NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

RECEIVED 2280
MAR 15 2013
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

226

**United States Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of property

historic name Lowe, Robert Chester and Elsie H., House

other names/site number

## 2. Location

street & number 1010 Shawneehaw Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Banner Elk vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Avery code 011 zip code 28604

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _X_ 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 _X_ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide _X_ locally. ( ___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kevin Cherry SHPO 3/8/2013
Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register
____ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 5.1.13

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**
(Check as many boxes as apply)

__x__ private
___ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

**Category of Property**
(Check only one box)

__x__ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

**Number of Resources within Property**
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 1 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 3 | 0 | Total |

**Name of related multiple property listing**
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**
N/A

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)

| Cat: | Sub: |
|---|---|
| Domestic | single dwelling |
| Agriculture/Subsistence | agricultural field |
| Agriculture/Subsistence | agricultural outbuilding |

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)

| Cat: | Sub: |
|---|---|
| Domestic | single dwelling |
| Agriculture/Subsistence | storage |

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)
OTHER: Minimal Traditional

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation stone
roof asphalt
walls granite
other

**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.

__x__ 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.

**Criteria Considerations**
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

(Enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

**Period of Significance**
1949

**Significant Dates**
1949

**Significant Person**
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
Whitesell, Charles F., designer
Draughon, Larry, stonemason
Ramsey, Lawrence, stonemason

**Areas of Significance**
**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**
__x__ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: Western Office, Archives & History

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 26.56 acres

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

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 17 | 421840 | 4001080 |
| 2 | 17 | 421960 | 4001170 |
| 3 | 17 | 422000 | 4001170 |
| 4 | 17 | 422060 | 4000940 |

x See continuation sheet.

**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 Sybil H. Argintar, Preservation Planning Consultant

organization Southeastern Preservation Services date December 11, 2012

street & number 166 Pearson Drive telephone (828) 230-3773

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28801

## 12. 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

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Martha Jo Beasley

street & number P.O. Bo 1618 telephone (828) 898-5571

city or town Banner Elk state NC zip code 28604

**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.0. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**Summary**
The Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House, built in 1949, is located in the town of Banner Elk, in the northeast corner of Avery County. The Minimal Traditional-style house faces northeast, at the northwest corner of a twenty-six and one-half acre parcel of open pastureland. The house is banked into the hillside, with the topography dropping in elevation from north to south. Elk Creek runs to the south and west of the house, and Highway 184, also called Shawneehaw Avenue, runs to the north of the property. Across the road are both historic and modern residential structures, with a modern subdivision to the east. West of the property is a portion of the Lees-McRae College campus, along with additional historic residences. The original semi-circular gravel driveway is located at the front of the house, with a large open lawn separating the house and drive from Highway 184. Portions of the original apple orchard remain to the north and west of the house, and a rail fence separates the house from the pastureland to the south. The barn and corn crib, both of which date to 1949, are located west of the house, near the creek.

**Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House. Contributing Building. 1949.**

The Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House is a one-and-one-half story-plus-basement Minimal Traditional-style house with an asphalt-shingled cross-gable roofline, random-range quarry-faced stone walls, two tapered stone chimneys and a shed-roof porch on the southeast elevation. Windows are typically either single or double six-over-six or eight-over-eight sash, with concrete sills, with some exceptions as noted below. The front (northeast elevation) of the house consists of a projecting sweeping front gable and a gently tapering stone end chimney set slightly off-center. Concrete steps framed by cast-iron railings lead up to the six-panel front door at the northeast corner of the projecting front gable. There are four bays on the first floor, including the porch entrance at the southeast corner, consisting of concrete steps and a metal railing, and a single eight-over-eight window bay on the second, in the gable end. Windows are eight-over-eight, with a multi-light picture window framed by four-over-four sash, recessed back from the front, at the northeast corner. The southeast elevation, which drops in elevation from east to west, is six bays on the first, with a double six-over-six window in the gable end on the second level. Moving from west to east, the first three bays project forward, and consist of a replacement one-over-one double-hung window, the multi-light-over-panel door to the kitchen, and a picture window that is the same as the one on the façade. In front of these three bays there is a concrete-decked stoop at the southwest corner with a shed roof, supported by decorative metal posts, which extends over to the porch roof to the east. Concrete steps and a metal railing lead up to this stoop. The east three bays of the southeast elevation consist of the six-panel side door framed by eight-over-eight windows. A porch with concrete deck and metal balustrade, covering the three east bays, is located at the southeast corner, with a shed roof supported by decorative metal posts. The rear (southwest elevation) has a full basement level visible above ground due to the change in elevation from the front of the house. It is five bays at the basement level, with a single-car garage located beneath the house at the northwest corner. To the south of the garage door additional bays include two-light sliding windows, a four-light-over-four-panel door, and a multi-light casement window with transom. The first floor is five bays wide, and the second floor is two bays. The three southernmost windows on the first level were changed to one-over-one sash when the baths and kitchen were remodeled, and the smaller one-over-one window at the bathroom on the second

level is also a modern change. The northwest elevation has a small portion of the basement visible above ground at the northwest corner, with three, two-light sliding sash windows. The first floor is four bays wide, with a second, tapered stone end chimney at the northernmost corner, and the second floor has a picture window consisting of eight-over-eight sash framed by four-over-four sash, in the gable end.

On the interior of the house, floors throughout are tongue-and-groove oak, all ceilings have a textured plaster finish, and doors are six-panel. Walls in all of the bedrooms, on both floors, have a textured plaster finish. There is a laundry chute system on both floors and the original electric wall heaters remain throughout the house. On the first story molding takes the place of baseboards, there are no door or window surrounds, and the window sills are molded. The first floor consists of a living room, den or music room, dining room, kitchen, bath, and two bedrooms. Notable features on the first floor include the variable-width wormy chestnut paneling in all of the rooms except the two bedrooms and the bath, built-in shelving in the rear hall, and floor to ceiling stone fireplaces in the living room and the den/music room. Both fireplaces have stone mantel shelves and the one in the den/music room tapers inward from above the mantel to the ceiling. The only changes on the first floor are the remodeled bath and kitchen, including new tile and replacement of some of the bath fixtures, and some replacement windows. The kitchen has new countertops, cabinets, and appliances. On the second story there is no cornice molding; baseboards are flat board with a squared-edge detail, as are the door and window surrounds and the window sills. The stairs to the second floor are enclosed, with a simple turned balustrade and newel post at the second floor hallway. Paneling, the same as on the first floor, lines the stairs, but the walls in the hallway have a textured plaster finish. The second floor contains three bedrooms, a cedar closet, and a bath. Changes on this floor include new tile, fixtures, and a window in the bath. The house has a nearly full basement where the stone foundation and the concrete block walls, which back the stone facing, are visible. However, some of these foundation walls consist of stone extending all the way to the ground.

**Barn. Contributing Building. 1949.**

The one-and-one-half-story, front-gable roof barn with shed-roof-covered storage areas on the east and west, is in fair condition. The shed-roof storage area to the east extends out as wide as the barn, while the storage area on the west is much smaller relative to the size of the barn. Walls are flush, vertical board and the roof is covered with metal sheathing. All openings are covered with flush boards. The structure of the building is of pole construction, with the locust posts set into the ground, serving as both foundation and roof support. Animal stalls, used formerly for the milk cows, are still intact.

**Corn Crib. Contributing Structure. 1949.**

The one-story shed-roof wooden corn crib with horizontal slatted walls and a shed-roof lean-to supported by wooden posts is in poor condition, with a large portion of the asphalt-shingle roof collapsing. Like the barn, this building is of pole construction.

**Integrity Statement**

While there have been some minor changes to the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House, consisting primarily of modernization of the kitchen and baths, along with replacement of windows in these side and rear locations with one-over-one double-hung sash, the building overall retains a high degree of architectural integrity as does the property overall.

The structures are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and additional structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structures. Information concerning land-use patterns, social standing, and social/economic mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structures. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

**Summary**

The 1949 Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House meets National Register Criterion C for architecture as a Minimal Traditional-style house, built of local materials and exhibiting a high level of craftsmanship, which showcases the work of local designer Charles F. Whitesell, and local stonemasons Larry Draughon and Lawrence Ramsey. The house is an excellent and intact example of the Minimal Traditional style, including notable stonework and carpentry. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the style within the context of Banner Elk in Avery County, North Carolina, including its stone exterior, the asymmetrical form, the gable roof with projecting front gable, prominent chimneys with a Tudor Revival/Period Cottage influence, a one-and-one-half-story height, and multi-light double-hung window sash. The period of significance is 1949, the date of construction.

**Historic Background**

In the mid-nineteenth century, when Banner's Elk[1] was settled, present-day Avery County was part of Watauga County. Watauga County had been formed from Wilkes and portions of Ashe, Caldwell, and Yancey counties in 1849. Avery County was formed out of the southwest portion of Watauga County in 1911.[2] The land which made up first Watauga, and later Avery County, was an area rugged in terrain, often with harsh winters, and remote from most of the rest of the state. Much of the area was settled in the mid-nineteenth century by families of English, German, and Scotch-Irish descent, including the Moody, Dugger, Abrams, VonCanon, Keller, Smith, Lineback, and Foster families. Being close to the Tennessee border, much of the early trade traffic came from out of state rather than other parts of North Carolina. It was a long and difficult trip to travel east to other regions of North Carolina, with a trip to Charlotte often taking up to three weeks, and a trip to nearby Lenoir taking four or five days.[3] When these trips were made, farmers loaded up on a year's supply of goods such as flour, coffee, sugar, salt, and rice, which could not be produced locally. By necessity, early settlers had to become largely self-sufficient.[4]

Avery County was formed on February 23, 1911.[5] The county was named for Colonel Waightstill Avery, Revolutionary soldier and attorney general of North Carolina, and the county seat of Newland was named for North Carolina Lieutenant Governor William Calhoun Newland.[6] Even though there had been some rail access and road improvements in the area by the time Avery County was formed in 1911, much of the

[1] The present-day town of Banner Elk was originally called "Banner's Elk" for the many Banner family members that settled there beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The "Elk" part of the name came from the location of these early settlements on the Elk River. It was not until the twentieth century, when Avery County was formed, that the name was changed to Banner Elk.
[2] Whitener, Daniel J. History of Watauga County. Boone: Watauga Centennial Commission, 1949, p. 33.
[3] Ibid, p. 39.
[4] Ibid, p. 42.
[5] Cooper, Horton. History of Avery County, North Carolina. Asheville: Biltmore Press, 1964, p. 5.
[6] Ibid, p. 9.

county, including Banner Elk, remained isolated in many ways from the rest of the State. There were no paved roads, and dirt turnpike roads, such as the one between Banner Elk and Elk Park or the Parallel Road between Banner Elk and Cranberry, formed some of the only transportation routes.[7] In 1915, Avery County issued a $100,000 bond for road improvements.[8] By 1917, the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad had acquired the old Linville River Railway, and completed its route from Johnson City all the way to Boone, with multiple stops in Tennessee and North Carolina, including Newland, along its sixty-six miles.[9] Called the Tweetsie line, it was known for its ornate passenger cars and mountain excursions, and continued to run until 1946, when automobiles and better roads made train travel less economical. As roads and rail continued to improve in the regions, commercial farming became more prevalent, and tourism continued to grow as an industry. The population of Avery County was 10, 335 in 1920; 11, 803 in 1930; 13,561 in 1940; and 13,352 in 1950, with Banner Elk's population in 1949 at 3,990.[10] Banner Elk, along with the rest of Avery County in the early twentieth century, began to be more accessible due to the development of roads and railroads, as more visitors began to visit the area. However, most of the resort hotels were located in Linville and surrounding communities. It was not until Beech Mountain ski resort was developed in 1967, and later Sugar Mountain ski resort in the early 1970s, that Banner Elk began to see more of an influx of visitors as well as individuals building second homes.[11]

One of the earliest settlers, and the first permanent white settler in what is now the Banner Elk area, was Martin Luther Banner (1808-1895), who moved there from Surry County in 1849 with his wife and ten children. Two of Martin Luther's brothers, John William and Lewis Bitting, moved to Banner Elk in the 1850s and remained in the area. Lewis Bitting (1805 – 1883) bought 200 acres in Avery County and ran a tannery on the land.[12] He married Nancy Meadow Flippin in 1837, and had eight children, including William Derritt; Samuel Henry; Joshua Albert; Mary Mildred; Nancy A; Lewis Martin; Edwin Joseph; and Martha H. Lewis Martin Banner (1854 – 1916), one of the sons, was known as "Lute". He married, had two sons, Lewis Bitting Banner (named for his grandfather) and Thomas Banner. After his wife died, he moved back to Banner Elk and lived on sixty-one and one-fourth acres of the 200 acres his grandfather had originally bought.[13]

---

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid. p. 11.
[9] History of Watauga County, p. 48. Banner Elk tried to get the line to stop there, but it bypassed them and went on to Boone.
[10] History of Avery County, p. 65.
[11] Beasley, Martha Jo. Granddaughter of Robert Chester Lowe. Phone interview with Sybil H. Argintar, November 30, 2012.
[12] Beasley, Elsie Lowe and Martha Jo Beasley. Daughter and granddaughter of Robert Chester Lowe. Personal interview with Sybil H. Argintar, June 15, 2012. It is interesting to note that while Lewis Bitting Banner had seventeen slaves, he was a staunch Unionist during the Civil War, and, according to family lore, assisted Union soldiers across enemy lines.
[13] Beasley, Elsie Lowe. Photographs Banner's Elk: Album One. Sabre Printers, 2006, p. 26.

It is this land that Robert Chester Lowe, known as Chester, (1895 – 1960) bought on June 25, 1943, from Lewis Bitting Banner for his own house and farm.[14] Chester was the son of Robert Lee and Nancy Blanche VonCanon Lowe, who had married January 28, 1891, and owned and operated the Banner Elk Hotel in town from 1893 to 1948.[15] The Lowe children were all born at the hotel and grew up there. Chester attended grammar school and was taught by Reverend Edgar Tufts, a minister at the Presbyterian Church in Banner Elk. He continued his education at the Lees-McRae Institute (now Lees-McRae College), graduating from the tenth grade on December 8, 1913. [16] He briefly continued his education at the Appalachian Training School in Boone, but soon returned home to help out at the hotel and to work in the lumber business with his uncle Fred VonCanon, eventually buying a one-fourth interest in the business.[17] Chester enlisted in the army during World War I and served in the army's lumber yards in Vancouver, Washington, in the Spruce Production Division, which cut spruce logs into the proper lumber dimensions for building the new war "aeroplanes." Enough lumber was cut each day to build 300 planes.[18] In February 1919 he returned permanently to Banner Elk and became a partner in the VonCanon Lumber Company, buying another one-fourth of the business.[19] Fred served as buyer and head of the company and Chester worked as his assistant and director of field operations, supervising the purchase of land, the cutting of lumber at local sawmills, and the stacking and hauling of the lumber from the mills to the buyer. Chester was also the "tally" man for the company, keeping track of the lumber produced.[20]

Robert Chester Lowe married Elsie Lee Hunsucker (1898 - 1976) on November 15, 1920, and bought a home near his parents' hotel. Elsie Hunsucker was born in Conover, North Carolina, and graduated from Catawba College in 1920 with a focus on music and art. Chester and Elsie had three children, Frances, Robert, and Elsie. Chester continued to work at VonCanon Lumber Company and, while he worked there, set aside boards of wormy chestnut, which at the time no one in the community wanted, in hopes of using them someday in his own home. Elsie and Chester were active in the community and local politics, both affiliated with the Democratic Party in a primarily Republican county. They were members of the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church, and both helped at local schools. Chester was also mayor of Banner Elk in the 1930s and a member of the Banner Elk Civic Club.[21] Chester bought the sixty acres of land previously owned by Lewis Bitting Banner, his great-grandfather, in 1943, but did not move there

[14] Survey from L. B. Banner to R. C. Lowe, June 25, 1943. From Lowe family papers.
[15] "Gilbert Alexander Lowe, Jr., 1822 – 1881: His Ancestors and Descendents". Unpublished, 1997, in western office of Archives & History, p. 74.
[16] Ibid, p. 86.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Beasley, Elsie Lowe. From notes about her father and the VonCanon Lumber Company. Unpublished.
[19]"Gilbert Alexander Lowe, Jr., 1822 – 1881: His Ancestors and Descendents". Unpublished, 1997, in Western Office of Archives & History, p. 86.
[20] Beasley, Elsie Lowe. From notes about her father and the VonCanon Lumber Company. Unpublished
[21]"Gilbert Alexander Lowe, Jr., 1822 – 1881: His Ancestors and Descendents". Unpublished, 1997, in Western Office of Archives & History, p. 86.

until 1949 when the house was complete. At that time, he sold the house near the hotel that he had been living in since 1943 to his sister Annie Lowe Heineman and her husband, Paul.[22]

It was not until 1949 that Chester was finally able to build his own home. He employed Charles F. Whitesell, a woodshop and mechanical drawing instructor at nearby Lees-McRae College, to design the house. Elsie and Chester Lowe knew of Mr. Whitesell from his work at the college, and by visiting Whitesell's home, still in existence on the campus of Lees-McRae College, which he designed and built himself.[23] Reverend Edgar Tufts, founder of the college, recruited Whitesell in the early 1930s from the State Department of Education, in Raleigh, with the purpose of establishing a vocational arts department at the school.[24] Whitesell worked for twenty-eight years at Lees-McRae College, teaching cabinetry, furniture making, graphic arts, architecture, and drafting. He ran the woodshop, where he also taught classes in wrought iron and weaving. He received a Bachelor of Education from St. Cloud State Teachers College (St. Cloud, Minnesota) in 1925, followed by a degree in industrial education from Stout Institute of Technology (Menomonie, Wisconsin) in 1936. Whitesell also attended Clemson University in 1931.[25] In addition to his work at the college, Whitesell was known for his own shop, the Banner Elk Craft Shop, which produced furniture.[26]

Larry Draughon (1910 – 1999), a stonemason from Banner Elk, was the main craftsman in charge of the construction of the house, assisted by another local stonemason, Lawrence "Happy" Ramsey.[27] Elsie Lowe Beasley, Chester and Elsie's daughter, remembers that Draughon would hand select stones from a local quarry for the house, making sure they were the right size and shape with minimal cutting needed.[28] The wormy chestnut boards that Chester salvaged from the lumber yard were indeed used in the finished variable-width paneling and molding throughout the house. The electrical work in the house was done by Harry Proffitt and the plumbing was done by Darrell Preswood, both local contractors. Other electrical

---

[22] Lowe family papers documenting the acreage transferred from Banner to Lowe, dated 1943. Lewis and Nancy Banner had a daughter named Mary Mildred who married William VonCanon in 1868. Mary Mildred Banner VonCanon and William VonCanon had a daughter named Nancy Blanche (Blanche) VonCanon , born 1869, who married Robert Lee Lowe in 1891. Robert Chester Lowe was the son of Blanche and Robert Lee Lowe, so there is connection between the Banner and Lowe families.

[23] Beasley, Elsie Lowe and Martha Jo Beasley. Daughter and granddaughter of Robert Chester Lowe. Phone interview with Sybil H. Argintar, December 1, 2012.

[24] File on Charles F. Whitesell, located in the archives of Lees-McRae College.

[25] Faculty analysis report. File on Charles F. Whitesell, located in the archives of Lees-McRae College. Whitesell, after his retirement, was honored on September 27, 1974 when the woodshop at Lees-McRae College was named for him.

[26] File on Charles F. Whitesell, located in the archives of Lees-McRae College.

[27] Not much additional information is available about "Happy" Ramsey, other than he often assisted Larry Draughon.

[28] Beasley, Elsie Lowe and Martha Jo Beasley. Daughter and granddaughter of Robert Chester Lowe. In-person interview with Sybil H. Argintar, June 15, 2012.

work was provided by Hardin Electric & Supply, Inc. of Salisbury, North Carolina, and built-in wall heaters were provided by Gregg Electric Co., Inc., of Johnson City, Tennessee.[29]

Larry Draughon was the son of Lewis and Mary Draughon, and grew up in Banner Elk. Lewis Draughon was a highly skilled blacksmith. Larry Draughon was self-taught in masonry work, and was also considered to be an excellent carpenter.[30] In addition to the Robert C. and Elsie H. Lowe House, Larry Draughon was the masonry craftsman for many other houses and buildings in Banner Elk. Among these are the Flossie Rowe Residence (1930s, 1181 Shawneehaw Avenue); the Homer and Arlene Hodges Residence (1940s, 191 Main Street); the Dr. Lawson Tate Residence (176 Tate Drive, early 1940s); his own home for himself and wife Betty (184 Penny Lane, 1945); the Dr. and Mrs. Linder Residence (early 1950s, 208 Tate Drive); the Dr. and Mrs. Briedenthal Residence (1950s, 656 Gaultney Road); the A. C. Chaffee Center at Lees-McRae College (1955, also the interior carpentry); the James H. Carson Library at Lees-McRae College (late 1950s); and the Recreation Center at Grandfather Home for Children (64 Grandfather Home Road, late 1960s).[31] Additionally, he assisted Miriam Hayes on the construction of her home (Concord, North Carolina, 1950s). Draughon was first and foremost a mason, but it is known that he completed cabinetry in doctors' offices and the emergency room at the former Cannon Memorial Hospital.[32]

Chester Lowe worked at the lumber yard until he retired in the 1950s, but he also worked the land associated with the house. He raised prized Hereford cattle along with dairy cows, sheep, chickens, and hogs. He grew buckwheat and corn for animal feed, and cabbage, which was sent to a sauerkraut factory located in Cranberry, North Carolina. Most of the pastureland was left for hay; Lowe also maintained a personal vegetable garden and apple orchards, pressing apples for cider in the fall.[33] There were other livestock barns on the property in addition to the barn and corn crib, none of which remain.

In 1974 Elsie Hunsucker Lowe deeded the sixty-acre parcel among her three children, with the stone house and 25. 42 acres of land going to daughter Elsie Lowe (1928 - ) and her husband James Claude Beasley (1924 – 2011).[34] James Beasley was a member of the Methodist Church in Banner Elk, was a World War II veteran, and worked as an educator and senior administrator with the North Carolina

---

[29] Ibid. The house was certified by General Electric as an all-electric home. Lowe family papers.
[30] Draughon, Gail. Daughter of Larry Draughon. Interview with Martha Beasley, June 26, 2012.
[31] Lees-McRae Archives on the building of the A. C. Chaffee Center. Beeson & Beeson, of Johnson City, Tennessee, were the architects. Heating, plumbing, and electrical work was done by Lafferty Utilities of Banner Elk and W. S. Thompson of Elk Park. Don Riddle of Banner Elk was the construction supervisor of local labor, of which Larry Draughon was one of the stonemasons and carpenters. Stone came from the college quarry on Beech Mountain.
[32] Draughon, Gail. Daughter of Larry Draughon. Interview with Martha Beasley, June 26, 2012.
[33] Beasley, Elsie Lowe and Martha Jo Beasley. Daughter and granddaughter of Robert Chester Lowe. Personal interview with Sybil H. Argintar, June 15, 2012.
[34] Avery County Deed Books 89, 771 and 92, 1055.

Department of Education.[35] The Beasleys deeded the house and 1.14 acres to their daughter, Martha Jo Beasley, on December 11, 2007; the house has remained in the family since it was built.[36] The other 25.42 acres was deeded from Elsie Lowe Beasley, then a widow, to Martha Jo Beasley on November 8, 2011.[37]

**Architecture Context**

The Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House was built in the Minimal Traditional style, a style popular from the mid-1930s through the early 1950s, when the Ranch style began to gain in popularity.[38] Large numbers of these houses were built pre- and post-World War II, especially within large subdivision developments of the late 1940s to early 1950s.[39] The style typically was small in footprint, one to one-and-one-half stories in height, with minimal ornamentation, asymmetrical fenestration with an off-center entrance, typically with at least one front-facing gable, shallow eaves, and double-hung windows. Often there is a picture window denoting the living room space, some use of built-ins on the interior, small, covered porches or uncovered stoops, at least one large chimney, and often a garage.[40] Exterior cladding could be stone, wood, brick, asbestos, or a mixture of all four materials. The form of the building was often a minimalist combination of the Colonial and Tudor Revival styles, with a gable roof, projecting front or cross gables, and asymmetrical fenestration.[41] These houses, like the Craftsman bungalow style before them, were houses for the middle class, simple in design, easy to build, and affordable. The Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House follows very closely many of the design tenets of the Minimal Traditional style, including a stone exterior, a cross- gable roof with a projecting front gable, prominent chimneys with a Tudor Revival/Period Cottage influence, a one-and-one-half-story height, asymmetrical fenestration, including multi-light double-hung window sash, interior built-ins, such as shelving in the first floor hall and laundry chutes, a small covered porch, and a garage beneath the house.

It was not unusual to build with stone in the Banner Elk area, as it was so readily available from several local quarries on Grandfather and Beech mountains. Many other buildings in Avery County and the adjacent counties, including the Crossnore Presbyterian Church (Crossnore, Avery County, 1924 to 1926); most of the buildings at Lees-McRae College (Banner Elk, Avery County, 1900 through the present); the Cove Creek School (Watauga County, 1941); and the United States Post Office (Boone, Watauga County, 1938) were built of native stone.

---

[35] James Beasley obituary. *Avery Journal*. March 1, 2011.
[36] Avery County Deed Book 421, p. 986.
[37] Avery County Deed Book 460, p. 995.
[38] "Antique Home" http://www.antiquehome.org/Architectural-Style/minimal-traditional.htm
[39] "Mid Century Home Style" http://www.midcenturyhomestyle.com/styles/minimal-traditional.htm, "Antique Home," and McAlester, Virginia and Lee, A Field Guide to American Houses, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984, p. 478.
[40] "Antique Home."
[41] "Mid Century Home Style."

Larry Draughon, in his work as a stonemason, kept up this tradition in the work he completed from the 1930s through the late 1960s. The Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House, completed late in Draughon's career, stands out as the most refined of all of Draughon's houses, in terms of craftsmanship and detailing, of all of the houses he built, bringing together within one structure all of his skills as a stonemason and carpenter. The chestnut paneling in the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House does not appear in any of Draughon's other houses, and indeed, it was not until the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House was completed that Draughon's skills in this trade became evident.

All of the houses that Draughon built in the Banner Elk area are extant, and while his institutional buildings were in a variety of modern styles, most of his residential work utilized the Minimal Traditional style popular in the time period when he was most active as a stonemason and carpenter. While his earlier houses have some similarities to the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House in terms of style, it is only one of two Minimal Traditional stone houses (the Hodges House, a much smaller house with a wing added being the other one) he built in Banner Elk. Draughon's own house (1945, 184 Penny Lane), a frame structure with wood siding rather than stone like the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House, has had a large addition added to one side which alters the original Minimal Tradition style. The same change took place at the Rowe residence (1930s, 1181 Shawneehaw Avenue), another frame building with wood siding, which has a large addition altering the Minimal Traditional appearance of the original section. The Tate house (early 1940s) is partially clad in stone, but has wood siding on the upper level. The Linder residence (early 1950s), built after the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House, has a stone foundation, but is clad in wood siding. The Briedenthal residence (1950s) is a Ranch style house, so is very different stylistically than the Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House.

**Bibliography**

Avery County Deed Records. Avery County Courthouse, Newland, North Carolina.

Beasley, Elsie Lowe. Photographs Banner's Elk: Album One. Sabre Printers, 2006.

Beasley, Elsie Lowe. Photographs Banner's Elk: Album Two. Sabre Printers, 2009.

Beasley, Elsie Lowe, and Martha Jo Beasley. Personal interview with Sybil H. Argintar, June 15, 2012.

Cooper, Horton. History of Avery County, North Carolina. Asheville: Biltmore Press, 1964.

Draughon, Gail. Daughter of Larry Draughon. Phone interview with Martha Beasley, June 26, 2012.

"Gilbert Alexander Lowe, Jr., 1822 – 1881: His Ancestors and Descendants." Unpublished, 199. Located in the Western Office of Archives & History.

Lees-McRae College archives. Banner Elk, North Carolina.

Lowe family papers and photographs. In possession of Martha Jo Beasley and Elsie Lowe Beasley.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Whitener, Daniel J. History of Watauga County. Boone: Watauga Centennial Commission, 1949.

**Additional UTMs**

5. 17 422330 4001990
6. 17 422500 4000810
7. 17 422460 4000700
8. 17 421880 4000840

**Boundary Description**

The National Register boundary includes Parcel # 185810462214 and 185810366757.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes a portion of the land that was historically associated with the house and provides an appropriate setting.

**Robert C. and Elsie H. Lowe House Photographs**

The following information applies to all photographs, except where noted.

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of property: | Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House<br>Banner Elk, Avery County, North Carolina |
| Photographer: | Sybil H. Argintar |
| Date of photos: | May 2012, unless otherwise noted |
| Location of original digital images: | North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office<br>Raleigh, North Carolina |

1. house, view northwest

2. house, view west

3. house, view southeast

4. house, view northeast

5. house, view south

6. fields behind house, view northwest

7. barn, view northwest

8. living room, view northeast

9. music room, view northwest

10. paneling and typical door, dining room
June 2012

11. stairs to second floor
June 2012

12. second floor hall

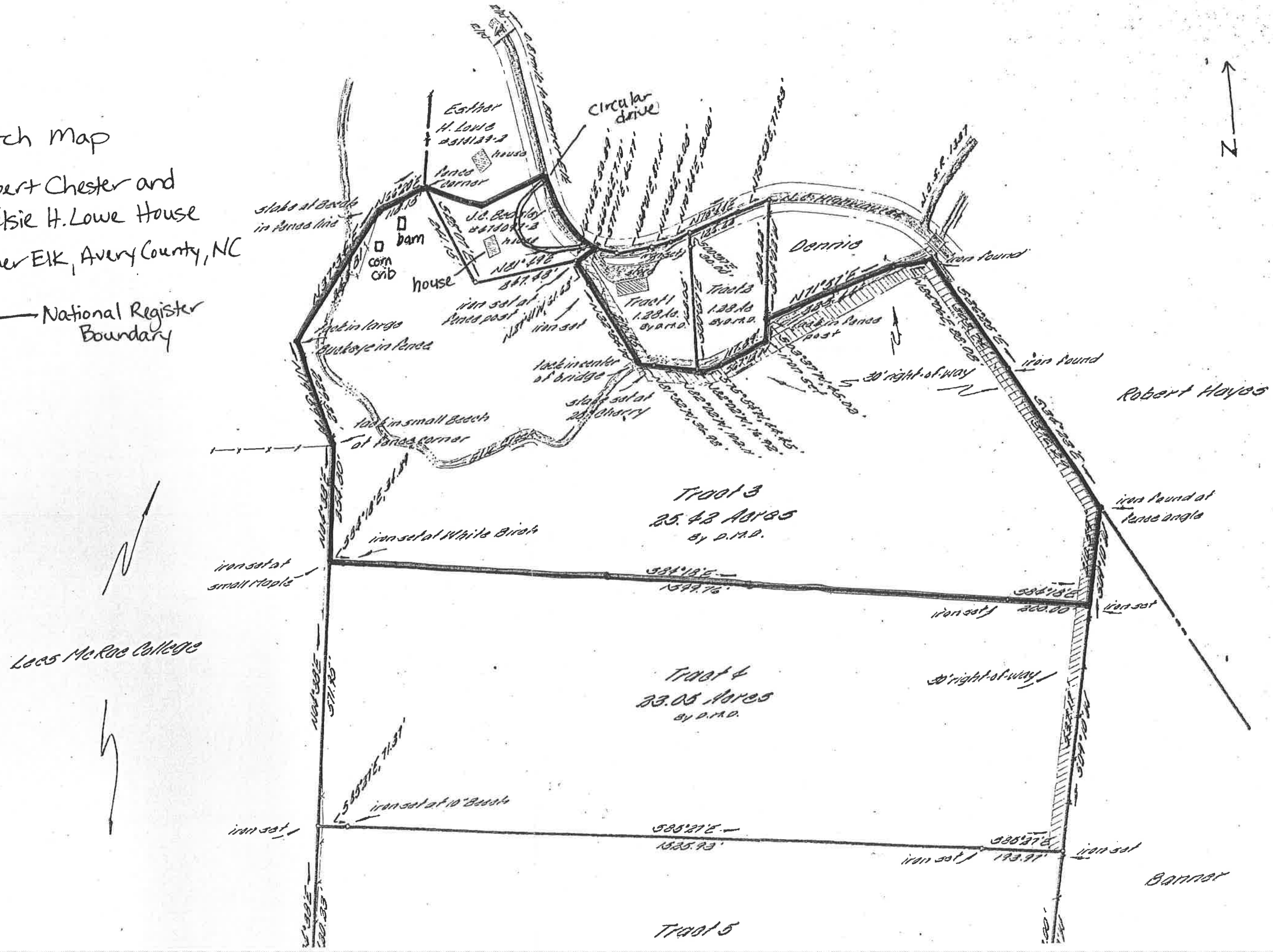
13. typical bedroom, second floor

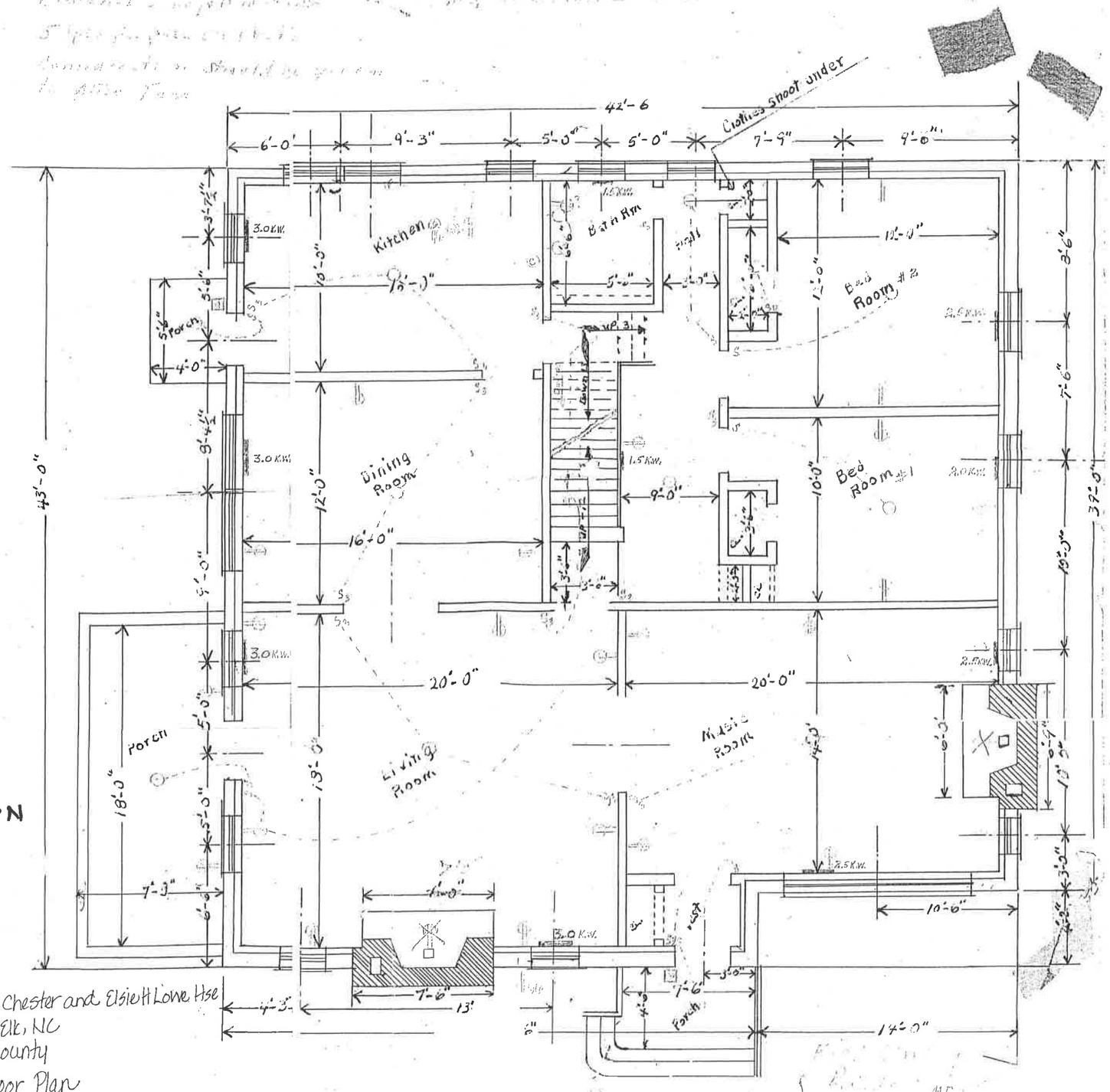
Sketch Map

Robert Chester and
Elsie H. Lowe House

Banner Elk, Avery County, NC

—— National Register Boundary



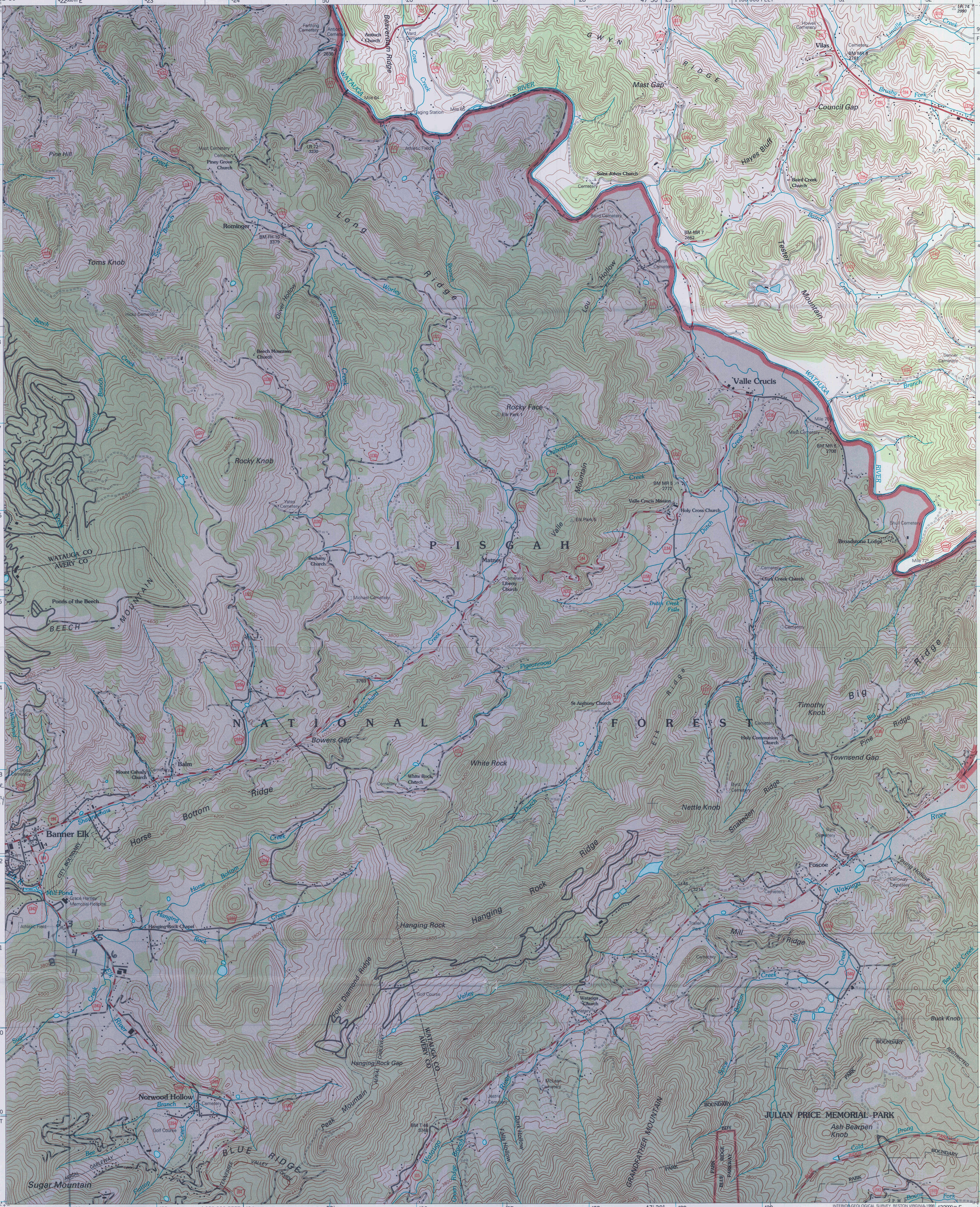



Robert Chester and Elsie H Lowe Hse
Banner Elk, NC
Avery County
First Floor Plan

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

# VALLE CRUCIS QUADRANGLE
NORTH CAROLINA
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)




Robert Chester and Elsie H. Lowe House
Banner Elk, Avery County North Carolina
Valle Crucis Quad

Zone 17
UTMs:
1 421840 4001080
2 421960 4001170
3 422000 4001170
4 422060 4000940
5 422330 4001990
6 422500 4000810
7 422460 4000700
8 421880 4000840

**Produced by the U.S. Geological Survey**
**Revised by the U.S. Forest Service**

Areas outside the National Forest System lands may not have been revised

This map covers part of the Tennessee Valley Authority Watershed Area

Compiled from aerial photographs taken 1953. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1994. Partial field check by U.S. Forest Service 1994

North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 10 000-foot ticks: North Carolina coordinate system (Lambert conformal conic)
Blue 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator ticks, zone 17

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks
The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software

Non-National Forest System lands within the National Forest
Inholdings may exist in other National or State reservations

This map is not a legal land line or ownership document. Public lands are subject to change and leasing, and may have access restrictions; check with local offices. Obtain permission before entering private lands

MN GN
5°28' 97 MILS
0°29' 8 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1994 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

**SCALE 1:24 000**

MILES | FEET | KILOMETERS | METERS

CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FEET TO METERS MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
AND U.S. TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY, CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE 37402
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

NORTH CAROLINA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1 Elk Mills 214-SW
2 Sherwood 214-SE
3 Zionville 220-SW
4 Elk Park 215-NW
5 Boone 221-NW
6 Newland 215-SW
7 Grandfather Mountain 215-SE
8 Globe 221-SW

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLES

HIGHWAYS AND ROADS

Interstate
U. S.
State
Secondary State
National Forest, suitable for passenger cars
National Forest, suitable for high clearance vehicles
National Forest Trail

Primary highway
Secondary highway
Light-duty road
Composition: Unspecified
Paved
Gravel
Dirt
Unimproved; 4 wheel drive
Trail
Gate; Barrier

# VALLE CRUCIS, NC
1994
DMA 4656 III NE - SERIES V842

TVA 215-NE

ISBN 0-607-90982-X

1010