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
John C. Sikes House
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
1301 East Franklin Street
CITY, TOWN
Monroe
STATE
North Carolina

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY OWNERSHIP STATUS PRESENT USE
_DISTRICT _PUBLIC _UNOCCUPIED _AGRICULTURE
BUILDING(S) _PRIVATE _UNOCCUPIED _MUSEUM
_STRUCTURE _BOTH _WORK IN PROGRESS _COMMERCIAL
_SITE _PUBLIC ACQUISITION ACCESSIBLE _EDUCATIONAL
_OBJECT _IN PROCESS _YES: RESTRICTED _PRIVATE RESIDENCE
_IN PROCESS _YES: UNRESTRICTED _PRIVATE RESIDENCE
_BEING CONSIDERED _NO _PRIVATE RESIDENCE

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
Lee Taylor and Janice R. Newman
STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 29025
CITY, TOWN
Charlotte

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Union County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Monroe, NC
DATE
1979
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Survey and Planning Branch, NC Division of Archives and History
CITY, TOWN
Raleigh
STATE North Carolina
Determined eligible: No
The John C. Sikes House is an elegant essay in Neo-Classicism. Designed in 1926 by Louis D. Sutherland, member of the distinguished Charlotte architectural firm of C. C. Hook, the Sikes House rivals Hook's White Oaks, the Duke Mansion, in suburban Myers Park. The two structures affirm both the consistency and the inventiveness of the Hook office.

The Sikes House anchors a 3.89-acre site whose remaining paths and carriage-drives repeat, at landscape scale, the curvilinearity of the Adamesque trim which adorns the house. The remnants of picturesque landscaping also serve as a foil against which the geometric clarity of the elevational organization is strengthened. The grounds thus act not only as a buffer but as an integral feature of the design unit.

The house is built of vertically-scored yellow Roman bricks laid in mechanical bond with deeply-raked joints. The house consists of two units: a two-and-a-half story main block, five bays wide and four deep; and a two-story rear ell, four bays long and three deep. Each block carries a shake-shingled gable roof. The full pediments of the lateral elevations are interrupted by partially engaged end chimneys. A modillion cornice underlines the gable. Beneath it runs a decorative frieze composed of headers resting on soldiers.

Fenestration is treated consistently, level by level, throughout. Beginning at the roof, eight-light dormers, each with flat-paneled pilasters supporting a broken pediment, pierce the main block. On the second story are six-over-six sash, each surmounted by a flat-paneled stone lintel. Wooden shutters, bearing the cut-out silhouettes of urns, flank each second-story sash. On the ground floor are paired eight-light casements. Each stands above a flat-paneled wooden apron. Each double casement is crowned by a stone tympanum. From each tympanum an escutcheon projects in bas-relief between foliate swags. Outlining these tympanum are brick archivolts with flat-paneled stone impost blocks and keystones. The central entrance receives a complementary treatment: an elliptically-arched fanlight surmounts French double doors; full-length sidelights flank the doors.

The central entrance on the main (southwest) facade is dramatized by a parapeted portico. Its full entablature is supported by six stone Tuscan columns. The columns stand at the top of a short, broad flight of stone steps. A broad piazza runs along the main facade and terminates in a parapeted side porch. A one-story sun porch balances the side porch at the opposite end of the facade. Neo-Classical stone planters ornament the piazza and tie the house to the extant garden furniture which, like the fluted birdbath and egg-and-dart trimmed stone bench, reiterates the classicizing theme.

The main block is symmetrically organized around a center hall two rooms deep with the one-story sun porch adjoining the southeastern front parlor. In the rear block, which stands on a multi-roomed brick cellar, symmetry makes way for utilitarian concerns: kitchen, pantry, and ancillary spaces line up in a functional enfilade behind the northwestern dining room.
The center hall features a grand stair which rises in two flights beginning front-to-back along the southeastern wall. The string carries a handsome wave molding and each tread supports three turned balusters beneath a molded handrail. The handrail descends into a spiral terminating in a newel which repeats, at larger scale, the profile of the balusters.

Trim throughout the house is finely executed. The first and second floor principal rooms contain tripartite Adamesque mantels, paneled window and door architraves, molded baseboards, and excellent hardwood floors. On the first floor a molded dentil cornice encloses the main rooms. Surrounds in these rooms include raised-paneled lintels with decorative diamond-shaped center blocks; the outlines of these diamonds recall the diamond-shape design of the exterior parapet.

The formal first floor front rooms contain mantels of particularly high quality. The western parlor mantel includes a mottled marble surround, flat-paneled tapered pilasters supporting a tripartite frieze. The frieze bears a center panel ornamented with a bas-relief of birds, urn, and floral spray. Above is a flat-paneled overmantel which matches the large flat-panels trimming the parlor walls. The mantel is flanked by French doors leading to the side porch. The eastern parlor mantel, similarly, includes a marble surround and fluted columns supporting a tripartite frieze with a flat-paneled center block.

The small adjoining sun porch contains a stuccoed chimney breast with a recessed arched shelf. Green, blue, and terra-cotta tiles, their smooth surfaces contrasting with the roughly textured white stucco, are set into the fireplace surround in quasi-Art Deco geometries.

Marble tubs, tile bathroom floors, and extensive kitchen shelving are all intact. The second floor includes a side hall connected by an enclosed back stair in the first floor kitchen. The finished third floor attic, like the cellar, is sheathed in thin beaded siding.

The John C. Sikes House is an exceptionally fine Neo-Classical house; it is clearly among the most skillful essays in the style in Union County, and, with its handsome grounds provides much-needed green space in an increasingly congested urban area.
The John C. Sikes House, built in 1926-1927 to designs of Charlotte architect Louis D. Sutherland, is a handsome two-and-a-half-story brick Neo-Classical Revival mansion set in a landscaped park of nearly four acres. The house possesses both architectural and historical significance. Lavishly detailed, well crafted and maintained, the Sikes House is surely the most sophisticated house in Monroe, the seat of Union County and is among the best known houses by Sutherland. Its historical significance derives from the prominence of its builder, John C. Sikes (1880-1938), and its third owner—and the great-nephew of the builder—Henry Hall Wilson (1921-1979). Sikes, a Union County native who achieved considerable local prominence, practiced law in Monroe from 1901 until the mid 1930s, was twice elected to the North Carolina General Assembly, and served as mayor of Monroe from 1917 to 1919. His continued activity and prominence in local and state politics in the 1920s and 1930s, when he was also involved in a number of business houses in Monroe, was cut short in 1932 when he suffered a debilitating stroke, ending hopes for his candidacy for governor. The house was occupied by Mrs. Sikes from Sikes death in 1938 until her death in 1966. In 1973 the house was acquired by Sikes' great-nephew, Henry Hall Wilson. Wilson, like Sikes, was a native of Union County, practiced law in Monroe and served in the North Carolina Legislature. Following his work for Terry Sanford and John Kennedy in their successful campaigns in 1960, Wilson joined Kennedy's staff as the liaison between the White House and the House of Representatives in 1961 and served in that position until 1967 when he resigned to serve as president of the Chicago Board of Trade. In 1973 Wilson resigned from the Board of Trade and moved back to North Carolina, purchased the Sikes House, and May of that year announced at the house his candidacy for the Senate seat vacated by Senator Sam Ervin. Although his candidacy was unsuccessful, Wilson remained in Monroe and lived in the house until his death 23 July 1979. His widow sold the house to the present owners in 1980.

Criteria Assessment:

B. The house is associated with the life of John C. Sikes (1880-1938) who achieved local and state prominence in the fields of law and politics. It is also significant for its association with the life of Henry Hall Wilson (1921-1979), a national political leader and businessman who lived here from 1973 until his death in July 1979. Wilson was the great-nephew of the builder.

C. The John C. Sikes House, the most sophisticated Neo-classical mansion in the city of Monroe, embodies the distinctive characteristics of its period, type, and high quality of construction. The house was designed by Louis D. Sutherland, an architect working the Charlotte office of C.C.Hook, and remains perhaps the best known and most accomplished of Sutherland's work.
The John C. Sikes House's historical significance stems from its association with two prominent owners, John Cuthbertson Sikes, the builder, and Henry Hall Wilson, a national political figure.

John C. Sikes was born on the Sikes Mill farm on Rocky River in Goose Creek Township, Union County, North Carolina, on August 31, 1880. He was one of six sons and one daughter born to John C. Sikes, Sr., and Jane Austin Sikes. The older Mr. Sikes, a prosperous farmer and landowner, was determined to provide a good education for his sons. Thus the oldest, E. W. Sikes, earned a doctorate degree and eventually became president of Clemson College, and another son, O. J. Sikes, became a prominent attorney and judge in Albemarle, N.C. John C., Jr., entered Wingate College at the age of sixteen as its first boarding student, and later transferred to Wake Forest College, where he earned an A.B. and L.L.B., graduating cum laude.

Mr. Sikes obtained his license to practice law on his twenty-first birthday in 1901, and opened a law office in Monroe, where he practiced until a few years before his death at an Asheville hospital on September 4, 1938. On June 20, 1906, John Sikes and Maggie Crowell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Crowell of Monroe, were married and became the parents of four daughters.

Mr. Sikes was a very popular figure in Monroe and Union County; he was known for his skillful oratory, quick wit and personable manner. Thus while he did not seek public office on his own, he was prevailed upon by others to do so, and was twice elected to the General Assembly in 1911 and 1913, and served as mayor of Monroe from 1917 to 1919. During his tenure as mayor, he accomplished the first large-scale street paving program in Monroe and the building of a new high school. His political stature in the state was such that his candidacy for governor was widely discussed in influential circles, backed by prominent figures such as Julian Price, president of Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company. There appears to be little doubt that he would have been a candidate had he not suffered a stroke in 1932 and subsequent ill health until his death six years later.

Mr. Sikes' career embraced much more than public office, however. His successful business experience included that of president of the First National Bank of Monroe. When the bank was closed in the panic of 1930, he was able to negotiate a halt to the sale of its assets to the North Carolina Bank and Trust Company and to pay depositors the full amount of their funds in the bank. At one time he was also the president and major stockholder of the Monroe Hardware Company and had interests in other local businesses, including being a director of the Monroe and Union Mills.

During the course of his prosperous law practice of over thirty years, Mr. Sikes represented many businesses and individuals in the area, but the case which probably brought him the widest legal fame (and later became connected with Pinehaven) was his participation in the sensational Cole murder trial in Rockingham, N.C. William B. Cole, a wealthy textile manufacturer, shot and killed his daughter's suitor on a public street in Rockingham on August 15, 1925. Mr. Cole's battery of nine attorneys, which included John Sikes and two other Monroe lawyers, succeeded in importing the jury from Union County, and their strategy of pleading self-defense and insanity during the widely reported trial from September 29 to October 12, 1925 resulted in acquittal for their client.
It was early the following year that Mr. Sikes, then the county attorney, commissioned his good friend, Louis D. Sutherland, a Charlotte architect working for the firm of C. C. Hook, to draw the plans for his "dream house." It was to be built on a pine-covered site of nearly four acres about one mile east of downtown Monroe on the Wadesboro Road (now E. Franklin Street). Mr. Sikes purchased the site exclusively for the house on March 17, 1926. The lot had been part of a much larger area of land jointly inherited by John Sikes and two of his brothers from John Sikes, Sr. On May 17, 1926, Mr. Sikes granted a contract to G. M. Tucker of Monroe to construct the house for $35,000.00. L. E. Markham was given the plumbing and heating contract, and another $10,000.00 was to be spent on landscaping, which was to include tennis courts and Japanese gardens with lights. The road along the side of the property was renamed for the architect, Mr. Sutherland (from Chain Gang Road), and the Sikes moved into their newly completed mansion in June, 1927.

Since the construction of the house followed relatively soon after the Cole murder case, the story began in Monroe that Mr. Sikes' fee for defending the Rockingham industrialist was the price of the large new house. Mr. Sikes vigorously denied this allegation, but the story persists as a commonly held belief among many residents of Monroe at the present time.

The Sikes mansion was the setting for many gala social occasions in the late twenties and early thirties, including the wedding of the oldest daughter, Margaret Dixon Sikes (Mrs. Caldwell Johnston) on June 20, 1929. Extensive use was made of the third floor ballroom and the outdoor gardens for entertaining. Indeed, the Sikes hosted many local, state and national figures at their home, among them the brothers Belk, Julian Price (mentioned above), and on an earlier occasion, William Jennings Bryan.

In 1932, in another tribute to his popularity, John Sikes was elected potentate of the Oasis Temple of the Order of the Mystic Shrine at Charlotte. Later that same year, he attended the national Shriner's convention in California. Unfortunately, on the return journey he suffered a disabling stroke, and afterwards his health continued to decline. After Mr. Sikes' death in 1938, Mrs. Sikes continued to live in the family mansion until her own death in 1966. During World War II, Mrs. Sikes rented rooms to army officers from nearby Camp Sutton (built on government-acquired Sikes family land), now the site of Union Memorial Hospital.

In 1966, the house was sold by the heirs of Mrs. Sikes to Donald B. Harris and his wife, Colene. Mrs. Harris' decoration of the house was the subject of a feature article in the Charlotte Observer in 1969. The house was sold again in 1973, this time to a boyhood admirer of the mansion and a great-nephew of John Sikes, Mr. Henry Hall Wilson. Wilson was born in Monroe on December 6, 1921, the son of Henry Hall Wilson, Sr., and Annie Vernon Sanders Wilson. After schooling in Monroe, Wilson attended Duke University, where he received his A.B. degree in 1942. His university students were interrupted by wartime service in the U.S. Army, which he left as a first lieutenant in 1946. During the war, he was married to Mary Walters in 1944. Following the war, Wilson returned to Duke University, where he received his L.L.B. in 1948, and then moved back to Monroe to set up a law practice, which he maintained until 1961. During this time he was very
active in Democratic politics. He served three terms in the North Carolina Legislature from 1953 to 1959, and, in 1956, as president of the North Carolina Young Democrats Convention in Winston-Salem, became acquainted with the convention's speaker, the junior senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy.14

Four years later, Wilson was influential in the campaign of Terry Sanford for governor and was North Carolina chairman for John Kennedy's presidential campaign. The success in the election of both men resulted in the newly elected president asking Wilson to join his staff as the liaison between the White House and the House of Representatives in 1961. After the tragic death of President Kennedy in 1963, Henry Hall Wilson continued in the same White House staff capacity for President Johnson until 1967. In that year, the Chicago Board of Trade asked Wilson to take over as president of that organization, and he accepted. On the occasion of his leaving government service, Governor Terry Sanford held a testimonial dinner in Charlotte for Wilson, which was attended by more than 600 people.15

As president of the Chicago Board of Trade, Henry Hall Wilson made a number of significant changes in its operations. He completely reorganized the administrative structure by greatly increasing the power and prestige of his office. Under his supervision, trading volume of commodities nearly doubled, futures contracts were added in new commodities, including silver and lumber, and he established the Chicago Board of Options Exchange.16 In addition to his duties at the board, in 1968 he was appointed the head of a presidential commission charged with traveling to eastern European countries to promote international trade.17

In 1973, Wilson decided to resign his highly paid and prestigious position to return to his native North Carolina and seek the U.S. Senate seat held by the retiring Sam Ervin. He purchased the handsome mansion that had belonged to his great-uncle, John Sikes, on E. Franklin Street in Monroe, a place he had admired for many years. In May, 1973, Henry Hall Wilson held a press conference at the house to announce his race for the Senate.18 Later that same year he decided to celebrate the return of the estate to the family by holding a Sikes family reunion at the house.19

After his unsuccessful senate campaign in 1974, Wilson was a business consultant based in Monroe. In 1976, he was called to Plains, Georgia, to advise candidate Jimmy Carter on economics, and became involved in the campaign.20 During the nearly seven years that the Wilsons owned the house on E. Franklin Street, it was the subject of several feature articles in the Charlotte papers.21 Henry Hall Wilson died July 23, 1979. Friends attending his funeral in Monroe included Governor James Hunt, former Governor Terry Sanford, and Lawrence O'Brien, Commissioner of the National Basketball Association and former Postmaster General.22 Mrs. Wilson sold the house to the present owners, Lee T. Newman and his wife Janice, on March 11, 1980.23

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

1 Except where otherwise indicated, the primary information about John C. Sikes comes from an article in the Monroe Journal, September 5, 1938, p. 1, and interviews with Margaret Dixon Sikes Caldwell, January 17, 1981 and January 21, 1981.

2 Charlotte Observer, p. 1, September 29, 1925 through October 12, 1925.


4 Union County, N.C. Deed Book 66, p. 191.

5 Union County, N.C. Deed Book 42, p. 410.

6 Monroe Journal, May 18, 1926, p. 5; and August 3, 1926, p. 3.

7 Ibid., June 7, 1927, p. 3.

8 Mr. Sikes wrote to his daughter that his fee for defending Cole was $3,500. Interview with Margaret Dixon Sikes Caldwell, January 17, 1981.

9 Union County, N.C. Deed Book 207, p. 517.

10 Charlotte Observer, January 30, 1969, p. 1C.

11 Union County, N.C. Deed Book 257, p. 468.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuation sheet</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item number</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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23. Union County, N.C. Deed Book 335, p. 45.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.89 acres
Quad name: Monroe, NC
Scale: 1:24,000

The boundary for the John C. Sikes House is shown in red on the enclosed site plan and includes that 3.89 acre parcel of land lying at the northeastern corner of East Franklin Street and Southland Avenue and containing the house, garage, and landscaped grounds still associated with the house.

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Davyd Foard Hood, Survey Specialist
Mary Alice Dixon Hinson, Consultant
William H. Huffman, Consultant

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 27611

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE [Signature]

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE February 16, 1982

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


Interview with Mrs. Caldwell Johnston, January 17 and January 21, 1981.

Interview with Mrs. Henry Hall Wilson, Monroe, N.C., January 17, 1981.


Monroe Journal, March 19, 1926; May 18, 1926; August 3, 1926; September 5, 1938.

Union County, N.C. Deed Books 42, 66, 207, 257, 335.

Union County, N.C. Will Books 3, 6.

MONROE QUADRANGLE
NORTH CAROLINA—UNION CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

John C. Sikes House, Monroe, NC
3.89 acres
Zone 17

Easting: 543490
Northing: 3870080

Scale: 1:24000