Historic Resources of Wilkesboro (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)

**NAME**

J. L. Hemphill House

AND/OR COMMON

Lowe House or Woodie House

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

203 N. Brook Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

X_BUILDINGS

STRUCTURE

X

SITE

OBJECT

X

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

N/A

STATUS

X_OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES RESTRICTED

YES UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

MUSEUM

PARK

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. & Mrs. Glenn C. Woodie

STREET & NUMBER

203 N. Brook Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C.

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE

Wilkes County Courthouse

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C.

**FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Laura A. W. Phillips, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

for Wilkesboro Historic Properties Commission

STREET & NUMBER

STATE

Wilkesboro

N. C.

DATE

May 1980

TELEPHONE

N. C.
The J. L. Hemphill House is a prominent expression of late nineteenth century Queen Anne style architecture in Wilkesboro. Although not located in the center of town, as are most of the other properties of historic or architectural significance, the Hemphill House stands out from its surroundings -- not only because of its large size and intact detailing, but also because of its location on a street corner, at the crest of a hill, surrounded by its larger than usual lot (approx. 4 acres) of lawn and woodlands. The main facade faces southeast toward Main Street, but the spacious surroundings and the fact that the house is separated from Main Street by woods give it an almost rural character. However, the style of the house has an "in-town" quality.

The 1899 Hemphill House is a two-story frame, late Victorian house with earmarks of the Queen Anne style as so often interpreted in North Carolina during this period -- the irregular massing and variety of texture and ornamentation are all present. Basically the house is composed of a central hip-roofed block with slightly projecting gabled "wings" on all four sides and a two-and-a-half-story polygonal tower with bell-cast roof and finial on the south corner. While the main body of the house is sheathed in German siding, textural and visual variety are created by the use of patterned metal shingles on the roof, square-cut wood shingles on the top level of the tower, diamond-cut wood shingles in the gables, and diagonal boarding in the panels of the lowest level of the tower and in the panels of the dado, frieze and corners of the bay window on the southwest side. While the majority of windows are simple one-over-one sash, the gables feature upper sash infilled with stained glass with muntins of a decorative design. Adding to the large-scale feeling of the house, and helping to enliven it visually is the one-story porch which wraps around the front and half of the two sides of the house. Its frilly ornamentation consists of turned posts, shallow wood arches accented by applied curvilinear sawnwork details in the corners and a spindlework frieze which echoes the turned balustrade below. While the exterior of the house is predominantly of wood, the metal roof and brick foundation and chimneys create some contrast in the use of materials. Projecting from the rear of the house is a one-story service ell with gable roof, central chimney and hip-roofed porch along the southwest side with turned posts, plain balustrade and simple brackets. The house is painted white.

Glazed and paneled doors lead from the exterior to the interior of the J. L. Hemphill House. While the interior has an asymmetrical plan, rooms are arranged on either side of a central hall. The closed string main stairway with heavily turned newel and turned balustrade rises from the tower space to the left of the main entrance. Originally the walls and ceilings of the Hemphill House were entirely sheathed in stained beaded board. The second story retains this sheathing, but the first story has in recent years been over-sheathed with plywood paneling and acoustical tiles, although the original sheathing remains intact underneath. Wooden mantels in the house are of simple late Victorian design, and the door and window casings are symmetrically molded with bulls-eye corner blocks, typical of turn-of-the-century interiors. Although the interior is simple, it is consistent throughout the house.

A frame garage is located behind the house.
The 1899 J. L. Hemphill House is the most prominent Queen Anne style dwelling remaining in Wilkesboro. More than any other house it embodies the salient characteristics of this late Victorian style -- irregular massing and variety of texture and ornamentation -- as often interpreted in frame houses of the turn-of-the-century period in North Carolina.

C. The 1899 J. L. Hemphill House, with its irregular massing and variety of texture and ornamentation, embodies the distinctive characteristics of the late Victorian Queen Anne style in wood. The interior is representative of common millwork of the period.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

J. L. (Jimmy) Hemphill built the Queen Anne style house at 203 N. Brook Street in 1899.¹ He had come to Wilkesboro from Morganton and had married a Ferguson woman from Wilkes County. Hemphill operated a wholesale drygoods company in North Wilkesboro, although he was also apparently involved in the building trade. In addition to his house on Brook Street, local tradition relates that he built at least two other houses in Wilkesboro -- the Queen Anne/Colonial Revival house at 406 Highland Street and later a Colonial Revival house on Corporation Street. He also remodelled a house in Roaring River.²

After Hemphill, the Brook Street house had several owners, including a Miller family and a Dr. Reeves, until it was purchased in 1920 by Carl A. Lowe. The Lowes had eight children, and when both Carl A. Lowe and his wife had died, one of their daughters, Beulah Lowe Woodie, and her husband, Glenn C. Woodie, purchased the house from the estate.³ They still reside in it, so that the house has been in the same family (Lowe-Woodie) ownership for over sixty years.

Footnotes --

¹Beulah Lowe Woodie and Nancy Huffman (Beulah Woodie's daughter), interview by Laura A. W. Phillips, Wilkesboro, May 14, 1980. Their information on the date of construction came from J. L. Hemphill's daughter, a Mrs. Perdue, who lives in Moravian Falls.

²Dottie Hubbard, notes provided for survey file on 203 N. Brook St., Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, Survey and Planning Branch files, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.

³Woodie-Huffman interview.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, Survey and Planning Branch files, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

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VERSAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property, located at 203 N. Brook St. (southeast corner of Brook St. and Woodland Blvd.), consists of Parcel 1 of Block 7, Tax Map 104, Town of Wilkesboro, measuring approximately 465 x 350 x 150 x 130 x 220 x 241.5 x 165 feet. The property includes the J. L. Hemphill House, the lawn which surrounds it, and the woodlands to the south and east, all of which are part of the town lot of approximately four acres on which the house stands.
The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological 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 archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological 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.
1 Beulah Lowe Woodie and Nancy Huffman (Beulah Woodie's daughter), interview by Laura A.W. Phillips, Wilkesboro, May 14, 1980. Their information on the date of construction came from J.L. Hemphill's daughter, a Mrs. Perdue, who lives in Moravian Falls.

2 Dottie Hubbard, notes provided for survey files on 203 N. Brook St., Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, Survey and Planning Branch files, N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

3 Woodie-Huffman interview.