

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only
received OCT 9 1979
date entered DEC 11 1979

1. Name

historic "Pinecrest" (preferred); Kerens, Richard C. House

and/or common "Pinecrest"; Kerens-Spears House

2. Location

street & number Kerens Hill _____ not for publication

city, town Elkins _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district Second

state West Virginia code 54 county Randolph code 083

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Col. and Mrs. Lawrence E. Spears

street & number P.O. Box 910

city, town Elkins _____ vicinity of _____ state West Virginia 26241

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Randolph County Courthouse

street & number Randolph Avenue and High Street

city, town Elkins _____ state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Pinecrest," the Kerens-Spears House, is a large dwelling that sits atop a hill in Elkins, West Virginia. Coursed sandstone is the primary structural and exterior facing material, but wooden shingling on multiple roofs which cover the uppermost floor provides justification (along with its design by Peabody and Stearns of Boston) for describing overall character as representing a modification of Shingle style. It is asymmetrical in shape with gable-fronted sections in the main portion, a hipped roof on servants' wing, and two cone-shaped tops on rounded turrets. While dormer projections and steep gables give an appearance of a $2\frac{1}{2}$ story height at the front, the rear seems to be only $1\frac{1}{2}$ stories, for the principal roof here slopes over what is equivalent to two interior floors. A full basement underlies the house.

Porches, windows, doors, chimneys and dormers are decorative in their own right. Not only do they break facade lines, but they also contribute to dimension and help mellow what might otherwise have been enormous bulk. A front porch extends well beyond the exterior wall and curves along a single-story, rounded projection at the east corner. There is a small rear porch and a side porte-cochere. Windows have single panes in each section of double-hung sashes; they are differentiated by size and placed so as to significantly detract from heavy stone. The main entrance door has a diamond-shaped upper glass section with similar wide sidelights, and each is complemented by a diamond design in wooden panels beneath. Several chimneys rise well beyond rooflines, and these, too, detract from a pending horizontal bulk.

Other decorative elements proliferate. From projecting stone chimney caps to a narrow basement window in the west front turret, an abundance of details can be found in stone and wood. Windows and doors have three- to eleven-stone lintels, dormers have pent roofs or gables with indentations, brackets (similar to modillions in size and shape) form the basic cornice, horizontal wooden supports at porte-cochere and front porch arch between stone pillars, balusters on the latter are tightly placed, plain vertical slats that continue below the floor to form a skirt along basement level.

The building's given name, Pinecrest, is physically associated with a carved pine cone finial on the newel post of main stair in the central hall (which is approximately fifteen feet wide and fifty feet long). It sets the tone of interior character, for it is finely cut and solidly made. Following the asymmetry of the exterior, room placement inside is somewhat less than regular and is dominated by three large rooms on the first floor. Plan is less important than feature, however, and woodwork is outstanding. Builder Richard Kerens not only delighted in application of an enormous quantity of quartered white oak (even in high wainscoting throughout the servants' wing), he assured that it was milled or carved beautifully. Nothing bespeaks this quality more than the open-string, open-well main stair with its design of three styles of worked balusters per tread, including a spiralling motif repeated in the newel. Trim in oak (only drawing room mantel is cherry) seems endless, from chairrails to sliding doors.

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Mantels are treated with applied swags and garlands and include features such as attached Ionic columns and mirrored overmantels. Although hardware is not distinctively styled, it is functional and well made. Lighting fixtures (crafted in Majorca) are no less than delightful; most are brass tubes or plates in patterns of spirals, curves and leaves in ceiling fixtures and wall sconces, many of which have handsome glass shades or globes. By far the finest of these is the pair of "vaseline" chandeliers in the main hall.

Alterations have been only minor since time of construction. When they have been made, existing features or materials have been used where possible. This is evidenced in such ways as a former tube intercom that has been converted into a modern electrical system.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1892

Builder/Architect Peabody and Stearns, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Pinecrest," located at Elkins, Randolph County, West Virginia, is an architectural expression in a modified Shingle mode that combines volume and bulk with asymmetrical lines and excellent detail to produce a grand house well suited to its late nineteenth century "Robber Baron" heritage.¹ While design was by the prestigious Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns, it was most probably a product of Pierce T. Furber, their St. Louis representative until his death in 1893, for the latter had a similar strong connection with that Mississippi River city as had owner Richard C. Kerens. Kerens himself took quite an interest in construction, and his agreements for services with a variety of firms called for quality materials and craftsmanship, attesting to the contemplated stature of this place.² Richard Kerens accumulated substantial wealth in transportation enterprises, starting with mules and mails after the Civil War and continuing through railroad projects that eventually connected him with Henry G. Davis and Stephen B. Elkins, father- and son-in-law, who played a considerable role in "opening up" northern and central West Virginia.³ As a prominent Republican backer of men and movements he won an important reputation in Missouri and then nationally; it was his continued support of party hierarchy that led to President Taft's naming him as ambassador to Austria-Hungary, a post he held from 1909 until 1913.⁴ His large and attractive "mansion" has a history that did not stop with Kerens' death in 1916, though, for association with persons who have contributed considerably to their community and state continues today.⁵

Explanatory Notes

1. Stone is the predominant building material in this house and is quite evident at first and second floors and in gables. But offsetting emphasis is provided in two major ways: use of wooden shingle coverings on roofs and wooden siding on dormer facings. Unlike a well-defined Shingle style building, Pinecrest relegates use of this effect solely to roofs, and although these sometimes slope precipitously over two floors, they are nonetheless identifiable as roofs. Dormers stand out around the house, both literally because of their projection and figuratively because horizontal siding bands are broken by rounded indentations and diamond and circular patterns. Round turrets and a segmental bay combine with nicely detailed, deep front porch and side porte-cochere to compound the asymmetrical facades, creating an appearance of massiveness.

2. Richard Kerens was born in Ireland and raised in Iowa. After the Civil War he settled in Arkansas to begin a career that eventually led to his settling in St. Louis where he not only participated in economic activities but also became a social and political force. When a decision had

9. Major Bibliographical References

Board of Trade. Elkins, West Virginia, November, Nineteen Six. Reprint. Elkins, W.Va.: Randolph County Historical Society, 1975.
 Elkins, W.Va. Collection of Col. and Mrs. Lawrence E. Spears.
 Malone, Dumas, ed. Dictionary of American Biography. Vol. V. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961. (pp. 353-54)

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property Approximately 1 acre

Quadrangle name Elkins, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

17	599410	4309570
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification The building is located on a large (over three acres) lot. The extent of nomination is the house and surrounding land to a private road approximately 30 feet to the west side, along a shrubline at the north (rear) about 75 feet from the rear of the house.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Harding, Historian

organization Historic Preservation Unit
Dept. of Culture and History date July 26, 1979

street & number The Cultural Center
Capitol Complex telephone (304) 348-0240

city or town Charleston state West Virginia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Clarence Moran

title Director, Historic Pres. Unit, WV Dept. of Culture and History date September 27, 1979

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register <u>Clarence Moran</u> Keeper of the National Register Attest: <u>Emma Sue Sax</u> Chief of Registration	date <u>12-1-79</u> date <u>12-1-79</u>
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been reached to construct a "summer house," he apparently turned to fellow St. Louisian Pierce T. Furber who had established himself as representative of the Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns, an organization which participated grandly in application of the Shingle style. Among those who worked on construction or provided materials were the Riddle and Rehbein Manufacturing Company of St. Louis (milled quarter oak), a Piedmont, West Virginia, glazier who provided ninety-three windows of various sizes and types, George W. Walther and Company (plumbing) and William E. Wood and Company (heating and ventilating) both of Baltimore, and Robert Graves Company of New York (wall-paper).

3. After serving as mule driver and transportation expert for the Union Army, Kerens received a contract to carry mail via pony express. He prospered in this business at San Diego before moving to St. Louis to become more active in railroads, one of which was the West Virginia Central and Pittsburgh route which had helped to open vast coal and timber lands in northern West Virginia. This was the project of Henry G. Davis and Stephen B. Elkins (both of whom constructed estates similar to Kerens' Pinecrest on the hills of a city named in honor of Elkins). This project added a considerable measure to the Missouri businessman-politician's already substantial wealth.

4. Through generous donations and an ability to draw a staunch circle of followers, he became an important figure in Republican party affairs for nearly forty years. Not only was he a national committeeman for twelve years (1888-1900), but he was a member of the national executive committee during five presidential campaigns and served as national treasurer of the party for a time. Although he never held a high elective office, he had received support of the Republican minority in the Missouri legislature as nominee for the U.S. Senate. Kerens had declined offers of ambassadorships from Presidents Harrison and McKinley; in 1909, however, he accepted President Taft's request that he take the post at Vienna, where he served as U.S. representative to Austria-Hungary until 1913.

5. Kerens' former summer house has been a functional dwelling since passing to a local timber associate named Wilson. Since 1965, it has been home to Col. and Mrs. Lawrence Spears; Col. Spears served as deputy commissioner of the West Virginia Department of Commerce in the 1960s, and Mrs. Spears is currently a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates. One might view Pinecrest as luxurious in its quality, but the real character of the house is in its adaptability to being lived in. This must be part of the legacy of Richard Kerens himself.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The National Cyclopedia of American Biography. Vol. XXI. New York:
James T. White & Co., 1944. (pp. 408-09)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

thence following the upper contour of a sloping hill on the east side approximately 30 feet away from the building, and from there along a treeline at the top contour of another hill slope about 50 feet from the north (front) elevation. This represents the extent of cleared property functionally associated with Pinecrest.