
HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT
PHASE 2 INTENSIVE
HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY AND REPORT
REPLACE BRIDGE NOS. 49 and 50
OVER MIDDLE FORK AND EAST FORK OF NEW RIVER
BOONE, WATGAUGA COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
TIP NO. B-3066
FEDERAL AID NO. 8.2750801
STATE PROJECT NO. MABRSTP-1522(2)

Prepared By

Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
2228 Winter Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205
704-376-0985

Prepared For

Rummel, Klepper and Kahl, LLP
5800 Faringdon Road, Suite 105
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609
919-878-9560

15 March 2000

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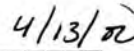
Principal Investigator
Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.



Date



Historic Architectural Resources
North Carolina Department of Transportation



Date

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The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to replace Bridge Nos. 49 and 50 over Middle Fork and East Fork of New River in the city of Boone, Watauga County (Figure 1). There are three alternatives described below, and each requires the removal of the current bridges (Figure 2),

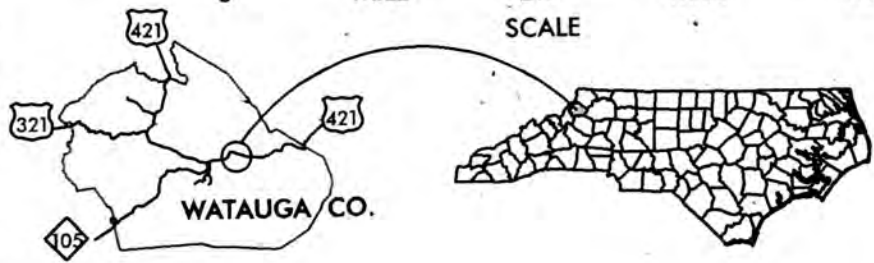
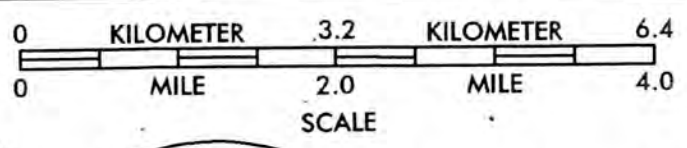
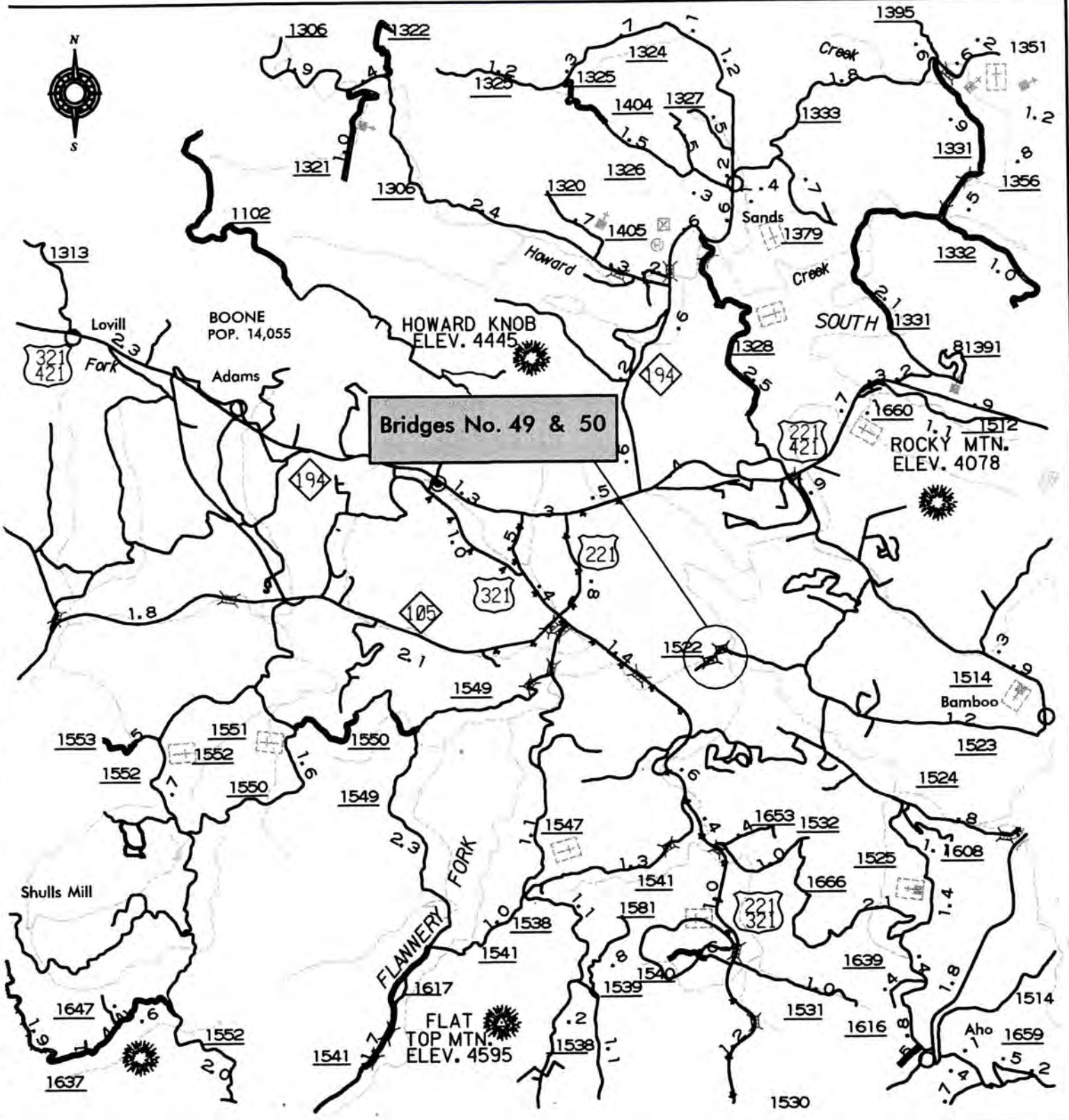
Alternative 1 replaces both bridges at the existing locations with minimum roadway approach work. Traffic will be detoured off-site on existing roads during construction.

Alternative 2 replaces both bridges on new alignment fifteen meters (fifty feet) north of the existing bridges. SR 1522 will be relocated from sixty-one meters (200 feet) west of Bridge No. 49 to sixty-one meters (200 feet) east of Bridge No. 50 for a total distance of 274 meters (900 feet). Traffic will be maintained on the existing roadway and bridges during construction.

Alternative 3 replaces both bridges on new alignment approximately fifteen meters (fifty feet) north of Bridge No. 49 and fifteen meters (fifty feet) south of Bridge No. 50. SR 1522 will be relocated from sixty-one meters (200 feet) west of Bridge No. 49 to 107 meters (350 feet) east of Bridge No. 50 for a total distance of 305 meters (1,000 feet). Traffic will be maintained on the existing roadway and bridges during construction.

Purpose of Survey and Report

This survey was conducted and the report prepared in order to identify historical architectural resources located within the area of potential effects (APE) as part of the environmental studies conducted by NCDOT and documented by a Categorical Exclusion (CE). This report is prepared as a technical appendix to the CE and as part of the documentation of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that if a federally funded, licensed, or permitted project has an effect on a property listed in or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be given a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings.

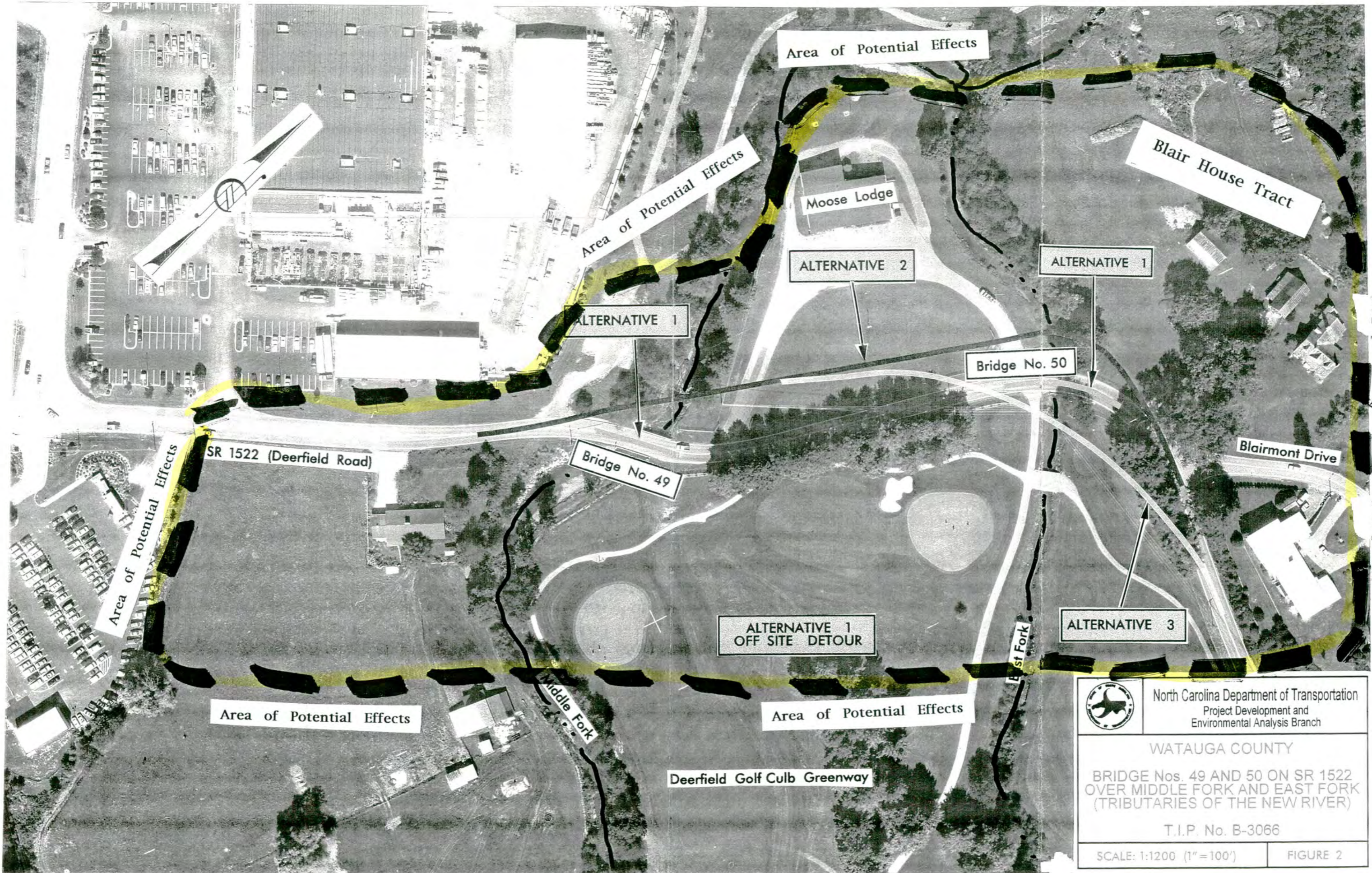


North Carolina Department of Transportation
Project Development and
Environmental Analysis Branch


WATAUGA COUNTY

**BRIDGE Nos. 49 AND 50 ON SR 1522
OVER MIDDLE FORK AND EAST FORK
(TRIBUTARIES OF THE NEW RIVER)**

T.I.P. No. B-3066



Area of Potential Effects

	North Carolina Department of Transportation Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch
	WATAUGA COUNTY BRIDGE Nos. 49 AND 50 ON SR 1522 OVER MIDDLE FORK AND EAST FORK (TRIBUTARIES OF THE NEW RIVER) T.I.P. No. B-3066
SCALE: 1:1200 (1" = 100')	FIGURE 2

Methodology

This survey was conducted and the report compiled in accordance with the provisions of FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A (Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents); and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 800; 36 CFR Part 60; and Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines for Historic Architectural Resources by NCDOT.

The "Final Identification and Evaluation" was conducted with the following goals: 1) to determine the APE, defined as the geographic area or areas within which a project may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist; 2) to identify all significant resources within the APE; and 3) to evaluate these resources according to the National Register of Historic Places criteria.

The methodology consisted of background research into the historical and architectural development of the area and a field survey of the APE. The field survey was conducted in January 2000, by automobile as well as on foot, to delineate the APE and to identify all properties within this area which were built prior to 1951. The boundaries of the APE are shown on an aerial map of the project (Figure 2). The APE is defined by modern construction, topographical features, and sight lines, and 100 percent of this area was surveyed.

Historical research was conducted at local and regional repositories. Although there have been no comprehensive architectural surveys of either Boone or Watauga County, a brief Historic Sites Survey form (undated) exists for the Blair House within the APE. In addition, the 1997 Phase I historic architectural resources report for the US 421, Boone Bypass project (TIP U-2703) identified the Blair House among the resources "Definitely Eligible for the National Register." Both the survey form and the Phase I report are on file at the Western Office of the Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Asheville.

Finally, interviews were conducted with individuals knowledgeable in the architectural development of the area and the history of the Blair House. Mr. F. Eugene Blair, a Blair family descendant, and Ms. Sanna Gaffney of the Watauga County Genealogical Society were contacted regarding the Blair House and family. Mr. John Spear, City of Boone Planning Department, was also interviewed concerning the Blair House and the overall architectural development of Boone. Finally, Clay Griffith, Head of the Western Office of the Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, was consulted about the Blair property and other historic resources in the general vicinity of the project.

Summary Findings of the Survey

One historic property, the Blair House, was identified within the APE and was evaluated in the "Property Inventory and Evaluations" section of this report. This late-nineteenth-century dwelling, which incorporates an earlier house, occupies a six-acre tract north of Bridge No. 50 and SR 1522 (Deerfield Road). The Blair tract also includes an associated smokehouse, wagon shelter/granary, and barn. No other historic architectural resources are located within the APE.

Properties Listed on the National Register

None

Properties Listed on the North Carolina State Study List

None

Properties Considered Eligible for the National Register

Blair House

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY

Settlement to the Civil War

European settlers began migrating into present-day Watauga County during the 1790s. In common with other western North Carolina counties, this section developed slowly through the nineteenth century. While settlers from the mid-Atlantic region streamed southward into the Piedmont during the colonial period, migration into the mountainous western reaches lagged well behind. Although Native Americans used this area as a seasonal hunting ground, the rugged terrain and the lack of navigable rivers and adequate roads restricted white occupation. The area that was to become Watauga County was occupied initially by such families as the Greenes, Hayeses, Coffeys, and Bolicks. Traveling into the upper Piedmont region from Pennsylvania and Virginia, these pioneer families made their way up the Yadkin River valley, clearing subsistence farms around the headwaters of the Yadkin River (Arthur 1976: 15; Thompson 1989: 1-2).

Lenoir, the county seat of Caldwell County, developed as the principal trading center. In the early nineteenth century, Lenoir farmers pastured their cattle in the highlands around Blowing Rock. However, the link between the two areas was not firmly established until the construction of the Lenoir-Blowing Rock turnpike (roughly following present US 321) in 1845. This overland route, which climbed northward from Lenoir across the Eastern Continental Divide, spurred local commerce, as farmers hauled cabbage, hay, cattle, and hogs to the market at Lenoir. A cotton mill was opened along the roadway in Patterson before the Civil War, and small furniture factories arose in and around the towns of Hickory and Lenoir to take advantage of the plentiful hardwoods being harvested on a limited scale. The turnpike also sparked the early development of Blowing Rock as a seasonal destination for tourists and travelers seeking a respite from the sultry summers of the Carolina Lowcountry (Arthur 1976: 15; Thompson 1989: 3; Buxton 1989: 2).

By 1849, the population of present-day Watauga County had grown to a sufficient size to justify the formation of a new county from portions of Caldwell, Ashe, Wilkes, and Yancey counties. The site of present-day Boone, first called Council's Store, was designated as the county seat. At mid-century, Boone consisted of a hotel, several sawmills, and a single row of frame stores and dwellings running along the base of Howard's Knob (McFarland 1973: 1-2).

Civil War Period to World War II

Watauga County largely escaped the physical devastation of the Civil War, though Union forces under the command of General George Stoneman occupied Boone and Blowing Rock toward the end of the conflict. In March, 1865, Stoneman's forces attacked rail lines in western North Carolina and Virginia. With 6,000 troops, Stoneman reached Boone in late March, fortifying the courthouse as his headquarters (Buxton 1989: 3; Thompson 1989: 4).

As North Carolina slowly recovered from the Civil War, transportation improvements generated a thriving summer tourist trade in the mountains. Critical to this area's tourist economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was improved rail and later, automobile access. In 1884, a

spur line of the Western North Carolina Railroad was completed from Hickory to Lenoir. In short order, Henkely, Craig and Company organized a hack line that carried passengers from the Lenoir depot up the pike road to Blowing Rock. Construction of several large hotels and numerous boarding houses quickly ensued. In 1889, the eighteen-mile Yonahlossee Turnpike, which connected Blowing Rock to the resort haven of Linville, was completed. With the acceleration of automobile ownership in the 1920s, improved concrete highways and bridges carried more and more tourists to the region. Blowing Rock, in particular, boomed as a tourist destination, with scores of new summer cottages appearing after World War I. Between 1920 and 1940, the year-round population of the village climbed from 338 in 1920 to 633 (Buxton 1989: 28-29).

North of Blowing Rock, the county seat of Boone remained a mountain village well into the twentieth century. Incorporated in 1871, Boone was described in 1888 as having "a gaunt, shaky courthouse and jail, a store or two, and two taverns" (Quoted in Bishir et al. 1999: 211). The 1896 *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory* recorded four general stores in Boone, along with two building contractors, a pair of hotels, several Methodist and Baptist churches, and a small collection of tanneries, sawmills, and blacksmith shops (Branson 1896: 637-640). Boone's population at the turn of the twentieth century was just 155. Even with the founding of Appalachian Training School (later Appalachian State University) in 1903, and the 1918 arrival of the narrow-gauge, East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad, Boone had only 374 residents in 1920 (Bishir et al. 1999: 211-213).

The railroad lines brought large, northern lumber companies into the timberlands of the mountains, and large-scale timbering flourished during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Whiting Lumber Company constructed a railroad from Pineola to Shull's Mill in the northwestern section of the county in 1915-1916, and a bond issue extended the line to Boone in 1918. Another lumber concern erected a twenty-mile flume eastward to the Southern Railway loading docks at Wilkesboro, where logs and lumber were shipped to northern and eastern markets. By the 1920s, the era of industrial timbering had come to an end, as lumber companies cleared the last great stands of virgin hardwoods in Watauga County (McFarland 1973: 22; Burns 1989: 32-33).

While timbering declined, small-scale farming persisted into the middle decades of the twentieth century. In the early twentieth century, Watauga County contained some 2,000 farms with an average size of ninety-five acres (forty-five acres cleared). Typical of the state as a whole, farmers raised corn in quantity (over 7,000 acres in 1923-1924), plus an assortment of other small grains, hay, and livestock. After World War I, Watauga County emerged as a major producer of apples, ranking in the top twenty-five percent of North Carolina counties in the number of fruit trees. At the eve of World War II, agriculture remained a mainstay of the local economy, employing seventy-five percent of the male population in the county (N.C. Labor Statistics 1901: 130-131; 1923-1924: 320-321; Johnson 1941: 192).

Post-World War II to the Present

In the latter twentieth century, the county as a whole continued to develop as a tourist destination, while the expansion of Appalachian State University (ASU) transformed Boone and its environs. Part of the sixteen-campus state university system, ASU in 1998 contained 12,000 students and over 700 faculty. The ASU campus reflects the school's recent growth, dominated by tall, red-brick institutional buildings constructed between the 1950s and 1990s. Downtown Boone contains relatively few buildings that pre-date World War II. King Street retains simple brick commercial buildings erected between the 1920s and 1940s. In the hillsides north of King Street, the town's oldest residential area features bungalows built in the 1920s and 1930s. In the general vicinity of the project area at the south end of town, Boone's modern development is reflected in a variety of new residential, commercial, recreational, and civic land uses. Within the APE, the six-acre Blair family tract is surrounded by modern construction, including the Blairmont residential subdivision (east), the Moose Lodge (west), and the Deerfield Golf Club (south).

Property Inventory and Evaluations

Blair House

North side SR 1522 (Deerfield Road), just west of the junction with Blairmont Drive, Boone, Watauga County

Associated Outbuildings

log smokehouse, frame wagon shelter/granary, frame barn

Setting

The Blair House occupies a six-acre remnant of the original Blair family farmstead, which has been subdivided in recent decades for a variety of residential, recreational, and civic functions. The house faces south across the lawn towards SR 1522 and the Deerfield Golf Club. A smokehouse stands behind the dwelling, while a wagon shelter/granary and a barn are sited to the west. The East Fork of the New River winds along the southwest boundary of the property, and a wooded hill dominates the north side of the tract, behind the house.

Physical Description and Evaluation of Integrity (Plates 1-9) (Figures 3-4)

The Blair House, originally a hall-parlor dwelling built in 1844, was enlarged and remodeled to its present form in the late nineteenth century. Reflecting the enlargement, the house displays an unusual, asymmetrical, six-bay front facade with two front doors, each leading into a separate front room. The well-preserved story-and-a-half, frame dwelling is capped by a standing-seam metal, side-gable roof, which features a stylish central front gable flanked by hip-roofed dormers. The front gable and dormers are embellished with diamond and octagon wood shingles. The single-pile main block has an engaged front porch (now enclosed by a modern bank of one-over-one windows and a weatherboard apron) which shelters the six-bay facade. With the exception of two mid-nineteenth-century, nine-over-six windows flanking the east doorway on the front facade, four-over-four windows predominate throughout the main block and the rear ell (Historic Sites Survey File; Griffith 1997).

The full-height, two-room rear ell features a dormer with decorative wood shingles matching those embellishing the front gable and dormers. The ell has an enclosed porch on the east side and a later shed-roofed extension on the west side. An exterior brick chimney fills the east gable end of the main block, while interior brick chimneys are located at the junction of the main block and ell, and between the two rooms in the ell. These chimneys have been repaired and partially rebuilt in the twentieth century. The Blair House is unoccupied, and the principal investigators were unable to gain access to the interior (Historic Sites Survey File).

The property includes three outbuildings, which are also no longer in use but remain in stable condition. The smokehouse, which remains in good condition, is constructed of half-dovetailed logs and has a projecting gable-front roof. The wagon shelter/granary, which is also in good condition, is a two-story, frame, weatherboard building with a standing-seam, metal roof and a nine-over-six window in the gable front. An enclosed stairway at the northeast corner ascends to the granary. A later shed extension along the

west elevation sheltered livestock. The barn, located west of the wagon shelter, is a frame, weatherboard, gable-front building with lateral extensions on the side elevations. It stands in deteriorated but stable condition. The smokehouse, the wagon shelter/granary, and the barn are all said to have been constructed during Henry Blair's tenure on this property. A cabinetmaker as well as a farmer and a schoolteacher, Blair used a portion of the barn for his woodworking shop (Historic Sites Survey Form; Griffith 1997).

Historical Background and Context

The original Blair House, now incorporated into the east side of the present house, is said to have been built in 1844 by Henry Blair. A farmer, cabinetmaker, and teacher, Henry Blair and his wife, Mary, operated a farm of approximately 300 acres along the Middle Fork and East Fork of the New River. Son George Blair acquired the property in the late nineteenth century, and may have been responsible for enlarging and remodeling the house, though this has not been confirmed. George Blair and his wife, Molly, were married in 1882, and raised three sons and one daughter in this house. Until the 1950s, the Blair family farmed the land that is now the Deerfield Golf Club (south of SR 1522), raising livestock, corn and other small grains, cabbage, and potatoes. Now the Blairmont residential subdivision, the land east of the house was formerly pasture for cattle and sheep. The Blair House tract remains in the Blair family, though the house is unoccupied and the outbuildings are no longer in use (Historic Sites Survey Form; Griffith 1997).

In its blend of regional and national architectural patterns, the Blair House clearly represents houses built in Watauga County and throughout the region during the late nineteenth century. Even as the geographical isolation of the mountain region fostered conservative building practices, the arrival of nearby rail lines, mass-produced milled lumber, and the seasonal tourist industry encouraged new designs and modes of construction. While builders and their clients tended to favor traditional single-pile house types, one or two stories tall, such forms were frequently garnished with fashionable millwork reflecting national trends (Bishir 1990: 291; Thompson 1989: 9-10).

Near downtown Boone, the William Lewis Bryan House, one of the city's few remaining nineteenth-century dwellings, reflects this pattern. Built in 1895, the Bryan House is a conservative frame, two-story, single-pile house type decorated with a central front gable and a two-tier porch with fancy, mass-produced millwork. In nearby Blowing Rock, the ca. 1900 D. P. Coffey House is a plainer rendering of the two-story, rectangular form, treated with simple lathe-turned porch posts (Dorsey 1972: 10; Thompson 1989: 10).

In rural areas, farmers, like the Blairs, often expanded and remodeled their existing farmhouses in this period to suit changing needs and tastes. Outside the APE, the Baird family of Valle Crusis enlarged their antebellum log house in the late nineteenth century to create an impressive two-story, frame residence with a stylish two-tier porch. Like the Blairs, the Bairds continued to build along customary lines, selecting the familiar two-story version of the single-pile house, which they embellished with up-to-date, picturesque trim (Bishir 1990: 291, 293; Bishir et al. 1999: 219).

Evaluation of Eligibility

The Blair House is recommended eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for architecture. Incorporating a smaller dwelling built in 1844, the house in its present form is a well-preserved and rare surviving example of late-nineteenth-century domestic architecture in Watauga County. The log smokehouse, the frame wagon shelter/granary, and the frame barn are also contributing resources.

The property is not considered eligible under any other criterion. The Blair House tract is not eligible under Criterion A for agriculture because most of the original farmstead has been subdivided for modern housing and civic and recreational land uses. The property is not eligible under Criterion B because it is not associated with individuals whose activities were demonstrably important within a local, state, or national historic context. Finally, the property is not considered eligible under Criterion D because the architectural component is not likely to yield information important in the history of building technology.

Boundaries

The proposed National Register boundaries are defined by the current 6.1-acre tax parcel. This parcel encompasses the house, the smokehouse, the wagon shelter/granary, the barn, and the surrounding open space and woodland that define the setting.



Plate 1. Blair House and Setting, Looking North.



Plate 2. Blair House, Front Facade, Looking North.



Plate 3. Blair House and Wagon Shelter/Granary, Looking West.

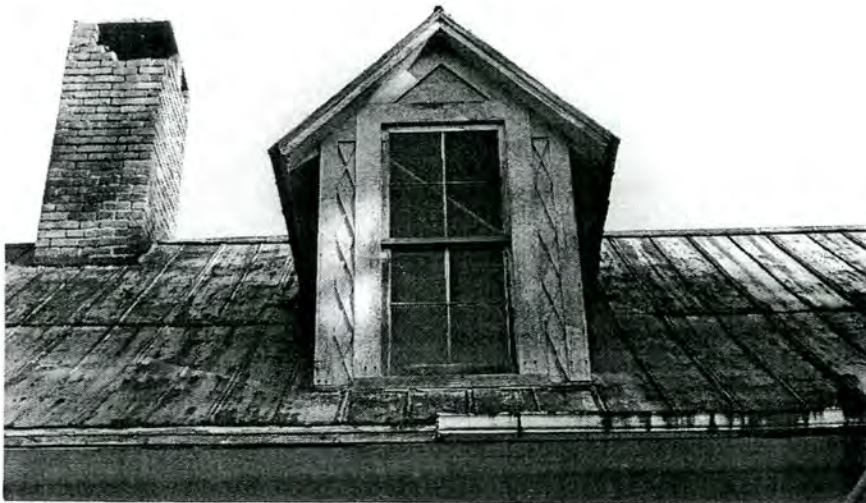


Plate 4. Blair House, Dormer on West Elevation, Looking East.



Plate 5. Blair House, West Elevation Rear Ell, Looking East.



Plate 6. Blair House, East Elevation Looking Southwest.



Plate 7. Smokehouse, Looking North.



Plate 8. Wagon Shelter/Granary, Looking North.



Plate 9. Barn, Looking East.



Plate 10. Field West of Blair House, Looking West.

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