

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

|                  |
|------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
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| DATE ENTERED     |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Michael Sherwood House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

426 West Friendly Avenue

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Guilford

CODE

81

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                   | STATUS   | PRESENT USE                                    |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC             | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED                    | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                   | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED  | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT            |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED           | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL            |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                          | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY              |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                  |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE     |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS             |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC            |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION        |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Sherwood House Law Building Company

STREET & NUMBER

426 West Friendly Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 27401

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Guilford County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

W. Friendly Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Greensboro

STATE

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sherwood House in Greensboro stands on the north side of Friendly Street, formerly named "Gaston Street." Probably between 1849 and 1851, Michael Sherwood build the house as his residence in the Greek Revival mode.<sup>1</sup> The house has been altered, but it is one of the few Greek Revival structures which remain in Greensboro.

The original Sherwood House was a two-story brick structure with a one-story wing at the northwest end. Variations in the brickwork make the later additions obvious: another story was added to the rear, northwest wing, a curious stair tower was added to the northeast, and several rooms were added behind the stair tower. Probably in the early 1900s (1900-1912) a full-height front portico with Roman Doric columns was added to the original facade.<sup>2</sup>

The main block is three bays wide and two bays deep. The main block and the original, one-story rear wing are of brick laid in a one-to-five common bond with Flemish variation. When the wing was heightened to two stories, however, the additional story was laid in regular common bond. The windows of the main block are full length, contain six-over-six sash and have louvered blinds. Windows of the original one-story wing are surmounted by flat arches formed of rowlocks. On the northeast corner of the wing, the outline of a former doorway can be seen in the exterior brickwork. It was possibly the original egress from the kitchen. The front door is Greek Revival in style and has two full-length vertical, raised panels and is surmounted by a two-light transom.

Both the east and west ends of the house have single-shouldered partially recessed chimneys which pierce the pedimented gable ends of the house. A molded cornice and boxed eaves continue into the pedimented ends. On the west side of the main block is a water table, although it is not repeated on any other side.

The interior of the main block of the Sherwood House follows a center-hall plan, one room deep. Originally the staircase might have been located in the central hall, although the floor has been replaced and there is no immediate evidence of there having been a flight of steps. On the first floor the front rooms on either side of the hall are very similar; both rooms have mantels with plain pilasters and tall plain friezes. The fire openings themselves have been closed to accomodate stoves. The molded base-board in both rooms is tall and the ceiling cornice is thin. The window surrounds are unmitered with a backband molding around the outer edge. The second floor rooms in the main block are finished in a similar manner to those downstairs. (The interior trim of the Sherwood House is almost identical to that of the 1847 Bumpas-Troy House in Greensboro.)

At the end of the central hall is the stair tower. The stair returns on itself with a transverse landing in between. The balusters are absolutely plain and square-in-section.

The original one-story rear wing probably contained the dining room and kitchen. The doorway leading from the west front room on the first floor to the dining room behind it has been sealed. The dining room fireplace has a mantel with pilasters and a tall frieze, and on the west side of the fireplace is a built-in cabinet. In this room the windows are treated as pairs, each opening containing four-over-four sash. The surrounds differ from those in the main block. The windows have post and lintel

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architraves topped by a beaded element. This surround was probably changed in the 1900s. Other wall finish in the dining room includes a tall baseboard and thin cornice.

The door leading from the dining room to the former kitchen behind it has also been closed. In the kitchen, the fireplace has completely closed, and west of the chimney breast are built-in cabinets. The wall finish is similar to that of the dining room except for the lack of a cornice.

On the second floor, the two front rooms are almost identical to their counterparts downstairs. Across the north end of the central hall, however, occurs what appears to be an enclosed ceiling beam. The second-story addition to the rear wing contains two rooms. Neither of the rooms appears to have had a fireplace, although the room nearest the front of the house contains the chimney breast from the kitchen fireplace below. This room has six-over-six sash in the west wall window with a post and lintel surround topped by a beaded element. The back room contains six-over-nine sash in the north and west wall windows; the surrounds of these windows match those in the original part of the house. Behind the stair hall a bathroom has been added.

Local tradition dates the house as "pre-1829," but no architectural evidence attests to that fact. The deed from Greensborough Female College to Michael S. Sherwood in 1849 mentions "lands and premises," but exactly what premises is not spelled out, if in fact there were any.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Guilford County, Register of Deeds Office, Deed Book 30, p. 614; Guilford County Tax Assessment Office, 1964 Residential Property Card, Map 21, Block 7, Lot 8.

<sup>2</sup>Photograph, 1912, showing portico.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD  | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE         | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                            | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE                     | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY                       | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                          | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY                     | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)<br>Journalism |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |   |

SPECIFIC DATES

1849-1851

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sherwood House in Greensboro was probably built between 1849 and 1851 for Michael Swaim Sherwood, publisher (1839-1860s) of The Greensborough Patriot. He was a relative of William Swaim, the first and most famous editor of The Patriot and the grandfather of "O. Henry," (William Sidney Porter) the early twentieth century short story writer.<sup>1</sup> Michael Sherwood's Greek Revival house is one of the very few ante-bellum homes which remain in Greensboro. Its association with The Greensborough Patriot is extremely noteworthy. The fiercely independent newspaper, which espoused such liberal views as the education of women, warned in its prospectus that it sought "to break that spell which has so long palsied the energies of the Southern states, and show them the necessity of improving their advantages. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Michael Swaim Sherwood was born on January 6, 1816. In 1835, when he was 19 years old, Sherwood's relative, William Swaim, died, leaving his newspaper, The Greensborough Patriot, to change hands several times before other competent editors were found. In 1839, however, two competent individuals accepted the responsibility of the paper-- Michael Sherwood, then 23, and Lyndon Swaim (a distant cousin to William Swaim). It was understood between the two partners that Sherwood would manage the business end of the venture, while Lyndon Swaim would handle the editorials and news.<sup>3</sup> The paper grew and prospered, leading one twentieth century Greensboro historian to write that "the paper wielded a power hard to estimate and doubtless to a great extent planted the seeds which, though apparently dormant for many years, have at last borne fruit in the scholastic and commercial prominence of Guilford County at the present day."<sup>4</sup>

Michael Sherwood did well at The Greensborough Patriot, and in 1849 he bought from the trustees of Greensborough Female College a five-acre tract of land located north of the northeast corner of Market and Edgeworth Streets in Greensboro.<sup>5</sup> This tract included the "Gaston Street" lot on which the house now stands.

In 1853, Sherwood's partner, Lyndon Swaim, was elected clerk of the county court, and in 1854 he sold his interest in The Patriot to Sherwood. Swaim resumed editorship briefly in 1869, and was a leading Greensboro architect in the 1860s and 1870s. Sherwood became active in Greensboro politics, and in 1864 was elected mayor of Greensboro.<sup>6</sup>

Sherwood's will of 1865, left his "Gaston Street house" and its three acres of land to his wife, Mariah Louisa Thomas Sherwood. At her death, the home was to be sold and the proceeds equally divided among the children.<sup>7</sup>

Michael Swaim Sherwood died in 1868, and his widow lived in the Gaston Street house

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until her death in 1903. Before her death, Mariah L. T. Sherwood deeded half interest in some Gaston Street property to her sons, Thomas and Michael, and the house and lot were probably included in this transaction. In 1910 Michael S. Sherwood, Jr., sold his "one half interest in a lot or parcel of land . . . fronting on West Gaston Street" to Thomas D. Sherwood, who willed it to his wife, Bessie, in 1925. Bessie Sherwood sold the house to the City of Greensboro in 1945, hoping that the city would restore it. The city, however, did nothing with the house and Bessie Sherwood bought it back in 1947, in which year she also deeded it to Mary Sherwood Mitchell. Mrs. Mitchell kept it until her death in 1971, whereby she willed it to her daughter, Mary Sherwood Mitchell Lindsay. Mrs. Lindsay, trying to insure the home's preservation, sold it to the Sherwood House Law Building Company, a group interested in the adaptive use of the old home as law offices.

Local tradition claims that William Swaim and his wife, Abiah Shirley Swaim, lived with "the M. S. Sherwoods" in the present dwelling on West Friendly, and that William Swaim's daughter, the mother of O. Henry, was born there in 1832. In addition, the house has been dated by local historians as "pre-1829." There are, however, several problems attendant to these traditions.

The William Swaims are supposed to have lived in the present-day Sherwood House with the Sherwood family from 1829 to 1833. Michael Sherwood did not acquire the land until 1849; moreover, Sherwood would have been the head of a household at ages 13-17, if the tradition holds true. There is little architectural evidence to support an 1820s date for the house. If, in fact, any Swaims lived with "the M. S. Sherwoods," it was probably the Lyndon Swaims, Sherwood's partner at The Patriot. Lyndon Swaim married William Swaim's widow, Abiah, and perhaps her daughter, Mary Virginia, the mother of "O. Henry," lived in the house on West Gaston for a short time. An article in the Greensboro Daily News claims that the Lyndon Swaims did live with the Sherwoods and that Mary Virginia was the first child to live in the house.

Whatever O. Henry's mother's association with the Sherwood House, it stands as an important reminder of one of Greensboro's outstanding families and Sherwood's efforts in the field of journalism.

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Guilford County, Register of Deeds Office, Deed Book 30, p. 614; Guilford County, Tax Assessment Office, 1964 Residential Property Card, Map 21, Block 7, Lot 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ethel Stephens Arnett, William Swaim, Fighting Editor (Greensboro, N.C.: Piedmont Press, 1963), p. 326; Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Mary Sherwood Mitchell Lindsay, "Ownership of Sherwood House," September, 1976; Arnett, William Swaim, p. 357; Ethel Stephens Arnett, Greensboro, North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955), p. 245; Robert Dick Douglas, "Lyndon Swaim," in Founders and Builders of Greensboro, 1808-1908, Bettie D. Caldwell, compiler (Greensboro: James J. Stone and Co., 1925), p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Guilford County, Deed Book 30, p. 614.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas, "Lyndon Swaim," p. 126; Arnett, Greensboro, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Raleigh, N.C., Division of Archives and History, Guilford County Original Wills, Michael S. Sherwood, December 19, 1865.

<sup>8</sup> Lindsay, "Ownership of Sherwood House;" Guilford County, Register of Deeds Office, Deed Book 142, p. 503; Deed Book 160, p. 39; Deed Book 224, p. 229; Guilford County, Will Book J, p. 353; Guilford County, Deed Book 1065, p. 434; Deed Book 1163, p. 284; Deed Book 1163, p. 283; Deed of Trust Book 2864, p. 267.

<sup>9</sup> Arnett, Greensboro, p. 285; Arnett, William Swaim, p. 94, 170; Eleanor D. Kennedy, "Owners Would Like To See Sherwood House Maintained," Greensboro Daily News, August 21, 1972; Dorothy Benjamin, "Long, Long Ago," The Greensboro Record, March 29, 1968; "Opening Doors of Old Homes," Greensboro Daily News, April 25, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> Arnett, Greensboro, p. 245.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arnett, Ethel Stephens. William Swaim, Fighting Editor. Greensboro: Piedmont Press, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. Greensboro, North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955.

Benjamin, Dorothy. "Long, Long Ago." The Greensboro Record. March 29, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Opening Doors of Old Homes." Greensboro Daily News. April 25, 1965.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 6084810 3992620  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Description and Significance prepared by Gwynne S. Taylor, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

(919) 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina 27611

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE September 8, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Douglas, Robert Dick. "Lyndon Swaim." In Founders and Builders of Greensboro, 1808-1908. Compiled by Bettie D. Caldwell. Greensboro: James J. Stone and Company, 1925.

Guilford County Original Wills. Michael S. Sherwood, December 19, 1865. Division of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Guilford County Records. Guilford County Courthouse. Greensboro, North Carolina.  
Subgroups: Deeds and Wills.

Kennedy, Eleanor D. "Owners Would Like To See Sherwood House Maintained." Greensboro Daily News. August 21, 1972.

Lindsay, Mrs. Mary Sherwood Mitchell. "Ownership of Sherwood House." September, 1976.



Michael Sherwood House  
426 West Friendly Avenue  
Greensboro, North Carolina  
Guilford County

UTM References  
17/608480/3992620

