

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 6/6/7
NRHP draft

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a) Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name W.N. Seay House
other names/site number 103-5054

2. Location

street & number 245 West 26th Street not for publication n/a
city or town City of Buena Vista vicinity n/a
state Virginia county Independent City code 530 zip code 24416

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] June 29, 2007
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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 the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

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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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

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6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling
 Domestic garage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling
 Domestic garage

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 Late Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
roof metal
walls wood
other brick

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

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8. Statement of Significance

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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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1889 – c.1900

Significant Dates 1889

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
<u>17 645074 4178405</u>	2 <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	3 <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	4 <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Michael J. Pulice, Architectural Historian and John R. Kern, Historian
 organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Roanoke Regional Office date February, 2007
 street & number 1030 Penmar Ave. SE telephone 540-857-7586
 city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mrs. Clelon Mason
 street & number 245 W. 26th St. telephone 540-261-2670
 city or town Buena Vista state VA zip code 24416

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 1

7. Description Summary and Site:

Built in 1889, the W.N. Seay House occupies a prominent position overlooking the City of Buena Vista, in eastern Rockbridge County, Virginia. From atop a small ridge that is perhaps the highest elevation within town limits, this 2-story Victorian is due west of Southern Virginia University (formerly Southern Seminary College), on West 26th Street. Left with just a single lot of less than one acre, campus buildings are now within several hundred feet of this prominent house that once served the funerary and furniture needs of the City. Sharing the small lot is also a garage/utility building to the NW of the house.

Detailed Description:

The W. N. Seay House is a handsome, relatively large 2-story, weatherboarded balloon-frame Victorian dwelling featuring an assortment of decorative elements that were popular at the time it was constructed, in 1889. It has a random fieldstone foundation, irregular T-footprint and complex interior plan, and a roof of two main gabled sections connected at right angles, covered with hand-crimped standing seam tin. Two brick chimneys with corbelled caps emerge from the center of the roof at the intersecting gables. A bracketed cornice surrounds the house with a friezeboard of pointed shingles. An additional gable appears on the west elevation, with a six-light, fixed-sash, triangular-headed window in the gable, identical to the window in the east gable end. The principal facade has a highly decorated, one-story, three-bay porch with turned, bracketed posts and jig-sawn balustrade. The porch has its own pointed shingle cornice, but without brackets. A very similar back porch wraps around the northeast corner of the house. Both porches have shallow hipped, standing seam roofs. The principal elevation also has two two-story polygonal bays— one in the front-gabled section and one at the east end of the side-gabled section— each with four slender, one-over-one, double-hung sash at each floor level, and paneled skirts below each set of windows and shingle cornices at both levels. The primary entrance has divided sidelights and lead-camed, abstract-patterned, stained-glass transom light. The other windows in the house are mostly paired, slender one-over-one sash like those in the polygonal bays, but there are two tall four-over-four double-hung wood sash in the east end of the house. All windows appear to retain original wood sash with intact surrounds.

The interior of the house features darkened pine woodwork, symmetrical moldings with paterae corner blocks, tall base moldings, multi-paneled doors with operable lighted transoms, and main stair in the central hall, with turned balusters and heavy newel posts on each floor. The stair rail balusters are attached to the stair ends, rather than being mortised into the treads, partially obscuring the carved scrollwork on the stringer. There is a secondary winder stair in a corner of the rear ell. The handrail has square, unturned balusters and newel post. French doors with fifteen panes of glass each lead from the stair hall to the dining room. The first floor fireplaces have embossed cast iron covers and intact original mantels. Like the house exterior, the interior possesses excellent integrity, with an unaltered floor plan,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 2

intact plaster walls and flooring, and preserved woodwork. Much of the woodwork retains its faux graining.

The c. 1900 garage/utility building sits 40-50 feet off the NW corner of the house. It is constructed of light framing clad in board-and-batten. It is square in plan, with a shallow pyramidal standing seam metal roof. It has a single garage bay with folding batten doors, but has a divided interior accessed via different doors-- there are two single leaf doors on the west elevation and a small window near the NW corner. Like the house, the garage demonstrates excellent integrity.

The Seay House is located within close proximity to the Southern Virginia University campus (formerly Southern Seminary College) which is currently undergoing a period of growth and expansion. This led them to the purchase and razing (in 2005) of a fine Victorian House, not unlike the Seay House, that was located between the campus and the Seay House.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 3

8. Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

W. N. Seay helped found Buena Vista City, where he established a planing mill in the late 1880s, purchased his house in 1890, and subsequently operated a funeral business and a furniture store. Funerary records and account books survive to document his business interests from 1907 to 1915. Seay served on the Buena Vista City Council from the time of its formation in 1892 and thereafter for twenty-two years. Active in the local Methodist Church, he also joined a number of fraternal orders. At his death in 1939 the *Buena Vista News* recognized Seay for his fifty years of civic leadership.

Justification of Criteria

The Seay House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture because of its excellent state of preservation, as well as its high quality of design and construction, incorporating unique and spirited Victorian style decorative elements. Houses of its type are quite rare in the area. The period of significance covers the dates of construction from 1889 (house) to c. 1900 (garage).

Acknowledgements

Francis Lynn, a resident of Buena Vista, provided substantial assistance with the historic context found in Section Eight of this document. Thomas Kastner, former president of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), Rockbridge County Chapter, brought the Seay House to the attention of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, which led to this nomination.

Historical Background

Born in Amherst County, Virginia, in 1850, William N. Seay moved to Rockbridge County in 1886. At the invitation of Buena Vista founder B. C. Moomaw, Seay selected fourteen acres from what is now Ridge Street to Factory Street in what is now Buena Vista City. There he established a planing mill and soon operated businesses as a dealer in lumber, a builder, and an undertaker. By 1890 he had purchased a house on Ridge Street immediately west of what would become Southern Seminary, now Southern Virginia University. By 1891 he had sold the planing mill and had devoted himself to his furniture and undertaking businesses.¹

Seay served on the Buena Vista town council for twenty-two years following establishment of the town in 1889 and incorporation of the city in 1892. After the land boom from 1889 to 1891, Seay apparently found himself overextended financially. The *Buena Vista Advocate* of October 30, 1891, reported that Seay's seven lots east of his residence, valued in total at \$1,000, and his lots and improvements on the Seay block on Beech Street, valued at \$10,500, were under assignment to attorney O. D. Batchelor, as

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 4

was Seay's personal property, including a stock of furniture valued at \$1,932.80 and coffins, fixtures, and two hearses valued at \$1,109.88.

Seay survived his financial difficulties and kept his house, valued at \$5,000 in 1890, and his undertaking business. The 1900 manuscript census for Buena Vista lists Seay as an undertaker and head of a household including wife Annie, son carpenter Walter W., daughter and teacher Maud L., son Homer H., and grandson Douglass W. The 1910 census lists Seay as a furniture dealer and undertaker, indicating that he had reestablished his furniture business by that date.

When the Seay House was purchased by Mrs. Clelon Mason and her late husband in 1964, they found piles of funerary and furniture store records in the attic. These primary source materials, donated to the Buena Vista Historical Society and archived at the Buena Vista Baptist Church office, provide detailed information on W. N. Seay's conduct of business and membership in various fraternal organizations from 1907 to 1914. In 1907 and 1908 Seay bought a coffin from Rankin Coffin & Casket Co. for \$32.50 and charged Mrs. Hannah Bragg \$40.00 for her husband's coffin. An envelope from about that date was printed "W. N. Seay & Son, The Furniture People, Everything to Furnish the Home, corner of Sycamore Ave. and 21st Street." An undated copy of a photograph from the account records collection shows a two-story brick commercial building with signage "W. N. Seay & Son FURNITURE" over the corner entrance of the 10-bay by 3-bay structure. The longer 10-bay façade probably faced Sycamore Avenue, while the 3-bay façade probably faced 21st Street. On another undated envelope was printed "W. N. Seay & Son, Furniture, Phone 33, Picture Frames Made to Order, Pictures and Easels, Stoves, Dishes, Jardiniers. . . ."

Bank statements from 1913 to 1915 detail the operations of Seay's undertaking business, including frequent expenditures for caskets, embalming fluid, flowers from Fallon Florist in Lynchburg, tombstones from J. H. Marsteller of Roanoke, and labor for gravedigging and hauling corpses and tombstones.² Also recorded are monthly dues paid for membership in various fraternal organizations: the

Order of the Golden Seal,³ the International Order of Odd Fellows,⁴ and Redmen.⁵

The *Buena Vista News* interviewed Seay on May 11, 1928 and described him as "Buena Vista's oldest citizen." The article noted Seay's twenty-two years of service on the Buena Vista town and city council and his forty-two years of service as a steward of St. John's Methodist Church. The story also praised Seay's progressive support of new state roads into Buena Vista, an interest perhaps reflecting his decision to move in 1886 to what would become Buena Vista because of the arrival by that time of the Chesapeake & Ohio and the Norfolk & Western railroads. When Seay died at eighty-eight, his *Buena Vista News* obituary, printed July 7, 1939, again mentioned his charter membership in St. John's Methodist Church and his many years of service on the Buena Vista City Council. The obituary cited Seay's membership in fraternal orders: the Odd Fellows, the Redmen, and the Junior Order of United American Mechanics.⁶ In summation, the obituary highlighted William Nelson Seay's life

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section 8 Page 5

accomplishments for over half a century in Buena Vista as a successful businessman in general manufacturing and undertaking and as an active civic and church leader.

Endnotes

1. Buena Vista Deed Book 54, p. 476, January 4, 1890. *Buena Vista Advocate*, January and February 1891; in Francis W. Lynn, editor, *Buena Vista: The Bud Not Yet Blossomed*, Historical Commemorative Booklet, Buena Vista Centennial 1892-1992, printed by the News-Gazette, Lexington, Virginia, 1992.
2. Ambrose Richardson, identified by Francis Lynn (personal communication, December 20, 2006) as a black laborer, received \$2.00 for digging a grave in 1914.
3. The Order of the Golden Seal, perhaps related to the Order of the Golden Dawn, was created in the late 1800s and was discontinued in the early 1900s. www.hermeticgoldendawn.org
4. Odd Fellows Lodges began in America around 1818 and expanded west in the late 1840s. www.ioof.org
5. Redmen or Red Men fraternal organizations began in America in the mid-1760s. www.redmen.org
6. Founded in 1853 in Philadelphia, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics was another nativist pre-Civil War organization like the Redmen. www.jrouam.com.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section 9, 10 Page 6

9. Bibliographical References

Lynn, Francis W., editor. *Buena Vista: The Bud Not Yet Blossomed*. Historical and Commemorative Booklet, Buena Vista Centennial, 1892-1992. Buena Vista, Virginia. Printed by the News-Gazette, Lexington, Virginia, 1992.

Lynn, Francis W. Personal communication, December 20, 2006, including photocopies of numerous newspaper articles, deed references, and an introduction to the W. N. Seay Account Books. Seay, William N. Account Books, 1907-1915. Buena Vista Historical Society. Buena Vista Baptist Church office.

U.S. Manuscript Census, Population, Buena Vista, Virginia, 1900, 1910.

10. Geographical References

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel boundary includes the house and garage, the only buildings on the property, and the curtilage around the buildings. It is referred to as map/tax parcel number 27-1-5-25-11 with a description listed in the tax records as ½ of 11, 12, and 19; and lots 13, 17, 18; and addressed as 245 West 26th Street in the City of Buena Vista, Virginia. The last deed book reference is 29, page 243.

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel boundary includes most of the original parcel belonging to W.N. Seay, as shown on an 1890 map of the City of Buena Vista.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**W.N. Seay House
Buena Vista, Virginia**

Section Photographs Page 7

Photographs

W. N. Seay House (DHR #103-5054)

City of Buena Vista, Virginia

Photographer: Michael Pulice

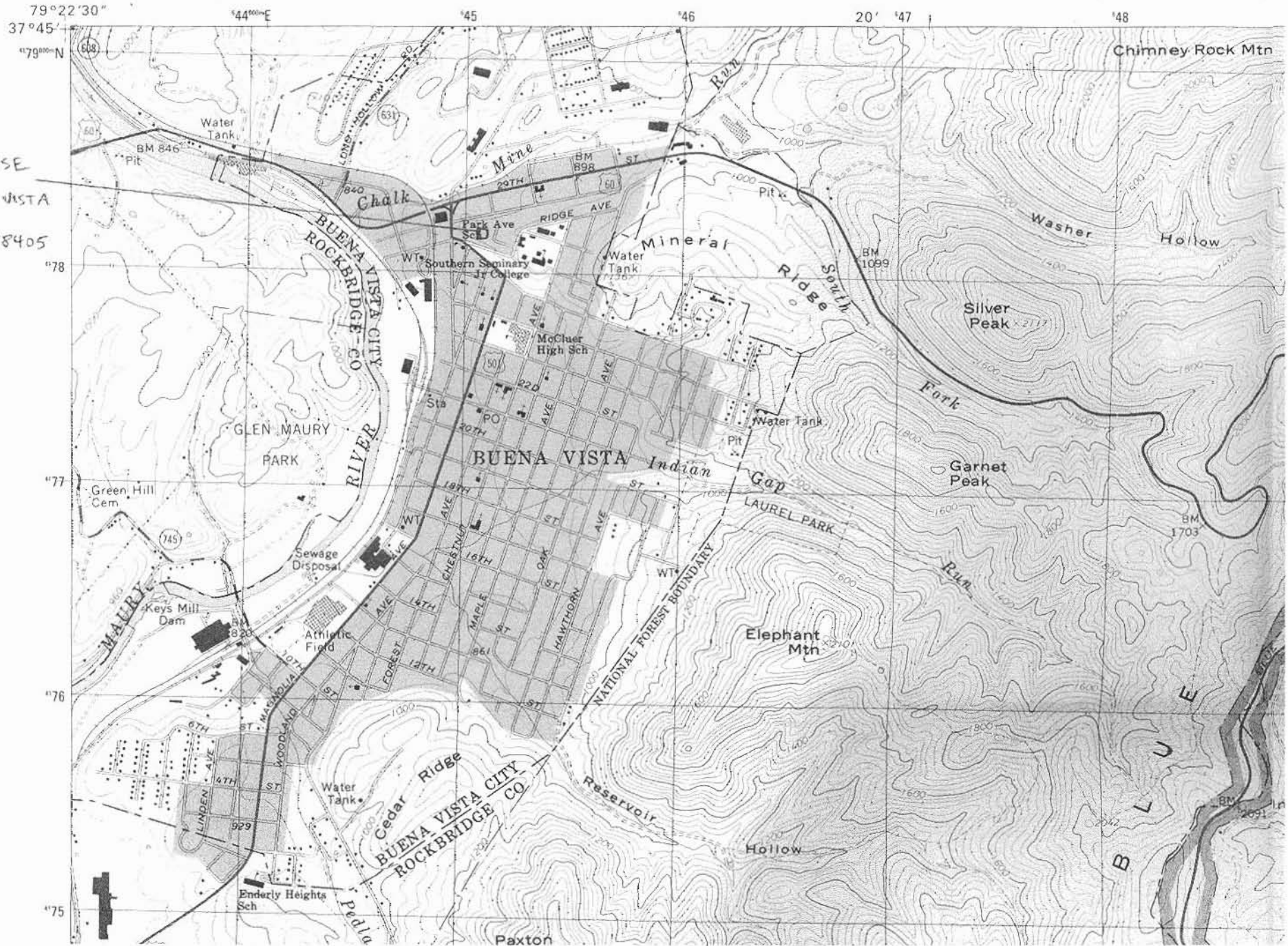
Date: August 2006

1. W.N. Seay House, exterior, front (south) elevation
2. W.N. Seay House, exterior, side (east) elevation
3. W.N. Seay House, exterior, side (west) elevation
4. W.N. Seay House, exterior, side (west) porch
5. W.N. Seay House, interior, dining room
6. W.N. Seay House, interior, main stair
7. W.N. Seay House, interior, kitchen door
8. W.N. Seay House, interior, front entrance
9. W.N. Seay House, garage, facing north



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U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DEPARTMENT OF MINES, MASSACHUSETTS



W.N. SEAY HOUSE
CITY OF BUENA VISTA
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