**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**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** Webbley

**AND/OR COMMON** The O. Max Gardner House

### 2 LOCATION

**STREET & NUMBER**

403 South Washington Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Shelby

**STATE**

North Carolina

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**

Tenth

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

IN PROCESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

**PRESENT USE**

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

**NAME**

Mr. Ralph Gardner

**STREET & NUMBER**

403 South Washington Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Shelby

**STATE**

North Carolina

**VICINITY OF**

28150

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

Cleveland County Courthouse

**STREET & NUMBER**

**CITY, TOWN**

**STATE**

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE**

**DATE**

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

**CITY, TOWN**

**STATE**
Webbley, or the O. Max Gardner House, is one of the most distinguished residences in the town of Shelby. The house is set back on a wide, deep lot on the east side of South Washington Street and is shaded with mature hardwood trees. A semi-circular drive lined with boxwoods approaches the house from the street.

The house is an early twentieth century overbuilding of a mid-nineteenth century Italianate dwelling, and though remnants of the earlier structure can be seen in places, the house is of thoroughgoing Colonial Revival character. The main block of the structure, the rear half of which incorporates the framing of the earlier house, is of frame construction on a brick foundation and roughly square in plan, rising two stories under a low-pitched hip roof with a flat roof deck and roof balustrade. Gabled attic dormers are centered on the west and north slopes of the roof; each contains a louvered attic ventilator beneath a fanlight. Brick interior end chimneys rise near the west ends of the north and south sides of the house. A pair of interior chimneys rise on the back side of the roof deck. Windows are of nine-over-one sash on the first floor, and six-over-one on the second; all are placed in plain surrounds.

A full-height, flat-roof portico supported by fluted Ionic columns dominates the symmetrical three-bay front (west) elevation. The wide frieze of the portico contains rows of paired horizontal panels. Curvilinear sawn brackets carry underneath the overhanging eaves of the portico and continue under the eaves of the entire house. A balustrade with turned balusters and large, square-in-section posts—components identical to those of the roof deck above—surmounts the portico roof.

The portico is flanked by one-story porches sheltering the end bays of the facade. These are supported by Doric posts connected by a handrail carried on turned balusters. Similar, but shorter balustrades are mounted along the flat roofs of these flanking porches.

The central bay of the facade extends forward on the first-floor level in a three-sided vestibule. A single door under a fanlight occupies the center face of the projection, flanked by paneled pilasters. On the side faces of the projection are sidelights composed of twenty-one lights each, with small groupings of six lights over fifteen light groupings. A balustrade carries across the top of this projecting vestibule, in front of the paired windows occupying the center bay of the facade on the second floor level.

A two-story bay projects from the center of the north side elevation. A screened porch with a porte-cochere attached extends off the first floor around this central bay; both porch and porte-cochere have roof balustrades identical to those of the small facade porches.

Two hip roof ells extend from the main block on the rear elevation. The one on the southeast corner is two stories and two bays deep; its two-story companion is only one bay deep, but it is in turn extended on the first floor level with a one-story, hip roof projection. A one-story, flat roof enclosure connects the two
ells. An exterior stair rises in one flight to the top of this enclosure between the ells and continues in boardwalk fashion along the roof of the enclosure to a second floor rear entrance to the main block of the house.

The interior of the main block follows a center hall plan, two rooms deep. Remnants of the woodwork of the mid-nineteenth century house can still be seen, chiefly with an occasional symmetrically molded door surround with corner block, but the majority of the present interior work is high quality finish in the Colonial Revival manner. Consistent throughout are molded cornices and high molded baseboards. Walls are plastered, and now papered. Doors have horizontal panels, and a large sliding door separates the first floor rooms on the north side. A wainscot of vertical panels carries throughout the center hall. The hall is divided mid-way by a transverse flat-arch flanked by free-standing circular-in-section posts set on paneled pedestals. The closed-string stair rises along the south wall of the rear section of the hall; it's molded handrail is supported by thin balusters and terminates in a volute.

Mantels vary in form, including Neo-Georgian, Neo-Federal, and Neo-classical types; several have delicate relief carvings of garlands, swags, urns, and other motifs.

The rear ells house the kitchen, an office, and utility rooms, and are simply finished.

A small, gable-roof servants' house of frame construction stands to the rear of the house. The only other structure on the property is a two-story garage building, also frame and under a gable roof.
Webbley, more commonly known today as the O. Max Gardner House, was the home of one of North Carolina's most prominent twentieth century public leaders. A key figure of the state's famous "Shelby Dynasty," O. Max Gardner (1882-1947) enjoyed a distinguished career that included service as state senator, lieutenant governor, and governor from 1929 to 1933. As the state's chief executive during the first years of the Depression, he was credited with initiating programs that helped many small farmers weather the difficult times. He later served under Roosevelt as chairman of the Advisory Board of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, and under Truman as Undersecretary of the Treasury. He was appointed as ambassador to the Court of St. James, but did not live to fulfill that appointment.

The original portion of the Gardner House in Shelby was constructed about 1852 for attorney Augustus Burton. In 1907 it was enlarged to its present form by J. A. Anthony, Gardner's brother-in-law. The house became Gardner's permanent North Carolina residence in 1911 when it was purchased by his father-in-law, Judge James L. Webb, and received the name Webbley.

Criteria Assessment:

B. Associated with the life and career of O. Max Gardner, one of the state's most distinguished political figures of this century who was also active nationally during World War II.

C. Embodies the form and characteristics of the Colonial Revival style, here fully developed in one of the most striking examples of the style in western North Carolina.
The lot where the Gardner House stands was part of the 147 acre tract that James Love donated for the town of Shelby on August 11, 1841. Five days later, Samuel S. Gidney surveyed the tract and laid off 160 lots for the town. The first sale began on October 5, but only fifty lots were sold, mostly those clustered around the courthouse square. At a second sale in January, 1842, only eight additional lots were sold. Not until the third sale, which occurred in February, 1845, did the specific lot herein examined pass into the hands of private ownership.

The first recorded owner was John D. Dameron whose name appears on the town plan of Shelby drawn by Dr. T. Williams in 1850. Dameron owned adjoining lots numbered 19, 30, and 41 in the southeast quadrant. Little is known about Dameron except that he ran afoul of the justices of the Cleveland County Court over monies involved in the construction of the courthouse. In February, 1851, he filed suit against the justices and the court fight was removed to Lincoln County. The outcome was not uncovered, but it may have played a role in the transfer of Dameron's lots in Shelby to Augustus W. Burton. The exact nature and date of transfer is unknown, but Burton held full title to the property by 1855.

Augustus W. Burton (1829-1877) was the son of Judge Robert Henderson Burton of Lincoln County. He graduated from the University of North Carolina in the late 1840s and studied law under Thomas Ruffin, then chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, and Richmond M. Pearson, later to become chief justice himself. Burton was admitted to the bar in 1849.

About 1850 he married Julia L. Olmstead, daughter of the Rev. A. F. Olmstead, rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Lincolnton, and moved to Shelby in 1852. He built a two story house on lot number 19 facing South Washington Street. The house then stood on the southeastern edge of town and was completed sometime between 1852 and 1855. Burton's legal practice seems to have floundered, perhaps because of his temperament. He was indicted for assault, came into conflict with several individuals, and went deeply into debt.

Whether or not Burton eventually lost his property in this manner is unclear, but he did not appear to own the property when he enlisted the Civil War in April, 1861. While living in the house, A. W. Burton had been elected to the State Legislature in 1852, had served as solicitor for the Western District (1852-1858), and had been returned to the General Assembly as a state senator in 1860. Most of his troubles in Shelby came during his tenure as Solicitor for the Western District, but he seems to have remained popular among the rural people of Cleveland County.
Through some method not clarified in the records, A. R. Homesly acquired the property containing the Burton homeplace. Homesly sold the lots on June 13, 1863 and for the next forty-eight years, the house changed hands rather rapidly, with one exception. On April 1, 1869, Mrs. Adelaide W. McAfee purchased the property at a sheriff's sale and lived there for nearly twenty years.

In 1905, J. A. Anthony, a prominent Shelby attorney bought the home and a much reduced lot. Anthony and his wife Ollie Gardner Anthony initiated the renovations in 1907 that totally changed the appearance of the structure. Anthony lived in his virtually new house until 1911, and while very successful in his own right, it was his law partner and brother-in-law, Oliver Maxwell Gardner, who brought the most prominence to the dwelling and lived there during most of his active political career.

O. Max Gardner (1882-1947) was born and raised in Shelby. The youngest child of a farmer-physician, Max received his early education in the public schools. He attended the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Technical Arts (now North Carolina State University), earning a degree in chemistry in 1903. After a brief stint as an A&M College chemistry instructor, Max decided to enter the law school at the University of North Carolina. He was graduated in 1906, passed the bar exam, and on January 1, 1907, entered into a law partnership with J. A. Anthony, husband of his sister Ollie and twenty-eight years older than Gardner. On that same day, Faye Webb, the town's most eligible woman, accepted his marriage proposal. Entrance into the legal profession, and marriage into the politically influential Webb family, launched the ambitious young man into a long and illustrious career.

The Webb family was headed by Judge James L. Webb, who in 1882 began a service of thirty-two years as a court official, twelve as a district solicitor and the remainder as a Superior Court judge. James's younger brother, E. Y. (Yates) Webb was a lawyer, county Democratic chairman, federal judge, state legislator, and a United States congressman for sixteen consecutive years. The seeming electoral invincibility of the Webb brothers and the political power they wielded gained them the sobriquet, the "Shelby Dynasty." When Gardner rose to prominence, along with his brother-in-law, Clyde R. Hoey, the perpetuation of family influence spanned several generations and lasted more than seventy years.

Max and Faye Gardner first set up housekeeping with Judge Jim Webb in the Webb home located two houses north of the Anthony home on South Washington Street. In 1911, Judge Webb bought the enlarged house at 403 South Washington Street from J. A. Anthony for $9,000. The Webbs, the Gardners (including two of Max and Faye's three children), and the servants moved into the imposing structure which quickly acquired the name Webbly. A few years later, Faye's sister suffered through a broken marriage and came to live with the Webbs and Gardners. By marriage and his own endeavors, Max Gardner
rose to the top of Shelby society, and while Judge Jim and Miss Kans (Kansas) Webb easily could have given their grandchildren a life of luxury, Max Gardner would not have his children spoiled. The family kept several cows out back of Webbley to generate work for the Gardner boys. Each day Ralph and James herded the cows to pasture on the other side of town and brought them back at night for milking.20 Their father had spent much time on a farm and took pride in the lifestyle, but having been to the manor born, the boys were embarrassed by such rural work ethics and took to back alleys in their daily sojourns to prevent discovery.21 Max Gardner never lost his interest in farming, often using tenant labor to rebuild abandoned or rundown farms. From the graciousness of Webbley, he presided over one of the largest cotton growing operations in Cleveland County.22

O. Max Gardner's first step in his climb to political fame came in 1910 when he was elected to the State Senate. Reelected in 1914 he made history by becoming the youngest man (32) ever named president pro-tem.23 At age thirty-three he presided over the State Senate as lieutenant governor and seemed destined for the highest office in the state. Political infighting, however, denied him that honor for nearly a decade. Inaugural day for Governor O. Max Gardner was January 11, 1929; nine months later the nation plunged into the Great Depression.24

Governor Gardner responded to the challenge. By introducing a live-at-home program that emphasized the raising of necessary food and livestock, he helped North Carolina farmers break their dependence on the cash crops of cotton and tobacco which enabled a better weathering of the economic storm. He cut the budget by degrees to meet declining revenues, and while state employees' salaries were reduced, fewer lost their jobs than those in other states. Gardner refused to allow the Depression to deter him from his campaign goals. He proposed, and the legislature passed, bills calling for such progressive changes as introduction of the secret ballot, improvement of state tax structure and creation of a State Tax Commission, a Workman's Compensation Act, improvement of prison conditions, abolition of chain gangs, and the beginning of a parole system.25 Gardner's term expired in 1933. He had not pulled North Carolina out of the depression, but he had certainly weakened its impact.

"After his four year term was over, he decided to set up a law office in the nation's capitol rather than practice in North Carolina where it might be embarrassing to try cases before judges whom he had appointed," said one associate and personal friend of Gardner's.26 He became counsel for the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce and lobbyist for some of the country's largest corporations earning friends among the powerful political echelons of Washington. He was recommended for numerous presidential appointments but refused until the advent of World War II.

Max Gardner accepted the non-salaried position as chairman of the Advisory Board of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion and liaison between Congress and the
White House, but had no intention of abandoning his highly successful law firm for any office short of a cabinet appointment. In this period, Roosevelt, a close personal friend, died on April 12, 1945. On January 19, 1946, Gardner's son Decker (James Webb Gardner) committed suicide. Gardner returned to Webbley to mourn his losses.

Treasury Secretary Fred Vinson, another close friend, had accepted the resignation of Undersecretary Daniel W. Bell. On February 14, 1946, Vinson called Gardner to come to Washington. Vinson and the new president, Harry S. Truman, urged Gardner to accept the appointment. Max somewhat reluctantly accepted the offer. He was a popular figure in Washington, working well with Congress and the administration. On December 2, 1946, with only ten months of service as Treasury undersecretary, Max Gardner was appointed ambassador to the Court of St. James. At 3 A.M. on the day he was to sail for England, he awoke with severe chest pains. At 8:25 A.M. Gardner died.

Much of the last twenty-five years of his life had been spent in Washington, but Max Gardner always considered Webbley home. In 1945 he had written, "... but my anxiety to return (to Webbley) is always present." Some of his fondest memories recalled receptions at Webbley, once for a crowd of 500 newspapermen attending the 50th anniversary of the North Carolina Press Association. For many years, the Gardners maintained two residences, and for six months Webbley would be closed down while Miss Faye's mother and sister joined them in Washington. Eventually, the Gardners established a permanent home in the capital.

After Max Gardner's death, Miss Faye returned to Webbley to live with her sister, Madge Webb Riley. The two had inherited the house because they were the only surviving children of Judge James L. Webb and Miss Kans. Madge died in the early 1950s, leaving Miss Faye as sole owner of the estate. She lived at Webbley until her death in January, 1969. Of her three sons, only Ralph survives and now occupies the house.

Besides being home of political leader Gardner, according to Ralph Gardner, born in the house in 1912, Webbley was the setting for a segment in D. W. Griffith's classic "The Birth of a Nation." Thomas Dixon, noted Shelby author, also used the house as the base for The Clansman; thus, Webbley has contributed not only to the political life of the United States but to the cultural media as well.
FOOTNOTES

1 Cleveland County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Cleveland County Courthouse, Shelby Deed Book A, 16, hereinafter cited as Cleveland County Deed Book.


3 Our Heritage, 37-39. See also map of town plan, 1850, drawn by T. Williams in Cleveland County Deed Book MM, 237.

4 Abstracts of minutes culled from the records of the Cleveland County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions are quoted in Our Heritage, 24-27.

5 In 1855 Burton failed to answer a court summons for indebtedness. As a result his property was attached and the list included lots 19, 30 and 41. Cleveland County Records, State Archives, Raleigh, Miscellaneous Records, #17208 and #19461, hereinafter cited as Cleveland County Miscellaneous Records.


7 Sherrill, Annals, 223. For year of move to Shelby, compare purchase order for clothing dated September, 1849, Lincolnton, and the bill mailed to Lincolnton in 1852 called for 3 years and 6 months back interest. The bill was forwarded to Burton in Shelby. Cleveland County Miscellaneous Records #1047.

8 For dates see fn. 7 and fn. 5. Burton's house was specifically named in the attachment.

9 Cleveland County Miscellaneous Records #2634, #20336, #2226, #2227, #2228, #17208 and #19461. On two separate occasions within a year he was indicted and prosecuted for assault against one Jonathan Mauney and for "...making an affray to the terror and disturbance of divers (sic) of the citizens of the state..." by armed force. He also alienated several powerful families, including that of James Love, by charging them with trespassing and entering suits with claims of $5,000 in damages. Unfortunately, Burton found himself deep in debt by the mid 1850s and those whom he had angered through his apparent arrogance found an opportunity to retaliate. When Burton refused to respond to the summons for repayment, his property was seized by the sheriff who threatened to sell it to recover the debts. One listing of attached property included "3 horses, 1 buggy and harness, 1 carriage and all harness, all household and kitchen furniture (bureaus, chairs, mirrors, etc.),
1 negro girl named Marina, 3 lots in Town of Shelby on southeast square nos. 19, 30, and 41, and 3 lots nos. 45, 46, and 49 near the Spring...and A. W. Burton's interest in the house and lot in which the said A. W. Burton's family now resides." The writ was dated January 25, 1856.


12 Cleveland County Deed Book E, 815; Deed Book I, 235; Deed Book 00, 251, 252, 260, 297; and Cleveland County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Cleveland County Courthouse, Shelby, Will Book 2, p. 378, Will of Adelaide W. McAfee. One of the intermittent owners was Clyde R. Hoey, later governor and U. S. Senator; however, he held the property less than two months and did not occupy the house.

13 J. Edgar Poag to J. A. Anthony, Cleveland County Deed Book pp, 304. Poag was a real estate dealer and subdivided the 6 plus acres into several smaller lots.

14 Our Heritage, 244. See attached photographs (copies).


17 Our Heritage, 229-234; and Weathers, The Living Past, 211-240.

18 Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 19; and Cleveland County Deed Book XX,1.

19 Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 37.

20 Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 37.

21 Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 6-8.


27. Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 231. For emergence as a powerful Washington figure, see pp. 131-203.


29. Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 262.


31. Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 270.

32. Gardner to Holt McPherson quoted in Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 236.

33. Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 37.

34. Morrison, Governor O. Max Gardner, 140.


36. Researcher's interview with member of house staff at Webbly, May 12, 1980.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**


**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

| ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY | 0.8 |
| UTM REFERENCES | |
| A[1,7] | B[5,110,0,0] | C[3,90,418,2,5] |
| ZONE EASTING NORTHING | ZONE EASTING NORTHING |

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**
The nominated property includes the lot measuring 280' x 126.5' identified as lot 17 of Tax Map 52, Block 6, of the Cleveland County Tax Mapping Office.

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

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**FORM PREPARED BY**

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**ORGANIZATION**

N. C. Division of Archives and History
Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section

**DATE**

July 10, 1980

**STREET & NUMBER**

109 East Jones Street

**TELEPHONE**

919-733-4763

**CITY OR TOWN**

Raleigh, North Carolina

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

| THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS: |
| NATIONAL X 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 National Park Service.

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE**

[Signature]

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature]

**DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

[Signature]

**ATTEST:**

[Signature]

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

[Signature]
Cleveland County Records
  Deeds
  Miscellaneous Records
  Wills


Cross, Jerry L. Interview with Staff of Webbley, May 12, 1980.


EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

4002 GROSS SQ. FT.