

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property:

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historic name: Easley House

other name/site number: ____The Breezes____

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2. Location:

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street & number: 1500 College Avenue

not for publication: na_

city/town: Bluefield

vicinity: na

state: WV county: Mercer

Code: 55

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: ____Building____

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
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__2__

__1__ buildings

_____ sites

_____ structures

_____ objects

____2____

__1__ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: __na__

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Resources of South Bluefield, West Virginia.

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. _____ See continuation sheet.

William G. Luman
Signature of certifying official

6/1/92
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
5. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the _____
_____ National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the _____
_____ National Register

_____ removed from the National Register _____

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

=====

6. Function or Use

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Historic: Domestic

Sub: Single dwelling

Current : Domestic

Sub: Single dwelling

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Tudor Revival style

Other Description: ____na_____

Materials: foundation: stone
walls : stoneroof: slate
other ____na_____Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: _____ State _____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : na _____

Areas of Significance: Architecture
Commerce

Period(s) of Significance: 1919-1941

Significant Dates : 1919, 1922.

Significant Person(s): Frank S. Easley

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Architect - Alex B. Mahood
Builders - John Lamaka and Lawrence Carole

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
 X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

na_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested.

na_ previously listed in the National Register

na_ previously determined eligible by the National Register

na_ designated a National Historic Landmark

na_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

na_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

X State historic preservation office

- Other state agency

- Federal agency

X Local government

- University

- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: 1.4 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	17.	479000.	4122470.	B	___	___	___
C	___	___	___	D	___	___	___

_na See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: _na See continuation sheet.

See sketch map dated Nov. 1991, M. Gioulis. Beginning at the north west corner of the intersection of College and Ferndell Avenues rectangle approximately 255 feet by 235.

Boundary Justification: _na See continuation sheet.

The boundaries include the streets that define the house site, the front level lawn area adjacent to College Avenue, the rise that the house sits on, and a short portion of the hill behind the house that serves as a natural boundary.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Michael Gioulis

Organization: N/A

Date: December 1, 1991___

Street & Number: 612 Main Street

Telephone: (304) 765-5716

City or Town:Sutton

State:WV ZIP:26601

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(8-86)

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(Easley House) Page #1

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The Easley house is a stone, two- story, Tudor Revival building located on the corner of College Avenue and Ferndell Street in Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia. It faces south, fronting College Avenue with the side elevation towards Ferndell Street. The house is situated on a rise. The lot slopes from the house to the front and east down to the street level. To the rear and west the lot rises to a hill which is wooded. In front of the house the lawn area on the College Avenue level is flat with a gently sloped landscaped area to the house. The landscaping was accomplished by a firm from North Carolina.

There is a two- story, side gable stone garage which was built at the same time as the house. It is a contributing building. There is also a second larger end gable garage with an office above. This was built ca. 1970 and is considered a non-contributing building.

The exterior of the Easley house is two- and- a- half stories tall with an uncoursed field stone siding. The stone is local and was quarried nearby at the site of the Bluefield College. The massing of the house is irregular with a projecting gable on the east side of the front elevation. This has an irregular pitched gable roof. A similar configuration exists on the rear portion of the house. There are massive stone chimneys on the rear and side elevations. There is a one story wing on the west end that is a conservatory. This has a flat roof. The roof has a moderate overhang.

On the clipped gable end of the front of the house is a half timbered section. There is also half timbering beneath the second floor window on the west bay of the front facade. The entrance bay has a projecting portico with a shed roof and stone arches. The entrance arch has a smooth faced stone surround with a pointed Gothic effect at the top. There are also smooth stone carved spandrel panels recessed into the stone facade at the haunches of the arch.

On the east side elevation there is a recessed exterior porch. This is accessed from the front elevation by a round- headed arch in the stone facade. On the side elevation of the porch there are massive stone piers supporting the roof extension.

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Windows are placed irregularly in the facade. They vary in size and configuration. Most are six- over six- double- hung wood sash.

There are large picture windows with multiple frames in the conservatory and in the front facade of the living room. The entrance door is a heavy painted wood paneled piece with multi-paned sidelights. Over the window in the front conservatory facade is a smooth stone rectangular cartouche with a shield in the center.

The plan of the house is a rectangle that runs east and west with another rectangle at the east end that is at a 45 degree angle to the main block. See the attached copies of the original floor plans for reference. The main block has a central stair hall with a living room and music room flanking it. The dining room is at the intersection of the two blocks and the kitchen and servants quarters in the angled block.

On the second floor the plan is similar. Bedrooms flank the central stair hall and landing and there are bedrooms in the wing.

The third floor is a non-original finished attic, completed ca. 1960.

There is a one story addition in the rear of the house adjacent to the kitchen. This serves as a den and family room. It was added ca. 1970.

Finishes in the house are plaster walls and ceilings with hardwood tongue and groove flooring. There is a wide three piece base mold, a ceiling cove mold, and wide molding with a backband around windows and doors. These are all painted. On the second floor the finishes are similar with the exception of wall- to-wall carpeting. The third floor is the same as the second.

Some interesting interior details include:

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Recessed round headed niches in the music room with sea shell tympanea.

Wood paneled spandrel of the open stair with round arches at the top of the panels. The spindles are turned decorative pieces and the newel post is made of multiple balusters with a curved handrail. The handrail and treads are dark finished hardwood and the remainder of the sections are painted. The same handrail and balustrade detail is used on the second floor.

Most of the lighting fixtures, particularly on the first floor are original to the construction of the house. This is also true of the plumbing fixtures including sinks and bath tubs.

The service pantry between the dining room and kitchen contains built in cabinets and counters.

There are fireplaces in the living room and in the owners bedroom. The living room fireplace has a painted wood mantel with rectangular pilasters that are paneled supporting a wide frieze area. There are urn and garlands in the frieze. The firebox surround is red brick with a flat jack arch over the opening. The bedroom fireplace is similar with a smaller plain frieze.

The bathrooms have original fixtures with ceramic tile walls and floors.

The original garage is a one- story side gable stone faced building. The facade material is the same as the house. The roof is slate. The front elevation has five sections of paneled doors and it is a two- car garage.

The newer garage is a two- story end gable structure with stone first floor facade that matches the house. The second floor is

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stucco and half timbering. There is a double wide garage door opening on the east side of the first floor and single entrance door to the stairs on the west side.

The house and the original garage are considered contributing structures. The newer garage is considered non-contributing.

Landscape features on the grounds include stone stairs at the edge of the house site plateau that lead to the lower level and a walkway to the corner of Ferndell and College. At the corner entrance are a pair of stone piers that originally served as the entrance gate posts.

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The Easley house is significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style of architecture and one of the few Tudor Revival styles that Alex Mahood designed and for its association with Alex Mahood, a prominent West Virginia Architect. It is significant under Criterion A for its association with the period of development of this section of Bluefield. It is significant under Criterion B for it's association with the Easley family, prominent locally and state wide for their association with coal production and the coal industry.

Alex B. Mahood, architect, contributed immensely to Bluefield's development. Mr. Mahood was a noted West Virginia architect and his commissions ranged throughout West Virginia and the surrounding states. He designed many of the public and private structures in the city and his list of commissions is staggering. He was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1888 and studied at the Ecole Des Beaux Arts in Paris. This is where many of the turn-of-the-century American architects learned of the Renaissance Revival and Classical Revival styles prevalent in Europe at the time. Charles F. McKim of McKim Mead and White in Chicago, is perhaps the most famous of the American architects who brought home the European styles, but many others contributed to the proliferation. Mahood is representative of this group. The presence of a professional of this caliber, concentrating his talents in Bluefield and southern West Virginia, is amazing. His influence is seen in many contemporary buildings throughout the state. His prowess is evident on the designs and details of his commissions.

Mahood came to Bluefield in 1912 and set up business. He was the architect for the West Virginia Hotel and for many of the projects in which the Cole Realty stockholders participated. In fact, most of his residential commissions are from stockholders and officers of the board. Many of his major residential works are in the South Bluefield area.

In other portions of the state, his commissions were also impres-

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sive. These include the Women's Dormitory at the West Virginia University in Morgantown, United States Steel Building in Gary, Skyway Drive-In Theater in Brush Fork, the Deco-Style Mercer County Courthouse in Princeton and the Guyan Theater in Logan, as well as a number of coal company offices and stores in the southern West Virginia region.

With the connections that he had and his association with the major industrialists of the era, Mahood was able to influence the architecture of southern West Virginia. This occurred through his effect on the major monied interests and industrialists in the state at the time. Coal was king in these decades and Bluefield and the Pocahontas coal field was one of its fiefdoms. The "court" architect could hardly but influence the masses.

Most of Mahood's residential commissions in Bluefield were in the Neo Classical Revival or Colonial Revival Style of Architecture. A few, including his own home were in the Mediterranean Revival Style. The Tudor Revival Style of Architecture that the Easley house represents is an infrequently used style for Mahood. The other major Tudor Revival houses in the Architectural and Historic Resources of South Bluefield multiple properties documentation is the Thomas House. Though this was an uncommon style for Mahood, his execution is excellent.

The house is an excellent example of the Tudor Revival Style. It contains all of the elements. These include: steep roofs; irregular massing; rusticated facade; half timbered upper facade sections; multipaned windows; slate materials; detailed interior surfaces; and entrance porticoes and conservatory wings.

Construction began on the Easley house in 1919 and was completed three years later in 1922. This spanned the time of one of the "booms" of residential construction in Bluefield. The second decade of the twentieth century saw rapid growth and the city began to take on an "established" appearance. This section of Bluefield was opening up to development. The Country Club and the Country Club Hill section were to soon experience the construction boom. Mahood's Bluefield Club was constructed in 1920

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as well as the adjacent residences in that district. The Easley house is at the base of the hill as one travels to the Country Club and on a major street connecting the downtown to the College and Bluefield, Virginia.

The development in residential construction at this time in Bluefield was centered in the South Bluefield area. The West Virginia Realtor Magazine stated that 402 building permits were issued for new construction in 1922 and 314 in 1921. Most of these were in this section. The population of Bluefield went from 15,292 in 1920 to 19,339 in 1930. This is indicative of the rapid growth of the area. The Easley house is one of the many, though much grander than most, of the larger residences constructed in this period for southern West Virginia's coal barons.

The street running north and south by the property was not open at the time of the building but the city later cut a street and allowed Mrs. Easley to name it. She named it "Ferndell" due to the preponderance of ferns growing there.

Frank Smoot Easley came to Bluefield from Pearisburg, Virginia in the late 1800's with his parents. He attended West Virginia State Normal School in Athens, West Virginia which is now Concord. His great uncle founded Concord College. His career began with the American Smelting and Refining Co. He spent eight years as a fuel agent and manager of the steamship line in New York. He then spent six years as manager of the coke department of the Pocahontas Fuel Co. of New York. He accepted a position with the Bluefield Coal and Coke Co., eventually becoming it's president. He retired at the end of the company's 50th year.

Frank S. Easley was an active community member. He served as chairman of the trustees of Bluefield College, served as president of the local Chamber of Commerce, president of the Bluefield Rotary Club and the Bluefield Country Club. He also was appointed to the first West Virginia Turnpike Commission where he was instrumental in the building of the turnpike. He was on several road committees where he helped to complete several roads in the southern part of West Virginia. He was the vice-president of the

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West Virginia Cole Realty Co. which was responsible for the erection of the West Virginia Hotel in downtown Bluefield and many of the residential developments in South Bluefield. He also assisted in bringing Bluefield College to Bluefield in 1919 and served as chairman of the trustees.

In his capacity with the Bluefield Coal and Coke Co. he secured 5,467 acres of land in McDowell County which operated under the name of the Southern Coal Co. in Brandshaw, WV. He was significant in the coal industry of the region through his control of the Bluefield Coal and Coke Co. This is illustrated by his involvement with the Bramwell Accident Insurance Company. This company, formed in 1896, was to provide insurance at a low cost to men at the Flat Top Field and give income during idle periods. These were lofty ideals at this time. They in essence provided unemployment insurance on a private level. Of course, this service was not provided free. The miners paid premiums based on 3 levels of benefits. Policy "A" provided five dollars per work for a monthly premium of one dollar. "B" provided three dollars per week for a monthly fee of fifty cents. "C" provided ten dollars per week and a ten dollar death benefit for two dollars per month. The existence of such an enterprise illustrates the control that the mining companies exerted over the life of the region.

In summary, the Easley house exhibits the characteristics of a style book copy of the Tudor Revival Style of Architecture. Alex Mahood's involvement with this house is typical of his association with all of the influential client base in Bluefield and the region. Through this base he influenced and controlled a major portion of the architectural activity of these customers as well as their companies such as the coal stores etc. The construction of such a grand house in the vicinity of the Country Club Hill and in South Bluefield exhibits the influence on residential development to come in this decade in the city. And Frank S. Easley's involvement as president and chairman of coal companies, banks, institutions, and other social and corporate entities in the area indicates his status as a prominent person in the econo-

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my of coal from the Pocahontas coal field, which is analogous to saying he was influential in the development of the State through it's coal industry.

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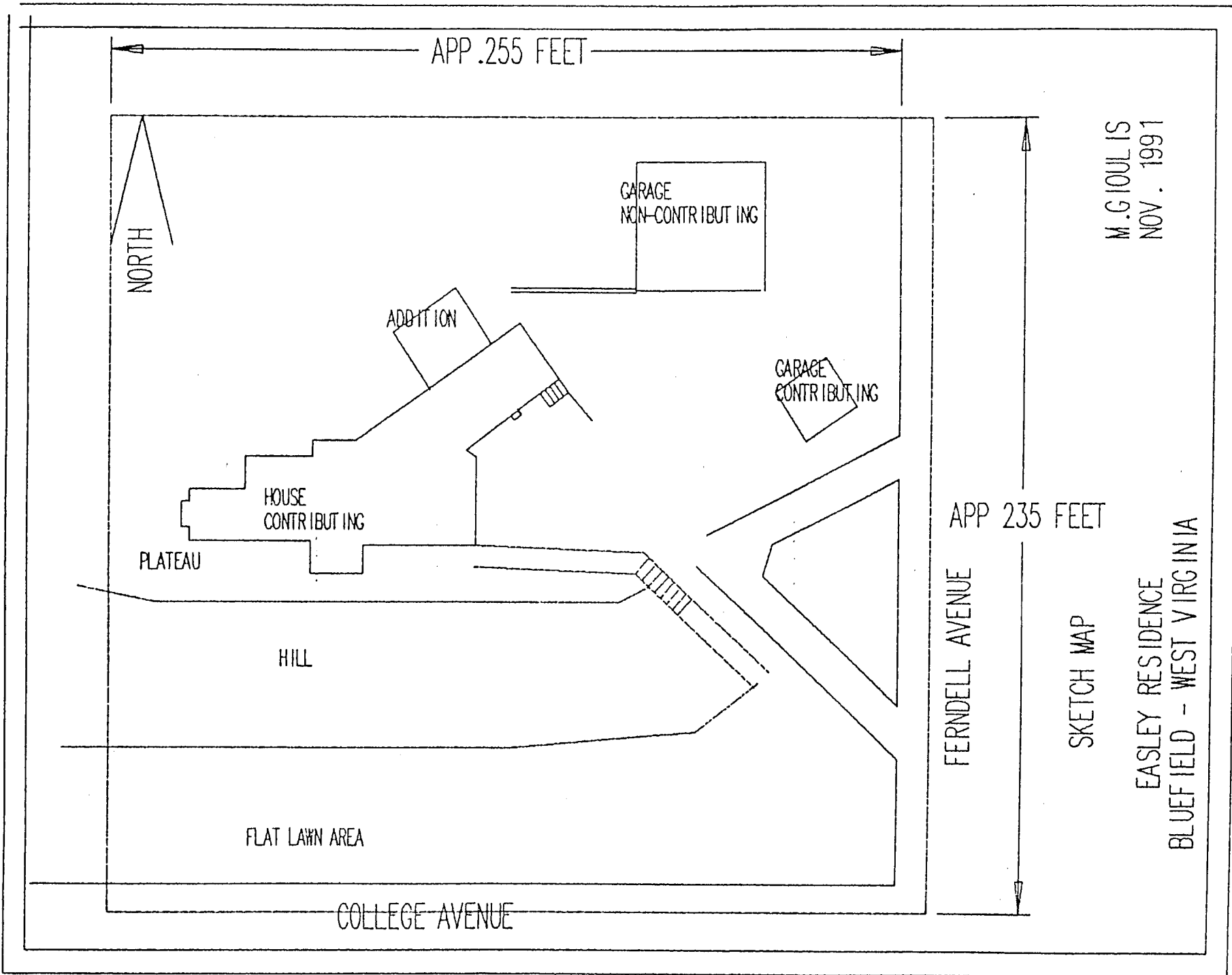
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN FOR THE HOME OF
MR. AND MRS. FRANK S. EASLEY
1500 COLLEGE AVE.
BLUFFFIELD, W. VA. 24701

