

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic "Breezemont"

and/or common Watts, General Cornelius C., House

**2. Location**

street & number 915 Breezemont Drive \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Third

state West Virginia code 54 county Kanawha code 039

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Eleanor Kawsek

street & number 915 Breezemont Drive

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state West Virginia

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kanawha County Courthouse

street & number Virginia & Court Streets

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ state West Virginia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Breezemont" or the "General" Cornelius C. Watts House, sits majestically atop Watts Hill commanding a panoramic view of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers and much of Charleston proper, the county seat of Kanawha County and capital of West Virginia.

When constructed c.1905, "Breezemont" was the focal point of a large estate owned and operated by Cornelius C. Watts. "Breezemont" is a stone building, of rock face ashlar designed in the Neo-Classic Revival mode on a generally rectangular plan. "Breezemont" has a striking red-tile roof. The front elevation of "Breezemont" is dominated by a two story portico, set left of center. The portico is supported by 3-group ~~wooden~~ <sup>cast-iron</sup> Ionic columns with plain shafts. The portico of the veranda is surmounted by a triangular pediment that is plastered and centered with a Palladian window. The roof of the portico, sheathed in red tiles that match the tiles on the roof of the house, intersects with the ridge of the main roof to form a T. Twin story Ionic pilasters flank the doorway beneath the portico. The remaining space to the right of the entry is arranged in a complex design centered upon a single two story Ionic column that supports a recessed two story porch at the southeast corner of the house. The single column acts as both a structural and ornamental unit to tie together the one story porte cochere (located on the north elevation of the house) and one story veranda.

The massive portico and two story porch are separated by a three-sided bay. This clever vertical division is emphasized by a gable dormer that pierces the roof over the bay. A second gable dormer is situated in the east roof elevation to balance the height of the structure above the porte cochere. In essence, the two dormers form the corner unit of the house and help to balance and complement the structure's major architectural feature, the portico.

The entrance of "Breezemont" is flanked by expansive leaded glass side-lights and surmounted by a rectangular transom. An interior, glass lined vestibule occupies the space immediately beyond the doorway.

Major details of the building include the embellishment of the cornice with modillions, the use of the ashlar base for all columns, and the presence of nine pane upper sashes, balanced by lower sash single panes, in the double hung windows. A glass conservatory originally attached to the rear of the house was converted to a frame utility room early in the century.

In 1926 the greater part of the Watts Estate was partitioned into the subdivision of Breezemont, primarily for financial considerations and because General Watts, by that time 78 years old, had become too frail to manage the rigorous affairs of a large estate.

In 1941 the interior of "Breezemont" was subdivided into apartments, a use it continues to serve in 1981.

"Breezemont" has, since its construction, been a prominent local landmark and, having changed but little on the exterior over the years, continues to be seen as such by the citizens of Charleston and Kanawha County, West Virginia.

## 8. Significance

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

Specific dates c.1905 Builder/Architect Robert M. and Edward S. Conker, Builders

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Breezemont", located atop Watts Hill overlooking much of West Virginia's capital city of Charleston, is significant as the home of Cornelius C. Watts, an individual prominent in the affairs of Kanawha County and West Virginia.<sup>1</sup> It is also significant as a surviving example of vernacular Neo-Classical architecture in the city of Charleston.<sup>2</sup>

### Explanatory Notes

1. "Breezemont" was built c.1905 for Cornelius Clarkson Watts (1848-1930) an individual who contributed quite significantly to the history of both Kanawha County and the state of West Virginia.

Cornelius C. Watts was born in Amherst County, Virginia in 1848. Watts served in the Confederate army during the American Civil War in Colonel John S. Mosby's famed "Mosby's Raiders". After the close of the war in 1865 Watts studied law at the University of Virginia and then, in 1870, moved to Wyoming County, West Virginia where he began the practice of law. In 1872 he was elected prosecuting attorney of Wyoming County, serving in that office 1873-1875. In 1875 Cornelius Watts moved to Charleston, Kanawha County, West Virginia where he became associated in law practice with John E. Kenna (U.S. Representative 1877-83, U.S. Senator 1883-93).

In 1880 Cornelius C. Watts was elected, on the Democratic ticket, Attorney General of West Virginia. He served as West Virginia's Attorney General from March 4, 1881 to March 3, 1885, turning out nine volumes of Supreme Court reports with the assistance of Major O.D. Cook.

On March 22, 1885, shortly after the expiration of his term as Attorney General, Watts represented the state of West Virginia before the United States Supreme Court in the landmark case of Miller, Auditor vs. the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company. The railway company was represented by such noted lawyers as Judge George F. Edmunds of Vermont, Judge William J. Robertson of Virginia and Judge James H. Ferguson. Cornelius C. Watts won the case for the State of West Virginia, including the recovery of \$200,000., and established, in the words of historian George W. Atkinson, "the right to forever tax, not only this railway, but all railroads now and hereafter to be built in this State".

In 1886 Watts was appointed United States Attorney for the District of West Virginia by President Grover Cleveland. Forced to resign that office by President Benjamin Harrison in 1889, Watts was elected to the West Virginia Senate in 1890 to represent Kanawha County. He served in the state Senate from 1891 until mid-1893 when he was re-appointed United State Attorney for West Virginia by President Cleveland. He resigned as U.S. Attorney in 1896 in order to accept the nomination of the Democratic Party for Governor of West Virginia. Cornelius C. Watts put on a spirited gubernatorial campaign, aided

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CONTINUATION SHEET "Breezemont" ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

by incumbent Governor William A. MacCorkle, but lost in the general election to Republican nominee George W. Atkinson, also of Kanawha County. Atkinson's plurality over Watts was a modest 12,070 votes.

After retiring from active political life, "General" Watts (as he was known from his term as Attorney General) resumed his legal and business activities. He was also a prominent sportsman, breeding and racing horses. He maintained a stock of approximately 50 brood mares, stallions, and colts. In 1907 his horse, "General Watts III", won the world's trotting record and held it for three years.

Among Cornelius Watt's many legal and business affairs one of the most significant was his organization of the Coal River and Western Railway Company which opened up rich timber and coal lands in the first decade of the twentieth century.

In 1926 the Charleston Bar Association honored Cornelius C. Watts, along with four other prominent attorneys, as the leaders in the Charleston legal profession for more than fifty years. Cornelius Watts died at "Breezemont" on May 28, 1930 at the age of 82, four months before his old friend and associate William A. MacCorkle.

Of the six children of Cornelius C. Watts and his wife Ella Shumate Watts, the youngest, J. Blackburn Watts, raised at "Breezemont", was also an individual of some prominence. J. Blackburn Watts was elected Prosecuting Attorney of Kanawha County in 1936 and re-elected in 1940, serving 1937 to 1945. In 1944 he was a Democratic candidate for Governor of West Virginia, receiving 8% of the vote and running third in a field of four strong candidates.

2. "Breezemont" was constructed c.1905 for Cornelius C. Watts, atop Watts Hill, on land purchased by Watts in 1883. Watts had formerly maintained a dwelling, or summer residence, on his large estate here until the construction of the stone residence he named "Breezemont" (a name the residence shares with the city street facing the property). Local tradition has it that Watts was prompted to build this imposing edifice by his friendly rivalry with former Governor William A. MacCorkle, whose elegant mansion "Sunrise" (entered on the National Register of Historic Places July 24, 1974) had been finished, overlooking downtown Charleston, in 1905. The house was constructed by prominent local builders Robert M. and Edward S. Conker.

"Breezemont" is a fine example of vernacular Neo-Classical Revival architecture, a style popular among Charleston's prominent families of that era. (For a

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CONTINUATION SHEET "Breezemont" ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

detailed description, see Section 7). At the time of its completion, "Breezemont" was one of Charleston's most elegant and, indeed, most prominent residences, commanding as it did (and continues to) a panoramic view of both Charleston's downtown area and "west side", and being visible to much of Charleston. Since that time, many of the elegant Neo-Classical Revival homes that once graced Charleston have been destroyed. Thus, "Breezemont" stands as one of the few remaining examples of vernacular Neo-Classicism in West Virginia's capital city, and as one of Charleston's most enduring landmarks.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Atkinson, George W. and Gibbons, Alvaro F., Prominent Men of West Virginia, Wheeling W.Va., W.L. Collin, 1890.  
Charleston Directory, 1907. Parkersburg, W.Va., Barnes Publishing, 1907.  
Charleston Gazette, Charleston, W.Va., May 29, 1930.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property one (1) acre

Quadrangle name Charleston, West Virginia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	7
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4	4	4	2	7	0
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4	2	4	6	1	0	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property includes lot #142, Charleston West, Map 15, revised 1979, Office of the Kanawha County Assessor, West Virginia.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael J. Pauley, Historian and Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian  
Historic Preservation Unit  
 organization W.Va. Dept. of Culture and History date January 15, 1981  
Science and Cultural Center  
 street & number Capitol Complex telephone 304/ 348-0244  
 city or town Charleston state West Virginia

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date December 7, 1981

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET "Breezemont"

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

Collins, Rodney S., "History of the General Watts House," Up and Down the Valley, Vol. III, No. 3, Kanawha Valley Historical and Preservation Society, Charleston, W.Va., April, 1977.

Hardesty's West Virginia Counties, Vol. 4, Richwood, W.Va., (1882), 1973.

Kanawha County Deedbooks, Charleston, W.Va.

Laidley, W.S., History of Charleston and Kanawha County, Chicago, Ill., Richmond-Arnold, 1911.

Poss, William R., Political Almanac of West Virginia, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W.Va., 1958.

Watts, Cornelius C., Reports of the Cases Argued in the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, West Virginia Reports, Vol. 19, Second Edition, Charleston, W.Va., 1901.

July checked.  
RSC 5/16/78

CHARLESTON WEST QUADRANGLE  
WEST VIRGINIA - KANAWHA CO.  
75 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

4860' NE  
(BIG CHIMNEY)

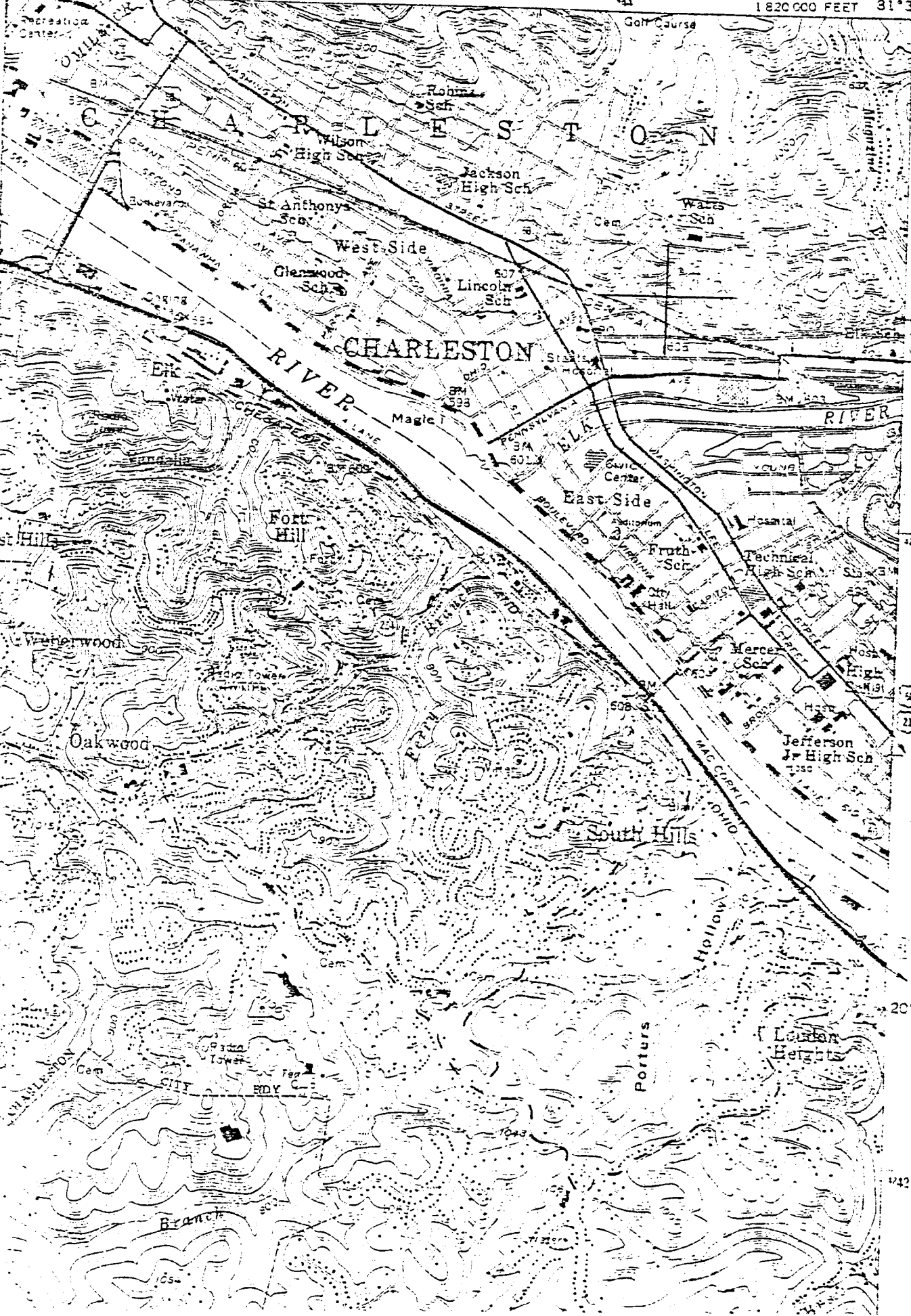
POCAHONTS 9 MI  
SUNSHINE 2 1/2 MI

413

441

1820 000 FEET 31° 37' 30"

38° 22' 30"



500 000  
FEET

0.7 MI  
BIG CHIMNEY  
1.2 MI  
LEAVELLY

425

STATE CAPITOL 1 MI  
WEST VIRGINIA TURNPIKE 4.2 MI

KANAWHA CITY 2 1/2 MI  
WEST VIRGINIA TURNPIKE 3 1/4 MI

20

422



