

471

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs

AND/OR COMMON

Healing Springs

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Both sides of SR 1542 from 0.2 to 0.45 miles west of junction with SR 1539

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF Crumpler

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Ashe

009

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: None

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Dr. and Mrs. R. L. Dickson

STREET & NUMBER

Mt. Jefferson Road

CITY, TOWN

West Jefferson

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Ashe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Jefferson

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

--- FEDERAL --- STATE --- COUNTY --- LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT (Archaeological)	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED (Archaeo.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS (Archaeo.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (Struc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR (Structural)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED "		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs, set in a small stream valley, originally was comprised of a large two-story frame hotel constructed in 1887 and a frame spring house built onto the hillside. The hotel, which burned in 1962, stood on the north side of a road and a small stream which winds back and forth under the road. The spring house is on the south side. To house the increasing clientele after the turn of the century, frame cabins were added along the road to the west of the spring house and a bath house to the east. A later, ca. 1920, group of frame cabins with vertical sheathing increased the resort to its present complex of buildings.

The present spring house built about 1900 is a replacement of an earlier house (or houses). It has an octagonal plan with a gable roof ell attached to the back and is set over an outcropping of rocks from which the spring flows. The building is set on a concrete foundation and has a dirt floor. The corners of the octagon are treated as piers--framed with vertical simply molded boards--which frame each bay of the octagon. On the north (entrance) bay steps lead down to a door of unwoven lattice which is flanked by screened openings at either side. The other bays have large four-part screened openings set between the piers with sections of shiplap siding across the top and bottom. The asbestos covered conical roof with overhanging eaves is topped by a finial.

The frame double cabin set to the west of the spring house was probably built at the same time. It is covered in weatherboards with frieze boards carried across the east (front) and west elevations which return on the gable ends. The gable roof, now covered with sheet asbestos, is pierced at the ridge line by a center stack common bond brick chimney. The three-bay facade is fronted by a shed-roof porch supported by square posts. It has a simple railing which is extended at either end to provide handrails for the flights of steps, giving access to the porch. The cabin and porch are set on stones with lattice screens between. The interior has a two-room plan with horizontal finishing.

A frame bath house, set to the east of the spring house, is clad in weatherboard with a gable roof now covered with sheet asbestos. Two doors are set in the west, two-bay gable front, and three windows with six-over-six sash are ranged on the north side. A platform porch carries across the front. It and the bath house have a screened underpinning. On the interior, which is horizontally sheathed, are separate bathing facilities for men and women.

Later a long frame structure, containing five cabins, was constructed to the west of the double cabin. It is covered with weatherboards and has a gable roof of sheet asbestos. The gable ends--one bay deep--have board-and-batten sheathing. A shed-roof porch, supported by square posts, is carried across the eight-bay north front. The porch has a simple board railing. The interior is horizontally sheathed with molded tongue-and-groove boards.

A row of five frame cabins, set to the east of the bath house, was built ca. 1920. They have vertical sheathing and gabled roofs covered with asbestos. Center stack brick common bond chimneys pierce the ridge line of each cabin roof. Each cabin has a full length shed porch, with exposed rafters, which is supported by square posts connected by plain board railings. The cabins and their porches are set on stacked stone with lattice screened underpinning. The front (north) elevations have a four-bay

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division--window, door, door, window--which define the two-room plan of these double cabins. Windows are six-over-six sash. The interiors have molded tongue-and-groove horizontal sheathing. A sixth double cabin, following the same form as the five, was built on the north side of the road across from the five.

And later, ca. 1930, a second frame double cabin was constructed on a hill, behind and between the weatherboarded cabins. With board-and-batten siding and a gabled roof of sheet asbestos, it has a shed-roof porch with square posts, plain board railings, steps at either end and a lattice covered underpinning.

Archaeology

Associated with the hotel building site are numerous evidences to indicate that it burned to the ground. There are charred beams on the site, and large concentrations of burned ceramics and melted glass. There are a chimney, ridge piers, a concrete walk, and stone and brick foundation piers remaining from the building. There were twelve stone piers apparently supporting the outside walls of the hotel, and three brick piers supporting the central part of the structure. The hillside on the western side of the hotel site has slumped and covered some of the foundation piers on that side.

Three distinct concentrations of artifacts were noted in the hotel ruins. There are two main ceramic service patterns and several other incomplete sets of ceramics in the concentrations. The ceramics are of a type which was made in the late 1800s and continues to be made today. The glass from the concentrations included cut and embossed drinking glass fragments. Also collected was a metal hinge, possibly from a table. The artifact concentration where this was found could possibly be the remains of a table which collapsed and burned in the fire. The other concentrations may have been ceramic storage areas.

The hotel measures approximately 120 feet NE/SW by 50 feet NW/SE.

A creek runs between the hotel site and the road, passing under the road, and continues to run in front of the cabins on the east side. Elevation of the site is approximately 2,600 feet AMSL.

Survey personnel contacted the owners of the hotel property, Dr. and Mrs. R. L. Dickson. According to Mrs. Dickson, the hotel was built in 1888 by Captain H. V. Thompson as a mineral springs resort hotel. She further stated that it was in continual use until 1962, when the frame structure burned to the ground in one hour.

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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Recreation
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1887, ca. 1900, ca. 1920 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The discovery of the mineral waters in Ashe County, which tradition holds to have been in 1885 by Willie Barker, opened the way for Captain H. V. Thompson of Washington County, Virginia, to develop this into a widely advertised and highly popular resort. The mineral spring spas of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not only centers for rejuvenating health, but were the most popular social centers. Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs is a good representative of a segment of our social heritage, of which only a few survive. For this reason it becomes especially significant as an archaeological site. When the hotel burned in 1962, all contents of the hotel perished in the fire, which is said to have taken just one hour to reduce the hotel to rubble. This information, plus the extensive knowledge of the contents and operation of the hotel, make it an excellent opportunity to scientifically recover the virtually intact remains of the hotel at the time of the fire.

Dotted across the United States, including North Carolina, are springs which are naturally heated below the earth or which, because of the rock around them, have unusually high concentration of minerals. These were believed to have great beneficial effects upon a wide variety of ailments--benefits which would be obtained either through immersion in the water or through drinking it. Originally, these mineral springs attracted people seeking mainly the medicinal effects, but the hotels which were built up around the springs often became popular for those seeking improvement of their social life as well as of their health. A tour to one of these springs became an important part of the social year of the upper class citizens of town and plantation, and the social activities there were gay and brilliant, including dances, elaborate suppers, and informal concerts. Ladies took extensive wardrobes along and often changed their costume several times a day. (Not everyone enjoyed such social business: Mrs. Ebenezer Pettigrew of Washington County wrote, "I think those people who are constantly gadding about from Shocco to Saratoga, from thence to the city, etc.--are in a state of most perfect derangement."). This healthful diversion, which began in the period before the Civil War, continued after the war and well into the twentieth century.

The mountain resort springs were popular not only for the power of the mineral waters but also for the healthful mountain climate, a welcome relief in summer from the wet heat and yellow fever of the lowlands, in a time before air conditioning and mosquito control. The following passage, taken from a booklet which extolled the virtues of the mountain health springs, was published in the late nineteenth century:

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Here flow the new-born crystal, untainted waters, and here, far down in the mysterious laboratories of Nature, are found the minerals which impart to these waters the life-giving virtues that bring the bloom back to the cheek, the lustre to the eye, tone to the languid pulse, strength to the jaded nerves, and vigor to the wasted frame.

Whether the waters accomplished all this or not, they were indeed popular, as seen in the many mountain resorts.¹

Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs at Crumpler were discovered in July, 1885, by Willie Barker, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eli Barker, according to well accepted tradition. The story goes that Willie was helping his father plow corn on a hillside and his father sent him to the branch to find a spring from which to bring him some water to drink. Willie is quoted as relating the following story:

I went across the road and got in the branch and walked down it, stooping along under the bushes and grape vines until I felt cold water under my feet. I then commenced looking for and soon found the cold water running down the rock. I scratched around until I found a place large enough to get the cup of water for father. He sent me back for more water and said it was the best he had ever drunk. My hand and arm were very badly sore. (poison oak) The next morning it was almost well. We went back the next day and father worked in the spring with his hands that had sores on them, too. (also poison oak) The following day they were nearly well. . . Then everybody got to using the water and it had cured a power of folks. . . some-times 300 come here in one day.²

Subsequently, H. V. Thompson of Washington County, Virginia, acquired the springs (1885-1886).³ He began an extensive campaign, advertising the water as a "medical beverage, performing miraculous cures." Another feature emphasized in the advertising was that it is "nature's remedy for the alleviation and cure of many of the ills to which human family is subject. Through its action in purifying the blood, it imparts health to the skin and gives clearness to the complexion. . . The most remarkable discovery of the nineteenth century."⁴

The chief properties of the water are bromine and arsenic, as the name implies. An analysis of the water showed that it also contained sodium, calcium, lithium, copper and zinc carbonate; sodium and potassium chloride, sodium bromide, iodide and forate, ferrous sulphate and silica. The water is reported to have no odor, is clear and to have no offensive taste.⁵

A number of medical journals carried stories and editorials about the curative and healing characteristics of the water. It was hailed as being good to be used

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internally and externally. Newspapers played it up as a sensational discovery. As a result of this advertising and publicity, backed by hundreds of strong testimonials, the demand for the water from individuals and druggists over the north and south was great. The water was bottled at the spring in one-half gallon bottles and sold for \$6.00 a case. The nearest railroad station was then about 35 miles away and for ten years, from 1888 to 1898, it is estimated that an average of 50 wagons a day were kept busy hauling the water to the railroad station to be shipped to various parts of the country.⁶

Thompson and his wife Pamela J., who had organized Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs Company under Virginia law, successfully operated the hotel they had built, and are credited with the development of the resort.⁷ J. Kirby Hurt acquired the property in 1907 at a sheriff's sale for \$2,500. This price included 1 piano, 31 bedsteads, 18 dressing cases, 4 dining room tables, 8 rocking chairs, 4 office chairs, and 69 chairs, in addition to the buildings and spring.⁸ The property changed hands six more times, including another sheriff's sale in 1907,⁹ in the process of evolving to its present owners. Dr. and Mrs. Robert L. Dickson. They acquired the property in 1948, and operated the hotel and cottages until the hotel burned in 1962.¹⁰

Archaeology

Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs Hotel was in continual use from its construction in 1887 until it burned in 1962. According to the owners, there were antiques in the hotel, many dating from its construction when it burned. None of the contents were saved from the fire, so everything burned and collapsed in place. In terms of understanding the function of a specialized hotel such as this, the Bromine-Arsenic Springs Hotel could yield a great deal of valuable information. The site has not been disturbed since the fire, so it can be assumed that the artifacts' distribution on/in the ground will be a true representation of their original distribution patterns in the hotel. In an archaeological study, this type of context could be of immense importance, as it will allow for unusual precision in the understanding and interpretation of not only this fashionable spa complex, but also the questions concerning the use and distribution of mineral water, questions about a special function resort hotel, and questions about the impact of such a facility on the local community. These are only a few of the research problems which might be explored at this site.

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FOOTNOTES:

¹C. W. Cockshutt, "Mineral Springs: Fashionable Resorts of the Nineteenth Century," Tar Heel Junior Historian, Vol. 13, No. 4, May 1974. Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, p. 12.

²Ed Anderson, "Western North Carolina Mineral Springs Still Attract Thousands During Summer," The Charlotte Observer: Charlotte, N.C., July 23, 1939.

³Deed Books: SS: 285, SS: 283, A-1:130.

⁴Mrs. E. M. Anderson, "Bromine Arsenic Springs Discovery and History Recalled." The Skyland Post: West Jefferson, N.C. (page 1), Aug. 6, 1959.

⁵See note 3.

⁶See note 3.

⁷Deed Books SS: 283 and SS: 285.

⁸Deed Books D-1: 326-28.

⁹Deed Book X-2: 231.

¹⁰Deed Book L-3: 111.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Anderson, Ed. "Western North Carolina Mineral Springs Still Attract Thousands During Summer," The Charlotte Observer: Charlotte, N.C., July 23, 1939.
- Anderson, Mrs. E. M., "Bromine Arsenic Springs Discovery and History Recalled," The Skyland Post: West Jefferson, N.C., August 6, 1959.
- Ashe County Records, Ashe County Courthouse, Jefferson, North Carolina (Subgroup: Deeds).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	4 6 4 5 6 0	4 0 3 9 5 4 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Linda Robertson, archaeologist, archaeological description and significance; Davyd Foard Hood, consultant, architectural description; Charles Greer Suttlemyre, Jr.,

ORGANIZATION historical significance

DATE

Division of Archives and History

June 29, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-4763

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Larry E. Jim

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 7/8/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

