OMB NO. 1024-0018 EXP. 12/31/84

received

nited States Department of the Interior Mational Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instruction	ns in How to Comples—complete applic	ete Nationa	al Register Forms		
1. Nam	ie				randa disabbagan ener 17.5 may yang madi disabah manah kanadaran di salamban yang madi
historic John	n Franklin Cobb	House			
and/or common	Cobb Plantat	ion			
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3. Clas	sification			-	
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city, town Mur	phy			state _N	orth Carolina 28906
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title Cherokee	County Histori	c Sites	has this oro	perty been determined eli-	gible?yes _X_no
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Jes(cription		
dition excellent good fair	deteriorated ruins unexposed	Check one unaltered X altered	Check one X original site moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John Franklin Cobb House occupies a small shelf of land on a wooded hillside about three hundred feet south of Cobb Creek in Cherokee County, North Carolina. The hillside rises steeply to the south of the house and drops precipitously to the north, down to the alluvial floodplain of Cobb Creek, currently a grassy pasture. Cobb Creek flows east to west, joining the Nottely River less than one-half mile west of the Cobb House. The house site is approximately one mile north of the Georgia line.

Frame additions have extended the Cobb House both east and west of its ca. 1863 log core. Although it presents no composed facades, the building is still entered from the east, as it was originally. A gravel drive two-tenths of a mile long provides access from US 19-129 and ends in a gravel turn-around in front of the house. A stone carport was built into the hillside adjacent to the drive about two hundred feet in front of ${}^{\sharp}$ the house earlier this century. Other structures that share the hillside shelf with the house include a large nineteenth-century log smokehouse sited immediately behind it and a concrete rootcellar built into the hillside to the south, reportedly in 1934. Other outbuildings on the property, all twentieth century, include a gable-roofed board and batten chicken house sited on the hillside above the house to the south, a frame wash house beyond the smokehouse and down a gentle slope to the west, and a sheltered spring with monumented stonework dating from 1941. A plaque embedded in the stonework reads: "TY COBB/SENIOR GRANDSON/WORLD'S BASEBALL CHAMPION." Although it clearly displays the ad hoc nature of its evolution, the Cobb House is in basically sound condition and is currently being carefully maintained by owners who are very interested in its historical associations.

The Cobb House was originally a single-room plan log structure built by John Franklin Cobb in 1863. John Cobb's house was a typical mountain cabin: approximately square in plan, one-and-one-half stories tall, with exposed ceiling beams in the downstairs room and a boxed-in stairway providing access to the second floor. The cabin had an exterior end fieldstone chimney which served fireplaces on both floors (a second-floor fireplace is unusual) and which still survives. The original mantel, three broad boards composing the simplest of post and lintel designs, survives in the house with a later board shelf.

The first major addition to the John Cobb house was apparently a frame rear kitchen ell built in the 1870s. This ell was originally sheathed in board and batten inside and out. A porch along its north wall was later enclosed and the room thus created displays the original exterior treatment. Original interior walls are still board and batten. Also surviving in the 1870s ell are a hand-planed board and batten door and an original mantel which frames the fireplace in plain boards stacked in a three-tiered arrangement crowned with a board shelf. The ell is also served by a mortared fieldstone chimney.

Around 1901 a room was added just east of the log cabin, perhaps as a partial enclosure of a porch across the front of the house. In 1920 this 1901 room was incorporated into a major extension of the house to the east that added a bedroom served by yet another fieldstone chimney. It is interesting to note that this 1920 frame addition displays the building's most thoroughly articulated exterior details: a boxed cornice with an unmolded board suggesting a crown mold and boxed returns and a raking cornice with plain frieze board in its gable ends.

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In 1932 another small bedroom was added by way of a shed tied to the south wall of the 1920 addition. At the same time a shed extended the south wall of the 1870s ell by eight feet. This latter shed holds the present-day kitchen and a modern bath and connects with a small gable-roofed screened porch that extends the house to its western conclusion. The eastern conclusion comes, finally, in a gabled frame addition built beyond the 1920 room and its fieldstone chimney (attaching at its southeast corner) in the 1940s.

A measure of unity is brought to this conglomerate structure by its weatherboard siding and by the repetition of gable roofs over room-deep elements. Even the siding, however, shows inconsistencies in type and application. What the structure well represents in physical terms is the simple additive nature of folk building, free from overriding concern about compositional aesthetics. The aesthetic is one of accumulated utilitarian parts—ad hoc and informal.

8. Significance

1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 X 1800-1899	X architecture	community planning	law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation _X other (specify)
Specific dates	1863 and later	Builder/Architect _{Ur}	nknown	sports

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John Franklin Cobb House, or Cobb Plantation, near the North Carolina-Georgia line in southern Cherokee County was built as a log cabin in 1863. Since the 1880s the logs have been covered with weatherboarding. Numerous rooms have also been added to the cabin since the 1870s in a rather haphazard manner. The house remained in the Cobb family until 1977. John Franklin Cobb (1832-1911) was a farmer and local magistrate, with an estate of 150-200 mostly wooded acres. He married Sarah Waldrop (1837-1921) in 1863, shortly after his discharge from Confederate service. They had six children born between 1863 and 1880. Among their grandchildren was Tyrus Raymond Cobb (1886-1961). As a teenager Ty Cobb often spent summers with his grandparents who unlike his parents encouraged him to play baseball. Though his parents lived in Georgia and he himself was known as the "Georgia Peach," Ty Cobb gained his earliest baseball experience on the playing fields of Murphy and Andrews in Cherokee County, North Carolina.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- B. The John Franklin Cobb House was the occasional childhood home of baseball great Ty Cobb.
- C. The nucleus of the Cobb House is an 1863 log cabin, typical of the traditional
 log dwellings of the southern Appalachians and basically intact though much enlarged through additions.

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The John Franklin Cobb House is located near the Bell View community of Notla Township in southern Cherokee County, about one mile from the North Carolina-Georgia line. Now situated on a tract of about six acres, the house was once the focus of a 200-acre farm. Originally built as a log cabin in 1863 by John Franklin Cobb, the building has undergone numerous additions and renovations since that time. Today the logs of the original cabin are exposed in only two spots. The expansion has followed no logical plan, with rooms, ells, and siding added at various times between the 1870s and 1940s. Besides the present one-and-one-half-story house, there are several outbuildings on the property, notably a barn and smokehouse dating to 1885 and a washhouse built ca. 1928. Aside from its age the house is lent particular significance through its association with baseball legend Ty Cobb. The young Cobb often spent his summers there with his grandparents, who unlike his parents encouraged him to play baseball.

The Cobb House is one of only five or so surviving pre-1865 structures within the present bounds of Cherokee County. Only the Walker Inn in the county seat of Murphy betters it in terms of size and age. The county was formed in 1839 from Macon County. Settlement of the area began about the same time, following the removal of the Cherokees and acquisition of their land by the state. Then as now the county, the westernmost in North Carolina, was exceptionally mountainous and predominantly rural. Today much of the land in the county is given over to the Nantahala National Forest just as much of that across the state line in Georgia is taken up by the Chattahoochee National Forest. Population and development, which remained sparse and scattered throughout the nine-teenth century, have slowly increased in the twentieth. Most of this growth has been in the towns of Murphy and Andrews, with some in communities such as Bell View and Hanging Dog which grew up near streams or at crossroads.

William Alfred Cobb, father of John Franklin Cobb, was the first family member to settle in the area. Born in Burke County, the elder Cobb moved to Waynesville in Haywood County, where he served as sheriff. Around 1845 he moved to Cherokee County. Along the way he married Charlotte Hansen by whom he had eight children. He first settled near the Georgia line but later moved to the Hanging Dog area. At some point, probably during the 1840s, he received a land grant for forty-three acres, land which the state had only lately acquired by treaty from the Cherokee Indians. When he eighteenth century, volumes which have been passed down to his descendants. When he died in 1886, Cobb's personal property was inventoried by his son. As J. F. Cobb recorded it, his father owned four cows, thirteen hogs, blacksmith tools, a saw, an ax, and "verious Books two tedious to mention." 3

John Franklin Cobb (1832-1911) was the second eldest son of W. A. Cobb. Described as "short and lean," he stood five feet six inches tall. As he aged he had back problems which "stamped an expression of pain permanently on his face." Nevertheless he was always ready for a hunt, and, in his day, was said to have taken twenty-five bears and over one hundred deer. He had a reputation as a "wise and eloquent soul," and as a Notla Township magistrate, was often called upon to settle disputes. In 1863 he married Sarah Waldrop (1837-1921), daughter of William and Elizabeth Waldrop of Cherokee County. She was a sturdy, independent pioneer woman, well-versed in the ways of the backwoods and particularly adept at cures calling for roots, herbs, bark, and the like. Many years later Ty Cobb recalled distinctly the effects of two such potions, a disinfectant

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and a purgative, which she had administered to him. "Any time Grandma mixed medicine, she got results that made the Castoria and Lydia Pinkham look like bush leaguers," he recalled. John and Sarah Cobb had six children: William Herschel (born in 1863), an educator and politician in North Georgia, and father of Ty Cobb; Mary Jane (1865), who married and moved to Missouri where she died at a young age; John Marshall (1868), an educator, who founded nearby Bell View Institute and served in the lower house of the state legislature in 1891; Schuyler Colfax (1874), also a teacher who moved to Missouri; James David (1876), who taught for a while, then became a tax accountant; and Nora (1880), the youngest, a teacher, musician, and writer, who in time inherited the house.

Around 1860 John Franklin Cobb went to the Cleveland, Tennessee area to work on the railroad. He is said to have used the money he earned at that work to buy land when he returned to Cherokee County. Unfortunately deeds for that period have been lost. The only entry for land received by Cobb is a grant for eighty-nine acres recorded in 1883 but almost certainly for property for which he had taken possession earlier.8 By his daughter Nora's account, J. F. Cobb had finished construction on his new cabin by 1863 when he brought his new bride there to live. Yet a year earlier Cobb apparently was living across the state line in Georgia. That was his indicated place of residence when he volunteered for Confederate service, joining Company C of North Carolina's Thirty-Ninth Regiment on June 20, 1862. However, the strength of his convictions about the Confederacy are suspect. His daughter claimed his sentiments were basically Unionist and that he was coerced to join the company. The fact that he was discharged in August 1862, only two months after enlistment, tends to confirm this. There is no $_{9}$ record of his having been injured nor was there any reason given for the discharge. Ty Cobb claimed that his grandfather was always an anti-slavery Republican and was sorely disappointed when all four of his sons returned from college diehard Democrats. Cobb apparently put his energies into farming and raising a family after 1862. He did make other land purchases in the 1860s for which records have been lost. In 1867 and 1868 he was taxed on 220 acres valued at \$500.11 In 1870 he cultivated eighteen of those acres; the remainder was wooded. Half of his plantings were corn and about half wheat. By 1880 he was cultivating thirty-five acres of corn, wheat, some tobacco, and thirty apple trees. He kept some stock, a few horses, cows, and thirty-five sheep. 12 His farm remained basically unchanged, although somewhat reduced in size, over the years. An inventory of his property after his death in 1911 showed that he owned 150 acres, a cow, a wagon, a plow, and three sheep. 13 In 1895 Cobb sold one-half of the mineral rights on his tracts to A. Werner Meyer, who had discovered "a good vein of silver."14 Apparently very little came of this find.

As the years passed additions were made to the house "until it sprawled over the knoll like a hen covering her brood," in Nora Cobb Spencer's words. 15 The first of these rooms were built to accommodate the children; the later ones brought modern conveniences to the Cobb House. In 1870 the Cobbs had three small children and a white domestic servant living in the log cabin. 16 It was during the next decade that a dining room, bedroom, and the first kitchen were added. Siding was added to the outside of the building in the 1880s. Around 1901 a new room, later used by Nora Spencer as a music studio and for tutoring, was built just east of the living room. In 1920 a bedroom was added east of this room. In 1932 another room was built behind this room; the present kitchen and bathroom were built in the same year. Other rooms were added in the 1940s. The oldest outbuildings on the property, a barn and smokehouse, were apparently built in the 1880s. A washhouse was built in 1928 and a chicken coop in the 1940s. 17

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Tyrus Raymond Cobb (18 December 1886 - 17 July 1961) had an unparalleled baseball career. The "Georgia Peach," as he was called, created or equalled more records than any other player in the history of the game. The outfielder played from 1905 to 1928. Most of the those years were spent with the Detroit Tigers, but his last three seasons were with the Philadelphia Athletics under manager Connie Mack, who lured him from the Tigers with a record salary offer of \$60,000 a year. Ty Cobb led the American League in batting twelve times and hit over .400 three straight seasons. He stole 892 bases during his career, a record that stood for fifty years. Cobb was an aggressive and, according to some, unprincipled player. His alleged spiking, which he consistently denied, was a particular sore point with other players. Despite his unpopularity in some circles Cobb was the leading vote-getter among the initial group of inductees to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936 (the others were Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner, Walter Johnson, and Christy Mathewson). Long before his retirement Cobb was a rich man, having invested shrewdly in Coca-Cola and General Motors stock. 18

Little known is the fact that this illustrious career had its beginnings in Cherokee County, particularly at the Cobb House and on the ballfieds of Murphy. Cobb hailed from what he called the "backwoods of northeastern Georgia." He was born in the Narrows community of Banks County to William and Amanda Cobb. The family moved to Royston when he was still quite young. Professor William Herschel Cobb was a farmer, schoolteacher, and onetime Georgia state senator. Though from a poor area the Cobbs were themselves middle class. "We had status," Ty Cobb wrote. 19 Thus it is not surprising that his father discouraged his ball-playing, beleieving it to be a waste of time and showing a lack of ambition. His father hoped that he might become a doctor or a lawyer. As a consequence the young Ty Cobb looked forward to the train trips to his grandparents, who had no such objections as to how he spent his time:

There was still another powerful male infuluence in my early life: my grandfather, John Cobb--the squire of a section of the Blue Ridge Mountains near Murphy, North Carolina. Summertimes I was allowed to visit Grandpa and Grandma Cobb. I couldn't wait to make the hundred-odd-mile trip . . .

A decision I'd have to make before long-between college and a career no other Cobb had elected-began to take shape here.²⁰

Ty Cobb's aunt Nora often drove him by buggy to Murphy and Andrews to play ball. These trips took place during his early teen years, that is, between 1897 and 1903. In 1904 Cobb received a minor league tryout and in the next year, at age eighteen, was in the majors at Detroit. During his playing years Cobb often came back to the old place. On occasion he would return to Detroit with some of his grandmother's home cooking to share with his teammates. About 200 feet from the house is a rocked-in spring. At that spot is an engraved plaque which reads "TY COBB/SENIOR GRANDSON/WORLD'S BASEBALL CHAMPION." The plaque, erected in 1941, is apparently the only recognition given locally to Ty Cobb.

John Franklin Cobb died intestate in 1911 at the age of seventy-nine. His heirs included his five surviving children and several grandchildren (including Ty Cobb). 22 Each of the heirs transferred their interest in the property to Cobb's widow Sarah. In 1916 Mrs. Cobb sold all of her real estate, three tracts totaling 158 acres, to her daughter Nora for \$1,350. Sarah Cobb died on October 4, 1921, at the age of eighty-four.

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Thus Nora Cobb Spencer was the owner of the house for over forty years. Educated at Holbrook College and receiving music training in Boston and elsewhere, J. F. Cobb's youngest child was a teacher and tutor for most of those years. 24 In addition she was a writer, penning during the 1940s an historical account of the family and a book of poems. One of these poems was a five-stanza verse, entitled "The Old House on the Farm," which included these lines: "You're more than eighty--pillars weak, / And your hinges oft-times creak . . ."25 Spencer was also a philanthropist, allocating \$4,000 in 1953 to establish a medical clinic. She specified that the building be constructed as a memorial to the Cobb family and that preferential treatment be given to family members and then to her own former students and their families. 26 Shortly before her death in 1959 Nora Cobb Spencer presented the house and land to her heirs. For a number of years afterwards the division of the estate and final settlement were postponed. During that time the house was usually vacant, although it had an occasional tenant. The farmland and wooded property around the house was sold in separate lots. the house and the 5.9-acre lot were sold by the heirs. Since then it has twice again been sold. The present owners, Marshall and Sandra Hall, bought the place in 1979. 28 The Halls, who came to North Carolina from Florida, have shown considerable interest in the history of the house and its restoration.

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NOTES

- Margaret Walker Freel, Our Heritage: The People of Cherokee County, North Carolina, 1540-1955 (Asheville: Miller Printing Co., 1956), 262-263.
- ²Cherokee County Deed Book 22, p. 15. The deed for the land grant was not recorded until 1887, one year after W. A. Cobb had died. Many of the local records were destroyed in the last months of the Civil War. Thus this 1887 entry represented the second record of the transaction.
 - Cherokee County Estates Records, W. A. Cobb folder, North Carolina State Archives.
- ⁴Ty Cobb (with Al Stump), My Life in Baseball: The True Record (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961), 34; Levi Branson (comp.), Branson's North Carolina Business Directory (Raleigh: Levi Branson), 1890, p. 187; 1896, p. 181; and 1897, p. 181.
 - ⁵Freel, <u>Our Heritage</u>, 122; Seventh Census, 1850, Population Schedule.
 - 6Cobb, My Life in Baseball, 36-37.
- ⁷Freel, <u>Our Heritage</u>, 263; Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule; John L. Cheney (ed.), <u>North Carolina Government, 1585-1974: A Narrative and Statistical History</u> (Raleigh: Secretary of State, 1975), 469.
 - 8Cherokee County Deed Book 20, p. 246.
- 9Nora Cobb Spencer, "Cobb Creek: An Account of the Cobb Family and Pioneer Days" (unpublished manuscript in the Murphy Public Library, n.d.), 23-26; John Wheeler Moore (comp.), Roster of North Carolina Troops in the War Between the States (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1882), III, 91. The updated roster for Cobb's company has not yet been published. Yet a call to the editor of the roster confirms that no further record of Cobb's service can be located. His widow did file a pension application after his death in 1911.
 - 10 Cobb, My Life in Baseball, 35.
 - 11 Cherokee County Tax Records, North Carolina State Archives.
 - 12 Ninth and Tenth Censuses, 1870, 1880, Agricultural Schedules.
 - 13 Cherokee County Estates Records, J. F. Cobb folder, North Carolina State Archives.
 - 14 Cherokee County Deed Book 30, p. 92.
 - 15 Spencer, "Cobb Creek," 81.
 - 16 Ninth Census, 1870, Population Schedule.

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¹⁷ Interview (and followup correspondence) with Sandra Hall, 27 June 1983. Mrs. Hall based her information about the structural changes to the house on a conversation with June Posey, who along with his brother Paul, was "more or less raised" by Nora Cobb Spencer.

¹⁸ Cobb, My Life in Baseball, 44 passim; John Garraty (ed.), Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement VII (1961-1965) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), 127-129.

¹⁹ Cobb, My Life in Baseball, 17, 32.

²⁰Cobb, <u>My Life in Baseball</u>, 34, 35.

²¹Cobb, My Life in Baseball, 37; Sepncer, "Cobb Creek," 104.

²²Cherokee County Estates Records, John F. Cobb folder, North Carolina State Archives; Cherokee County Deed Book 81, pp. 167-174.

²³Cherokee County Deed Book 77, p. 580; Cherokee County Vital Statistics, North Carolina State Archives.

²⁴ Freel, Our Heritage, 263.

Nora Cobb Spencer, Musings From the Old Cobb Homestead (Asheville: Stephens Press, [1946?]), n.p.; Freel, Our Heritage, 125.

²⁶Cherokee County Deed Book 192, p. 129.

Cherokee County Deed Book 209, p. 429, and Deed Book 227, p. 100.

²⁸Cherokee County Deed Book 377, p. 139, and Deed Book 378, p. 114.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geograph	ical Data			
Acreage of nominated property				
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For NPS use only				
I hereby certify that this pro	perty is included in the	National Regi	ster	
				date
Keeper of the National Regist	er			
Attest:				late
Chief of Registration				

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