

# INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

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

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR  THEMATIC NOMINATION

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Thomas B. Finley Law Office  
AND/OR COMMON

J. F. Jordan Law Office

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

S.E. corner, Broad & North Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fifth

STATE

N. C.

VICINITY OF

CODE

037

COUNTY

Wilkes

CODE

193

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

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

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

N. B. Smithey Estate (N. B. Smithey Realty Co.)

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Drawer 1227

CITY, TOWN

North Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C. 28659

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Wilkes County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C.

## 6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laura A. W. Phillips, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

for Wilkesboro Historic Properties Commission

DATE

May 1980

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Wilkesboro

STATE

N. C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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 Thomas B. Finley Law Office stands on the southeast corner of Broad and North Streets, just across the street from Courthouse Square.

Probably built during the early 1880s, the law office is a diminutive one-story frame structure, only one room wide and two deep, with weatherboard siding, six-over-six sash windows with wood louvered shutters, gable roof sheathed in standing seam metal, and a central chimney. A front porch with hipped roof, slender wood posts, and replacement brick steps and ironwork balustrade lends shelter to the main entrance with its glazed and paneled door and overhead transom. The wall of the porch is distinguished from the rest of the siding by the use of flush boards rather than weatherboarding. The same flush board treatment is found flanking the rear door on the north side of the building, providing a strong suggestion that there was once a porch at this location as well as on the front.

The highlight of the exterior is the bargeboard treatment on both front and rear gables. The sawwork bargeboards of tear drop design seem to drip from the gable peaks and are capped by decorative finials, giving the building a Carpenter Gothic appearance.

The simple interior of the law office features flush board walls, a two-panel door between front and rear rooms, and a wood mantel of late Greek Revival post-and-lintel design.

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

\_\_\_\_\_ NATIONAL

\_\_\_\_\_ STATE

X

\_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

Unknown

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For the past hundred years, the Thomas B. Finley Law Office has been occupied by a succession of prominent lawyers in the Wilkesboro area, including Finley, Herbert L. Greene, Frank B. Hendren, and J. Floyd Jordan. These men were not only prominent in their field, but also played significant roles in community life in general, being active in business, politics, education and religion. The diminutive Carpenter Gothic-influenced building itself is a well-preserved example of a late 19th century law office, and is one of only two such offices remaining in this county seat town.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The Thomas B. Finley Law Office is associated with the late 19th and 20th century development of the legal profession in Wilkes County.
- B. The Thomas B. Finley Law Office is associated with the professional lives of several men who played significant roles in Wilkesboro and the surrounding area during the late 19th and 20th centuries, including Thomas B. Finley, Herbert L. Greene, Frank B. Hendren and J. Floyd Jordan.
- C. The Thomas B. Finley Law Office embodies the distinctive characteristics of the 19th century Carpenter Gothic style, and is one of only two 19th century law offices remaining in the county seat town of Wilkesboro.

Although the exact date of construction of the Finley Law Office is uncertain, it appears likely that it was built by Isaac Wellborn, after he purchased 40 feet on the southeast corner of Broad and North Streets in January 1880 for \$50.<sup>1</sup> Little is known about Wellborn, except that in 1884 he was listed as one of the lawyers practicing in Superior Court.<sup>2</sup>

The name most often associated with the Law Office (except, perhaps, for that of the current occupant, J. F. Jordan) is that of Thomas B. Finley. Finley was born in 1862, the son of Augustus W. and Marth Gordon Finley, and was reared at Fairmount, the family homeplace across the Yadkin River from Wilkesboro. He was educated at Wilkesboro Academy, Finley High School in Lenoir and at Davidson College. After reading law under Col. George N. Folk, Finley was admitted to the bar in 1885 and established his practice in Wilkesboro.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to his law practice, Finley took an active role in many aspects of business and civic life in the Wilkesboro area. In 1888 he served as chairman of a committee to promote a bond election which would raise money to have the railroad come to Wilkesboro.<sup>4</sup> When, instead, the railroad came to the future North Wilkesboro across the river, Finley was prominent in the early development of the town. It was largely through his efforts that the Bank of North Wilkesboro was established, and he served as a bank director.<sup>5</sup> In 1891 he was one of the incorporators of the North Wilkesboro Brick Company, in 1897 he helped organize the Wilkesboro Telephone Company, and in 1910 he was one of the organizers of the Fin Win Cotton Mills Company.<sup>6</sup> In 1907 a Board of Trade was established in North Wilkesboro to advance the interests of the town and Thomas B. Finley was named president.<sup>7</sup> Finley married Carolina Elizabeth Cowles -- the daughter of another prominent lawyer and politician, William H. H. Cowles -- in 1893,<sup>8</sup> and although they made their home in the new town of North Wilkesboro, Finley continued to practice law out of the little law office next to the courthouse in Wilkesboro. In 1918 he served as vice president of the State Bar Association.<sup>9</sup> Finley's practice continued until 1919, when he became Judge of the 17th Superior Court District, an elected position which he held until his retirement in 1935.<sup>10</sup>

During Finley's legal career, he had several distinguished partners. Herbert L. Greene was a partner during the earlier years of Finley's practice. Greene was educated at Wilkesboro Academy and at the State University. Like Finley, Greene studied law under Col. George N. Folk and was then admitted to the bar in 1887. Greene was active in politics, serving in 1896 as mayor of Wilkesboro. In 1900 he was elected to the State Legislature, where he served as chairman of the County and Congressional Executive Committees of his party. He was the author of the bill

(continued)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Anderson, J. Jay. "Superior Court Judges in Wilkes from 1918." The Journal-Patriot (North Wilkesboro). October 28, 1976.

Crouch, John. Historical Sketches of Wilkes County. Wilkesboro: The Chronicle Job Office, 1902.

(continued)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	48,641,010	400,000	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of the northwest portion of Parcel 2, Block 2, Tax Map 103, Town of Wilkesboro, within the following boundaries: starting at the southeast corner of Broad and North Sts. and running east 60 ft. along the south side of North St., then running south 30 ft. in a line parallel to Broad St., then running

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enacted by the Legislature in 1901 which ordered the Wilkes County Commissioners to build a new courthouse.<sup>11</sup>

After 1900 Finley was in partnership with Frank B. Hendren. Hendren attended public schools, Moravian Falls Academy and Wake Forest College. For some years before entering law, Hendren taught school -- in Ashe County, Vashi Academy in Alexander County, Montgomery County, High Point Female College, Winston, and Jackson County -- and served four years as principal of Moravian Falls Academy. In addition, he was for a time superintendent of schools in Burke County. In 1895 Hendren was admitted to the bar, and after practicing for several years in Morganton, he returned in 1900 to Wilkesboro. Besides his law practice, Hendren served for a couple of years as major of Wilkesboro and also as one of the editors and publishers of the Blue Ridge Baptist, a four-column paper published twice a month.<sup>12</sup>

After T.B. Finley became Superior Court Judge in 1919, Frank Hendren continued his practice in the law office, and was joined in August, 1922 by J. Floyd Jordan. Jordan had attended the Bugaboo Free School and then had spent four years in World War I, he attended Wake Forest College and graduated with an LL.B. degree, after which he passed the bar. Like the other lawyers who had used the little frame law office next to the courthouse, Jordan has played an active role in community life. Between 1937 and 1941 he served as major of Wilkesboro, for 17 years he worked with the Boy Scouts, for 23 years he researched the histories of Baptist Churches in the Brushy Mountain Association, and for 42 years he taught Sunday School.<sup>13</sup> In 1980 Jordan was still maintaining his law practice in the Carpenter Gothic Office, and after nearly sixty years, was by far its longest occupant.

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 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 is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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<sup>1</sup>Typescript material for Old Wilkes Walking Tour.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson J. Hayes, The Land of Wilkes (Wilkesboro: Wilkes Co. Historical Society, 1962), p. 269.

<sup>3</sup>John Crouch, Historical Sketches of Wilkes County (Wilkesboro: The Chronicle Job Office, 1902), p. 130; J. Jay Anderson, "Superior Court Judges in Wilkes from 1918," The Journal-Patriot (North Wilkesboro), October 28, 1976, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Crouch, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Hayes, pp. 320, 322, 340.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 295.

<sup>8</sup>Crouch, p. 131.

<sup>9</sup>Anderson.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Crouch, pp. 127-128; Hayes, p. 373.

<sup>12</sup>Crouch, pp. 120-121; Hayes, pp. 280, 373.

<sup>13</sup>Arlene Edwards, "Time Almost Bypassed Wilkes Law Office," Winston-Salem Journal, July 16, 1978, pp. C-1, 12; Hayes, p. 373.

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Edwards, Arlene. "Time Almost Bypassed Wilkes Law Office." Winston-Salem Journal,  
July 16, 1978.

Hayes, Johnson J. The Land of Wilkes. Wilkesboro: Wilkes Co. Historical Society,  
1962.

Old Wilkes Walking Tour, typescript material.

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west 60 ft. in a line parallel to North Street, and then running north along the east side of Broad Street to the point of beginning. The property included the law office and its most immediate surroundings.

NORTH WILKESBORO

Wilkesboro MRN  
Wilkesboro, N. C. Quadrangle  
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000

Thomas B. Finley Law Office  
17 486400/4000280

Wilkesboro-Smithey Hotel  
17 486405/4000240

Brown-Cowles House and Cowles Law Office  
17 486470/4000300

St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
17 486050/4000310

Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church  
17 486520/4000200

J. L. Hemphill House  
485180/4000070

Johnson-Hubbard House  
17 486420/4000200

J. T. Ferguson Store  
17 486400/4000190

Federal Building  
17 486150/4000120

10'  
4002  
NEWHOPE 14 MI.  
30 MI. TO INT 40

ANTIOCH 6 MI  
WINSTON-SALEM 49 MI.

3998000m N.



NORTH ST

JF JORDAN  
LAW  
OFFICE

HOME BUILDERS ASSN OF WILKES CO.

RESERVED  
PARKING  
LAW OFFICE

CALL IKE'S  
BLUE RIDGE  
TAXI

BLUE RIDGE  
TAXIS