



**North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State Historic Preservation Office**

Peter B. Sandbeck, Administrator

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor  
Linda A. Carlisle, Secretary  
Jeffrey J. Crow, Deputy Secretary

Office of Archives and History  
Division of Historical Resources  
David Brook, Director

September 14, 2009

Ms. C. LeAnn Pegram  
Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission  
P.O. Box 2511  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102

Re: Revocation of Local Historic Landmark Ordinance for the  
River John Conrad House, Forsyth County

Dear Ms. Pegram:

The matter of the proposed revocation of the landmark ordinance for the River John Conrad House was recently brought to my attention by my staff. We consider any potential revocation of landmark status to be a very serious matter. Consequently, I met with Alta Cassady, our staff member responsible for our coordination with local commissions, to review our handling of your submittal and our letter of June 29, 2009.

I regret to inform you that I learned from Ms. Cassady that our normal internal procedures were not followed properly in carrying out our review. As a result, our letter of June 29 does not present an accurate view of our advisory opinion on the proposed revocation of landmark status for the Conrad House. Due to the tight time frame and staff error, your submittal was not reviewed by our survey specialist assigned to Forsyth County, as is required by our in-house review procedure. We require this extra layer of review to ensure that our comments are made by someone who is familiar with the architectural resources and context of the subject property or properties. In this instance, your submittal should have been reviewed by Ann Swallow, our National Register coordinator, prior to our sending our advisory opinion.

In an effort to correct this oversight, I shared your submittal with Ann Swallow and with Claudia Brown, who heads our architectural survey and National Register program. Each looked over all the materials contained in your submittal and presented their findings to me for transmittal to you and the members of your commission.

I realize that this will be coming to you after your own commission already reviewed and voted upon this matter, and therefore may be of limited value at this time. But I wish to have the record show that in our opinion, the materials we reviewed in your submittal presented insufficient evidence to support the revocation of landmark status for the River John Conrad House.

We find that the majority of the features identified in the 1981 landmark designation documentation remain intact or largely intact. There certainly have been changes made to the interior plan and woodwork, as discussed in Ms. Van Dolsen's report. In a similar vein, exterior changes were made by the Gray family to restore the

house to its early 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance, with the approval of the commission at that time. These were made under the guidance of local experts and certainly should be considered an acceptable treatment for this local landmark.

Taken together, these changes do not outweigh the fact that the house retains its most important character-defining features, including its original exterior form and heavy-timber framing, chimneys, fenestration, and setting. Anyone viewing the house as it now stands, in its present setting, can still fully appreciate that this imposing house was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for a locally prominent citizen of significant means. It reads very clearly as a historic house, one of only a very few remaining from that period in rural Forsyth County.

Ultimately, it is the preservation of the house in its entirety—its overall appearance, form, site integrity and feeling—and not just the interiors, which provides the basis for the principle of public benefit underlying landmark designation. We believe the River John Conrad House continues to present in large measure those characteristics for which it was initially designated as a local landmark.

Please accept my apologies for this reversal of the opinion issued by mistake in our June 29 letter, and let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter B. Sandbeck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter B. Sandbeck, Administrator  
State Historic Preservation Office