Name of Property

historic name Sunnyside
other names/site number Whitley, R. B., House

Location
street & number 210 South Selma Road
city or town Wendell
state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183

State/Federal Agency Certification
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

National Park Service Certification
I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action
5. Classification

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Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

___ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
___ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
___ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
___ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCINE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1918-1944

Significant Dates
1918

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
unknown

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Whitley, Rayford Bryant

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:
___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other

Name of repository:
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  approximately 1.12 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John W. Narron and J. Daniel Pezzoni
date: March 12, 2001
organization:
street & number: PO Drawer 26268
city or town: Raleigh
state: NC
zip code: 27611
telephone: (919) 250-2170

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name: John W. Narron and Elizabeth M. Narron
street & number: PO Box 577
city or town: Wendell
state: NC
zip code: 27591
telephone: (919) 365-4378

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Sunnyside, located at 210 South Selma Road on the southern outskirts of the town of Wendell in Wake County, North Carolina, is a two-story brick house of rectangular form erected in 1917-18 for local business leader Rayford Bryant Whitley and his family. The well-preserved, east-facing house combines elements of the Craftsman and Colonial Revival styles and features a slate-shingled hip roof, a one-story front porch, porte cocheres on the front and north sides, patio terraces, and a two-tier back porch. Typical interior features include wooden floors, plaster wall and ceiling finishes, panel doors (six stacked panels), molded baseboards and cornices (the latter more ornate in the principal rooms), and simple door and window trim. Behind the house stand original outbuildings of one-story seven-course American-bond brick construction. To the north of the house stand two historic houses built for R. B. Whitley’s daughters; to the south are woods; and lots across Selma Road to the east and, more distant, behind the house to the west, have modern residential development.

Inventory

5. Gate pillars (north pair). Ca. 1918. Contributing object.

Exterior

Sunnyside is constructed of brick laid in a stretcher bond with stretcher/header courses every six courses. The chimneys, which are both interior and exterior, have corbeled caps. The Craftsman four-over-one and three-over-one double-hung sash windows have soldier brick lintels and quarry-faced granite sills. The Colonial Revival front entry is spanned by an elliptical arch and has a leaded-glass fanlight, one-pane sidelights, and a door with a glass panel. Other entries have four-light transoms. On the front slope of the roof is a hipped dormer with sides sheathed with slate shingles. The main house roof, the dormer roof, and the slate-shingled hipped roofs of the front porch, the two porte cocheres, and the smokehouse (described below) have decorative exposed rafter ends.
Description (continued)

The front porch is supported by square-section Craftsman brick pillars with quarry-faced granite caps and belt courses. The porch is extended on its ends by patio terraces that wrap around the south and north sides of the house, and it extends on the front to form a porte cochere with an integral planter at the end. The north terrace links to a second porte cochere, which like the front one is detailed similarly to the front porch. Other front porch, terrace, and porte cochere details include brick walling, tile floors, granite steps, and beaded matchboard ceilings. The first tier of the engaged back porch has a modern enclosure of T1-11 siding and aluminum windows, whereas the open second tier retains its original square-section posts and balusters. To the rear is a slightly projecting and integral two-story wing containing the kitchen on the first floor and a bedroom on the second.

Interior

The front entry opens directly into the living room, the focus of which is a fireplace with a three-part mantel of Federal design that is decorated with carvings of urns, swags, and bell flowers. Pocket doors lead from the living room into the dining room and into a sitting room, and French doors lead into a center passage. The passage contains a one-run stair with square-section newel posts and balusters and a lowest step with a rounded end. The sitting room has a Georgian Revival mantel with an eared architrave surround, a dentil cornice, and pressed brick fireplace surround and hearth. Flanking the sitting room mantel are book shelves with segmental-arched tops. Other first-floor features include a chairrail in the dining room and mid-twentieth-century metal cabinetry in the kitchen. The second floor is detailed like the first, but its two bedroom mantels are Craftsman in inspiration; one has blue-glazed tiles in its surround and hearth. At the front end of the second-story passage is a small room (which may have functioned as a sleeping porch) with an entry with sidelights and transom between it and the passage.

Outbuildings and Landscape Features

Directly behind the house stands a two-room smokehouse with a slate-shingled hip roof, a six-panel door, and a single four-over-one window. (The smokehouse and the other outbuildings, unless otherwise noted, are one story in height and of seven-course American-bond construction.) The larger room served for salt-curing meat, and it retains a concrete floor and a rack suspended from the ceiling joists that is studded with nails for hanging meat. The smaller room, function unknown, is entered through a panel door with wire mesh inserted in place of some of the panels. To the north of the smokehouse stands the garage, which was built to shelter R. B. Whitley’s two automobiles (a Packard and a Ford) and hence has two segmental-arched garage
Description (continued)

Door openings with chevron-pattern beaded matchboard doors. The garage has a concrete floor and a metal-sheathed front-gable roof with a shallow pitch. To the south of the smokehouse stands the washhouse/sweet potato house, which was made into an apartment in the 1950s. The building has an asphalt-shingled front-gable roof, segmental-arched openings that were altered into doors and windows (one-over-one and six-over-six) in the 1950s, and a flue constructed of textured brick. Next to this building stands a frame privy with novelty weatherboard siding and a metal-sheathed shed roof that was moved to the property in the mid-twentieth century to serve as a dog house. All of the outbuildings are in good condition. Most are being used for storage.

Photographs taken of Sunnyside soon after its construction show that the yard was originally devoid of large trees. The presently well-shaded yard is the product of over eighty years of evolution. Off the south side of the house is a formal garden consisting of concentric brick walkways with pavers laid in a basketweave pattern and a concrete bird bath in the center. The garden is thought to have been set out after R. B. Whitley's death in 1944, and it is also thought to replace a more informal garden in the same location. A curved gravel driveway leads from the road to the house where it passes under the front porte cochere. At the north and south terminuses of the driveway are pairs of brick gate pillars (four pillars total) with quarry-faced granite caps. A second gravel driveway, with a partial border of granite boulders, extends from the north pair of gate pillars along the north edge of the property. The yard is planted with willow oaks, cedars, magnolias, pines, a monkey puzzle tree, and a deodar cedar. There are abundant plantings of boxwoods, hollies, and ground covers.

Integrity Statement

Sunnyside possesses very good architectural integrity. The only substantial alteration to the exterior is the enclosure of the first tier of the back porch. Inside, the mid-twentieth-century kitchen remodeling and remodelings of the bathrooms which appear to have taken place at the same time represent the only substantial changes. The house retains all of its character-defining exterior and interior features. The outbuildings are also more or less original--only the washhouse/sweet potato house has had its integrity lessened as a result of its conversion into an apartment in the 1950s. As noted above, the yard has changed from its original appearance, but there are indications that its present character--with ornamental trees, borders, and planting beds--had begun to take shape before R. B. Whitley's death. Most changed is Sunnyside's setting. The agricultural fields that once surrounded the house were developed into a residential neighborhood in the late twentieth century, or (as on the south side of the house) have grown up in woods. Three buildings that historically formed a part of Sunnyside's surroundings survive, however:
Description (continued)

two Craftsman houses built by R. B. Whitley for his daughters, and Sunnyside's original stable, a two-story brick building that now stands across Commander Drive to the west of the house on a separate parcel.
Sunnyside was the home of Rayford Bryant Whitley, a leading businessman of Wendell, North Carolina in the early twentieth century. R. B. Whitley operated the town’s cotton gin and one of its tobacco warehouses—enterprises associated with the two crops that formed the economic basis of the town and its hinterland—and he founded the Bank of Wendell and a general merchandise firm. Whitely moved to Wendell from a neighboring county in 1906 at a time when the community was being linked to outside markets by the construction of the Raleigh & Pamlico Railroad. Through his business activities Whitley exploited the new opportunities and helped build Wendell from a crossroads village into a prosperous market town. Sunnyside, built in 1917-1918 for R. B. Whitley, his wife Marietta Harper Whitley, and their children is a substantial brick Craftsman/Colonial Revival residence that features patio terraces and porte cocheres as well as original outbuildings including a smokehouse and a two-car garage.

Sunnyside meets Criterion B and is eligible in the commerce area of significance for its association with prominent Wendell businessman Rayford Bryant Whitley. The property also meets Criterion B under community planning and development for the important role Whitley’s business activities played in Wendell’s development during the first half of the twentieth century. Sunnyside is appropriate as a representation of Whitley’s significance under Criterion B as stated in National Register Bulletin 32 (p. 18): "A person’s home at the time (s)he achieved significance will usually represent any significant accomplishments that occurred while the individual was living in that home." Sunnyside has a general association with Whitley, whereas other resources in Wendell associated with his significance in the areas of commerce and community planning and development (several of which are noted in the text) are associated with only specific aspects of his career. Sunnyside also meets Criterion C in the architecture area of significance as a prominent local example of Craftsman and Colonial Revival domestic architecture.

Sunnyside’s significance relates to the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941)" contexts 3 and 4 and property type "House; Twentieth Century Popular House Types (ca. 1910-1941); Craftsman and Period Revival—subtype Colonial Revival." Sunnyside satisfies the registration requirements for its type as set forth in the MPDF (p. F-141) in that it retains a sufficiently high degree of integrity. The period of significance extends from 1918, the date construction of the house was substantially completed, until R. B. Whitley’s death in 1944. Sunnyside is eligible at the local level of significance.
Statement of Significance (continued)

Historic Context: Commerce and Community Planning and Development

The life of Rayford Bryant Whitley (1862-1944) parallels the economic revival of the South following the devastation of the Civil War. Born into a poor landholding family in Johnston County, which adjoins Wake County on the southeast, Whitley was unable to pursue a college education. The difficulties of his young life were compounded by an attack of typhoid fever. Nevertheless, Whitley struggled to overcome adversity, and in 1881 at the age of eighteen he opened a general merchandise store in the Johnson County community of Earpsboro. Several years later he was appointed a township constable, and in 1893 he married Marietta ("Mamie") Harper (1868-1956) of the Johnston County town of Smithfield and the daughter of state senator Dr. John J. Harper. Whitley's marriage coincided with his first plunge into state politics as a representative to the 1893-1894 session of the North Carolina legislature.¹

Whitley continued to operate his Earpsboro store, but in May 1900 he purchased a commercial lot in the Johnston County town of Selma and in March 1901 he advertised the opening of R. B. Whitley & Company, a general merchandise store operated in partnership with Ashley and Charles Horne. He also opened a store in the nearby town of Clayton, perhaps with the Hornes who were from Clayton. In 1902 R. B. Whitley was elected Selma's mayor, and he served as a director of the Bank of Selma the following year. Ever on the look-out for business opportunities, in 1906 Whitley shifted his attention to the community of Wendell, located just across the Johnston County line in eastern Wake County, which had been selected as a depot location on the Raleigh & Pamlico Railroad then under construction. Named after poet Oliver Wendell Holmes (father of the eponymous Supreme Court justice), Wendell dates its origins to the establishment of a school and post office in the early 1890s. It was incorporated as a town in 1903 in anticipation of the railroad, which stimulated the development of the town and its agricultural hinterland.²

In 1906 the Whitleys moved to a house on South Main Street in Wendell, and R. B. quickly

¹ Marietta Whitley Joseph personal communication; Darley, Harper Journey of Faith; Smithfield Herald, July 1, 1886 and May 17, 1894; and Whitley, "Rayford Bryant Whitley."

² Lally, Historic Architecture of Wake County, 82, 216, 234; North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory [1902 and 1903]; Smithfield Herald, May 26, 1903; and Amis, Historical Raleigh.
Statement of Significance (continued)

assumed a position of leadership in the community. The opening of the R. B. Whitley General Store on Third Street in 1906 appears to have been the first order of business, followed in July 1907 by the formation of the Bank of Wendell. Whitley served as the bank’s first president, and he remained active in its management until his death. An indication of the bank’s prosperity is given by its assets, which had increased from $23,145 in 1908 to $87,793 by 1912. In 1908 Whitley helped found the Wendell Methodist Church, and the following year he opened a cotton gin on Magnolia Street. Cotton was an important crop in eastern Wake County in the early twentieth century. Also important was tobacco, and according to Whitley’s son and biographer, Philip R. Whitley, R. B. Whitley was "energetic in establishing the Wendell Tobacco Market." According to historian Beth Thomas, Wendell was a "major player" in eastern Wake County’s bright leaf tobacco trade. About 1919 Whitley built the R. B. Whitley Tobacco Auction Warehouse on a lot next to his store, from which he participated in the town’s tobacco trade. His Bank of Wendell was "critical to the success of the tobacco market," according to Thomas. Whitley’s activities were key to Wendell’s growth during the years that followed incorporation in 1903. The population of the town grew from 759 in 1910 to 1,239 in 1920, and by the early 1920s, according to architectural historian Kelly Lally, Wendell could boast four tobacco warehouses, three cotton buyers, cotton and knitting mills, a lumber mill, a tobacco factory, and seventeen stores.3

In 1906, at the time of R. B. Whitley’s move to Wendell, he purchased a farm on the south side of the Raleigh & Pamlico tracks and south of town. Here in 1917 he commenced the construction of a large and stylish brick home which the Whitleys named Sunnyside. Before the family could move in, however, the influenza epidemic of 1918 struck the nation, and the Whitleys donated the use of their unfinished home as a hospital. According to Whitley descendants, the hospital received patients from all over eastern Wake County, and R. B. and Mamie’s children assisted in the care. The family moved into the house in 1919. When R. B. and Mamie’s son Paul Harper Whitley and daughter Ruth Whitley Parish reached maturity in the 1920s and 1930s, R. B. built them one-story brick bungalows on lots to the north of Sunnyside. The houses were

3 Lally, *Historic Architecture of Wake County*, 235-36; Thomas, "Wendell Commercial Historic District," 12-13; Amis, *Historical Raleigh*; Bank of Wendell Minute Book; and Whitley, "Rayford Bryant Whitley." In 1994, according to Kelly Lally, the ca. 1919 Whitley Tobacco Warehouse was the oldest tobacco warehouse to survive in Wake County, and Wendell’s tobacco market was one of the last to operate in the county.
Statement of Significance (continued)

designed by Lossie Williams Whitley, Paul’s wife.4

R. B. Whitley’s business activities included the purchase and operation of a number of farms in eastern Wake County. The farms were worked by tenants, for whom Whitley built brick tenant houses. According to Whitley descendants and architectural historian Kelly Lally, Whitley preferred brick construction for its durability, and he gave his tenant houses hip roofs and distinctive segmental-arched window openings. A group of Whitley tenant houses survives in the Rolesville vicinity of Wake County, accompanied by brick barns.5

In 1931 R. B. Whitley served again in the state legislature and on the appropriations, conservation and development, and public roads committees. Whitley pursued two strategies to keep his Bank of Wendell open during the Depression. He merged with the Farmers and Merchants Bank in 1931, and he saw to it that depositors were able to withdraw their money as needed, a measure that helped maintain confidence in his institution. While banks across the nation closed during these years, Whitley expanded, helping to re-establish the Bank of Clayton in 1935. Whitley served on the board of directors of the Bank of Clayton as well as the Clayton Cotton Mill and the board of a regional organization, the Flue-Cured Tobacco Grower’s Cooperative Association. During the last years of R. B. Whitley’s life he was aided in his many enterprises by his sons. Paul Harper Whitley (1894-1932) managed his father’s farms, the tobacco warehouse and the cotton gin, and after Paul’s untimely death the youngest son, Philip Ray Whitley (b. 1905), took over his responsibilities. Philip R. Whitley followed in his father’s footsteps by serving in the state legislature from 1950 to 1960.6

In 1939 Farm Security Administration photographer Marion Post Wolcott visited Wendell and met R. B. Whitley. Her photograph of Whitley, published in the 1992 retrospective Looking for the Light, shows a weather-beaten seventy-six-year-old man seated in his store with a cigar in

4 Wake County Deed Book 2042, p. 477; Marietta Whitley Joseph personal communication; Darley, Harper Journey of Faith; Lally, Historic Architecture of Wake County, 235.

5 Marietta Whitley Joseph personal communication; Lally, Historic Architecture of Wake County, 235, 241.

6 Marietta Whitley Joseph personal communication; Smithfield Herald, May 26, 1944; North Carolina House of Representatives Journal, 1931 Session; and Whitley, "Philip R. Whitley."
Statement of Significance (continued)

one hand and a cane in the other. Five years later, on May 25, 1944, R. B. Whitley died at Sunnyside. His obituary quoted a Wendell-area resident as saying, "If we were down and out, we could go to Mr. Whitley and he would see us through. He was a friend to the farmer." Philip R. Whitley had the following inscription carved on his father's tombstone: "Pioneer, Citizen, Builder, Man of God, and Friend to Man." Philip lived at Sunnyside with his mother Mamie until her death in 1956. After Philip the house was occupied by his daughter Ruth Whitley Thompson. The present owners, the Narrons, purchased the property in July 2000 and occupy it as a family residence.7

Architecture Context

According to architectural historian Kelly A. Lally, Sunnyside is "undoubtedly one of the most stylish houses in [Wendell] in the 1910s and 1920s." With the Tudor Revival style, the Craftsman and Colonial Revival styles ranked among the most popular styles for dwellings in Wake County's small towns and rural areas during the period from the 1910s to the 1940s. Whereas Sunnyside is a hybrid of the two styles (as described in section 7), other houses in Wendell such as the M. C. Todd House on East Wilson Avenue and a block of bungalows on West Third Street are more purely Craftsman in style. Sunnyside is larger than these and most other Craftsman houses, a trait it derives from the Colonial Revival, which as a style was especially suited for grand architectural statements. Other Colonial Revival features of Sunnyside include its symmetry, its front entry with sidelights and elliptical fanlight, and mantels based on Federal and Georgian prototypes. Because of its status as a hybrid, Sunnyside is not as fully expressed a Colonial Revival residence as such Wake County examples as the Glenn Judd House in Fuquay-Varina and the J. K. Barrow House in Zebulon, but it shares with these houses an appearance of size and graciousness. Architecturally, Sunnyside was commensurate with Whitley's standing in the Wendell community.8

The architecture of three brick outbuildings presently and formerly associated with the Sunnyside nominated parcel also deserves comment. The garage and washhouse/sweet potato house (included in the nominated parcel) and the barn (not included) are distinguished by their

7 Hendrickson, Looking for the Light, after p. 77.

8 Lally and Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County," F137-F139; Lally, Historic Architecture of Wake County, 235, 238, 239.
Segmental-arched openings, a feature common in commercial and industrial construction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but rare among domestic and agricultural outbuildings. The feature probably reflects the familiarity of Whitley and his builders with the construction of commercial buildings and tobacco warehouses in which segmental-arched openings were standard. As noted above, Whitley also used segmental arches in the construction of tenant houses.⁹

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amis, Moses N. *Historical Raleigh and Sketches of Wake County and its Important Towns*. 1913.


*North Carolina House of Representatives Journal.*

*North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory.*

*Smithfield Herald* (Smithfield, N.C.).


Wake County deed records. Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh.


Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel is portrayed on the approx. 1:100-scale map that appears as Exhibit A.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel correspond to the present 1.12-acre lot on which Sunnyside and associated historic features stand. A barn formerly associated with the property now stands on a separate lot under different ownership separated from the nominated parcel by approximately 200 feet.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number  Photo  Page  13  

PHOTOGRAPHS

1.  1. Subject: Sunnyside (same for all photos)
   2. Location: Wake Co., N.C. (same for all photos)
   3. Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni (same for all photos)
   4. Photo date: November 2000 (same for all photos)
   5. Original negative archived at the NC Dept. of Cultural Resources
      (same for all photos)
   6. Description of view: Front (east) and north elevations of house.
      View looking southwest.
   7. Photograph number appears at beginning of entry (same for all photos)

2.  6. South and west elevations of house. View looking northeast.


4.  6. Living room.
Exhibit A: Sunnyside nominated parcel. Scale: 1 inch equals approx. 100 feet. Resource key: 1) Sunnyside house; 2) Washhouse/sweet potato house; 3) Smokehouse; 4) Garage; 5 & 6) Gate pillars; and 7) Privy. Number and direction of view of exterior photographs indicated by triangular markers.