

LENOX SPRING

Hendersonville, North Carolina

Landmark Designation Report

Prepared by

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November 10, 2023 (draft)

**Local Landmark Designation Report
LENOX SPRING
Hendersonville, North Carolina**

NAME OF PROPERTY

Lenox Spring

NAME AND ADDRESS OF CURRENT PROPERTY OWNER

City of Hendersonville

LOCATION OF PROPERTY, LEGAL DESCRIPTION, NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS

The property is located at the corner of S. Whitted Street and Lennox Park Drive. See boundary map for the full legal boundaries. Deed Book 239, p. 216 also has a full legal description. The property is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

AD VALOREM TAX APPRAISAL

\$46,900.00

JUSTIFICATION OF LAND PROPOSED TO BE DESIGNATED

The boundary as shown on the accompanying maps includes all of the land historically associated with the spring, as shown on the historic plat (Henderson County Plat Book B, p. 252).

PROPERTY INCLUDED IN DESIGNATION AND BOUNDARY

The property included in the designation report is shown on the accompanying tax map.

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION

ca. 1917

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

ca. 1917 – ca. 1970

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Lenox Spring, with a period of significance of ca. 1917 – ca. 1970, dates from ca. 1917 when the surrounding Lenox Park was platted and developed by real estate developer F. A. Sumner. While the spring itself dates to ancient times, the stonework construction around the spring, complete with seating, along with stairs to the homes located on the hill above the springs, made Lenox Spring more accessible to both locals and summer visitors. The spring is important for its association with the tourism industry in Hendersonville, but also for its importance to local people who also “took the waters”. The water was bottled at the source and shipped all over the southeast due to its reputation for medicinal properties. The City of Hendersonville purchased the spring in 1942 and created a public park, which it has remained until the present day. The spring continued to serve the local and visiting community of Hendersonville until 1970 when the spring itself was closed due to concerns over potability of the water. In addition, the stone construction around the spring is a notable, intact landscape architectural feature of the property which is worthy of preservation.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Lenox Spring is located within a park setting on a triangular-shape lot that is bordered on the north by Lennox Park Drive and on the east by South Whitted Street. To the south and west of the park are additional residential lots. The easternmost two-thirds of the park lot is a flat, grassy area with a concrete sidewalk running along South Whitted Street. Lenox Spring is the only landscape feature in the park, and is located towards the rear, or west side of the lot, surrounded by woods on three sides. Just off the park boundary, to the south of the spring, are the remains of a staircase constructed of cut granite blocks with grapevine mortar joints. A portion of this staircase is gone, but originally it extended all the way up the hillside to the lots above the spring. To the east and west of the stairs there appears to be a stone retaining wall, but this is currently covered with vines. Historically these stairs served as access to the spring from the houses on the hill. It does not appear that this staircase is currently part of the park property but remains as part of the lot to the southwest of the spring, 601 S. Whitted Street.

Lenox Spring is surrounded by a semi-circular cut granite stone wall, approximately five courses in height, with flush mortar joints. Set inside this wall is a semi-circular concrete seating area. This stonework dates from ca. 1917 – 1922, when the owner F. A. Sumner rebuilt portions due to some damage. The spring itself is set within a concrete area in front of the seating area and is presently covered by a metal grate, which was placed there by the city ca. 1970. Outside of the semi-circular area around the spring is a larger concrete area which is delineated by a lower retaining wall of the same cut granite stones with flush mortar joints, and approximately three courses in height. Along the east wall and wrapping around to the north and south sides of this section is a u-shaped low seating area with a concrete bench. On the north and south ends of this area are several concrete steps leading down to the spring and seating areas.

Based on documentary photos, the park was delineated by a wood picket fence, with stone pillars of cut concrete block with grapevine mortar joints marking the entry at the corner of South Whitted and Lennox Park Drive. Between these pillars was a wood sign with “Lenox Spring, Welcome” painted on the cross members at the top. At the rear of the lot there was another wood sign painted with “Please Use But Don’t Destroy” painted on the top cross member. These features are no longer present.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The history of Lenox Spring is tied directly to the history of Hendersonville as a popular tourist destination. Related to the advent of tourism as a major economic force in the town was the development of the railroad. While early visitors from the lowcountry of South Carolina made the trek up the mountain in the summers to the Flat Rock area of Henderson County prior to the railroad, it was access to rail transportation that drove the boom in tourism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As early as the 1880s, the construction of the French Broad Valley Railroad was begun, with the goal being to connect Hendersonville and Brevard.

This construction was halted for a time, but by 1891 the rail line, then under the ownership of the Hendersonville and Brevard Railway, began operations. The line operated for a short time, but a trestle collapse over the French Broad River between Horse Shoe and Etowah shut the line down for a while. The line officially reopened on October 25, 1895, but was in financial trouble and was bought by the Transylvania Railroad Company, formed by Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania investors, in March 1899. Investors in the rail line knew it was located close to the Southern Railway routes from Spartanburg, South Carolina and had great potential not only for tourism but for the lumber industry in western North

Carolina.¹ This company extended the line from Brevard to the development of Lake Toxaway, with stops including Hendersonville, Yale, Horse Shoe, Etowah, Blantyre Penrose, Davidson River, Pisgah Forest, Brevard, Selica, Cherryfield, Calvert, Rosman, Quebec, and Lake Toxaway. In the summer this rail line operated four passenger cars daily, some of which were private cars chartered by wealthy summer visitors. Southern Railroad bought the Transylvania Railroad Company line in 1906, which it continued to operate until 2002 (as Norfolk Southern beginning in 1982).²

It was during this boom in the tourism industry that the development of the Lenox Park subdivision came into being. F. A. Sumner, an Asheville, North Carolina resident and real estate developer originally from Spartanburg, South Carolina purchased for \$75,000 what was then platted as Columbia Park, Section 2, in Hendersonville, in 1917. It was noted in newspaper articles that Mr. Sumner "...intends making some big improvements on the property...".³ Sumner developed many areas of Hendersonville as well as Asheville. Lenox Park, operating as the Hendersonville Development Company, platted the subdivision in March 1917.⁴ It was bounded by Palmetto Avenue (now Lennox Park Drive) on the north, Hebron Street on the south, and South Whitted Street on the east. Within this tract was the current triangular-shaped lot noted as the "spring tract". Prior to this time the land was owned by Dr. W. D. Whitted. Dr. Whitted was a physician, druggist, and surgeon and was the first to practice medicine in Hendersonville.⁵ For many years the spring was known as Whitted's Spring, and in addition to the medicinal qualities of the water there, the land was thought by the Cherokee to be sacred, and that "...those who drank the waters from the spring would be cured of all their pains and sicknesses..."

The triangular-shaped lot designated on the Lenox Park plat as the "spring tract", was developed by Sumner. Under his ownership, Sumner, in April 1918, installed the steps "...from the Whitted spring to the top of the hill immediately in the rear of the spring. He is also building concrete walks and making other improvements around the spring...".⁶ In May of 1918, Sumner continued to make improvements around the spring, including "...flights of stone and concrete steps from the rear of the spring to the street that comes around the top of the hill some distance above the spring...".⁷ As Sumner completed his Lenox Park subdivision and the improvements to the spring, he noted publicly in March of 1919 that "...there was little doubt that this section would have more tourists during the coming summer than have ever before come here in a single season...".⁸ Later that same year, towards the end of the summer, in August of 1919, the newspaper reported that "...hundreds of people have visited and drank water from Lenox park spring during the past sixty days...". People would approach from all directions, bringing with them some type of container to carry the water back with them. Individuals also drove up in automobiles to stop at the spring to drink. The spring had undergone great improvement by "...the removal of all loose earth from where the water comes up out of the crevices or the rocks and crushed stone filled in, so that when the water comes gushing through the crevices in the large rocks it strokes

¹ "Pittsburgh Capital". *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*. March 18, 1899.

² <https://www.etowahnheritage.org/the-railroad> Accessed November 1, 2023.

³ "Observer Comments on the Sale of Columbia Park and Board of Trade Meeting", *The Hendersonville Visitor*, January 9, 1917.

⁴ Henderson County Plat Book B, p. 252 (formerly Plat Book 3, p. 93).

⁵ Fizsimmons, Frank L. *From the Banks of the Oklawaha*, Hendersonville, North Carolina: Golden Glow Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 157-158.

⁶ "Improving Lenox Park", *French Broad Hustler*, April 18, 1918.

⁷ Notice, *The Western North Carolina Times*, May 31, 1918. A 2020 deed notes that the steps from the spring remain as part of the property at 601 S. Whitted Street..."it is understood that the warranties in this deed do not apply to so much of the stone stairway as it is included in this boundary..."

⁸ Notice, *The Western North Carolina Times*, March 21, 1919.

same into the basin which holds the water until it rises above the outlet which is through a channel cut in stone...". By this time a wall of concrete and stone had been built around the spring that provided seating to visitors while they drank the cool water. The spring was considered to be "...an asset of much value to the people residing in Lenox park and vicinity, especially to those who are unable to get ice, and to people who prefer good, pure spring water to well or city water. The water of this spring is said to provide medicinal properties of much value...".⁹ Lenox Spring continued to be used by visitors and locals into the 1920s and beyond. As noted in newspaper accounts in July 1920, "...the big, bold spring in Lenox Park is being well patronized these hot days. It is estimated that 2000 people visited and drank of its pure, ice-cold waters Wednesday. And the owner estimates that at least 500 gallons of water are carried away from the spring each day, by people living in different sections of the city...". An ad for Lenox Park in August 1920 noted the lots still available for sale were "...close to the famous Lenox Park Springs, so well known to thousands...".¹⁰

Some of the stonework around the spring was rebuilt in May of 1922 by Sumner. Apparently a tree had disturbed the integrity of the rockwork around the spring, and new masonry was built around "...around the entire inclosure [enclosure] around the spring...".¹¹ Soon after this, Sumner sold the remaining twenty vacant Lenox Park lots above the spring to P. L. Wright and A. R. Hanson, retaining ownership of the spring but allowing the new owners access. One lot, noted as "top of the hill" on the 1917 plat was sold by Wright and Hanson to W. W. Watt, a Charlotte businessman and owner of Southern Hardware Company. Watt built a Colonial Revival home on this lot, which no longer exists.¹² Sumner did eventually sell his interest in the spring to S. I. Depew and wife Mildred Depew of Broward County, Florida sometime before 1927. Depew then sold the spring property along with other lots in Lenox Spring to W. H. Anderson and T. H. Gentry of Clarendon County, South Carolina in October 1927.¹³ A portion of these lands were then sold by W. H. Anderson and wife, E. T. Anderson, Mary G. Sprott and husband C. W. Sprott, and J. H. Gentry and wife Vera M. Gentry to the City of Hendersonville in 1942 for the formation of Lenox Park. Mention is also made in this deed of a plat surveyed by Howard B. Miller dated February 3, 1942, but to date this has not been located.¹⁴ The City still retains ownership of the original "spring tract". The deed describes where the existing stone columns were located, with the beginning point of the property being "...eighteen feet from the exact center of the north stone column at the entrance to Lenox Spring, said column located about twenty feet southwest of the intersection of the west margin of Whitted Street and the south margin of Palmetto Avenue (now Lennox Park Drive). It is not known when the entry pillars and fence as shown in the documentary photos were torn down, but it is the intention of the City of Hendersonville to replace these.

Tourists were one of the largest groups who drank from the mineral waters at Lenox Spring. But the local community also drank the water, from the early days of the spring well into the late twentieth century. John Gibbs, who grew up in the neighborhood in the 1950s and 1960s remembers that local children would meet up there periodically, and they would get a drink from the spring. Families would gather at times for picnics in the park. He remembers that tourists would bring clear glass jugs to the

⁹ "Lenox Park Spring", *The Western North Carolina Times*, August 15, 1919.

¹⁰ "Lenox Park", *The Times-News*, August 20, 1920.

¹¹ "New Rock Masonry is Built Around Spring at Lenox Park", *The News of Henderson County*, May 2, 1922.

¹² "Wright and Hanson Buy Lenox Park", *The News of Henderson County*, June 23, 1922. No mention is made about the wood picket fence around the perimeter of the park being constructed by Sumner. It is possible this is something the City built when they purchased the property in 1942.

¹³ Henderson County Deed Book 175, p. 503.

¹⁴ Henderson County Deed Book 239, p. 216.

springs and fill them. The city closed the spring sometime before 1970, citing that the water was no longer potable. John Gibbs also remembered other privately owned springs around Hendersonville, but Lenox Spring, during his lifetime, was a public park that was accessible to everyone.¹⁵

Lenox Spring was not the only spring in the Hendersonville area. The ancient geology of the mountains created an abundance of these mineral-rich springs, and when they were discovered, as Lenox Spring was, they were often marketed to locals and summer visitors to “take the waters”. Several of these springs are known, including Lenox, Crystal Spring and Basin Spring in Laurel Park, and Poinsett Spring near Saluda.¹⁶ Crystal Spring opened in Laurel Park in 1909, and was accessible to the public. Basin Spring was privately owned, but was open for visitors and was used by many at summer dinners served right by the spring.¹⁷ Of these, it appears that only Lenox and Crystal Spring remain active. Crystal Spring is located on Crystal Spring Drive. The spring, denoted by a historic marker, remains, as does the arched stone covering, wall, and rocky, moss-covered hillside. Originally there was a “dummy line” rail that extended up the hill into Laurel Park where there was a lookout tower, but this no longer exists. Lenox Spring was also privately owned until 1942, but was accessible to all as was Crystal Spring. The waters from Lenox Spring were bottled and shipped via rail all over the southeast because of its healing properties. It is only in recent years that the spring itself has been covered over by a metal grate so that access is no longer available to the local community. Of the numerous springs in the area, Lenox Spring and Crystal Spring were the most popular, being regularly visited by both locals and summer visitors.

INTEGRITY

Lenox Spring retains a great deal of integrity in regards to setting, location, workmanship and historic context. The spring remains within the historic setting where it was first developed for use by local people and summer visitors. The stonework around the spring remains as it was originally, with the only exception being that the spring waters are covered by a metal grate for public safety purposes. While the original wood picket fence and stone entry posts are gone, it is the intention of the City of Hendersonville to restore those based on historic photos. The stone steps which lead from the spring up the hill to the adjacent property at the southwest boundary are also intact, including the granite piers with grapevine mortar joints and what appears to be stone retaining walls which are currently covered by vegetation. While the steps do not appear to be and were not historically part of the park boundary as shown in this designation report, based on deed records and historic photos of the park and spring, they were likely constructed at the same time as the stonework at the entry to the park by the same stonemasons. These steps tell part of the story of the construction of the spring and access to the springs from the adjoining neighborhood. These can be used as a guide for the reconstruction of the entry piers.

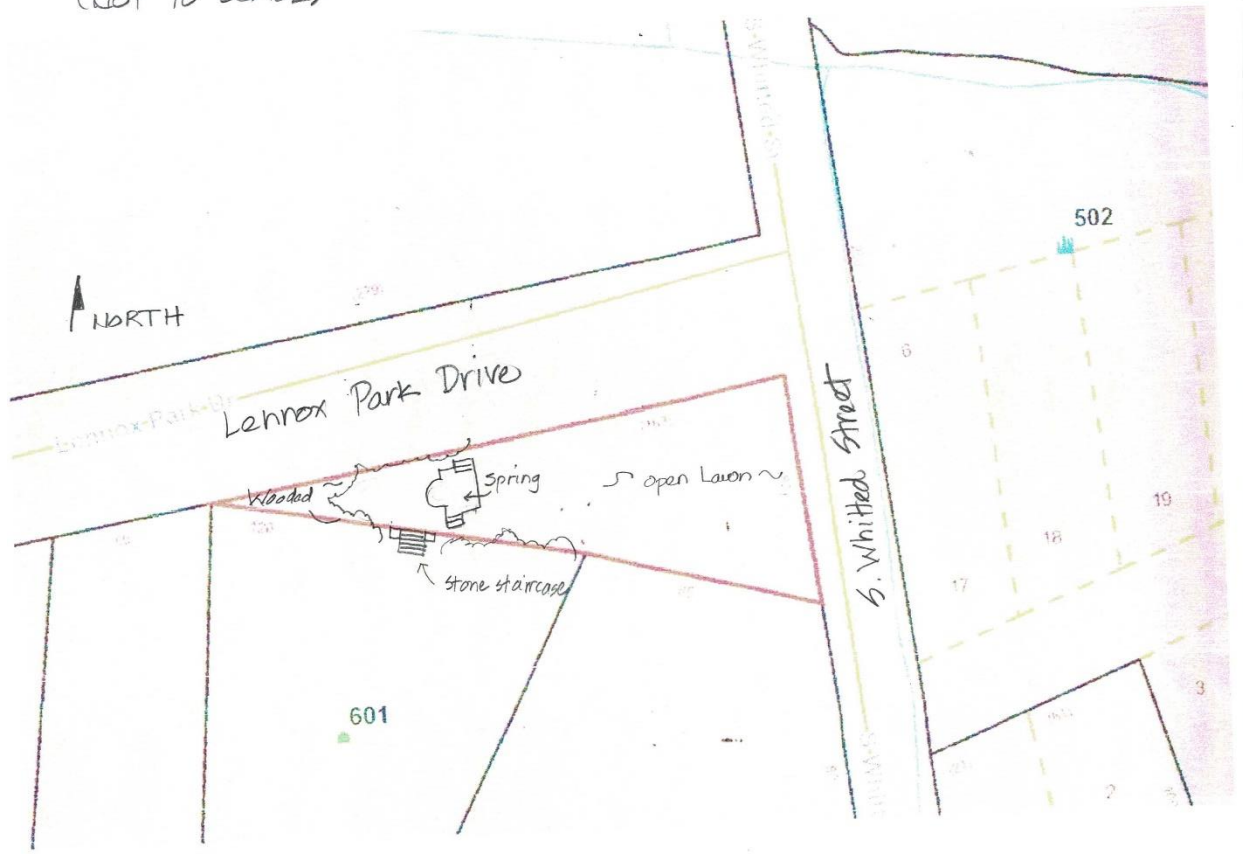
¹⁵ Gibbs, John. Neighborhood resident. Phone interview with Sybil Argintar, November 9, 2023.

¹⁶ Welter, LuAnn. Email to Sybil Argintar, October 18, 2023.

¹⁷ Society notice. *The Western North Carolina Times*. July 21, 1905.

SITE PLAN

LENOX SPRING SITE PLAN
(NOT TO SCALE)



PHOTOS



1. Intersection of Lennox Park Drive and S. Whitted Street at Lennox Park, view south



2. View towards Lennox Park, spring to rear, view southwest



3.

3. View towards Lennox Spring, view west



4. Approximate location of original stone pillars at entrance to park and springs



5. Trees along southwest edge of park, view southwest



6. Lenox Spring and stonework, view southwest



7. Close-up view of stonework surrounding spring, grate covers spring



8. Lenox Spring stonework, view southeast



9. Lenox Spring stonework, view northwest



10. Stone staircase at southwest edge of property, view southwest



11. Close-up view of stonework on staircase, granite with beaded mortar joints



12. View of stairs, cheek walls, and hillside, view southwest



13. Staircase at rear of spring, view southeast



14. Staircase as rear of spring, view northwest



15. Woods to southeast of stairs, view southeast



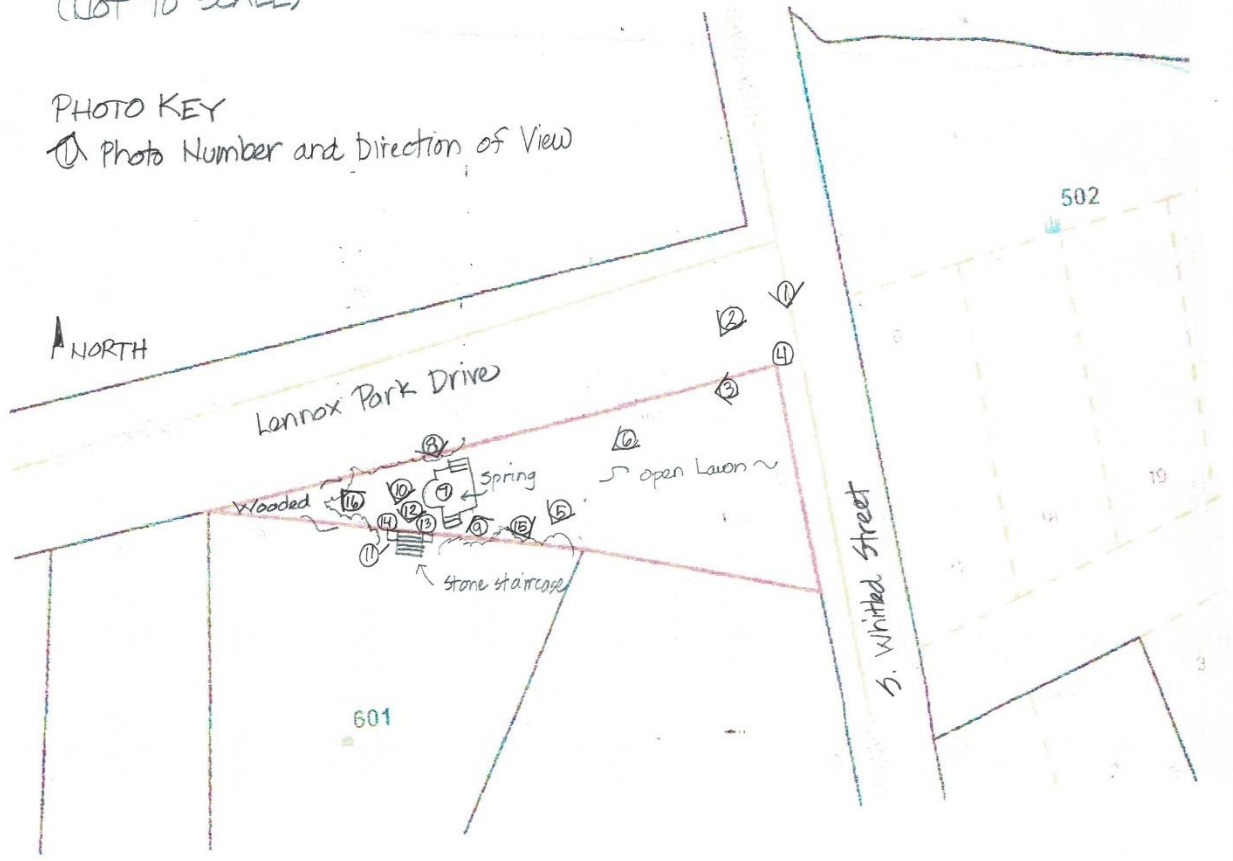
16. Additional view of woods to northwest of spring, view northwest

PHOTO KEY

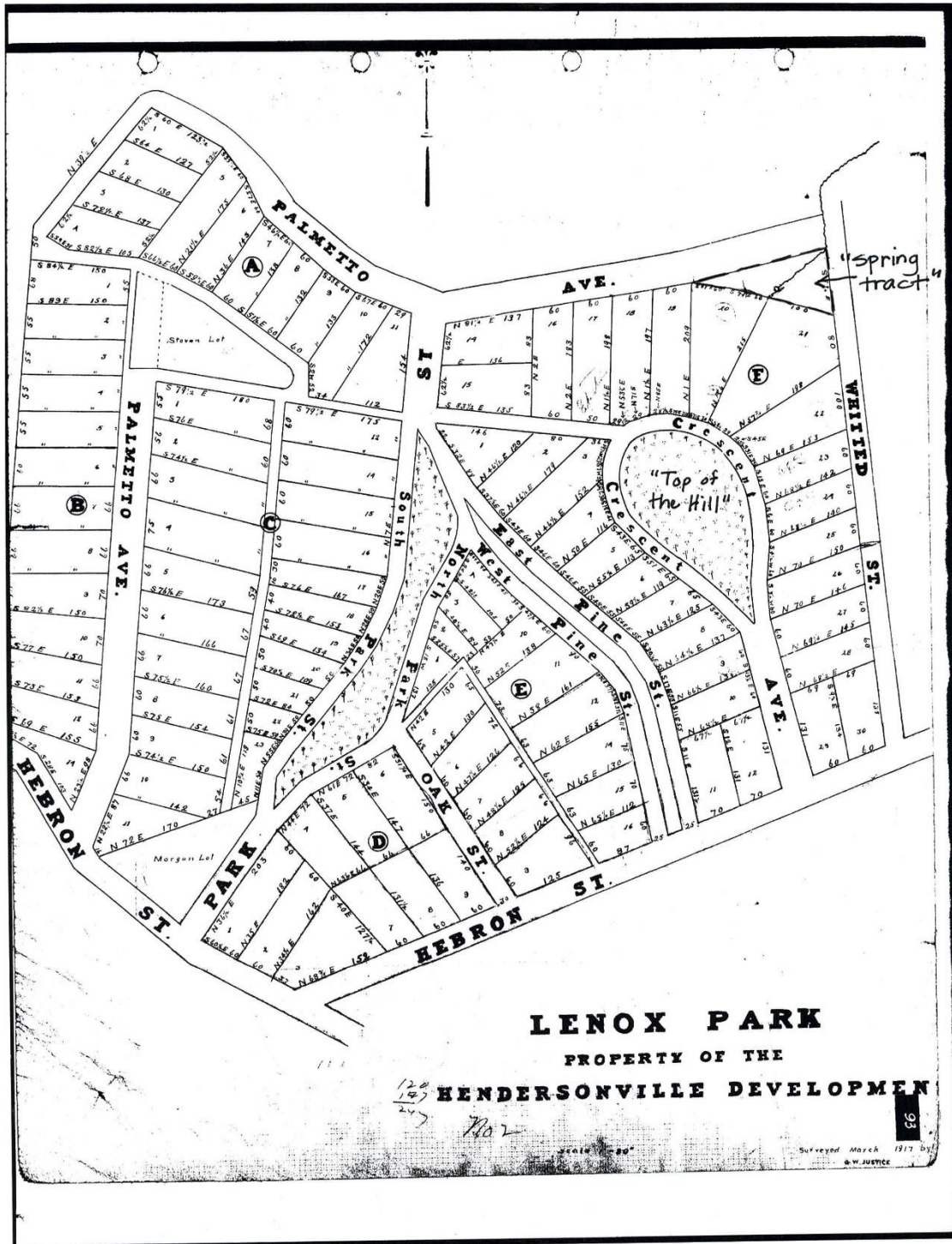
LENOX SPRING SITE PLAN
(NOT TO SCALE)

PHOTO KEY

↖ Photo Number and Direction of View



DOCUMENTARY PHOTOS AND OTHER MATERIALS



March 1917
Plat 3, 93 (B, 252)

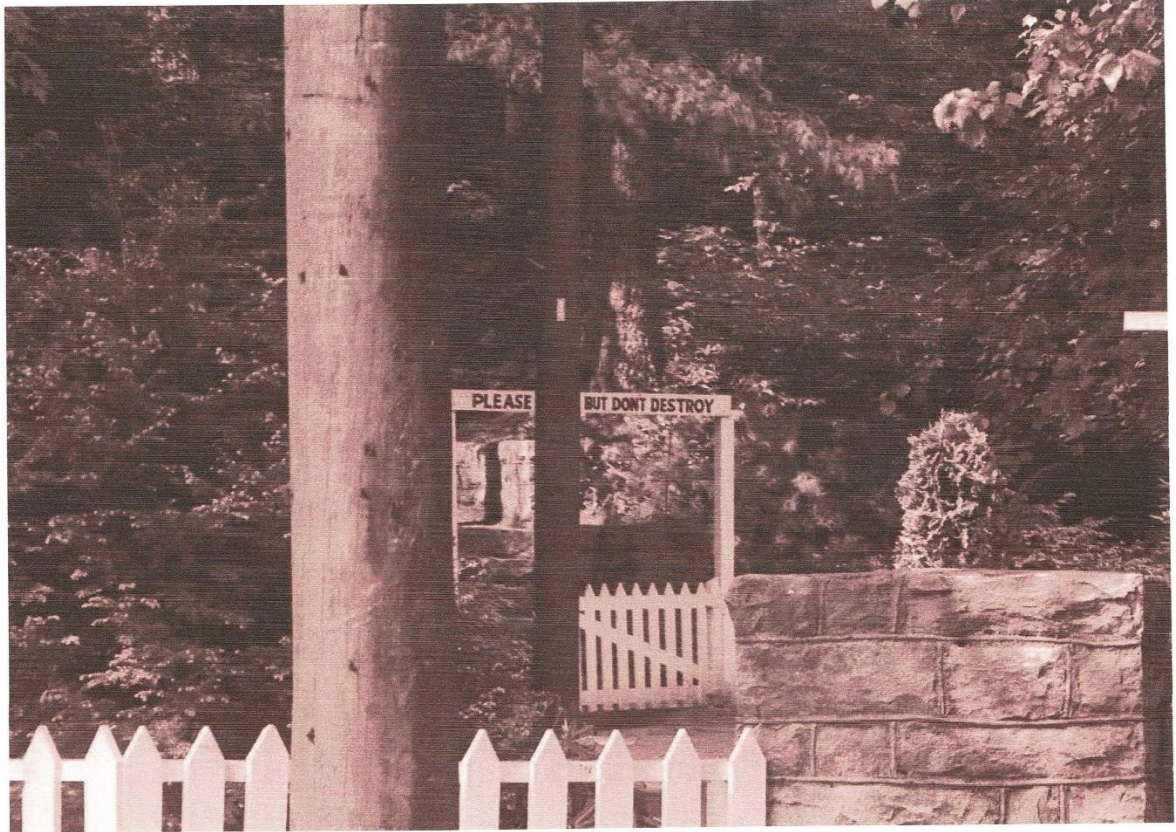
Lenox Park Historic Plat showing "spring tract"



Lenox Spring Documentary Photo, date unknown, extent of fence shown



Lenox Spring Documentary Photo, date unknown, details of entry, piers, fence, and wall at spring



Lenox Spring Documentary Photo, date unknown. Details of stone steps at rear.



Crystal Spring today, on Crystal Spring Drive and Walnut Loop



Crystal Spring and stonework, view southwest



Crystal Spring, view of cascading spring, view southwest

MAPS (AERIAL AND CONTEXT VIEW W/O AERIAL)

Henderson County, NC

Tax Parcel Report

Wednesday, September 27, 202

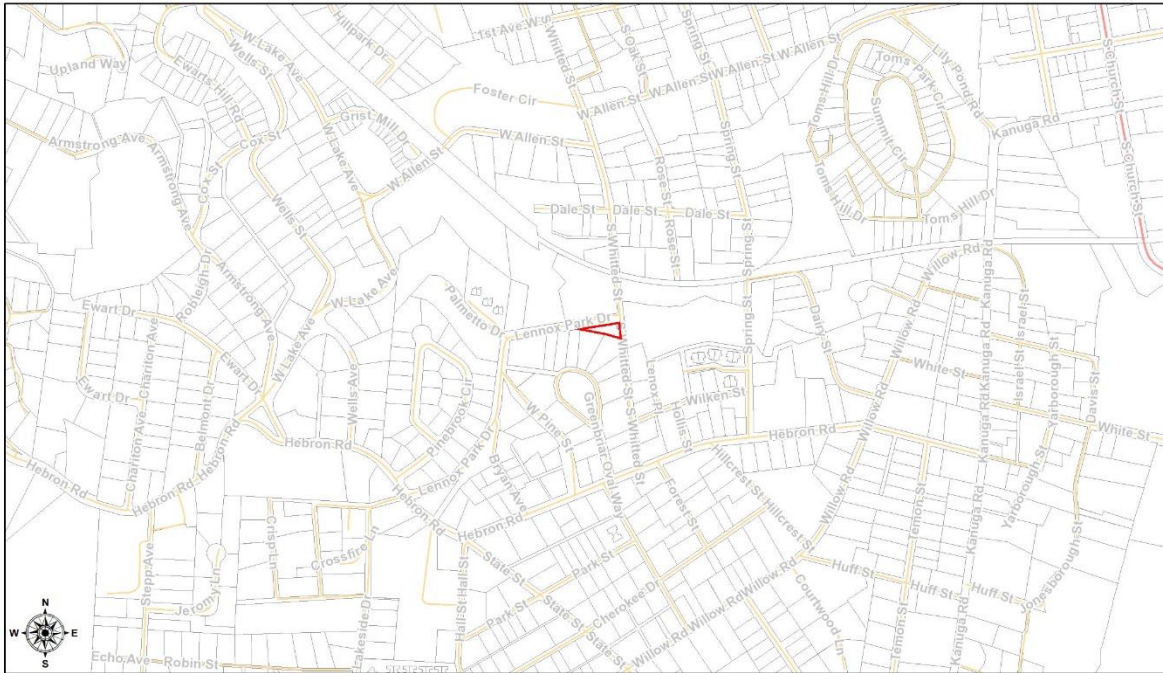


WARNING: THIS IS NOT A SURVEY

Parcel Information

Lenox Spring Boundary Map

Lenox Spring Location Map



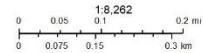
November 1, 2023

Streets and Highways

- FREEWAY
- INTERSTATE
- BOULEVARD
- THOROUGHFARE
- COLLECTOR
- Local Roads
- Parcels

THIS IS NOT A SURVEY.

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“Pittsburgh Capital”. *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*. March 18, 1899.

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