheshire, Sketches, 310-311.

¹⁰ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942.

¹¹ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942.

¹² Asheville City Directory, 1894-95.

¹³ Citizen-Times (Asheville), March 29, 1942.

¹⁴ Buncombe County Plat Book 154-143.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

4

¹⁵Buncombe County Deeds, 536-314.

¹⁶Buncombe County Deeds, 551-54.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Cheshire, Joseph Blount. Sketches of Church History. Wilmington: Wm. L. DeRosset, Jr., 1892.

Citizen-Times (Asheville). March 29, 1942.

Johnson, Guion Griffis. Ante-Bellum North Carolina. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937.

Journal of the 42nd Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church In North Carolina. Fayetteville: Edward J. Hale & Son, 1858.

Langley, Joan and Wright. Yesterday's Asheville. Miami: E. A. Seeman Publishing Company, 1975.

Stanard, Wanda Engle and Carr, Emily Shuber. Trinity Episcopal Church: One Hundred and Twenty Fifth Anniversary, 1849-1974. Asheville: Trinity Episcopal Church, 1974.

COXE AVENUE

CAR
LOTS

ALLEY

SAWYER STREET

ODD FELLOWS
HALL

SL1

174.6

RAVENS CROFT
SCHOOL

RAVENS CROFT DRIVE

CHURCH STREET

AVENUE

HILLIARD



