### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS

**NAME**

HISTORIC Silvermont

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER: East Main Street

CITY, TOWN: Brevard

STATE: North Carolina

**CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<td>SITE</td>
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<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
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<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>YES-RESTRICTED</td>
<td>PRIVATE RESIDENCE</td>
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<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>YES-UNRESTRICTED</td>
<td>RELIGIOUS</td>
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**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME: Transylvania County Board of Commissioner

Leighton W. Martin, Chairman

STREET & NUMBER: County Administration Building

East Main Street

CITY, TOWN: Brevard

STATE: North Carolina 28712

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE: Transylvania County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER: East Main Street

CITY, TOWN: Brevard

STATE: North Carolina 28712

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE: N/A

DATE: 

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY TOWN: 

STATE: 

DETERMINED ELIGIBLE: No
Silvermont, completed in 1917 and one of the most ambitious private residences ever built in the far western corner of North Carolina, is a large, gambrel roof Colonial Revival mansion centered on an eight-and-one-half acre lot on East Main Street in Brevard. Though the landscaping around the house has been disturbed in recent years with the placement of basketball and tennis courts on the grounds as part of Transylvania County’s public recreation facilities, the house has been left essentially unaltered and retains its early twentieth century form, materials, and workmanship.

The brick structure is built on an L plan. The symmetrical five-bay, double pile, two-and-one-half story front block is covered by a broad gambrel roof of slate shingles, punctuated with pairs of interior end chimneys and gabled dormers with arch-headed windows across the lower slope of the gambrel on the front and back. The smaller rear ell is also covered with a gambrel roof, but long shed dormers face the lower slopes of the roof.

Windows vary in size and form depending on their placement, though most are of six-over-one sash. Those of the end walls of the house have brick flat arches with cast stone keys. The three-part attic windows on the end walls, an a three-part window centered midway up the rear elevation, are embellished with arching brick patternwork.

A monumental two-story portico dominates the facade, curving forward from the central bay of the front (east) elevation; it is supported by massive columns with Corinthian capitals. A paneled balustrade carries atop the flat portico roof. Under the portico a one-story porch extends the full width of the facade and continues down the side elevations. This is supported by columns connected by a simple balustrade with molded handrail and square-in-section balusters. A similar balustrade mounts the porch in front of the sheltered balcony under the portico. A porte cochere is attached to the porch on the north elevation. On the south side projects a one-story, flat roof sun room of frame construction with an elliptical plan. Its arch-headed windows are separated by engaged colonnettes.

The wide double-door central entrance is flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a broad elliptical fanlight. A simpler entrance is above and opens onto the second floor balcony.

The main block follows a center hall plan, two rooms deep, and retains its high quality millwork. Paneled wainscot carries through much of the house; doors have one or two vertical panels and are set in post-and-lintel type frames of the period. Mantels are of a typical Colonial Revival character with free-standing pilasters and mirrored overmantels. The finest interior feature is the wide open-string stair in the center hall which rises along the north side of the hall midway to a landing, and then completes the climb in the opposite direction. This stair splays forward at its base; its molded handrail is carried by turned balusters. A three-part Palladian window within an elaborate frame of fluted colonnettes supporting entablatures lights the landing.
The second floor is similarly planned and finished, with rooms across the front and sides flanking the central stair hall. The addition of a fire wall at the top of the stair is the only substantial interior change.

The rear ell contains the kitchen and various utility rooms. The attic level of both the main block and the ell are divided into a maze of simply finished rooms.

The only other structure on the property is a gambrel roof brick garage, contemporary with the house or nearly so. It contains two sets of double doors, though the south bay has been permanently enclosed. A pair of gabled dormers light the interior.
8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD
- PREHISTORIC
- 1400-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW
- ARCHEOLOGY
- PREHISTORIC
- ARCHEOLOGY
- HISTORIC
- AGRICULTURE
- ARCHITECTURE
- COMMERCE
- COMMUNICATIONS
- COMMUNITY PLANNING
- CONSERVATION
- ECONOMICS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
- INDUSTRY
- INVENTION
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- LAW
- LITERATURE
- MILITARY
- MUSIC
- PHILOSOPHY
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- RELIGION
- SCIENCE
- SCULPTURE
- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
- THEATER
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES 1916

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of the most ambitious private residences ever erected outside of Asheville in western North Carolina, Silvermont is a thirty-three room Colonial Revival mansion with a broad gambrel roof, imposing portico, and high quality interior millwork. It was completed in 1917 for Joseph Silversteen, Transylvania County's leading twentieth century industrialist. Silversteen (1880-1958) was a Pennsylvania native who moved to Transylvania County about 1902 and became a highly successful entrepreneur. A tanner by trade, he owned and operated tanning industries, lumber industries, and was involved in a number of financial institutions. Until the 1950s Silversteen industries were the largest taxpayers in the county. Silversteen and his wife, the former Elizabeth Mount, were civic leaders who contributed time and money to a number of organizations, schools, and charities. They had three daughters, two of whom were active in the business world, and the third was a professional musician of note. The Silversteens died in the 1950s and the last of their daughters, Mrs. Dorothy Bjerg, died in 1972. Mrs. Bjerg left the mansion and its surrounding eight acres to Transylvania County, and the house and grounds are used as the county's main public recreation center.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Associated with the early twentieth century industrial development of western North Carolina and the transformation of the region's economy from one of primarily agrarian to one of a mixed agricultural and industrial base.

B. Associated with the life and work of Joseph Simpson Silversteen, Transylvania County's leading early twentieth century industrialist.

C. Embodies the form, materials, and details of the Colonial Revival style of early twentieth century domestic architecture, and is one of the most ambitious residences of its type ever erected in western North Carolina.
The Joseph Silversteen House, known as Silvermont, is a large Colonial Revival house built in the Transylvania County seat of Brevard in 1916 or 1917. Joseph Simpson Silversteen was described at his death as the county's "wealthiest and most influential man." Silversteen was an industrialist and financier of great importance to the community during the first half of the twentieth century.

Silversteen was born in 1880 in Towanda County, Pennsylvania. While in Pennsylvania he married Elizabeth Mount of Stroudsburg. In 1902 the Silversteens moved to Transylvania County. They arrived at a time when the county was beginning to break out of its mountain isolation. Transylvania County was formed in 1861 from Henderson and Jackson counties. Brevard was established as the county seat shortly thereafter, although it was not incorporated until 1889. The railroad came to Brevard in 1895. Also in the 1890s J. F. Hayes moved to Brevard from Pennsylvania and became the town's first industrialist. Hayes is best known as the founder of the luxurious Toxaway Hotel. 

Silversteen was a tanner by trade. When he arrived in North Carolina he quickly established a tannery near the old Jephta post office, which he named the Toxaway Tanning Company. A community quickly grew up around the company. Silversteen named this community Rosman, after two associates Rosenthal and Ormansky. In 1910 he organized the Gloucester Lumber Company, which utilized 20,000 acres purchased from the forests of George Vanderbilt. Thus Silversteen was a leader in the lumber industry, an industry that was the leading economic force in Transylvania County until the 1930s. Silversteen owned and operated a number of other companies such as the Rosman Tanning Extract Company, and the Transylvania Tanning Company. He also directed the Hans Reece Tannery in Asheville. The Silversteen industries employed several hundred men at their peak and were the largest taxpayers in Transylvania County until the 1950s.

Silversteen was active in Brevard's financial life. He was president of the Brevard Federal Savings and Loan Association for twenty-five years. He was also president of Brevard Building and Loan, and was on the local advisory board of the First Union National Bank. He had large holdings in real estate. Silversteen served in the North Carolina National Guard in World War I, and was on the War Production Board in World War II.

Silversteen was active in a variety of civic affairs. He was a benefactor of churches, schools, and recreational facilities. He built the first brick elementary school building in Rosman, and gave land for the high school gymnasium which is named after him. He built the Silversteen Community Center in Brevard. He gave financial support to the Silversteen elementary school in the Gloucester district. Silversteen and his wife supported many of Transylvania's churches, including Brevard's St. Philip's Episcopal, of which they were members. For many years he was county chairman of the American Red Cross.

Fraternal and trade organizations were interests of Silversteen. He was a Mason of the 32nd degree and helped build Brevard's Masonic Temple. He was also an Elk, a Kiwanis, and a Shriner. Silversteen belonged to the Tanners Council of America, the Appalachian Lumbermen's Club, and the Chemical Society of New York. He was president of the Brevard Country Club, and belonged to the Asheville Country Club and the Hendersonville Country Club. He was an avid bridge player and achieved the rank of Master. At the time of his
death in October of 1958 he was considered to be "the dean of American tanners," and his
death received coverage in the obituary section of the New York Times.8

Mrs. Silversteen was also a person of impact in the community. Her interest in
chambers and schools equaled that of her husband. She was state regent of the Daughters
of the American Revolution in 1942, and was national vice president of that organization
in 1943. She was also active in the Daughters of Colonial Wars and the Daughters of 1812,
and was a trustee of Western Carolina College (now University). She died unexpectedly in
1956 in New York City.9

The Silversteens had three daughters. Dorothy was born in 1905. She graduated from
Bennau College with a music degree. In 1932 she married merchant marine captain Thorvald
Askel Bjerg. Like her mother she was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution.
She was active in her father's businesses, serving as director of the Toxaway Tanning
Company, and was president of the Gloucester Lumber Company from her father's death in
1958 until 1967 when it merged with the Champion Paper Company. Mrs. Bjerg was listed
Augustine, Florida in 1972, where she had been socially prominent for several years.10

Miriam was born in 1906, and attended St. Mary's College in Raleigh. She married
Alfred Weiss. She was general manager of the Transylvania Tanning Company until 1954,
and was also president of the Evergreen Cemetery Association, director of the Gloucester
Lumber Company, and secretary-treasurer of the Weiss Machine Company. She died January
22, 1965.11 Adelaide was born in 1913. She obtained a music degree from Salem College in
Winston-Salem, North Carolina and became a professional musician. She married Robert N.
Hill, III. She made several recordings of children's music and became an expert in
mountain ballads. A contralto, she performed under the batons of such noted conductors
as Arturo Toscanini, Otto Klemperer, Leopold Stokowski, and Serge Koussevitsky. She died
in 1968.12

Silversteen left Silvermont to his three daughters upon his death.13 Mrs. Bjerg was
the last of the daughters to die. She willed the mansion to Transylvania County to be
used as a recreation center. An 8.5 acre tract surrounded the house.14 A description of
the house gives an idea of the comfort that surrounded the Silversteens:

An intercom system with a buzzer in every room so the family could ring
the maid, an elevator, walk-in closets in every room with automatic
lights, seven fireplaces, 12 inch solid concrete support walls, classic
bathrooms with the typical old pedestal sinks and one that dated back to
the "potty" days even before indoor plumbing are some of the things that
fascinate the recreation department's staff.15

Mrs. Bjerg left the house fully furnished, with a complete library, a grandfather clock,
a baby grand Steinway piano and an $80,000 trust fund to be used for the upkeep of the house.
The house contains 33 rooms, including 7 bedrooms.16
The current status of Silvermont is uncertain. The park which surrounds the house has been a success, with facilities such as basketball courts and tennis courts being used daily. Because of its size and age maintenance on the house has been more expensive than originally thought. The house had to be rewired to meet existing fire and safety codes, while the roof has required several costly repairs. The trust fund left by Mrs. Bjerg has proven inadequate for the complete financing of these repairs. However, there are a number of plans for alternative funds and it is hoped that Silvermont will continue to be used by the citizens of Transylvania County.
FOOTNOTES

1 Asheville Citizen-Times, October 19, 1958.


3 Transylvania Times, July 18, 1968; McCrary, "Silversteen"; Powell, North Carolina Gazetteer, 426, 497. Toxaway is a river that rises in southwest Transylvania County. The name comes from the Cherokee word Tor-tzoo-whah, meaning redbird.

4 Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina, IV, 2101; McCrary, "Silversteen"; Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 50; Transylvania County Deed Book 43, p. 498.

5 Transylvania Times, July 18, 1968; Asheville Citizen-Times, October 19, 1958; McCrary, "Silversteen"; Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 50-51.

6 Transylvania Times, July 18, 1968; McCrary, "Silversteen"; Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 50-51.

7 Transylvania Times, July 18, 1968; McCrary, "Silversteen."


9 Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 51-52; Asheville Citizen-Times, November 5, 1956.

10 Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 53-54.

11 Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 52.

12 Norris and Reidinger, Transylvania County, 52-53.


MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is an 8.5 acre tract identified by the Transylvania County Tax Supervisor's Office as parcel #41 of Tax Map 809-2, and includes the house, its garage, and acreage that has remained in continuous association with the house. See attached map.

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

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<th>State</th>
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FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE
Michael T. Southern, Survey Specialist
Jim Sumner, Researcher

ORGANIZATION
Survey and Planning Branch
Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section

STREET & NUMBER
North Carolina Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN
Raleigh

STATE
North Carolina

CODE
27611

DATE
April 9, 1981

TELEPHONE
(919) 733-6545

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

TITLE
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE
May 27, 1981

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER


