United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation 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 Benvenue  

and/or common  

2. Location  

street & number 330 Southern Boulevard  

city, town Rocky Mount  

vicinity of X  

congressional district Second  

state North Carolina  

code 037  

county Nash  

code 127  

3. Classification  

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<td>educational</td>
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4. Owner of Property  

name Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Lane  

street & number 330 Southern Boulevard  

city, town Rocky Mount,  

vicinity of  

state North Carolina  

27801  

5. Location of Legal Description  

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Nash County Courthouse  

street & number  

city, town Nashville  

state North Carolina  

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  

Historic and Architectural Resources of  
the Tar-Neuse River Basin  

has this property been determined eligible?  

| yes  | no  |

date 1977  

federal  

state X  

county  

local  

depository for survey records N.C. Division of Archives and History  

Survey and Planning Branch  

city, town Raleigh  

state North Carolina
## 7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on a 125 acre plot just outside Rocky Mount, Benvenue is a handsome example of Victorian architecture incorporating elements of the Second Empire style. Originally built in 1844, the house was expanded and extensively remodeled to its present form in 1889 by Benjamin H. Bunn. The present owners restored the house in 1967 with the help of Tarboro craftsman, Merkle Pulley.

A large, two-and-a-half story, three-by-three bay frame house set on a raised brick foundation, Benvenue follows a modified T-plan with a one-story ell and a modern rear addition. Edged with ornate castiron cresting, a steep mansard roof with imbricated and floral patterned slate tiles covers the house and is repeated on a smaller scale over the one-story, two-bay front porch and bay windows which are also decorated with elaborate sawnwork and turned moldings. Excepting the bays on the front (south) and side (east) elevations, the window treatment and placement are symmetrical with double windows set in simple frames with vernacular keystones and cornerblocks and flanked by single leaf blinds. The cupola which rises between the molded chimney caps was added during the recent restoration.

The downstairs interior follows a center-hall plan with two rooms (a parlor, and bedroom) opening off to the east, and another parlor, library, and dining room opening to the west. The hallway is divided by two plain segmental arches with a straight close-string stair centered between them on the eastern wall. The front-to-back stair has an elaborately carved walnut newel post and finial, heavily molded handrail, and turned balusters. The wall treatment and finish include a vertically sheathed and reeded dado, simply molded chairrail, door surrounds with roundel cornerblocks and reeded reveals, plaster wall, and a molded cornice. The two southern rooms are similar in design with plastered walls, molded baseboard, and picture rail in the southwest room. The bay alcoves are framed by plain segmental arches and adorned with louvered shutters and reeded Victorian window surrounds.

Traces of the original 1844 core are evident in the floorboards and ceiling of the library, bedroom and the two rooms directly above them. Victorian embellishments in the library include glass-doored bookcases flanking an ornate fireplace with a richly detailed slate mantel and an iron fire closure depicting a forest scene. Other downstairs mantels are also of slate with incised and marbleized decoration.

The highlight of the interior is the dining room where the wainscoting, mantel treatment, and a coffered and sheathed ceiling form a striking combination. The ceiling is divided into sixteen squares by heavily molded ribs with projecting blocks and pendent bosses. The reeding within each of the sixteen squares alternates diagonally with neighboring squares.

The second floor's finish is consistent with that of the first. Two pairs of bedrooms are separated by a wainscoted hallway divided by a plain segmental arch. Modest slate mantels with marbleized decorations remain as do some of the original bathroom fixtures. The half-story is unfinished and divided into four unequal rooms. A stair to the cupola replaced the ladder which previously provided access to the roof.

Benvenue stands in the foreground of a cluster of outbuildings corresponding in age to both the original 1844 structure and the 1889 remodeling. The most significant structures are a frame kitchen, dovetailed log rootcellar, frame dairyhouse, smokehouses, commissary, a restored greenhouse, springhouse, and a one-room schoolhouse formerly used by two of Benjamin H. Bunn's daughters to teach school. Traces of the formal gardens to the west of the house remain, along with some of the plantings introduced by Benjamin H. Bunn.

A stable and pigeon house were dismantled by the present owners because of their poor condition, and a one-story office building was erected on the site of the stable.
Outbuildings: Numbers correspond to those on attached plat map.

1. Kitchen: 9-over-9 sash; rough mantel with pilasters.
2. Roothouse: crude dove-tailed notches.
5. Formal garden: rectangular in plan. Originally had brick walks and an iron arch to entrance. Badly overgrown. Some of plantings include Ginkgo trees, Sweet Betsy; crepe myrtle; magnolias, four boxwood, Breath of Spring and assorted wildflowers.
6. Smokehouse: smaller than #3; made of cypress weatherboards, overhanging gable roof; sand-clay floor. Brick foundation is a replacement.
7. Old house (ca. 1830?) is one room, exposed floor joists. High plain mantel with molded entablature; pulvinated frieze; enclosed stairway with a plain rectangular newel. Plain chair rail.
8. School: 1 room; 9-over-9 sash; weatherboards; louvered shutters; lintels, squared sills, flat-panel door. Mantel same as in kitchen. Chimney is single-shouldered; stepped.
9. Greenhouse: Cypress frame original; glass replaced; stuccoed brick.
10. Dairyhouse: "Fancy" mantel with crude ionic entablature--columns, egg and dart cornice and beads.
Located on the outskirts of Rocky Mount, Benvenue is one of Nash County's most impressive late nineteenth century mansions. Built in 1844 by Redmond Bunn, a wealthy Nash County planter, the house was remodeled and expanded to its present form in 1889 by his son, Benjamin Bunn. A handsome example of Victorian architecture which incorporates elements of the Second Empire style, the house served as a center for social and political events in Nash County. In its present form, Benvenue reflects the prosperity of the Bunns, a family active in Nash County politics, business, and agriculture.

Criteria Assessment:

B. Associated with Redmond Bunn (1806-1883), a wealthy Nash County planter and businessman; and with Benjamin Bunn (1844-1907) one of eastern North Carolina's most important political figures.

C. Built in 1844 and extensively remodeled as a Victorian mansion in 1889, Benvenue is an excellent example of changing architectural styles and tastes within one generation and reflects the increased size and wealth of the Bunn family as it moved from planter status to a more diversified role in politics, business, and agriculture.

D. Benvenue is likely to yield information about changing lifestyles in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.
Benvenue is one of Nash County's most impressive nineteenth century mansions. Located on the outskirts of Rocky Mount, the house was built in 1844 by Redmond Bunn. It was greatly expanded in the late 1880s by his son Benjamin H. Bunn, who gave the house its name at that time. For most of its existence Benvenue has been associated with the Bunn family, one of Nash County's most influential families.

Redmond Bunn was born in 1806, the only son of William Bunn, who died in 1810. Redmond was born in a house his father built ca. 1800. It still stands, located on the Benvenue property.

The family was a distinguished one locally. Redmond Bunn's grandfather Captain Benjamin Bunn was a Revolutionary War militia captain and one of Nash County's largest land owners, with holdings in excess of 2,500 acres. Other family members served in both houses of the General Assembly, and as justice of the peace and as Nash County Constable in the eighteenth century. Redmond Bunn's uncle, Bennett Bunn, was among the more prominent members of the planter class around Rocky Mount, and was the builder of "Stonewall" an impressive mansion that was Nash County's first brick house. After the death of Redmond Bunn's father, William Bunn, his mother, Druscilla Bunn married William Dortch and had several more children. One of Redmond Bunn's half-brothers, William T. Dortch, was a prominent political figure, who was speaker of the North Carolina House before the Civil War, a Confederate senator during the war, and a North Carolina senator after the war. He was also one of the state's most prestigious lawyers.

Redmond Bunn married Mary Hickman Bryan on March 12, 1832. They had five children, William Henry, born 1833, Elizabeth Druscilla, born 1834, Mary Redmun, born 1839, Elias, born 1841, and Benjamin Hickman Bunn, born in 1844. Redmond was a merchant, postmaster, and planter. He and his uncle Bennett were in business together, associated with the Battle Milling operation, one of the state's first successful textile mills. In the 1840s he was in business with Benjamin F. Knight. They operated a general merchandise store at Rocky Mount under the name of Bunn & Knight. Bunn was a postmaster for a time.

Antebellum Nash County was one of North Carolina's most prosperous agricultural counties. Large cotton plantations dominated the economy of the area. Bunn's 1860 holdings of 412 acres and 19 slaves were impressive enough to make him a member of Nash's planter class, although he was by no means in the wealthy upper strata. His 1860 farm was valued at $2,830. One observer writes, "The Nash planter of this period... was highly literate, subscribed to newspapers and periodicals, hired tutors for his small children, sent his older ones to nearby academies, and then to Wake Forest or the University of North Carolina." Bunn fit this description perfectly. He had a large library, saw to it that his sons were well educated, and, in the words of a contemporary, was "the embodiment of gentle courtesy."

All three of Redmond Bunn's sons fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Two were killed in the war, with only Benjamin surviving.

Benjamin Bunn was educated at private schools, but was unable to matriculate at a university, as his schooling was interrupted by the war. After the war Bunn read law under his uncle William Dortch and in 1866 was licensed to practice law in Nash County. The following year he was licensed to practice law before Superior Court. He would practice law for forty years.
After the Civil War Redmond Bunn continued to operate his farm, which was valued at $1,236 in 1870. In 1880, at the age of 74, he served as enumerator for his district in the Tenth United States Census. He died in 1883, leaving his property to his son Benjamin. By this time Benjamin had become, in the words of Josephus Daniels, "a brilliant lawyer," and was one of eastern North Carolina's most important political figures.

Benjamin Bunn began his political career in 1867, at the age of 23, when he was elected first mayor of the newly incorporated city of Rocky Mount. Bunn was a member of the 1875 Constitutional Convention and in 1880 was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. In 1882 he was elected to the state legislature, and was named chairman of the joint committee on the code. In 1884 he was a Democratic elector for the Cleveland ticket. In 1886 he ran for the United States Congress, but was defeated. He was elected in 1888 and re-elected in 1890 and 1892. He received some fame for a speech in Congress on the Federal elections bill. Bunn did not seek re-election in 1894. He returned to Rocky Mount and served as United States Postmaster from 1895 until 1897 and then returned to private law practice. He practiced until his death in 1907 and "it is conceded that his practice at the time of his death was one of the largest, most representative and most lucrative of any North Carolina practitioner, and that in all essentials of his profession the state has never possibly known his superior."

Bunn married Harriet A. Philips on November 7, 1871, at her home in Mount Moriah. Her father, James Philips was a prominent physician. Benjamin and Harriet Bunn had nine children, all born at Benvenue. The large family required enlargement of the house in the late 1880s. The children were Mary, born in 1873; Hattie, 1875; James, 1877; Bessie, 1879; Annie Lee, 1883; Redmond, 1885; Benjamin, 1887; Laura, 1891; and Catherine, 1894. Redmond, named after his grandfather, was expected to follow his father in the legal profession, but died at age 16. James Bunn, who had been trained as a chemist went back to school to study law. He later became a partner in his father's law firm (along with F. S. Spruill) and succeeded his father as county attorney in 1907, a position he held for many years. Benjamin went into business, Hattie was a school teacher, and Bessie was politically active in the area for many years. For much of the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century Benvenue was a social center for Nash County. A social highlight of the house's history is most certainly the 1893 wedding of Mary Bunn and Dr. George Wimberly. The 9 P.M. candlelight wedding was viewed by over two hundred guests who "arrived by horse and carriage or train and were overnight visitors at the Bunn home." The hallway was decorated in bamboo vines and palms, while "fresh flowers for the home required a whole railroad car and were shipped compliments of the Botanical Gardens of Washington, D.D." The Rocky Mount Argonaut lauded the wedding as "undoubtedly one of the grandest affairs which has taken place in Eastern Carolina since the war."
Benjamin Bunn died on August 25, 1907. The Raleigh News and Observer wrote that he "leaves an honored name to his children and a record of patriotic service to his State." His wife survived him until 1929. At her death the property was divided among her children. The last Bunn to live at Benvenue was Hattie Bunn, who never married, and died in 1963. The Bunns remained prominent in the area, and Benvenue retained its status as one of Nash County's social and political centers. In 1965 Hattie Bunn's heirs sold the property to Royal Shannonhouse. In 1969 it was purchased by Ralph Harrison Lane, Sr. The house was restored in the early 1970s by Tarboro carpenter-craftsman Merkle Pulley. In addition to Benvenue and the earlier one-room house, the property contains various outbuildings, including a kitchen, several smokehouses, a commissary that may have been Redmun Bunn's post office, and a one-room schoolhouse at which Miss Hattie Bunn taught. The small community of Benvenue which surrounds the property took its name from the Bunn property, as did the Benvenue Country Club, whose 1922 clubhouse was built on property previously owned by Benjamin Bunn.

Benvenue has a rich and varied history. Its long association with the Bunn family, and its historical connections with Stonewall and the William Dortch House, both of which are on the National Register of Historic Places, make it one of Nash County's most important historic homes.

The structure of course is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archeological record. Therefore, archeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.
FOOTNOTES

1 Benvenue was named for a Scottish mountain Ben Venue.


3 Moye, "Stonewall," 5; Nash County Historical Notes: A Bicentennial Tribute (Rocky Mount: Nash County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 53, hereinafter cited as Nash County Historical Notes.


7 Moye, "Stonewall," 5-6. Genealogical Notes supplied by Joseph Watson, copy in files of Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, hereinafter cited as "Genealogical Notes"; Nash County Historical Notes, 85, 263.

8 Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Nash County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Slave Schedule.

9 Helen R. Watson in Nash County Historical Notes, 65.

10 Battle, "Benvenue."

11 North Carolina Biography, VI, 322; Ashe, Biographical History of North Carolina, IV, 62-67.

12 Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Nash County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule.

13 Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Nash County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule.

14 "Genealogical Notes."

15 Josephus Daniels, Tar Heel Editor (Raleigh Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 333.

Barringer, Rocky Mount, 13.

Barringer, Rocky Mount, 33. This volume contains a picture of the wedding dress.

Rocky Mount Argonaut, November 16, 1893. This article is reprinted in both Battle, "Benvenue," and Nash County Historical Notes, 179.

Bunn left the property to his wife in Nash County Will Book 6, p. 399. His wife's will was Nash County Will Book 9, p. 390.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Battle, Dr. Margaret. "Benvenue, Now Restored, Gave Its Name and Family to a Growing Rocky Mount." Rocky Mount Telegram, February 6, 1972.


Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Nineteenth Century. Madison, Wisconsin: Brant and Fuller, 2 volumes, 1892.


Genealogical Notes on the Bunn family supplied by Joseph Watson. Copy in files of Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Moye, William J. "Stonewall." Research report in files of Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Nash County Historical Notes: A Bicentennial Tribute. Rocky Mount: Nash County Bicentennial Commission.


News and Observer (Raleigh). August 27, 1907.


9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 11.6 acres

Quadrangle name Rocky Mount

UMT References

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| B 18 | Lat.77°59'.37" | Long. 35°58'.51"
| C 18 | Lat.77°59'.35" | Long. 35°58'.41"
| D 18 | Lat.77°59'.41" | Long. 35°58'.41"

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

Verbally boundary description and justification

Benvenue is located at the end of Southern Boulevard and Bunn Avenue and includes approximately eleven acres that contain the house and immediate outbuildings of an earlier and much larger track of land. These are shown on the attached plat of "Benvenue."

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

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11. Form Prepared By

Architectural description: Terrell Armistead Crow, Consultant

Historical Statement: Jim Sumner, Researcher

Survey and Planning Branch Archaeology and Historic Preservation

N.C. Division of Archives and History

109 E. Jones Street (919) 733-6545

12. 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 16, 1980

For HCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register date

Attest: date

Chief of Registration