

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Thomas B. Finley House**

North Wilkesboro, Wilkes County, WK0100, Listed 5/15/2008

Nomination by Laura A. W. Phillips

Photographs by Laura A. W. Phillips, March 2007



Façade view



Rear and Side View

**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 Finley, Thomas B., House

other names/site number The Oaks

**2. Location**

street & number 1014 E Street not for publication N/A

city or town North Wilkesboro vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Wilkes code 193 zip code 28659

**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.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
___ 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): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Finley, Thomas B., House  
Name of Property

Wilkes Co., NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	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: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling  
DOMESTIC secondary structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling  
DOMESTIC secondary structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
roof ASPHALT  
walls WOOD  
other BRICK  
WOOD

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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County and State

**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.

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**

1893  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1893  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Bonniwell, Norma  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_



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National Park Service

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### DESCRIPTION

#### Materials, cont'd.

Other: METAL  
STUCCO  
GLASS

#### Summary and Setting

The 1893 Thomas B. Finley House is located at the northeast corner of E and Eleventh streets (1014 E Street) in an older residential section of North Wilkesboro. Facing southeast on the uphill side of the town's original street grid, the house overlooks North Wilkesboro's historic downtown with the Brushy Mountains in the distance. (For ease of discussion, the façade will be considered the south elevation, rather than the actual southeast, and the remaining elevations will follow suit as east, north, and west, rather than the actual northeast, northwest, and southwest.)

The house stands near the center of its approximately three-quarters-of-an-acre lot, which it shares with a contemporary ice house, servants' house, and a 2001 garage. From the front sidewalk along E Street, the sloping front lawn is terraced with two low stone retaining walls interrupted at the center by steep concrete steps that lead, with two intermediate landings, to the upper level of the lawn on which the house stands. The lower retaining wall has partially cut stones and is laid with grapevine joints, while the upper retaining wall is more informally laid with rocks of varying sizes and shapes and with mortar filling the large and small spaces between them. The center break in the upper retaining wall is accented by a pair of square concrete pedestals that support metal and glass lanterns of recent date. The next higher landing has a pair of decorative stone pedestals, also of recent date. To either side of the concrete steps, junipers form a ground cover for the steep slope of the front (south) portion of the lot. The west and east sides of the lot slope somewhat more gently downward to 11<sup>th</sup> Street on the west and the driveway of the adjacent property on the east. The house stands on the more level upper portion of the lot. A herringbone-laid brick walk leads to the front steps of the house from the steep concrete steps rising from E Street. Another herringbone-laid brick walk runs from the north end of the west side porch, along the west side of the house, under the breezeway between the house and garage, to the rear porch, and to the parking area. Southeast of the house is a tall magnolia tree. The few other trees scattered on the property are deciduous. A variety of small shrubs surround the house. East of the house, a loose-stone-lined garden water feature with a low wood bridge was added in 2006. Also in recent years, a small stone patio was built adjacent to the east end of the rear porch. A frame garage (2001) is attached to the northwest corner of the house by a breezeway. Behind (north of) the garage is a concrete driveway and parking area that dates

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from the same time as the garage and breezeway. East of the northeast corner of the house stands the original ice house. The original servants' house with its later addition stands north of the house. Bordering the rear of the property is a post and rail fence.

### Exterior

The large, Queen Anne-style, frame house has two full stories with an attic and basement and a one-story rear ell. The house rests on a brick foundation, from which German-sided walls rise to the asphalt-shingled roof. The roof is composed of a central, truncated hip intersected on each side by a projecting gable and on the southwest corner by a tower. A delicate ironwork balustrade crowns the truncated hip forming a widow's walk, and metal cresting ornaments the ends of the ridges of the east, west, and one-story rear gables. The roof is pierced by three, tall, interior brick chimneys, two of which retain decorative corbelled caps. A one-story, hip-roofed, wraparound porch carries across the façade and halfway along the east and west elevations. A secondary, one-story porch with a shed roof runs along the eastern two-thirds of the rear elevation.

Four first-story doors provide entrance to the house. The main entrance, located at the center of the façade, is a single-leaf door with a wood-paneled lower half and a single rectangular pane of glass filling the upper half. At the rear of the house, at the opposite end of the center hall from the front door, the single-leaf door is composed of two wood panels in its lower third and a pair of vertical glass panels in its upper two thirds. A third door opens from the east side of the wraparound porch into the family room. It has two wood panels in its lower third and twelve glass panes in its upper two-thirds. The fourth entrance is a modern glass and wood door that opens to the added laundry wing at the northwest corner of the house. Almost all the windows of the house are one-over-one sash with louvered wood shutters. Exceptions are at the rear of the house and include the two-over-two sash window of the bathroom at the rear of the second-story center hall and a modern, round wheel window in the gable of the added laundry room. There are also several decorative stained-glass windows in the Queen Anne style located at the front of the house. The fixed window at the first landing of the primary stair and the window in the upper half of the door to the second-floor, center-bay, porch-balcony both are bordered with stained glass squares. The upper sash of both the front-gable Palladian window and the third level of the southwest elevation of the corner town are filled with multi-paned stained glass.

The irregular configuration of the Finley house, with its multiple projecting and receding planes, is typical of the Queen Anne style. The forward-most projecting section of the façade (south side) includes the center-bay entrance on the first story and an engaged balcony-porch and entry on the second floor. To the left (west) of the entrance is a window to the parlor with a matching window above it on the second story. The west end of the façade terminates in the

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square, three-level tower set at an angle so that it is oriented toward the southwest. Each face of the first two stories of the tower contains a window. East of the central entrance, the façade recedes to a one-bay-wide plane, whose focal point is the stained-glass-bordered window that lights the stair landing. Above it is a window at second-story height.

At the center of the house's east elevation, a two-story, one-bay-wide section projects to the east. Its east side has a pair of windows at both first- and second-story levels. Its south elevation contains the door leading from the porch to what is now the family room. Above the door, on the second story, is a window, and adjacent to the window on the wall perpendicular to it on the south is another window. North of the projecting center bay on the east elevation, the second story continues in the same plane as the wall to the south of the center bay. However, at first-story height, a hip-roofed room with a pair of windows on its east wall projects eastward beyond the elevation's center bay.

The most prominent feature of the west elevation of the house is its projecting center bay. The first story forms a bay window with a single window on each angled side and a pair of windows at the center. The second story, which repeats the pair of windows on its west side, is squared-off so that it overhangs the first-story bay window. Decorative brackets with a sunburst motif and a central acorn pendant form a visual transition from the northwest corner of the bay window to the second story. The single bay south of the west elevation's center projecting bay has one window each on the first and second stories and terminates at the south end with the corner tower. North of the projecting center bay is the one-story kitchen ell that projects northward. It has a single window at its south end and a double window to the north, both replacements of the original, more evenly spaced and more vertical windows. The kitchen ell was extended a single bay to the north in 2001 and contains the exterior door to the laundry room. At the same time, a gable-roofed breezeway supported by turned posts like those on the back porch was built to extend from the laundry entrance westward to the garage.

The only significant alterations to the exterior of the Finley house, in addition to the windows of the kitchen ell, were executed in 2001 on the rear (north) elevation, although the resulting appearance remains much like the original. When the laundry room addition was built, the rear porch west of the center rear door was enclosed. Other remodeling of the rear porch also took place at this time. The window immediately east of the rear door was left intact, but the two other windows between it and the east end of the house were enclosed. Turned posts, similar to the originals but different in proportion and weight, replaced the originals, and a balustrade with heavy turned balusters was added. At the second-story level of the rear elevation, a bathroom with a low hipped roof projects northward from the main wall. It has a single window on the north side, although originally there were two. Above this projecting room, a small window lights the attic gable.

Typical of Queen Anne style houses in North Carolina, the exterior of the Finley house is richly ornamented. In this case, most of the decoration is achieved through the use of wood,

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although metal, stucco, and glass also play a part. Decorative focal points include the porches, gables, and corner tower, in addition to the stained glass windows and metalwork on the roof already mentioned.

One of the most prominent exterior decorative features is the one-story porch that wraps from the projecting bay on the west side of the house, around the southwest corner tower, across the façade, and around to the projecting bay on the east side of the house. The porch rests on a brick pier foundation with wood lattice between the piers, has a tongue-and-groove board floor and ceiling, and a hipped roof. Turned posts with small, paneled brackets support a tightly bracketed cornice. Running between the porch posts is a complex balustrade composed of two layers. The lower layer, which makes up about two-thirds the height of the whole balustrade, is composed of heavily turned balusters alternating with acorn pendants set within top and bottom molded rails. The upper layer of the balustrade features a sawnwork arcade topped by a more heavily molded handrail.

Though they are much smaller in scale than the wraparound porch, the small second-story porch above the entrance bay and the second-story balcony on the tower also add to the decorative complexity of the Finley house. The small porch is engaged beneath the main front gable and is accessed from the front end of the second-floor hall. With its entrance wall on the north and a solid wall on the west, it is open only on the south and east. Its floor is sunk beneath the rise of the wraparound porch roof below, and it has a flush-boarded inner wainscot not visible from the ground. Resting above the wainscot is a low wood arcade topped by a molded handrail. Supporting the open corner of the small space is a turned post; it is echoed by matching pilasters where the porch joins each wall. Spanning each of the two open sides of the porch is a wooden arch with pierced fanlights at each corner and a dropped "keystone" at the center. Above the arch is a two-layer-thick frieze composed of vertical sticks on the outer face with boarding in a rick rack pattern behind it on the inner face.

The balcony projects from the southwest elevation of the tower. A band of fish-scale shingles sheathes the low balcony skirt. Above that, the balustrade is supported at the corners by short, chamfered posts topped by round balls. The narrow balustrade itself is composed of upper and lower molded railings with alternating paired vertical wood slats and single wood balls between the two railings. The side sections of the balustrade also have turned ornaments beneath the lower rail. On each side of the balcony, large sawnwork scrolled brackets extend from the tower wall to the top of the balustrade.

The front and side gables are identical in their decorative treatment. The lower three-fourths of each is sheathed in fish-scale-cut wood shingles. The gable peak projects about a board's width beyond the shingled section and is separated from it by a tightly bracketed shelf. The triangle of the peak is filled with glass and pebble *objets trouvés* in stucco. The larger front gable is treated like the side gables, but with the addition of a centered Palladian window brightened with stained glass squares in the upper sashes.

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A signature feature that contributes to the stylistic character of the Finley house is the three-story square tower set at an angle at the southwest corner of the house. It is also one of the focal points for the exterior decoration of the house. In addition to the form of the tower itself and the second story balcony, the third story adds visual variety to the house through its use of panels with novelty wood siding laid on the diagonal, with bordering panels sheathed with flush boards. Above the third-story level, the tower is capped by a steep pyramidal roof. Its crowning feature is a spectacular lightening rod composed of a metal rod surrounded by intricate decorative metal work and a glass ball near the top.

### Interior (See Floor Plan)

The front door of the Finley house opens to a small weather entry whose glass-and-wood-paneled double-leaf door leads to the vestibule. The interior of the house follows a center-hall plan while exhibiting the Queen Anne-style irregularity of room size and shape. Although there have been some alterations on the interior to accommodate modern living and, in some instances, decorating taste, the original features remain remarkably intact.

The floors of the first story are narrow-board oak; on the second story they are wider-width pine. Except where sheetrock has been used in alterations, most walls and ceilings are plastered. Exceptions include the ceiling of the center west room on the second floor, which is sheathed in beaded boards, and the ceiling of the center east room on the second floor, which is sheathed in four-inch tongue-and-groove pine. The reason for these exceptions is not clear. Crown molding is found throughout the house; most of it was installed in 2001, although the molding in the dining room may be original. Plaster ceiling medallions were also installed in 2001; the one in the dining room, at least, replaced a missing original medallion. A wainscot composed of vertical novelty boarding with a molded baseboard and chair rail runs throughout the house. It remains unpainted in the vestibule, along both the first- and second-floor halls, and up the primary stair, but has been painted white in the other rooms of the house.

Four-panel wood doors are standard on both floors. Those of the dining room and family room on the first floor, the hall doors of the two middle bedrooms on the second floor, and the door from the kitchen to the laundry room addition have transoms. Five-panel wood sliding pocket doors open between the vestibule and the parlor and between the parlor and the dining room. Originally they were double-leaf doors that opened outward from the parlor, but they were converted during a 2001 remodeling. Between the vestibule and the center hall on the first floor is a double-leaf door, each leaf of which contains a pair of horizontal wood panels in the bottom third and ten glass panes in the upper two thirds. Similar to this door is the single-leaf door that opens to a corner china cabinet in the dining room. It has two vertical wood panels in the lower third and six panes in the upper two thirds. Both doors and windows throughout the house have molded surrounds with bull's-eye corner blocks. On the first floor, the original

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doors—with the exception of the china cabinet door—remain unpainted. The door and window trim of the first floor is painted white in the parlor, dining room, family room, and bedroom, but has been left unpainted in the vestibule and center hall. On the second floor, the doors and door surrounds are left unpainted in the center hall. Within the rooms, the doors and the door and window trim are painted white.

In addition to these general interior features, several other notable features contribute to its Queen Anne-style ornateness. One of the most significant is the dramatic primary stair, which begins its rise east to the second floor on the south wall in the southeast corner of the vestibule. On its way up, the stair makes two landings and two turns, creating a dramatic open space from the base to the ceiling of the second floor. The stair features a molded hand rail, turned balusters, and a paneled closed string. The primary newel at the base turns outward slightly for emphasis. It is square, has a two-step base, a shaft with four inset panels per side, and a cap with a turned ornament that is flat on top, apparently once the pedestal for a newel finial. The lower panels of the shaft exhibit bull's eyes, while the top panels contain carved sunbursts. The primary, non-decorative wood of the shaft is lighter than the wood used for all other features of the newel, thereby intensifying its decorative quality. The four secondary newels, at the stair landings and at the top, are much simpler. Each is square, with fluting on the unattached sides and a turned cap ornament with a cone-shaped top. The two newels at the top of the stair continue through the floor about a foot through the vestibule ceiling and terminate with a turned pendant. A beaded-board wainscot runs along the entire stair wall from bottom to top, continuing the wainscot of the vestibule and the first and second-floor halls.

Another notable decorative feature of the house is its collection of seven original mantels. An eighth mantel, in the first-floor bedroom, is an addition. Of particular importance are three Queen Anne-style mantels found in the parlor, dining room, and family room on the first floor. Each follows a different design, though each has a mirrored overmantel and each displays a stylistically typical array of turned, sawnwork, and carved elements including pilasters, colonettes, scrolls, fretwork, beading, small bracketed shelves, and other features. These three mantels remain unpainted, but their ceramic tile firebox surrounds and hearths have been replaced in recent years with larger marble tiles. On the second floor, all four mantels are painted white and have stone hearths. All four have as their basis a post-and-lintel mantel form, seen best in the mantel of the east bedroom, which has chamfered pilasters, bases, and frieze and a two-part molding supporting a mantel shelf that angles back toward the wall at the corners. The other three mantels deviate from the basic mantel in their use of added ornamentation. The nursery mantel, in the room north of the east bedroom, has an applied, possibly original, foliate decoration in the center third of the frieze. The mantel of the west bedroom varies from the basic mantel in that it has fluting around the edge of the mantel shelf, a band of fluting as the molding beneath the shelf, and an additional band of molding running between the two pilasters just above the fire box. The fourth and most elaborate of the second-floor mantels is located in the

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southwest bedroom above the parlor. It also uses fluting around the edge of the mantel shelf, on two horizontal bands beneath the frieze, on the pilasters, and elsewhere. Further decorating the mantel, brackets at the top of each pilaster support a turned ornament attached by a block to the underside of the shelf but free standing from the frieze.

The sawnwork arches found toward the rear of the first-floor hall and at the front end and toward the rear of the second-floor hall constitute another decorative detail of note. Set within trimmed doorways, the arches are formed by two sawnwork brackets that meet at the center, displaying a tree of life design with other curvilinear forms in each corner. The archway at the front of the second-floor hall also features carved brackets that once held a rod by which a portiere, or heavy curtain, hung to minimize drafts.

In contrast to the decorative and open primary stair, an enclosed service stair located between the center hall and the kitchen rises from north to south to the second story. Unlike the main stair, it does not have a beaded-board wainscot. From the second story landing of the service stair, a door opens to a north-to-south continuation of the enclosed stair leading to the attic. The attic is unfinished, with all its rafters and support posts exposed. A ladder-like stair at the center of the attic leads to a hatch that opens to the widow's walk on the roof deck. The basement is reached from an enclosed stair beneath the service stair from the first to second floors and is accessed by a door on the west side of the first-floor hall immediately north of the archway. Most of the basement has been finished to the extent that it can be used for utilities and storage.

There have been several changes to the interior of the Finley house in addition to those already mentioned. Primary among these are the 2001 remodeling of the kitchen and bathrooms, the construction of a laundry room and half bath addition just north of the kitchen, and the creation of closets in the bedrooms and under the vestibule stair. None of these changes detract from the historic integrity of the house.

### Secondary Buildings (See site plan)

Three secondary buildings accompany the Finley house on its lot. Of these, the ice house and the servants' house are contributing resources; the garage is a noncontributing resource due to its 2001 date of construction.

Contemporary with the house, the ice house stands east of the northeast corner of the house. Resting on a brick foundation (seen only from the downhill, east end), the small frame building has German siding and a steep, asphalt-sheathed, front-gable roof. Simple sawnwork boards decorate the ends of the gable fascia, and German siding covers the soffits of the overhanging eaves. In the peak of each gable is a diamond-shaped vent. At the west end of the ice house, a brick-sided door well leads down a step to a double-leaf, vertical-board door with a plain surround. The sides of the building have no fenestration. At the rear of the building is

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what appears to be a modern window. Beneath it, an earlier opening has been enclosed. Beneath that, a batten door opens to the below-ground level. An open frame shed has been added to the rear of the ice house in recent years. Its south end is covered with lattice. The above-ground interior of the ice house has been sheathed with modern materials, has new ceiling joists, and is used for storage.

The servants' house, located north of the main house, was enlarged between 1926 and 1945 and is now used as a rental house. The original servants' house, located on the south side of the current building, is contemporary with the main house. This section is rectangular with a brick pier foundation, German siding, and a side-gable roof with overhanging eaves with tapered rafter ends. The center of the ridge is pierced by a brick chimney. The entrance of the original building is on the south side facing the main house and is flanked by a single window on the east and a pair of windows on the west. All windows of the house are one-over-one sash. The addition, also sheathed with German siding but with a concrete-block foundation, was built primarily north of the original building. A shed roof was added from the original gable peak along the north side of the house and, at the north end of the west elevation, a gabled room with an end window was extended to the west. The eaves of the addition do not have tapered rafters. With the construction of the addition, a small gabled stoop with plain posts and balustrade was built at the south end of the west elevation to shelter the new primary entrance. North of this entrance is a pair of windows. The north elevation of the addition has three windows, and the east elevation has two. The interior of the servants' house was not accessible to view.

The garage, built in 2001, is attached by an open breezeway with a gable roof and turned posts to the laundry entrance near the northwest corner of the house. Although a modern structure, the garage was designed to be compatible with the house. The one-story, two-bay, frame building faces north, has a brick foundation, German siding, and a front-gable roof. The west side of the garage has a gabled wall dormer, and the south gable peak echoes the overhanging *objets trouvés* peaks of the main house gables. Windows on the east, south, and west sides of the garage are one-over-one paired and single sash with faux shutters. North of the garage is a large, concrete, driveway and turnaround pad with space for additional parking.

### Integrity

The Thomas B. Finley House retains substantial historic architectural integrity in terms of its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. In the 114 years since its construction in 1893, remarkably few alterations have been made to the exterior of the house, and these are located at the rear. The interior has experienced more change, but these alterations are centered primarily on the kitchen and bathrooms, which were completely remodeled in 2001 to make the house more comfortable for modern living and have little effect on the overall integrity of the house. There have been other changes, as previously described,

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but these are relatively minor when compared to the great wealth of original details and materials that remains intact. The house stands on its original site and retains two of its original outbuildings. Although a garage was added in 2001, it was designed to be compatible with the house, is located adjacent to the rear corner of the house, and is attached to it only by an open breezeway.

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### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

#### Summary

The Town of North Wilkesboro was established in 1891 by the Winston Land and Improvement Company to take advantage of the terminus of the North Western North Carolina Railroad, which was completed from Winston in August 1890. Located on the north side of the Yadkin River opposite Wilkesboro, the county seat of Wilkes County, the new town grew rapidly as it capitalized on being the newly created shipping point for the vast timber and agricultural resources of the upper Yadkin River valley.

Wilkesboro attorney Thomas B. Finley (1862-1942), whose family owned the farmland on the north side of the Yadkin River prior to its purchase by the Winston Land and Improvement Company in 1890, played a central role in promoting a local bond issue to raise \$100,000 toward the building of the railroad to Wilkes County. After the arrival of the railroad and the creation of North Wilkesboro, Finley became one of the town's biggest supporters. He was involved in all aspects of North Wilkesboro's civic, commercial, industrial, and institutional life.

In 1893, Finley undertook the construction of his residence at the northeast corner of E and 11<sup>th</sup> streets on the hillside overlooking North Wilkesboro's commercial center. Both substantial and fashionable, the house reflected his position in the community. Finley made an unlikely and remarkable choice in the architect for his house—Norma Bonniwell (1877-1961), a young woman from Hickory, North Carolina. Norma Bonniwell practiced with her father, George C. Bonniwell, under the name of Bonniwell and Daughter. Only sixteen years of age when she designed the Thomas B. Finley House, Norma Bonniwell is also known to have designed buildings in Hickory and Statesville in the 1890s and, with her sister, Josephine, to have worked at the turn of the twentieth century in an architect's office in Raleigh. While there may have been other women practicing architecture in North Carolina at the time, none have been identified. The two-story frame house that Bonniwell designed for Finley is an imposing example of the Queen Anne style characterized by irregular massing; an exuberant combination of German siding, wood shingles, and diagonal board siding; porches, balconies, and a corner tower; and a wealth of details such as turned and sawn woodwork, stained glass, and *objets trouvés*. Today the well-preserved Finley house survives as the most fully articulated example of the Queen Anne style among a group of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century houses in North Wilkesboro.

The Thomas B. Finley House meets Criterion C for listing in the National Register because of its local architectural significance as the best domestic example of the Queen Anne style in North Wilkesboro. Its architectural significance also derives from its having been designed by Hickory architect Norma Bonniwell, who, as a woman practicing in the 1890s, was

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a rarity in the architectural profession in North Carolina. The period of significance for the Thomas B. Finley House is 1893, the year in which the house was constructed.

### Historical Background

Thomas Brown Finley, son of Augustus W. and Martha Lenoir Gordon Finley, was born on November 6, 1862, at the family homestead, then known as Fairmount, on the north side of the Yadkin River in what is now the town of North Wilkesboro. After attending school locally and Finley High School in Lenoir, he entered Davidson College, where for three years he pursued a course of study preparatory to the study of law. After his years at Davidson College, Finley studied under Colonel George N. Folk at his well-known Blackstone Law School at Riverside, in Caldwell County (NR, Riverside, 2004). Upon receiving his law license in 1885, Finley entered into practice with John S. Cranor in Wilkesboro, the county seat of Wilkes County. After a year with Cranor, Finley practiced alone for several years and then formed a partnership with Herbert L. Greene. In 1902, he and F. B. Hendren established the firm of Finley and Hendren, with which Finley remained until 1918, when he was elected as a superior court judge. The prosperous firm of Finley and Hendren occupied a small Carpenter Gothic building (NR, Thomas B. Finley Law Office, 1982) across the street from Courthouse Square in Wilkesboro (*Biographical Sketch*, 1, 3-5; *The Journal Patriot*, April 6, 1942).

From the beginning of his adult life, Finley played a prominent role in the civic and business life of Wilkes County. One of his first accomplishments was his successful effort to interest a railroad in building a line from Winston to Wilkes County. He was treasurer of the first bond election to raise money for the rail line in 1887 and was chairman of the committee in 1888, when the bond election passed by a majority of 2,700 (*Biographical Sketch*, 7-8). On October 10, 1888, the Wilkes County Commission entered into a contract with the North Western North Carolina Railroad, agreeing to subscribe \$100,000 toward the building of the railroad on the condition that it come within one mile of the Wilkes County Courthouse. The railroad reached its terminus in August 1890 and was, in fact, within one mile of the courthouse. However, much to the dismay of the commissioners, the terminus—as the whole rail line—was located on the north side of the Yadkin River, thus leaving Wilkesboro to remain a quiet county seat (Phillips, Downtown Main Street Historic District, Section 8, p. 20).

With the railroad ending on the north side of the river, that area, which consisted only of farmland at the time, was ripe for development. A new town at this location could utilize the railroad to tap the vast timber and agricultural resources of the upper Yadkin River valley. The Finley family, who owned the farm land on the north side of the river, began, themselves, to plan for a town. Even before the bond election, Thomas B. Finley was thinking of a town on the north side of the river and confided to a friend in Lenoir that he had laid one out on paper, to be called Finleysville (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 4). As the railroad

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approached, the Finley family initiated plans for the development of a town to be called Gordon (a family name) (Phillips, Downtown Main Street Historic District, Section 8, p. 20).

In the end, however, the family sold the land to the Winston Land and Improvement Company—composed primarily of a group of prominent Winston investors—which was established on November 30, 1890, to complete purchases of the land and build a town to be known as North Wilkesboro. A group of civil engineers surveyed the company's land and, in 1891, laid out streets, avenues, alleys, blocks, and lots on that part of the land lying south of what today is the alley between E and F streets. Willard Franklin Trogdon, the company's secretary, treasurer, and general supervisor for development of the town, prepared a map of North Wilkesboro to distribute to hundreds of prospective buyers. Meanwhile, the company graded ten miles of streets and built bridges, trestles, stone culverts, a school, an opera house, a bank, and other buildings at a total cost of over \$200,000. The first lot was sold on January 10, 1891. On March 4, 1891, the Town of North Wilkesboro was incorporated. On December 4, 1891, the first large auction of lots was held (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 6; Phillips, Downtown Main Street Historic District, Section 8, pp. 20-21).

The speculative development of the Town of North Wilkesboro was a great success. From around fifteen inhabitants in 1891, the population grew to 918 by 1900, and to 1,500 by 1904, causing Trogdon in that year to lay out more streets, blocks, and lots, doubling the size of the town. A revised map was prepared in 1907. In 1906, the town could boast two banks, a multitude of stores—many of which were housed in twenty-six large brick buildings—five churches, three hotels, two graded schools, as well as private schools, and numerous industries. By 1910, North Wilkesboro's population had grown to 2,750, and by 1920 to 4,000, after which it leveled off (Phillips, Downtown Main Street Historic District, Section 8, p. 21; Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 7).

On December 6, 1892, Thomas B. Finley purchased part of the alley, part of lots 17 and 18, and lots 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, and 32 in Block 69 on the town map from the Winston Land and Improvement Company for \$540.00. The conveyed land encompassed part of the nominated property, including the rear half of the house and the outbuildings. Although a deed was not found for the southwest corner of the nominated property—that which contains the front half of the house and the front yard down to E Street—the December 6, 1892, deed makes clear, through its boundary description, that the property was already in Finley's ownership (Deed Book 15, pp 491-492).

With a suitable house site in hand, in 1893 Finley undertook the construction of a substantial and fashionable house that would reflect his position in the community. Finley hired as his architect Norma Bonniwell (1877-1961), a young woman from Hickory, North Carolina, who practiced with her father, George C. Bonniwell, under the name of Bonniwell and Daughter. According to the *Manufacturers Record*, Norma Bonniwell had prepared plans in 1892 for a \$25,000 building at Lenoir College in Hickory, and in 1897, *The (Statesville) Landmark* reported

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that she was preparing plans for several houses in that town (Elizabeth Finley Postcard; Bishir, Bonniwell Family; Hambrick Interview, March 25, 2007). How Finley made the connection with, and the unusual selection of, Bonniwell as his architect is not known. If she designed other buildings in North Wilkesboro, there is no known record. Regardless, Norma Bonniwell designed a well-articulated Queen Anne-style frame house for Finley that has remained the best example of the style in North Wilkesboro. An early photograph of the house found in the 1906 publication, *Views of North Wilkesboro, North Carolina*, shows that its current appearance has changed remarkably little since the house was built. (See Architecture Context.)

On September 27, 1893, Thomas B. Finley married Caroline Elizabeth Cowles (1873-1947) in the Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church (NR, 1982). She was the daughter of Corinna Worth Cowles and William H. H. Cowles, an attorney and four-term Congressman from Wilkesboro. Immediately after the wedding, the Finleys departed by train for a honeymoon to Niagra Falls and the World's Fair in Chicago. They returned to Finley's newly built home, "The Oaks," which, according to family tradition, was not quite finished at the time. Here they reared four daughters and one son, all of whom graduated from college. In addition to the house lot, Finley owned extensive land north of F Street. In 1913, for the entertainment of his children and their friends, Finley built a tennis court—a rarity in Wilkes County at the time—on top of a hill behind the Finley house. Located in his cow pasture lot, the tennis court was surrounded by high wire (*The North Wilkesboro News*, September 28, 1893; *The Journal Patriot*, March 10, 1947; Phillips, Brown-Cowles House and Cowles Law Office, Section 8; *Biographical Sketch*, 6; Finley Interview, March 11, 1980; *Heritage of Wilkes County*, 207).

In the years between their marriage and their deaths, the Finleys played active roles in the North Wilkesboro community. In 1918, Thomas B. Finley served as vice-president of the North Carolina Bar Association, and that same year he was elected Judge of the Seventeenth Judicial District, North Carolina Superior Court. In 1926, he was re-elected to a second eight-year term. After retiring from the superior court bench in 1934, he became an emergency judge, serving courts to which he was assigned by the governor. Finley also was attorney for the Town of North Wilkesboro for many years. However, his activities were not confined to law. Finley was head of the committee that secured the rights of way for the Watauga and Yadkin Railroad, and he was instrumental in passage of the legislation that made possible the building of the turnpike road toward Jefferson, the first "good road" measure for this part of the state. In order to promote better farming methods, he helped organize, and then served as president of, the Wilkes County Fair from 1908 to 1916. He was chairman of the Wilkes County School Board between 1914 and 1918, and was president of the Commercial Club, the first men's civic organization in North Wilkesboro. Finley helped spur industry in North Wilkesboro, and in 1919 he was a member of sixteen corporations, companies, and committees, president and chairman of nine, and a director of most of the others. He also helped organize the Bank of North Wilkesboro, the first bank in town. Finley was a large landowner, holding over 17,000 acres of mountain land in

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Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties. He owned 1,000 acres in and around North Wilkesboro, including 976 town lots, approximately thirty dwellings, and stores in downtown North Wilkesboro. In the 1920s, he developed the T. B. Finley Park addition to North Wilkesboro. In 1926, Finley gave Rendezvous Mountain, about twelve miles north of North Wilkesboro, to the Daughters of the American Revolution and the State of North Carolina for a state park. Today it is Rendezvous Mountain Educational State Forest, a 1,780-acre haven for flora and fauna living within its woodlands. Finley was also a Mason, a member of the Knights of Pythias, a Kiwanian, and a strong supporter and member of the North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church (*The Journal Patriot*, April 6, 1942; *Biographical Sketch*, 10-13; *Heritage of Wilkes County*, 207; McDaniel, 1).

For her part, in addition to her role as wife and mother, Caroline Elizabeth “Carrie” Finley was an active member of the North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, where she served several terms as president of the Woman’s Auxiliary, was a member of the church choir, and was often a Bible study leader. In addition, she was the first president of North Wilkesboro’s Woman’s Club and a charter member of both the Rendezvous Mountain Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Wilkes Valley Guards Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy. In general, she was closely identified with the civic and social life of North Wilkesboro (*The Journal Patriot*, March 10, 1947).

Thomas B. Finley died on April 3, 1942, and Carrie Finley followed him on March 9, 1947. After more than half a century in family ownership and occupancy, the Finley house changed ownership multiple times during the next half century. Despite the large number of ownership changes, few alterations were made to the house during those years. Finally, in 2001, the house was carefully renovated by G. Kent and Geraldine F. Hayes. At that time, the kitchen, bathrooms, and closets were updated, and a laundry room and half bath were added to the rear of the house. Even with the alterations made at that time, the house, as a whole, remains remarkably intact. Owners since 2003, Janaka and Catharina Hettiarachchi are preserving the house (Deed Book 531, p. 896; Deed Book 543, p. 58; Deed Book 613, p. 102; Deed Book 641, p. 514; Deed Book 701, p. 59; Deed Book 916, p. 532).

### Architecture Context

The creation of a new town necessitated the construction of a variety of building types—commercial, industrial, institutional, and residential—to fulfill the needs of the new residents. North Wilkesboro’s first two decades witnessed phenomenal growth in population, from fifteen inhabitants in 1891 to 2,750 in 1910, accompanied by a parallel boom in construction (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 7).

From North Wilkesboro’s earliest days, the building of houses kept pace with other construction. During the 1890s, reflecting the optimism and wealth generated by the new town,

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a goodly number of grandiose houses exhibiting the Queen Anne or a combination of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles were erected. The Queen Anne style of architecture, popular in America primarily between 1880 and 1905, is characterized by an irregularity of plan and massing, a variety of surface textures, and exuberant ornamentation. When combined with the Colonial Revival style, the Queen Anne incorporates some details, such as classical columns and Palladian windows, which are reminiscent of the architecture of America's Colonial period. Photographs of four of the best local examples—the Thomas B. Finley House, the W. F. Horton House, the George Doughton House, and the E. S. Blair House—are included in the 1906 publication, *Views of North Wilkesboro, N. C.* Providing a good impression of the size and decorative quality of houses built during the 1890s and early 1900s in North Wilkesboro, the featured houses are all frame, two stories in height, with irregular configurations, multiple gables, porches, balconies, towers, and sawn and turned details in wood (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 12).

Of the four houses illustrated in *Views of North Wilkesboro, N. C.*, only the Thomas B. Finley House survives. Built in 1893, the two-story frame dwelling is an imposing example of late-nineteenth-century Queen Anne-style domestic architecture of the type popular in most North Carolina towns and cities during the period and is the finest surviving example in North Wilkesboro. Its irregular massing is made even more stylish by the exuberant combination of German siding, wood shingles, and diagonal-board siding. Richly detailed with turned and sawn woodwork, stained glass, and *objets trouves* in the gable peaks, the house is a delight to the eye. The front gable's Palladian window is one detail of the Finley house that can be found on numerous other North Wilkesboro houses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 12).

E Street, on which the Thomas B. Finley House (1014) is located, retains some of the best examples of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century houses in North Wilkesboro. Several two-story houses reflect the general stylistic characteristics of the Finley house though in a more simplified manner. The Arthur A. Finley House at 1208 E Street, probably built during the early 1890s; the J. Robert Finley House at 1107 E Street, built in 1907; and the E. M. Blackburn House at 1015 E Street, built ca. 1905, display a combination of such details as wraparound porches with decorative sawnwork brackets, balconies, Palladian windows, shingle work, bracketed gable eaves, and stained glass. Though of smaller scale, the one-story frame John George Finley House at 911 E Street, probably built ca. 1900, shows the same type of stylistic influences as the larger houses. It boasts a multi-gabled roof, a decorative frieze beneath the eaves, two projecting asymmetrical front bays, and bracketed front and side porches (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 12-13).

Other smaller-scale houses of Queen Anne, or a combination of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival, styling are found in North Wilkesboro beyond E Street. Two excellent examples are the Carrie W. Foote House at 703 9<sup>th</sup> Street and the Caudill House at 710 9<sup>th</sup> Street,

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both dating from the turn of the twentieth century. Both are characterized by steep hipped roofs with multiple projecting gables and highly decorative wraparound porches with pedimented entrance bays. The Foote house is unusual in being of brick rather than frame construction, while a special feature of the Caudill house is its polygonal corner tower (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 13).

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the influence of the Queen Anne style in the domestic architecture of North Wilkesboro was waning, while classicism was gaining favor. The ca. 1910 Dan Brookshire House at 1001 Trogdon Street is a good example of this transition. Unusual in being of brick rather than the more typical frame construction, the Brookshire house echoes many of the previously popular Queen Anne-style features, such as irregular massing, a wraparound porch, and a polygonal corner tower. Nevertheless, its Doric porch posts and Colonial Revival interior features signal the growing shift to classicism. During the following two decades, the influence of the Queen Anne style disappeared and was replaced by the Colonial Revival, the Neo-Classical Revival, and the Craftsman styles (Phillips, North Wilkesboro Historic Inventory, 13).

The architect of the Thomas B. Finley House was Norma Bonniwell (1877-1961) of Hickory (Elizabeth Finley Postcard). The daughter of George C. and Kate Snedeker Bonniwell, she practiced with her father during the 1890s under the name of Bonniwell and Daughter (Bonniwell, 116; *The Architects' Directory*, 1894, 1896-1897). George C. Bonniwell (1837-1912), a native of New York, graduated in architecture from the Cooper Institute in New York. He moved to the Hickory area in 1877, after having been in Philadelphia to help plan and construct buildings for the World's Fair of 1876. Apparently, when Bonniwell arrived in Hickory, there was little demand for his professional talent, so he turned to commerce and industry. In helping establish the Piedmont Wagon Works and other early industries, Bonniwell became known as Hickory's "Father of Industry." Nevertheless, he continued his professional work as an architect and builder and, according to the *Raleigh News and Observer* of August 24, 1899, he erected the Black Mountain Hotel, the Hickory Inn, the Waynesville Courthouse, Claremont College, the J. H. Pearson House and the Episcopal Church in Morganton, the Methodist Episcopal Church in Hickory, the Lowenstein House in Statesville, along with other buildings (Bishir, Bonniwell Family; Bonniwell, 109-110).

George Bonniwell trained three of his children in architecture: Gaither, Norma, and Josephine. Gaither worked for awhile in Hickory, but eventually settled in Florida. According to family tradition, Norma and Josephine (1879-1964) attended Claremont Female College in Hickory. Norma and Josephine both worked in conjunction with their father, although Josephine is thought by the family to have been more of an artist than an architect. Norma and Josephine together did design work for First Presbyterian Church in Hickory, and Norma designed an earlier Methodist church in Hickory that no longer survives (Hambrick Interviews, March 17 and March 25, 2007).

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The *Manufacturer's Record* of March 19, 1892, reported that "Miss Norma Bonniwell has prepared plans for the erection of \$25,000 building at Lenoir College." On February 23, 1897, *The (Statesville) Landmark* announced that "Miss Norma Bonniwell, an architect of Hickory, was in town last week looking after the matter of drawing plans for residences for Messrs. R. L. Poston, C. W. Boshamer, and W. A. Thomas. She is now preparing plans for Mr. Poston's house, which is to be built on Mulberry Street, next Mr. Geo. H. Brown's" (Bishir, Bonniwell Family). Now demolished, a Poston House was located at 123 S. Mulberry Street in Statesville. It was a frame house of Gothic Revival stylistic influence with three gables across the front. The W. A. Thomas House, located at 302 West End Avenue in Statesville, is one of the most distinctive Queen Anne-style houses in that city (Phillips, Mitchell College Historic District, Inventory List). The United States Census of 1900 listed both Norma and Josephine Bonniwell as boarders living at the White residence in Raleigh; their occupations were listed as working in an "architect office." The architecture firm of Pearson and Ashe hired Norma as a draftsman in 1899; Josephine probably worked at the same firm with her sister (Bishir, Bonniwell Family). On November 20, 1901, Norma Bonniwell married William Peele King, and they settled in Windsor, North Carolina. In 1903, Josephine Bonniwell married Eubert Lyerly, and they returned to Hickory (Hambrick Interviews, March 17 and March 25, 2007). No architectural work is currently known to have been associated with either Norma or Josephine after their marriages.

The case of Norma and Josephine Bonniwell—two young women who were active in the architecture profession in North Carolina in the 1890s—is highly unusual. There may have been other women practicing at the time, but if so, they have not been discovered. That the Bonniwells had their father's support and promotion is all the more interesting (Bishir, Bonniwell Family). Norma appears to have been the more active of the two; at least, more buildings have been attributed to her. Her situation seems especially remarkable, not only because she represents a rare case of a woman functioning as an architect in the late nineteenth century, but also because she apparently had a fair number of clients despite being a woman, and because she was surprisingly young at the time of some of her commissions. For example, she was only sixteen when she designed the Finley house. It is likely that she worked under her father's supervision, but it was her name that appeared on the plans for the house. Thus, the Thomas B. Finley House is not only the finest surviving Queen Anne-style house in North Wilkesboro, but it is even more distinctive for being a rare example in North Carolina of an 1890s house known to have been designed by a woman, Hickory architect Norma Bonniwell.

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### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is defined as Wilkes County Tax Parcel ID 1404018 (also known as Wilkes County Tax PIN 3868-54-0469). It is delineated by the bold black line on the accompanying Wilkes County Tax Map, drawn to a scale of 1" = 100'.

#### Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property encompasses a tract of less than one acre that constitutes the surviving historic and current property associated with the Thomas B. Finley House.

### PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information for #1-5 applies to all nomination photographs:

- 1) Thomas B. Finley House
- 2) North Wilkesboro, Wilkes County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) March 9, 2007
- 5) CD: NCHPO, Raleigh
- 6-7)
  - 1: Main stair, vestibule, view to SE
  - 2: Parlor, open to vestibule and dining room, view to NE
  - 3: First floor center hall, view to N
  - 4: Main stair from second floor, view down to vestibule
  - 5: Servants' house, view to NW
  - 6: Ice house, view to SE
  - 7: East elevation and façade of house, view to NW
  - 8: Façade detail, view to N
  - 9: Façade (south elevation) and west elevation, view to NE
  - 10: Overall and setting from E Street, view to N
  - 11: Overall and setting from corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and E streets, view to NE
  - 12: Rear (north elevation), view to SW