



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

Pat McCrory, Governor
Emily W. Klutz, Secretary
Kevin Cherry, Deputy Secretary
Office of Archives and History

To: Rob and Caroline Rodier

From: Jennifer Cathey, State Historic Preservation Office
828.296.7230 x. 227, jennifer.cathey@ncdcr.gov

Date: June 6, 2014

Re: Notes on 82 Westwood

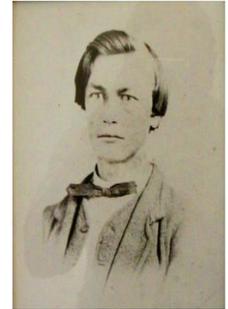
- Westwood Place was once the route of the Western Turnpike, a road chartered by the State in 1849 to link Salisbury with North Carolina's far western counties via Asheville. Travelers would cross the French Broad River at Smith's Bridge, climb the hill, travel along what is now Westwood Place and follow the Turnpike along Hominy Creek to points west, or branch off towards the Sulphur Springs Hotel.
- Until the 20th century, the property adjoined the Reynolds House lot to the south. The Merrimon House lot to the north was broken off the 82 Westwood lot in 1899.
- Documentary research thus far suggests that the property on which 82 Westwood stands once belonged to Smith family, and later to the Henry family. Both are distinguished in Asheville history. It remains to be discovered if a Smith or a Henry (or perhaps even a Swepson) built the house. As of yet, no smoking gun has been discovered to tell us who built the place. Study of construction detailing and documentary records may allow us to come to an educated guess as to who designed and built the house. For now, that best guess is



Western Turnpike in 1850, main route in red, alternate route in green. Reuben Deaver operated the Sulphur Springs Hotel in association with the Henry family. From UNC North Carolina maps collection.

James Love Henry and wife Mollie, although there's compelling reasons to think that Jesse Smith may have started construction of the house, or it's possible that Robert Swepson had a hand in its development.

- Jesse Smith's father, James McConnell Smith, was a wealthy businessman influential in the development of Asheville. He operated farms and livestock stands along the Buncombe Turnpike, a general store and hotel in downtown Asheville, and built "Buck House," now known as the Smith-McDowell House, ca. 1840. Jesse was a storekeeper and miller, and seems to have inherited some of his father's property. He experienced failed businesses and financial problems through the 1850s and 1860s. He died in 1870, and his wife Margaret Graves Smith and children left Asheville for her family home in Yanceyville.
- Jesse Smith lost the property spanning the current 82 Westwood lot in bankruptcy proceedings in 1869. Could he have started construction of 82 Westwood? Doug Swaim commented in *Cabins & Castles* that "strong tradition" dates 82 Westwood to 1860...yet we have no documentation of what exactly that "strong tradition" was. (Oral history? Comments made by homeowner or neighbor ca. 1980s?) Jesse Smith married in 1853, and was active in DT Asheville and West Asheville throughout 1860s. 82 Westwood architectural details described below suggest a date later than 1860, though it is still compelling to keep Jesse Smith in mind as having a role in its development or construction.



Jesse Siler Smith, ca. 1840.
From Caswell County Historical Assoc.

- John Love Henry (1835-1884) and R.R. Swepson acquired the 82 Westwood property in 1869. Though he was involved in post Civil War Asheville business and railroad development, Swepson appears never to have had a residence in Asheville. J.L. Henry was a newspaper editor, lawyer, circuit court judge, and businessman, and he amassed extensive real estate in Asheville, including the "Henry Estate" stretching from Smith's Bridge to the vicinity of Westwood Place. Before his death in 1884, he was a developer of "Silver Springs," a cluster of houses, stores, and a hotel on the west end of Smith's Bridge on the French Broad River (about the location of the New Belgium construction site).

- J.L. Henry's father, Robert Henry, was a surveyor, schoolteacher, lawyer, and Revolutionary War veteran. (And according to Wayne Caldwell's intro to a recent biography of Henry, also *brilliant, mean, shrewd, stubborn as an ill-tempered mule, and tight as tree bark.*) Robert Henry discovered warm springs in West Asheville, and was involved with development of the Sulphur Springs Hotel—a premier summer attraction in West Asheville through the 19th century. J.L.'s brother William and sister-in-law Cornelia Smith Henry, lived in West Asheville near the Sulphur Springs. Cornelia kept a diary through the Civil War era, now published as *Fear in North Carolina: The Civil War Journal and Letters of the Henry Family*. In the diary, Cornelia had some interesting things to say about J.L. Henry's relations with Mollie Henry, and with Federal troops following the Battle of Asheville.



J.L. Henry gravestone at Riverside cemetery. The marker is inscribed *In Memoriam, by Daughter Bell.*

- Ownership of 82 Westwood seems to have been linked for some period of time in the 19th century with a grist mill on Smith's Mill Creek. The mill associated with the house *may* have been the Smith's Mill for which the creek is named, and also the mill belonging to Jesse Smith—although these connections are not yet clearly documented. For certain, the mill was at one time known as Hazel Mill and Hazel-Green Mill. For a brief time in the 1880s, R. O. Patterson owned and operated Hazel Mill, and also owned 82 Westwood. Hazel Mill was located around the spot where Hazel Mill Road runs into Patton Avenue. Records also suggest that Hazel Mill Road was once called Patterson Mill Road.

- The Atkinson family was long associated with 82 Westwood. Nat and Harriett Atkinson acquired the house in 1887. Natt had a law office on “Hazel Hill” as early as 1883 or 1884, and later ran a real estate business called Atkinson & Sons, with a downtown office. Ads in the 1897 Asheville City Directory indicate Natt as editor and publisher of “*Land of the Sky: a monthly magazine describing and illustrating Western North Carolina the Switzerland of America,*” probably promotional material for land sales.
- As documented in Doug Swaim’s *Cabins & Castles* book, 82 Westwood is unique for its “Tuscan” style, it bears some similarities to other Asheville area homes. Its overall form and brickwork relate to the Spears House at 53 Orange Street. Interestingly, the Orange Street house was the home of Jane Cordelia Smith Spears—Jesse Smith’s sister. The floor plan of 82 Westwood—three front rooms of equal size—bears some resemblance to the Billy Wagner House documented in *Cabins & Castles* (ca. 1835 frame house north of Asheville) and to the floor plans of Ravenscroft and Furnihurst. Similarities or connections among these houses warrant more study.
- The architectural significance of 82 Westwood has yet to be fully explored and put into context—but it is no doubt unique in Asheville and Buncombe County for its picturesque Italianate style, association with post-bellum development of the city, and for its outstanding interior millwork.

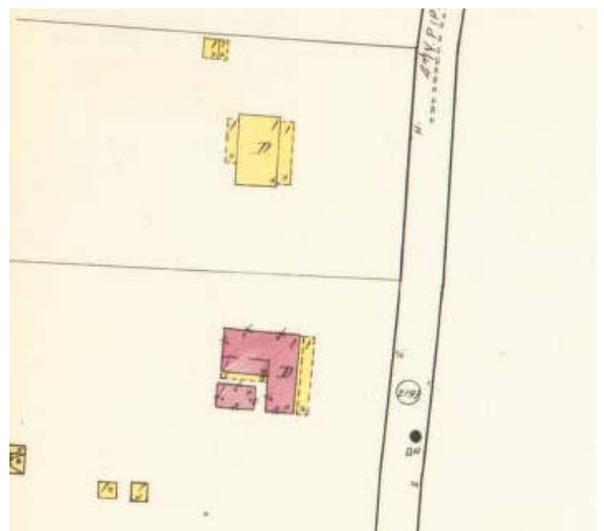


Spears House, 53 Orange Street.

- 82 Westwood’s roof and floor framing are mill sawn, showing circular saw marks. This places its construction after the Patton-Parker House on Charlotte Street (1868) and the Spears House on Orange Street (ca. 1860s), both of which contain mill sawn (not circular sawn) framing. A box lock between the left parlor and middle front room at 82 Westwood displays an 1870 date. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps indicate that the freestanding kitchen building was joined to the main house after 1917. The fireplace mantels are sophisticated for Buncombe County compared to other known houses with post-bellum interiors. (Original mantelpieces in the Patton-Parker House are late, vernacular Greek Revival. The Spears House and Smathers’ Turnpike Inn (demolished in the 1980s) featured mantels akin to those at 82 Westwood, but with a more hand-made vernacular flavor.) Interior millwork at 82 Westwood appears “store-bought” or manufactured, rather than handmade by a local builder or craftsman. Overall, these construction and decorative features—paired with the historical research—suggest an early 1870s construction date for the house, and a property owner of means.

82 Westwood title trace (subject to additional research & interpretation):

| | |
|----------|--|
| 2014 | Rob & Caroline Rodier Joseph Bennett |
| 1940 | Walter & Lillian Bennett William E., Frank, & Jack Atkinson |
| 1887 | Nat & Harriet Atkinson |
| 1887 | Charles E. & Susan Graham |
| 1883 | Robert O. & Medora Patterson |
| 1871(?) | James L. & Mollie Henry |
| 1869 | James L. Henry and Robert R. Swepson |
| ca. 1856 | Jesse Siler Smith |
| ca. 1840 | James McConnell Smith Candler & Baird |



1917 Sanborn fire Insurance map showing 82 Westwood (bottom left) with freestanding kitchen and outbuildings, and Merrimon House (top left).