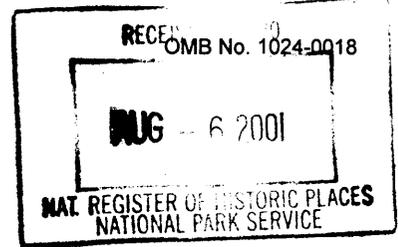


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Wheeler-Evans House

other names/site number /SE1772

2. Location

street & number 340 South Lake Jesup Avenue N/A  not for publication

city or town Oviedo N/A  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Seminole code 117 zip code 32762

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

James Archer Matthews 7/31/2001  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical 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 certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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  See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the  
National Register

Date of Action

9/20/01

**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)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(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**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

DOMESTIC/Garage

DOMESTIC/Storage shed

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

DOMESTIC/Garage

DOMESTIC/Storage shed

**7. Description**

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

LATE NINETEENTH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVAL/  
Colonial Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt Shingle

other Wood  
Wrought-iron

**Narrative Description**

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

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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or 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 36) 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1928-1950

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

Wheeler, Benjamin Franklin, Sr.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Fisk, Herbert A.

Kiehl, Howard

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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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida**

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**Summary**

The Wheeler-Evans House is a significant historic architectural resource in the City of Oviedo. The house stands at 340 South Lake Jesup Avenue. Rising two-and-one-half-stories, the hollow-tile-and-brick house is among the largest and best-preserved examples of the Colonial Revival style in Seminole County. The house has a modified T shape with a cross-hip roof plan. A one-story porte cochere and a one-story sun porch with flat roofs and roofline balustrades bracket a central two-and-one-half-story section. Other features include gable dormers, corbeled brick chimneys, eaves brackets and dentils along the frieze, textured red brick exterior walls with quoins, and double-hung sash windows. A one-story semi-circular porch with Doric columns and a roofline balustrade marks the front entrance. The house contains approximately forty-one hundred square feet of interior floor space, and is executed with a superior level of craftsmanship. A contributing garage and shed, and a non-contributing storage building also stand on the property. Possessing exceptional presence, detailing, massing, and ambiance, the house retains its early twentieth century character and integrity to a high degree.

**Setting**

Oviedo is located in Seminole County, Florida. The city lies about eleven miles northeast of Winter Park, and Sanford, the seat of government of Seminole County, lies fifteen miles to the northwest. Lake Jesup, one of the chain of lakes forming the upper St. Johns River, lies about two miles north. The population of Seminole County is nearly 350,000, and the City of Oviedo, one of the smallest of the county's municipalities, contains 22,000 residents. The primary corridors consist of State Roads 419, 426, and 434, which converge in Oviedo's downtown. The Green Belt, a toll by-pass through eastern Orange and Seminole Counties, borders Oviedo on the west. Railroad tracks historically ran through the city, but all of those have been dismantled.

The Wheeler-Evans House stands several blocks southwest of Oviedo's downtown. It occupies a small ridge south of the intersection of Lake Jesup Avenue and Clark Street. State Road 426, locally designated as Broadway Street, lies two blocks north and Hillcrest Drive one-half block to the south. The house stands in a residential neighborhood. Although a comprehensive survey has not been conducted of Oviedo, it appears that the Wheeler-Evans House is the only example of the Colonial Revival style in the city.

The house faces west, setback from Lake Jesup Avenue approximately eighty feet. A loggia projects from the rear of the house, connecting it with a contributing garage, which contains about five hundred square feet of interior floor space, and a small non-contributing brick storage building. A contributing wood-frame shed with corrugated sheathing stands about sixty feet south of the house. A citrus grove consisting of nearly twelve acres radiates to the sides and rear of the house. Although citrus trees were planted on the site beginning in the 1880s, the current grove was laid out in the early-1990s, following severe freezes in the 1980s. Consequently, the grove is excluded from the boundary, but it provides ambiance and a sense of the historic relationship

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
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between the house and its agricultural setting. A variety of hardwood trees provide ambiance and shade, and shrubs screen the foundation of the house from view.

**Physical Description**

**Exterior**

The symmetrical front, or west, facade displays the primary distinguishing characteristics that make the house a good example of the Colonial Revival style (photograph 1). Two gable dormers pierce the hip roof with picturesque curved muntins in the upper sashes of the double-hung sash windows. Two large corbeled brick chimneys along the north and south elevations, respectively, provide additional symmetry. Carved brackets and dentils accent the eaves line and frieze, and fenestration is symmetrical and regular with twelve-over-one-light double-hung sash windows. Single windows punctuate the second story walls; those on the first story are tripartite arrangements with the outer frames displaying a more narrow profile than the central windows. A projecting, central, semi-circular porch guards the entrance (photograph 2), which is embellished with a leaded glass fanlight and sidelights. A wrought-iron balustrade and a well-executed frieze adorn the porch roof, which is supported by Doric columns. Gutters and down spouts fabricated with copper extend along the fascia and down the textured red brick walls, which are accented with brick quoins. The down spout collectors are embossed with a "W." Displaying pine-tree reliefs, paneled wood shutters embrace the windows along the front facade, and are part of the original architectural plans.

The eaves line and frieze details evident on the facade are continued along the north elevation (photograph 3). Symmetrically placed twelve-over-one-light double-hung sash windows bracket the chimney, which is centered on the elevation. A one-story sun porch projects from the main wall. The sun porch displays many of the features that embellish the front porch, including a roofline balustrade, frieze with dentils, and Doric columns. The columns appear in tripartite arrangements at the corners, and single columns adorn the adjoining main wall. Fanlight transoms accent nine-light single-hung sash windows.

A two-story hip extension, which forms the shaft of the modified T shape, is evident from the north elevation. A brick chimney with a metal cap pierces the roof. Fenestration is asymmetrical and irregular with twelve-over-one, eight-over-one, and six-over-one-light double-hung sash windows. A pedimented entrance leads into a basement, and at the northeast corner a rear door opens into a loggia, which connects the house with a garage.

The rear, or east, elevation displays two-story and one-story hip extensions (photograph 7). The eaves line brackets and dentils are continued along the two-story extension, but a simple molded frieze adorns the one-story extension. Both display double-hung sash windows with twelve-over-one lights.

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida**

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The south elevation (photographs 7, 10) is similar to the north elevation with the exception of a few minor distinguishing characteristics. A one-story porte cochere projects from the main wall. It displays Tuscan columns mounted on a brick stem wall, which supports a flat roof adorned by a roofline balustrade. A chimney is centrally located on the elevation, and is bracketed by single window openings on the upper story, and a window and an entrance on the first story. The rear cross-hip extension displays regular, but asymmetrical fenestration. Midway along the elevation, near the wall connections, lies an entrance that is protected by a shed roof and an ornate wood bracket.

**Interior**

**First Floor**

The interior plan is predicated on a central hall plan with the rooms radiating around that centralized feature. Ceilings rise eleven feet, and fifteen-light French doors with leaded glass handles and brass hardware separate most spaces. Door and window openings are finished with a wide, beaded molding. Crown, picture, and toe moldings finish plastered walls, and oak floors provide a rich ambiance. Wall and ceiling hammered brass and copper sconces adorn each room, and many rooms have ceiling medallions.

The entrance opens into the central hall (photographs 12, 13), which leads into an arched alcove protected by an arched door with a beveled mirror. A quarter-turn staircase with a landing extends along the north wall of the central hall. Adorned with crown and pendant moldings, a semi-circular opening arcs across the ceiling, lending the staircase a monumental feel.

The first floor contains nine rooms. A living room (photograph 14) occupies the space to the right, or south, of the hall. Easily the largest space in the house, the room measures fifteen feet by thirty feet. A fireplace finished with a paneled wood mantle and marble firebox face is centered on the south wall. Applied decoration on the mantelpiece includes Corinthian columns, sunflower patterns, and an "Aladdin's" lamp. A ten-light French door east of the fireplace leads into the porte cochere.

A library, dining room, and sun porch occupy the space to the north, or left, of the central hall. Once again, French doors provide access between the rooms. The library (photograph 15) displays four original built-in bookcases with leaded glass doors. The sun porch (photograph 16) has a fireplace with a textured brown brick firebox face and a bracketed cypress wood mantle. Executed in plaster, a chimneypiece above the shelf contains an arched statuary niche. The floor and baseboard of the sun porch is finished with ceramic clay tiles; in-laid tapestry ceramic tiles adorn the hearth.

The alcove off the main hall is suggestive of the diminutive nature of the features that lie beyond. Beyond the alcove lies a secondary L-shape hall (photograph 18), which leads to the dining room (left or north), or the

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living room (right or south). Bracketing a six-paneled arched door are two rectangular six-paneled doors, one with an exaggerated narrow profile. An arched niche and staircase opening occupy the east wall of the hall (photograph 19). Built around two newel posts with abbreviated handrails, the staircase features a distinctive full-turn, or 360 degree, double winder-and-landing system. The small profile and features of the secondary hall and staircase contrasts markedly with the expansive nature of the central hall and adjoining rooms. In addition, the combination of arched openings and wood paneled doors that display various profiles furnish relief and character within the narrow corridor.

To the east of the secondary hall lies a powder room, playroom, and breakfast room. Across from the powder room opens a lighted door that leads out to the south side of the house. The playroom contains two built-in seat-boxes with inset brass lid pulls, and the breakfast room contains a built-in china cabinet (photograph 20).

A pantry, kitchen, and utility room occupy the northeast corner of the house. The pantry (photograph 21) is divided from the dining room by a six-paneled wood door. The pantry contains a U-shape counter top, and numerous cabinets, cupboards, and drawers with paneled and nine-light doors. A nine-over-one-light double-hung sash window provides natural interior lighting into the space. Beaded board serves as the backing for the lighted cabinets.

The pantry leads into the kitchen (photograph 22). Beyond the kitchen stands a utility room (photograph 22), which contains a door at its north end that leads onto the loggia.

### **Second Floor**

The second floor consists of five rooms and two restrooms. Ceilings reach nine feet, and moldings, doors, hardware, and sconces similar to those found on the first floor adorn the rooms of the second floor. In contrast to the first floor, all of the second-floor doors are paneled wood to provide privacy. Two bedrooms open on both sides of the central hall (photograph 25), and a sleeping porch occupies the east end of the floor. A canted door near the east end of the hall provides access to the secondary staircase.

A restroom (photographs 24, 26) located midway along the west wall services the northwest and southwest bedrooms. A second restroom stands at the east end of the hall. Closets support each room, and a walk-through closet connects the southernmost bedrooms. The restrooms contain original freestanding sinks, towel closets, and arched openings for the shower/tub spaces.

### **Furnishings**

The Wheelers consulted with the Tarr Furniture Company of Tampa, Florida to furnish their home. The company prepared scaled line drawings for each room and provided suggested appointments and locations for

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
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appropriate carpets, furniture, and draperies from Oriental and America Colonial motifs. Oriental carpets from Bengal were selected for many rooms, and furniture appointments in most rooms displayed Adamesque influences. Fifty-two window shades made of Bancroft's Sunfast Holland cloth were installed on the window frames. The majority of these furnishings, especially the carpets, tables, chairs, sofas, desks, and bed frames and posts, adorn the residence, providing a veritable encyclopedia of early-twentieth century furniture in a Colonial Revival residence.

**Alterations**

A number of minor alterations occurred over time. About 1960, the uppermost section of the chimney piercing the north slope of the roof of the eastern cross-hip extension blew off during a storm, and the remaining chimney was capped with a metal cover.

The utility room, kitchen, and powder room were slightly modified in an alteration planned by James Gamble Rogers in 1980. Originally a rear porch and broom closet occupied the utility space. The renovation resulted in the enclosure of the porch and closet into a single utility room, and the removal of the original door between the rear porch and kitchen. A slight realignment was also made in the opening between the kitchen and pantry. The original paneled wood door separating the pantry and kitchen was also removed. The size of the powder room was slightly reduced as part of the alteration to the kitchen and pantry. The modifications are a product of serving the needs of owners over time and are compatible with the original design of the house.

**Contributing Outbuildings**

Constructed in 1928, a contributing garage (photographs 6, 9) displays a hip roof with a ridge vent, textured red brick walls, a vehicle bay door, pedestrian door, and twelve-over-one-light double-hung sash windows.

Built about 1935, a contributing shed stands about sixty feet south of the house (photograph 11). Containing approximately 100 square feet of interior floor space, it displays a gable roof with a shed extension and corrugated metal panels for the roof and wall sheathing.

**Non-Contributing Building**

A non-contributing brick storage building is incised within the roof of the covered walk (photographs 5, 6). It stands at the northeast corner of the covered walk, and is separated from the garage by about three feet. It was built at the same time as the loggia (1980). James Gamble Rogers II prepared the plans for the loggia, brick storage building, and interior modifications of the residence. By then, Rogers had retired from active practice. But, he continued to design homes for close friends and associates, including the Evans. During the period, Rogers also executed the plans for the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Evans on Lake Charm.

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida**

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**Summary**

The Wheeler-Evans House fulfills criteria B and C at the local level for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Under Criterion B, the house has significance as the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin F. Wheeler, Sr., early settlers and business leaders of Oviedo. Born in Dade City, Florida, in 1878, B. F. Wheeler arrived in Oviedo in 1889, and in 1908 helped organize Nelson & Company, a citrus packing enterprise. He also established the Oviedo Citrus Growers Association in 1909, and the Oviedo Board of Trade in 1911. In 1923, he incorporated Nelson & Company, founded the Wheeler Fertilizer Company in 1934, and organized and served as president of the Citizens Bank of Oviedo in 1946. The house, completed in 1928 is tangible evidence of the exuberance of the Florida land boom in Oviedo, and the wealth of a successful citrus and celery grower and businessman during the early twentieth century. The house served as his home until his death in 1954. The house possesses further significance under Criterion C. One of the largest historic houses in Oviedo, the residence is a good example of Colonial Revival architecture. Herbert A. Fisk, a draftsman working for the Design-build Company of Howard C. Kiehl of Orlando, prepared the plans for the house. Kiehl supervised its construction. The design of the dwelling is consistent with national and statewide trends in architecture.

**Historical Context**

Seminole County, organized in 1913, contains a number of communities with a nineteenth century heritage. One of the oldest of those is Oviedo, which was founded in the 1870s southeast of Sanford near Lake Jesup, a tributary of the St. Johns River. Although permanent settlement began in the 1850s, the formal naming and organization of the village occurred in 1879, when postmaster Andrew Aulin selected Oviedo from the name of the capital city of the Spanish province of Asturias. In 1886, Aulin platted a plan of development for Oviedo. Agriculture, especially citrus, became a mainstay of the economy. The lure of riches from agricultural harvests encouraged two railroads to extend tracks into the village. New homesteads and farms appeared, but freezes in December 1894 and February 1895 destroyed thousands of citrus trees statewide. Still, farmers replanted citrus groves and truck farms. Celery was introduced after the devastating freezes, and the first rail cars filled with the vegetable were shipped from the neighboring City of Sanford in 1898. In 1908 alone, over one thousand rail cars packed with celery were shipped from the "Celery City" to northern markets. Oviedo remained a rural agricultural village with the population increasing from 293 in 1900 to 488 a decade later.

Growth sparked the creation of Seminole County in 1913, and Sanford was designated the seat of county government. In Oviedo, a woman's club was organized in 1906, and business leaders organized a board of trade in 1911. The following year, the Bank of Oviedo was established. Most businesses, churches, and civic organizations developed in the small commercial center, which was largely destroyed by fire in 1914. In 1913, the Black Hammock Drainage District was formed to transform wetlands into agricultural fields. Nelson & Company and the Oviedo Citrus Growers Association handled most fruit packing in the town. In 1915 alone, Oviedo's farmers shipped over sixty thousand boxes of citrus by rail. Growers with large citrus groves included

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida**

J. H. Lee, H. B. McCall, S. Nelson, and B. F. Wheeler. Farmers J. F. Dorny, N. F. Legette, and S. C. Partin planted potatoes and tomatoes. Citrus and vegetable packinghouses appeared along railroad sidings, and small neighborhoods radiated around the downtown. Following a particularly heavy freeze in February 1917, some Oviedo farmers began cultivating celery to help offset losses from their frozen fruit. The quick cash crop enabled some to expand their grove holdings, and other farmers increasingly turned to the "green gold" for a primary source of income. Within the span of a decade, Seminole County accounted for 3,700 acres planted in celery, more than one-half of the celery cultivated in the state. Citrus remained an important crop. In 1919, Seminole County farmers shipped 200,000 boxes of oranges, and nearly 112,000 trees had been planted.

During the Florida land boom of the 1920s, Seminole County experienced substantial growth. In 1920, the census bureau counted 685 residents in Oviedo, and the county's population reached 14,738 in 1925. That year, Oviedo's residents incorporated the Town of Oviedo, and several new subdivisions opened previously undeveloped property. A new brick school was completed in 1922, and by 1930 the town had become the second largest community in Seminole County. Between 1922 and 1927, nearly ten miles of roads had been paved in the vicinity of Oviedo. The number of farms countywide increased from 573 to 810 between 1920 and 1925 with grove and farmlands reaching 13,020 acres in 1927. Oviedo's dependency on agriculture insulated some residents from the worst effects of the collapsing land boom, and, in 1930, Oviedo's population reached 1,042. In 1929, the sale of celery alone brought nearly three million dollars in revenue to Seminole County farmers.

Seminole County's development lurched to a stop as the air seeped out of the land boom, and then, in October 1929, the stock market began a downward spiral, leading into the Great Depression. The financial panic delivered its full impact in the early-1930s. By 1933, numerous Florida banks had failed. Deposits and investments fell and annual incomes declined. Hundreds of properties in Seminole County were foreclosed, and several banks failed in Seminole County. A moderate rate of growth persisted, however, largely because of the citrus industry. Seminole County residents also enjoyed a relatively diversified economy, and the population continued to climb, reaching 18,735 in 1930. Bumper vegetable and citrus harvests helped buoy the economy, and encouraged businessman B. F. Wheeler to establish a fertilizer plant in Oviedo. Farmers and associations annually shipped about 228,000 boxes of oranges at the beginning of the decade, and nearly 4,100 acres of citrus trees were cultivated throughout the county. Celery sales also boomed, and, in 1937 alone, approximately 3,325,000 crates of celery were shipped out of Florida, most from Seminole County farms. Financial assistance from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal program implemented by the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, helped construct several facilities in Seminole County, such as the Sanford Armory and Big Tree Park. In 1940, the census enumerated 1,356 people in Oviedo.

During the 1940s, the county's population continued to rise, reaching 24,560 in 1945. NAS Sanford opened during World War II to train Navy pilots. Many servicemen stationed in Florida during the war returned with their families at its close to take up residence. The state also began to attract a growing number of retirees from

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
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the North and Midwest. Relatively inexpensive housing and low property taxes appealed to retired Americans who relied on a fixed income. In 1946, the Citizens Bank of Oviedo opened, and a new fertilizer plant was completed the next year. At mid-decade, a new city hall was built, and agribusiness and commercial growers began to replace family farms.

Over the following decades, the state's growth accelerated. Although much of Seminole County shared in the growth, Oviedo retained its rural ambiance, hardly touched by development pressures and population growth. In 1970, the town's population stood at 1,926, but the neighboring cities of Altamonte Springs and Sanford experienced explosive growth. In the mid-1980s, freezes devastated central Florida's citrus grove. A few determined companies and individuals replanted, but most growers either sold out or pushed farther south in search of warmer, more predictable weather patterns. In the aftermath of the freezes, some Seminole County groves yielded to commercial and residential developments. Finally, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, Oviedo began to experience significant growth, and in 1990 the census bureau counted 15,722 residents.

**Historical Significance**

Born in Dade City, Florida, Benjamin Franklin Wheeler, Sr. arrived in Oviedo in 1889 and in 1893 began work as a telegraph operator for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. His family had settled at Oviedo in the 1870s, but moved to Pasco County, only to return upon his father's death. Then, after working as a telegraph operator for several years, Wheeler became station agent, a post he held until the early-1920s. In 1898, Wheeler purchased a citrus grove that had been destroyed in the freezes of 1894-1895, and began pruning and budding trees, and planting rootstock. His success at nursing the grove to health, and harvesting fruit from it, led him to plant more trees and invest in a local citrus packing firm, Nelson Brothers Packing Company. The company had been organized by brothers Gus and Steen Nelson in the 1886; Steen Nelson, W. H. Browning, and Wheeler reorganized the partnership in 1908, naming the business Nelson & Company. In October 1909, A. W. Davis, W. J. Lawton, and Wheeler incorporated the Oviedo Citrus Growers Association, which they "created and organized in connection with and under the Florida Citrus Exchange system." Wheeler participated only briefly in the association, however. Later, about 1925, when Nelson & Company joined the Florida Citrus Exchange (FCE), the company maintained its membership with the statewide organization only two years because Wheeler could not tolerate what he believed to be the FCE's poor marketing practices. Steadily gaining success as a grower and packer, Wheeler by 1915 had planted thirty acres in citrus, which yielded 5,000 boxes of fruit.

An astute businessman, Wheeler developed a keen sense of seizing opportunities to expand the business, and to develop new products and services. In 1913, Wheeler bought out Browning's stake in the company and expanded the old packinghouse in 1916. In 1922, he purchased Steen Nelson's share, and became president of Nelson & Company. In October 1923, B. F. Wheeler, Sr., R. L. Wheeler, and T. L. Lingo incorporated the company, retaining the original name, in part, to preserve the loyal customer base and name recognition developed over the past four decades. The Wheelers and Lingo created a stock corporation with 250 shares

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**WHEELER-EVANS HOUSE  
Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida**

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valued at \$100.00 each. To insure his control of the corporation from its inception, B. F. Wheeler, Sr. owned 248 shares of the company and held the post of president, which he retained until his death. Lingo was the corporate secretary and treasurer, and served as the office manager through World War II; R. L. Wheeler was the packinghouse manager and vice-president of the corporation.

Under the direction of B. F. Wheeler, Sr., the company cleared and set its own groves. Wheeler also periodically expanded his personal holdings. Although he purchased a few established groves, most often he acquired undeveloped land, which he cleared and set with citrus trees. A keen observer of Florida's winter weather patterns, he generally selected property for a grove along the south shore of a lake, which he believed, represented the best land for citrus trees to withstand freezing conditions. Devastating freezes in 1894-1895 and in 1917 contributed to his understanding of the location for setting out groves. The freeze of February 1917 provided further impetus for Wheeler to diversify the company's interests. First, he planted celery as a cash crop, and then, in the early-1920s, the company constructed a commercial building along on East Broadway Avenue in downtown Oviedo to house a shop and tool room that later was converted into a hardware store. This building later was expanded again and became the main office of Nelson & Company. In 1947, the building was equipped with air conditioning, the first building in Oviedo to contain climate control.

At its peak, the combined grove holdings of Nelson & Company and B. F. Wheeler, Sr. amounted to nearly 1,000 acres extending between Orange, Seminole, and Volusia Counties. Most groves stood within a ten-mile radius of the Oviedo packinghouse. Wheeler initially planted orange trees, and, in the 1920s, began planting Hart's Late Valencia sweet oranges and Dancy tangerines, another old variety first planted in Orange Mills, Florida, in 1871 by Colonel George L. Dancy. By the mid-1940s, Nelson & Company had developed a reputation of being the second largest shipper of Orlando tangelos in Florida, second only to the Lake Region Packing Association.

About 1935, the company planted groves with Orlando tangelos, a variety propagated in 1931 by budding Duncan grapefruit with the Dancy tangerine. This was the first occasion in which a commercial cultivator and packer set groves of the new variety in Orange and Seminole Counties. The company also budded Navel and Valencia varieties onto Cleo and Sour Orange rootstocks. Wheeler's experimentation with new citrus varieties helped Nelson & Company lengthen its harvest season, spread the workload at the packinghouse over a longer period, and avoid placing the fortunes of the company on any one variety of fruit. Although the business primarily packed fruit harvested from its own groves, it also purchased the fruit from other growers' trees. In those cases, a company crew picked and hauled the harvest to the packinghouse. Nelson & Company initially used mules and wagons to haul its fruit from grove to packinghouse, replacing the mules with trucks and tractors in the 1920s. In 1939, the company pruned trees with hedging machines, the first large-scale citrus operation to use mechanical pruning equipment in Seminole and Orange Counties.

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Nelson & Company applied various labels to its citrus crates to identify its products. Since the 1880s, the nation's citrus growers and packers had used crate labels to establish brand name recognition with consumers. As groves expanded and fruit sales became more competitive, Florida's growers adopted labels as part of their marketing strategy. Displaying colorful decorative art, the labels generally targeted a popular theme: animals, flowers, humor, patriotism, royalty, songs, and various exotic subjects.

Picturesque labels developed for Nelson & Company exhibited themes in nature and heritage. Early on, the Nelson brothers had used the "Pride of Oviedo" label to market their fruit. It was replaced by the "White Rose" label, which predates the date of incorporation (1923), and probably also extends into the late nineteenth century. The "Moon Beam" label appeared in the mid-1920s. The artwork was reminiscent of beautiful hammock grove lands around Oviedo, and identified the company's grade two citrus. A popular Florida citrus label, Moon Beam was reproduced on the cover of *Citrus Growing in Florida*, a University of Florida Presses publication in its fourth edition. Citrus products bearing these labels of Nelson & Company were marketed along the eastern seaboard, especially Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Two other labels identified Nelson & Company fruit shipped into Canada. The first of those, the "Ben Franklin" label was developed about 1935 to memorialize the American statesmen, the given name of the company's president, and mark the company's top grade fruit shipped to Toronto. The "Maple Leaf" label appeared about 1940 to market grade two products in Canada. Competition among citrus packers for customer recognition reached feverish proportions in the Depression, compelling the Florida Citrus Commission to register crate labels in 1937. By then, the "White Rose," "Maple Leaf," "Moon Beam," and "Ben Franklin" were well-established trademarks of Nelson & Company.

In the early-1930s, Wheeler began using fertilizers to strengthen his citrus trees and increase fruit yields. Initially, he purchased 200 pound bags of fertilizer from a company in Jacksonville, storing the overage in a warehouse. Soon, area farmers became aware of his holdings, and he began selling them the excess. He experimented with various chemicals to manufacture his own fertilizer. He applied dolomite lime on his groves to elevate the level of magnesium in the soil, a necessary element for healthy trees and robust fruit. About 1931, he hired Harry Hasson, a chemist who had worked for Swift & Company in Chicago. Hasson formulated specific blends for specific plant uses predicated on the types of soil, vegetable, or the size of citrus trees. About 1933, he constructed a wood-frame fertilizer manufacturing plant to mix cottonseed meal, potash, and other organic materials. To market the fertilizer he established "Wheelco," a subsidiary of Nelson & Company. In 1947, following a spectacular fire, he rebuilt the plant, and, in 1952, at its height of production, Wheelco manufactured 29,000 tons of fertilizers.

Wheeler's combined businesses of citrus packing and fertilizer manufacturing provided numerous jobs in Oviedo and Seminole County. In the 1930s, the company employed about twenty-five full-time citrus workers, and added nearly 200 additional laborers during the harvest season of October to June. The fertilizer plant

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maintained a work force of nearly sixty-five employees. By the early-1950s, the company maintained a permanent staff of twenty-five, and a seasonal force of nearly 250 employees.

Wheeler's business and civic interests extended well beyond the citrus industry. Wheeler organized and served as president of Oviedo's Board of Trade in 1911, and, in 1914, Seminole County's Board of Commissioners appointed him a commissioner of the Black Hammock Drainage District, which levied taxes on property within the newly-formed district to help fund the drainage program. Wheeler's political influence broadened in the 1920s, when he served two terms on the Seminole County Commission. He also helped organize the Town of Oviedo in 1925, and, as a commissioner, was credited with reaching a compromise that set the original town limits at one square mile. He served on the town's commission between 1925 and 1931. In 1939, he was elected to the executive committee of the board of directors of the Tavares & Gulf Railroad Company, then a subsidiary of the Seaboard AirLine Railway. In 1945, he helped establish the Seminole County Chamber of Commerce, and in 1946 he organized and was elected president of the Citizens Bank of Oviedo. Within thirty days of the bank's opening, the institution held \$1,000,000 in deposits. Wheeler served as bank president until his death. In the late-1940s and 1950s, he helped organize the Florida Citrus Mutual in Lakeland, a statewide grower exchange that has become the chief advocate for Florida's citrus growers. Wheeler was instrumental in encouraging area growers to join the Mutual. In 1997, he was inducted into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame.

B. F. Wheeler, Sr. resided in the house until his death in 1954. His wife, Mrs. George Lee Wheeler continued to live there until 1980. Mrs. Wheeler, a daughter of J. H. Lee, an Orange County commissioner, civic leader, and Lake Charm citrus man, had graduated from Littleton College in North Carolina in 1905. She returned to Lake Charm, and taught school for several years in Oviedo. She married B. F. Wheeler in 1908 and joined him in the office at the railroad depot. It was a position of responsibility, since all freight, merchandize, mail, and passengers--both arrivals and departures--was by train. She maintained an active, daily part in the management of the office for seven or eight years. Later, when the couple's three children were born, Mrs. Wheeler continued her interest in civic and church affairs. As a founding member and president of the Oviedo Woman's Club in 1906 she played an important role in numerous community improvement projects. A member of the local Methodist Church, she was president of the Women's Society and taught the Young Women's Sunday school class for many years. In 1927 and 1928, she planned with the architect the brick Georgian Colonial home on South Lake Jessup Avenue. She and her husband contributed financial support to nearly twenty of Oviedo's young people who might not otherwise have been able to attend college. Mrs. Wheeler also contributed substantial financial support and guidance in the planning and design for a new Methodist Church in the 1950s. After Mrs. Wheeler's death, Mrs. Clara L. Evans, a daughter of B. F. and George Wheeler, and her husband, John Evans, acquired the property. Mrs. Evans presently resides in the historic house.

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**Architect & Builder**

The house stands on a parcel acquired by B. F. Wheeler, Sr. in 1901. Then, a two-story wood frame house and a ten-acre citrus grove occupied the site. In 1927, in preparation for building a new brick home, Wheeler moved the wood-frame dwelling using logs and mules to roll it to a new location. The house has since been demolished. To develop the new dwelling, he contacted Howard C. Kiehl, an Orlando contractor. Kiehl arrived in Orlando about 1926, and established a construction company in the Metzinger Building in downtown Orlando. He advertised his business as "building, designing & contracting." Herbert A. Fisk, a draftsman working for Kiehl, completed the plans for the house in March 1928. Fisk arrived in Orlando about 1921, and initially worked as a carpenter, and became a foreman of the Joseph Woodnick Construction Company. During the 1920s, he developed an interest in house design and acquired the skills of a draftsman. About 1927, Fisk began working for Kiehl, and the Wheeler House in Oviedo was among his first projects. Howard Kiehl supervised construction of the house, which was completed in 1928 at an approximate cost of \$20,000.

By 1930, Kiehl had moved his firm to 500 West Central Avenue. Five years later, Kiehl incorporated Orlando's first design-build company with architect Raymond C. Stevens. A registered architect, Stevens prepared building plans and was later characterized as a "patriarch of the building industry honored for his ability as an architect and builder and for his friendly personality." Interestingly, Herbert A. Fisk worked as a draftsman for Kiehl & Stevens. The company developed an excellent reputation for quality and innovation among wealthy clientele, and offered homeowners the uncommon advantage of developing a new home from conception to completion. They furnished clients "preliminary sketches, finished architectural drawings, and personal supervision of every detail of construction." Kiehl & Stevens, Inc. completed numerous dwellings in Orlando, including the exclusive areas of Spring Lake Terrace and Dubsdread subdivisions.

During the bleak years of the Great Depression, Kiehl & Stevens employed cement block construction, one of the first companies in Orlando to use the new, relatively inexpensive building material. Stevens experimented with new stylistic influences, including Minimal Traditional, Monterey, and Ranch. Commercial projects executed by the company included Orlando's Lake of the Woods Apartments on Columbia Street, completed in 1937. The company assembled Kiehl's home on Niblick Avenue in Dubsdread in 1941. That year, the partners ended their association. Kiehl resumed his independent construction business, and Herbert Fisk remained with him as a draftsman until his death in the late-1940s. Stevens formed a partnership with architect George Sipple in the mid-1940s. Documented examples of Kiehl & Stevens, Inc.'s craftsmanship in Orlando, probably with the expertise of Herbert Fisk, include the Louise Baum House (1936), V. M. Hill House (1935), G. M. Jarvis House (1937), Ella Parshall House (c. 1937), the William Whitfield House (1928), and the Murphy House (1939) near Lake Winyah. The design and construction of the Wheeler-Evans House in 1928 is among the earliest examples of the work of Herbert A. Fisk and Howard C. Kiehl in central Florida.

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**Architectural Context**

Colonial Revival was a dominant style of American residential architecture during the first half of the twentieth century. The term "Colonial Revival" refers to a rebirth of interest in the early English and Dutch houses of the Atlantic Seaboard. The Georgian and Adam styles were the backbone of the Revival, which also drew upon Post-medieval English and Dutch Colonial architecture for references. A revival of the style began after the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876, when the centennial of the Declaration of Independence sparked renewed interest in the architecture of the colonial period. Many of the buildings designed for the Exposition were based on historically significant colonial designs. Publicity on the Exposition occurred simultaneously with efforts made by national organizations to preserve Old South Church in Boston and Mount Vernon. About the same time a series of articles on eighteenth century American architecture appeared in the *American Architect* and *Harpers*. The publicity helped make Colonial architecture popular throughout the country.

In Florida, the Bungalow eclipsed the popularity of the style in the early 1920s and Mediterranean Revival styles. The typical Colonial Revival house in Florida is an eclectic mixture of several of colonial designs rather than a direct copy of a single plan. The influences of the Prairie style and American Foursquare plan often appear on models. The style emerged in the state in the late-1880s, reaching its height of popularity in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Some identifying characteristics of Colonial Revival architecture include gable, hip, or gambrel roofs, often pierced by dormers; a symmetrical facade, an accentuated front entrance, normally set within a simple entry porches supported by columns; double-hung sash windows, frequently set in pairs and usually displaying multi-pane glazing in each sash.

**Architectural Significance**

The Wheeler-Evans House is an important architectural landmark in Oviedo and Seminole County. Embodying Colonial Revival styling, the house is the only building that displays the style in Oviedo, and is one of the largest examples of the genre in Seminole County. Completed in 1928, it retains its historic architectural character to a high degree. The house contributes a sense of time, place, and historical development through its ambiance, linkage, and character to the historic built fabric of Oviedo.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The property boundary is the south 110 feet of the north 529 feet of west 223 feet of the northwest 1/4 of the southwest 1/4 of the northwest 1/4 of section 15, township 21 south, range 31 east, less the west 20 feet for the road.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary encloses less than one acre of property historically associated with Benjamin Franklin Wheeler, Sr. House and encloses the historic resources associated with the residence. South Lake Jessup Avenue and a citrus grove that radiates around the residence largely define the boundary, larger than the footprint of the houses.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. 340 South Lake Jesup Avenue
2. Oviedo (Seminole County), Florida
3. Sidney Johnston/Jodi Rubin
4. 2000
5. Historian, DeLand, Florida
6. View showing front (west) facade, facing east
7. Photograph number 1 of 26

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. Detail view showing porch on front (west) facade, facing east
7. Photograph number 2 of 26

6. View showing north elevation, facing south
7. Photograph number 3 of 26

6. View showing northeast elevation & garage, loggia, and brick storage building, facing south
7. Photograph number 4 of 26

6. View showing garage and brick storage building, facing west
7. Photograph number 5 of 26

6. View showing covered walk, garage, and brick storage building, facing east
7. Photograph number 6 of 26

6. Oblique view showing rear (east) and south elevations, facing northwest
7. Photograph number 7 of 26

6. View showing covered walk, facing north
7. Photograph number 8 of 26

6. View showing covered walk and garage, facing northeast
7. Photograph number 9 of 26

6. Oblique view showing south elevation, facing northwest
7. Photograph number 10 of 26

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6. View showing corrugated metal shed, facing southwest
7. Photograph number 11 of 26
  
6. View showing central hall and staircase, facing east
7. Photograph number 12 of 26
  
6. View showing central hall and staircase, facing east
7. Photograph number 13 of 26
  
6. View showing living room fireplace, facing south
7. Photograph number 14 of 26
  
6. View showing library, facing southeast
7. Photograph number 15 of 26
  
6. View showing sun porch, facing southeast
7. Photograph number 16 of 26
  
6. View showing dining room, facing northwest
7. Photograph number 17 of 26
  
6. View showing secondary hall, facing southwest
7. Photograph number 18 of 26
  
6. View showing secondary staircase, facing southeast
7. Photograph number 19 of 26
  
6. View showing playroom and breakfast room, facing east
7. Photograph number 20 of 26
  
6. View showing pantry, facing north
7. Photograph number 21 of 26
  
6. View showing kitchen and utility room, facing east
7. Photograph number 22 of 26
  
6. View showing second-floor southwest bedroom, facing southeast
7. Photograph number 23 of 26

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6. View showing second-floor southwest bedroom and adjoining restroom, facing north

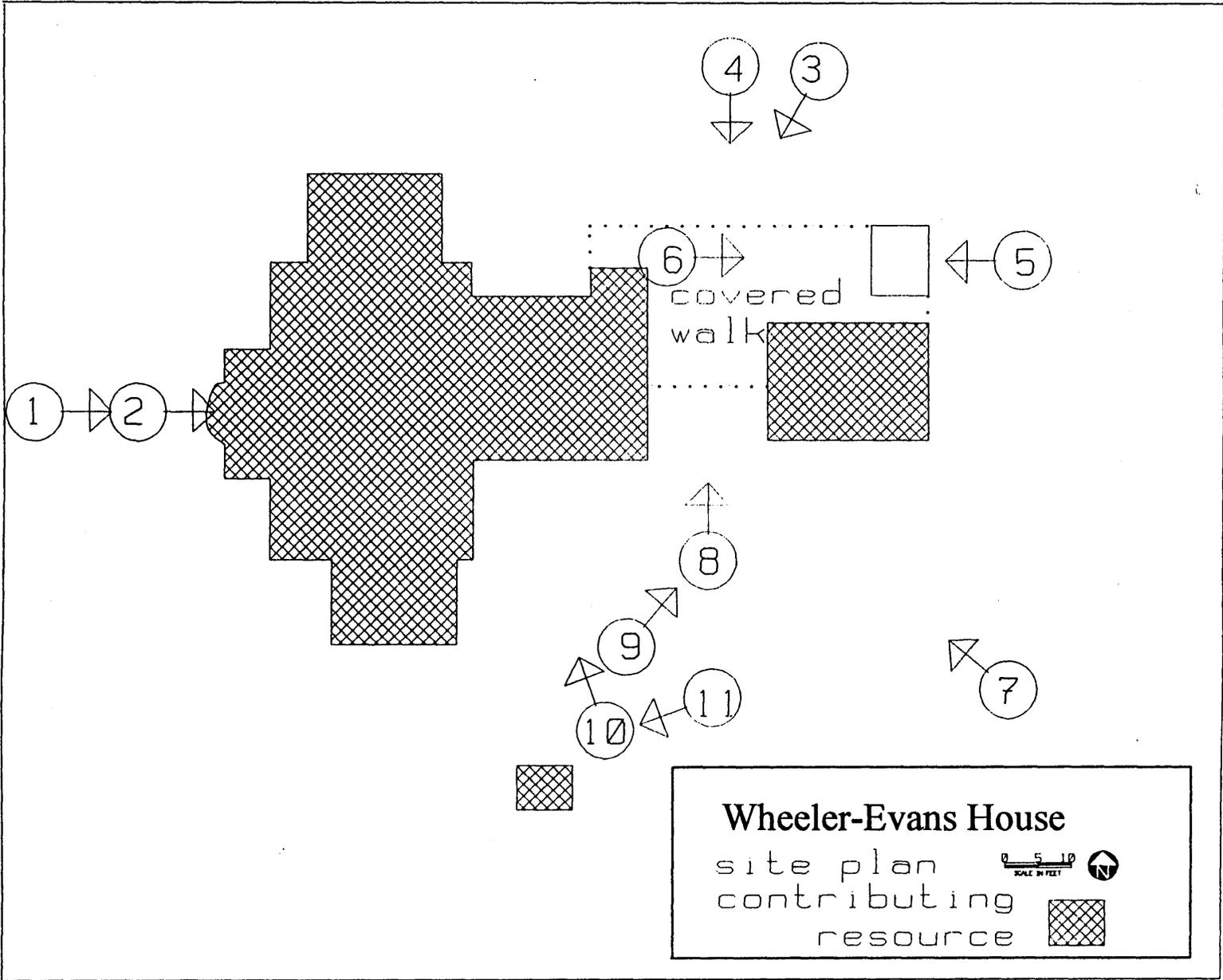
7. Photograph number 24 of 26

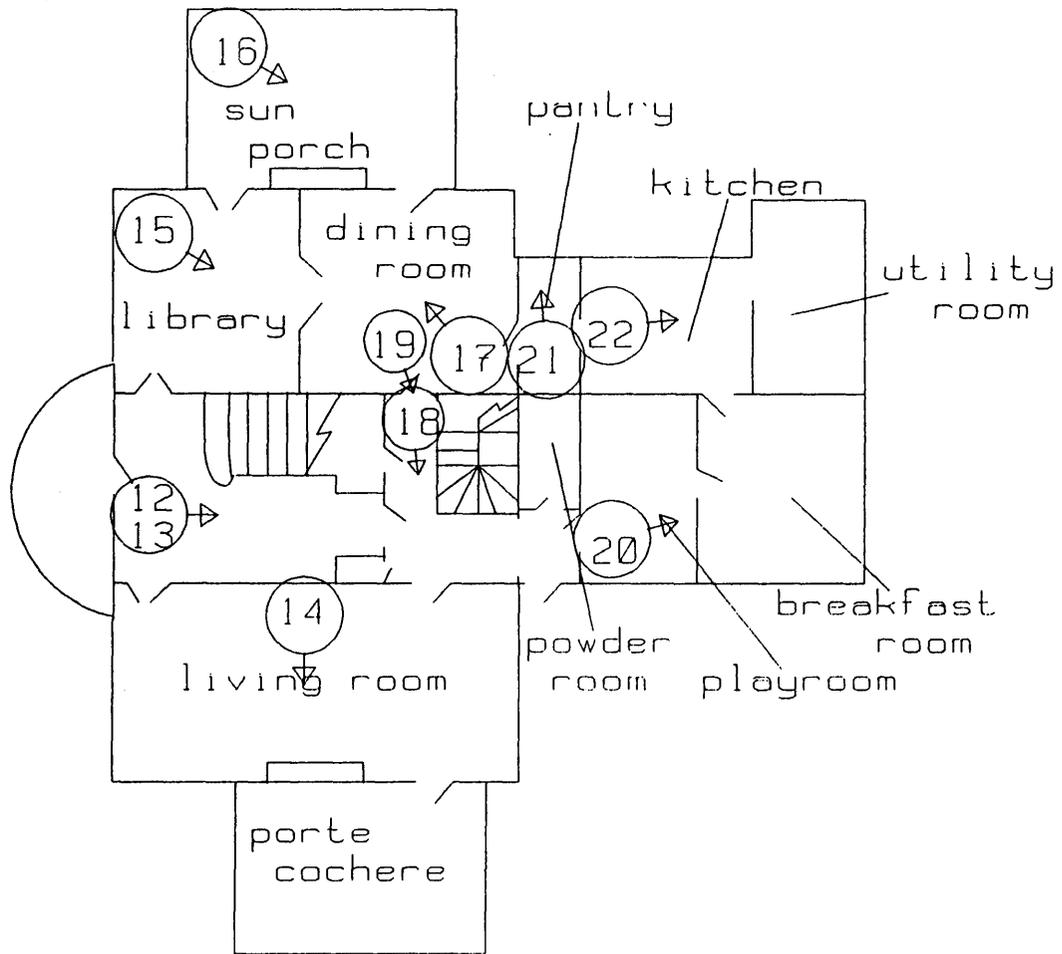
6. View showing second-floor hall, facing northeast

7. Photograph number 25 of 26

6. View showing second-floor northwest bedroom and adjoining restroom, facing south

7. Photograph number 26 of 26



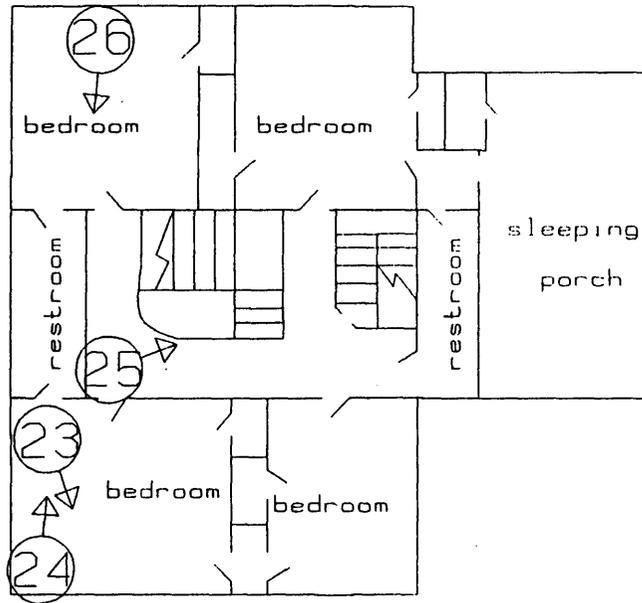


# Wheeler-Evans House

1st floor plan

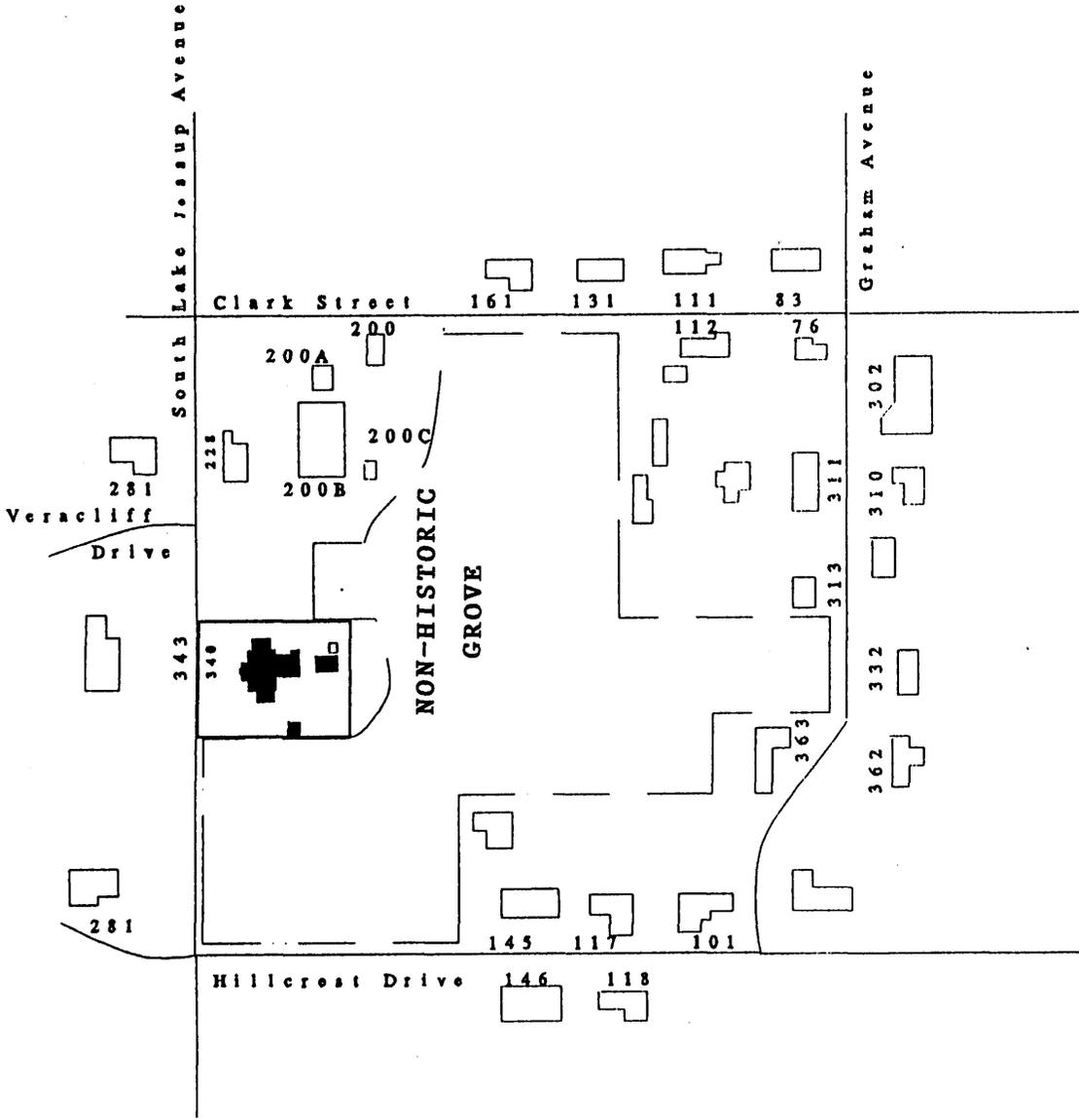
0 5 10  
SCALE IN FEET





**Wheeler-Evans House**  
2nd floor plan

0 5 10  
SCALE IN FEET



Wheeler-Evans House Site Plan 1"=180'

Property Boundary

Grove Boundary

Contributing Resource



NONCONTRIBUTING

