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 Joseph Franklin Bland House

and/or common Frank Bland House or "The Castle"

2. Location

street & number 1809 Virginia Road

city, town Winston-Salem

county Forsyth

3. Classification

Category building(s) X building(s) structure site object

Ownership public X private X both

Status X occupied X unoccupied work in progress

Accessible Public Acquisition in process being considered

Present Use

agriculture X museum

commercial X

educational X

entertainment X

government X

Industrial X

military X

park X

private residence X

religious X

scientific X

transportation X

other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. Richard E. Nash and Melva N. Nash

street & number 1809 Virginia Road

city, town Winston-Salem

state North Carolina 27104

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds Office

street & number Forsyth County Hall of Justice

city, town Winston-Salem

state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

From Frontier to Factory: An Architectural History of Forsyth County

title has this property been determined eligible? X yes _ no

date 1981

federal _ state X county X local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, N. C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh

state North Carolina
Built during the early 1930s, the Joseph Franklin Bland House is an impressive two-story Chateauesque style house, commonly referred to as "The Castle." Facing southeast, the Bland House is beautifully situated on a wooded lot of approximately two acres in the fashionable Buena Vista neighborhood of Winston-Salem. Accompanying the original house are an original ironwork fence bordering Virginia Road, remains of the original stone swimming pool and bridge, and compatible additions housing a catering kitchen, a guest house and a garage, along with a swimming pool, a landscaped patio, a tower-like gazebo, low stone walls, and a free standing, four-bay garage.

The asymmetrical massing of the Bland House includes one-and-one-half and two-story sections, front, side and rear wings, a circular stair tower with steep conical roof, irregularly placed stone chimneys, and multiple gables. With its massive fieldstone walls and roofs of recycled slate tiles, the house appears to be a naturalistic fortress commanding its site above a ravine. Other exterior features include deeply inset, multi-light: steel casement windows -- both large and small, -- and heavy oak batten doors with iron strap hinges, knobs, and knockers made on the site.

The interior of the Bland House has an irregular plan arranged on two main floors with a partially finished attic and basement. Like the exterior, the interior has a massive quality, with structural members -- stone, iron and heavy timber -- frequently expressed, helping to create the impression of a medieval castle.

On the first floor, the main entrances are at the center of the house, on the southeast and northwest sides. Heavy oak batten doors open to an L-shaped hall with a combination of stone walls and pine paneled walls. The plaster ceiling is interrupted by large wooden joists. (A previous owner painted the stone walls white in the hall.)

Southwest of the hall is a guest wing, entered from the hall by a heavy wood batten door. It contains its own narrow hall sheathed in pine paneling, a bedroom on the northwest side with plastered walls and added closets, a remodelled bathroom, and at the southwest end, a large sitting room. The sitting room is one of the most interesting rooms in the house. It features stone walls (unpainted), hewn ceiling joists with wood paneled ceiling, heavy batten doors (one leading to the exterior) with iron hardware, and a stone fireplace with broad, stone arched niche above the firebox, flanked by bookcases set in the stone. Large casement windows are on the southeast and northwest sides of the sitting room.

Northeast and north of the entrance hall are the dining room and the original kitchen. The kitchen is finished with wood paneled cabinets. The side hall between the entrance hall and the dining room has a flagstone floor. A small closet and bathroom are entered from the northwest side of this hall. A doorway with segmental arched, hewn timber lintel leads from the side hall to the dining room. The dining room has heavy hewn ceiling joists and rough plaster walls and ceiling.

The most unusual, and nearly breathtaking, interior spaces are the stair tower and the living room. Nestled between the main entrance and the living room wing on the southeast side of the house is the circular stair tower. Its exposed stone walls and steps were painted white during the mid-twentieth century by a previous owner. Winding in a fourteen-
foot-diameter spiral within the tower, the stone steps with flagstone treads appear to be free-standing, but are actually supported by flat iron bands which are cantilevered from the wall. The balusters and handrail are created from steel pipe, soldered together and connected to each step by a heavy bolt. Tall, slender casement windows provide light to the stair well. The stair tower is crowned by a steep conical roof, whose wood sheathing and wood ribs remain exposed to view, creating an interesting visual pattern. A single lantern hangs from the peak of the roof.

Entered from the stair tower or from the dining room at the east corner of the Bland House is the magnificent 20 x 30-foot living room. The entire fireplace (southwest) wall in this large room is of exposed, unpainted stone, while the other walls are plastered. Hewn primary and secondary rafters and huge hewn collar beams which support the steep roof remain exposed, allowing for a 28-foot vertical space. The hewn framing members were reused from the Bohannon Grist Mill which had stood on Main Street, serving Salem and early Winston. Small lighting fixtures line the ridge of the roof and are recessed along the wall plates, but the central fixture is a handsome, oversized wrought iron chandelier in an elaborate S-shaped design, which is hung on large chains from the roof ridge. Coordinated with the design of the chandelier are the designs of the wrought iron balcony rail, on the northwest wall opening from a bedroom, and the wrought iron fire screen. The fireplace itself is simple with a flagstone hearth and a recessed, mirrored shelf above the large rectangular fire box. Other features of this room include 6-8-inch oak flooring, niches (formerly bookshelves) on either side of the door leading to the dining room, wood sheathed gable ends, and organ piping above the northwest balcony.

Although of greater simplicity than the first story, the second story of the Bland House continues many of the same design characteristics. Asymmetrically arranged around a small hall northwest of the stair tower are a collection of two bedrooms, a bedroom/sitting room, two bathrooms and several closets and storage rooms. The three major rooms of the second floor have plastered walls and ceilings and hewn ceiling joists. Heavy wooden doors are the rule, and several passage openings have hewn timber, segmental arched lintels. Of particular interest in the northeast bedroom are the two circular windows which flank the entrance to the living room balcony. Opening to the exterior, these porthole-like windows were fabricated from oil drums. Another interesting feature of the second floor is the storage area which is entered from the southwest side of the southwest (master) bedroom. Located in the attic space above the first floor sitting room, it forms an enormous clothes closet.

During the late 1950s or 1960s, the Robert Odoms converted the attic of the Bland House to two bedrooms and a bathroom. Under present ownership however, this space is again used for storage.

Basement rooms are found beneath much of the Bland House. Beneath the living room is a large playroom with stone walls, heavy wood ceiling joists with pine paneling between the joists, and heavy wood doors with wrought iron strap hinges. On the southwest wall is a large fireplace with segmental arched firebox and large rock mantel shelf.

Northwest of the playroom is the large, unfinished cellar, floored partly in concrete and partly in dirt. An unusual feature of the structural system of the Bland
House is visible in this area. Large granite piers support railroad tracks (two per pier), which in turn support heavy wood joists. Beneath the hall where there is a flagstone floor, the tracks -- set two feet on center -- hold flat rocks which serve as the base for a concrete slab, into which the flagstones are set. Extending northwest from the north corner of the cellar was a garage of stone construction, now used for storage.

Present owners Dr. and Mrs. Richard E. Nash have made two additions -- a guest house and a professional catering kitchen -- to the Bland House since their purchase of the property in 1971. Like Frank Bland, they have done a majority of the work themselves, using some of his same building techniques and much the same materials -- stone from the Rockford area of Surry County for the walls and slate for the roofs. The guest house was built first as a free-standing structure. It has a steep gable roof and large iron round-arched windows designed from those at Graylyn (the Bowman Gray estate) and custom made. The interior of the guest house, with its hewn rafters, stone fireplace, spiral stair and decorative ironwork railing, reflects the influence of the interior of the original house. Beneath the guest house is a garage, now used as a work space. Built secondarily, the catering kitchen is a smaller structure with mansard-influenced roof which connects the guest house with the main house. Both the guest house and the kitchen use a combination of stained wood weatherboarding and stone on the sides and rear which are not usually seen. The Nashes are currently adding a stone wine cellar to the rear of the kitchen.

The Bland House, fronted by a flagstone terrace, overlooks a ravine on a beautiful wooded lot. Still surrounded by approximately two acres, the house originally had around three acres, facing on Buena Vista Road. The driveway entered the property from Buena Vista Road, crossed a small stone bridge and continued around to exit on Virginia Road. During the 1950s several lots were created from the land fronting on Buena Vista, so that while the little bridge remains (but not on the property), the drive now enters and exits from Virginia Road. An ironwork fence built by Bland and stone gateway remain on the Virginia Road side of the property. Even though a row of houses now separates the front of the Bland House from Buena Vista Road, enough wooded land remains with the house to provide it with an attractive setting that has a surprisingly isolated appearance. Originally the site also contained a small water wheel by a spring, a stone swimming pool nearby and a stone bath house, all down the ravine from the east corner of the house. The bath house and water wheel are gone, but the pool remains in an overgrown state. Behind the house is a stone wood shed with slate roof, now used as the pump house for the new pool.

The Nashes have made several changes to the site, but all are compatible and done in what appears to be the spirit of the original site. Nash has built several low stone walls around the house and lining the upper side of the drive, which has been extended in front of and down hill from the house to a low, four-bay corrugated metal garage painted dark brown with a flat roof near the east corner of the property. Northwest of the house, within the area bordered by the rear of the house and the kitchen/guest house wing, the Nashes have added a kidney-shaped swimming pool. It is surrounded by a large patio of curvilinear form, which is bordered by a low stone retaining wall and a variety of plantings. At the westernmost point of the patio is a circular stone structure built by Nash, with round-arched openings and crenellated top. This tower-like gazebo houses a barbecue grill.
8. Significance

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Specific dates ca. 1936-37

Builder/Architect Joseph Franklin Bland

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Joseph Franklin Bland House, built in the early 1930s in the fashionable Buena Vista neighborhood of Winston-Salem, is an impressive example of the Chateauesque style. Incorporating numerous unusual features from an engineering and design standpoint, the stone house was planned and actually constructed in large part by its original owner. Frank Bland (1888-1940) was an accomplished local musician who served the community at different times as the organist of the large First Presbyterian and St. Paul's Episcopal churches. Bland not only played, but repaired, built and sold musical instruments. He established the Bland Piano Company around 1913. Still in operation under his widow, Mozelle Dugan Bland, it is the oldest remaining music company in Winston-Salem. Subsequent owners of the Bland House, commonly known as "The Castle", have all held significant positions in the community.

Criteria Assessment:

B. The Joseph Franklin Bland House is associated with the life of Frank Bland (1888-1940), an accomplished musician in Winston-Salem who served at different times as the organist of First Presbyterian and St. Paul's Episcopal churches and established the Bland Piano Company, now the oldest music company operating in the city.

C. The Joseph Franklin Bland House is a distinctive representative of the Chateauesque style, built in Winston-Salem in the early 1930s. Planned and largely constructed by its owner, the two-story stone house incorporates many unusual features, including railroad tracks used in the support system, oil drums used for porthole windows, steel pipe used for stair railing, and heavy iron bolts hand-fashioned into door hardware. Subsequent additions have continued the use of many of the same building techniques and materials.
Joseph Franklin (Frank) Bland was born in Cleveland County on December 4, 1888 to J. F. and Elizabeth Burrus Bland. For a brief period the family moved to Asheville, but in 1896 they moved to Elizabeth Burrus Bland's hometown of Rockford in Surry County. Like the Burrus family, the Blands became a prominent family in the community. Frank's father, J. F. Bland, was an accomplished musician and sold pianos and organs throughout the county. He instructed his children in music, and three of the five, including Frank, pursued careers in this field. Although Frank Bland spent only a portion of his youth in Rockford, he apparently developed a strong affection for the place and its people, for he retained close ties with the community throughout his life.

At the age of fourteen, Frank Bland went to Salem to study music at Salem College. At the same time, he became the organist at First Presbyterian Church. After several years he moved to Washington, D.C., where he continued his study.

Upon returning to Winston-Salem, Bland became the organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. He was an accomplished musician who could repair and build musical instruments as well as play them. In the years that followed, Bland became greatly admired by both the music community and the community-at-large for his abilities.

Around 1913 Bland established the Bland Piano Company at 212 North Main Street. By 1923 the business had moved to 220 N. Main, the former location of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company. Bland Piano Company remained at that location until 1971, when the site was needed for the construction of the Forsyth County Hall of Justice. By 1937 Bland had expanded his business with the purchase of Bowey Piano Company, a large music company which had been established in Winston in 1894. Still in operation, the Bland Piano Company is now distinguished as the oldest music company in Winston-Salem.

In addition to Bland's primary commitment to music, he was a member of numerous organizations in Winston-Salem, including the Rotary Club, Elks, Masons, Shriners, and Knight Templars, making a special contribution to these groups by playing the piano at their meetings and ceremonies.

Throughout his life in Winston-Salem, Bland retained an interest in and a concern for his boyhood home of Rockford and helped the community in a variety of ways. When the Baptists in Rockford, of whose congregation Bland remained a lifelong member, built a new church, he donated and installed a pipe organ which he had earlier replaced at Ardmore Methodist Church in Winston-Salem. Of greater significance was Bland's erection of a low-water toll bridge at Rockford. For years a bridge across the Yadkin River connecting Surry and Yadkin Counties had been sought by Rockford citizens without success, and a ferry was the only means of crossing the river at this location. Around 1930 Bland financed a bridge of two spans -- one connecting the Yadkin side with an island in the river, and the other connecting the island with the Surry side. He also built a stone house on the island which served as living quarters for the caretaker–toll collector. In appreciation of Bland and his bridge, the town celebrated with a picnic lunch on the island on July 4, 1930. Soon thereafter, however, a flood damaged the island house and warped the bridge, but repairs were made and the bridge was re-opened. It continued in service until the disastrous flood of 1940, when the bridge was so badly damaged...
damaged that it could not be repaired. In the meantime, Bland had died, and the bridge was not rebuilt. 13 (At present, a low-water bridge of single span, which was built in the 1960s, crosses the Yadkin River at Rockford.)

In 1917 Frank Bland married Mozelle Dugan at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem. With a background similar to Bland's in many ways, Mozelle Dugan was part of a family in which art, music, school, and church were stressed. As a child, Mozelle went with her family by train to New York and Atlanta to attend the opera. Frank and Mozelle Bland lived for years above their music store on Main Street. They had only one child, Laura Elizabeth Bland, who is now a professor at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory. 14

During the last ten years of his life, Frank Bland became nearly obsessed with the planning and building of his stone castle-like house. According to his widow and a close friend, its design was influenced by a picture Bland had of a German castle as well as by other houses that he had seen while driving around. 15 Between May and September of 1930, Bland purchased two parcels of land from Lucy B. Patterson and Janet Crump Gray for the site of his house. 16 Bland's chosen property consisted of several acres of beautiful wooded land with a ravine and spring located in Buena Vista. Developed in stages between the early 1920s and the 1950s as part of the westward residential expansion of Winston-Salem, Buena Vista quickly became the place to live and is still considered one of the most fashionable neighborhoods in town.

Even before Bland had purchased the site for his house, he had begun to collect materials for its construction. While driving to Roaring Gap one day, he found the type of stone he wanted to use. Thereafter, he and a black employee of Bland Piano Company made numerous trips in his truck to gather the stones and transport them to the building site. Hewn timbers used as exposed rafters, ceiling joists, and door lintels came from the old Bohannon Grist Mill which had stood on Main Street, serving Salem and early Winston. Railroad tracks, which were cheaper than new steel, were purchased for portions of the structural system. Other unusual materials included iron piping for the stair rail, metal oil drums for porthole windows, and large iron bolts which were fashioned into door hardware. 17

Frank Bland had a reputation for being able to make, build, or do anything with his hands that he wanted to. 18 Before construction began on his house, he built a decorative ironwork fence to line the street sides of his property. 19 This fence remains along Virginia Road.

Bland not only planned his house, but supervised its construction and did much of the work himself. In addition to Bland, workers included at least one employee of the piano company and laborers hired on a daily basis. 20 Bland also built a swimming pool, a bath house, a small water wheel near the spring that fed the pool, and a small stone bridge along the original entrance from Buena Vista Road. 21 The bath house no longer remains and the original pool lies overgrown in the ravine. At the time of Bland's death, a chapel for family worship was being added to the house, but it remained unfinished and was eventually removed. 22
The completion date of the house is uncertain, but the Blands were listed in the city directory at this location for the first time in 1937. Unfortunately, Bland did not have the opportunity to enjoy his creation for long. On the evening of July 6, 1940, after completing work on a pipe organ that he built for his chapel, Bland suffered a heart attack and died. Funeral services were held at the house and later at the Rockford Baptist Church, where Bland was buried next to his parents in the church cemetery.

Upon Bland's death, his widow, Mozelle, and their only child, Laura Elizabeth, inherited the house. They continued to live there until 1948. Mozelle Bland took over the Bland Piano Company business, and though in her eighties, still directs its operation. In addition to her association with the music business, Mozelle Bland has probably been best known for teaching the five-year-olds of St. Paul's Sunday School for over sixty years. She has become famous within the congregation for the tiny pink and white birthday cakes which she has made and presented to the children on the Sundays nearest their birth dates.

There have been five owners of the house since the Blands. On March 30, 1948, Mozelle and Laura Bland sold the property to Julia W. Shoffner, who soon married Charles W. Reynolds. Reynolds was chief engineer at Western Electric. On November 13, 1950, the Reynolds sold the house to Lee C. and Jonnie Lee Hazen. During the Hazen ownership, the land fronting on Buena Vista Road was sold, creating several small house lots. Although this eliminated the Buena Vista Road entrance to the Bland property, the property remains large enough and wooded enough to retain sufficient site integrity. Hazen, who was the manager of J. C. Penney's, and his wife sold the remaining property on September 16, 1955 to Robert Taft Odom, a physician, and his wife, Mary. The Odoms owned the property until June 23, 1969, when they sold it to Dean H. Smith, who was president of Hanes Knit-Wear, and his wife, Virginia. Two years later, on June 26, 1971, the Smiths sold the Bland property to its present owners, Richard E. Nash, a dentist, and his wife, Melva N. Nash, a caterer.

Since 1971 the Nashes have added a catering kitchen, a guest house, a new swimming pool, a landscaped patio with stone gazebo, and low stone walls. In the spirit of the original owner, they have used the same types of building materials and have done much of the work themselves, following Bland's sometimes unusual techniques. As a result, their additions appear as a natural extension to Bland's original concept for the property. While making these compatible additions, the Nashes have also carefully preserved the original house.

Although completed less than fifty years ago, the Bland House possesses exceptional architectural significance. Built during the years of the Great Depression, when most significant construction projects were of a public nature, it features distinctive Chateauesque styling, a clear departure from the more prevalent Colonial and Georgian Revival houses of the period. Frank Bland, the designer, builder, and first owner of the house, displayed his notable talents as a craftsman in the construction and detailing of the handsome house. The high degree of skill with which he executed such features as the spiral staircase, the visible structural system of the stair tower's conical roof, and the living room's magnificent rafter system reveals him as a master in the use of stone,
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National Park Service

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<td>wood, and iron. These factors in particular set the Bland House apart, at a time when most of Winston-Salem's substantial homes were designed by a handful of prominent architects and built by the major contracting firms.</td>
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Footnotes


2. Houck, Rockford, p. 72.

3. Houck, Rockford, p. 72.

4. Houck, Rockford, p. 72; Obituary.

5. Houck, Rockford, p. 72; Obituary.


8. Winston-Salem City Directory, 1923; Pfaff Interview.


10. Weaver, Winston-Salem, p. 51; Winston-Salem City Directory, 1937.

11. Obituary; Weaver, Winston-Salem, p. 21; Interview by Laura A. W. Phillips with Mozelle Bland (Bland's widow), Winston-Salem, September 30, 1983, hereinafter referred to as Bland Interview.


15. Bland Interview; Pfaff Interview. Although several stone houses of Chateauesque or Norman Revival style had been built in Winston-Salem around 1930 -- most notably Graylyn, home of Bowman Gray -- Mozelle Bland was not aware of their specific influence on her husband.

16. Deed Book 326, p. 190, Office of the Register of Deeds, Forsyth County Hall of Justice, Winston-Salem, deed hereinafter referred to by book and page numbers only; Deed Book 455, p. 320.
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<td>22</td>
<td>Pfaff Interview; Bland Interview.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Obituary; Pfaff Interview. Fred Pfaff was with Bland when he died.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>&quot;Bland Services Set at 5 P.M.,&quot; Winston-Salem Journal, July 8, 1940.</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Will Book 79, file 1531, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Forsyth County Hall of Justice, Winston-Salem.</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Bland Interview.</td>
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<td>Deed Book 580, p. 144.</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Deed Book 628, p. 347.</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>Comparison of Deed Book 628, p. 347 and Deed Book 715, p. 244; Bland Interview.</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Winston-Salem City Directory, 1952; Deed Book 715, p. 244; Winston-Salem City Directory, 1956.</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Deed Book 1019, p. 99</td>
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 2.2 acres
Quadrangle name: Winston-Salem West, N.C.
Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification
The nominated property consists of tracts 201 B, 202, 103 B, and 301 on Forsyth County tax map 114, as outlined in red on the accompanying map. It includes the house and the wooded site of 2.2 acres on which it stands.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Laura A. W. Phillips, Consultant
organization: 
street & number: 637 N. Spring Street
date: November 16, 1983
telephone: 919/727-1968
city or town: Winston-Salem
state: North Carolina 27101

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature: William S. Pié

date: January 12, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

Forsyth County Records; Office of the Register of Deeds, Forsyth County Hall of Justice, Winston-Salem (Subgroup: Deeds); Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Forsyth County Hall of Justice, Winston-Salem (Subgroup: Wills).


Winston-Salem Journal, 1940.

Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel, 1940.