city, town

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

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date entered

1. Nan	1e			
historic The	VanLandingham Esta	te		
and/or common				
2. Loca	ation			
street & number	, 2010 The Plaza			not for publication
city, town Cha	arlotte	vicinity of		
state N. C.	cod	e 037 county	Mecklenburg	code 119
3. Clas	sification			
Category district _X building(s) structure site object	Ownership publicX private both Public Acquisition	Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government	museum _X park _X private residence religious scientific
Object	in process being considered N/A	yes: unrestricted X no	industrial military	transportation other:
	being considered N/A	yes: unrestricted	industrial	
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4. Own	being considered N/A Per of Proper and Mrs. George Clif	yes: unrestricted X no	industrial military	
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state

7.	De	sc	rip	ti	on

Condition Check one Check one excellent deteriorated unaltered original site X good ruins altered moved date fair unexposed	$\underline{\underline{\hspace{1cm}}}$ excellent $\underline{\underline{\hspace{1cm}}}$ deteriorated $\underline{\underline{\hspace{1cm}}}$ good $\underline{\hspace{1cm}}$ ruins	unaltered	x original site	•
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ralph VanLandingham residence is an excellently preserved example of an early twentieth century suburban estate. The two-story wood-shingled house is an important local example of the Bungalow style expanded to massive proportions. It is set in four-plus acres of carefully landscaped grounds originally designed by Leigh Colyer, one of the region's earliest landscape architects.

In Charlotte of 1912, at the height of the city's great boom period, Ralph VanLandingham, a well-to-do cotton broker, and his family moved from the older Piedmont Park section of the city to the new suburban development at the end of the East Charlotte trolley line—Chatham Estates. For their house there, Mr. and Mrs. VanLandingham had commissioned the prominent local architectural firm of Hook and Rogers to design a residence in the latest style. The designers embraced a popular idiom of the day—the Bungalow—for the large house on its many—acre suburban site in Chatham Estates, today part of the Plaza—Midwood neighborhood.

The Bungalow was part of a widespread revolt in the 1900s against the fussiness of earlier Victorian styles. Originating from the Bengalese word "bangla", meaning a low house surrounded by porches, the term Bungalow in the United States came to stand for rustic simplicity. The style embodied spreading roofs, dormers, porch-verandas, lightness of construction, shingle-clad outer walls, and stone chimneys.

Having basically a center-hall rectangular plan, the VanLandingham house has projecting wings on both floors which create an asymmetrical exterior appearance. Approaching the front entrance, a circular drive leads to wide steps which rise some three feet to a broad tiled platform. Over this entrance area is a low roofed canopy supported on stone piers at each side and joined at the front by an arched stone lintel. From the entrance platform, wide terraces extend across the full width of the house and turn down each side to form verandas.

Exterior design is severe, even stark, and generally exhibits simple machined woodwork of simple shapes. The house rests solidly on a foundation of random ashlar granite blocks. Wall surfaces are grey uniformly stained cypress shingles laid in alternating wide and narrow bands. Windows are tall double-hung sash units with large single panes in upper and lower sash. Window groupings vary in each bay, reflecting the size and function of the rooms within, rather than any effort to impose symmetry.

Reflecting the wing projections and dormer features, the hipped terra cotta tile roof presents a variety of shapes, and its great mass dominates the house. At the roof overhang, exposed rafter ends are sawn in an undulating pattern to create a bracketed soffit extending out some three feet beyond the wall. There is no crown mold or other elaboration at the cornice. Tall granite chimneys rise where and there above the roof.

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Overlooking the broad, carefully landscaped grounds on the south side is a circular terrace which opens from the interior through glass double doors. Above this terrace is an iron trellis erected to provide support for climbing vines. At this side the double doors are arched, and in one section which connects to the solarium they are surrounded by granite ashlar laid to form a carefully proportioned stone canopy with projecting stone brackets in the arch. On the opposite—north—side of the house the driveway extends to join a service entrance. Here also is a low-roofed canopy supported by granite piers and connected by an arched lintel.

The rear elevation is the handsomest facade of the house. Featuring an arched triple unit window which lights the large dining room, this side also has a pair of carefully proportioned arched, stone-encased doorways from the solarium. On the second story there are wooden frames with copper wire panels enclosing sleeping porches adjoining the two major bedchambers. Also at the rear is a delicate slatted screen concealing a rear service entrance and cellar stair.

The interior finishes are as uniformly simple as the exterior. Walls and ceilings are plastered and have little or no molded trim at the cornice level or floor line. Window and door casings consist of simple rectangular boards with square rabbeted back bands. Flooring throughout is narrow oak strips with the exception of ceramic tile in the bathrooms.

Arched glass doors form the main entrance and open into a small tile-floored vestibule. Beyond this, a second set of doors opens into the wide center hall. Decorative millwork is limited to broad, simply-molded casing surrounding the doorways. Even in this formal space, trim is plain and rectilinear.

From the high-ceilinged center hall four rooms radiate to the sides and rear. At the front right, double sliding pocket doors open onto a large rectangular living room. Centered on the long interior wall is a fireplace fitted with an iron coalburning grate and an elaborately carved black marble mantel. Flanking this fireplace are double doors with multiple glazed lights, opening to a solarium at the rear. The solarium also has a chimney backing the living room fireplace. It is of stone to give a feeling of rustic simplicity, which is picked up in the room's other appointments. A continuous arrangement of glass arched windows and glass doors on two sides visually expands the room into the outdoors. There is a brick herringbone pattern floor, stained cypress shingles carried in from the exterior walls, and a painted board-and-batten ceiling.

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From the hall, a second pair of sliding doors to the left of the main entrance opens onto a book-lined study. A small fireplace, centered in the exterior wall opposite the doors, has a fine carved imported marble mantel like that in the living room.

At the rear of the long central hall, high arched glass doors lead into a dining room of banquet proportions. Huge windows to the east and south overlook the gardens located in that quadrant of the grounds. Next to the dining room is the food preparation area, which does not open directly off the center hall. A door from the dining room leads through the pantry into the kitchen. When the house was built, this area would have been the exclusive province of the servants.

The wide stairs to the second floor are nestled in an alcove at the left rear of the center hall, which also contains a side entrance. The stairs, rising some fourteen feet in two runs, have delicate square turned balusters and a heavy, plain rectangular newel post.

On the second floor is a relatively large central hall surrounded by four spacious bedchambers, each ensuite with its own bath. The rooms vary in size and the three largest have adjoining sleeping porches, for warm weather sleeping. The porches, a popular feature in homes of this period, have wooden floors covered with canvas.

The grounds are as significant a part of the VanLandingham Estate as the house. They are believed to be the creation of Leigh Colyer, a pioneer Charlotte landscape architect. After a period of neglect, they have been updated during the 1960s and 1970s under the direction of Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner, horticulturalist with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The grounds are the product of years of work, and have inevitably changed with the life cycles of the plantings and the wishes of successive owners. Early photos in the VanLandingham papers in the UNC-C archives indicate, however, that the grounds still adhere closely to the arrangement first set forth by Leigh Colyer.

The house is set back from The Plaza and Belvedere Avenue, the main streeets, near the center of the site. On three quarters of the land, along the street sides of the estate, Colyer used an informal, asymmetrical arrangement of plantings. provided a naturalistic setting for the rustic architecture of the house. A canopy of random spaced oaks shades the property, interspersed with some hemlocks and spruce, and one deodar cedar. A low stone wall with gate posts at the drive entrances aruns along the street and is lined with japanese holly. In the 1960s Ralph VanLandingham brought rocks and earth from his summer home at Linville in the North Carolina mountains and created informal rock-ringed beds under the trees, planted with azaleas from the mountains. At the rear of the grounds is a large two-story garage whose rectangular shape complements the main house.

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On the rear quadrant of the site, southeast of the house and shielded from the major streets, is a sequence of more formal areas. Adjacent to the living room and solarium of the house is a lawn, probably used for parties. At one side is a curving walk lined by tall privet hedges. This leads to a series of rectangular flower gardens that step down to what now appears to be a small amphitheatre at the southeast edge of the grounds. According to Dr. Hechenbleikner this originally contained a swimming pool. Behind the formal areas, above the amphitheatre, are extensive plantings of rhododendron. These were begun with some rare hybrids in the 1930s or 1940s and greatly expanded by Dr. Hechenbleikner and Ralph VanLandingham during the 1960s and 1970s. Inspired by the work on the estate, VanLandingham made donations to UNC-C that allowed establishment of the six-acre VanLandingham Glen and Susie Harwood Garden that are now an integral part of the college campus.

8. Significance

1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications	community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement		 science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation
Contract of		invention	1	other (specify)
		(Char	loc Christian) Hood	and Passas amphis

Specific dates 1913-1914

Builder/Architect (Charles Christian) - Hood and Rogers, architect Leigh Colyer, landscape architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The VanLandingham Estate, consisting of a large Bungalow-influenced house set in a four-plus acre landscaped park, is one of Charlotte's most important early twentieth century suburban estates and one of the few which were developed and survive outside of Myers Park—Charlotte's premier suburb of the early twentieth century. The house was designed by the locally prominent firm of Hook and Rogers in 1913 and completed by 1914. Leigh Colyer designed the grounds of the estate with formal and informal areas. Perhaps the most significant component of the gardens are the plantings of rhododendron initiated in the 1930s or 1940s. The VanLandingham family were prominent in Charlotte from their removal here in 1907 until their deaths. Ralph VanLandingham was a prominent cotton broker and civic leader and was particularly active in the life of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Charlotte, and in All Souls Episcopal Church at Linville where he maintained a summer home. Mrs. VanLandingham was also a prominent civic leader and President of the Board of St. Peter's Hospital where she died in 1937. The house was the residence of their son until his death in 1970.

Criteria Assessment:

- B. The VanLandingham House is associated with the lives of members of the VanLandingham family who were prominent in business, civic, and social circles in Charlotte from 1907 when Ralph (1875-1959) and Susie Harwood VanLandingham (1860s-1937) moved to Charlotte until the death of their son Ralph, Jr. in 1970. The house is also associated with the careers of the firm Hook and Rogers who designed the house and Leigh Colyer who landscaped its grounds.
- C. The VanLandingham House, an unusually distinctive stone and frame house reflecting the influence of the California bungalow, is a handsome example of an early 20th century country house surviving intact in grounds of unusual quality and character.

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On March 13, 1913, Susie Harwood VanLandingham, wife of Ralph VanLandingham, purchased lot 6-9, located to the immediate southeast of the intersection of Belvedere Avenue and The Plaza, from Chatham Estates, Inc. Having moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, from Atlanta, Georgia, in 1907, Mr. and Mrs. VanLandingham had initially lived with the former's parents, John Henry VanLandingham and Mary Oates Spratt VanLandingham, at 500 East Avenue or E. Trade Street. Mr. VanLandingham had returned to Charlotte to join a cotton brokerage firm headed by his father which would soon move its offices to the eleventh floor of the Realty Building, now the Independence Building.

From 1909 until 1914 Mr. and Mrs. VanLandingham lived in a house at the intersection of Central Avenue and Piedmont Street. In May 1913 Mrs. VanLandingham secured a loan of \$6000 from the Independence Trust Company for purposes of "erecting a residence" on the lots which she had purchased from Chatham Estates, 6 Inc. The VanLandinghams completed and occupied the house sometime during 1914.

Ralph VanLandingham, born in Charlotte on November 9, 1875, lived in the house on The Plaza until his death on August 3, 1959, although he did spend considerable time at his summer home in Linville, North Carolina. He succeeded in establishing himself as an affluent cotton borker and prominent citizen in the community. He had an extended tenure as senior warden of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. For several years he was treasurer of the Charlotte Country Club. Indeed, his civic activities even extended to Linville, where he served as treasurer and senior warden of All Saints Episcopal Church.

Susie Harwood VanLandingham, born in the late 1860s in St. Paul, Minnesota was an outstanding human being. In 1881 she moved with her family to Volusia County, Florida where her father, Norman B. Harwood, became a high official with the Florida East Coast Railroad then being developed by Henry Morrison Flagler. After her father's death in 1885, she moved with her mother, Susan Drury Deane Harwood, to Atlanta. It was there that she met Ralph VanLandingham and became his wife on September 17, 1901. In the intervening years, however, Susie demonstrated that she had acquired considerable executive ability. She was one of the founders of the Atlanta Art Association. She was an officer of the Atlanta Y.W.C.A. Even more significantly, she headed the company which built the first fire-proof hotel in the State of Georgia.

Mrs. VanLandingham continued to be active in civic affairs in the years following her arrival in North Carolina. The Charlotte News characterized her as "a woman of rare gifts and a person of unmistakable quality." "Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Mrs. Ralph VanLandingham," the newspaper asserted,

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"was the range and depth of her interests." She served as regent of the Halifax Convention Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. She was chairman of the North Carolina Board of Approved Schools. She was president of the Board of St. Peter's Hospital, where she financed the building of the emergency waiting room in honor of her mother. Probably her most notable contribution, for which she received a personal commendation from President Woodrow Wilson, was her supervision of the Red Cross Canteen at Camp Greene during World War I. Finally, Mrs. VanLandingham provided generous support to Crossnore Industrial School for Mountain Children near Linville, North Carolina. She died at St. Peter's Hospital on September 26, 1937.

Mr. and Mrs. VanLandingham had two children: Susan Deane VanLandingham, a nationally known golf star as a young woman, who married Norman Cordon, Jr., and resided in Chapel Hill; and Ralph VanLandingham, Jr., a prominent stock broker and bachelor who resided at the house on The Plaza. The children were twins, born in Atlanta in 1902. Susan VanLandingham Cordon died in 1964, leaving her interest in the house in Charlotte to her daughter, Susie Harwood Cordon.

Ralph VanLandingham, Jr. died on March 30, 1970. Securing sole ownership of the property at 2010 The Plaza on December 27, 1966, he established an arrangement by which the University of North Carolina at Charlotte would obtain the property upon his death. That Mr. VanLandingham decided upon this course of action is not surprising. He had demonstrated his support for UNC-C by establishing the VanLandingham Glen on the campus. This garden received plantings from the lavish rhododendron collection which Mr. VanLandingham had developed in honor of his father on the grounds surrounding the house. Further documenting Mr. VanLandingham's commitment to education was the fact that he provided scholarships for several students who attended colleges and universities in North Carolina. In November 1978 the State of North Carolina sold the VanLandingham Estate to Mr. and Mrs. George Clifton Cline who moved into the house in December and continue to maintain their home here.

Paul Chatham began development of Chatham Estates early in the 1910s, creating the core of the present Plaza Midwood neighborhood. He bought a large parcel of land straddling "Poorhouse Cartway" and hired local landscape architect Leigh Colyer to provide a street design. Colyer recast "Poorhouse Cartway" as a grand straight boulevard renamed The Plaza. Chatham's own streetcar line ran down the green median in the center of the street. Parallel to The Plaza were humbler streets, what are now Thomas Avenue to the west and Nassau Boulevard to the east. This pattern of a grand boulevard and modest sidestreets in a single suburban development was common in early Charlotte subdivisions.

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Soon after the neighborhood was opened a handful of grand houses were erected along The Plaza. These included the VanLandingham estate, the Biship Kilgo residence nearby at 2100, and the transplanted Victorian residence of J. W. Miller at 1600, today known as Victoria. Lots sold very slowly, however, and a decade after its development the neighborhood still consisted largely of vacant land. In the early 1920s most of the small lots along Thomas Avenue were filled with compact Bungalows. Sometime in the mid-decade Chatham evidently abandoned his dream of imposing residences lining The Plaza, and he sold the land off for modest houses. Today the VanLandingham estate stands out as the boulevard's finest residence.

The designer of the VanLandingham estate grounds and the Chatham Estates subdivision plan was Charlotte landscape architect Leigh Colyer (18 -1953). Born and schooled in England, he migrated to the United States in the 1890s with his parents and lived briefly in Ahseville and Statesville, North Carolina, before settling permanently in Charlotte. Beginning his practice around the turn of the century, he is believed to have been the city's first full-time landscape architect and possibly the first in North Carolina. He designed residential and institutional grounds, cemeteries, and subdivisions throughout North Carolina during his lifetime. His son, Leigh Colyer, Jr., of Charlotte, remembers that his father laid out much of the city's Elmwood Cemetery, the circular rose garden in Independence Park, the grounds of the North Carolina Sanitorium, and the estates of the state's prominent Efird and Lineberger families. Researchers in Shelby, North Carolina, have found, in addition, that Colyer designed that city's Belvedere suburb.

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FOOTNOTES

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- Mecklenburg County Deed Book 305, pp. 485-486.
- ² Charlotte Observer, September 27, 1937, Charlotte City Directory: 1908, p. 325.
- 3 Charlotte Observer, February 27, 1915, August 4, 1959.
- Charlotte City Directory: 1909; p. 339; Charlotte City Directory: 1914, p. 487.
- 5 Mecklenburg County Deed Book 315, p. 560.
- ⁶ For an early photograph of the VanLandingham Estate, see <u>Charlotte Observer</u>, January 4, 1914.
- 7 Charlotte Observer, August 4, 1959.
- ⁸ Charlotte News, September 27, 1937; Charlotte Observer, September 27, 1937.
- 9 Charlotte News, September 27, 1937.
- 10 Charlotte Observer, September 27, 1937.
- Gravestones in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte, N. C; Mecklenburg County Will Book 27, p. 428; Charlotte Observer, April 1, 1970.
- 12 Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2818, p. 19; Charlotte Observer, April 1, 1970.
- Butler and Spratt, Civil Engineers, <u>Map of Charlotte Township</u>, <u>Mecklenburg</u> County, N.C. From Recent Surveys...1892.
- Leigh Colyer, Jr., Wedgewood Drive, Charlotte. Telephone interview with Thomas Hanchett, September 1, 1982.
- $\frac{15}{\text{Lbid}}$. There are known surviving drawings of Colyer's work for the VanLandinghams.
- $\frac{16}{1}$ Loid. Colyer's obituary in the Charlotte Observer does not mention his education or $\frac{1}{1}$ specific projects.
- Tim and Genevieve Keller, Shelby Historic Survey. Interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, August, 1982. According to the Kellers, Colyer's skillfully delineated design for the suburb is on file at the Register of Deeds Office in Shelby.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

10. Geographic	al Data		
Acreage of nominated property	.24 acres		
Quadrangle name Charlotte East			Quadrangle scale 1:24000
UTM References			
A 1, 7 5 1, 7 4, 3, 0 3, 8 Zone Easting North	9 8 3 3 5 ing	B Zone Eastin	ng Northing
c		D	
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Verbal boundary description and	J justification		
See attached tax map			
List all states and counties for p	roperties overla	apping state or county t	ooundaries
state N/A	code	county N/A	code
state	code	county	code
11. Form Prepai	ed By		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Architectural description		e and Thomas Hanche	tt: Historical research by
			nt by Dayvd Foard Hood (staff)
organization D	1 77 6	date	
organization Division of Archi	ves and Histo	ory date 3	July 14, 1983
street & number 109 E. Jones	St.	telephone	919 733-6545
city or town Raleigh		state N	Jorth Carolina
12. State Histor	ic Prese	rvation Offi	cer Certification
The evaluated significance of this pro	perty within the st	ate is:	
national	state	X_ local	
As the designated State Historic Pres 665), I hereby nominate this property according to the criteria and procedu State Historic Preservation Officer sig	for inclusion in the res set forth by the	e National Register and cer	
title State Historic Preser	vation Office	r	date July 14, 1983
For NPS use only			
I hereby certify that this property	y is included in the	National Register	
			date
Keeper of the National Register			
Attest:			date
Chief of Registration			

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An Inventory of Building In Mecklenburg County and Charlotte For the Historic Properties Commission.

Charlotte City Directory (1907, P. 434); (1908, p. 325); (1909, p. 339); (1910, p. 359): (1911, p. 404: (1912, p. 420); (1913, p. 425); (1914, p. 487).

<u>Charlotte News</u> (September 27, 1937, p. 4, p. 11); (December 26, 1937, Sec. 2, p. 1, p. 14); (March 31, 1970, p. 5B).

Estate Records of Mecklenburg County (Will Book Y, pp. 443-446, p. 529); (Will Book 27, p. 428).

Records of the Mecklenbrug County Register of Deeds Office (Deed Book 305, p. 485); (Deed Book 305, p. 486); (Deed Book 315, p. 560); (deed Book 335, p. 308); (Deed Book 2818, p. 19).

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax office Parcel Number 09506101

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Charlotte (1911, p. 71); (1929, vol. 2, p. 228).

The Charlotte Observer (February 27, 1915, p. 2); (September 27, 1937, p. 1, p. 3); (December 26, 1937, Sec. 2, p. 1); (August 4, 1959, p. 1B); (April 1, 1970, p. 18A).

Vital Statistics of Mecklenburg County (Death Book 51, p. 391).

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