

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 T. Max Watson House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 297 East Main Street

not for publication N/A

city or town Forest City

vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC

county Rutherford

code 161

zip code 28043

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Jeffrey Brown SHPO 8/17/01
Signature of certifying official Date

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

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Cat: Domestic Sub: secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Georgian Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

weatherboard

roof ceramic tile

other _____

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

T. Max Watson House
Name of Property

Rutherford County, NC
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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1939

Significant Dates
1939

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Roberts, Leah Range

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.

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: _____

T. Max Watson House
Name of Property

Rutherford County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.14

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 17	421910	3910080	3		
2			4		

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda Blosser

organization

date May 1, 2001

street & number PO Box 133

telephone 828-862-8123

city or town Brevard

state NC

zip code 28712

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Theron Paul Watson

street & number P.O. Box 1800

telephone 828-245-4411

city or town Forest City

state NC

zip code 28043

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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T. Max Watson House, Rutherford County, NC

Narrative Description

The T. Max Watson House is situated approximately at the center of a 2.41-acre site at 297 East Main Street, one block east of downtown Forest City. The Watson House sits on a long, urban lot, 182 feet by 630 feet, which extends from Main Street to Trade Street to the north. It is located in a neighborhood of other early to mid-twentieth century houses. Today many of the houses on Main Street have been demolished or adapted for commercial uses. The vehicular approach to the house is from the south via a driveway that follows the western edge of the property, turns east at the rear of the house and ends at the garage entrance.

The landscape of the lot has evolved over time according to the original landscape plan by Clarence M. Leemon, a landscape architect from Charlotte. Running along the western edge of the property line are box hedges. A curving stone path extends from the driveway to the front portico. The patio on the western side is bricked and delineated by box hedges. Several mature trees with bushes and shrubs planted close to the house punctuate the front lawn. To the north of the house is a formal lawn, which terminates with a group of trees and plantings. A small shed sits on the western edge of the lawn towards the rear of the lot.

The landscape architect's plan retained the largest trees on the lot and planned for a long formal lawn at the rear of the house surrounded by bushes, plants, and flowers. The box hedges along the western edge and around the patio are also part of the original plan. The landscape has followed the original plan, and it is intact.

1. T. Max Watson House. Contributing. 1939.

Designed by architect Leah Range Roberts, the Watson House is a fully articulated example of the Georgian Revival style. The original blueprints do not survive, but the house remains largely unchanged since its construction in 1939. In the 1950s, the Watsons enclosed the second story sleeping porch off the master bedroom and the rear entry porch. A small shed was also constructed at the western edge of the property line. The shed was not part of the original design by Roberts.

Facing south, this two-story white brick residence has a center-passage plan with a side gable roof, central projecting entrance bay, and a set back front gable one-story garage on the eastern end. The roof is covered with interlocking red clay tiles manufactured by B. Mifflin Hood Tile Company of Charlotte. The roof has a fully articulated entablature, with modillions, dentils and boxed returns.

The front (south) façade of the main block is symmetrical and divided into five bays, with two bays of windows on either side of the central projecting bay. Most of the window openings are one-over-one sash with inoperable shutters, some being paired. The lintels and sills are brick. The projecting bay features corner quoins, a portico on the first floor, and a Palladian window on the second. The portico has a fully articulated cornice with a metal balustrade above and is supported by three Ionic columns on each side. The central paneled door is flanked by leaded glass sidelights. Above the portico, the Palladian window is flanked with leaded glass sidelights.

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T. Max Watson House, Rutherford County, NC

The roof on the projecting bay is a front facing gable with boxed returns and a half-round attic vent in the center of the gable end. The attached frame east wing has board and batten wood siding on the end gable. There is a small round arch window on the second level of the front elevation of the wing.

The west elevation of the house is divided in three bays. The third (north) bay on the second story is a window added in 1952 when the sleeping porch was enclosed. The side gable end is covered with weatherboards and has a small window at the attic level. The stack of the exterior end chimney terminates with simple corbelling. The north or rear elevation is composed of three distinct sections: the garage wing, a projecting gabled section, and western section with a recessed porch on the first floor, and an enclosed sleeping porch above. This elevation is divided into ten bays. The central projecting gable section is brick and an off center, shorter projecting bay has a three-sided bay window on the first floor. The western end of the façade is a porch on lower level and the enclosed sleeping porch above. The second story of the western end is covered in weatherboard. The porch is supported with Tuscan columns, with three at the corner. Multi-lite doors, original to the house open onto the rear porch at the northwest corner of the house. The floor of the patio is broken quarry tile with two multi-pane doors leading to the interior. The enclosed second story porch has grouped square posts and triple windows. The lower story of the weatherboarded east end wing has double garage doors.

Inside, the grand central stairhall is flanked to the east and west by one room, with formal and informal dining rooms beyond the hall to the north. Located to the northeast of the hall, the kitchen adjoins the back (servant) stairs (see Exhibit A, floor plan). The entry hall is notable for its arched opening with molding; curved staircase with turned balusters and the scalloped brackets on the end of the stairs. Ceilings in the stairhall and throughout the house are plaster. Some walls have been wallpapered. Walls are also plaster with the exception of the nursery, basement, and the study which are covered with pine panelling. Doors are typically six-panel, with brass knobs. Floors are carpeted with the exception of the kitchen, which is covered with linoleum tile. The formal living room has an Adam style mantelpiece. The dining room to the north has built-in corner cabinets that display the same scalloped brackets as the staircase. The informal dining area, directly west of the formal dining room, features a built-in china cupboard. The kitchen features a one-piece stainless steel sink and wraparound counter top manufactured by Custom Silvi Sheen Sink, by Tracy Mfg. Co.¹ Directly east of the entry hall is a small bathroom and study. The bathroom retains the original color scheme and fixtures specified by the architect. The study has built-in bookcases with the same brackets as the stair and cabinets in the dining room. The fireplace in the study features a mantelpiece similar to the living room but not quite as elaborate.

The attached east wing is connected to the main house by a stairway. The stairway serves the nursery and basement. Upstairs the (former) nursery features pine paneling and built-in bookcases. There are two small closets on the south side of the nursery. Also accessible from the

¹ Watson, Theron. Son of T. Max Watson and current owner of the house. Interview by Amanda Blosser, 3 August 2000 and 9 August 2000. The architect specified this sink.

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T. Max Watson House, Rutherford County, NC

rear stairs is the basement. The basement is finished in the same pine paneling. A small mechanical room is accessed from the basement.

Upstairs, all four bedrooms and bathrooms are similar in detailing (See Exhibit A for floor plan). The walls are all plaster and floors carpeted. The master bedroom has a formal fireplace like the living room below. All the bedrooms have closets which have a floor raised four inches above the finished floor. The architect designed this detail in order to keep closets dust-free.² The bathrooms feature decorative tile work each with a different color scheme and stainless steel hardware.

2. Shed. Non-contributing building. ca 1950s.

Small, square one-story building with a front gable roof. Board and batten with wood shingles. Building is set on the western edge of the property and surrounded by bushes. Good condition.

² Watson, Theron. Son of T. Max Watson and current owner of the house. Interview by Amanda Blosser, 3 August 2000 and 9 August 2000.

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T. Max Watson House, Rutherford County, NC

Statement of Significance

Summary

The T. Max Watson House, built in 1939, is significant in Forest City as an excellent example of a Georgian Revival style house. Built during the second phase of Colonial Revival in North Carolina, the T. Max Watson House is an interesting blend of a carefully detailed Georgian Revival residence and free form interpretation of the Colonial Revival models. Designed by Leah Range Roberts, the Watson House is one of a small group of Colonial Revival residences in Rutherford County and the only example of Georgian Revival architecture. The Watson House is eligible for listing under National Register Criterion C for architecture.

Historical Background

The varied geographical features of Rutherford County contributed to the development of a diverse economical, social, and architectural heritage. Located in the southwestern corner of the North Carolina Piedmont on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, “in many respects the county represents the broad range of North Carolina’s historical development in microcosm, for it harbors aspects of the agricultural, industrial, and resort developments that characterize the state as a whole.”³ From the days of earliest settlement, the county was largely composed of farmers who lived in isolation from the rest of the state.⁴ The county remained predominately agricultural until the arrival of the textile industry in the twentieth century.

Forest City is located six miles east of Rutherfordton, the county seat, and is situated in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. The town is interconnected by three US highways – 64, 74, 221- and one state highway, NC 108. From a crossroads settlement originally known as Burnt Chimney, the town of Forest City had its official beginning in 1877. The community was named after the solitary blackened chimney from James Arthur’s home. As the community began to grow, and leaders envisioned the time when the settlement could become a leading city in the area, consideration was given to changing the name. In 1882, the post office was changed to Forest City, and five years later, the North Carolina General Assembly officially changed the name to Forest City. The population, according to Federal census taken in 1880, was 110. In 1900 it had increased to 1090; and in 1930, 2020. The town was laid out in the 1920s around a public square, a plan which won Forest City recognition in 1927 from the United States Department of Agriculture as one of ten best planned cities in the United States.⁵

During the growth of the textile industry in the early twentieth century, T. Max Watson returned to Rutherford County as the general manager of Spindale Hosiery Mills. Mr. Watson, born in Lancaster, South Carolina, was the son of Rev. S.N. and Lillian Watson.⁶ S.N. Watson

³ Merkel, Kimberly I, *The Historic Architecture of Rutherford County* (Forest City: Rutherford County Arts Council, Inc., 1983) p 1.

⁴ Bishir, Catherine, Southern Michael, and Jennifer Martin, *A Guide to the Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) p 175.

⁵ Griffith, Clarence. *The History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties, 1730-1936*. (Asheville: Miller Print Co), p 530.

⁶ Griffith, Clarence. *The History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties, 1730-1936*. (Asheville: Miller Print Co), p 547.

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held pastorates in North and South Carolina. T. Max Watson completed high school in Forest City and returned to the town after receiving a degree from a business college in South Carolina. In 1923, Watson married Lillian Beasley, a schoolteacher in Spindale.

Once married, the Watsons continued to live in Spindale where T. Max Watson became involved in politics serving as a delegate to the Democratic convention and eventually being appointed to the North Carolina State Highway commission. Shortly after Watson was appointed to the commission in 1937, he purchased 2.41 acres on East Main Street in Forest City and began construction of their new home.⁷

The Watsons commissioned Leah Range Roberts, an architect/interior designer based in Charlotte, and despite their initial hesitance to work with a female architect, Herman-Sipes Construction was selected as the contractor.⁸ In 1939, the construction of the Watson House was complete and the Watsons and their two children, Glen and Theron, moved to Forest City. Roberts continued to remain in contact with the Watsons, and especially remained friends with Lillian Watson. The house still remains in the ownership of the Watson family today.

Architectural Context

Colonial Revival was a dominant style of domestic architecture in America during the first half of the twentieth century and entered North Carolina residential architecture “through classicized adornments grafted onto houses of Queen Anne form . . . and subsequently in a renewed emphasis on symmetry and a central portico.”⁹ The classicized adornments grafted on Queen Anne houses typified the first phase of Colonial Revival architecture in North Carolina and continued until the late 1920s. These early examples were rarely historically correct copies but were instead free interpretations with details inspired by colonial precedents.

A second, overlapping phase of Colonial Revival began in North Carolina in the 1920s with the more literal replication of Georgian and Federal styles. Like other architectural styles, the Colonial Revival was widely disseminated through periodicals and books. These ventures led to a wide understanding of the prototypes on which the revival was based. The second phase tended towards copies that were more carefully proportioned and detailed. This Georgian-Federal phase thrived in the 1920s and 1930s, and the model of Colonial Williamsburg, remained popular until the present.¹⁰

The T. Max Watson House in Forest City is an interesting blend of a carefully detailed and free form interpretation of Georgian Revival architecture. Typical of Georgian Revival copies, the Watson House has a symmetrical façade with a central projecting bay, a center-passage plan and restrained classical details and proportions in the entablature, portico, moldings, quoins, and interior trim. The painted white brick and white trim enhances the classical features of the house.

⁷ Rutherford County Deed Book.

⁸ Watson, Theron. Son of T. Max Watson and current owner of the house. Interview by Amanda Blosser, 3 August 2000 and 9 August 2000.

⁹ Bishir, Catherine. *North Carolina Architecture*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). p 417.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p 417.

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In contrast, the attached east wing and the rear façade show a freer interpretation. The east wing mimics an outbuilding in its smaller size and different materials. The rear façade is asymmetrical and the proportions are uncharacteristic of Colonial Revival. Instead modern features such as bay windows, garage doors, and French doors are used with minimal Colonial Revival detailing.

While there are several examples of the Colonial Revival style in Forest City and the county, the Watson House dates from the later period of the revival. These Colonial Revival houses include the J.H. Thomas House, ca 1922, in Forest City; the James D. Ledbetter House located near Forest City built in 1914; and the Ben F. Andrews House, ca 1907, located on the Carson-Mill property.¹¹ Of these, the Watson House is the only Georgian Revival house in Forest City.

Serving as both architect and interior designer, Leah Roberts practiced at a time when demands for housing and commercialization increased, and the field of architecture was rapidly professionalizing.¹² Licensing laws and professional organizations began to exert control over the building industry. Even more unusual was the fact Roberts was a female architect because “architecture had been a traditionally white, male dominated field,” and it was not until the 1950s that women started to enter the field in North Carolina with any noticeable numbers.¹³

Very little is known about Roberts and the scope of her work. Her professional life was centered in Charlotte, where she shared an office with her husband Blair W. Roberts, a contractor and developer.¹⁴ Blair and Leah Roberts moved to Charlotte in 1919, shortly after Blair was discharged from military service following World War I.¹⁵ He then entered the real estate and contracting business. It is still unknown whether Roberts attended a professional architecture school, although she did not attend a design school in North Carolina nor was she member of the North Carolina AIA.¹⁶

Of Roberts’s projects, the Watson House is the only known design. Several Georgian Revival residences in Shelby and Charlotte have been attributed to her, but of these houses, only one is orally documented as being a Roberts design.¹⁷ Located in Shelby on Country Club Road, the house follows in the same style, featuring painted brick exterior with quoins, clay tile roofs, double pile plan, and similar size.¹⁸ The majority of the information about Roberts is based on

¹¹ Merkel, Kimberly I, *The Historic Architecture of Rutherford County*, (Forest City: Rutherford County Arts Council, Inc. 1983), p 12.

¹² Bishir, Catherine, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl Loundsbury, and Ernest H. Wood, III. *Architects and Builders in North Carolina, A History of the Practice of Building* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p 223. As noted, by the late 1930s, the state had joined with architects and contractors to organize and control the building process through education and licensing.

¹³ *Ibid*, p 413.

¹⁴ Charlotte City Directory, 1939

¹⁵ “Retired City Contactor Dies at 83,” *Charlotte Observer*, 17 June 1963.

¹⁶ Jackson, David C. and Charlotte V. Brown. *History of the North Carolina Chapter of The American Institute of Architects 1923-1998: An Architectural Heritage* (Raleigh, NC: 1998 North Carolina Chapter, the American Institute of Architects, 1998) p 17.

¹⁷ Watson, Theron. Son of T. Max Watson and current owner of the house. Interview by Amanda Blosser, 3 August 2000 and 9 August 2000.

¹⁸ Field observations by Amanda Blosser, 20 September 2000.

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National Park Service**

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T. Max Watson House, Rutherford County, NC

oral documentation; because there is very little written information about her. More research about the scope of Roberts's projects is needed before her overall importance can be determined.

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Major Bibliographic References

Bishir, Catherine W. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Bishir, Catherine, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl Loundsbury, and Ernest H. Wood, III. *Architects and Builders in North Carolina, A History of the Practice of Building*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Bishir, Catherine, Michael Southern, and Jennifer Martin. *A Guide to the Architecture of Western North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Charlotte City Directories, 1939- 1950.

“Retired City Contactor Dies at 83.” *Charlotte Observer*. 17 June 1963.

Griffin, Clarence. *The History of Old Tyron and Rutherford Counties, 1730-1936*. Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1977, reprinted 1982.

Jackson, David C. and Charlotte V. Brown. *History of the North Carolina Chapter of The American Institute of Architects 1923-1998: An Architectural Heritage*. Raleigh, NC: 1998 North Carolina Chapter, the American Institute of Architects, 1998.

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

Merkel, Kimberly I. *The Historic Architecture of Rutherford County*. Forest City: Rutherford County Arts Council, NC, 1983.

Watson, Theron. Son of T. Max Watson and current owner of the T. Max Watson. Interview by Amanda Blosser, 3 August 2000 and 9 August 2000.

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

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T. Max Watson House, Rutherford County, NC

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for this nomination is indicated on the accompanying tax map and is a 2.41 acre tract. PIN 04-25508.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all of the lot originally associated with the property.

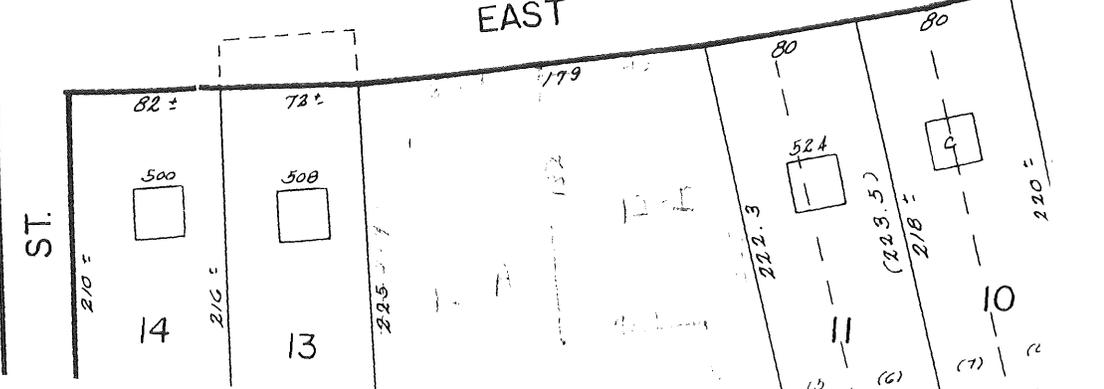
226

209

209



Watson House
 297 E. Main St.
 Forest City
 Rutherford Co.
 RIN/04-25508



4654 IV NW
RUTHERFORD TON
(RUTHERFORD NORTH)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



T. MAX WATSON HOUSE

FOREST CITY, RUTHERFORD CO. NC

ZONE 17 Forest City Quad

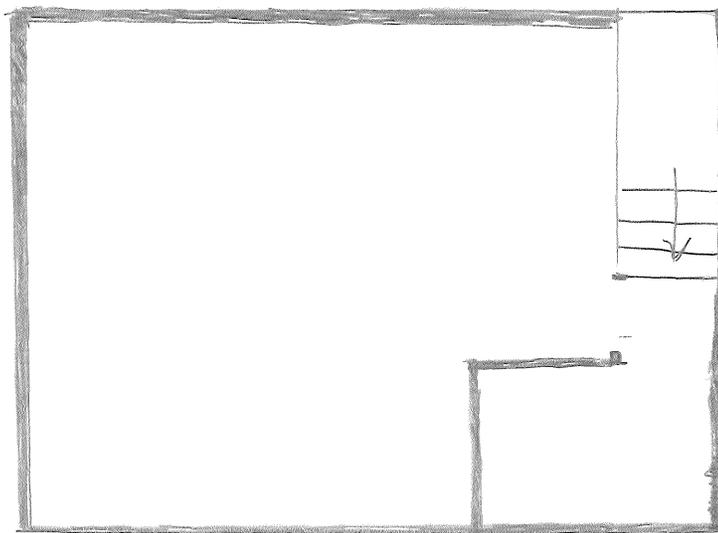
EASTING 421910

NORTHING 391000



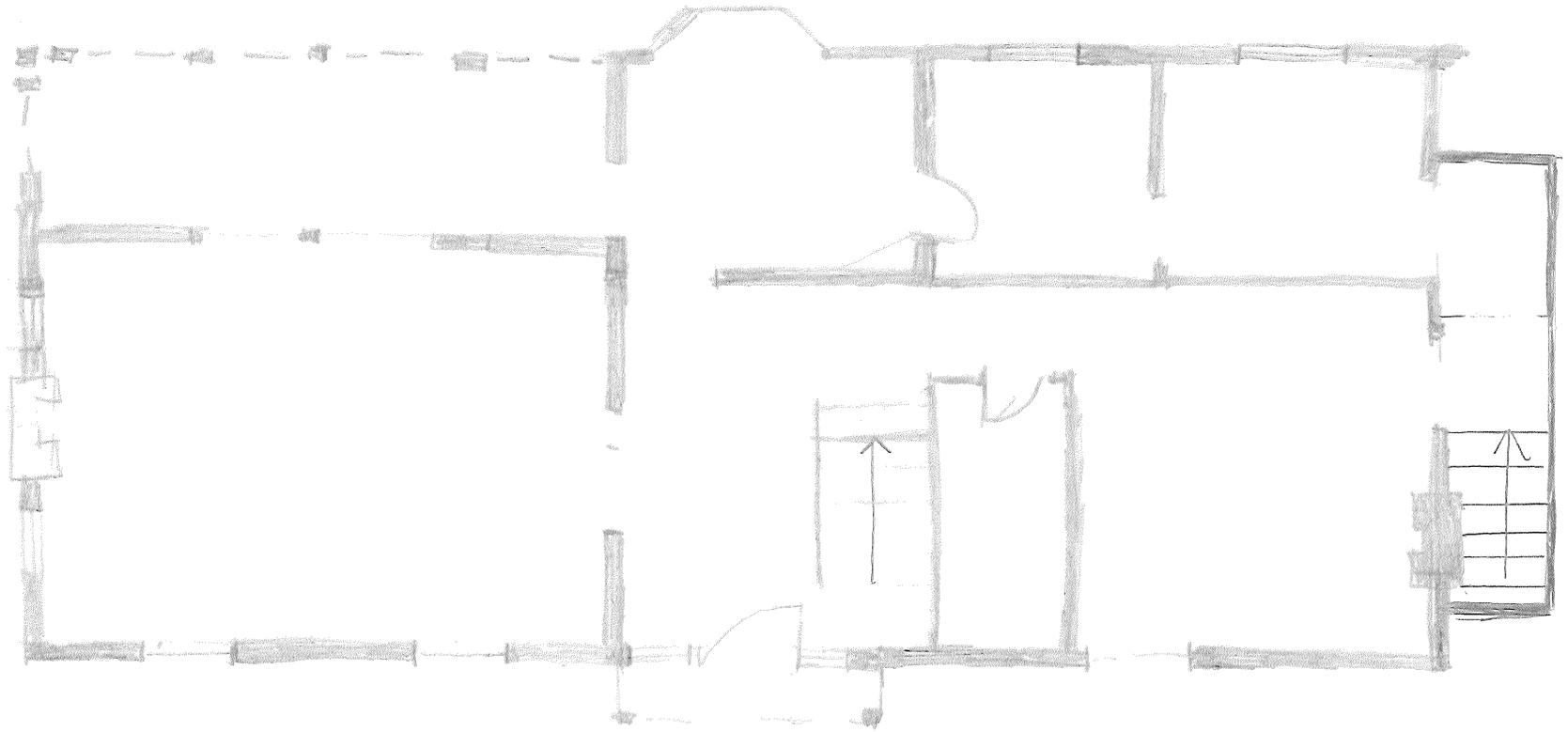
T. Max Watson House
297 East Main Street
Forest City, Rutherford Co.

BASEMENT



T. Max Watson House
297 East Main St
Forest City, Rutherford Co.
1st Floor

↑ N



2nd Floor

T. Max Watson House
297 East Main Street
Forest City, Rutherford Co.

