

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Skyline Lodge

Highlands vicinity, Macon County, MA0808, Listed 4/13/2022
Nomination by Caroline Wilson, MacRostie Historic Advisors
Photographs by Caroline Wilson, October 2021



South Elevation, facing north



North Elevation, facing south

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Skyline Lodge
 Other names/site number: _____
 Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 470 Skyline Lodge Road
 City or town: Highlands State: North Carolina County: Macon
 Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: X

3. State/Federal Agency Certification


As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local
 Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

	<u>3/1/22</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: _____ Date: _____ <u>North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official/Title	_____ Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the 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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Hotel
COMMERCE/Restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Hotel
COMMERCE/Restaurant

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Wrightian

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: STONE/Granite, WOOD/Board-and-Batten; WOOD/Plywood Paneling; WOOD/Lap Siding; Foundation: STONE/Granite; CONCRETE; Roof: ASPHALT; Other: CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Skyline Lodge is a 41-unit hotel located four miles northwest of the town of Highlands, North Carolina, near the southwest corner of the state. The complex is set on approximately three acres amidst the rolling, heavily forested topography of Flat Mountain, and features excellent views to the surrounding mountains. The complex sits on a hill that begins at the main approach on the north end of the property and slopes slightly down to the south, and more dramatically at the east and west sides. The slope of the property allowed for daylit basement areas within the 1938 sections of the complex. The complex faces towards a valley and Pine Mountain beyond. The main lodge building was designed with rough-cut and stacked stone terraces that take advantage of this magnificent view. Areas to the east and west contain single-family homes, some of which date to the original development phase of Skyline Lodge, while others are more

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contemporary.¹ Due to the dense tree cover on the mountainsides, the visual impact of these homes is negligible. Skyline Lodge is a Wrightian building constructed in two phases: the first phase, begun in 1937 and abandoned in 1938, was designed by Cincinnati architect Arthur Kelsey with assistance from his wife, Charlotte Peabody Kelsey, who is credited with the landscape design of the property; the second phase, completed in 1965, was designed by Robert Opsahl, an architect from Florida who studied under Kelsey in the 1950s. The first phase included the exterior walls and roofing of three connected sections: the Main Lodge, the Kelsey Guest Wing and the Garage Guest and Service Wing.² The second phase included the interior finishing of the phase one buildings, conversion of the Garage Wing into a guest room wing, and the addition of a new Service and Guest Wing, constructed using similar materials and taking its design cues from the original phase one buildings. The character-defining features of this complex are its association with the natural setting of the mountains, which was a key principle of the Wrightian style, and the use of local materials including rough-cut granite, lap siding, and board and batten siding. The building's relationship with nature is facilitated by the copious amounts of outdoor recreational space found throughout the complex including guest room balconies and porches, outdoor terraces accessed from the Main Lodge, and large swaths of glass windows providing excellent mountain views in the Main Lodge. The building's south elevation has become the iconic face of the property with the stone-faced balcony protruding from the building's main mass; this space is partially covered by the overhang created from the hipped roof, which features an additional gabled pop-up at the top. This is one of the most architecturally significant parts of the building and is representative of the original development of the property as well as

¹ Note: Howard Randall, the original developer for Skyline, owned two cabins on the ridge east of the complex. Known as Big Billy Cabin and Little Billy Cabin, these homes were constructed by Joe Webb, a prolific local builder who specialized in historic construction methods.

² Note: The Garage Guest and Service Wing was originally constructed as a two-story automobile garage and was substantially complete before the building project was abandoned in 1938. In 1965, the garage was converted to two levels of guest rooms, and a perpendicular extension containing three guest rooms on the upper level, and janitorial spaces on the lower level was added. It is not clear how much of the original garage structure was altered to accommodate the rooms and new wing. Clear changes made in 1965 include a higher pitched roof and the possible removal or enclosure of exposed stone exterior walls with board-and-batten siding. Some of the exposed granite piers may have been deconstructed and used elsewhere on the property.

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the original design's reliance on the principles of Wrightian architecture. As part of the 1965 completion of the complex, the glazed gable above the Main Lodge's north entrance, and the registration office with an attached flat-roofed porte cochere were added in an effort to reflect the Mid-Century Modernist design principles in fashion at the time. The addition of the registration office and porte cochere by the complex's parking lot is a commentary of the ascendancy of the automobile in American tourist culture.

The exterior of the central U-shaped building was complete in 1938 but left unfinished after the developer's untimely death. New owners purchased the complex in 1964 and hired architect Robert Opsahl to finish the project. As Opsahl was a student of the project's original architect, Arthur Kelsey, he remained faithful to Kelsey's plans in completing the existing building's interiors. In addition, he made additions including the conversion of the auto garage into guest rooms and the addition of a new wing featuring a registration office and additional units.

Skyline Lodge has operated as a public hotel since opening in 1965. Some floorplan changes occurred in 1969 following a kitchen fire in the Main Lodge including the conversion of the manager's apartment into additional kitchen space, and the refinishing of the exposed wood beams in the main lounge. Room interiors have changed including newer carpets in the bedroom and tile in the bathroom. Overall, Skyline Lodge retains a high degree of integrity and has recently undergone a historically sensitive renovation that recaptures its mid-twentieth century character.

Narrative Description

Site

The Skyline Lodge sits on three acres atop Flat Mountain, an area located four miles outside the town limits of Highlands. Promotional information for the Lodge claims that the resort sits at 4,000 feet above sea level. The site, surrounded by dense tree cover, is composed of the hotel complex, a large parking lot in the front (north elevation), a central courtyard, and a west courtyard, accessible via a narrow road

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running under the L-shaped wing at the west side of the property. Additionally, there are wooden decks located at the lower level of the Main Lodge, and in front of the Lodge, both of which allow for sweeping views of the valley mountains beyond.

The parking lot was recently repaved and re-striped and slopes downward towards the Registration Office, located at the front of the complex (Photo 1). The central courtyard, is located between the Kelsey Guest Wing and the Garage Guest and Service Wing. The Main Lodge Building faces onto this space, which until recently, contained an oval-shaped swimming pool. As part of the recent renovations of the complex, the pool was filled in as it was impossible to make it code compliant. The historic stone coping that once ran around the pool edge was retained and incorporated into the new hardscaping. At the west side of the complex is a paved road that leads to the west courtyard. This road is lined by a concrete wall, presumably dating to the 1965 completion of the property and fronts the Garage Guest and Service Wing. This courtyard features a concrete retaining wall along the east side and a lower concrete wall with planters on the west side, fronting the 1965 Service and Guest Wing. The west courtyard is finished with pea gravel and features a modern wooden pavilion on the west side. Entry to the lower-level rooms of the Garage Guest and Service Wing are accessible via stacked stone staircases at both ends of the concrete retaining wall that runs along the east side of the courtyard. As these lower-level rooms feature semi-private patio entries, the adjacent area is landscaped Japanese Maples, shrubbery, and flowers.

Exterior Layout and Design

Skyline Lodge is a single building composed of four connected sections or wings: the Main Lodge, the Kelsey Guest Wing, the Garage Guest and Service Wing, and the Opsahl Guest Wing. The U-shaped core of the hotel consists of the Main Lodge, the Kelsey Guest Wing, and the Garage Guest and Service Wing, converted to guest rooms in 1965. The swimming pool, added in 1965 to the original main courtyard that separates the Kelsey Guest Wing from the Garage Guest and Service Wing. In 2021, the swimming pool, which could no longer be altered to meet modern codes, was infilled to create a green space in the

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courtyard. Stacked rough-cut stone, painted board and batten and lap siding face the buildings' exteriors. The design of these buildings reflects the organic architecture principles made popular by Frank Lloyd Wright, who was a significant influence on Arthur Kelsey, the original architect for the complex. While the 1965 renovation of the complex by architect Robert Opsahl introduced new sections to the building, his work to complete the older parts relied on the original plans, with a few notable exceptions: the enclosure of the gabled front balcony on the south side of the Main Lodge, the addition of the glazed gable at the north elevation of the Main Lodge, the addition of a registration office and porte cochère along the north side of the Garage Wing, and the enlarging of the main level rooms in the Kelsey Guest Wing by absorbing the original interior corridor and creating a new exterior corridor.

SKYLINE LODGE, CONTRIBUTING BUILDING, 1937-38, 1965, 1969

Skyline Lodge is one building with four connecting sections: the Main Lodge, the Kelsey Guest Wing, the Garage Wing, and the Opsahl Guest Wing.

Main Lodge

The Main Lodge (Photo 2), begun in 1937, and fully completed in 1965, houses the primary guest amenities of the resort.³ This section is roughly T-shaped and one-and-a-half stories over a full basement. The Lodge is faced in a combination of painted lap siding, and painted, vertically placed plyboard panels, with sections of rough-cut granite; the hipped roof allows for deep overhanging eaves. The north elevation exterior features a dramatic gable that extends over the main entry to the building. This gable features large panes of glass above lap siding and allows for an intimate seating area in the loft inside the Lodge. This gable was added as a part of the 1965 renovation to the complex and imbues the north elevation with Modernist characteristics, including the drastic angle of the roof and the half-glazed wall. depart from the original Wrightian influence (Photo 3). The main entry features wide double French doors accessed via

³ Note: Plans for the lodge were underway by late 1936, but construction did not begin until 1937.

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stacked stone entry with knee-high granite walls to either side and bluestone flagging. To the west end of the elevation, the wall is finished with granite facing and a ribbon of wood-framed casement windows. A large granite chimney is located at the northwest corner.

The south elevation provides additional dramatic elements which were a part of the Lodge's original Wrightian character including the angled, cantilevered balcony and stacked stone terraces. The walls are partially faced in granite with sections of lap siding and feature ribbons of wood-framed casement windows. The primary visual element of this façade is angled, cantilevered stone balcony that projects from the main wall. Tall, wood-framed French doors provide access to the balcony from the dining room inside. The balcony is flanked by a single casement window and a granite planter box. The other principal feature of this elevation is the granite terrace, located on the east side, and designed by Charlotte Peabody Kelsey. Access to the terrace is from a single French door located in one corner. The current terrace is the lower section of the original two-part structure. The upper terrace was enclosed with a low wall and ribbon windows during the 1965 renovations; the original granite faced wall remains in the Lodge's dining room. This is the wall that was added in 1965 to enclose the upper terrace, creating additional seating for the dining room located inside. The west side of the south elevation features a basement level sunroom addition with a shed roof. This area was created from an original terrace after a 1968 kitchen fire that destroyed this section of the Lodge. The sunroom is framed with low granite walls and large expanses of wood-framed, fixed windows. This addition is also visible on from the west elevation and features a wooden deck that is accessed from the sunroom.

The west elevation of the Lodge features plywood panel siding and a large section of granite facing. The foundation is concrete. At the south end, the sunroom added in 1968 is visible along with the bulk of a wooden deck that appears of modern construction. Adjacent to the deck is the original granite, cantilevered exterior staircase that provided access to the upper level. The staircase is a feature of the 1937 construction and shows the Wrightian influence as there are only treads, and no risers, which evokes a floating effect

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(Photo 4). A single-width doorway at the top of the stair would have provided access to the apartment. However, the apartment was destroyed in the 1968 kitchen fire. When the Lodge was renovated, a new, larger kitchen was installed in the space originally set aside for this apartment and the doorway sealed.⁴ Adjacent to the staircase are two, wood-framed fixed windows, one at each level. The lower level has a metal-framed, sliding glass window that appears to date to the 1968, or possibly later. At the northwest corner of the Lodge, a concrete staircase provides access to the Garage Guest and Service Wing rooms, the lower level of the Lodge, and the main courtyard.

Only a small section of the east elevation is visible as the Kelsey Guest Wing connects to the Main Lodge at this point. Approximately one window bay and the outer face of the chimney are visible. The wall containing the window as well as the outer face of the chimney are stacked stone.

Interior

The Lodge interior is comprised of a lower level with restrooms, bar and sunroom; and a main level which contains a lounge, restaurant, and kitchen. The main entrance located at the north elevation leads into a small entry space beneath the mezzanine loft before opening into the lounge, which has a soaring, angled ceiling with exposed wood beams (Photo 5). The mezzanine level loft is supported by the stone exterior walls as well as two wooden posts directly beneath the structure. The loft is accessed by a narrow staircase at the east end. The mezzanine's north wall is glazed, which allows for expansive views of the courtyard, the parking lot, and trees beyond. This space is used as a reading nook and is finished with carpeted floors, and a combination of gypsum board and painted plywood panel walls. This area may have been re-built following the 1968 kitchen fire as the balcony wall features a steep angle as opposed to the straight wall with shallow ledge that appears in the historic plans.

⁴ Note: In 2000, Robert Opsahl wrote in a letter to then owner Robert Nass that the post-fire renovation completely changed the original function and layout of this area.

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The main level of the Lodge features a glazed wall composed of casement windows installed in the 1990s. These windows appear to be based off of the original units and provide an expansive view to the valley and mountains beyond. Two rough-cut granite fireplaces with massive stone lintels anchor the lounge. A clear coating has been applied to the surface of the stone. Five square skylights are located above the west fireplace; most likely, these skylights were added to the roof in 1969, following the 1968 fire, which required significant renovations to this section of the Lodge. During recent renovation efforts, charred wood beams were uncovered in the area around these skylights; this is an indication that the fire, which started in the adjacent kitchen, extended into the lounge. The lounge walls are a combination of painted gypsum board and exposed stone. The floors in the lounge are composed of luxury vinyl plank, installed a renovation conducted in 2021. A modern bar counter runs along the south side of the room. One restroom and one office are located in the northwest corner of the lounge; the restroom was recently renovated and features a tiled floor and black marble sink console.

The restaurant dining room is accessed from the lounge. Located on the west side of the Lodge, this space is comprised of two sections, separated by a rough-cut stone wall with two window openings and two door openings. This wall was originally an exterior wall, thus the east dining space sits where the original upper terrace was originally placed. Both sides of the dining room feature exposed stone walls and luxury vinyl plank. A large, stacked stone fireplace is located on the north wall between the kitchen and west dining room.

The kitchen is located on the north side of the Lodge. The kitchen floors are terracotta tile and some of the walls have exposed rock faces, lacquered with sealant. At the center of the kitchen, an open tread staircase leads to the lower level of the building. Most likely, this staircase was constructed after the 1968 fire, providing access to the lower-level club lounge, which opened in 1970 after the renovations were completed in 1969.

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The lower level of the lodge houses an office, freezer room, a small library, bar and sunroom, two restrooms, and an interior corridor that connects to the lower floor of the Kelsey Guest Wing. Sections of the corridor and the lower-level club lounge walls showcase the rough-cut stone foundation. Carpet tiles cover the corridor floor, while luxury vinyl plank can be found in the library, bar and sunroom. The library serves as an antechamber and is finished with painted gypsum board walls. Beyond the library is the bar, which contains a stacked stone fireplace and a wooden counter at the south end (Photo 7). The ceilings are finished with gypsum board as are the east and west walls. The adjacent sunroom was created from the original west terrace by enclosing it with a combination of large fixed and casement-style windows along the west elevation. A door accesses the wooden deck located at the southwest corner of the Lodge's exterior. The ceiling is finished with stained beadboard and stacked stone walls are visible at the north and east sides of the room.

Kelsey Guest Wing (1937-38; 1965)

The Kelsey Guest Wing is a one-story-on-a-basement, side-gable-on-hip-roof structure located along the east side of the courtyard and is connected to the Main Lodge via a lower-level interior corridor. The main level rooms, of which there are ten, are accessed by way of an exterior corridor, that sits approximately a foot above courtyard (Photo 8). The original plans for this wing show that this exterior walkway was added in 1965 after the original interior corridor was divided up and absorbed into the individual guest rooms, resulting in larger rooms at this level. The exterior covered walkway is of wood construction and has a canted railing with vertical wood posts supporting the roof. A synthetic outdoor covering covers the walkway. The exterior corridor wall of this wing is constructed of stacked stone pillars interspersed with board-and-batten panels below wood-framed casement windows.⁵ Each room has a steel

⁵ Note: The historic plans show that this wing was meant to have interior corridors on both levels. Presumably the exterior stone walls (and pillars) were complete before the project was abandoned. As exterior corridors were a popular feature of Modernist motor court hotels, it appears that a new exterior corridor was constructed in 1965 and the space originally intended to serve as a corridor was absorbed into the room configurations.

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access door. Beneath the exterior walkway, a line of square awning windows can be seen. These windows are level with the main courtyard and provide light as well as ventilation to the lower level of the Kelsey Guest Wing. At the northeast and southeast ends of the wing, there is an enclosed stair hall, which provides access to two units as well as a staircase leading to the lower floor.⁶ Both stairhalls are faced with stacked stone and board-and-batten paneling. Large, wood framed windows along the west elevation of each stairhall provide light. Both the north and south ends of the Kelsey Guest Wing are faced with board-and-batten and feature a wide, stacked stone chimney. There are sections of lap siding beneath the single bay of windows. Like the west elevation, the exterior wall of the east elevation is faced with board-and-batten interspersed vertical sections of stacked stone. These stone sections give the façade a dimensional quality. The east elevation of this wing has been modified from its original 1938 appearance by the addition of a two-story balcony structure. It is not clear when this structure was added to the building; in a 1965 newspaper article highlighting the opening of the resort, only eight private balconies were offered.⁷ Presumably, this reference is to the eight rooms located in the newly constructed 1965 Guest Wing. This balcony structure is fitted into the planes of the east exterior wall and is constructed of wood with horizontally placed railings. To provide privacy, wood partitions divide the structure into individual balconies.

The Kelsey Guest Wing contains twenty rooms; ten rooms are located on each level. The main level rooms are slightly larger due to the incorporation of the original interior corridor space. These rooms contain carpet tile floors and painted gypsum board walls. Single walls are finished with textured wood panels that may date to the 1965 renovation. This paneling is located on north wall of each unit and extends approximately three-quarters up the wall. These wood panels can also be found on the east wall, where the

⁶ Note: There is an enclosed stairhall at both ends of the wing so there are two staircases total. Four of the units on the main level (two at each end) are accessed by way of this stairhall. An additional four units (two at each end) are located on the lower floor and within the stairhall structure.

⁷ John Parris, "New Highlands Resort Will Open Sunday," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 26, 1965.

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bathroom is located, as well as on the ceiling chases located the east and west ends of the room. On the east wall, a wide, aluminum-framed sliding door provides access to the balcony. The bathroom is located in either the east or west corner of each room, and contain a marble-topped sink console, toilet, and an enclosed glass shower. Bathrooms are finished with penny tile and painted gypsum board walls. The sink countertop is located below a horizontal fixed window, located in the corner of each bathroom; the windowpane has been replaced with an opaque, textured glass to provide privacy. It is not known when this change occurred.

The lower floor single-loaded corridor and rooms can be accessed by either of the stairhalls. Each stairhall is carpeted and features a stacked stone stair railing that doubles as a planter. The lower floor corridor is entirely enclosed as originally designed and is lighted by operable awning windows with mesh interior screens. The lower floor rooms are similar to the main level units with a few exceptions. The overall footprint is smaller as the originally design interior corridor was maintained as a means of egress. Due to the smaller size, these lower floor rooms contain a king-sized bed. Both the corridor and units are carpeted and are finished with gypsum board walls. The textured wood panels found in the main level rooms can be found in the lower floor rooms as well; however, many of these panels have been painted. All lower-level rooms, except for Rooms 101 and 110, have stacked stone fireplaces. It is possible that the main level rooms also had the same stacked stone fireplaces, but these have been covered over with gypsum board. Like the main level rooms, the lower floor units also have access via a sliding door to a balcony on the east side of the wing. Bathrooms are arranged in a similar manner as the ones in the main level, essentially being stacked beneath the ones of the floor above. Likewise, the arrangement and finishes are the same.

Garage Guest and Service Wing (1937-38; 1965)

The Garage Guest and Service Wing (Photo 10) is comprised of two sections and is roughly ell-shaped. The long arm of the ell borders the west side of the central courtyard and is composed of one-story on a basement. The wing is connected to the Main Lodge at the main level, by way of an office and pantry, which can be accessed from the exterior walkway of this wing. There are ten rooms in this wing; five at the

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main level, and five at the lower level. The building was originally constructed as a twenty-car garage; historic photographs depict the exterior of the garage as it stood in 1938 when the project was abandoned, but it is not clear if a flooring structure had been installed. At very least, a portion of the original structure was used to create a guest wing during the 1965 renovation and completion of the building. It is clear from historic photographs that the roof of the original structure was replaced in 1965; the current roof is higher pitched, which allowed for cathedral style ceilings in the main level rooms, and lacks the originally constructed monitor windows. The footprint of the structure seems to have been maintained when compared to the historic plan, though some elements, such as the stone piers may have been removed⁸ The building contains a total of ten units, five on each level. Like the Kelsey Guest Wing, the Garage Guest and Service Wing is faced in board-and-batten with stacked stone walls at the north and south elevations. The east elevation faces toward the courtyard and Kelsey Guest Wing and features a long exterior walkway operating as an exterior corridor. This walkway is at grade and covered by the eaves of the gabled roof. This walkway provides access to the five main level rooms.

The west elevation of the Garage Wing is substantially different as the full two-story structure can be viewed (Photo 11). Attached to the wing is a two-story balcony structure, divided into ten separate spaces by partition walls. The main level rooms have balconies with railings composed of evenly spaced, horizontally placed timbers. These railings were installed during a renovation conducted in 2021. The lower-level rooms have private patios which also serve as the entry for the units. Given that the west elevation was infilled to create guest rooms, it is sided with board-and-batten paneling. Each unit (on both levels) has a steel access door and a bank of wood-framed windows; the center window appears fixed while the end windows seem to operate as casement units.

⁸ Note: A comparison of the historic plans for the building with the current as-builts show that the two spaces in the garage were combined to make one guest room (i.e. ten spaces became five guest rooms).

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The interior of the Garage Wing guest rooms differ somewhat from those found in the Kelsey Guest Wing. These rooms do not have fireplaces. The main level rooms have cathedral style ceilings with painted ridge beams. This effect was achieved by replacing the original roof, which allowed the room structure to be shifted upwards. All ceilings are finished with gypsum board. These rooms have the same textured wood paneling found in the Kelsey Guest Wing. These panels extend three-quarters up the wall and are painted. Gypsum board finishes the wall above the panels. Main level rooms are laid out with the bathroom by the entry door at the east elevation; as a result, there are no windows along this elevation. The three-piece bathrooms have penny tile floors and walls that are half tiled, half gypsum board. Each bathroom has a toilet, marble topped sink console, and glass shower enclosure. The bank of windows and steel door accessing the balcony are located on the west wall of these rooms. The balconies feature synthetic water-resistant floor coverings.

The lower-level rooms can be accessed by way of a stairway in the courtyard or by walking around the registration office, located at the north end of the complex.⁹ A gravel road and a concrete retaining wall front the entry to these rooms. Stacked stone stairs at either end of the retaining wall provides direct access to these rooms, each of which has a private patio overlooking a landscaped area of low bushes and ornamental trees. Each unit has a steel entry door and a bank of wood-framed windows like the rooms above. The lower-level rooms are arranged differently than the main level rooms; the bathroom is located at the rear of the unit so that it is stacked beneath the main level facility. The lower-level rooms have eight-foot-high ceilings. These rooms contain the same carpeting and textured wood panels walls as the main-level rooms. The three-piece bathrooms have penny tile floors and walls that are half tiled, half gypsum board. Each bathroom has a toilet, marble topped sink console, and glass shower enclosure. One room on the lower floor is ADA accessible and has a tiled shower with no glass enclosure.

⁹ Note: The 1936 architectural plans show that courtyard staircase was originally designed as a ramp, which would have allowed vehicles to drive down to the lower floor garage from the central courtyard

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One of the substantial changes to the original Garage structure was the addition of the two-story service wing, located at the north end of the section (Photo 11). The service wing is placed perpendicular to the Garage Guest and Service Wing and the two components share a roof. A covered corridor (open at the ends) connects the courtyard to the exterior corridor that accesses the three upper-level guest rooms. This exterior corridor is covered by the roof overhang and features a railing of horizontally placed timbers. Access to the lower floor of the service wing, which contains storage and laundry rooms, is obtained by walking around the registration office. The registration office and porte-cochere, located at the north end of the service and guest room area, were both constructed in 1965, and are attached to the Garage Wing (Photo 13). It is possible that the original north wall of the Garage Guest and Service Wing serves as the south wall of the registration office. The style of both components reflects the heritage of complex by the use of the same materials, but the design as a whole is more Modernist, which is displayed the flat-roofed porte-cochere and the gabled pop-up on the roof above the registration office. The porte-cochere is wide, extending out from the registration office and providing enough cover for two vehicles. The supports for the porte-cochere are stacked stone bases with thin wood posts. The underside of the porte-cochere features steel I-beams. The north and east walls of the registration office are partially faced in granite with a row of wood-framed casement windows above. The north elevation of the remaining section of guest and service area is faced in painted board-and-batten and features a row of clerestory windows where the guest rooms are located. This upper section is supported by two large, stacked stone piers. In between these piers runs the access road to the west courtyard. The laundry and janitorial rooms are located in the east pier and accessed via a staircase adjacent to the registration office.

The south elevation of the guest and service section features an exterior corridor on the upper level, which is accessed via a covered passage running in between the registration office and the main level of the Garage Guest and Service Wing. This corridor is covered by the roof overhang and features a railing of horizontally placed timbers. The exterior wall beyond the walkway is composed of granite piers

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interspersed with board-and-batten-panels. There are three rooms at this level; all three have steel entry doors. Two have a row of five windows placed beside the entry: a larger fixed wood-framed window is located in the center and is flanked by two thinner wood-framed casement windows. The third room, dubbed the “Crow’s Nest” is located at the end of the section. The steel entry door serves as the terminus of the exterior corridor. The unit has a three-piece, aluminum clad picture window and corner balcony with wood railings that match the ones used along the adjacent exterior corridor. The west elevation of the guest and service section is faced in board-and-batten and features another three-part, aluminum framed window with a larger center panel flanked by a single casement unit.

The interior of the registration office is accessed via a wood-framed French door located at the northeast corner. Inside the reception office, the main feature of the space is an exposed stacked stone wall located on the south and east sides of the space. The south wall features wood-framed clerestory windows and wooden planter shelf with window boxes attached to the wall. Painted textured panels cover the west wall of the interior, as well as the chase that juts out above the tall windows on the north wall. There is a steel emergency door located on the west wall. The flooring of this space appears to be stamped and stained concrete.

The interiors of the three guest rooms on the upper level of this section feature similar finishes to the rooms in earlier described sections of the complex. These finishes were installed as a part of the 2021 renovation of the property. All feature carpet tiles and painted textured wallboard. These rooms have cathedral ceilings with painted center ridge beam. Bathrooms feature penny tile floors and half-tiled walls. There is a marble topped sink console, a toilet, and a glass shower enclosure. Rooms 216 and 217 share a connecting door and a similar layout with bathrooms located at the west end of each unit. Both of these rooms do not have private balconies. Room 222 is the corner unit with a different layout. Upon entering the room, there is a walk-in closet to the right. This closet goes through to the bathroom, which is divided into two spaces: the central space contains the sink and shower, while a toilet is located in a small room adjacent.

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The main room is large and features expansive views to the south and west. The private balcony is located at the southwest corner and is accessed via an aluminum framed sliding glass door.

Opsahl Guest Wing (1965)

The two-story Opsahl Guest Wing was designed by Robert Opsahl and connects underneath the west end of the service and guest area portion of the Garage Guest and Service Wing. The section features a gable on hip roof, and carries out the spirit of the original buildings with the use of stone and wood materials. The east elevation, which faces toward the parking lot, is dominated by a two-story covered, exterior corridor with railings of evenly, spaced horizontally placed timbers. These railings are replacements dating to the 2021 renovation of the property. Staircases with the same railings are located at either end of the structure. The east elevation is faced entirely with painted board-and-batten, though each end of the wing has a two-story high, stacked stone structure that protrudes out from the façade. There are no windows along this elevation, only the steel entry doors for the units and two smaller doors that access two storage closets, which are situated roughly in the center of elevation between the two middle guest rooms. The north and south ends of the building are alike as they feature cantilevered projections faced with painted board-and-batten sections. Lap siding is located beneath the single, wood framed window at each level of these projections. These windows are different from others found in the complex in that they appear to be double sashed, but are actually two stacked awning units. The corners of the projections have rows of applied horizontal trim. The structure's concrete foundation is visible below the projections. The south end differs from the north as the west end of service and guest section rests on top of the Opsahl Guest Wing, thus the picture window from the unit 222 is visible at this end.

At the west elevation, the placement of Room 222 (in the service wing) on top of the structure is most prominent (Photo 14). The gable end of Room 222 is exposed, and the wall is finished with plyboard. A large picture window also punctuates the wall. The remaining portion of the 1965 Wing's west elevation is primarily taken up with balconies. Given that this wing was newly added during the 1965 renovation,

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these balconies are individually attached and not built as a unified system like the ones located at the 1938 and Garage Wings. Four balconies (two on the upper and two on the lower level) are grouped together at the south end. Similarly, four balconies are grouped together at the north end. Each balcony has a wooden railing of vertically and horizontally placed rails. A wooden privacy wall is located on the side closest to the next adjacent balcony. This elevation is faced with board-and-batten though there are two sections of lap siding occurring in between the first and second, and third and fourth balconies at each level. There are four narrow, fixed wood-framed windows grouped together in the center of the façade where the bathroom stack is located. At each balcony, the steel door is flanked by three narrow wood-framed casement windows at each side. Along the bottom of the elevation, wood latticework panels extend approximately six feet up. At the ends of the structure, the massive concrete foundation supports are exposed. A wooden deck, constructed at the southwest corner, partially obscures one of the supports. A steep wooden stair extends from the deck, providing access to the road below the wing.

All of the eight rooms located in the 1965 Wing are accessed from the east elevation. A retaining wall and service drive separate this wing from the parking lot, which is located to the east of this wing. Each level contains four rooms, accessible by way of wood-framed exterior corridors that run the length of the building. While the building is linear like the earlier buildings on the site, its floor plan is very different from the other guest wings. The two center rooms (119 and 120, 219 and 220) have bathrooms that back up to the other, separated by the demising wall between units. The two end units (118 and 121, 218 and 221) have bathrooms located in the stacked stone areas that extend out from the main wall of the building. The four lower-level rooms have standard height ceilings while the four upper level rooms have cathedral ceilings with a painted center ridge beam. The walls have painted, texturized wood panels across the entire surface. Carpet tile covers the floors. The most prominent feature of these rooms is the combination of windows on either side of the balcony door, allowing for expansive views across the mountains. Both types of bathrooms in these lower-level rooms contain a marble-topped sink console, toilet, and glass shower

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enclosure. A narrow, wood-framed window with opaque glass is located above the sink console of Rooms 119 and 120. There are no windows located in the bathroom facilities of Rooms 118 and 121 due to the presence of a closet area. Bathroom finishes penny tile floors and half-tiled walls. The four upper-level rooms are very similar to the lower units. Floors are carpet tile and the walls are finished with painted, texturized paneling. Since these rooms have cathedral ceilings, the texturized wallboard extends three-quarters of the way up the wall before transitioning to gypsum board (Photo 15). The window and door arrangement at the balcony is the same in these rooms, as is the bathroom arrangement. Once again, only the center rooms (219 and 220) have windows in the vanity areas but these rooms lack the closet space offered in rooms 218 and 221. Bathrooms feature penny tile floors, half-tiled walls, a marble sink console, toilet, and glass shower enclosure.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE

Swimming Pool – ca. 1965

The swimming pool (Photo 10), once located in the courtyard fronting the Main Lodge building, dates to the 1965 completion of Skyline Lodge. The pool was rectangular in shape with rounded corners. As part of the 2021 renovation of the property, the swimming pool was filled in to create a green space in the main courtyard. The historic pool coping, comprises of local stacked stone, was maintained in order to express the dimensions of the original pool.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE

Pavilion – ca. 2000

There is an outdoor, wood pavilion located along the service court on the west side of the property. The wood structure is approximately four bays long and two bays wide and has a gabled roof. The pavilion

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features a deck and contains a hot tub for use by the guests. This structure dates to the last twenty years; the most recent proprietor of the Lodge commissioned it.

INTEGRITY STATEMENT

Skyline Lodge retains a high degree of integrity as a Mid-Century Modern hotel complex whose Modernist design incorporates and sympathetically builds upon its original Wrightian design, and is unique for the mountainous, rural Macon County area.

Location

The Skyline Lodge remains in its original location and has not been moved. The location is approximately three miles from the Town of Highlands in rural Macon County in the state of North Carolina.

Setting

Skyline Lodge is located atop a high hilltop amidst the Appalachian Mountains. The setting was an important component contributing to the hotel's development. Though decades have passed since the first phase of construction at Skyline, the surrounding countryside remains relatively undisturbed.

Construction of private homes as well as small residential developments have occurred, but given the dense tree cover on the surrounding mountainsides, the views from Skyline have been preserved. Thus, the setting is intact and displays high integrity.

Design

Skyline Lodge is the work of two architects contracted in two different periods. The first architect, Arthur Kelsey, was hired in late 1936 to design the resort and as a devotee of architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the architectural principles of his mentor informed the design of Skyline. The project was approximately 50% complete in 1938 when it was abandoned. Nearly thirty years passed before being the project was resumed, this by new owners, who hired Robert Opsahl to complete the existing building interiors and add additional sections. Opsahl, who had studied under Arthur Kelsey in the 1950s, attempted to respect

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his mentor's design for the complex while imbuing it with the characteristics of Modernist architecture. The interior finishing of the original buildings, including the conversion of the two-story garage into ten guest rooms, a service wing addition to the Garage Wing, and a new guest wing with eight bedrooms was completed in 1965. Opsahl did make some changes to the original buildings including the addition of an exterior corridor along the original guest wing, the creation of a glazed gable above the north entrance above the Main Lodge, and the addition of a registration office and porte cochere in front of the Garage Guest and Service Wing. Presumably, he also installed the textured wood paneling in the guest rooms, all of which has been retained, though some has been painted. The property's retention of the Opsahl-era changes and interior finishes lends a high degree of design integrity to the complex.

Materials

One of the significant aspects of Skyline is the inclusion of natural materials in its construction. Rough cut granite block was used throughout the building and is exposed both on the exterior and interior. Oral reports indicate that the exterior wood paneling was locally milled. According to a 1965 newspaper article, redwood was used in the interior finishes. Presumably, this is a reference to the textured wood panels in the guest rooms. However, the exterior portions have since been painted, which somewhat diminishes the effect of this material. There are examples of Redwood paneling that were added to the Kelsey Guest Wing that are intact and unpainted. Overall, Skyline Lodge contains good integrity of materials.

Workmanship

The design intention of Skyline, during both periods, was meant to emphasize solid craftsmanship. The amount of labor needed to mine the granite to create the blocks used to construct Skyline was immense. The culling of local tree species and creation of the panels and lap siding boards found on the exterior and interiors of Skyline is equally impressive. As these materials are largely intact and still on display as intended, there is a high degree of integrity to the workmanship found at Skyline.

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Feeling

The physical expression of the two architects responsible for Skyline is intact. It is clear that Opsahl's contributions were meant to update the overall style of Skyline, but he was largely sympathetic to the original architect's vision for the property. The embracing of nature is a key component of the building's aesthetic and is fulfilled by the copious use of windows throughout the property. A number of outdoor spaces such as the south terrace and swimming pool courtyard invite guests to experience the wonders of nature. All of these components remain at Skyline Lodge and give the complex a high degree of integrity in feeling.

Association

Skyline Lodge was conceived as a hotel from the beginning. During the first decades of the twentieth century, there was great interest in traveling, and the Highlands area became a popular destination as a result. Largely populated with summer travelers, the most ubiquitous form of lodging was the private boarding house first, and then later, private homes transformed into small, informal hotels. Skyline, as a purpose-built resort, was meant to bring the conveniences and luxuries of a well-appointed hotel to a community that was still very rural despite its popularity. Even with the nearly thirty year break in construction, the original purpose of Skyline was finally achieved with its opening in 1965. The resort's association with changing trends in travel is also evident as the renovation of the property included amenities catering to vacationing families. The addition of a swimming pool courtyard is in line with similar hotel developments of the period. The creation of a registration office and porte cochere adjacent to the parking lot speaks to the desires of travelers to walk straight from their vehicles to their rooms. These additions to the building speak to the importance of providing the amenities that travelers had come to expect during the 1950s and 1960s. Skyline Lodge continues to operate as a hotel today, and is currently undergoing a multi-million dollar refurbishment that will continue the hotel's purpose for

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generations to come. Skyline Lodge has a high degree of integrity for its association with tourism in the Highlands area.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1936 - 1938

1965 - 1972

Significant Dates

1938

1965

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Kelsey, Arthur

Kelsey, Charlotte Peabody

Opsahl, Robert

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Skyline Lodge, located in Highlands, North Carolina, is a 41-room hotel constructed beginning in 1937 and completed in 1965. Arthur J. Kelsey, a Cincinnati-based architect who admired the design tenets of Frank Lloyd Wright, drafted the original plans for the Lodge beginning in 1936. Following the death of the original developer in 1938, the Lodge sat partially unfinished for twenty-seven years.

In 1965, Skyline Lodge was finally opened to the public after being purchased by new owners and completed. Robert Opsahl, an architect living in Clearwater, Florida, was hired to complete the interiors of the Main Lodge and the original 1938 room wing. Opsahl also reconstructed the former Garage Wing to include guest rooms and added service spaces, a reception office, and an additional guest room wing. As Opsahl studied under Arthur Kelsey at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., he attempted to preserve the important original design elements of the Lodge while providing updated facilities in the more streamlined look of the prevailing Modernist style of the mid-century period.

The Skyline Lodge is eligible for listing under Criterion A for Entertainment/Recreation and Criterion C for Architecture. Under Criterion A, Skyline Lodge is locally significant as a hotel built to capitalize upon the tourist industry in Highlands and Macon County. Highlands, located three miles from the hotel, was founded in the late 1870s as a resort town. However, Skyline Lodge seems to be an anomaly as a purpose-built hotel; historically, Highlands had many hotels, however most were originally boarding houses converted from private residences. Examples include the Old Edwards Inn, built in 1880 and 1935 in Highlands' central business district¹⁰; and the Colonial Pines Inn, built in 1937 and remodeled extensively in 1960, located in the Highlands North Historic District.¹¹ Both properties are contemporaneous with the first and second phases of Skyline's construction, but are located in the heart of

¹⁰ Note: Old Edwards Inn was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

¹¹ Note: The Highlands North Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

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Highlands. Skyline Lodge's secluded location allowed for a lodging experience different from these in-town hotels as it offered resort style amenities including a swimming pool, hiking trails, ice skating rink, tennis courts, and private trout fishing lake. Under Criterion C, Skyline Lodge is locally significant as a rare, and highly intact example of a Mid-Century Modern, resort-style hotel in rural Macon County and demonstrates the importance of the Wrightian influence on Modernist architecture. Apparently, there are not any extant examples of Mid-Century Modernist hotels or motels in Highlands, though examples did exist but have been altered beyond recognition. There are some examples of extant Mid-Century architecture including the original Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, built in 1966, and Dr. Pate's Office Building, designed by Robert Opsahl in 1969. Overall, the Modernist style of architecture seems to have been more popular with residential projects; Robert Opsahl obtained multiple commissions including Whiteside Villa, completed in 1967.¹² The period of significance spans two time frames: 1936 to 1938 when the project was first conceived, partially constructed, and then abandoned; and 1965 to 1972 which encompasses the project's completion and successful operation as a mountain-top resort.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Entertainment/Recreation

The Skyline Lodge is a 41-room hotel located in the Town of Highlands, North Carolina. Commissioned in 1936 by Howard Randall, a wealthy businessman from Cincinnati, Ohio, the Lodge was meant to cater to the vibrant tourist colony of Highlands, founded in 1875. The town, situated on a plateau of the southern Appalachian Mountains, became popular with North Carolinians from other parts of the state, but also attracted residents of the surrounding states—Georgia and South Carolina. While Highlands has operated as a summer resort for most of its existence, the town has become popular during the winter, offering a robust arts community to year-round residents and shoulder season visitors.

¹² "The deVillie House, aka Whiteside Villa," NC Modernist, accessed August 30, 2021, <https://www.ncmodernist.org/fox.htm>.

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Samuel Truman Kelsey and Clinton Carter Hutchinson, two Kansas entrepreneurs looking to develop a summer resort, established the Town of Highlands. Mountain locales were popular destinations for health resorts during the nineteenth century as the cooler temperatures and verdant natural landscape provided a respite for people living in warm climates or densely packed cities. For most of the nineteenth century, traveling for pleasure was an activity available to the wealthy, who had ample resources to spend on travel and lodging. The founding of Highlands coincided with a surge in middle-class tourism, which was the result of railroad expansion.¹³ To aid in the colonization of Highlands, Samuel Truman Kelsey authored *The Blue Ridge Mountains in Western North Carolina*, a promotional pamphlet published in 1876, which extolled the virtues of Highlands and its surrounding environs.¹⁴ While Highlands became populated with both permanent and transient residents, most of these were wealthy people. Indeed, one of the early significant settlers was Samuel Prioleau Ravenel, who hailed from one of the wealthiest and most prestigious families in Charleston, South Carolina. Wealthy Charlestonian families had been fleeing the hot, humid Lowcountry summers for generations, often building summer homes in the Upcountry of South Carolina, and the lower lying mountainous regions of Western North Carolina. Samuel Prioleau Ravenel was acquainted with the Highlands area well before the town developed in the late 1870s as he had been involved with the construction of the Stumphouse Tunnel, outside of Walhalla, South Carolina during the Antebellum period.¹⁵ Ravenel became charmed with the surrounding area, and according to family history, he bought “much of Whitesides Mountain”, near Highlands, before the Civil War. He had family ties to the area including his brother, Henry Edmund Ravenel, the owner of Seneca Plantation, located near Pendleton,

¹³ Cindy Aron, *Working at Play, A History of Vacations in the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4-5.

¹⁴ David Foard Hood, *Playmore/Bowery Road Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places, 2002, 6.

¹⁵ Note: Stumphouse Tunnel is an incomplete railroad tunnel located in Oconee County, South Carolina. Construction began in 1852 and approximately 4,000 feet of tunnel was completed before being abandoned in 1859. The tunnel was to provide access to Blue Ridge Railway but could not be completed due to monetary concerns and the political unrest due to the impending American Civil War. The Tunnel was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Information from the National Register nomination available at: <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/oconee/S10817737002/S10817737002.pdf>.

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South Carolina, located south of Highlands. Samuel Prioleau Ravenel spent a good deal of time at the plantation, particularly during the Civil War and after his brother's untimely death in 1863. It was where he met his wife, Margaretta Fleming Parker, a widow living with her sister, Mrs. Robert Adger, at nearby Rivoli Plantation.¹⁶ In 1878, the couple began building the first summer home in the Highlands area.¹⁷ The house was dubbed "Wantoot" after the Ravenel's ancestral plantation outside of Charleston, which had been burned by the Union Army in 1865.¹⁸ The Ravenels began the fashion for seasonal houses, and several other families constructed homes on the outskirts of the town. Most of these homes comprise the Playmore-Bowery Road Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

Highlands as a vacation destination was slower in development. By the late 1870s, the town boasted a post office and dry goods store along with several full-time residents. Perhaps the rate of growth was too slow for the original developers as Clinton Hutchinson sold his shares to a New York City doctor in 1879. Samuel Kelsey too moved on, turning his attentions to the development of a resort in Linville, North Carolina. Henry Martin Bascom, another New Yorker, came to the town in 1881 and effectively became the booster for its development.¹⁹ By 1880, the town had its first guest lodging, The Highlands Inn.²⁰ Full-time residents also sought to capitalize on the town's increasing popularity. In 1883, Mrs. Margaret Rideout constructed a large home on three of the original lots in the town and ran a boarding house for visitors for many years.²¹ That same year, Margaretta Ravenel purchased a home on South Fourth Street and operated it as the Islington Inn. It was so popular that she paid to expand the property three times during the thirty

¹⁶ Mary Stevenson, ed., *The Diary of Clarissa Adger Bowen, Ashtabula Plantation, 1865 with excerpts from other family diaries and comments by her granddaughter, Clarissa Walton Taylor, and many other accounts of the Pendleton Clemson Area, South Carolina 1776-1889*, (Pendleton, SC: Foundation for Historic Restoration in Pendleton Area, 1973), 100-101.

¹⁷ "Who Were the Ravenels?," *Highlands Historical Society Newsletter*, Summer 2014, 1.

¹⁸ Graeme Long, "Macbeth Silver," *Charleston Museum*, <https://www.charlestonmuseum.org/news-events/macbeth-silver/>, accessed March 23, 2021.

¹⁹ David Foard Hood, *Highlands North Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places, 2011, 33-36.

²⁰ Note: The Highlands Inn was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

²¹ Hood, 32.

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years she owned it.²² The Islington Inn would eventually be re-branded as the King's Inn and would celebrate its one hundredth year anniversary in 1970.²³

By 1883, Highlands was on the upswing. A survey of the *Blue Ridge Enterprise*, the town's newspaper during this time, shows that the town boasted many cultural and educational amenities, including a public school, a library and literary society, an improvement association, a temperance union, and a horticultural and industrial society.²⁴ That same year, the *Blue Ridge Enterprise* touted Highlands as the "Switzerland of America" with "pure mountain air, cold springs, grand scenery, cool summers, mild winters," the town was "a paradise for the health seeker and tourist."²⁵ While tourists did come to the area, they seemed to be largely local. The *Blue Ridge Enterprise* documents the comings and goings of these visitors, noting their home city and state whenever announcing an arrival or departure. Due to the town's location at the juncture of South Carolina and Georgia, many came from these states, or from North Carolina.

The lack of transportation options available seemed to stymie attempts to grow the town's visitor base beyond these contiguous states. There was no railroad connection, and residents had to rely on road transport to nearby towns and cities with this amenity. Walhalla, South Carolina, thirty miles distant, served as an important hub for receiving goods and providing mail as it was a stop on the Blue Ridge Railway. To visit Highlands, a tourist would take the train to Walhalla, and then hire a wagon or carriage to carry them further to the town. Thus, the trip to Highlands cost great time and expense, which kept middle-class, more distantly located visitors to a minimum. But for those who afford the journey to Highlands, its location continued to be a draw. The surrounding Whitesides, Satulah, and Flat Mountains provided ample opportunity for exploration and recreation, affording day trippers the opportunity to connect with the natural

²² Wiley Sloan, "The King's Inn," *The Laurel*, March 2015.

²³ Note: The hotel management was mistaken in its dates as it has now been proven that the King's Inn began its life as a lodging in 1883. A fire completely destroyed the hotel in 1994.

²⁴ *Blue Ridge Enterprise*, August 2, 1883.

²⁵ *Blue Ridge Enterprise* (Highlands, NC), January 9, 1884.

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beauty of the area. In 1899, Isma Dooly, a journalist for the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote about the fashion for “climbing” mountains, particularly as women were taking up more athletic activities. Her comments indicate the rising popularity of summer resorts in mountainous climes.²⁶ In fact, the *Atlanta Constitution* devoted substantial space to advertisements for hotels and resorts through the south and northeast. A 1905 advertisement for Lake Toxaway, located twenty-five miles from Highlands, extolled the virtues of its “unparalleled climate” and six resort hotels.²⁷ In 1909, a double page spread devoted to the wonders of Franklin, North Carolina, located less than twenty miles from Highlands.²⁸ But during this same time, there are a lack of advertisements for Highlands. But following World War I, the popularity of taking a vacation began to grow. Wages were rising, and even hard-working laborers were able to afford automobiles. This would revolutionize the way people traveled and vacationed.²⁹ By 1920, there were 313 residents recorded in the town, but this did not reflect the number of visitors that swelled the population during the summer months.

The 1920s would mark a period of great expansion in Highlands. Regional boosters jockeyed for the construction of new roads and the paving of old ones, which created better access to both Highlands and surrounding towns.³⁰ Golfing had become a popular pastime with vacationers as evidenced by the development of resort hotels with golf courses. This trend came to the area in the early 1920s when the High Hampton Inn and its eleven-hole golf course opened. Located in Cashiers, a small town in adjacent Jackson County, the hotel and its recreational amenities were only ten miles from Highlands.³¹ In response, established locals and regular visitors to the area established the Highlands Country Club in 1928. The

²⁶ Irma Dooly, “If You Want to be a Belle this Summer You Must Learn to Climb Mountains,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), July 9, 1899.

²⁷ “The Beautiful Sapphire Country,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 2, 1905.

²⁸ Eugene Ray, “Franklin, North Carolina a Gem City in the Setting of the Sapphire Mountains,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 6, 1909.

²⁹ Aron, 209.

³⁰ “A Brief History of Highlands, highest town east of the Rockies,” *Franklin Press and Highlands Maconian* (Franklin, NC), July 5, 1928.

³¹ Note: High Hampton Inn is still in operation and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

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clubhouse and golf course quickly became the social center of the summer set. The club boasted a golf course designed by the famous Donald Ross, and christened by Bobby Jones, an amateur golfer who would eventually become golf's first celebrity player.³² As a result of this project, the *Franklin Press* proclaimed "Highlands, the Highest Incorporated Town East of the Rockies, To Be Playground of Southeast."³³ The article also discussed the recent opening of the Highlands Museum of Natural History, later known as the Highlands Biological Station, and Camp Parry-dise, a well-known summer camp for girls. According to the newspaper, the town boasted a "attractive tea room" and the local ladies had plans for a Woman's Clubhouse and Community Center.³⁴ Advertisements in the same issue of the newspaper show that Highlands had a vibrant business district catering to tourists and locals alike. J. Jay Smith offered "Ladies' Furnishings and Ready-To-Wear" while the Highlands Drug Store boasted a soda fountain and café.

Highland's growth as a tourist destination seemed to be in limbo when the stock market crashed in October of 1929. While the effect was not immediate, the shock waves from the event eventually grew until America found itself caught in a massive depression. Taking a vacation during such troubling times was impossible for the millions out of work or facing reduced hours. But for those who had managed to thrive despite the dire economic circumstances, vacationing was still an activity to indulge in, and they wanted more from their vacations.³⁵ In the first half of the 1930s, national parks and forests saw a spike in visitors and campers. These locales included recreational activities or the chance to lose oneself in the wilderness, away from the stress of daily living.³⁶ Given Highlands' location and its wealth of outdoor activities, it is no surprise that the town saw an increase in visitors during this period. Howard Doane Randall, a Cincinnati, Ohio industrialist, one of the frequent visitors to the area during this period. Randall was born to James and

³² "About Us," *Highlands Country Club*, <https://www.highlandscountryclub.com/about>, accessed March 26, 2021.

³³ "Golf Link on Top of Eastern America," *Franklin Press*, July 5, 1928.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Aron, 239.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

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Marie Randall in 1882.³⁷ The Randalls owned a prosperous harness machinery business in Cincinnati, appearing frequently in ads placed in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the company shifted to the production of leather goods machinery and sewing machines, which proved to be profitable.³⁸ Presumably, as the only child in the family, Howard was expected to take a significant role in the family business. The 1900 Federal Census lists him as being at school and living in the family home at 764 Ridgeway Avenue in the Avondale section of Cincinnati. The 1901 Cincinnati City Directory lists him as an employee of Randall & Company, an indication that he went from high school to working without attending college.

Beginning in 1906, James Randall and his wife Marie began spending a significant amount of time in Florida.³⁹ Howard remained in Cincinnati, presumably to keep an eye on the family business. But in 1907, the city directory lists his residence as Florida, and it would continue to do so until 1910. In that time, Randall married Louise Bell, the daughter of Judge George Bell of Atlanta, Georgia. The wedding announcement in the September 6, 1908 *Cincinnati Enquirer* claimed that Miss Bell was from one of the oldest families in Georgia. The couple was married in October 1908 and moved to Florida following the wedding.⁴⁰ By 1910, Howard and his family, which now included daughter Virginia (born in 1909), were living in Ohio full-time, residing in Springfield Township, just north of Cincinnati.⁴¹ It appears that his

³⁷ 1900 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com, accessed August 31, 2021, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/40456092:7602?tid=&pid=&queryId=1ec48a380834ed89473cad2ad780bf64&_phsrc=DVZ124&_phst=successSource.

³⁸ "Third in Line," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 10, 1936.

³⁹ "Mr. James Doane Randall," *The Orlando Sentinel*, March 5, 1936.

⁴⁰ "Bell-Randall," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 10, 1908.

⁴¹ 1910 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com, accessed August 31, 2021, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/21926344:7884?tid=&pid=&queryId=f08efbb4f124a13dc616cb174f953eff&_phsrc=DVZ126&_phst=successSource.

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grandfather Silas Burrows Randall, the founder of Randall & Company had lived in that area before his death in 1895.⁴²

Howard and his family eventually moved back to the City of Cincinnati and lived in the affluent Mount Auburn neighborhood. Two additional daughters were born, Jean in 1911 and Martha in 1913, and Howard continued as an employee at the Randall Company.⁴³ In 1918, the United States entered World War I, and Howard enlisted with the Corps of Engineers. He spent a year in France before returning to his family in Cincinnati.⁴⁴

In 1922, the Randall Company shifted to the manufacture of leather interior components for automobiles and supplied trimmings to major car companies such as Pierce Arrow, Packard, and Chrysler. The 1926 Cincinnati City Directory listed Howard as the vice president of the company. In August 1929, an advertisement in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* announced the company's public offering, which was meant to underwrite a major expansion. This resulted in a new manufacturing facility, completed by 1930 according to advertisements in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Of course, this was a terrible time in American history to be expanding a company. It seems that the poor economic conditions eventually affected the company as they were unable to pay dividends to shareholders in 1932. Fortunately, the following year, the company was able to settle its arrears and resume its normal dividend schedule.⁴⁵

The Randall family enjoyed an active social life in Cincinnati. Louise Randall was involved with the United Daughters of the Confederacy and served as the president of the Cincinnati chapter.⁴⁶ The

⁴² "Randall, Silas B.", *Spring Grove Cemetery*, accessed January 30, 2020, <http://www.springgrove.org/stats/57361.tif.pdf>.

⁴³ *1920 United States Federal Census*, Ancestry.com, accessed August 31, 2021, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/33818544:6061?tid=&pid=&queryId=f08efbb4f124a13dc616cb174f953eff&_phsrc=DVZ128&_phstart=successSource.

⁴⁴ Army Transport Service, Passenger Lists, 1910-1939, *Ancestry*, accessed January 30, 2020, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=61174&h=958741&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=HnJ191&_phstart=successSource.

⁴⁵ "Resumes Dividend Basis," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 10, 1933.

⁴⁶ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 6, 1928.

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Randalls often journeyed to visit friends and family in the south.⁴⁷ Given their frequent journeys south, the Randalls most likely heard about Highlands via friends and family. By the early 1930s, Howard Randall's parents maintained a summer residence in Hendersonville, North Carolina.⁴⁸ In fact, in 1931, a mention in the society pages of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* stated that Louise Randall and daughter Jean were spending a few weeks in North Carolina.

By June of 1932, the *Franklin Press* reported that "H.D. Randall of Cincinnati has recently completed a new summer home at Billy Cabin Mountain."⁴⁹ The Randalls would eventually have two homes in this location, both constructed by Joe Webb, a prolific builder of cabins in the Highlands area during the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁰ The Randalls clearly had a soft spot for the booming resort town; in 1936, the family hosted the wedding of daughter Martha in Highlands. It was after this event that Howard Randall began pursuing his plans for a resort hotel. To facilitate this project, his daughter Virginia (called Ted) and son-in-law, Jack Wilcox relocated to Highlands to oversee the construction of the lodge. Jack purchased a farmhouse and began a demonstration farm to occupy him and perhaps provide additional income for their stay.⁵¹

In the fall of 1936, Howard Randall began corresponding with architect Arthur Kelsey about a potential design for the project. Correspondence between the Wilcoxes and Arthur Kelsey indicates that they were responsible for introducing him to Howard Randall.⁵² Given the friendly tone of their correspondence, it seems they had been social acquaintances in Cincinnati, where Kelsey lived and

⁴⁷ "Two Ladies Injured When Car and Auto Have A Collision," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 25, 1916. "Mrs. Howard Randall," *Atlanta Constitution*, August 3, 1922.

⁴⁸ *Times-News* (Hendersonville, NC), July 10, 1934.

⁴⁹ Sarah Hicks-Hines, "Town Growing in Popularity," *Franklin Press and Highlands Maconian*, June 20, 1932.

⁵⁰ Randolph P. Shaffner, "A List of 191 Historic Structures In and Around Highlands," *Highlands Historical Society*, accessed January 30, 2020, http://highlandshistory.com/documents/historic_houses_list.pdf.

⁵¹ "Wilcox Quits Post as Clerk in Highlands," *Franklin Press and Highlands Maconian*, September 28, 1946.

⁵² Arthur Kelsey to Howard Randall, November 11, 1936. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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worked.⁵³ By October 1937, Kelsey was living in Highlands and sending regular status reports on the construction of the lodge. In November, he received a letter from Howard Randall and possibly a long overdue payment for his services. Randall writes “No doubt you have long since given up hope of ever seeing the enclosed. It’s simply been several of ‘these things’ of late. Hope my being so delinquent has caused you nothing more serious than a slight uneasiness.”⁵⁴ This is the first indication that all was not well with Randall’s finances. Articles in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* indicate that the Randall Company had expanded into office supplies in 1936. Shortly thereafter, the company began posting losses.⁵⁵

By February 1938, Kelsey’s regular accounting reports show that the project had already consumed \$14,000 and an additional \$2000 was outstanding.⁵⁶ Howard Randall attempted to get a construction loan for the project, but the bank denied him in May. Arthur Kelsey wrote to RFC Mortgage Company on his behalf, entreating them to send an inspector to the property.⁵⁷ A letter in late May notes that the loan was turned down due to the property’s low appraisal value. Randall comments in the same letter that he may try putting political pressure on the mortgage company. He also mentions that “matters will be eased off at once” if he is able to sell his Florida property.⁵⁸ Randall’s financial situation was certainly dire by this time. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that same month that he owed over \$9,000 in back taxes.⁵⁹ A few weeks later, Randall defaulted on a mortgage loan and the bank filed suit against him.⁶⁰ Around the same time,

⁵³ Arthur Kelsey to Jack Wilcox, April 7, 1937. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁵⁴ Howard Randall to Arthur Kelsey, November 30, 1937. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁵⁵ “Randall Company Reports Loss,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 10, 1936.

⁵⁶ Arthur Kelsey, “Lodge for Howard Randall” (unpublished report), February 28, 1938, typescript. Report located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁵⁷ Arthur Kelsey to John Campbell, Jr. c/o RFC Mortgage, May 21, 1938. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁵⁸ Howard Randall to Arthur Kelsey, May 25, 1938. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁵⁹ “Tax Liens Filed,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 4, 1938.

⁶⁰ “New Suits Filed,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 2, 1938.

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the newspaper reported that the Randall Company had posted a loss of \$37,000.⁶¹ On June 26, 1938, Howard Randall was found dead in his Cincinnati office, the victim of an apparent suicide.⁶²

Three days later, Arthur Kelsey issued a construction report and comprehensive history of the Highlands project.⁶³ In this report he attempted to trace the value of the property, pre-and-post-construction. Kelsey noted that the exterior of the hotel was 90% complete and the interior was nothing but “rough framing with no plumbing or electrical.” He also detailed the attempts at financing that Randall made before his death, noting that meetings with RFC Mortgage and a local bank had occurred early in June with a final application submitted to RFC for funding. Kelsey surmised that this funding would reimburse Randall’s estate for the money already spent, but he also noted that Jackson County Bank was interested in providing construction financing.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the bank would require a bonded contractor to complete the work, which would raise the cost considerably. It is probable that Jack Wilcox had been serving as the construction foreman and hiring local, unbonded labor to complete the project. Kelsey’s report listed the different ways of reducing costs and methods of financing so the project would be complete in time for the summer season of 1939. Kelsey even figured up the potential profit once the resort opened and discussed the feasibility of offloading the project on another developer, though he cautioned that in its uncompleted state, the resort had very little value. He optimistically noted that a profit could be realized upon the sale of the property, but only if completed.⁶⁵ The following year, a sales brochure for the lodge property was prepared and circulated, which indicates that the project was a burden upon the Randall family.⁶⁶ Just as Arthur Kelsey cautioned, the property did not sell. After all, the last years of the Great Depression were playing out, followed by the United States’ entry into World War II, which put an effective halt to travel due to gas and

⁶¹ “Randall Reports Loss,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 5, 1938.

⁶² “Manufacturer Ends Life with Bullet,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 27, 1938.

⁶³ Arthur Kelsey, “Lodge at Highlands, N.C.” (unpublished report), June 29, 1938, typescript. Report located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Arthur Kelsey, “North Carolina Mountain Hotel Property,” brochure, 1939. Brochure located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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tire rationing.⁶⁷ Thus the capital and supplies needed to complete such a large project were not readily available.

While the Skyline Lodge project remained unfinished for over two decades, there were great changes happening in the tourism business. The years following World War II were prosperous, and mountain destinations remained popular with vacationers. As more travelers discovered Highlands and surrounding areas, new resorts were born. Golf had continued to grow in popularity and offered an opportunity for expansion. When the Highlands Country Club became members-only in the 1950s, retired executive Eugene Howerdd, Sr. decided to develop his own golf course. He purchased 8500 acres and the former Fairfield Inn in nearby Cashiers, North Carolina, and hired landscape architect George Cobb to design a golf course.⁶⁸ The resort opened in 1956 as the Sapphire Valley Inn and Golf Course; ads for the resort appear frequently in the *Galax News*.⁶⁹ Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Highlands continued to grow as America's dependence on the automobile allowed for more travelers to experience out-of-the-way places like Highlands. Issues of the local *Galax News* provide a conversational and somewhat gossipy view of the small town, but ads for local businesses provide insight to the type of people being lured to Highlands. The central business district seemed to be the most popular location for tourism related businesses as visitors were in close proximity to shopping, dining, and entertainment options such as the Galax Theatre, a movie house located on Main Street.⁷⁰ This desire to be in the center of the action, even while one was on vacation, did not bode well for the sale of the abandoned Skyline Lodge project as it was located over a mile from the town.

⁶⁷ Andrew Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the Great American Hotel," *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 30, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/twilight-mom-and-pop-motel-180963895/>.

⁶⁸ "The Resort is Born," *Sapphire Valley Historical Society*, accessed December 31, 2021, <https://historyofsapphirevalley.org/the-resort-is-born>.

⁶⁹ Note: The historic Fairfield Inn, renamed the Sapphire Valley Inn, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. In 1986, a fire damaged the structure and it was later demolished. The resort and golf course is still in operation. In 1971, the property was sold to the Realtec corporation, who added condominiums on the vast property.

⁷⁰ "Galax Theatre," *Cinema Treasures*, accessed August 31, 2021, <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/9171>.

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Many of Highland's historic, in-town lodgings were attempting to assimilate into the increasingly modern age of travel. In 1957, Lee's Inn opened in the former King's Inn No. 2. Twenty-eight new rooms with baths and dressing rooms, wall-to-wall carpeting, and a large porch were completed in 1959.⁷¹ By 1961, the hostelry was known as "Lee's Inn and New Motel", an indication that they were operating a motel concept. "Motel" was an abbreviation of the term "motor court hotel", a type of lodging popularized in the 1930s as automobiles became ubiquitous.⁷² Motor court hotels allowed guests to park adjacent to their rooms, allowing for quick and easy access to their vehicles. In fact, the proximity of the automobile court and garage to the guest wing at Skyline indicates that Arthur Kelsey was aware of the latest trends in hospitality. Apparently, the motel concept was popular at the Lee's Inn and Motel; a further addition of eight "motel units, each with tile bath" opened in 1962.⁷³ Similarly, the venerable King's Inn eventually re-branded itself as the King's Inn Motel and Restaurant by 1967. These improvements and additions to pre-existing inns and hotels did not stem the tide of new lodgings in the area.⁷⁴ In 1956, the Towne House Motel opened on Main Street in Highlands. The article detailing its opening described the building as being faced with "crab orchard stone" and the most modern conveniences such as wall-to-wall carpeting and ceramic tile baths could be found in the guest rooms.⁷⁵ While the Towne House does not appear to be extant, the use of the word "motel" indicates that the new lodging most likely provided parking near to its rooms.

Another mid-century tourism development was the creation of dedicated event spaces within pre-existing hotels. The Kings Inn, one of Highlands' longest hotels in continuous operation, added a new 150-seat dining room by 1956.⁷⁶ In 1962, Lee's Inn announced the construction of a new two-story convention

⁷¹ "Additions at Lee's Inn," *Galax News*, June 18, 1959.

⁷² Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the Great American Hotel."

⁷³ Note: In the June 18, 1970 edition of the *Galax News*, Lee's Inn was an established hostelry dating back a half century.

⁷⁴ Note: Some of the motels appearing in the *Galax News* included Mitchell's Motel and Hemlock Lodge (July 18, 1957) and Cashiers Motel in neighboring Cashiers, North Carolina (August 31, 1961), both of which were located on major routes or highways through the region.

⁷⁵ "Highland's Newest Motel," *Galax News*, June 21, 1956.

⁷⁶ "Kings Inn One and Two," *Galax News*, July 19, 1956.

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hall along with its plan to diversify its lodgings. The space was divided into a first-floor function room and a second-floor dining room.⁷⁷ The addition of these spaces indicate that these hotels were looking for an additional income stream by hosting social and corporate events. As Highlands had been regarded as a warm weather destination until this point, providing special event spaces for local residents could provide some revenue during the cold months when there were fewer visitors to the area.

Perhaps it was the shift to year-round tourism that finally made a way for the Skyline Lodge project to be revived. Nearly thirty years after the abandonment of the Skyline Lodge project, an article in the June 26, 1965 edition of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* reported that a new resort was set to open that weekend in Highlands. Dubbed the Skyline Lodge, the building was under new ownership and ready to welcome guests year around. The resort's second architect, Robert Opsahl, wrote in 2000 that he was hired by former clients living in Orangeburg, South Carolina.⁷⁸ A deed search on the property has not turned up the names of the new owners and there is a lack of information on their identities in local newspapers. Nonetheless, Opsahl was hired to complete the building's interiors, enclose and expand the Garage Guest and Service Wing to allow for guest rooms, and add a new eight-room wing to bring the total number of rooms to forty-one. This work cost nearly \$870,000. Most units had "wall-to-wall carpeting and native stone fireplaces" and eight of the rooms boasted private balconies.⁷⁹ A postcard from the late 1960s shows The Skyline Lodge in its full glory. Much had changed in the years since Arthur Kelsey had designed the Lodge, but Opsahl embraced his mentor's intent, sensitively altering the Main Lodge and designing the new portions to work harmoniously with the original sections of the building. However, Opsahl had to account for changes in hospitality field. For instance, the former motor court in between the original room wing and the Garage Wing became a pool and cabana area, an appealing and mandatory amenity for summer visitors. A porte-

⁷⁷ "Lee's Inn Expansion Program," *Galax News*, 1962.

⁷⁸ Robert Opsahl to Robert Nass, December 15, 2000.

⁷⁹ "New Highlands Resort Will Open Sunday," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 26, 1965.

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cochere and registration office, added at the north end of the former Garage Wing, indicates the prominence of automobiles in the life of the average American vacationer.

When Skyline Lodge opened in June of 1965, the intention was to operate year-round resort. Perhaps to combat the recent trend towards more urban vacation settings, Skyline offered first-class dining and an array of activities. The property contained seventy-five acres and boasted many guest amenities including hiking trails and trout fishing.⁸⁰ To entice more visitors during the cold weather months, Lodge management reported that ice skating would be available to guests on the property's two lakes and that a man-made rink was also in the works. The Lodge also intended to join a community effort to create a ski slope.⁸¹ Staff turnover apparently made the first years of the Lodge's operation difficult.⁸² It is possible that operating the Lodge during the cold months was unsustainable; Highlands remained a relatively isolated outpost accessible only by vehicle. It is possible that during snow and ice events, the roads would have been impassable, thus discouraging wintertime travelers.

In January 1968, a fire broke out in the kitchen, which was located on the main floor of the lodge wing. Robert Opsahl mentions in a December 2000 letter that he helped fight the fire "in extremely cold weather". He then says that he "brought a family of carpenters with me and hired many local people and undertook the construction myself." The damage was contained to the Main Lodge, and Opsahl wrote that following the fire, "the new Owner did not rebuild it as it was."⁸³ This statement indicates that the original manager's apartment, located adjacent to the kitchen, was abandoned in favor of expanding the restaurant's kitchen.

⁸⁰ Note: The current property consists of 3.68 acres. The twenty-two acres surrounding the complex were retained by Robert Nass, who owned the property from 1990 to 2020. Some of the lots seemed to be associated with a residential development scheme known as Laurel Falls at Skyline. It is probable that a number of one-acre lots in the same area were originally a part of the Lodge's seventy-five acres.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Note: Two articles in the *Galax News* (June 9, 1966 and July 28, 1966) show that staff turnover was a problem with the resort going through three managers in a year. This indicates that there may have been a general issue with the ownership.

⁸³ Robert Opsahl to Robert Nass, December 15, 2000. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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In May 1969, *The Cherokee Scout and Clarion Progress* revealed that the newly “restored and renovated” Skyline Lodge would be re-opening under new ownership. The new owners were Oren and Marilou McClain, who did not have ties to the Highlands community. In fact, Oren was a retired attorney and residential developer from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. An ad for the Lodge in the June 29, 1969 edition of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* reported that tennis courts were under construction. This amenity appears to have been completed as there are two tennis courts and a clubhouse located across Pine Circle, just north of the property. The clubhouse mimics the style of the Lodge and appears to be two stories, with a gable-on-hip roof and plywood siding.⁸⁴ Onsite tennis courts would have provided another fun summertime activity for those visitors wishing to indulge in a resort experience. In June of 1970, the *Galax News* announced the opening of a “beautifully designed private club” at Skyline. The décor reportedly matched the rest of the lodge, including California Redwood and native stone. The new club room also boasted a wall of casement windows along one side, created from the enclosure of the original terrace adjacent to the space. It is not clear if the intended purpose of this clubroom was as a special events or community space, but it would have added another useful amenity to the Lodge’s offerings.

The Skyline Lodge has continued to operate in Highlands to the present day, though ownership has changed several times over the years. The Wrightian features of the Lodge’s design has perpetuated many myths over the years; while Wright never had any direct influence on the property, the prestige associated with his name has protected the complex from insensitive design changes. The exterior of the property still reflects both the 1936 – 1937 Kelsey plan and the 1965 Opsahl additions. While interior finishes have changed over the years to reflect prevailing design trends, the original layout of both the public rooms and hotel units has remained. The property is undergoing another ownership change and a renovation of the

⁸⁴ Note: These courts did not convey with the Skyline property when it was sold in 2020. The former owner, Robert Nass, retains ownership. Therefore, the property is not physically accessible at this time. The brief description provided herein was taken from satellite images.

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property will respect all eras of the Lodge's history. This important work will ensure the continuation of Skyline's architectural distinctiveness and history for future generations.

Criterion C: Architecture

The design of the Skyline Lodge has been the subject of conjecture for many years. Partially constructed and then abandoned in 1938, the rustic construction materials and design of the complex reflect the influence of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. While research has proven that Wright or his disciples had no hand in the design of Skyline, the Wrightian concept of "organic architecture" informed the original development of the complex. Wright's later contributions to Modernist architecture can be seen in the 1965 renovation and completion of Skyline Lodge as well. While there are a number of private residences in the Highlands area designed in this style, there are a few examples of publicly accessible buildings, making Skyline Lodge the definitive example of both early and mid-twentieth century Wrightian architecture.

Arthur J. Kelsey began designing Skyline Lodge in 1936. The architect, born on November 11, 1902 in Cleveland, Ohio, doubled-majored in architecture and fine arts at Yale University. In 1927, the *Hartford Courant* mentioned Kelsey as a runner-up in the competition for the Paris Prize, sponsored by the Beaux Arts Institute of Design.⁸⁵ Kelsey's exact graduation is not known, but in June 1930, he moved to Cincinnati to partner with Standish Meacham in an architectural firm. The two had been at Yale together,⁸⁶ but this partnership was short-lived as Meacham went on to form Rapp & Meacham with his father-in-law, prominent local architect Walter Rapp, in 1931.⁸⁷

According to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Kelsey began teaching freehand drawing at the University of Cincinnati in 1932. He was also active in the Cincinnati chapter of the American Institute of Architects

⁸⁵ "Beaux Arts Mention," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, CT), February 1, 1927.

⁸⁶ "Meacham, Standish", *Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati*, accessed January 30, 2020, <http://oldsite.architecturecincy.org/dictionary/M.html#meacham>.

⁸⁷ "Rapp, Walter L.", *Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati*, accessed January 30, 2020, http://oldsite.architecturecincy.org/dictionary/R.html#rapp_w.

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(AIA), overseen by well-known architect, Ernest Pickering. As the deprivations of the Great Depression set in, architectural work was difficult to obtain; instead, Kelsey assisted with the AIA's public campaign to encourage residents to invest in real estate. He frequently authored articles for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, including one in March 1932 with a plan for a two-story, six-room Colonial style home fit for "the average family and the average purse of Cincinnati". Kelsey mentions that the Cincinnati AIA had expressly designed this home to show that "both quantity and quality can be secured today for an investment within the reach of thousands who do not own their own homes." This message came straight from President Herbert Hoover and the federal government, whose agencies were in the early stages of creating the Federal Housing Administration.⁸⁸

In June of 1932, Arthur Kelsey married Charlotte Elizabeth Peabody, a trained landscape architect who would play an important role in the design of the Skyline Lodge. The couple most likely met through their involvement with the AIA; Peabody served on the Cincinnati Arts Commission, which had become involved in the AIA's campaign for affordable housing. Charlotte was also the managing co-editor of *Architectural Progress Monthly* magazine. Born October 19, 1899 to Arthur and Agnes Peabody, Charlotte's interest in architecture most likely stemmed from her father, Arthur Peabody, an architect of some renown.⁸⁹ After graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1921, Charlotte attended the Cambridge School of Domestic and Landscape Architecture for Women in Boston. This institution, founded by architectural professors at Harvard, did not grant degrees, and though Charlotte completed the three-year program in 1927, she was unable to register as an architect. Instead, she took a position in the

⁸⁸ "75th Anniversary of the Walter-Steagall Housing Act of 1937," *Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library*, accessed January 30, 2020.

⁸⁹ "Charlotte Kelsey," *Social Security Death Index*, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=3693&h=32775839&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=2442, accessed March 29, 2021.

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Wisconsin state architect's office, headed by her father. It was there that she designed the Memorial Union Building Terrace at the University of Wisconsin, which seems to be her only credited project.⁹⁰

It is not known if Charlotte continued in her capacity as co-editor of *Architectural Progress Monthly* after her marriage to Kelsey, but she was very involved in architectural and planning matters in the Cincinnati area. Mentions in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in the early and mid-1930s indicate that Charlotte was involved in the Hamilton County Planning Council as well as the Better Housing League. She was particularly interested in slums and blight, and in her capacity as chairwoman of the Planning Council, organized multiple site visits and meetings on the subject. It is possible that Charlotte met Virginia Randall Wilcox through her work with these organizations as the latter was working for the Cincinnati Associated Charities and Welfare Department during this period.⁹¹

In November of 1936, Arthur Kelsey began designing for Howard Randall's Highlands resort.⁹² This was a significant commission for Kelsey, especially given the state of America's economy at the time. However, there were significant issues with the design and building process from the start of the project. Letters between Kelsey and Jack Wilcox, and later Virginia, indicate that Howard Randall was in over his head. For one thing, he changed the location of the proposed resort, which caused considerable issues for Kelsey as he already begun the plans. Even by May 1937, Randall had not acquired the property for the resort, which caused further delays.⁹³ Randall also put in an order for lumber without confirming the needs with Kelsey, which concerned the architect.⁹⁴ Despite these difficulties, the tone of the letters exchanged between the principal players remained cordial throughout the project's lifespan. Letters exchanged

⁹⁰ Susan Olen Haswell, *The Memorial Union Terrace: A Landscape History*, (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Union, 2010), 24-25.

⁹¹ "Virginia Bell Randall Wilcox," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 23, 1991.

⁹² Arthur Kelsey to Howard Randall, November 11, 1936. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁹³ Arthur Kelsey to Virginia and Jack Wilcox, May 10, 1937. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

⁹⁴ Arthur Kelsey to Jack Wilcox, February 4, 1937. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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between Kelsey, Randall, and the Wilcoxes seem to indicate a genuine affection between the parties. While Kelsey corresponded with Jack Wilcox frequently, he also exchanged letters with Virginia “Ted” Randall Wilcox, who often stepped in for her husband who was a sporadic correspondent. In a letter of May 1, 1937, she wrote about the refurbishment of the “Johnson House”, a cottage in Highlands that was either purchased or leased for Kelsey, who intended to move from Cincinnati with his family. Virginia eagerly detailed the upgrades made in anticipation of his arrival, noting that Charlotte would have “a bath and running water and (please keep secret from Daddy) a fireplace.”⁹⁵

One of the curious things about these letters between the Wilcoxes and Arthur Kelsey is the mention of Frank Lloyd Wright, who appears as “F.L.W.” on more than one occasion. In her May 1, 1937 letter, Virginia states that the house acquired for Kelsey and his family “won’t be F.L.W.”, but it was well located in town. Her reference to “F.L.W.” brings up one of the long-standing mysteries of the Skyline Lodge. For decades, many assumed that Frank Lloyd Wright had designed Skyline. In 1990, the new owner of Skyline, Robert Nass, contacted the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, hoping that their archives may have the answer. The archivist at the time definitively stated that Wright did not have a connection to the property but given the distinct similarities of the building’s style to Wright’s, it was possible that one of his students designed the buildings.

There has been much speculation that Arthur Kelsey trained with Wright, but unfortunately, the documentation does not exist. Indeed, Frank Lloyd Wright did not start his school at Taliesin until 1932 and there is ample evidence that Arthur was already hard at work in Cincinnati at that time. But Virginia Randall’s glib reference in her letter indicates that Kelsey had some connection to the famous architect. Virginia makes another reference to Wright in a June 1938 letter when she reminds Kelsey to not “forget to see F.L.W.” at the national AIA conference in Baltimore. However, it seems that Charlotte Peabody

⁹⁵ Virginia Wilcox to Arthur Kelsey, May 1, 1937. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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Kelsey may be the missing link. Conversations with the Kelsey family confirm that Charlotte Kelsey knew Wright before her marriage to Arthur. She often attended parties at Taliesin, Wright's home in Wisconsin during the late 1920s.⁹⁶ This is no surprise given her father's prestige in the state. The connection must have been maintained throughout the years, as Arthur Kelsey's son David remembers taking a tour of Taliesin after delivering his sister to the University of Chicago in the early 1950s.⁹⁷ Regardless of the family's connection to Wright, Arthur Kelsey's design aesthetic for Skyline reflects Wright's theory of "organic architecture". This theory was explained in Wright's "The Natural House", which was published in 1954. While this publication falls nearly twenty years after Kelsey's endeavors at Skyline, the concepts were ones that Wright had been using for decades, but had struggled to define in his writings.⁹⁸ "Organic architecture" should take into consideration the following concepts: function, circulation, structure, topography, and climate.⁹⁹ Kelsey would have been more familiar with Wright's earlier writings on "organicity" and these concepts certainly informed his design for Skyline. The concepts most easily achieved by the design include the materiality or use of natural, possibly local materials. The granite stone that decorates both the exterior and interior of the Kelsey era sections clearly achieves this idea. Another part of Wright's theory that applies to Skyline's design is the topography or the idea that the building should grow out of its site. Skyline Lodge is perched on top of Flat Mountain and while it is a relatively long-slung structure, it still appears as if emerging from a rocky foundation. The building's relationship to the natural world beyond its walls is another Wrightian notion embodied by Skyline's design. The wide swaths of windows in the dining room and lounge areas of the Main Lodge bring nature inside. The number of terraces also constructed at Skyline are an important element to providing interaction with nature. However, the hardscaping plan was not of

⁹⁶ Sandra Herbert, email to Caroline Wilson, August 27, 2020.

⁹⁷ David Kelsey, email to Caroline Wilson, August 4, 2020.

⁹⁸ Note: The Frank Lloyd Wright foundation reports that Wright first hinted at his idea of organic architecture in a 1908 paper entitled, "The Cause of Architecture." In this paper, he defines the six qualities of "organicity": simplicity and repose in design, natural colorways, natural materiality, the building should belong within the context of the site, and the building must be sincere, true, gracious, loving, and filled with integrity.

⁹⁹ "Wrightian, 1950-1990," *Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation*, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://dahp.wa.gov/historic-preservation/historic-buildings/architectural-style-guide/wrightian>.

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Kelsey's design. The credit instead goes to his wife Charlotte, who signed off on the landscape and site plan for the project. The completion of the terraces is shown in Kelsey family photographs taken of the site during construction. As she was acquainted with Frank Lloyd Wright as well, it easy to understand his influence in Charlotte's designs. The Kelseys' devotion to Wrightian principles is clearly demonstrated by their designs at Skyline and proves how the influence of Wright can reach to even the most remote of places.

Wright's influence of the designs of Arthur Kelsey can be seen in another commission he completed in the Highlands area. The sad news of Howard Randall's death in June 1938 put the Kelsey family in limbo; Arthur and Charlotte Kelsey were left unpaid for much of the work they had completed for the project.¹⁰⁰ Even in 1938, the effects of the Great Depression still made it difficult to obtain architectural design work. Fortunately, a new Works Progress Administration project provided Kelsey the opportunity to design the Highlands Biological Station Museum.¹⁰¹ Kelsey employed the same style and materials used at Skyline to create a rustic building that took advantage of the surrounding natural beauty. The rear of the building overlooks a terraced lawn that may have been designed by Charlotte. As she was still in Highlands with the couple's two children during this time, and terracing seems to be her signature, it is possible that she designed this landscape feature.

By March 1939, Kelsey had completed his plans for Biological Station and the Kelsey family had left Highlands for good, relocating to Columbus, Ohio where Arthur had obtained work.¹⁰² The 1940 Census shows that Arthur, Charlotte, and their two children, lived in Worthington, a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. Arthur Kelsey eventually obtained the chief designer position with the National Youth Administration (NYA) in Washington, D.C. The agency was a creation of the New Deal and originally housed in the Works Progress Administration.¹⁰³ Kelsey's prior work with the organization might have

¹⁰⁰ David Kelsey, email to Caroline Wilson, August 4, 2020.

¹⁰¹ "Highlands To Build Museum," *Franklin Press and Highlands Maconian*, March 9, 1939.

¹⁰² "Highlands Highlights," *Franklin Press and Highlands Maconian*, March 9, 1939.

¹⁰³ "National Youth Administration (NYA)(1935)," *The Living New Deal*, <https://livingnewdeal.org/glossary/national-youth-administration-nya-1935/>, accessed March 30, 2021.

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recommended him for the job. However, the NYA disbanded on January 1, 1944, which may have placed the Kelsey family in limbo once more. Kelsey established his own architecture firm in 1946, so presumably, he found enough work to remain in Washington until this time. According to Kelsey's son and granddaughter, Arthur designed many residential homes in this latter phase of his career.¹⁰⁴ Notices and articles in the *Baltimore Sun* show that he also designed several government buildings including an elementary school and addition at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, and a new produce market in Baltimore.¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁶ As these buildings have not been located, it is impossible to identify the style Kelsey employed in the design of them. But based on renderings for earlier projects, he clearly employed a number of different styles, which display his proficiency as an architect. In addition to maintaining his own practice, Kelsey also joined the Architectural Engineering department at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., where he would teach an aspiring architecture student named Robert Opsahl. This connection would shape the future of the abandoned Skyline Lodge, though Kelsey would not live to see it. In October 1956, Arthur Kelsey died unexpectedly at the young age of 54.¹⁰⁷

Nearly ten years after his death, Arthur Kelsey's work at the former Randall lodge in Highlands came to fruition. Robert Opsahl, Kelsey's former student, became the architect who would finally complete Skyline Lodge. Opsahl was born in Decorah, Iowa in October 1926 to Eugene and Isabel Opsahl. Little is known about his early life beyond that after graduating from high school, he joined a training program for the United States Air Force Reserves in June 1944.¹⁰⁸ According to United States Military Enlistment records, he formally enlisted as a private in the Air Force Reserves in March 1945. Given that the war was winding down, it does not appear that Opsahl went abroad. Several years passed before he enrolled at Catholic University. A personal letter penned by Opsahl in 2000 explains his surprising connection to the

¹⁰⁴ David Kelsey, email to Caroline Wilson, August 4, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ "New Market Plan Opposed," *Baltimore Sun*, August 25, 1948.

¹⁰⁶ "Invitation for Bids," *Baltimore Sun*, February 1, 1954.

¹⁰⁷ "Arthur Kelsey dies in East," *Capital Times* (Madison, WI), October 26, 1956.

¹⁰⁸ Louise Lux, "17-Year-Olds to Start Their Training Monday," *Gazette* (Cedar Rapids, IA), June 11, 1944.

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original architect of the Lodge. In reference to Arthur Kelsey, he was “a Professor of Architecture at Catholic University, Washington, DC. I attended C.U. in the late 50’s and had Mr. Kelsey as an instructor.”¹⁰⁹ Opsahl notes that he spent a great deal of extracurricular time with Kelsey, who would regale him with stories of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright’s influence on Kelsey’s original design for the Lodge was evident; his preference for Wright’s work passed to another generation of architects as Opsahl would eventually design in a similar style. Opsahl later wrote that “Mr. Kelsey died in my last school year,” which would have been October 1956.¹¹⁰ Presumably, Opsahl graduated in the spring of 1957, and eventually moved to Clearwater, Florida.

Once in Florida, Opsahl formed a partnership with Modernist architect Joe McClung. McClung also favored Wright’s design principles, as evidenced by a Usonian style home he designed in 1961.¹¹¹ McClung and Opsahl worked together in the Orlando area for most of the early 1960s. In January 1964, *The Orlando Sentinel* ran an article detailing the duo’s design for a new welcome center at a nature-themed amusement park in Homosassa Springs, Florida. The new building was of a “rustic” style with Georgia Pine Log Rock construction and a cedar shake roof. The article also mentions that glass and laminated beams will feature into the construction of the building.¹¹² These design characteristics would later appear during Opsahl’s completion of Skyline Lodge.

According to Opsahl’s December 2000 letter, the new owners of Skyline Lodge were former clients who lived in Orangeburg, South Carolina, and were eager to complete the long-abandoned hotel project.¹¹³ While Opsahl could have dramatically changed the look and feel of Kelsey’s original design for Skyline,

¹⁰⁹ Robert Opsahl to Robert Nass, December 15, 2000. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Martie Liberman, “Florida Architecture: Sunnybrook House Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian Style,” *Modern Sarasota*, <https://www.modernsarasota.com/single-post/2016/07/06/Florida-Architecture-Sunnybrook-House>, accessed February 25, 2020.

¹¹² “Homosassa Site Getting New Face,” *Orlando Sentinel*, January 5, 1964.

¹¹³ Robert Opsahl to Robert Nass, December 15, 2000. Letter located in the survey file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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he chose to honor his former mentor by retaining the same stylistic elements and materials. His work at Skyline includes the reconstruction of the Garage Guest and Service Wing, which included the addition of a registration office, porte cochere, and service area, and the completion of a new guest wing. Unfortunately, Opsahl's plans for Skyline were later stolen by an intern working in his office, so the full extent of the work he completed can only be gleaned by comparing the current iteration of Skyline Lodge to the original plans drawn by Arthur Kelsey. This comparison shows that Opsahl was responsible for the addition of the partially glazed gable projection that houses the Main Lodge's loft. Knowing that Opsahl used laminated beams at his project in Homosassa Springs, the rooms with cathedral ceilings that contain a laminated ridge beam also seem to be an Opsahl design decision. While Opsahl respected the design of the extant building sections, he was a Modernist architect, but he too was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright. Though Wright had died in 1959, he had continued his prolific architecture career until the very end, eventually indulging in eccentric geometric shapes that resulted in groundbreaking Modernist buildings such as the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.¹¹⁴ Wright also popularized the use of cantilevered roofs, stairs, decks, and other components. The flat-roofed, cantilevered porte cochere seen at Skyline and designed by Opsahl, has precedents in several Wright-designed residential homes. Cantilevering became a favorite design characteristic for Opsahl. The projections at either end of the new guest wing were also cantilevered, and he would use the same construction technique at a later commission in the Highlands area.

Opsahl's work at Skyline must have required more manpower as throughout 1965, McClung and Opsahl were actively advertising for a draftsman to work in both the Florida and North Carolina offices.¹¹⁵ It appears that by June 1966, Robert Opsahl had dissolved his partnership with Joe McClung as he moved to Highlands permanently and opened an office under the name of Robert Opsahl Architecture. This announcement appeared in the June 30, 1966 edition of the *Galax News*, noting that Opsahl was well known

¹¹⁴ Arthur Lubow, "The Triumph of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 2009.

¹¹⁵ "Architectural Draftsman," *Tampa Bay Times* (Tampa Bay, FL), May 6, 1965.

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for “his contemporary style of design and locally best known as the designer of the Skyline Lodge.” Opsahl had enough work to hire additional help in 1968, as an advertisement appeared in the October 9th edition of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* requesting an “architectural draftsman or architect/Contemporary design oriented, creative ability and interest in architecture essential.” He eventually hired a young architect, James Fox, who would become well-known throughout North Carolina for his Modernist residential designs. Fox would assist Opsahl in the design and completion of the DeVille House, a residential property in Highlands, completed in 1968.¹¹⁶ Opsahl’s design for Whiteside Villa called for the same materials used to construct Skyline Lodge: native stone, locally hewn wood panels, and exposed timbering. One end of the house looks quite similar to the angled gable and balcony found at the principal (south) façade of Skyline Lodge. Like Skyline, Whiteside Villa has also been compared to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, and indeed, there are elements of the home that mimic Wright’s Usonian phase.¹¹⁷ Given Opsahl’s lengthy residence in Highlands, it is very likely that he designed other homes in the area, though these have not been identified.

After leaving Highlands in the 1970s, Robert Opsahl leveraged his experience at Skyline to complete several other hotels after closing his practice in Highlands and moving to Columbia, South Carolina. In the 1980s, he completed designs for a Ramada Hotel in Columbia (1984)¹¹⁸, the Quality Suites Hotel in North Charleston (1988)¹¹⁹ and the Comfort Inn in Clemson (1989).¹²⁰ By the early 2000s, Opsahl had retired though he still occasionally consulted with his son, a custom home builder in the Columbia area. Robert Opsahl died in June 2015 at the age of 88.

It is difficult to compare Skyline Lodge to other buildings in the Highlands area as there is a lack of intact examples. Many of the motels and hotels built in the years before Skyline’s opening have been

¹¹⁶ “James Howard Fox (1939-2017),” *NC Modernist*, <http://www.ncmodernist.org/fox.htm>, accessed February 27, 2020.

¹¹⁷ “Building Whiteside Villa,” Whiteside Villa, accessed September 1, 2021, <http://whitesidevilla.com/houseconstruction.html>.

¹¹⁸ “Dean, Dempsey teaming up to help build new Ramada,” *The Times and Democrat* (Orangeburg, SC), June 8, 1984.

¹¹⁹ “New Hotel,” *Charleston News and Courier*, March 3, 1988.

¹²⁰ “Comfort Inn of Clemson holds grand opening,” *The Greenville News* (Greenville, SC), October 11, 1989.

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demolished or altered beyond recognition. If residential projects in the Mid-Century style are discounted, the only other examples available for comparison are institutional or commercial buildings. Once such building was designed by Robert Opsahl following the completion of Skyline Lodge and Whiteside Villa. In an August 21, 1969 article in *The Galax News*, Opsahl was in the process of designing a new office for Dr. Pate in Highlands. The report stated that the building would be composed of Redwood and native stone, the same materials Opsahl used to complete Skyline Lodge. This building, located at 479 South Street, was completed and maintains good integrity. The two-story brown brick structure is set into a hill, giving the South Street façade the appearance of a single-story structure. This primary façade is composed entirely of brick with redwood trim around the four window openings. The hip roof with deep, overhanging eaves covers the entire structure, including the porch entry at the southeast corner. This design feature was often found in Wrightian homes. The remaining elevations are similar in style to Skyline, though the materials are different. Alternating sections of brown brick and redwood paneling at the windows have a similar rhythm to the stacked stone and board-and-batten sections at Skyline.

Another building both contemporary to Skyline's completion and similar in design is the Peggy Crosby Center at 348 South Fifth Street. This building was originally constructed as a new wing for the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in 1966; this expansion tripled the number of beds available for patients.¹²¹ While the architect is unknown, the hospital wing displays the artistry of someone with training. The double height building is topped with a steeply pitched gabled roof that is reflective of the Mid-Century Modernist style. Half of the building's primary façade is a blank brick wall, while the adjacent half is a porch covered by the dramatically pitched roof line. The façade wall is almost entirely glass save for the wooden entry door and the three vertical posts and single horizontal crossbar comprising the framing. The glass wall is continued on north façade, with the same framing components. The amount of glass would

¹²¹ "History," Highlands-Cashiers Hospitals, accessed August 31, 2021, https://missionhealth.org/member-hospitals/highlands-cashiers/history/?doing_wp_cron=1630559232.1749329566955566406250

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have provided a bright, modern entry and waiting room for the hospital. The choice of such a dramatic style of architecture is interesting given the rural character of this small community. However, much of the rhetoric of the Modernist Movement was about challenging the old and charging towards a brave new future, which seems like the mentality one would want from the local hospital.

It is difficult to determine how many Modernist era structures were built in Highlands. While the *Galax News* chronicles a number of new buildings and additions to older ones, very little is known about the style employed. A visual survey of the main thoroughfares of Highlands shows significant amounts of early twentieth-century architecture and modern buildings constructed to look historic or rustic. Due to the prevailing underappreciation for Modernist buildings, it is likely that many examples have been lost. Therefore, examples such as the Skyline Lodge, which is a highly intact example of both early Wrightian concepts as well as the Modernist style, are all the more important to preserve.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government

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University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): MA0808

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.03

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.076367 Longitude: -83.212747

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

All the property and buildings contained on Macon County Tax Map # 7540090406. Bounded on the west by Laurel Branch Road, on the east by private property (forested mountainside and Big Creek), to the south by private property (along a rock retaining wall), and the north by Skyline Lodge Road and Pine Circle.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated acreage encompasses the Skyline Lodge building, parking lot, courtyards and related driveways on the current tax parcel totaling 3.03 acres that provide the appropriate setting for the historic lodge. Originally the property contained over fifty acres but the last owner of the property (1990-2019) divided the majority of this land into one-acre parcels, and then sold many of the lots to private owners for residential development under the name "Laurel Falls at Skyline Lodge." One of these lots contains two tennis courts and two-story

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structure. Per a 1969 newspaper article, the tennis courts were a part of the Skyline Lodge Resort. While it is possible that these tennis courts were located where the current courts are, tax records indicate that construction dates to 1980 and 2000. It is likely that the original courts were demolished and then re-constructed, along with the two-story structure that stands adjacent. Therefore the current tennis courts are not the original and do not contribute to the significance of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

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date: December 31, 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Skyline Lodge
Name of Property

Macon County, NC
County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Skyline Lodge

City or Vicinity: Highlands

County: Macon

State: North Carolina

Photographer: Caroline Wilson

Date Photographed: October 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 15. Skyline Lodge, South Elevation, facing north
- 2 of 15. Skyline Lodge, North Elevation, facing south
- 3 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, North Entrance, 1965 Gable Addition, facing southeast
- 4 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, Lounge and Bar, facing northeast
- 5 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, Lounge Fireplace, facing northwest
- 6 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, West Side of Restaurant, facing south
- 7 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, Lower Level, Lounge and Club, facing south
- 8 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Kelsey Guest Wing, North and West Elevations, facing southeast
- 9 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Kelsey Guest Wing, Lower Level, Room 107, facing northeast
- 10 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing, East Elevation, facing northwest
- 11 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing, West Elevation, facing northeast
- 12 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing, Upper Level, Room 214, facing west
- 13 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Reception and Porte Cohere (Garage Guest and Service Wing), facing southwest
- 14 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing (L) and Opsahl Guest Wing (R), East Elevation, facing southwest
- 15 of 15. Skyline Lodge, Opsahl Guest Wing, Upper Level, Room 220, facing north

Skyline Lodge
Name of Property

Macon County, NC
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



1. Skyline Lodge, South Elevation , facing north.



2. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge Building and Courtyard, North Elevation, facing south.



3. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, North Entrance and 1965 Gable Addition, facing south.



4. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, Lounge and Bar, facing northeast.



5. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge, Lounge Fireplace, facing northwest.



6. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge Building, West Side of Restaurant, facing south.



7. Skyline Lodge, Main Lodge Building, Lower Level, Lounge and Club, facing south.



8. Skyline Lodge, Kelsey Guest Wing, North and West Elevations, facing southeast.



9. Skyline Lodge, Kelsey Guest Wing, Lower Level, Room 107, facing northeast.



10. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing, East Elevation, facing northwest.



11. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing, West Elevation, facing northeast.



12. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing,
Upper Level, Room 214, facing west.



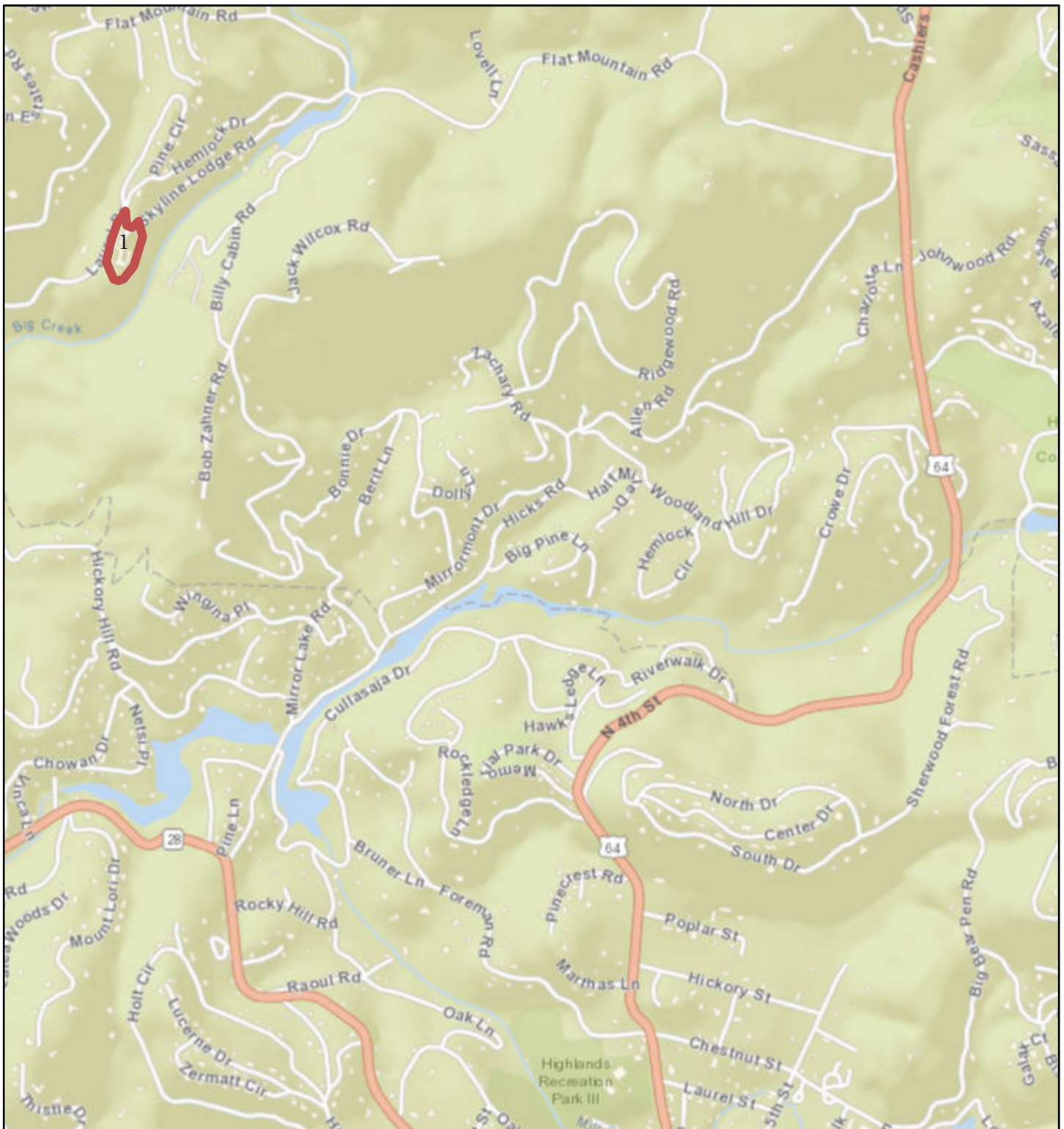
13. Skyline Lodge, Reception and Porte Cohere (1965), facing southwest.



14. Skyline Lodge, Garage Guest and Service Wing (L) and Opsahl Guest Wing (R), East Elevation, facing southwest.



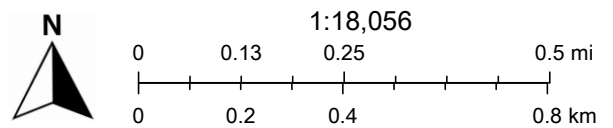
15. Skyline Lodge, Opsahl Guest Wing, Upper Level, Room 220, facing south.

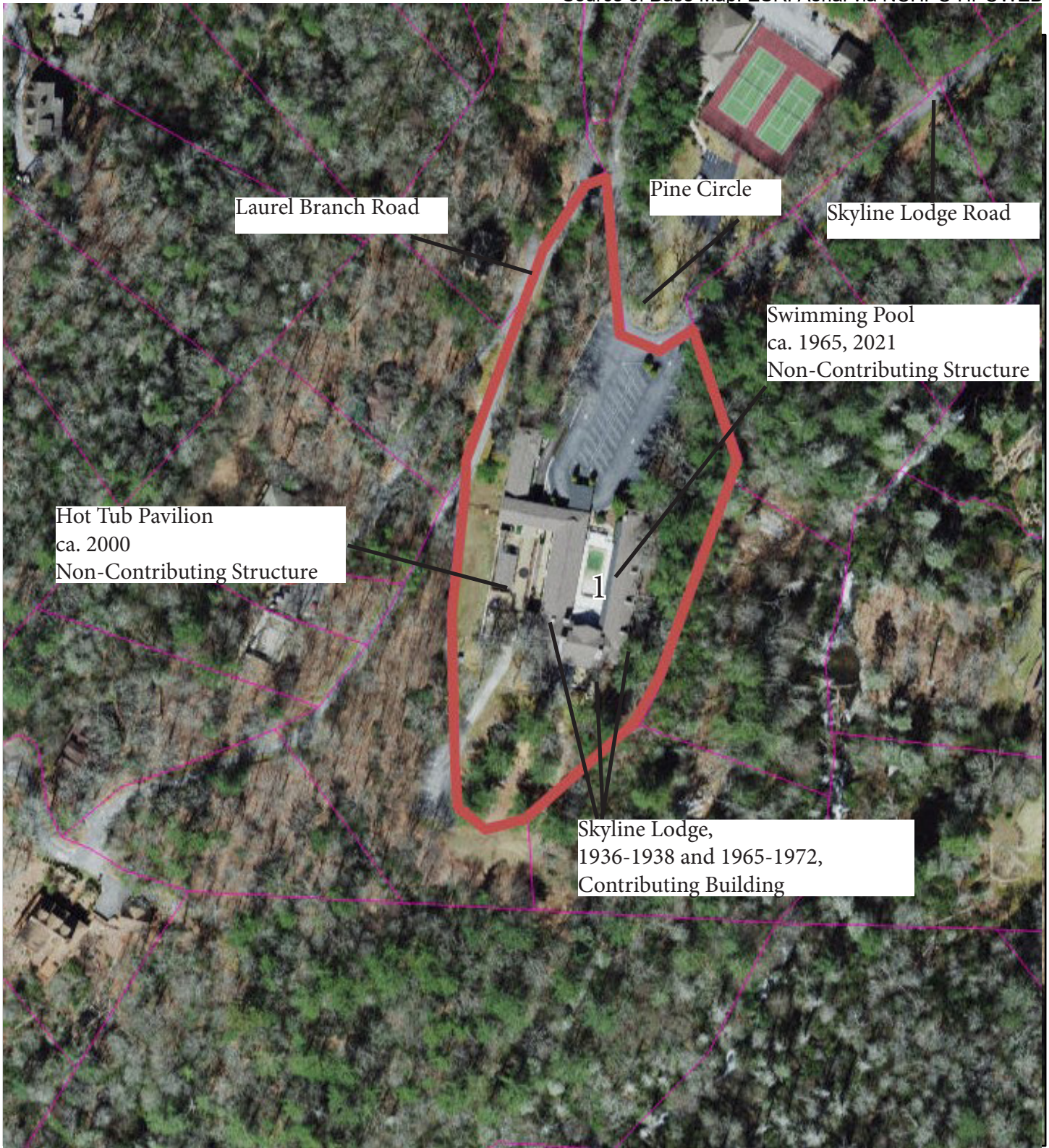


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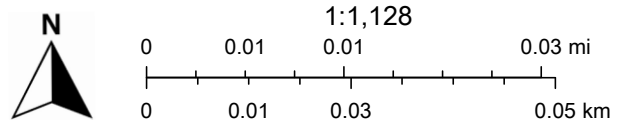
NR and Parcel Boundary

Skyline Lodge, 470 Skyline Lodge Road, Highlands, NC 28741





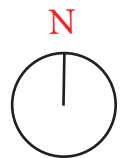
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Tax Parcel # 7540090406

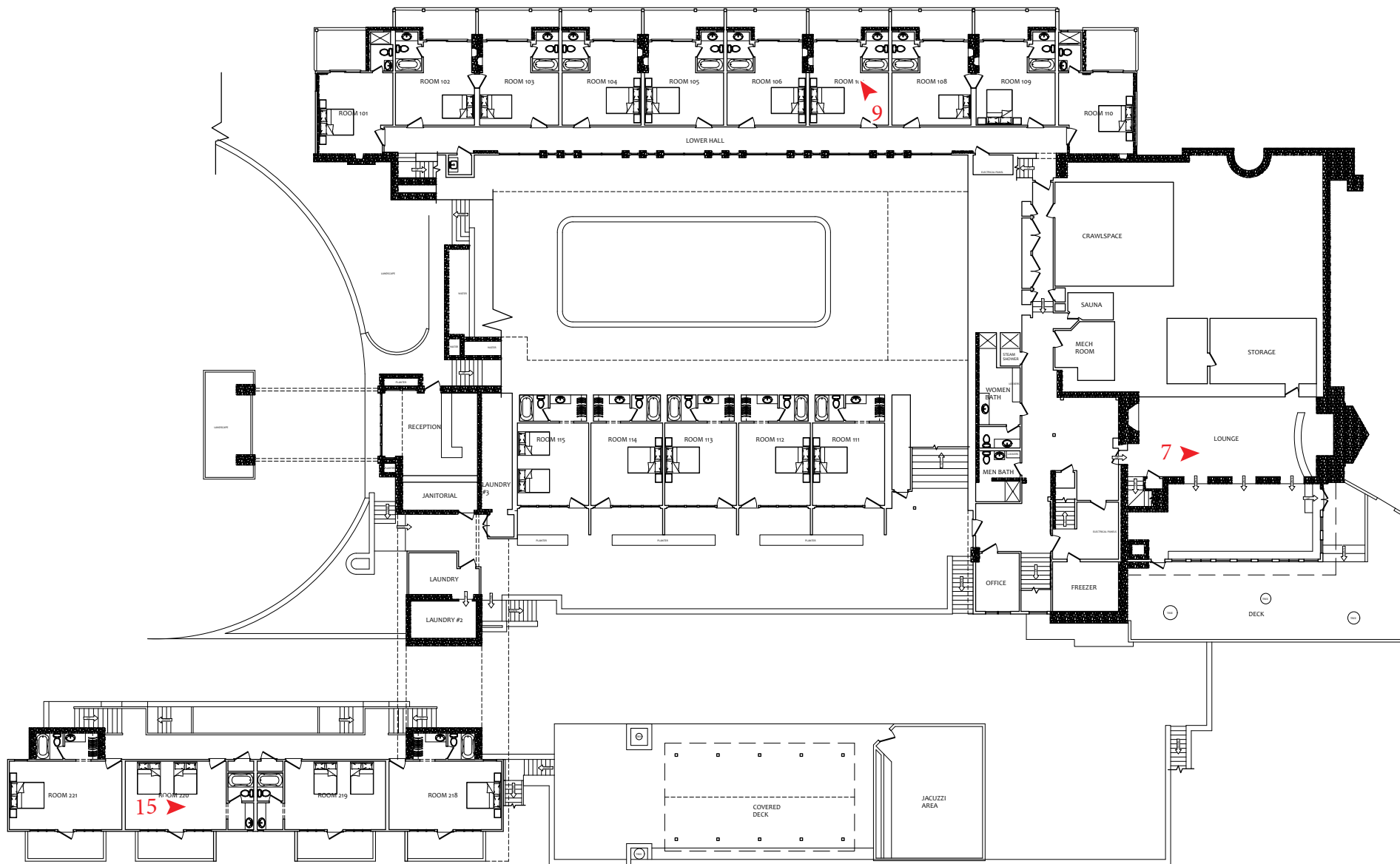


NR and Parcel Boundary

Skyline Lodge, 470 Skyline Lodge Road, Highlands, NC 28741

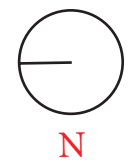
Map created by Caroline Wilson,
MacRostie Historic Advisors

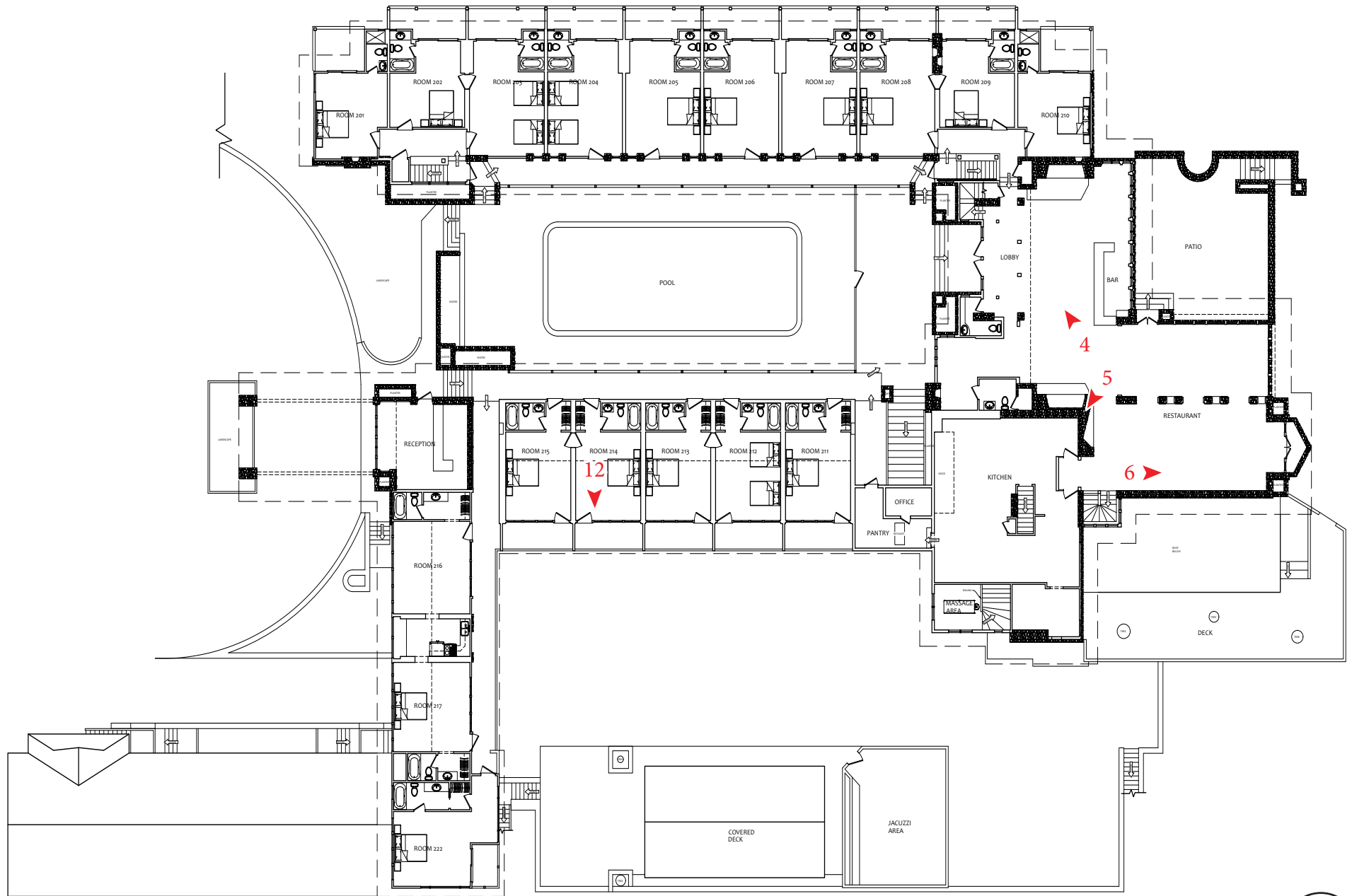




National Register of Historic Places Nomination
 Lower Level Floor Plan Photo Key
 Skyline Lodge, 470 Skyline Lodge Road,
 Highlands, Macon County, NC

Scale: 1/8" = 1'0"





National Register of Historic Places Nomination
 Upper Level Floor Plan Photo Key
 Skyline Lodge, 470 Skyline Lodge Road,
 Highlands, Macon County, NC

Scale: 1/8" = 1'0"

