

States Department of the Interior
Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of Ashe County, North Carolina, c.1799 – 1955

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Topography, Geography, Prehistory and Settlement of Ashe County Through 1860
Slavery, the Civil War, and the Age of the Yeoman Farmer: 1860 - 1915
Change Comes with a Full Head of Steam: 1915-1929
National Crisis, Local Impact: 1930 – 1955
Ashe County After 1955

C. Form Prepared by

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City or town Christiansburg state VA zip code 24073

D. Certification

I, as the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official _____ Date _____

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799 -1955SECTION E – STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTSIntroduction

Dr. Elisha Mitchell, for whom Mount Mitchell, the state's highest peak, is named, visited Ashe County and much of western North Carolina during the early nineteenth century. At times derogatory and at other times glowing, Mitchell's diary of his visit to Ashe County in 1828 tells much about the character of the place. From his vantage point atop Mount Jefferson, Mitchell exclaimed: "Nearly the whole county of Ashe lay at our feet, the Merryanders of the river could be traced as on a map. Some of the plantation in view also presented a noble appearance, but oh, what an ocean of mountains."¹

Mitchell's description still has meaning for the Ashe County of today. The place is organized by its geography of mountains and the winding routes of the New River and its many tributaries. Formed in 1799, the county seat of Jefferson and the outlying community of North Fork thrived during the nineteenth century, but were superseded by the growth of the railroad town of West Jefferson after the completion of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad in 1915.

The early settlers were farmers and agrarian life dominated the county well into the twentieth century. Even today the county is rural with the modest farm complex from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century being the most numerous property type. These farms were served by decentralized communities with general stores, post offices, schools, and churches. Many examples of each of these building types are still found in the county.

Once described as a "Lost Province" because of its remoteness, the county was never cut off or isolated from trade. Although difficult transportation routes are part of the county's history, there were thriving stores and businesses by the 1830-1850 period and the Ore Knob Copper Mine flourishing during the 1870s. The timber industry boomed during the 1915-1930 period after the construction of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad into the county in 1914. Many of these enterprises are illustrated by the county's extant historic buildings.

1 Elisha Mitchell, *Diary of a Geological Tour by Dr. Elisha Mitchell in 1827 and 1828 with Introduction and Notes by Dr. Kemp P. Battle, LL.D.*, (Chapel Hill: James Sprunt Historical Monograph No. 6, by the University of North Carolina, 1905), accessed via New River Valley Notes website <<http://www.newrivernotes.com/nrv/foot.htm>>.

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Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799 -1955AN "OCEAN OF MOUNTAINS": THE TOPOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY, PREHISTORY,
AND SETTLEMENT OF ASHE COUNTY THROUGH 1860*Topography and Geography*

The landscape of western North Carolina has inspired artisans, naturalists, tourism promoters, and residents alike with its rolling hills, clear rivers and streams, and endless mountains. The complex geology of western North Carolina also helped define settlement patterns and the culture of this mountainous region. The distinct mountains, ridges, and valleys are part of the larger Appalachian Mountain chain that runs diagonally from Alabama to eastern Canada. In western North Carolina, this chain consists of parallel ranges. The Great Smokey Mountains and Unaka ranges define the western edge, while the Blue Ridge creates the eastern boundary at the edge of the Piedmont. The west side of the Blue Ridge lies at an elevation of about 3,000 feet, creating a plateau reaching westward to the Stone Mountains and penetrated by several passable gaps. The Blue Ridge forms the Eastern Continental Divide, defining the watersheds of the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other. Between these parallel mountain ranges are many cross ridges and valleys that separate basins defined by the New, Watauga, Toe, Nolichucky, French Broad, Pigeon, Little Tennessee, and Hiwassee rivers. The New River drains into the Ohio River Basin and is remarkable for its northward flow from east to west across the Appalachian Mountains. The river is also noted for its ancient history. Although unproven, many argue that the New River is second only to the Nile as the oldest river in the world.²

The New River and its tributaries provided access to the northwestern-most corner of North Carolina, the area eventually settled as Ashe County. Nestled between the Blue Ridge and Stone Mountains, the north and south forks of the New River created rich river valleys surrounded by the beauty of large, symmetrical hills. Deep rich soils are found along the river valleys as expected, but also cover many of the steep hillsides and mountain peaks. The upper New River valley in Grayson County, Virginia, as well as Ashe and Alleghany counties, North Carolina, "comprise a unique, unified mountain region" that is differentiated from the valley further north. The river's "merryanders" cited by Dr. Mitchell create numerous bends, and between these and the adjacent hillside are rich bottom lands, often seventy-five to two hundred acres "creating an almost perfect setting for small farm units." In addition to the bottom lands, natural grassy balds, areas high on the hills covered in bluegrass, were sought out for livestock grazing. Expansive stands of chestnut, black walnut, hickory, maple, and pine once covered many of the hillsides and provided generations of timber and associated industry. Thus, the geography was an important factor in the economic and cultural development of the county.³

A concentration of true mountains lies near the center of Ashe County, with Mount Jefferson, designated as a state park in 1956, being the most accessible. It rises to a lofty height of nearly 5,000 feet. Surrounding this mountain are Bluff Mountain and Three Top Mountain to the east, Phoenix Mountain and

2 West Virginia Geology website, <<http://www.wvgs.wvnet.edu/www/geology/geoles01.htm>>.

3 Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *The New River Controversy*, (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1979), 33.

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Little Phoenix Mountain to the north, Mulatto Mountain to the south and, with the highest elevation at 5,196 feet, the Peak to the west. Black Mountain lies at the southwestern border of the county and Pond Mountain defines the northwestern corner. Numerous streams flow from these mountains, shaping the slopes, valleys and hollows, providing sources of abundant pure water, and often defining old trading paths, roads, and areas of settlement.

Dr. Aras Cox writes about the fortuitous situation of the county for agriculture in his *Footprints on the Sands of Time*: "There is scarcely a plot of land to be found large enough for an ordinary farm that is not supplied with springs of clear, cold water and streams running through them. Beautiful groves of timber, oak, hickory, ash, poplar, maple, walnut, pine and cherry. The climate and soil is well adapted to the growth of different grasses, as timothy, clover, redbtop, bluegrass, and evergreen."⁴

American Indian Activity

The lands that now make up of Ashe County were first used during the Paleo-Indian period (12,000-8000 B.C.). It appears likely that there were temporary camps on the uplands used by hunter-gatherers, whose permanent camps were located in eastern Tennessee. Woodland Period (500 B.C.-A.C. 1000) sites are found on both the floodplain and upland areas. The small occupation sites from both these periods suggest that the valley was an important food gathering route through the mountains. The ridges were inhabited during the summer, while the floodplain was used in the winter. Deer, which provided food, cordage, hide, and bone, were likely hunted here and fish dams and fish weirs documented by archaeologists illustrate the importance of the river as a source of food.⁵

By the time of the first European contact with Native Americans, the Cherokee inhabited the southern mountains of North Carolina and adjacent sections in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. The Cherokee were an Iroquoian group who claimed the northern mountains, including what would become Ashe County, as their hunting territory although there were no permanent settlements in the area. During a 1969 survey of the proposed hydroelectric reservoir that would have flooded the New River valley in Ashe and Alleghany counties as well as in Grayson County, Virginia, forty archaeological sites and eleven fish dams were documented. The archaeological sites are frequently located on the sandy loam soils of the floodplain. Archaeological investigations on a small number of sites in Ashe County have found them to be "heavily eroded, lack[ing] subsurface features, and contain[ing] materials that are typical of similar sites in the region."⁶

4 Aras B. Cox, *Footprints on the Sands of Time: a History of Southwestern Virginia and Northwestern North Carolina*, (Sparta: Star Publishing, 1900), accessed via New River Valley Notes website, <<http://www.newrivernotes.com/nrv/foot.htm>>.

5 Schoenbaum, 9; Paul Mohler, Megan O'Connell, and Brian Overton, "Archaeological Survey Report: Road Widening of NC 88 from US 221 Business to NC 194 in West Jefferson, Ashe County, North Carolina, 2001," North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh; and Archaeology files at the Western Office of the State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville.

6 Mohler, et al.

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Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799 -1955*Early Exploration and Settlement*

Among the earliest explorers in the area that would become Ashe County were Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson (father of Thomas Jefferson), who came into the region in 1746 and again in 1749 as they conducted survey work for the colonial Board of Trade. The pair extended the boundary of Virginia and North Carolina westward by ninety miles, ending on Pond Mountain, which Jefferson is purported to have named. The map produced from their work, *A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia*, was published in 1751 and was the first reasonably accurate map of the region.⁷

The Moravian leader Bishop August Spangenburg ascended the Blue Ridge in late 1752 in search of a site for a planned Moravian community (later located at Bethabara and Salem). Spangenburg followed the South Fork of the New River (South Fork) as far as Grassy Creek. He found the soil of the hollows and small valleys suitable for farming and grazing, but rejected the area since he was looking for a large expanse of arable land.⁸

Hunters and hunting parties from Virginia and North Carolina's Yadkin Valley were active in the area during the 1750s and 1760s. The most famous of these was Daniel Boone, who was an active hunter during the 1760s in what is now Watauga County. An 1811 article in the *Raleigh Star* written by an Ashe resident reported that the first settler in the county arrived in 1755. This may have been Andrew Baker, who was later forced to leave by the onset of the French and Indian War in 1754. Other sources suggest that Andrew Baker returned in 1763 or 1765 after the war's end. Enoch Osborne settled at Mouth of Wilson, Virginia, a few miles north of the North Carolina line in 1765. David Helton is believed to have first come into the North Fork area with a hunting party from Virginia in 1770 and returned with his family the following year. He settled on land in the vicinity of Helton Creek in the north-central section of Ashe despite the lack of legal title. A community called Helton soon grew up along the creek and was well populated by the time Dr. Mitchell visited there in 1828.⁹

The first land grants were issued for lands west of the Blue Ridge in 1778 and by 1790, two hundred grants had been issued. These tended to be clustered on the North Fork of the New River (North Fork) between Big Laurel Creek and Big Horse Creek; on Helton, Grassy, and Beaver creeks in the Jefferson vicinity; and on the South Fork between Naked Creek and Mulberry Creek. Many early grants were held by speculators, and it is estimated that only about eighty households existed in the area. A 1784 tax roster lists eighty-two names for the section of Wilkes County that would become Ashe. The 1790 census for the same area listed only seventy-seven free white males over the age of sixteen.¹⁰

7 Ron Bailey, "A Surveyor for the King," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Summer 2001, accessed on Colonial Williamsburg website and "Rivers, Edens, Empires: Lewis and Clark and the Revealing of America," electronic exhibit on Library of Congress website.

8 Schoenbaum, 19.

9 Ruth Weaver Shepherd, ed., *The Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. I (Hunter Publishing, 1984, 1998 reprint), xi; Thomas McGimsey, letter to editor of *Raleigh Star*, 3 May 1811, in Thomas Henderson Papers, North Carolina State Archives; Clarice Weaver, ed., *The Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. II (Charlotte: Delmar Printing, 1994), 14-15; and Mitchell.

10 Crawford, 19; Shepherd, xi; and "Some early land grants in the New River Water Basin," map in vertical files of Ashe

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Settlers to the county came south from Virginia or west from the Catawba and Yadkin valleys. Most were of British or Scots-Irish descent, but German and Swiss ancestry were also common. One of the earliest settlers was Martin Gambill, who was born in Culpepper, Virginia, to parents who had also been born in Virginia. Gambill came to Wilkes County in 1768 and settled on the South Fork in 1778. In July 1780, Gambill, played a prominent role in the Battle of Big Glades at Old Fields, where local troops defeated a detachment of 150 Loyalists. The incident was part of the larger regional contest settled at Kings Mountain in October 1780. In the days leading up to the battle, Gambill made a famous 100-mile ride to Seven Mile Ford, Virginia to deliver a message to Colonel William Campbell. The message alerted the American commander to move his men to Kings Mountain. Gambill was seriously wounded at Kings Mountain, but recovered to become Ashe County's first tax collector and in 1806, as well as the county's' first sheriff. In 1810, Gambill was elected as the first State Senator from Ashe and held that position until his death in 1812.¹¹

Another early settler was Captain John Cox, whose parents immigrated to Pennsylvania from Ulster, Ireland. He acquired land on the South Fork at the mouth of Cranberry Creek in 1780, although he may not have moved there until 1785. Cox was named as one of three Commissioners in the 1799 act creating Ashe County and he came to hold enormous acreages, owning 8,000 acres in 1815. This wealth passed to his descendants, and by 1860 twelve of Ashe County's eighty-two slaveholders were direct descendants of John Cox.¹²

The story of Cox's descendants illustrates the advantage that could be obtained by the families of early settlers and is echoed by the story of Aquilla Greer. Greer was of Scottish descent and came to Ashe County around 1812 from Virginia. He constructed a brick house, a rarity, using slave labor. His son John continued to reside in Grassy Creek, where his father had settled, and in 1860 was the third largest slaveholder and one of the wealthiest men in the county with an estate valued at \$27,000.¹³ A perusal of the Ashe County land grants helps to make the point. John Cox and Martin Gambill both received sizable acreages, as did many others whose surnames are recognizable in the county even today and which are often associated with historic properties recorded in the architectural survey. These include men by the names of Pennington, Weaver, Baker, Vannoy, and Osborne.¹⁴

In addition to Helton and Grassy Creek, one of the earliest settlements was at Sutherland. Lands in the Sutherland area were part of 1778 land records, and many deeds mention the establishment of sugar camps in the vicinity. Sugar camps (for the purpose of making maple sugar) were among of the many ways that new settlers could live off of the land. Land speculators purchased property in the area in 1799, selling at a profit to Alexander Sutherland of Elk Creek, Virginia, in 1805. Sutherland was of Scottish descent. His son, Thomas, settled on the land in 1807. Thomas Sutherland soon acquired more land and was appointed Justice

County Public Library.

11 Crawford, 19-20 and Shepherd, xi and 249-250.

12 Shepherd, 204-205 and Crawford, 21.

13 Shepherd, 274-275 and Crawford, 21-22.

14 "Ashe County Land Grants," accessed at New River Notes website, <<http://www.newrivernotes.com/nc/ashe.htm>>.

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of the Peace in 1818. The proximity of Sutherland to Meat Camp in Watauga County suggests that the area was part of the early hunting grounds along the North Fork. Meat Camp was a base for hunters in the area and oral tradition holds that the name of the community came from a cabin or camp that was built as a centralized place where hunters kept meat and hides while they continued to hunt.¹⁵

Establishment of County and County Seat

As the western lands of North Carolina became increasingly settled, the process of political division and organization was not altogether smooth. The State of Franklin formed in 1784 included part of what would become Ashe County, but was primarily made up of lands that would become part of Tennessee upon that state's formation in 1796. Franklin existed only until 1789, but its short duration was tumultuous as factions vied for political control and official recognition from North Carolina.¹⁶

The first survey of the new Tennessee-North Carolina boundary was undertaken in May and June of 1799. According to the diary of John Strother, the survey began "at a sugar tree and beech on Pond Mountain, so called from two small ponds on it." Strother's description of the terrain in the area of their camp on the night of May 23, 1799, rings true for this remote section of Ashe County. He wrote that they camped "at a bad place . . . after having passed through extreme rough ground and some bad laurel thickets."¹⁷

This survey work was combined in 1799 with the formation of Ashe County. The new county encompassed "all that part of the county of Wilkes lying west of the extreme height of the Appalachian Mountains."¹⁸ The county did not achieve its current form until the eve of the Civil War, after lands in the southwest were given over to form Watauga County in 1849 and lands in the northeast were ceded to form Alleghany County in 1859.

The county seat of Ashe was established at Jefferson, which was known during the early nineteenth century as Jeffersonton, in 1803. The first courthouse was log, replaced about 1832 with a brick building. This building was demolished after the extant courthouse was constructed in 1904 behind the 1832 building. Elisha Mitchell expressed an unfavorable view of the little town during his 1828 visit writing: "Jefferstontown has 6 or 8 dwelling houses--rather shabby."¹⁹ Dr. Aras Cox, wrote in a more positive way in 1900, as he described the three rows of cherry trees that lined Jefferson's main street. Cox found the county seat to be in "a good location, laid out for convenience."²⁰ James Arthur also mentions the cherry trees in 1915 writing that they: "give not only shade, but an air of distinction not noticeable in newer towns, while the colonial style of several of the houses indicate a degree of refinement among the earlier inhabitants sadly missing from many places of equal antiquity."²¹

15 Shepherd, 54 and 470-471.

16 Weaver, 17-18.

17 John Preston Arthur, *Western North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Co., 1914), 38.

18 Arthur, 159.

19 Mitchell.

20 Cox.

21 Arthur, 161.

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Most early roads within Ashe County followed the numerous waterways. Mitchell describes a typical journey: "rode to the north of Helton, ten miles and fording that stream, as I was told, for I did not undertake to count, thirty-two times in the distance, and then down the North Fork to Col. Meredith Ballou's. This ride was very pleasant."²² The first mention of road-building in the records of the County Court came in 1806 when steps were taken to lay out a road northward over Phoenix Mountain from Jefferson. Arthur Fletcher reports in his book *Ashe County: A History*, that "thereafter, at every meeting of the court of which there is record, road location and road building and maintenance appeared to have been of prime importance." The building of roads was accomplished in sections by court-appointed overseers using men assigned to work under them. Road work was required of every male citizen. This system was in place until the early twentieth century.²³

The main thoroughfare in the county was known as the Buffalo Road or Buffalo Trail. It was said to have been formed during ancient times by the migration of buffalo to the Piedmont of North Carolina and was used by American Indians. Later hunters, herdsman, and explorers found passage on this trail, which led from the Yadkin Valley up through Deep Gap and across the valley of the South Fork of the New River to Trade, Tennessee, where it joined other trails at the trading center located at the base of Snake Mountain.²⁴

By 1840, stages, or hacks, ran from Salem, North Carolina, to Jonesboro, Tennessee, by way of Wilkesboro, Jefferson, Creston, and Taylorsville (now Mountain City, Tennessee). Other sources cite a similar stage route from Salisbury to Taylorsville through Jefferson during the 1830s. These ceased by 1850, but Samuel Northington ran a line from Jefferson to Taylorsville after the Civil War.²⁵ This was an arduous journey: in the late 1850s the trip between Jefferson and Salem took thirty-six hours, whereas today the journey is less than two hours. Through the 1840s, supplies for the Worth & Thomas store in North Fork came overland on a journey of several days from Fayetteville. In 1856, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad reached Abingdon, Virginia, fifty-six miles from Jefferson, opening up new trade opportunities for Ashe County.²⁶

Despite the transportation routes and economic development that occurred in Ashe County during the nineteenth century, it became known as one of the "Lost Provinces" of northwestern North Carolina. The moniker helped perpetuate a myth of the county's remoteness and by extension backwardness. Ashe was indeed connected with the outside world, but these connections were primarily with Virginia and Tennessee as the county was not easily accessible from eastern North Carolina. This was especially true after 1856 and the establishment of the railhead at Abingdon.

22 Mitchell.
23 Arthur Fletcher, *Ashe County: A History* (Charlotte: Heritage Printers, 1963), 80-81.
24 Shepherd, xi, and Weaver, 12-13.
25 Arthur, 243, and notes and map in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.
26 Ibid, and Shepherd, 15-18.

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It was the Buffalo Road that influenced the location of some of the county's oldest settlements. North Fork (now known as Creston) is located on the North Fork of the New River. The settlement was well developed during the early nineteenth century, primarily through the efforts of entrepreneurs David Worth and Stephen Thomas. A post office in present-day Ashe County was established in North Fork in 1830. Within a few years, the community included livestock trader Zachariah Baker, a tavern (the only such establishment on the road between Jefferson and Trade, Tennessee), the large Worth & Thomas Store (1835), a small textile and clothing factory run by Mrs. Worth and her slaves, and a carriage and furniture factory.²⁷

The development of communities like North Fork illustrates the steady growth in Ashe County from its formation in 1799 through the 1840s. By 1800, the county, which still included lands that would become Alleghany and Watauga counties, was home to 3,000 people, growing to 7,500 by 1840. The greatest decade of growth came in the 1820s, when the population expanded by nearly sixty-two percent.²⁸ The earliest post office in the area was established in 1823 at Councils Store, which would later become Boone in Watauga County. Additional post offices were established at Jefferson in 1831, at Elk Cross Roads (now Todd) in 1837, at Helton in 1849, South Fork (near Obids) in 1850, and Nathans Creek, also in 1850.

Commerce and Industry

North Fork was larger than Jefferson during the early nineteenth century and its prominence in the early history of the county is evident in the variety and scale of its business and industry. The mercantile operated in North Fork by Stephen Thomas and his son-in-law David Worth, was a sizable operation established during the 1830s along with the tannery, carding mill, and associated cloth and clothing manufacturing business. Credit reports from the 1850s indicate that these were highly profitable enterprises.²⁹ In Jefferson, Colonel George Bower, the county's wealthiest man, operated the Jefferson Inn during the 1840s; the Waugh, Poe, and Murchison mercantile was also operating here during this period. In 1845, Jefferson also was home to two Methodist ministers, the jailer and sheriff, a tinner, and a blacksmith.³⁰ *Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory* of 1851-1852, lists four general stores in Jefferson (owned by Bower, Faw, Gentry, and Waugh) along with Quincy F. Neal, an attorney; James Wagg, a physician; and three hotels (owned by Bower, Bartlett, and Faw).³¹

Scattered across the county during this period, stores were being constructed to serve growing populations in outlying areas. The Alexander Martin Tavern (AH 267) for example, was built sometime around 1860 in the Brushy Fork area northwest of North Fork. The tiny, full-dovetail log building is probably

27 Crawford, 11 and Shepherd, 47.

28 Crawford, 16.

29 Crawford, 131.

30 Arthur, 163.

31 *Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory*, 1851-1852, accessed at New River Notes website.

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representative of Ashe's earliest commercial buildings. Little is known of other early stores, but they were almost certainly located in communities like Elk Cross Roads (now Todd) in the southwestern part of Ashe County, which was noted as a trading center as early as 1781.³²

In addition to mercantiles, taverns, and hotels, other early enterprises included a number of iron mines and foundries beginning around 1807 with forges built by Daniel Dougherty and William Herbert (Harbart) on Helton Creek. Dougherty sold his forge to Meredith Ballou in 1814, while the Herbert forge continued until 1858 under the name of Helton Forge. Other sources suggest that the earliest forge was a Catalan forge³³ begun about 1790 by Meredith Ballou and George Bower on the North Fork, two miles below Crumpler at The Falls. Describing Ashe County in an 1811 letter to the *Raleigh Star*, former State Legislator Thomas McGimsey reported five forges in operation at that time.³⁴

Another indication of the breadth of the iron industry in Ashe County during the Nineteenth century is the small manufacturing plant in Jefferson where Meredith Ballou made iron long bars and hauled many wagonloads of iron to Charleston. Additionally, Ballou's son built a bloomery forge near the mouth of Helton Creek before 1860, which continued into 1890s. There was also a forge in the North Fork area from 1825 until 1829; the Laurel Bloomery forge operated from 1847 until 1853; and New River Forge existed on the South Fork from 1871 until 1878. There were three veins of iron in the county: the Ballou, or river belt; Red Hill/Piney Creek; and Titaniferous/McCarty with outcroppings on Grassy Creek, Helton Creek, and Horse Creek. The iron mines were pit mines and in 1890 were located at Crumpler, Grimsley, Helton, Jefferson, Sturgills, and at the Mouth of Buffalo. Mining virtually ceased about 1888 because transportation costs became low enough to make imported ore and goods less expensive.³⁵

Although the iron industry was important to the county's development during the first half of the nineteenth century, forges were much less common than grist mills, which were closely tied to the county's agricultural economy. The 1840 census shows that there were fifty-seven gristmills and twenty sawmills in the county.³⁶ Yet in 1868, *Branson's Business Directory* lists four only grist mills: Bower's Mill in Jefferson; Hamilton's Mill, also in Jefferson; Perkins' Mill in Helton; and Worth's Mill at North Fork. Bower's Mill was built in 1825 by Absalom Bower, brother of Colonel George Bower, and survived well into the late twentieth century. It was originally designed to grind wheat, but in its final years was used only for corn. All of these mills were located on creeks, which provided water power to turn the mill stones.³⁷

32 "Todd Historic District, 1999," Western Office, State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville.

33 A bloomery, which consists of a pit or chimney with an air intake, is a type of furnace that produces a spongy mass of molten iron. A catalan forge is a particular type of bloomery that utilizes a water-powered bellows to make hotter temperatures possible. With a bloomery or catalan forge, wrought iron could be produced directly from ore.

34 Reeves, 143-4; Shepherd, 15-18; Arthur; and Thomas McGimsey in *Raleigh Star*, 3 May 1811, Thomas Henderson Papers, North Carolina State Archives.

35 Ibid; *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890, accessed at New River Notes website, <<http://www.newrivernotes.com/nc/ashe1890.htm>>; and Fletcher, 221-222.

36 Lee Tippet and Eric Voigt, "Archaeological Survey an Evaluation: U.S. Rte 221 Widening Project, 2003," North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh.

37 "Bower's Grist Mill," architectural survey file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

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Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799 -1955*Agriculture*

While Ashe County was home to many businesses and a few industrial concerns prior to the Civil War, the county's economy remained overwhelmingly agricultural throughout the period. It was the prospect of good land and water for crops and livestock that enticed the area's settlers to come to this remote place. Thomas McGimsey described Ashe County in 1811 as "a fine county for pasture and meadows from which great numbers of cattle and sheep are raised, which brings much wealth to the farmer." McGimsey goes on to report that the residents of Ashe sent a variety of produce to market, including cattle, sheep, butter, cheese, bee's wax, venison hams, and ginseng.³⁸

While McGimsey describes a variety of marketable produce from Ashe County farms, it is important to recognize that this produce was usually sold locally in small quantities. The agricultural system was one of self-sufficient, minimal cash agriculture. The premise was simple: grow or produce everything possible for your family's livelihood, and then sell or trade modest surpluses locally. Butter, eggs, chickens, and herbs were among the most common small-scale goods marketable at the county's general stores. On a larger scale, local and itinerant livestock dealers purchased cattle and drove them to market at the rail head in Abingdon, Virginia. Early settlers brought with them the Devon or Shorthorn breed, which was used for meat, milk, and oxen. In 1860, there were more than 3,000 "milch" (milk) cows in the county and 659 oxen.³⁹

Ashe County farms produced vegetables, corn, oats, buckwheat, rye, and wheat for the family's use. Hunting was still a primary source of food during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but reliance upon domesticated animals was increasing. Livestock, hogs in particular, grazed on the mast (nuts, leaves, etc.) available in the abundant forests of the county. In 1860, there were 19,524 hogs in Ashe County and 7,842 cattle. The number of hogs declined steadily after 1900, while the number of cattle rose after that date. This shift is indicative of the increasing market access for cattle as well as a shift in the diet of farmers. As the old-growth forests were cleared for agricultural fields, it was less practical to keep large numbers of free-range hogs and more economical to keep a few hogs along with beef cattle on the farm's pasture.⁴⁰

By the eve of the Civil War, Ashe County was the leading producer of buckwheat, rye, molasses, and cheese in western North Carolina. Despite this statistic, it is likely that the county's buckwheat and rye were consumed or traded locally and excess produce would be so modest as to make the difficult trip to a market impractical. Cheese and molasses, because of their non-perishable characteristics and value as commodities may have been traded over greater distances, perhaps on a regional scale. Cheese was wholly the province of large landholders who could provide enough pasture to support herds of cattle large enough to produce excess milk.⁴¹

Most agricultural produce came from farms of fairly modest size. In fact, only one in twenty-three farmers owned more than two hundred acres of improved land in 1860. Yet, there were a few very wealthy

38 McGimsey.

39 Fletcher, 202.

40 *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, 1860 – 1900.

41 Crawford, 31.

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landowners. Fourteen men in the county held farms with more than four hundred acres of improved land. Being made up primarily of relatively small farms, Ashe County naturally was not a large slave-holding area. The 1860 census showed 391 slaves in the county and 6.6 percent of the heads of household as being slave holders (compared to about 49 percent in the cotton-growing South). There was a strong correlation between wealth, large land holdings, and slave ownership. Of the twenty-three farmers owning two hundred or more acres, fifty-seven percent were also slaveholders. Colonel George Bower was the county's wealthiest citizen and largest slaveholder, with thirty-four slaves and 1,000 acres of cleared land. Similarly, John Greer was the third largest slave holder in the county, with seventeen slaves and nearly 700 acres of land in 1850. Still, Ashe County was the second poorest county in the state in 1860.⁴²

Religion

Many of the earliest settlers were associated with the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and sometimes Lutheran or Quaker churches. Other denominations included Baptists and Methodists. One of the earliest churches in the area was the 1773 Grassy Creek Presbyterian Church. It is unclear whether this was on the North Carolina or Virginia side of Grassy Creek, however. An article in *The Northwestern Herald* in 1924 reported that Reverend John Black of Abingdon preached the first sermon in the county in 1773 at Grassy Creek and at Beaver Creek the following Sunday. The church at Grassy Creek was short-lived, abandoned before the end of the Revolutionary War. When the Presbyterians were unable to supply a minister to the area, many people of the Presbyterian faith converted to the Baptist denomination.

Early Baptists organized the North Fork of the New River Baptist Church on Staggs Creek in 1785 and was later joined by Beaver Creek Baptist Church, established in 1787. Both churches are still active. Other early congregations are Beaver Creek Baptist, established in 1787; Old Fields Baptist, established in 1803; Senter Baptist (AH 408), established in 1829; and Horse Creek Primitive Baptist Church (AH 110), founded in 1840. It is important to note that these early churches were members of an association that served as a loose governing organization helping to link churches socially and theologically. The North Fork church mentioned above, for example, became part of the Mountain District Baptist Association in 1799.⁴³

While growth among the Baptist churches was strong in the early nineteenth century, it did not come without division. Between 1836 and 1838 a controversy gradually arose within the Mountain District Association. The division this controversy caused was part of a wider movement across the state. In eastern North Carolina Joshua Lawrence, pastor of the Tarboro Baptist Church and a leader in the powerful Kehukee Baptist Association, called in 1830 for the preservation of "the Christian religion in its primitive state," which "needs no law for its support."⁴⁴ In Ashe County, Elder Richard Jacks espoused the opposite position

42 Fletcher, 199; Crawford, 34 and 38; and "Grassy Creek Historic District National Register Nomination, 1976," Asheville Regional Office of the State Historic Preservation Office.

43 Jeff Weaver, "Early Religion in the Upper New River Valley," accessed at New River Notes website and *Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. I – II.

44 Quoted in Ansley H. Wegner, "Memorial Primitive Baptist Church, Wayne County, 2005," unpublished report, Research

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arguing "that souls could be 'saved' by human efforts," which went against the Calvinistic idea that salvation was "in the hands of God." Added to this was disagreement over membership in temperance, or secret, societies. The Mountain District Association disallowed membership in any society seeing those organizations as undertaking work that was the purpose of the church. They held that these societies "detracted from energy which should have been devoted to the church". Finally, dissension arose over the issue of missionary work, which the old order often opposed.⁴⁵

Jacks and his followers began to organize new "Missionary" Baptist Churches in Ashe County and surrounding areas, although growth was limited until the 1860s. The first successful church established by Jacks was Baptist Chapel Church (AH 6) in Helton in 1842. A new association serving the fledgling Missionary Baptist churches was established in 1848 and was reorganized twice to create the current Ashe and Alleghany Baptist Association in 1886.⁴⁶ After the establishment of the Missionary Baptist churches, the churches that continued under the Mountain District Association came to be known as "Primitive" Baptist to describe the basic tenets of their faith and to distinguish them from the Missionary Baptists.

It is not clear when Methodism came into Ashe County, but circuit work began in the area from Wytheville, Virginia, to Greenville, Tennessee, sometimes referred to as the Holston country, in 1783. It is noted by Garland Stafford, in his compilation of Methodism in the county, that Jeremiah Lambert was appointed pastor of the first Methodist circuit in the region in 1783. He was followed by Henry Willis in 1784 and Richard Swift and Michael Gilbert in 1785.⁴⁷ A diary account dated March 27, 1793, by Bishop Francis Asbury, also believed to be among the first Methodist preachers in the area, states "My soul felt for these neglected people. It may be by my coming this way, Providence will so order it, that I shall send them a preacher."⁴⁸ It was not until 1809, however, that an itinerant minister was sent. Services during this time were held in the open or in individual homes as ministers would travel, meeting on any day a group could be gathered. Unlike the Baptists, which were governed locally, the Methodists were governed by regional conferences and each church was part of a smaller circuit.⁴⁹

Records indicate that the earliest Methodist church in Ashe County was founded at Jefferson in 1827. Both Little Laurel and Nathan's Creek (AH 406) Methodist churches were organized by about 1850. Helton Methodist Church (AH 155) followed in 1863.⁵⁰ Levi Blackburn was an active Methodist leader in Ashe County by the 1830s; in 1850 he established Hopewell Methodist Church. Blackburn then moved to Elk Cross Roads (now Todd) and established Blackburn's Chapel (AH 43) where his son Hamilton served as the first pastor.⁵¹

Branch Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

45 Weaver, "Early Religion."

46 Ibid.

47 Garland R. Stafford, compiler. *Methodism in Ashe County, NC, From Beginning to 1961*. (Jefferson, NC.: Jefferson United Methodist Church, 1974) 35.

48 W.C. Greer, Personal letter to Reverend Robert E.L. Plummer, 1925.

49 Stafford, 35 and Weaver, "Early Religion".

50 Shepherd, 79-80.

51 Shepherd, 77.

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An early feature of Methodist church services, were camp meetings. Elisha Mitchell records such a meeting during his 1828 visit to Helton. "It being the middle of the harvest," he wrote, "but few people attended, and if they had staid away it had, as it seems to me, been as well. After service a class meeting. I staid and heard a reasonable amount of female screaming and vociferation. . ." ⁵² Here Mitchell alludes to the emotional services that the Methodists enjoyed. In October of 1868, another camp meeting at Helton was described in Worth family documents: "There was not as many persons there as last year, though there was as many as could be comfortably situated, we entertained as many or more than the other tent holders." ⁵³ Camp meetings, like their counterparts called Association meetings in the Baptist Church, provided a venue for worship, entertainment, and socialization.

Education

Although churches made a noted presence in the early years of the county, there are few records of education and educational facilities. Some information has been gleaned, from early diaries and letters, however. David Woods, an early settler in Ashe County, states that he "kept school" between 1784 and 1786. He records in 1784 that there were four schools in the county: in Grassy Creek, Helton, on the North Fork of New River near Creston, and in Beaver Creek. ⁵⁴ The school in Grassy Creek was located on the hill near the site of the Virginia-Carolina School (neither school building is extant). Early teachers included William Baker, William Greer, Freeland Anderson and John Freeland Greer. ⁵⁵

In these early years, individual families and local communities provided education for their children, acquiring teachers when possible, and eventually establishing an organized school. Woods reported that by 1789, the four schools previously mentioned were joined by schools on Naked Creek and two others whose locations were unknown to him. ⁵⁶ Martin Gambill built a log school on his Chestnut Hill farm in 1790. Other sources indicate that there were ten schools by 1790. While the population was very small during this period, the number of schools indicates that many of these households were young families with children. ⁵⁷ Indeed, Elisha Mitchell noted in 1828 that "The country swarms with children." ⁵⁸

As described by Woods, these early schools were usually housed in crude buildings, that consisted of

52 Mitchell.

53 Ibid, 48.

54 Alfred B. Hurt, *Educational Development of Ashe County, North Carolina*, 1929, electronic version, <<http://www.newrivenotes.com/nc/ashe.htm>>.

55 W.C. Greer, 1925.

56 J.F. Fletcher, *A History of the Ashe County, North Carolina and New River, Virginia Baptist Associations*, (Raleigh, NC: Commercial Printing Co., 1935) 184.

57 Crawford, 19; Shepherd, xi; and "Some early land grants in the New River Water Basin," map in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

58 Elisha Mitchell, *Diary of a Geological Tour by Dr. Elisha Mitchell in 1827 and 1828*, James Sprunt Historical Monograph No. 6 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1905), New River Notes website, <<http://www.newrivenotes.com/nc/mitchdia.htm>>.

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“posts about ten feet high, with poles across the top on which bark peeled from trees was laid as protection from rain, the sides and ends [being] open.”⁵⁹ Because of the simplicity of these buildings, classes were held only in the summer for an average of two-and-a-half months. When teachers were available, their salaries were paid by the patrons of the school. This method of employing teachers often meant that only the well-to-do in a community could afford the opportunity to educate their children. Salaries would often include goods rather than money, as noted in the following account from David Woods’s 1789 diary. For teaching at Nathans Creek he received “37 schillings in Virginia money (about \$4.75); 5 deer hams; two bearskins; 4 ½ yards of woolen cloth and one cooking pot.”⁶⁰

As the county grew in population, the roles of church and school naturally became more established within individual communities. While church growth continued at a consistent pace, however, the establishment of organized educational facilities lagged behind for many years. The Public School Law was passed in 1839 to support local schools, but no record of Ashe County receiving assistance from the Literacy Fund established by the law can be found until 1843. In 1852, the General Assembly created the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction with Calvin Wiley as the first appointee. In his first report in 1853, Wiley noted thirty-six school districts in Ashe County each with at least one school and a total number of pupils at 2,078. The average term for the school year was 2.94 months. By 1858, fifty-eight schools were operating in the county with an enrollment of 4,371 and average attendance of 2,223 students.⁶¹

Architecture

Elisha Mitchell gave a detailed, if not entirely flattering picture of the landscape during the antebellum period.

“All the houses between here and Tennessee are log huts. The North Fork winds amongst the high steep mountains and along its banks on the little arable land there is, the inhabitants are settled. They depend a good deal upon their cattle which look well. They are fertile quite to their tops and though they are covered with timbers-large chestnuts, oaks, etc., afford a good deal of pasturage. They will afford much more when the timbers come to be cut down.”⁶²

It is undoubtedly true that the vast majority of early buildings in Ashe County were constructed of log. Houses, barns and other agricultural buildings, churches, schools, and commercial buildings, such as Waugh’s store (no longer extant), in Jefferson,⁶³ were all constructed of log according the handful of extant

59 Hurt, 1929.

60 Fletcher, 184.

61 Ibid., 184-1866.

62 Mitchell.

63 Arthur, 163.

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examples, historic accounts and oral tradition. Frame and brick buildings dating before 1860 were extremely rare although there were a few brick buildings in the county, primarily in Jefferson. Only two antebellum brick houses, the William Waddell House (AH 2) and the c.1860 John Osborne house (AH 292), survive in the county. Since the 1976 architectural survey of the county, five early brick houses have been destroyed.

The earliest surviving dwelling is not known with certainty, but it is likely a one-and-a-half-story log house (AH 264) in Brushy Fork. Its original owner is unknown, but local tradition describes the house as having been built in 1799. The enormous width (over two feet) of the logs used in its plank-construction walls reveal that they were hewn when the forests of Ashe County were still populated by enormous old-growth timber. Nearby is the only known dog-trot house in the county. Built for Stephen and Mary Osborn (AH 239), during the 1830s or 1840s, it, too, was built with very large logs and massive stone chimneys. Located a few miles southeast is the log house built by Charles B. Roark in 1832. Like the 1799 house, the Roark House is a single-pen, one-and-a-half-story dwelling. This form is thought to be typical of early nineteenth-century dwellings in the county, but this house is unusual in its location about one-third of the way up the very steep slope of The Peak. All three of these early houses are located in the vicinity of North Fork (Creston) one of the early settlement areas.

Another early settlement area, Nathans Creek holds fewer log buildings, but is the site of the notable Levi Gentry Barn (AH 541), a double-pen barn said to have been built in 1821. Levi and Nancy Gentry's log house (AH 369), which was moved to another site near Warrentown about 1960, is unusually large with two log pens that were originally arranged in a saddlebag configuration. Near the Gentry Barn is the Bower-Cox house (AH 3), the only example of a Federal-style frame house in the county and the only pre-1860 frame dwelling recorded in the survey. The original, hall and parlor front section of the house was built about 1820 and was owned by the wealthy and influential Colonel George Bower as the seat of his very large farm during the 1840s.⁶⁴

Bower's house reflects the wealth and stability that he had achieved during the early nineteenth century and is emphasized by the impressive, two-story brick Jefferson Inn built by Colonel Bower in Jefferson during the 1830s. Used as both Bower's town residence and as a hotel, the building was demolished about 1971. The two surviving antebellum brick houses in the county illustrate that other Ashe County citizens were wealthy enough to afford brick houses during the antebellum period as well. The two-story brick William Waddell House (AH 2) was built in the Sussex area about 1825. The austere three-bay facade original to the house has been heavily altered by the application of Eastlake-inspired ornamentation that was added after a fire gutted the interior about 1870. Also surviving is the c.1860 John Osborne house (AH 292) in Ashland. This two-story brick house has a small, one-story attached brick kitchen, but has been altered with early-twentieth century additions to the rear of the house.

64 "Bower-Cox House National Register nomination, 1976," Western Regional Office of the State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville.

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SLAVERY, THE CIVIL WAR, AND THE AGE OF THE YEOMAN FARMER: 1860 - 1915

The War in Ashe County

The Civil War manifested severe hardships in Ashe County as it did in most of the South. The county experienced little direct fighting, yet by mid-1862 one-third of all Ashe households had members serving as soldiers or otherwise directly engaged in the fight. Local residents and the Confederate Home Guard were often harassed by Union non-regulars who came over the border from Tennessee. The Ashe County jail was burned in March of 1865 as General George Stoneman marched through the area. In addition to this violence, the tensions ran high among county residents who had differing views of the war. There were pockets of Union supporters in the county, centered in the North Fork area and more than sixty Ashe men served in the Federal troops.⁶⁵

Martin Crawford, in his book *Ashe County's Civil War*, argues that it was economics that drove these differing views during the war. The wealthiest districts in Ashe County (centered in the Jefferson and Old Fields areas) were also the areas with the highest percentages of slave owners and by extension, had the highest percentage of local enlistment in the Confederate troops. Crawford found that even though only one in seventeen families owned slaves in Ashe County in 1860, slavery was still an important part of the county's economic and political life in part due to the civic positions held by some of the county's wealthiest farmers and slaveholders. Men such as Col. George Bower, Andrew McMillan, and David Worth were the county court's presiding magistrates during the late 1850s.⁶⁶

In sharp contrast to these men is W.H. Younce, a native of northwestern North Carolina who published *The Adventures of a Conscript* in 1899, which detailed his Union loyalties, conscription into the 58th N.C. Regiment, and repeated desertions and eventual enlistment in a Union regiment.⁶⁷ This work focuses on Younce's determined allegiance to the anti-slavery cause, but for most Ashe County residents the war was less about noble beliefs and more about economic and physical survival.

The struggle for control of the volatile North Carolina-Tennessee border was a source of violence in many western North Carolina counties. The border situation was exacerbated by a serious drought in 1862 and 1863 and a shortage of salt during the same period. Additionally, Ashe County chafed at conscription (mandatory enlistment) laws.⁶⁸ The young, healthy adult men made up the enlisted, or regular, troops for both the Confederates and the Union sides. The elderly, very young, or disabled men in a community maintained the Home Guard to protect the area and enforce conscription. Just as Younce chose to flee from conscription to join the regular Union troops, other Union sympathizers joined one of several bands of non-regulars that were not under the command of the Union hierarchy. These bands, called Bushwhackers by

65 Crawford, 94, 126, 142, and 149.

66 Ibid, 92-94.

67 W.H. Younce, *The Adventures of a Conscript*, 1899, accessed at New River Notes website, <<http://members.aol.com/jweaver300/grayson/adventur.htm>>.

68 Crawford, 107.

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their enemies, were often cited for their theft and violence. An attack on a Watauga County Confederate sympathizer by Union non-regulars from eastern Tennessee in 1863 is a case in point. The alarm sounded during the attack brought help from Confederate neighbors, one of whom was killed during the skirmish. In retaliation, vigilantes associated with the Home Guards in Watauga and Ashe counties hanged the father of one of the non-regulars for treason since he had provided food and lodging to his son.⁶⁹ Highlighting the seriousness of the situation in the region, neighboring Alleghany County was forced to call upon the Surry County Home Guard for defense against such attacks.⁷⁰

The disastrous effects of the war may be summed up in several 1870 *U.S. Census* statistics. The production of both wheat and oats fell from 1860 levels. The number of horses, cattle, oxen, and sheep declined as well, but the decrease was sharpest for hogs, a principal food source. In 1870 there were only about 8,100 hogs, down from about 19,500 in 1860. The human toll was significant as well. Thirty percent of Ashe County recruits died during the war, and forty percent of these were married men. In 1870, the number of female heads of households had risen to one in seven from one in twenty in 1860.⁷¹

Formation of Towns and Growth of Communities

Despite the general decline shown by the 1870 census, Ashe County was able to rebound fairly quickly from the effects of the war. In fact, the period between 1870 and 1900 was one of intense growth in Ashe County. The county's population more than doubled, increasing from 9,573 in 1870 to 19,581 in 1900. It was an era of agrarian prosperity and the small communities that served Ashe County's farmers multiplied rapidly. New post offices spread throughout the county included: Apple Grove, Shady Springs (Baldwin), Berlin (Bina), Brandon, Staggs Creek (Clifton), Comet, Crumpler, Fig, Fleetwood, Furches, Glendale Springs, Grassy Creek, Grayson, Hemlock, Husk (Nella)⁷², Idlewild, Index, Lansing, Mouth of Buffalo (Dresden), Obids, Ore Knob, Orion, Oval, Parker, Riverside, Silas Creek, Solitude, Sturgills, Sutherland, Toliver, Transou, Trout, Wagoner, Warrensville, Wheeler (Green Valley).⁷³ Most of the new post offices were founded between 1880 and 1900.

The description of Jefferson given by Dr. Aras Cox in his 1900 book *Footprints on the Sands of Time* illustrates one of the largest of these growing communities. "There are dry goods and grocery stores," he writes, "hotels, law and medical offices, work-shops, school buildings, churches, and fine family residences." He goes on to list the local merchants, flour mills, mechanic, lawyers, doctors, and ministers.⁷⁴ Whereas

69 William R. Trotter, *Bushwhackers: the Civil War in North Carolina, the Mountains* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1988), 172.

70 Jean Sizemore, *Alleghany Architecture: a Pictorial Survey* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing, 1983), vii.

71 *U.S. Agricultural Census, 1860-1870 and Crawford*, 153 and 160.

72 It should be noted that the community's post office was known as Husk. The railroad named the depot Nella and the two names were used interchangeably.

73 U.S. Census for 1870 – 1900, accessed at University of Virginia Library Geospatial and Statistical Data Center website and Shepherd, 89-97.

74 Cox.

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Jefferson was a traditional town with a clearly identified commercial core, the agricultural communities at most of the new post offices were more diffuse, often centered around a single general store which usually held the post office, with a church, school, or other businesses nearby.

In the 1890 *North Carolina Business Directory*, the population of each town or area served by a post office is listed, yet these figures can be misleading. Jefferson was the largest town with a population of 350, followed by the declining town at Ore Knob Copper Mine, which still was home to 272 people. Creston had a population of 60. Helton had a population of 100, but was not a concentrated town; rather, this area was centered along Helton Creek where the grist mill, woolen mill, and Methodist church were located. Farms were disbursed over a broad area that was serviced by the post office. The 1890 list of businesses and tradesmen in Helton includes two general stores, a painter, the woolen mill, a broom manufacturer, two blacksmiths, a cooper, and a whiskey distillery.⁷⁵

The late nineteenth-century demographics of the county should be noted. As it had been since European settlement, the population of Ashe was overwhelmingly white, yet the number of African Americans in Ashe County rose significantly. In the 1860s it increased almost seventeen percent, from 500 to 582. The reopening of the Ore Knob Copper Mine in 1873 prompted economic growth and provided employment for many African Americans. The mine employed 700 people in 1878 and by 1880, the African American population in the county stood at 963, a sixty-five percent jump from 1870. As a result, several African American communities emerged. The largest, at Coxes Grove in northeastern Ashe County was established by 1870.⁷⁶ Another small community grew up along Peak Road in Creston and included the Thomas, Wellington, Stout, and Maxwell families. They were farmers, but also performed agricultural and domestic labor and sold produce to make their living. Many of the Peak Road families migrated from the county in the mid-twentieth century. This community was served by an African American school in Creston between 1880 and 1940, although the school was open only a few weeks a year.⁷⁷ The African American population in Ashe County declined from its 1880 peak to 684 by 1900 following the closure of the Ore Knob mine.

In her recollections of late nineteenth-century life in Jefferson, Mrs. C.D. Neal (1876-1971) wrote about several domestics and laborers. "There was Raleigh and his wife, Ceely," she writes "who was the best laundress around. After their daughter wrote back to them to come to Pennsylvania to get higher wages they went and never came back." Perhaps the most prominent African American in Jefferson was Adam Roberts. He was a Union veteran who had been raised by a white family in Jefferson, from whom he inherited a large amount of property. Roberts operated a successful blacksmith shop in Jefferson, which is listed in both the 1883 and 1890 business directories,⁷⁸ and built an impressive brick house there about 1880 (AH 564).

75 *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890.

76 *Ibid*, 157-8 and 165.

77 *By their own Agency: A Medical History of Ashe County, North Carolina* (Boone: Appalachian State University Master's Thesis, 2003), 81.

78 Mrs. C.D. Neal, *Miss Chessie's Memories*, from news columns written between 1950 and 1970, privately published, 1971(?); *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1883, New River Notes website, <<http://www.newrivernotes.com/nc/ashe1883.htm>> and *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890; *Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. II, 261.

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Excluding the unusually large populations of Jefferson and Ore Knob, the average size of Ashe County's communities was about thirty-five persons in 1890 according to the *Business Directory* listings. Apple Grove, which gained a post office in 1875, was typical of these. Located in the northwestern part of the county on Little Horse Creek, Apple Grove was a thriving community between the 1880 and 1910. In 1890, the community had three lumber dealers, three livestock dealers, and five general stores. Many of these businesses were dispersed over about a two-mile radius from the community center, noted on a 1912 Soils Map as the intersection of present-day Little Horse Creek Road and Stansberry Road.⁷⁹ Today, Apple Grove is almost indiscernible except as a notation on county maps.

Apple Grove was served by two schools: White Oak School near the intersection of Little Horse Creek Road and Tucker Road and Osborne School near the intersection of Jack Jones Road and Roaring Branch Road. Churches included the Mt. Zion Baptist Church (AH 115) and the Horse Creek Primitive Baptist Church (AH 110). The locations of most of the general stores and other businesses are unknown, but the John Tucker Store (AH 102), which is listed in the 1890 directory, survives on Tucker Road about two-and-a-half miles from the center of Apple Grove. Additionally, there are a number of historic farms and houses in the vicinity of Apple Grove from this period, eight of which were surveyed. Five of these are farms seated by large I-houses, including the notable Perry-Shepherd Farm (c.1890, AH 108), the Foster Eldreth House (c.1890, AH 96), and the William Clark Farm (1906, AH 114).⁸⁰

The 1883 and 1890 business directories allow a glimpse into Ashe County's communities. Each was made up of a different combination of general stores, livestock dealers, lumber dealers, flour mills, tanners and other tradesmen. The little communities were dotted with a handful of manufacturers and mines and were also sometimes the home of physicians, dentists, and even jewelers. In 1883, the county had four dentists and ten physicians (there were sixteen in 1890) and three watchmakers or jewelers (there were four in 1890).⁸¹ The availability of goods and services in Ashe, which by this time was well-ensconced in its "Lost Province" reputation, was highlighted by the comments of well-known author and local colorist, Charles Dudley Warner, who traveled through Ashe County in 1889. He found David Worth's home in Creston to be very fine. His surprise continued since he "did not expect to find a house in the region with two pianos and a bevy of young ladies whose clothes were certainly not made on Cut Laurel Gap. . ."⁸²

Commerce, Industry, and Transportation

Warner's surprise was unwarranted. Although David Worth was clearly one of the county's most affluent citizens, access to goods had improved significantly since the antebellum period. In 1883, there were twenty-nine general stores in Ashe County. Scattered within walking distance of one another, these general stores tended to be quite small and owned by local businessmen. John Sturgill was an exception to the rule in

79 Ibid and U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Soils Map, North Carolina, Ashe County Sheet, 1912".

80 Ibid.

81 *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1883, and *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890.

82 Shepherd, 49 and 89-97.

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that he owned five of the stores; in Grassy Creek, Horse Creek, Husk, Lansing, and Sturgills. The two at Sturgills (AH 122) and Husk (AH 119) survive. Both date to circa 1900 and are unusually large one-and-a-half-story, shed-roof buildings. Although Sturgill owned the buildings, it is thought that most of the stores were operated by individual storekeepers. Arthur Powers rented the building in Sturgills and ran a general store during the early-to mid-twentieth century. Powers sold dry goods, groceries, and feed. He would buy eggs, blackberries, chickens, rabbits, and herbs from the local population. Some of this produce may have been sold in the store, but most was probably sold by Powers to large regional buyers.⁸³

The practice of storekeepers like Powers buying herbs from the local population is of note. The herb trade was established by commercial dealers in the region by the early nineteenth century and was an important feature of local trade at general stores in the region by mid century. The Waugh and Harper store in Lenoir, Caldwell County, for example, paid out nearly \$250 for herbs between September and November of 1876. While this firm processed the materials and offered them for wholesale, it was more common for small general store operators to sell the dried herbs to a larger firm such as that operated by the Cowles family. Calvin Cowles had a thriving root and herb business in Wilkes County by the 1860s and his son, Arthur, moved the business to Gap Creek in southern Ashe County in 1869. His stationery, now in the North Carolina State Archives, reads "Arthur D. Cowles, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Medicines, etc. and Collector and Dealer in all kinds of Indigenous Botanic Crude Roots, Herbs, Barks, Seeds, Flower, etc and Country produce generally." The importance of herbs is expressed by Branson's *North Carolina Business Directory*, which reported in 1896 that "medicinal herbs" was one of neighboring Watauga County's primary crops. While herbs were probably used medicinally in many Ashe County homes during the historic period, this was not the primary purpose for the local herb trade. The local trade was a small part of a large-scale business that stretched not only regionally but across the country and even overseas. China, for example, was a major importer of ginseng, the most valuable herb traded in Ashe County.⁸⁴

Modest improvements in transportation during the late nineteenth century aided the county's ability both to export goods like herbs and to have better access to imported goods. Transportation improvements included a toll road begun in 1874 from Wilkesboro to Tennessee through Jefferson using private funding by Ashe County's Colonel Nathan Horton, who lived along the route. Apparently this road was never completed and the county commissioners turned their attention to improving access to the rail head at Marion, Virginia, a major regional commercial center. In 1887, the commissioners took steps to secure convicts to construct a road from Jefferson north toward Marion "by way of the Mineral Springs, . . . to the Virginia line, the nearest and most practicable route . . ." ⁸⁵ The road, likely the precursor of the current North Carolina Highway 16, was probably one of the most important transportation improvements from the late nineteenth century. Oral tradition regarding trading trips to Marion are found throughout the county. A story in the Clark family

⁸³ Danny Griffith, interview with Sherry Joines Wyatt, 14 December 2004 and Mr. Sullivan (grandson of John Sturgill), interview with Sherry Joines Wyatt, 16 December 2004.

⁸⁴ "R.T. Greer and Company Root and Herb Warehouse National Register Nomination, 2002," Western Office North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville.

⁸⁵ Fletcher, 94-95.

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relates that William Clark went to Marion, in 1906, to purchase mantelpieces for his new house. The mantels cost ten dollars and the fifty-mile trip took a week.⁸⁶

Like the Clark family, local general stores often purchased their stock at railheads such as that in Marion, as well as through traveling salesmen, known as drummers. Clearly the number of travelers in the area was multiplying as indicated by the increase in the number of hotels in Ashe County from three to nine between 1883 and 1890.

While the hotels certainly housed traveling salesmen, they also served an increasing number of tourists, some of whom were drawn to the region by its healthy environment. The interest in the healing qualities of the mineral springs was prevalent in the Appalachian region during the late nineteenth century and was first manifested in Ashe County when Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs (AH 20) was discovered in Crumpler in 1885 and a hotel was constructed there in 1888. Shatley Springs (AH 405), located a few miles south of Crumpler, was discovered in 1887 and developed as a resort soon thereafter. Glendale Springs Inn (AH 8) located in southeastern Ashe County, near the Wilkes County line, was regionally famous for its mineral water bathing pools. It was built in 1895 and significantly expanded in 1905.⁸⁷

In 1890, Ashe County gained another point of commercial access when Southern Railroad completed construction of its depot at North Wilkesboro, about forty miles southeast of Jefferson. Following the establishment of this depot was an early phase of the timber industry that would come to define Ashe County's history after 1915. The industry had previously been confined to portable steam sawmills and a handful of larger water-powered mills producing lumber for local use, but during the 1890s several small tannic acid or tan bark plants were established. These modest industrial facilities extracted tannic acid from wood, primarily oak bark, for use in the leather tanning industry. Most of these local facilities were quickly replaced by a large firm in North Wilkesboro, but the interest in large scale timbering was sparked. In 1902, well after the first acid plants had failed, the Hemlock Extract Company was established near the Tennessee border in northwestern Ashe County; the community of Hemlock carries the company name. Utilizing markets in Tennessee, the company remained in business for several years and was one of the earliest timber industry companies to operate successfully in the county. This firm would eventually build a narrow gauge railroad over Cut Laurel Gap to Tennessee to provide easier access to their markets.⁸⁸

The new North Wilkesboro rail head also helped to spur road improvements in Ashe County. By 1911, a sand-clay road from Jefferson to Wilkesboro was under construction, jointly financed by the county and state and built with convict labor, but just a few years later the road was destroyed by the floods of 1916.⁸⁹ The desire for rail connections within Ashe County began in 1907-1908 when a bond issue to support the construction of a Virginia Southern Railway branch from Mouth of Wilson, Virginia to Jefferson passed

86 William (Bill) Clark, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 8 December 2004.

87 "A Wonderful Spring! Thompson's Bromine Arsenic Water - Springs in Ashe County, N.C.," advertisement accessed via New River Notes website; and Catherine Bishir, et al, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999), 208-210.

88 Fletcher, 201 and Arthur, 485.

89 Fletcher, 100.

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overwhelmingly. This project never materialized, however.⁹⁰

While the tannic acid plants failed to take hold, other timber-related businesses thrived locally. In 1890, there were nine saw mills in Ashe County, probably all small, localized operations as the lack of good transportation still prevented most large-scale export industries. The list of “manufactories” in the 1890 *Business Directory* was still dominated by tradesmen such as blacksmiths, coopers, saddle makers, tanneries, and millwrights. Two exceptions were the Worth & Lillard spring wagon factory at Creston and the Woolen Mill at Helton (AH 158).⁹¹

The woolen mill was begun on June 20, 1884, by the Perkins brothers, Winfield and William. The complex consisted of a mill building and a two-story company store. The mill building burned in 1894, but was rebuilt in 1895 to operate with water and steam power. John Littlewood, an Englishman with a background in textile manufacturing, helped to establish the mill and purchased the business around 1895. At that time, John's son, Herbert Littlewood, who had operated the woolen mill at Mouth of Wilson,⁹² joined his father in Helton. The mill began producing colored yarn and socks. Military contracts during World War II helped to increase production and the mill reached its peak during that time. The mill closed during the late 1950s or early 1960s. While the Helton mill was the only woolen mill in Ashe County during this period there were three such mills in neighboring Grayson County, Virginia, in 1884 and 1911.⁹³ The 1890 *Agricultural Census* supports the logic of establishing a woolen mill. In that year, the county was home to 13,403 sheep, which produced 38,093 pounds of wool.⁹⁴

The most wide-spread industry in the county was the grist mill. Serving the county's many farmers, mills were scattered along fast-running creeks. In 1883, there were seven corn mills and eighteen flour/corn mills. This number had grown to fourteen corn mills and twenty flour/corn mills by 1890.⁹⁵ In fact, three of the four surviving grist mills in Ashe County were constructed during the 1880–1910 period. One of these is the Perkins Flour Mill (AH 59), built in 1885 on Helton Creek for Winfield and Will Perkins. It is a large, three-story structure that rests on a high stone foundation at the edge of the creek. It served local customers and produced its own Lucy-Belle brand flour, as well as bran, cream of wheat, feed, and corn meal.⁹⁶ The Cockerham Mill sits at the mouth of Dog Creek where it enters the New River. A mill was in operation at this site by 1791. The extant frame and heavy timber building (AH 56), partially supported by a later dam, was built about 1900 for Marcus L. Cockerham. His son, Josh Cockerham, operated the grist mill as well as a

90 Fletcher, 99.

91 *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890.

92 The mill (demolished) at Mouth of Wilson was established in 1884 by Col. Fields J. McMillan and was still in operation in 1911 as Fields and Hash Manufacturing. The company store and owner's house are extant.

93 *Mountain Heritage*. Vol. 1, Northwest Ashe High School, 1980; Fletcher, 234; Gibson Worsham, “A Survey of Historic Architecture in Grayson County, Virginia including the towns of Independence and Fries, 2002,” Virginia Department of Historic Resources; and *Hill's Directory for Grayson County, Virginia, 1911*, accessed at New River Notes website,

<<http://www.newriversnotes.com/nc/ashe.htm>>.

94 *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1890.

95 *Ibid.*

96 *Mountain Heritage*. Vol. 1, Northwest Ashe High School, 1980.

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planing mill and a forge on the property.⁹⁷ The Clark-Miller Mill (AH 105) was built for Ashe County Sheriff and legislator Ambrose Clark during the early twentieth century. It was later sold to Wilday Miller who ran it with his three sons, producing flour under the Miller's Best or Miller's Choice brand. The three-story building is perched on a bank above Little Horse Creek.⁹⁸

Another facet to the county's industrial scene was mining. The commercial value of mineral commodities outweighed the expense of exporting them via the county's poor transportation system. In Ashe County in 1883 and 1890, there were two mica mines and one soapstone mine. Mica mines were common in the region, producing sheet mica that was in great demand during the early nineteenth century because of its heat resistance and transparency. It was used in household products such as in the windows of wood stoves as well as ship windows. Soapstone mines were less common and Ashe County's mine likely produced soapstone primarily for local use. Many historic houses in the area feature soapstone lintels, hearths, and fire surrounds.

Like most of western North Carolina, Ashe County's early mines were primarily iron ore since this was the most valuable mineral to early settlers in need of farm implements. The 1883 *Chataigne's North Carolina Business Directory* lists four iron mines, while the 1890 *Directory* lists ten. The most economically viable mineral for export was copper and in the 1880s the county had eight copper mines.⁹⁹ The largest of these was Ore Knob Mine, in southeastern Ashe County, which was at its zenith in the 1870s and early 1880s. The Ore Knob mine was initially mined for iron in the early nineteenth century by forge-owner Meredith Ballou, but the operation ceased when the ore was determined to be undesirable due to the high concentration of copper and sulfur. Ballou thought the tract was worthless and stopped paying taxes on it; the property was eventually sold at auction. The Buckhannon Company of Virginia acquired it in 1857 and extracted copper from the mine until 1861. About 1870, S.S. and J.E. Clayton of Baltimore, Maryland purchased the mine and about 500 acres. They developed the copper mine under the direction of Captain John Dent, an English mining engineer, using up-to-date machinery and a smelter. The operation was successful, shipping sheet copper to Baltimore via the depot at Marion. The Ore Knob Copper Company was incorporated in 1881, but the company was already in decline from its boom in the mid-1870s because the ore had become more difficult to reach and to process. Further, prices fell dramatically after ore was discovered in Idaho and Montana. Captain Dent left the mine in 1883, yet it operated sporadically during the early to mid-twentieth century with the most successful period being between 1953 and 1962 at which time the mine closed for good.¹⁰⁰

The population of the village of mine workers that grew up around the Ore Knob mine during the

97 Mitch Wooten, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt 24 August 2005 and Mitch Wooten, unpublished research.

98 Ernie Carpenter, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, January 2005 and Johnny Eldreth, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 9 December 2004.

99 *Chataigne's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1883, accessed at New River Notes website; *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890, accessed at New River Notes website; and Fletcher.

100 Arthur, Fletcher, 224-227; and "Ore Knob Story," unpublished history written by former mine manager Phillip Eckman, vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

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1870s reached 600 in 1875, when it was incorporated as the county's largest town. The tax valuation of the property was set at \$30,000 in 1878, but had declined by 1903 to only \$8,000.¹⁰¹ The 1883 *Business Directory* illustrates the self-sufficient character of the town of Ore Knob. There were six blacksmiths and wheelwrights, an auctioneer, boarding house, livery stable, carpenters, coopers, a physician, three notaries, and several other trades people. In 1878, the Board of County Commissioners appointed the owner-operator of the mine, James E. Clayton, to collect taxes from the mine workers because the board found it difficult to collect from the transient worker population.¹⁰² Nothing is left of this town today.

Agriculture

The 1880-1910 period was an intensely prosperous time for farmers in Ashe County. The availability of improved farming implements and technology brought out the natural richness of the region. Prior to 1872, most farming implements in the county were homemade. The first grain drills came into use in 1884 and the first commercial fertilizer in 1891, although it was several years before its use became widespread.¹⁰³

The number of farms rose sharply from 1,009 in 1870 to 3,215 in 1910. Further, the average farm size was in decline during the late nineteenth century from 148 acres in 1880 to 87.8 acres by 1900. This pattern indicates a period of subdivision of larger land holdings among the second and third generation descendants of the early settlers. As the number of family members needing land increased, the number of acres held in farms also increased to a peak of 287,162 acres in 1880 and then leveled off through the 1920s. In 1910, over ninety-seven percent of the county's land was occupied by farms.¹⁰⁴

Farm life was organized by the seasons. Branson's 1890 *North Carolina Business Directory* finds the county's staple products to be wheat, corn, butter, grass, and livestock. Corn, wheat, rye, oats, and buckwheat were planted each spring along with a large vegetable garden that provided a significant portion of the family diet. Summer was a time for maintaining the garden and hoeing the corn. Oral history records the tradition of hoeing young corn three times during early summer to remove weeds and mound soil, referred to as hilling, around the base of the plants. With mid summer came cutting and raking hay by hand with a scythe or later with horse-drawn machines. Dried hay was stacked into large, rounded stacks. Wheat was cut, shocked, dried, and threshed by a traveling threshing machine. The grain was then taken to a local mill to be milled into flour.¹⁰⁵ Surplus grain was often sold locally. A *Mountain Messenger* advertisement in 1873 announces that Marion Mills was ready to purchase 100,000 bushels of wheat, corn, and rye, "enough for our local trade."¹⁰⁶

101 Ibid and Fletcher, 96.

102 *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1883.

103 Fletcher, 208-209.

104 *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1870 - 1920.

105 *North Carolina Business Directory*, 1890 and Joines, Sherry, *Up Before Dawn: Farms and Farm Ways in Alleghany County, N.C.*, University of Georgia Master's Thesis, 1998, 88-92. Although this work looked at neighboring Alleghany County, practices in Ashe would have been very similar.

106 *Mountain Messenger*, 25 December 1873, available on microfilm at Ashe County Public Library.

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Corn was the dominant crop throughout the period since it was used both for the farm family's cornmeal and for livestock feed. Climbing from 277,027 bushels in 1880 to 397,716 bushels in 1910, the level of corn production conveys the period's prosperity. At the same time, production of wheat, oats, and rye all fell significantly, yet buckwheat production increased sharply after very low production in 1880.¹⁰⁷ The meaning of these statistics is not entirely clear, but we can hypothesize that the increased success of corn along with increased access to purchased food stuffs may be part of the explanation.

The livestock listed for the county in the agricultural census suggests that this was a period of both growth and transition. The number of cattle increased from 6,320 in 1880 to 14,097 in 1910 (dairy cattle increased from 4,455 to 7,349). Additionally, the number of sheep increased, perhaps due to the demand for wool from local mills at Helton and Mouth of Wilson, Virginia. The number of swine fell during this period as additional acres were placed into cultivation, decreasing the acres of woodland where the hogs once foraged freely.¹⁰⁸

Other figures give us insight into the diet of farmers in the county. Crops such as potatoes and beans increased during the period and molasses production nearly doubled. In contrast, maple syrup, which had been a principal product of the settlement period, decreased sharply after 1870 and was almost non-existent by 1900.

Orchards were found on nearly every Ashe County farm during the historic period. The agricultural census shows that apples accounted for most of the large fruit production in the county. In 1900, over 480,000 bushels of apples were produced along with more than 8,000 bushels of cherries, peaches, pears, and plums. From this produce, 134 barrels of cider and vinegar were made along with 298,990 pounds of dried fruit. Much of this produce was used by the farm family or traded locally. Oral history records that farmers would take wagon loads of produce to larger towns like Wilkesboro, North Carolina and Marion, Virginia, where they would sell modest quantities of surplus apples and other produce to both commercial firms and individuals. While travelers had observed the bounty of Ashe's orchards since at least the late nineteenth century and the State Department of Agriculture promoted orchards in their 1910 pamphlet *Orchard Lands*, the apple was not a cash crop in the modern sense. Rather it was one of many forms of supplemental income for farmers.¹⁰⁹

Another state pamphlet, *North Carolina: A Land of Opportunity in Fruit Growing, Farming, and Trucking*, described Ashe County's agricultural opportunities: "The clear streams that flow everywhere and the natural growth of fine grasses mark this region for cattle and the dairy, while on the uplands fruit of all kinds flourishes as it seldom does elsewhere."¹¹⁰ The significant increase in cattle described above is notable since cattle were expensive to acquire and maintain. For example, the production of hay between 1880 and 1910 nearly doubled. There was an increased interest in cattle, specifically in breeding cattle that better

107 *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, 1870 – 1920.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Joines; Catherine Bishir, Michael Southern, and Jennifer Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999), 202; John Arthur, 518; Fletcher, 209; and *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, 1900.

110 Quoted in Arthur, 519.

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suited the discrete purposes of beef and milk production. In 1900, Hereford cattle were introduced and interbred with the Shorthorns, which had been brought by the early settlers, resulting in the “white faced” cattle that were common as meat producers in the county through the twentieth century. Jersey, Guernseys, Ayrshires, and Holsteins gradually came to dominance as milk producers.¹¹¹

While cattle were more expensive to raise, they also brought a greater monetary return than field crops or other types of livestock. The prevalence of small-scale cattle trading by farmers is highlighted by the thirty-eight cattle dealers listed in the 1883 *North Carolina Business Directory*; this number had increased to forty-two by 1890. Dairy products like butter, milk, and cheese also sharply increased in production between 1880 and 1910. In 1910, over 172,000 pounds of butter and 8,600 pounds of cheese were sold by Ashe County farmers. Relatively little milk was sold outside the county, perhaps an indication of the unreliable transportation for perishable goods.¹¹²

Religion

In the years just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, a major political controversy arose in the Senter and Mountain District Baptist Associations that reflected the larger political controversies of the nation. With a resolve of independence and a lifestyle of autonomy, many inhabitants of the county had little sympathy for the system of slavery. As the war approached, sentiment on both sides of the issue became stronger.

As a minority opinion, pro-Union sentiments were often kept underground during the war. This resulted in the establishment of the Union League, a secret order, which helped to support and protect those whose sympathies lay with the Union cause. These opinions were not confined to political venues, but also became part of the expression of church doctrine. The Mountain Baptist Association called upon its 1848 ruling to prohibit involvement in other “societies” and refused to allow church membership to those professing Union League association. Church congregations divided, creating separate congregations of Union and Confederate sympathizers. Pro-Union Baptist churches often attached strips of red cloth to trees around their meeting houses to warn anti-Unionist Democrats of the Union League affiliation, resulting in the nicknames of “Red Strippers” or “Red Stringers” for the Union Baptists.¹¹³

The pro-Unionists established the Mountain Union Baptist Association in 1867 at Silas Creek Church. The Mountain Union Association covered Ashe and Alleghany counties in North Carolina and Grayson County, Virginia. Further divisions among the churches eventually led to two associations with the Mountain Union name, three by the name Little River, and another association called simply the Union Association. Adding to the complexity, some Mountain Union and Missionary Baptist churches merged, resulting in Primitive/Missionary Baptist church mixes.¹¹⁴

111 Fletcher, 202-203.

112 *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, 1910.

113 *Ibid*, 3.

114 Weaver, “Early Religion”.

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In discussing the formation of associations and the fractious nature of the Baptists, it is important to note that the individual churches were independent, which may explain the development of diverse doctrines. In other words, the Baptist churches decided what association best fit with their own theology, in contrast to the strict, hierarchical organization of the Methodists. The Baptist Associations were intended to act as a means of ensuring doctrinal orthodoxy and fellowship.¹¹⁵

Like the Baptists, the Methodist congregations also had become split over the slavery issue. This national division led to the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church South. The Methodist's Holston Conference, which covered Ashe County, elected to join the Methodist Episcopal Church South. After the war, the Holston Conference reorganized with both Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal South churches operating in the same territory.¹¹⁶

After the extensive reorganizations of the Civil War and its aftermath, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century became a period of intense church establishment and construction. New buildings were erected by Horse Creek Primitive Baptist (c.1880, AH 110), Greenwood Methodist (c.1880, AH 162), Covenant Union Baptist Church (c.1900, AH 88), Grassy Creek Methodist (1904, AH 9), St. Mary's Episcopal (1904-05, AH 54), Sutherland Methodist (c.1885, AH 248), and Worth's Chapel (Creston United Methodist, 1903, AH 45, NR 2005) to name only a few. Of a list of the fifty-one churches in the Ashe Baptist Association, fifteen were founded between 1880 and 1910.¹¹⁷

Among the sweeping changes at the end of the Civil War was the establishment of churches for freed slaves. With the support of the Mountain Union Association, the New Covenant Baptist Association (NCBA) was formed in 1873. Elders Dred A. Goins, George Washington Goins, J.C. Greer, and Thomas Jones, long-time county residents and ex-slaves, had been ordained at Shoal Creek Church of the Mountain Union Baptist Association about 1867 and were present at the 1873 session. Pleasant Hill Baptist Church is recognized as the first officially established church of the NCBA, organized 1868 and located in Alleghany County.¹¹⁸ Pleasant Grove Church (AH 515), originally called Gap Creek Church, located in Cranberry, was established by 1892. The extant building was constructed in 1961.¹¹⁹ Mount Olive Church (AH171) was in existence by 1882. The extant building was erected between 1907 and 1910. Membership ranged from forty-five in 1897 to only twelve in 1952, the year the church dissolved.¹²⁰

After a hiatus of many years, the Presbyterian denomination slowly began to be reintroduced into Ashe County during this period. *The Jefferson Recorder* reported on January 2, 1908: "Rev. R.K. Mosely, formerly of Concord, North Carolina arrived in Jefferson Wednesday accompanied by his four children and will take charge of the Presbyterian work in Ashe County, making his home in Jefferson. Mr. Mosely will preach at the Presbyterian Church in Jefferson next Sunday at 11 o'clock, and it is hoped that our people will

115 Ibid.

116 Stafford. Note: The Methodist church was divided up into conferences, which covered discrete geographic regions and aided in the church governance and organization.

117 Shepherd, 74.

118 Sexton, 5.

119 Ibid, 150, 151.

120 Sexton.

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give him a hearing."¹²¹

Education

Education was superseded by the economics and concerns of a society at war during the first half of the 1860s as noted by Dr. Calvin Wiley, State Superintendent, in 1863:

The present generation does not need to be told that it was hard to keep up a general education system during 1863; the character of the times and the nature of the obstacles interposed to moral progress of every kind, are well understood. Considering the trials through which the country is passing, we are prepared to hear without surprise of the temporary suspension of enterprises with which our best hopes are bound up.¹²²

James Harvey Weaver (1849-1917), a Methodist minister in Ashe County, characterized the experience of many school age children during this period in his diary. He notes that he had little opportunity for "schooling," but was "educated in the use of all agricultural implements."¹²³ During the winter, when the chores of farming were not demanded of him he would attend school for a two or three month period. His recollection of the teachers and physical conditions of school is unflattering:

Teachers were generally very incompetent, teaching almost as many things wrong as right. The houses were without exception very cold and with pupils often standing in crowds around a large fire and not infrequently burning their dresses, pantaloons and shoes, and sometimes their flesh. The seats were logs split open with holes bored in them in which legs were placed. These were often so tall that the small children could not touch the floor with their feet. Thus hour after hour they had to sit without any support for their feet or backs. This was indeed a system of great cruelty. In schools under these circumstances I learned to read and write and cipher a little, making more improvements in leisure hours than I ever did at school.¹²⁴

Weaver goes on to say that he studied several subjects at home, including mathematics, English grammar, history and philosophy and that he took every opportunity for further instruction, often from Methodist circuit riders.¹²⁵

121 *The Jefferson Recorder*, 2 January 1908, microfilm available at Ashe County Public Library.

122 Fletcher, 1962:186.

123 James Harvey Weaver, b. 24 May 1849 d.. 17 Feb 1917. Transcript from portions originally discovered by Robert Bower Weaver of Lexington, Virginia and posted on the New River Notes website, www.newrivernotes.com

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

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In 1866-1867, the General Assembly enacted laws authorizing towns and cities to collect taxes for the establishment of a public school system, but this was slow in starting. Mary Sutherland, of Sutherland, taught in the first school there after the war and was paid by the parents of her students. J. W. Todd, a Jefferson lawyer, was appointed county examiner of teachers and reported in 1868-1869 that no public funds had been used as there were no public schools in operation. In 1870, there were four schools with a total of 150 pupils. The State Superintendent's report showed of Ashe County's population of 9,575 ten years old and older, 3,386 could not read or write.¹²⁶ There was significant improvement, however, by 1873 when the county had fifty schools serving over 1,900 pupils. In 1879, this number had grown to eighty-three schools with 3,015 students.¹²⁷

The first schoolhouse noted in Jefferson was log and stood on a branch in the eastern end of town on a lot owned by Felix Barr, "just left of the blacksmith shop." This building was removed in 1873 or 1874.¹²⁸ Progress in the building of schools for public education continued at a slow pace until 1879 when records show an increase in both numbers of schools and students in attendance. The 1879 annual report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction records that there were 106 school districts in Ashe for white students and six for Negroes, with a total of thirty-one publicly owned schoolhouses. Eighty-three schools operated that year, indicating that many students were taught in private homes, vacant store buildings, or other available community spaces. The school census for this year shows 5,152 white and 232 black students. By 1906, there were ninety-nine schools in 104 districts in the county guided by 110 white teachers and serving 6,001 white students. Additionally, there were ten black teachers and 248 black students. Nine schools in the county were held in log buildings; the other ninety schools were presumably held in frame buildings.¹²⁹

Lula Reeves Hudler found the condition of her Grassy Creek school during the 1910s much improved over James Weaver's earlier account. "We would have programs. Children would recite and I had one [a recitation] something about my curly hair so Mother dolled me up in curls. I loved to do it. We walked across the hills and carried our basket of lunch: biscuits, pig, apple butter and gingerbread."¹³⁰

In 1881, the General Assembly abolished the office of county examiner and required the election of a superintendent of schools in every county, which set the advancement of public education as a priority. The position of county superintendent was originally held part-time by attorney Major Quincy F. Neal for little pay (a total of two days over a two month period in 1882). Major Neal was succeeded by George W. Bower, who served from 1887 until 1892. These men set the precedent for school administration in the county.¹³¹

A movement in private schools also gained momentum during the late nineteenth century and in 1890 the following private schools were noted in the Superintendent's annual report: Jefferson Academy, 60 students; Beaver Creek Academy, 70 students; Creston Academy, 50 students; Sutherland Seminary, 60

126 Shepherd, 68.

127 Ibid.

128 John Preston Arthur, *History of Western North Carolina*, 1914, via www.newriversnotes.com

129 Statistics printed in *Mountaineer Heritage*, 1990-'91, Vol.1:25.

130 Lula Reeves Hudler, accessed on New River Notes website.

131 Shepherd, 69.

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students; Graybeal Chapel, 55 students, Helton Academy, 50 students.¹³² The Helton Academy was established in 1902 as the first high school in the county with the Reverend S.W. Brown, a Methodist minister, as principal. It was built through the efforts of community members and eventually was consolidated with Lansing school in 1930.¹³³ The *Mountain Messenger* carried an advertisement for the Jefferson Male and Female Academy on February 6, 1873. Tuition was one dollar for primary, fifteen cents for arithmetic and grammar, and two dollars for "Higher English branches and the languages."¹³⁴ The Green Valley Institute (AH 241) was organized in 1904 as a private academy serving grades one through twelve. Taken into the public system in later years, the school served both elementary and high school until 1935, when the high school was discontinued and moved to Riverview School. Ancil Pennington Graham recalled that there were four or five teachers during the 1920s, but the school had only two teachers by the late 1930s and 1940s. Green Valley Institute closed in 1953.¹³⁵

Additional private academies were sponsored by local churches. Notably, the New Covenant Baptist Association sponsored a school for its ministers and young people in Crumpler, called the Mount Ideal Educational Normal, 1907. In *The Chalice and the Covenant*, which chronicles the history of the African American New Covenant Baptist Association, local historian Mark Sexton notes: "The Association had embarked upon the task of educating its members to a degree beyond that provided by the public schools of the day, putting forth the extra effort necessary in order that the association and race might recuperate their educational deficiencies lingering from the aftermath of slavery and reconstruction."¹³⁶ The association sponsored the school through 1918, after which a lack of funding forced its closing. With a goal of fostering participation in all aspects of county life, political, economic, social, and educational, "the church, through school, fostered elements of an advancing culture."¹³⁷

By the early 1900s, two Methodist institutions were established in southwest Virginia and in 1910, the Methodist Church appealed to the Western North Carolina Conference to establish a school in Ashe County. By 1913, a school was in operation in Jefferson on a six-acre tract with three professors and 100 students, increasing to 200 students prior to World War I. This school closed in 1927 and was sold to the Ashe County Board of Education for use as a public high school.¹³⁸

Informal consolidation began as early as the first quarter of the twentieth century. For example, the Union and Windfall schools were replaced by the new Tuckerdale school, but the new building was yet another one-room school that grew to over one hundred students. Tuckerdale teacher, Zeke Sexton used "box suppers" to help fund school initiatives. The suppers were prepared by the girls and usually bought by the boys who desired their company for the evening. The funds were then used for such things as digging a well,

132 Fletcher, 1963:189.

133 Shepherd, 11.

134 *Mountain Messenger*, 6 February 1873, microfilm.

135 Ancil Pennington Graham, interview by Lori Tolliver-Jones, April 2005 and Northwest Ashe High School, *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 15, 1994.

136 Sexton, 16.

137 Stafford, 38.

138 Stafford, 38.

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adding a library, and purchasing books over the years. The school was moved to Lansing in 1938.¹³⁹

The importance of Ashe County's schools to their local communities is reflected in the report of the Commencement exercises at Laurel Springs School in 1908. *The Jefferson Recorder* announced that "the exercises were of unique character indeed." The day included exercises by small children, followed by dinner in the school, music, speeches, burlesque oration and farces, a speech by the Superintendent, a debate, and prizes. The school session was closed by W.D. Dickson, principal.¹⁴⁰

Architecture

Houses

Few houses survive from the war-torn and impoverished c.1860-c.1870 period, although the early pattern of log construction continued. Two surviving examples were likely among the largest houses built during this time. The John Carson House (AH 222) near Crumpler and the original section of the John and Martha Graybeal House (AH 518) in Mill Creek are both two-story log dwellings built about 1860. Yet, the use of log construction was not limited to this period of poverty. In fact, Millard and Maggie Wyatt built their one-and-a-half-story, single-pen log house (AH 356) in 1897 during a period of agricultural prosperity, illustrating the continued use of this common early form.

In contrast to the modest log dwellings are the two surviving examples of late nineteenth-century brick houses. The circa 1880 Hardin-Sutherland House (AH 156) in Sutherland is large and highly ornamented with Eastlake and Queen Anne-inspired details as well as unique configurations such as the cross-motif attic window. Much simpler in design is the J.H. Carson House (AH 472). Built in 1886, this two-story, side-gable, brick house is like many of its frame contemporaries with its center hall plan and lack of ornament.

The fine houses of this period were sometimes rendered in wood. The very large McCarter-Thomas House (AH 160) was built about 1870 in Greenwood. The unusual double-pile, center-hall-plan interior provides an excellent example of the fine woodwork that was the hallmark of the county's best houses during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Graining, burlled door panels, ornate corner blocks, and mantelpieces are of note. Arguably containing the county's best woodwork is the two-story, gable-ell Wilcox House (AH 353) in Comet. Built during the late nineteenth century, this house has graining, two-tone wood mantelpieces with floral and geometric motifs, and two-tone wood wainscoting. The use of light and dark woods was a common feature of the period and was applied to more modest dwellings as well, like the one-story, side-gable, single-pile Asa Brown House (AH 524), built in Brownwood during the late nineteenth century.

Just as the finest houses in Ashe County were rarely built of brick, neither did they utilize plaster for interior walls or ceilings. The only recorded frame house with a plaster interior is the circa 1870 Latham House (AH 341) in Clifton. The absence of plaster seems to have been a matter of choice rather than a lack

139 *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 1, 25.

140 *The Jefferson Recorder*, 2 January 1908, microfilm available at Ashe County Public Library.

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of access to markets. As we have seen, commerce was regularly conducted in Marion, Virginia, and in 1873 the *Mountain Messenger* advertised Marion Mills' "superior finely ground plaster."¹⁴¹

The period from 1870 through 1910 was one of intense construction in Ashe County. This coincides with the agricultural prosperity of the period and is reflected in the large number of houses from this era. Twenty-eight builders or carpenters were listed in the 1883 and 1890 *North Carolina Business Directory* and there were twenty-one lumber dealers and nineteen saw mills in 1883. The large number of lumber dealers is notable since oral history records that many of the houses, like the c.1890 Isham Goss House (AH 106), were built with lumber sawn from the associated farm.

The architectural survey revealed that the two-story, side-gable, single-pile I-house was probably the most common house type from this period. The prosperity of the period and awareness of more complex architectural styles, such as the Queen Anne style, influenced builders to create a more commodious version of the I-house. It is very common in the county for a one- or two-story rear wing to be part of the I-house's original design. The wide main elevation of this house presents an impressive facade suggesting wealth and security. The interior space of these houses tended to be six rooms organized around a center hall on both floors. In Ashe County, the rear ell was occasionally two rooms wide as in the Perry-Shepherd House (AH 108). This variation in plan is thought to represent the very gradual shift in the area towards larger houses with a more modern spatial sensibility (i.e. living room, dining room, and separate bedrooms) that culminated by c.1915-1920 in increasing numbers of foursquare plan houses in the county.

Owners of I-houses in Ashe County and western North Carolina generally were clearly expressing a strong sense of fashion and taste. The level of detail and finish of I-houses in the county ranges considerably, but the majority of the largest and most finely appointed houses of the c.1880 - c.1910 period are I-houses, indicating the form's fashion status. Many of these examples feature a two-story, gable-roof porch at the center bay of the facade. This porch, which is sometimes repeated as a two-story, shed-roof porch along one side of the rear ell, contains much of the house's ornamentation. The Cicero Pennington House (AH 153) in Helton, built in 1884, features an excellent interior with grained door panels as well as exuberant sawn ornamentation on the porches. The porch posts themselves are flat boards sawn into a curvaceous and decorative silhouette. Sawn brackets and balustrades are also present. This ornament is similar to that at the Perry-Shepherd House in Apple Grove (AH 108) where diagonally-laid boards in the gable ends and small brackets at the cornice add to the complex decorative scheme.

Approximately seventy I-houses have been surveyed. The Little Horse Creek/Apple Grove area has many well-preserved I-houses, with six examples surveyed. Only the Grassy Creek, Weaver's Ford, Chestnut Hill, and Sutherland areas have similar numbers of I-houses. About one-fourth of the surveyed I-houses feature the two-tier porch and five of these are in the Apple Grove area. The concentrations of I-houses are most likely due to the agricultural potential of the soil in those areas. Pockets of prime farmland, according to the 1983 Soil Survey, are found in Grassy Creek, Nathans Creek, and to the west of Jefferson and West Jefferson. Land with soils that are notable for agricultural production is found in virtually all sections of the county, however, especially in areas where early settlement is known to have occurred such as Sutherland,

141 *Mountain Messenger*, 25 December 1873.

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Helton, and in the Apple Grove vicinity. While the flattest and best agricultural locations were settled during the earliest period, agricultural development in the county during the late nineteenth century utilized these fine soils with less regard to the steepness of the slope. The soil's richness enabled farmers to create wealth that in turn allowed them to build dwellings that were among the finest in the county during the 1880 - 1910 period. Supporting this idea is the coordination between rich soils and concentrations of late-nineteenth century I-houses in Helton, Grassy Creek, Little Horse Creek, and Sutherland.¹⁴²

It should be noted, that while the I-house was an extremely prevalent house type, the one- or one-and-a-half-story, side-gable, single pile houses were also numerous during the historic period. Fewer examples of these types survive intact, however. The one-and-a-half-story form is very similar to its two-story, I-house counterpart except that there is a greater tendency towards the use of the hall and parlor plan such as in the representative c. 1900 Jake and Elizabeth Hosier House (AH 93) in Hemlock. Some of the one-story, side-gable, single-pile dwellings have a great amount of decoration in keeping with that found on many of the I-houses, while others are quite plain. The most modest of these are unpainted, board and batten dwellings that are often of boxed construction. This type of construction uses no studs, instead, the exterior sheathing (and interior if present) are simply nailed to top and bottom plates. The method is thought to have been widely used for inexpensive housing throughout the county, but few examples survive.

Farms

Almost all of the houses discussed above would have been historically surrounded by collections of outbuildings that created extensive farm complexes, many of which survive today. In Ashe County, and in much of the South, farms were distinguished by the construction of a variety of outbuildings in a range of sizes and uses. The springhouse, cellar, meat house or smoke house, wash house, and privy were ubiquitous. The first three of these were often clustered near the kitchen door of the farmhouse as they were necessary for everyday meal preparation, yet there are few other clear patterns in outbuilding arrangement.

The difficult topography, and perhaps a lack of desire on the part of the farmer, prevented the use of orderly, rectilinear building layouts. At the same time, however, the topography often could be utilized to aid in the construction and function of outbuildings. For example, cellars were almost invariably banked, or recessed, into the hillside to provide the easiest type of insulation for the apples and root vegetables that were kept there.

Agricultural outbuildings on the typical farm included at least one barn. Often during this period, barns were front-gable, two-story buildings. The granary was sometimes placed near the barn, but more frequently it was located in the space between barn and domestic outbuildings, reflecting its dual role as food storage for both humans and animals (corn and sometimes wheat).

Three of the most complete farm complexes in the county include the collection at the McCarter-Thomas Farm, which dates primarily from the c.1890-1950 period; the complex at the Alexander and Rebecca Oliver Farm (AH 329) that dates from c.1900-c.1930; and the outbuildings at the Joel and Hattie

142 U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Ashe County, North Carolina* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 14-15, 20-21 and 25.

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Walters Farm (AH 517), which date from 1906-c.1960. In each case, the house was historically surrounded by a fence, at least one corner of which was defined by a primary domestic outbuilding such as the meat house, wash house, or spring house. Often additional buildings, like the granary, helped to define the rear or side of the fence. Except for this modest attempt at an organized, rectilinear design close to the house, convenience, location of water, ease of construction, and topography determined building layout. Immediately outside of the fence was often a loose cluster of outbuildings such as the privy, cellar, spring house, granary, or chicken house. It is typical among most farms in the county to find a greater degree of formality near the house, fading quickly just outside the adjacent yard area.

Churches

Early church buildings varied little from one another. The earliest churches typically were log, and were replaced as the congregation grew with simple front-gable frame buildings with little adornment. Some churches had a double-aisle interior plan served by two separate entries on the gabled facade. Oral tradition indicates that these entries were for men and women, who are said to have sat on opposite sides of the church. In general, the Baptist churches were very plain while the Methodist often adopted details such as towers and belfries. These characteristics are seen in some of the notable churches in the county such as the very simple Horse Creek Primitive Baptist (c. 1880, AH 110), which retains two separate entries, and Covenant Union Baptist Church (c.1915, AH 88). These contrast with Cranberry Methodist Church (AH 513), which is ornamented by a belfry. The most elaborate church of the period is Worth's Chapel in Creston (AH, 45). Built in 1902, it has eclectic Gothic and Queen Anne-influences.

Schools

Like most of the churches, schools during this period had very simple forms with no ornament. Flatwoods School (AH 86), built about 1900, is the county's only surviving one-room school dating from the early twentieth century. The unornamented front-gable building retains a small stage area and board-sheathed walls, one of which is painted as a blackboard. One-room buildings were most common, but this period did see the introduction of two-room, two-teacher schools. Little Helton (AH 174), built about 1914, is one of three extant two-room schools in the county. It retains the original interior with entry vestibule.

Commercial and Industrial Buildings

Shifting from the small log buildings of the antebellum period, commercial buildings between 1860 and 1915 developed into a building type that would be repeated well into the mid-twentieth century: a small, one-story shed or gable-roofed building with a central entry flanked by windows. The c. 1900 front-gabled Charles Tucker Store (AH 102) in the Apple Grove area typifies this design. It also illustrates the use of boxed construction that was common among commercial buildings of the period. The John Sturgill Store (AH 122), also c. 1900, in Sturgills carries a shed roof and represents the few larger stores that were in the county at this time.

While there is an air of impermanence in the period's commercial buildings, expressed largely by the

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use of boxed construction, limited interior finish, and typically small size, the industrial buildings were considerably more substantial. The 1885 Perkins Flour Mill (AH 59), for example, is a large, three-story frame building resting on an impressive stone foundation on the bank of Helton Creek. Similarly, the 1884 company store building at Helton Woolen Mill is a large, well-crafted frame building ornamented by curved, exposed rafter tails and purlins, and sits on a stone pier foundation.

CHANGE COMES WITH A FULL HEAD OF STEAM: 1915-1929

The Virginia-Carolina Railroad

In 1870, the only railroad in the Appalachian region connected Norfolk, Virginia and Knoxville, Tennessee. By the early part of the twentieth century, however, railroads had been constructed into West Virginia, southwestern Virginia, Kentucky, and eastern Tennessee as timber and coal industries took root.¹⁴³

The Virginia-Carolina Railroad, which would eventually serve Ashe County, was created in 1898 by Egerton Minge, a former Norfolk and Western freight agent. Under his leadership, the first train arrived in Damascus, Virginia (about forty miles northwest of Jefferson) in 1901 connecting the remote areas of southwestern Virginia, northeastern Tennessee, and northwestern North Carolina with the seaport at Norfolk, Virginia. The railroad was built primarily for freight, but as the only rail service in the area, the Virginia-Carolina also provided passenger service. Hassinger Lumber Company became the Virginia-Carolina's primary freight customer, with a large band mill in Konnarock, Virginia (about twelve miles east of Damascus). Several branch or spur lines were built out from Damascus to reach this company and other timber companies. Hassinger Lumber Company even built a spur line, the White Top Railway, to reach timber resources. By 1912, the depletion of timber in the Konnarock vicinity forced the extension of rail lines further south. In 1912, the Virginia-Carolina Railroad crossed the 3,576 foot summit of White Top Gap, only a few miles north of the Ashe County line. This was the highest point ever reached by a freight and passenger train east of the Rocky Mountains.¹⁴⁴

In 1914, the Virginia-Carolina Railroad entered Ashe County and extended all the way across the county by July of that year. The railroad cut through the center of Ashe County by following Big Horse Creek to Berlin (Bina) and then continued southward along Buffalo Creek, the North Fork of the New River, across country to Old Field Creek, and along the South Fork of the New River to Todd.¹⁴⁵ While the initial construction was completed in July of 1914, it was not until May 15, 1915 that the first passenger, mail, and express train arrived at the Elkland Depot in Todd.¹⁴⁶

143 Joines, 13.

144 Thomas H. Blevins, *A Brief History of the Virginia Creeper*, 2003, 3-5.

145 Ibid and Doug McGuinn, *The Virginia Creeper: Remembering the Virginia-Carolina Railroad*, 1998.

146 Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Todd Historic District National Register Nomination, 1999," Western Office of the State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, 8.15. It should be noted that Todd had originally been known as Elk Cross Roads, but the U. S. post office name was changed to Todd in 1890. The depot, however, was called Elkland Depot by the railroad company and the area school also took that name. Dual names for community and depot were common along the railroad in Ashe County.

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Mingea carefully planned and built his line to ensure easy connections with the large Norfolk and Western lines. This paid off in 1919, when the Norfolk and Western Railroad acquired the Virginia-Carolina Railroad. Officially, the line was known as the Abingdon Branch, but locally it was called the "Virginia Creeper," reflecting the train's slow progress up the steep inclines on portions of its run.¹⁴⁷

Timber Industry

A 1909 railroad promotion in Ashe County focused on the benefit of good transportation: "Vote for the railroad and pay 55 cents for a sack of salt instead of \$1 to \$1.25."¹⁴⁸ On a larger scale, however, the benefit to exports from Ashe had the greatest impact. The rich timber resources in the area were the primary enticement for building the railroad, and the timber boom that came after the train's arrival was unprecedented. New companies and their employees flocked into the county. Local people took jobs with the timber companies and many farmers intensified their traditional logging practices now that it was easier to get their timber to market.

The rise of the Ashe County's timber industry was part of a regional trend. In 1900, the southern Appalachian region was home to 1,770 timber establishments, which contributed thirty percent of the hardwood timber cut in the United States. The operations employed nearly 12,000 workers. At its peak in 1909, the region was supplying forty percent of the total national production. As the early timber sources in the southern part of North Carolina began to give out, focus shifted to northwestern North Carolina and southwestern Virginia.¹⁴⁹

Although a local resident, Felix Barr, is reported to have had the first steam sawmill in county, the timber industry in Ashe County was primarily the realm of several large, outside companies.¹⁵⁰ J. L. Wright, Blue Ridge, and Scott & Brown were all based outside of the county, but maintained lumber yards in the valley along Elk Creek at Todd. Each of these companies, and their counterparts throughout the county, might employ ten to twenty men. The scale of Ashe County's timber boom is conveyed by the oral history of Herman Greer who, at the age of nine, worked in the Todd vicinity as a wagon driver hauling logs off steep mountain slopes to nearby sawmill sites. Greer observed: "There was a sawmill up every holler." Photographs of Todd from the late 1910s show vast stacks of sawn lumber awaiting shipment.¹⁵¹

One of the most important of the large timber firms operating in Ashe County was the Hassinger Lumber Company. The immense operations of Hassinger had a significant impact in the county beyond forcing the extension of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad into Ashe County. The history of Hassinger Lumber in the region began in 1905, when Luther Hassinger moved the family lumber operations from Pennsylvania

147 Blevins, 5.

148 McGuinn, 34.

149 Wyatt, "Todd," 8.15.

150 "Forestry helped form future for present-day Ashe County," *Jefferson Times* 7 February 1985, vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

151 Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Todd Historic District National Register Nomination, 1999," Western Office of the State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, 8.15-8.16.

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to Konnarock, Virginia after acquiring 30,000 acres in the White Top vicinity. Hassinger Lumber was one of the largest timber producers in the eastern United States. At the height of operations, the company employed over 400 workers.¹⁵² In Ashe County, Hassinger Lumber was active in the Bowie (Fleetwood)¹⁵³ area where the company built simple boxed construction houses for its workers and may well have logged sites elsewhere in the county, especially in the Pond Mountain area, which was close to their base near White Top.¹⁵⁴

In addition to lumber, there were other important businesses that made up the timber industry. Tan bark, pulpwood, and extract wood were all commercially viable. Tan bark was the bark of the chestnut oak, which contained a high degree of tannin, the chemical used in hide tanning. Pulpwood, taken from soft woods such as poplar, was used in paper making and extract wood, taken from dead chestnut trees, was so-called because commercially viable chemicals could be extracted from it. The Smethport Extract Company of Smethport, Pennsylvania, became one of the county's earliest industrial plants when it built a large tannin extract facility in Smethport (two miles north of Jefferson) in 1914. At its peak, the company employed about ninety workers on three shifts. Located along the rail line between Jefferson and Warrentonville, a community sprung up around the plant and in 1916 a post office was established, although few early buildings remain in the area today.¹⁵⁵

Growth of the Towns

The timber industry caused a boom period in communities along the rail line, particularly at the depots. The *Watauga Democrat* reported on June 24, 1915 that the train's arrival in Todd had initiated an "air of business heretofore unknown in that section."¹⁵⁶ In fact, Todd had been anticipating the arrival of the train for many months. The town's prosperity was evident in the establishment of the Bank of Todd by local investors in November 1918. A 1920 edition of the *Todd Bank News* lists local businesses at that time: Elkland Supply Company General Merchandise; Cox & Howell General Merchandise; A.G. Miller General Merchandise; Cook Brothers Mercantile; Graham Brothers General Merchandise; Burton K. Barr's ground limestone, silos, and autos; Dr. John Hageman; Dr. W.R. Blackburn; Will McGuire job printing; Scott & Brown Lumber Company; and L.D. Graham, blacksmith and wheelwright¹⁵⁷

Similar patterns developed all along the rail line. In Lansing, the Bank of Lansing was established by

152 Description of Hassinger Lumber Company Collection, accessed at East Tennessee State University, Archives of Appalachia website.

153 It should be noted that the community's post office had always been called Fleetwood. The railroad christened the depot Bowie and the community was often called by that name as well.

154 "Bowie once Boomed where Fleetwood Stands," *Jefferson Times*, 22 August 1985.

155 Wyatt, "Todd," 8.16 and Shepherd, 54 and 95.

156 *Watauga Democrat*, 24 June 1915 in Todd Notes, quoted in Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Todd Rural Historic District National Register Nomination, 1999," Western Office of the State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville.

157 *Todd Bank News*, Vol. I, No. 5, December 1920 in Wyatt, "Todd."

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1920 and the town grew with new stores and houses.¹⁵⁸ A boarding house (AH 380) was constructed during this period as well. The Lansing Depot was used to ship lumber and pulpwood.¹⁵⁹

At the Riverside depot (in what is now Brownwood), local landowner J. S. Brown platted a new village in July 1915. A post office was established here in 1916, but the plat was far more ambitious showing lots densely laid out on either side of the railroad tracks. Alleys were incorporated and standard street names, like Main, Locust, and Pine were assigned. Illustrating the hopeful nature of the plan, there was even a College Street. By 1925, Brownwood, like most of the other rail towns, was at its peak. The village had the depot (AH 512) and post office along with three or four general stores, a grist mill, a root and herb warehouse (AH 41), and a lumber yard.¹⁶⁰

In Bowie (now Fleetwood, AH 510) during the 1920s, there was a hotel, theater, various stores, pool hall, taxi service, dentist, blacksmith, grist mill, and cattle pens. The train exported tan bark, milk, railroad ties, and livestock. There were also residences, stores, and Calvary United Methodist Church (see AH 510) along with the houses built by the Hassinger Lumber Company. Much of this village was destroyed by fire in 1929, although the church and a handful of other buildings remain.¹⁶¹

While growth was notable in each of these villages and towns, the largest of the railroad towns was West Jefferson. Following the decision to bypass Jefferson to maintain a shorter railroad route, H. C. Tucker, E. A. McNeill, T. C. Bowie, and others formed the West Jefferson Land Company to sell lots in the new town. The first train passed through West Jefferson in February of 1915.¹⁶² Buildings such as the two-story, brick West Jefferson Hotel (1917-1918, AH 55) were constructed on Main Street and Jefferson Avenue. The two-tiered porch on the hotel's rear faced the tracks to greet passengers disembarking at the nearby depot (now moved, AH 414)). The growth of the new town and the decline of Jefferson are evident in the population statistics. In 1890, the population of Jefferson was 350, but by 1920 it stood at only 196. In 1920, only five years after its founding, West Jefferson was home to 462 people. By 1930 it had grown to 704, while Jefferson had only 296. In comparison, Lansing had a population of 267 and Todd had 104 people in 1930.¹⁶³

The Impact of the Railroad on Rural Life, Commerce, and Industry

There were nine depots in Ashe County: Nella (Husk), Tuckerdale, Lansing, Warrensville, West Jefferson, Baldwin, Bowie (Fleetwood), Riverside (name changed to Brownwood in 1919), and Elkland

158 "Report of the Condition of the Bank of Lansing," *The Ashe Recorder*, 11 March 1920, microfilm at the Ashe County Public Library.

159 Ward Sexton, "Lansing Paragraphs" and "Lansing Historical Notes," unpublished history in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

160 Sherry Joines Wyatt, "R.T. Greer and Company Root and Herb Warehouse National Register Nomination, 2002," Western Office of the State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville.

161 "Bowie once Boomed where Fleetwood Stands," *Jefferson Times*, 22 August 1985.

162 Shepherd, 58.

163 *Mountain Times Almanac*, 1994, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

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(Todd). The communities that arose at each depot included varying industrial entities, businesses, hotels and boarding houses, churches, schools, and houses. In Tuckerdale, for example, was the Tuckerdale Inn (AH 61) and in Husk was the Husk Store (AH 119). In the larger town of Warrensville, were several modest dwellings lining the streets near a commercial core with business such as the Yates and Shoaf general stores and the c.1930 Seagrave Oil Company and Service Station (AH 363-364).

The train served much of Ashe County's rural population by providing an easy means of reaching the towns of Lansing and West Jefferson as well as larger commercial centers beyond the county such as Abingdon, Virginia. The Norfolk and Western train schedule published in *The Ashe Recorder* on April, 28, 1921, shows that the train left Abingdon every day except Sunday at 9:50 in the morning and arrived at West Jefferson at 2:09 in the afternoon and at Todd at 3:20. The train left Todd for the return trip at 6:20 pm.¹⁶⁴ The line served passengers, brought goods into the county, and took out vast amounts of timber. Additionally, the train hauled livestock to market. The inventory taken when the railroad closed between West Jefferson and Todd in 1933 show that cattle pens were located at both the Bowie and Riverside depots.¹⁶⁵

Another export of the 1920s was soapstone. The local use of soapstone in the nineteenth century was well documented during the architectural survey. The easily worked, heat-resistant stone was used for fireplace surrounds, hearths, and spring boxes. The National Soapstone Company opened a quarry and processing plant in Baldwin in the 1920s on Black Bear Inn Road. The enterprise employed about a dozen people. A dinky train¹⁶⁶ brought raw material from the mine to work areas where it was polished and cut into smaller units. The dinky train then carried the stone to either the Baldwin or West Jefferson depot. The company closed in 1932, a casualty of the Great Depression.¹⁶⁷

While economic change washed over the county during the 1915-1925 period, day-to-day rural life changed little from the late nineteenth century. The rural general store was still the primary place of trade for local residents, but the new rail line did play an important role in the trade of these general stores. Coy Ham was a case in point. After he built his first store about 1923 (replaced in 1940, AH 97), he took live chickens, eggs, herbs, hams, and furs in trade. No cash was actually exchanged during these transactions; rather, Ham deducted the price of these goods from the purchases of his patron and issued a due bill or credit for any unused amount. Ham would then haul the roots and herbs to West Jefferson for shipment. He kept live chickens in a chicken house at the store until he shipped them in crates to New York from the Lansing depot.¹⁶⁸

164 *The Ashe Recorder*, April, 28, 1921, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

165 Records of the Interstate Commerce Commission, "Engineering Branch: Valuation Reports, Property Change Reports, Working Papers, and Returns," Norfolk and Western Railway Company, National Archives and Records Administration.

166 A type of train that used narrow rails and was common for short, difficult runs.

167 "Ashe Quarry uncovered nature's ingenious soapstone," *Jefferson Times*, Mountain Living section, 28 November 1985, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

168 Lisa Phipps, "Country Stores," term paper, Wilkes Community College, 12 June 2003, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library and Wade Ham, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 8 December 2004.

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In fact, the root and herb business may have expanded in Ashe County with the greater ability of general store owners to ship their product to buyers. In Brownwood, R.T. Greer and Company, a large wholesaler based in Marion, Virginia, built a commodious herb warehouse (AH 41) about 1918 across the street from the Brownwood depot. The Greer Company was the nation's largest dealer in crude botanicals in 1928, selling to pharmaceutical companies such as Eli Lilly and Rexall as well as exporting ginseng to China. Oral history records that during the mid-1920s wagons would sometimes line up a half a mile down the road from the warehouse waiting to unload. During the peak season in summer, the warehouse would be open twenty-four hours a day. At the warehouse, the dried herbs were collected and baled for shipment. After the closure of the depot in 1933, the warehouse continued until 1945 using trucks to transport the herbs.¹⁶⁹

Due to increased industry and commerce, as well as improved transportation, visitation to Ashe County increased. While statistics for the number of visitors after the construction of the railroad are not available, we can surmise from the construction of buildings like the West Jefferson Hotel and the Tucker Hotel, also in West Jefferson, that there were greater numbers of visitors. Some of these visitors were patronizing the local mineral springs. At both Healing Springs and Shatley Springs, new guest cabins were constructed during this period. Two new inns were also opened during this period, both in the homes of their owners. In 1927, Fred and Lessie Ray opened the Black Bear Inn (AH 502) in Baldwin. The reputation of the inn for good food and hospitality grew and three guest cottages were eventually constructed on the property. The inn closed in 1960. The second inn, the Buffalo Tavern, was operated by Walsh Ray during the 1920s and 1930s. The adjacent vineyard produced wine sold in the tavern.

Expanding Transportation

While the growth of the railroad was clearly the major transportation development during the second quarter of the twentieth century, its impact was paralleled by significant improvement in the county's roads. The county commissioners undertook a bond issue in 1916 to construct several bridges, most notably a large truss bridge over the New River at Crumpler. The *Ashe Recorder* in April of 1919 carried several editorials lobbying for the passage of bonds for road construction and reported that the state's Highway Commission engineer had suggested new state roads from Jefferson to the Alleghany County line, the Virginia line, the Tennessee line, the Watauga County line, and the Wilkes County line by way of Obids. In 1919, the Ashe County Good Roads Commission was established and spent large sums of county money on road and bridge construction from 1916 through 1925.¹⁷⁰ Increasingly, the county turned to state funding for roads, particularly after the "Good Roads" governor, Cameron Morrison (1921-1925), set the stage for state-supported road improvements. In 1928, Ashe County commissioners attempted to induce the state to take over more road maintenance. With a population of 22,000, they argued Ashe was one of the largest counties in the region, yet only seventy-five miles of its many miles roads were state-maintained. The push to increase

169 Wyatt, "R.T. Greer," 8.9.

170 Fletcher, 100-103 and *Ashe Recorder*, 17 April 1919, microfilm available at the Ashe County Public Library.

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state road maintenance was eventually successful.¹⁷¹

Two bridges are extant from this prolific period of transportation construction. High above the New River, the elegant ten-span concrete bridge carrying U.S. 221 was built by the Highway Commission in 1922 (AH 62). In contrast, the small Pratt-truss bridge (AH 365), built over Buffalo Creek in Warrensville about 1930, is typical of the bridges that spanned the county's numerous waterways during the early and mid-twentieth century.

Agriculture

Agricultural endeavors intensified during this period of modernization and growth from 1915 through 1930. There was also a marked shift toward cash-crop agriculture primarily in the form of dairy and beef cattle. Encouraged by state-supported demonstrations, commercial dairying began by about 1915. This development was also linked to the promotion of the cheese-making industry by the state. A cheese factory was built in Grassy Creek in 1915 and produced about \$14,000 worth of cheese in 1917. Similar factories were established at Sturgills (AH 151) and Clifton. These ventures failed, however, due to their small size, scattered locations, and the extremely poor condition of the roads that linked the farmers, the factories, and the rail depots. The small factories were precursors, however, to establishment of the Kraft-Phoenix Cheese factory in West Jefferson in 1930. Kraft operated the cheese factory until 1975 when it was sold to then-manager Chesley Hazelwood. He renamed the enterprise Ashe County Cheese, which is still operating today as the state's only cheese factory.¹⁷²

At the same time, the beef cattle industry was increasingly promoted in Ashe County by the State Department of Agriculture. The dairy and beef industries competed for support during the 1920s and 1930s. This competition and the draw of lucrative dairy opportunities elsewhere eventually resulted in a large migration of dairymen from Ashe and Alleghany counties to new farms near Bel Air, Maryland throughout the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁷³ Yet this was only one of numerous transitions in Ashe's agriculture during this period.

One of these transitions in the county's agricultural economy was the introduction of Burley tobacco, which is air-cured. This differs from the flue-curing process used for the Bright Leaf tobacco grown in the North Carolina Piedmont in 1925. The climate in the mountain region of the state prevented the type of large-scale production of Bright Leaf tobacco that defined the Piedmont's agriculture. The climate in the mountain region was more suitable for the growth of Burley tobacco, which was in its experimental stage from 1925-30. Agricultural Census statistics reveal the initial impact the new tobacco had on mountain tobacco production. In Ashe County, production increased from 3,249 pounds in 1920 to 12,981 pounds in

171 Fletcher, 105.

172 Linda Burchette, "Cheese: it has a proud history," *Jefferson Post*, 6 October 1994, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library and "Grassy Creek," 2.

173 Shepherd, 14.

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1930 and continued to increase exponentially thereafter.¹⁷⁴ Initially, most farmers took their crop to market at Abingdon until the construction of a market in West Jefferson during the 1940s.¹⁷⁵

The number of farms in Ashe County multiplied from 1910 through 1930, while the total acres of farmland in the county shrunk. Reflecting this dichotomy, farms in 1930 tended to be smaller than they had been in 1910. While this phenomenon is also observed during the nineteenth century due to the division of farms among descendants of early settlers, now the smaller farms were primarily a factor of the modernization and intensification of farm practices where higher yields could be derived from a smaller area. Peaks in wheat production and in the numbers of horses and dairy cattle in 1920 and a peak in corn production in 1930 illustrate the agricultural prosperity of the period.¹⁷⁶

On the whole, the agricultural transformation that was well underway by 1930 was subtle in its impact on daily life. The "Announcement of the Ninth Annual Grassy Creek Fair" on October 12, 1935 gives a glimpse into the production and life on Ashe County farms. Fair contests included events in the "Farm Crops Department" with prizes for the best ten ears of corn, best gallon of field beans, and best peck of beets. Virtually every farm product was judged including sweet potatoes, onions, sweet peppers, pumpkin, squash, turnips, Irish potatoes, cabbage, best bunch of clover, alfalfa, and timothy hay, and best sheaf of wheat, rye, oats, and barley. Horticulture, poultry, and livestock were also judged. In the "Woman's Department" were events in embroidery, crochet, tatting, breads, pastry, candy, canned goods, coverlids (sic), rugs, and house dresses; Flower and art competitions and an exhibit of antiques completed the event.¹⁷⁷

Religion

During the 1915 to 1930 period, church organization and building reached a plateau with only about eight of the fifty surveyed churches being built in these years. This time frame saw the introduction of new denominations however, including the Christian Unity Baptist Church (similar to Free-Will Baptists or Separate Baptist), Church of Christ in Christian Union, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Church of God, Mennonites, and Free-will Baptists. As none of the buildings surveyed serve these denominations they may have begun in people's homes and other types of buildings, such as community stores or schools. Many of these congregations are housed in modern buildings built after 1955.

Baptists continued to be the leading denomination in the county. The New River Baptist Association remained active and held annual meetings throughout this time period, with at least three host churches being located in Ashe County. Among churches in the Ashe Baptist Association, seven were constituted between 1915 and 1930. The Mountain Union Baptist Association churches grew slightly from twenty-one to twenty-five during these years.¹⁷⁸

174 *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1920 and 1930.

175 Shepherd, 14.

176 *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1920 and 1930.

177 Photocopy of brochure in vertical file of Ashe County Public Library.

178 New River Baptist Historical Table 1871-1977 as posted on www.newrivernotes.com

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The churches continued to be central to the county's social life. Weekly church services were occasions for local church members, but churches also sponsored large gatherings that drew crowds from across the county like homecomings, decorations (for adorning and cleaning the church cemetery), association meetings, and revivals. These events usually included "dinner on the grounds" and were times for renewing friendships and courting. The importance of the events is highlighted by their consistent coverage in period newspapers. News items from Bina in *The Northwestern Herald* on February 28, 1924, for example, reported the success of a recent revival: "The revival closed Wednesday with twenty conversions and twenty-two additions to the church. Six were baptized at the close of the meeting . . ."¹⁷⁹

Education

While the coming of the railroad brought many improvements to the county, these advances did not significantly impact education. Even though a state law passed in 1907 provided for the establishment of high schools, only one was reported for Ashe County as late as 1916. In this year, Helton High School, established in 1902, still had an enrollment of only thirty-nine taught by one teacher. Yet, two additional high schools were reported the following year at Grassy Creek and West Jefferson.¹⁸⁰

By 1920 a total of seven tax districts were reported in the county, an increase of only two since 1912. The slightness of the increase was due in part to efforts made toward consolidation of schools. The number of one-room schools shrank from seventy-five in 1915 to fifty-eight by 1920. This same year saw thirty-three schools with two teachers (up from eleven in 1910), five with three teachers, and three schools with four or more teachers. An early 1920s statement by C. M. Dickson, County Superintendent of Schools, reveals some of the reasons for slow growth in the Ashe County school system:

On account of the geography of the county we can do very little consolidation, but wherever possible we are consolidating. When the state authorities learn that our schools run in zero weather; that the streams become un-fordable in a very few minutes; that the snow drifts are often six to eight feet deep; that the streams are frequently frozen over; and that in consequence of these things that we have to visit most of these schools on horseback, they will be ready to be somewhat indulgent if our progress does not appear to be as "marked" as some of the more fortunate counties. We might further say that we have no Rural Supervisor, no Farm Demonstrator, no stenographer, nor help of any kind.¹⁸¹

Exacerbating the situation, many parents began sending their children to school on an even more irregular basis as the term became longer with "the children dropping out of school early in the spring to

179 "Elkland Closes Successful Session," *The Northwestern Herald*, 28 February 1924, microfilm available at Ashe County Public Library.

180 Alfred Hurt, *Educational Development in Ashe County*, 1929, Chapter IV, via www.newriversnotes.com

181 Ibid.

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assist in the work on the farm and in the home [being] a common occurrence. The lack of any organized effort to enforce the compulsory attendance law in Ashe [also] kept the attendance irregular.”¹⁸² As late as the 1925-1926 academic year, thirty-two one-room schools were still in use. The average school term in 1927 was 124 days for whites and 120 days for African Americans, which was less than the required six-month term.¹⁸³

Despite these statistics, progress was made during the 1920s and especially after 1930 as the condition of the county's roads improved. In the early 1920s, under the direction of county Superintendent R.E.L. Plummer, a consolidation project was begun in the Grassy Creek community. The Virginia-Carolina High School was created by combining three small schools in the area with expenses shared between the states. This building is no longer extant, but it was the county's first accredited high school and the first to which students were transported (via one wagon in 1922-23) at public expense. Five wagons and three “motor trucks” were in use by 1925 and in 1927 the school transportation fleet consisted of eleven trucks, traveling an average of sixty-six miles each day, transporting 387 students to five schools.¹⁸⁴

A second consolidation effort, again undertaken by Plummer, began in 1928 in the Crumpler area with the combination of Oakdale, Oak Mill, Fairview, Laurel View, and Old Fields school as Healing Springs School (AH 545). Because the county commissioners refused to allocate funds for this project, Plummer himself donated twelve acres for the proposed school and the community provided the building materials. Classes began at the new school with five elementary teachers and 178 students. The Reverend W.N. Parker of Marion, Virginia was the first principal. There were a total of four accredited high schools in the county during this period including West Jefferson, Lansing, Jefferson, and Grassy Creek, and six non-accredited high schools, Helton, Fleetwood, Green Valley, Elkland, and Healing Springs.¹⁸⁵

As in most rural communities of the period, the school was a focal point for social activity. This is well illustrated in Ashe County by the newspaper accounts of commencements and term-closing exercises at schools across the county in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, on February 28, 1924, *The Northwestern Herald* gave a report of Elkland School's term-closing exercises. During the day-long event, morning exercises by the grammar school were followed by dinner “served on the grounds.” In the afternoon there were speeches, and that evening “Deacon Dubbs,” a rural comedy, was given by the High School department followed by entertainment from the West Jefferson Trio and West Jefferson String Band.¹⁸⁶

Architecture

The changes in architecture from the 1915–1930 period are illustrative of the shifts taking place in the

182 Hurt, Chapter IV.

183 Hurt, Chapter V.

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid.

186 “Elkland Closes Successful Session,” *The Northwestern Herald*, 28 February 1924, microfilm available at Ashe County Public Library.

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county's economy. The most striking changes are linked to the growth of the towns and the development of concentrations of buildings based on popular models in the towns. New architectural forms, motifs, and styles were slow to disseminate into rural sections of the county.

This contrast between rural and town models is illustrated by early photographs of West Jefferson and Lansing revealing the appearance of the hip-roof cottage, along with some examples of the two-story, hip-roof, double-pile form. Although these forms were more concentrated in towns, they are also found in rural areas of the county. The William Osborne house (AH 278) in Hemlock is an early example of the hip-roof cottage in a remote location.

During the c.1870-1915 period the most architecturally refined houses were located on farms in rural sections of the county. That pattern began to shift after 1915 as wealth became more concentrated in the towns. The Thomas "Tam" Bowie House (AH 455) in West Jefferson epitomizes this change. Arguably the most high style house in Ashe County, this very large, two-story brick Colonial Revival-style house was constructed in 1916 on a hill above the fledgling railroad town, in which Bowie was an investor. On a more modest scale is the c.1920 Willie Roten House (AH 358) located just outside of the town of Warrentsville. This simple foursquare design has an interior that combines the traditional use of varnished beadboard with popular purchased wood ornament. The living room and adjacent library, for example, are separated by a low bookcase with multi-light doors topped by Tuscan style columns. The boarding house in Lansing (AH 380) is a similar example also with an interior sheathed in varnished beadboard and decorative features such as a set of French doors with an arched transom separating the parlor and dining room. Finally, the 1928 Craftsman-style house built by E.E. and Hazel Trivette (AH 416) outside of West Jefferson is the best example of the Craftsman style in the county, featuring a stone veneer, wide eaves, and a broad, gabled porch supported by large, square stone piers. The large size of the house sets it apart from the other Craftsman houses in the county, most of which are modest-sized bungalows.

The use of the Craftsman style bungalows is fairly limited in Ashe County, particularly in the county's rural sections. Most of the surveyed bungalows display only modest references to the style such as exposed rafter tails and battered posts on masonry piers and in many cases the references are absent altogether. Yet, the bungalow was the dominant house form after 1925. The earliest bungalow surveyed in the county is thought to have been built in 1919 by Ashe County Sheriff and Legislator Ambrose Clark on his farm in Little Horse Creek (AH 112). The large one-and-a-half-story, side-gable type became the typical farm house, usually displaying minimal stylistic references. In towns like Jefferson, Lansing, and West Jefferson, however, Craftsman bungalows were more common albeit still restrained in their styling. Jefferson and Lansing have several examples along the primary streets, and in West Jefferson there are several examples to the west and north of the commercial core.

The central business district of West Jefferson helps to illustrate the shift in Ashe County towards popular architectural styles and forms. The one- and two-story brick commercial buildings erected along Main Street and Jefferson Avenue during the late 1910s and 1920s (and through the 1950s) are virtually indistinguishable from commercial buildings found elsewhere in the state during this period evident by their utilization of modest corbeled cornices, low-relief brick pilasters separating facade bays, recessed storefronts,

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sometimes with transoms, and second floor apartments with private entries on the first floor facade. Lansing retains a few of its early wooden commercial buildings, one of which is still clad in fire-preventative metal sheathing. In rural areas, the commercial buildings continued to follow the traditional forms: one-story frame buildings with shed, hip, or front-gable roofs.

It was also during this period that the tradition of expanding older houses becomes more evident. While several of the late nineteenth-century I-houses encompass older log sections, none of those illustrates the practice of expansion as clearly as the John and Martha Graybeal House (AH 518) in Mill Creek. The log section on the west side was built about 1860, while the large brick section to the east was constructed in 1924. Less visible but equally dramatic is the Gilley-McCoy House (AH 283) in Little Laurel Creek. The original c.1900 house was a traditional one-story, side-gable, single-pile dwelling, but in the 1920s or 1930s the house was remodeled into a one-and-a-half-story, side-gable bungalow.

Church buildings varied in size and style during this period. The Warrensville Methodist Church (AH 361) of 1921 is similar in design to the earlier Grassy Creek Methodist Church in its use of a hipped, corner entry tower. Unlike the rectilinear interior plan at Grassy Creek, however, the Warrensville church interior is laid out on a diagonal within the square sanctuary. The two Presbyterian Churches built during the late 1920s are the precursors to a series of churches that utilize native stone in their designs. Lansing Presbyterian Church (AH 47) built in 1928 displays strong Arts and Crafts references in its use of river stone veneer, while West Jefferson Presbyterian Church (AH 434), built about 1927 also is stone but in the Gothic Revival style.

The survey revealed a shift away from the front-gable, one-room school design to rectangular, side-gable or hip-roofed buildings with broad facades that sometimes featured a projecting central bay. Trout School (AH 318) of c. 1930 is a side-gable two-room structure that housed grades one through seven while Landmark School, (AH 186) of 1924 also has two full classrooms as well as an additional, smaller room in the projecting front bay, used as an activity space. The increasing diversity of school design during this period is illustrated by Silas Creek School (AH176), c. 1915, the county's only historic two-story school building, but the second floor served as the Oddfellows Hall. A greater degree of stylistic detail for school buildings came into play by the late 1920s. Healing Springs School (AH 545) was one of the first schools to be clad in brick veneer and display Colonial Revival references such as the cupola over the entry bay.

NATIONAL CRISIS, LOCAL IMPACT: 1930 – 1955

The Great Depression

The economic prosperity spawned by the timber boom was not long-lasting. Smethport Extract was among the first to close, dismantling its plant and moving it to Helen, Georgia in 1919-1920. This was only the first in a quick succession of closures in the timber industry as the logging companies like Hassinger Lumber moved on to less-depleted areas during the late 1920s. By about 1930, most of the large stands of timber in Ashe County had been harvested. Lumber shipments from the depot in Todd declined from 485 rail

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cars in 1927 to only twenty in 1932.¹⁸⁷

Coinciding with the depletion of timber resources were the onset of the chestnut blight¹⁸⁸ and the economic crash of the Great Depression. In 1933, the railroad ceased to operate south of West Jefferson, eliminating Todd's role as rail head. Livestock markets, a primary cash source for local farmers, plummeted. Additionally, the Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky coal mines, previously sources of "emergency" income for Ashe County residents, greatly reduced operations as coal prices declined. Ashe County men, sometimes with their families, used to take employment at the coal mines as not only a primary source of income, but also during times of hardship when extra cash was needed. Now the safety net was gone.

The severity of the economic decline is illustrated by Sheriff H.M. Miller's report to the County Board of Commissioners in 1932. Miller told the commissioners that the collection of past-due 1931 taxes would require the sale of more than half the homes in Ashe County. By the end of 1932, unpaid taxes reached over \$147,000. The county defaulted on more than one million dollars in road bonds in the early 1930s and a refinancing scheme was not put into effect until 1937.¹⁸⁹ Neither the Bank of Lansing nor the Bank of Todd survived the Depression.¹⁹⁰

The New Deal

Responding to the economic crises created by the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted a series of new federal relief programs between 1933 and 1937 that came to be called collectively "the New Deal." The federal program that had the most significant impact in Ashe County was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA grew out of the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933. Initially known as the Emergency Relief Administration, this body began its state-administered programs with two principal objectives: to give direct relief to those in need (including the unemployed and transients) as well as administer a public works program that would employ jobless citizens.¹⁹¹ By 1935, the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration spent over \$52 million in federal funds, with nearly \$250,000 in Ashe County. In 1935, the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act was passed replacing the 1933 Emergency Relief Act. At this time, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) absorbed the Emergency Relief Administration works program. The WPA spent an additional 173.7 million dollars in North Carolina from 1935 through 1942.¹⁹²

Several schools, gyms, and other public works projects were constructed in Ashe County by these

187 McGuinn, 60.

188 The chestnut blight, *Cryphonectria parasitica*, a highly contagious fungal disease, eventually destroyed the native American Chestnuts that were an important part of the region's forests.

189 Fletcher, 105-108.

190 Sexton and Sam Shumate, "Making the Milk Run," *Blue Ridge Mountain Memoirs*, March 1996, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

191 Sherry Wyatt, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Elkland Gymnasium, 2002", Western Office State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, 8.3.

192 Ibid. and "A Brief History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, accessed at www.cccalumni.org/history1.html

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programs, benefiting the county both through the new facilities and the employment of the workers who built them. Approximately one-half of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration funds spent in Ashe County from 1932 through 1935 went to school-related projects, while road improvements received approximately one-quarter of the funds. In fact, the single most costly project in Ashe County during this period was West Jefferson High School (\$25,447). The construction of sanitary privies for county schools (\$11,452) and the construction of Jefferson High School (\$10,840) also registered high costs (both of these schools have been demolished). The scope of the relief fund-assisted school building program in Ashe County was broad, including six new high school buildings and nine gyms, providing a gym at each high school. Relatively inexpensive to build, gymnasiums were extremely useful because they served not only for school athletic events, but as auditoriums and community buildings as well. Gymnasiums were the most common type of new building constructed on school campuses by the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration during its 1932-1935 operations. Among the extant buildings constructed by the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration's successor, the WPA, between 1935 and about 1940 are the Lansing School (AH 58), the West Jefferson Community Building (AH 415), and Ashe County Memorial Hospital (AH 460). They were all built in a restrained Colonial Revival style with exteriors of locally-available granite. The use of local materials in building construction was something the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration and Works Progress Administration were well known for.¹⁹³

Another New Deal program that made important contributions in Ashe County was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was established as an "army" of young men who would "battle" against the destruction and erosion of the country's land. The CCC helped to construct one of the most ambitious New Deal projects in Ashe and other Western North Carolina counties, the Blue Ridge Parkway. Four CCC camps were established along the proposed parkway route in North Carolina and Virginia with an average of 150 young men at each camp. The Glendale Springs Inn (AH 8) served as the workers' dormitory and headquarters from 1935 to 1938 during construction of the adjacent parkway section.¹⁹⁴

The scenic Blue Ridge Parkway stretches nearly five hundred miles along the crest of the Blue Ridge in North Carolina and Virginia. Colonel Joseph Hyde Pratt, head of the North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey in the early 1900s, is credited with promoting an idea he styled "The Crest of the Blue Ridge Highway." The project began with construction between Altapass and Pineola, N.C. (in Mitchell and Avery counties) in 1912, but World War I halted work and the parkway was not resurrected until the programs of the New Deal came into effect. The idea of the parkway encompassed relief both in the form of jobs for the region's impoverished residents and in the promise of economic benefit over the long term through the tourism the parkway would promote. One of the staunchest proponents of the parkway in northwestern North Carolina was U.S. Congressman Robert L. Doughton of Laurel Springs in Alleghany County. Through his efforts, work on the parkway began in Alleghany and Ashe counties early on with construction on the Parkway beginning in Alleghany County on September 11, 1935. The early construction

193 Ibid.

194 Harley E. Jolley, *The Blue Ridge Parkway*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 55 and 69 and Bishir, 210.

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of the Parkway in Alleghany and Ashe counties brought with it immediate job opportunities for local residents as the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, the CCC, and private contractors worked to build the road through difficult terrain. As many as 1,200 people were at work on the Parkway during the 1930s stabilizing and planting construction sites, reducing fire hazards, building fences, and installing erosion control measures. In addition to the road itself, seven recreational areas were also constructed along its length.¹⁹⁵

Rural Electrification

Technological change that had begun in Ashe County during the 1915-1930 period with advances in agriculture and transportation continued during the difficult Depression years. In 1925, the county's board of commissioners appropriated \$2,000 for a hydroelectric survey by the State Department of Conservation and Development.¹⁹⁶ The first hydroelectric power plant and dam (AH 349) were constructed in 1931 by the Northwest North Carolina Utilities Company at Sharpe's Falls on the North Fork of the New River near Dresden. Ernest Bumgardner, the first plant manager was provided with a house nearby, but it was destroyed in the 1940 flood. The small power plant survives, however, constructed of uncut, random-laid granite.¹⁹⁷

After this private development came the establishment of the federal Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in 1935. The agency promoted rural electrification by providing low-cost loans to build transmission and generation facilities. An REA office opened in Jefferson in 1939. In 1940, Blue Ridge Electric Member Corporation, which was already providing power to Caldwell, Watauga, and Alleghany counties, bought all Northwest N.C. Utilities Company facilities including the power plant and dam. By 1941, Ashe County had 331 miles of lines. The Sharpe's Falls power plant supplied electricity to West Jefferson until 1970, with a peak production of 1,252,000 kilowatt hours in 1949.¹⁹⁸

One of the most important voices in the electrification of Ashe County, and much of rural North Carolina, was Ashe County resident Gwyn B. Price. Price had served as principal of Jefferson High School for fourteen years and owned a modern dairy in Fig. He served in the federal Agricultural Adjustment Administration and later the Farm Security Administration. In 1941 Governor Broughton appointed him head of the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority in Raleigh. Price continued in that position from 1941 until 1972, serving under eight governors. In 1941, only one-fourth of North Carolina's farms had electricity but within ten years nearly all had access to the service. Later, Price helped to organize rural telephone cooperatives across the state.¹⁹⁹

195 Ibid.

196 Fletcher, 103.

197 Northwest Ashe High School, *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 14, 24.

198 Ibid.; *Jefferson Post*, 10 July 1997, clipping in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library; and Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation website.

199 Weaver, 246.

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Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799 -1955*Agriculture*

While dairying and beef cattle competed for support during the early twentieth century, by the 1940s each facet of the livestock industry was making important contributions to the county's economy. Bill Sharpe noted in his 1948 *North Carolina: a Description by County*, that livestock was Ashe County's "major agricultural pursuit." Bassett Young began the first cattle market in Ashe County during the early-to-mid-twentieth century and a second cooperative market was established in 1955.²⁰⁰ The 1950 U.S. Census records the county's peak numbers of beef and dairy cattle, and by 1954 Ashe led the state in both beef and dairy cattle production and was second only to Watauga County in sheep.²⁰¹

Dairying was bolstered by rural electrification in the late 1930s and early 1940s since electricity was necessary for Grade A dairies. The importance of dairies as customers for the electric company is expressed in publications like the *Cooperative Dairy News*, published by the Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation in the late 1940s.²⁰² A Grade A dairy, which produced milk for bottling, was required to keep its milk in coolers. Grade C dairies, which continued to be common in the county through the 1950s, produced milk for cheese or evaporated milk. Grade C dairies placed their milk in metal cans, which were collected daily by an unrefrigerated truck.²⁰³

Significant historic dairies include the one owned by Bower and Bill Walters near Jefferson (AH 517) which operated from the 1940s until about 1985. At its peak, the farm had forty-five head of cattle with the capability of milking eleven cows at one time, producing about two tons of milk a day.²⁰⁴ The dairy begun by Cecil and Norma Yates (AH 527) in 1942 was one of the last in the county when it closed in 2005. The only operating dairy found on a historic farm in the county is at the A.S. Cooper Farm (AH 40) near Brownwood, which dates to the mid-nineteenth century.

The Gwyn Price Farm (AH 338) was one of the county's largest and most modern dairies. The several barns, milking parlors, and bottle plant were built between 1932 and the early 1940s. The dairy maintained thirty to thirty-five registered Guernsey cattle, a rarity in the county due to their expense. Initially milk was sold to the Kraft Cheese factory, but with the availability of electricity, the farm became a Grade A dairy and began to bottle and sell milk locally under the Golden Guernsey trademark until about 1945. In the later years, the milk was sold to Coble Milk (later known as Yadkin Valley Cooperative).²⁰⁵

Coble Milk built a collection plant in Lansing in 1942 (AH 378). This was the unloading point for route trucks early each morning. The milk cans were emptied, washed, and reloaded onto the trucks. Milk

200 Shepherd, 15.

201 *U.S. Agricultural Census, 1950; The State*, 28 August 1954, photocopy in Ashe County Public Library vertical files; and Bill Sharpe, editor, *North Carolina: a Description by Counties*, Warren Publishing Co., 1948, photocopy in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

202 Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, *Cooperative Dairy News*, May 1947.

203 Grade B dairies, which also produced milk that would be further processed before consumption, were not common in the county.

204 Bill and Bower Walters, Interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 9 September 2005.

205 Joe Price, Interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 10 June 2005.

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from the plant was hauled to a processing plant in Lexington, North Carolina. The Lansing plant shipped 45,000 to 60,000 pounds of milk each day for twenty-five years; it closed by 1967.²⁰⁶ The other important local buyer for milk was the Kraft Cheese plant in West Jefferson. In 1954, the plant used 130,000 pounds of milk a day.²⁰⁷

State support and boosterism for dairy and beef production culminated in 1944 with the construction of the Upper Mountain Research Station (AH 479) by the State Department of Agriculture. Locally referred to as the "test farm," the station continues to be a center for agricultural research specific to the mountain climate. Early experiments included work with beef cattle, sheep, Burley and Turkish tobacco, potatoes, and tomatoes. One of the most important early projects was research to improve production and storing of livestock forages for the extended winter feeding period in the region. Up-to-date scientific information was dispersed to area farmers at community events such as the station's cattle sales and crop-specific field days. The field days provided public access to demonstration fields at the farm and were led by the station's agricultural experts.²⁰⁸

After 1952, the station's research focused on livestock, forage production, and burley tobacco. The burley tobacco breeding program was important in the effort to develop disease-resistant plants that were well-suited to their environment.²⁰⁹ The station's work was a significant factor in tobacco's rise as a major cash crop in the county. While the crop had begun its ascent in the late 1920s, tobacco production in Ashe jumped exponentially from 12,981 pounds in 1930 to 473,787 pounds by 1940 and 1,100,563 pounds in 1950. This increase made a local market feasible and in the late 1940s, Tri-State Tobacco Warehouse (AH 567) became the first tobacco warehouse in West Jefferson. Built by Larry Taylor, who operated it along with his father and uncle, the building was later known as Farmer's Burley Warehouse. There were three tobacco auction warehouses in the county by 1954.²¹⁰ The promotion and excitement generated by the crop is evident in the annual tobacco festivals marking the opening of the tobacco market. Held in West Jefferson during the 1950s, the November 30, 1950 event included a parade, prizes for downtown shoppers, a festival queen chosen from representatives from each school, and a square dance.²¹¹

Other cash crops during the early twentieth century included beans, both dried and fresh, for which a market was established in West Jefferson in 1942. The market, which sold 100,000 bushels of snap and pole bean in its first year, provided an important, easily accessible place where local farmers could sell their crops. By 1954, a second bean market had been established at Smethport.²¹² One of the major customers of the

206 Sexton; Sam Shumate, "Making the Milk Run," *Blue Ridge Mountain Memoirs*, March 1996, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library; and *Mountaineer Heritage*. One source indicates closure of the plant was in 1959 while the other says it was 1967.

207 *The State*, 28 August 1954, photocopy in Ashe County Public Library vertical files.

208 "Upper Mountain Research Station, 50 Years of Progress, August 15, 1996," commemorative history and event program.

209 Ibid.

210 *The State*; *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1940 and 1950; and "Tri-State tobacco warehouse moves," *Ashe County Herald*, 5 November 1993, Ashe County Public Library vertical files.

211 *The Skyland Post*, 30 November 1950, microfilm available at Ashe County Public Library.

212 Shepherd, 14 and *The State*, 28 August 1954, photocopy in Ashe County Public Library vertical files.

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fresh bean market was Beaver Creek Cannery. Opened in 1950 by John Weaver, the cannery employed fifty men and women each summer. The operation canned nearly half a million bushels of beans each year, purchasing its product primarily from local warehouses. The cannery closed in 1970 and burned in 1986.²¹³

One of the largest and most progressive of Ashe County's farms was Colvard Farms in Orion. The farm was owned by Fred N. Colvard who worked closely with state researchers to develop and market superior crops from the region for national distributors. The blight-resistant 'Sequoia' potato developed by Colvard won national fame. Colvard Farms was a major employer in the county during the mid-twentieth century with several families living on the farm and up to two hundred people hired seasonally. In both his roles as a farmer and as a member of the North Carolina Board of Agriculture, Colvard was a pioneer in the establishment of the commercial Christmas tree industry in the region during the 1940s. Colvard's daughter, Edith Crutcher, recalls that an early load of Christmas trees was taken to Roanoke for sale. The idea of growing Christmas trees was met with skepticism locally, but proved to be successful.²¹⁴

Thus, by the mid-1950s, the agricultural practices in Ashe County had shifted from the minimal cash system of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to cash-crop agriculture based on livestock, tobacco, and beans with additional crops such as Christmas trees in their infancy. Further, many Ashe County citizens had traded the life of full-time farming for part-time farming supplementing income from the county's new industries. In 1950, 1,984 farmers also worked off the farm, up from 1,756 in 1940. By 1940, the average farm size had fallen to only 61.5 acres. In this same year, however, the county reached its peak number of farms: 4,153.²¹⁵

These smaller, more numerous farms were products of both decades of property division as well as the intensification of production within a smaller area made possible by modern technologies. Technological advances were clearly marked by the agricultural census. In 1930, there were 725 cars, 225 trucks, and 25 tractors on the county's farms. In this pre-REA period, only 97 farms had electricity. In 1950, there were 1,099 cars, 894 trucks, and 147 tractors. Over 2,800 farms had electricity in 1950 and 45 farms used electric milking machines.²¹⁶

Industry and Commerce

The farmers who found off-farm work were often employed at one of the several local industries that had grown during the 1940s. Statistics from 1947 show that 4.2 percent of the county's population was employed in industry, primarily in the fields of lumber and furniture.²¹⁷ One of these companies was the Phenix Chair Company (AH 435), which was begun by Robert Barr in 1935 with three employees making

213 "Memories of the Beaver Creek Cannery," *The Skyland Post*, 2 April 1986.

214 Weaver, 99 and Edith Crutcher, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 12 August 2005.

215 *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1940 and 1950.

216 *Ibid*, 1930 – 1950.

217 Bill Sharpe, editor, *North Carolina a Description by Counties*, Warren Publishing Co., 1948, photocopy in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

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one hundred chairs per month. The business moved to West Jefferson (AH 435) and expanded throughout the 1940s and 1950s.²¹⁸ Additionally, the Helton Woolen Mill (AH 158) was at its peak during the 1940s and early 1950s. It was joined in 1940 by Knox Knitting Mill (AH 319), owned by Worth and Joe Knox, in Creston.²¹⁹ By 1954, Ashe County was home to a hosiery plant (Peerless Hosiery, 1953), a canning plant (Beaver Creek Cannery), a planing mill, and two flooring companies (one being the Oak Flooring Company, 1935).²²⁰

Though important, each of these plants was relatively small. In 1953-1954, Sprague Electric built a plant along the Norfolk and Western tracks running on the banks of the North Fork near Bina. This was the first of the large industrial plants that would be constructed in Ashe County. The original building was 50,000 square feet in which the company produced dry electronic capacitors used in televisions and other devices. By 1963, the company had expanded its facilities and employed 825 people.²²¹

Religion

Twenty of the fifty churches surveyed were from this period, indicating a surge in growth. Although some of these churches may have been long established, the growth of the congregation demanded new spaces for worship. Also, an influx to the county of other denominations spawned new church construction. Newer denominations organizing congregations in the county included the Church of Christ and the Pentecostal Assembly, each begun in 1936 with permanent buildings by 1939 and 1938, respectively.²²² The Transou Christian Church (AH 482) was founded by two women, Grace Jones and Barbara Arnold, who hailed from Indiana. The building is believed to have been constructed about 1943.²²³

The two branches of the Methodist Church nationally reunited in 1939, resulting in the consolidation of many of the smaller Northern and Southern congregations. Members who disagreed with this consolidation subsequently organized a few "Independent" Methodist Churches in the Upper New River Valley.²²⁴ The Christian Unity Association was formed in 1936 from churches previously associated with the Mountain Union and Jefferson Baptist associations. The Christian Unity organizational meeting was held at Zion Hill Church (AH124) which had been formed by parishioners excluded from Big Helton Primitive Baptist Church (AH 123) for being members of the Union League, a group sympathetic to the Union cause during the Civil War. This new association brought forth a progressive theology including women ministers

218 "Thomasville...Making Quality Products," *Jefferson Times*, 21 November 1983, vertical files of Ashe County. Public Library and "Within Human Memory," special section, *Jefferson Post*, 5 July 1991, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

219 "Within Human Memory."

220 *The State*, 28 August 1954, photocopy in Ashe County Public Library vertical files and Schoenbaum, 42.

221 Fletcher, 239-240.

222 Pastor Mike Peters & congregation, *Mt. Paddy Church of Christ in Christian Union*, August 1985, (Jefferson, NC, *Jefferson Post*) posted on www.newriversnotes.com and *Blue Ridge Pentecostal Assembly*, 17 August 1999 (Jefferson, NC, *Jefferson Post*) Extra section.

223 Herbert Royal, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, 25 August 2005.

224 www.newriversnotes.com

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and the need for continual confession of sins. An open communion was adopted, and the practice of foot washing remained an ordinance of the church. A split in the association in 1969 left only two churches following the historic ordinances, one of which is Zion Hill Baptist Church.²²⁵

The Big Laurel Mennonite Church was the first of this denomination in the county when it was founded in 1952. As of 1985 there were only fifteen Mennonite congregations in the entire state, two of which are located in Ashe County.²²⁶

The Catholic Church did not emerge in Ashe until 1954 when a few families began meeting in homes, inns, and the courtrooms of the courthouse. The current St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church building in Jefferson was purchased from the Presbyterians in 1962 and serves as the only Roman Catholic congregation in the county.²²⁷

Education

Ashe County had eighty schools in 1933, including forty-seven one-teacher schools and nineteen two-teacher schools. Nine of these were high schools offered classes through at least the tenth grade: Jefferson, West Jefferson, Lansing (AH 58), Riverview, Virginia-Carolina, Healing Springs (AH 545), Elkland (AH 36), Nathan's Creek (AH 407), and Fleetwood (AH 511). Consolidation of schools continued during the 1930s, and by 1950 there were only thirteen one-teacher schools.²²⁸

Through the financial and physical assistance of the NC-ERA and later by the WPA programs, new school buildings were constructed and existing schools received additions. The first of the new schools was Nathan's Creek School, built in 1932. The gym at Nathan's Creek School was one of four nearly identical gyms built at Elkland, Healing Springs, Nathan's Creek, and Fleetwood schools by the NC-ERA during the early 1930s. Several types of gyms were constructed across the state depending upon available labor and supplies and all of the gymnasium plans were approved by the State Board of Education and the State Insurance Commission to ensure public safety. This factor may have had a large impact on the Ashe County School Board's decision to use nearly identical gym plans. It is unclear who designed the gyms, but the buildings are similar in form to many built by the NC-ERA. The use of local materials was encouraged by the NC-ERA administration, resulting in several gyms built of wood, which was still easily obtained and doubtless the least expensive material available in Ashe County.²²⁹ Lansing High School, built in 1937-1938 through the WPA, was designed by Basil Barr, and constructed with an exterior veneer of local stone. It served up to 700 elementary and high school students annually and employed thirty teachers until 1965 when

225 Historical and Genealogical Resources for the Upper New River Valley of North Carolina and Virginia Since 1998, Statistical of the Table Christian Unity Baptist Association, Ashe County, NC; Johnson County, TN; Grayson County, Virginia 1935-1975, posted on www.newrivervalleynotes.com

226 Sherri Considine, *Mennonite Church Teaches Non-Resistance, New Testament*, 3 April 1985 (Skyland Post & Alleghany News) supplemental section.

227 *Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church*, 15 May 2001 (Jefferson, NC, *Jefferson Post*) Keeping the Faith section.

228 Wyatt, "Elkland," 8.2-8.3 and 8.7.

229 *Ibid.*, 8.7.

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the high school was consolidated with Northwest Ashe High School.²³⁰ In 1938, Healing Springs School received a gymnasium with a cafeteria in its basement as well as four classrooms and an office added to the main school building.²³¹

In 1936 there were a total of sixty-six schools in the county, thirty-seven of which had only one teacher. Of the six schools reported as African American schools, five were one-teacher institutions.²³² As educational opportunities increased for white children in the county, attempts were also being made to provide similar opportunities for African American children. These attempts fell short in some respects, as seen in the experience of John Miller, an African American born and raised in Ashe County. In 1940 four African American schools were reported, all of which were elementary grades. Consequently, Miller found that he had to leave the county to attend a high school and continue on to college. Miller returned to Ashe in pursuit of a job in 1951, but found no opportunities available. Eventually he was offered a position at the Bristol School (for African Americans) in Jefferson, after completing his bachelor's degree during the summers at the Negro Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina in Greensboro (1950 – 1954). He became the first African American to teach white students in the county after integration when he secured a position at Northwest High School, where he taught for twenty-two years.²³³

Architecture

After 1930, the bungalow dominated all other house types in both rural areas and towns throughout Ashe County. As discussed earlier, the one-and-a-half-story, side gable bungalow was ubiquitous on farms, while bungalows in the towns tended to have a greater degree of Craftsman detailing.

It is of note that the bungalow lingered as an important house type well into the 1950s, when the form had fallen from favor in the state's more urbanized areas. For example, the one-and-a-half-story, cross-gable bungalow built for Squire and Blanche Graybeal (AH 293) in Ashland wasn't completed until 1940. Arthur and Fanny Paisley built a Craftsman-style brick bungalow (AH 198) on their Grassy Creek farm in 1937. Unusually late is Troy and Annie Shatley's one-and-one half story, side gable bungalow with brick veneer, which was built in 1956 on their farm near Jefferson (AH 449).

Oral history illustrates the dissemination of house forms and styles in the area during this period. Evelyn and Garfield Truitt built a clipped gable-roof bungalow in the early 1940s in neighboring Alleghany County. The couple saw a similar bungalow in Galax, Virginia, and based their new house on its design.²³⁴ The only Tudor Revival-style house (AH 338) surveyed in Ashe County was built in 1939 under similar circumstances. The owners, Gwyn and Pauline Price, had a friend in Bristol, Tennessee from whom they got

230 Lisa Wiles, *Mountaineer Heritage, Vol. 12*, 1990-'91 (Jefferson, NC, Northwest Ashe High School) 15-16.

231 *Mountain Heritage, Volume*

232 *Within Human Memory*, 5 July 1991 (West Jefferson, NC, Jefferson Post) 5-S.

233 John Hodnette, *Fishing with John Miller*. 1990-'91, Vol. 12 (Jefferson, NC, Northwest High School Journalism Staff) 6-8; and *The Black Mountaineer: Glimpses From the Past*, 17-18 April 1985, Skyland Post.

234 Wyatt, *Up Before Dawn*.

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the plans for the house. Unlike most of North Carolina, there are very few examples of the Colonial Revival style from this period in Ashe County. There are a handful of Cape Cod-style houses on the county's farms, but the only Colonial Revival houses surveyed from the c.1915 through 1960 period are located in West Jefferson, such as the circa 1940 house at 301 College Avenue in West Jefferson (AH 422). The only example of a Dutch Colonial Revival house surveyed was built for Constant & Leona Woodie (AH 543) in Furches. Constant Woodie drew the plans himself in 1931 after seeing a similar house elsewhere.

While the Tudor Revival style is very rare, there are several Period Cottages in the county and by the late 1940s, they had become a relatively common fixture on Ashe County farms. These Period Cottage-style houses express a modest interpretation of the Tudor Revival with a reliance on asymmetrical gables (often with curved rooflines), brick, limited use of stone as accents, and features such as round-head doors. The 1949 Colonel and Robertine Francis House (AH 412), built on their farm near Crumpler, is a well-preserved example. A draftsman drew the plans from a photograph provided by the owners. The Francis raised tobacco and beef and dairy cattle, in addition to Colonel Francis's teaching position at Healing Springs School and Robertine Francis's job as hospital cashier. The one-and-one-half-story brick-veneer house is side-gabled with a front-gable projection. Granite quoins frame the main entry.

Among the most interesting of the Period Cottages is the Claude Shatley House (AH 446) near Jefferson. One of four houses in the vicinity constructed of local river stone, this house is the most detailed example, with subtle ornamentation incorporated into the random stone work. Shatley was a contractor and is thought to have built this house.

As discussed earlier, the architecture in West Jefferson tended to follow popular models more closely than in the rural sections of the county. This was especially true for the town's commercial buildings, many of which date from the 1930–1955 period. As the town grew, buildings went up not only on Jefferson Avenue and Main Street, but on Second and Third streets as well. Two intact examples of buildings from this period are the Parker Tie Company Building (AH 436) on South Third Street from circa 1950, and the circa 1940 Dr. Pepper Bottling Plant on East Second Street (AH 426).

Following national trends, automobile ownership in Ashe County rose dramatically between 1930 and 1950. The U.S. Agricultural Census recorded for the first time in 1930 the number of cars and trucks on farms in the nation's counties. Ashe had a total of 950 automobiles in this year, but by 1950 that number had jumped to 1,993. Service stations from the period illustrate this large increase.²³⁵ The service station built about 1930 on the corner of East Second Street and Jefferson Avenue is illustrative of a new building type that followed the growth of automobile ownership (see AH 426). Other good examples of service stations in Ashe County include the service station (AH 376) at the intersection of NC Highway 194 and Big Horse Creek Road in Lansing and the Worth Greer Service Station (AH 144) built about 1940 outside of Lansing. Large rural stores like the Joines-Huffman Store (AH 63) in Scottsville and the Miller Store (AH 227) in Crumpler incorporated gas pumps into their existing slate of services. Yet, the smallest type of rural store was still being constructed in rural Ashe County. The modest, shed-roof building built by Lee Osborne for his store (AH 109) in Apple Grove about 1950 differs little from its predecessors of the 1910s and 1920s.

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School buildings constructed during this period began to take on a more substantial appearance. Brick and stone became more common and consolidation required that larger facilities to be built. The long, side-gable form with an entry vestibule was executed in brick at both Nathan's Creek (AH 407) and Healing Springs (AH 545) schools. Most of the schools were one-story or had basement-level classrooms permitted by banking the building against the steep topography. Lansing High School (AH 58) of 1937 stands out due to its full two-story height as well as its granite exterior. Several of the gymnasiums built through the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration program exhibited similar designs. These frame buildings often stood one-and-a-half-stories with dormers and sometimes were surrounded by lower one-story, shed-roof extensions. Gymnasiums of this type are seen at Nathan's Creek (AH 407) and Healing Springs (AH 545) schools.

The churches from this period show a marked contrast to previous periods in construction materials. Although many congregations continued the use of the simple front-gable form, building materials were varied and included brick, stone, and river rock. This trend is especially notable among Presbyterian churches such as the stone Foster's Memorial Presbyterian Church (AH 64) of 1931, Gillespie Presbyterian (AH 95) built in 1932 using both brick and stone, and Laurel Fork Presbyterian (AH 501) built in 1933 of randomly-laid river stone. Nathan's Creek United Methodist (AH 406) built in 1937 and Senter Primitive Baptist (AH 408) built about 1940 are both relatively unadorned brick buildings. Green Valley Methodist (AH 265) built circa 1940 is a rare example in the county of the cruciform plan with brick veneer.

Many rural churches continued to employ the frame construction front-gable form, however, even later into the twentieth century. For example, Farmer's Memorial Church (AH 130) is a simple front-gable structure built in 1942-1943. Similarly, the gable-front Laurel Hill Union Baptist Church (AH 309) with double-leaf entry was built about 1952.

ASHE COUNTY AFTER 1955

The Economy

The growth of manufacturing in Ashe County that had begun in the 1935-1955 period blossomed during the mid-1950s. In 1957, a satellite plant of the P.H. Hanes Knitting Company (later Sara Lee) opened in a large new facility on the outskirts of Jefferson. This plant remained in operation until 1996. The Hanes plant was encouraged by local promoters who built the plant to the company's specifications using funds raised through sale of notes by a locally organized non-profit corporation. The cost of the facility was over \$250,000.²³⁶ Another textile plant, Jefferson Apparel (later Greensboro Manufacturing), came to the county in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

By 1978, 3,140 people, almost of third of the local labor force, were employed in manufacturing.²³⁷

236 Sherry Joines Wyatt, "P.H. Hanes Knitting Company National Register Nomination, 2004," State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh and vertical files at Ashe County Public Library and Fletcher, 241-242.

237 Center for Improving Mountain Living, "County Development Information for Ashe County, 1980," Western Carolina

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This number had grown slightly to 3,340 by 1985. It is interesting that 720 of these jobs were in wood-using industries, continuing the traditional reliance upon the local wood resources.²³⁸ The Phenix Chair Plant (AH 435) in West Jefferson, which was purchased from its founder Robert Barr by Thomasville Furniture in 1964, had 400 employees in 1983. The company made dining room chairs. A large portion of the lumber used was obtained from local sources and kiln-dried at the plant.²³⁹

As is true throughout North Carolina, Ashe County lost most of its manufacturing base during the 1990s. The county's textile plants, including Knox Knitting Mill, Hanes, and Jefferson Apparel, have all closed, as did Sprague Electric and Phenix Chair. Chemi-con, an electronic component manufacturer, occupies the former Sprague Electric plant and Leviton Manufacturing's Southern Devices Division is housed in the former Hanes plant; the company operates two other facilities in West Jefferson. The abandonment of the Norfolk and Western Railroad branch line through the county in 1977 foreshadowed the decline in manufacturing.²⁴⁰ The petition for abandonment in 1972 shows that in 1971-1972 only 246 car loads of freight were shipped, primarily from companies like Phenix Chair; Sprague Electric, which then employed 800 people, received fifty-one car loads of incoming freight. These numbers were far below the required minimum of 35 carloads per route-mile required by the Interstate Commerce Commission regulations.²⁴¹

Despite the growth in the manufacturing sector during the 1950s, an increasing number of county residents, primarily young people, were moving away from the county. The census shows that between 1950 and 1960 there was a decrease in population of about 2,100 people, entirely in the rural townships, while both Jefferson and West Jefferson showed small gains. West Jefferson reached a population of 1,000 and Jefferson reached 814, up from 883 and 304, respectively, in 1947. Yet, the populations of the smaller towns of Todd, Warrensville, and Lansing all decreased between 1950 and 1960. By 1970, however, the population of West Jefferson declined and stood at only 889.²⁴²

Agriculture

Agriculture flourished during the 1950s, primarily due to the rise of tobacco as a cash crop. The production of tobacco nearly doubled between 1950 and 1960 to reach over two million pounds. While the rate of increase in production slowed after 1960, there was still significant expansion of the crop. In 1992,

University.

238 "Forestry helped form future for present-day Ashe County," *Jefferson Times*, 7 February 1985.

239 "Thomasville...Making Quality Products," *Jefferson Times*, 21 November 1983, vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

240 Passenger service was discontinued in 1962.

241 North Carolina Utilities Commission, "Statement of Carload Freight Shipped from West Jefferson, July 1971 thru June 1972," Interstate Commerce Commission Docket No. AB-10 (Sub-No. 3) 1973, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library and Blevins, 12.

242 Bill Sharpe, editor, *North Carolina a Description by Counties*, Warren Publishing Co., 1948, photocopy in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library; Fletcher, 56; and vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

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Ashe County produced 3.17 million pounds of tobacco. Recently, national trends and societal changes have brought information on the health risks of tobacco to the forefront which has caused a decline in the crop's production.²⁴³

It is estimated that the county had sixty to seventy dairies in the 1950s and 1960s, but a comparison of the 1950 and 1960 census data shows a sharp decline in the number of dairy cattle in the county. Associated with this drop was a marked decrease in the production of corn as well. By the late 1990s, there were only four dairy farms in Ashe County. The reason for the decline was that the price for milk had been stagnant for nearly twenty years, while the cost of production, including waste management, grain, and Grade A equipment had risen significantly with the introduction of new health standards.²⁴⁴

Farmers in Ashe County committed themselves to the cash-crop agricultural system. Work by researchers, extension agents, and farmers to achieve more profitable crops continued during the 1950-1980 period. In 1978, however, only 810 of the county's labor force (9,690 people) were employed in agriculture.²⁴⁵

The fledgling Christmas tree industry initiated in the 1940s by Fred Colvard and others grew slowly until the 1980s. In 1981, Ashe County produced 80,000 Fraser fir and 56,000 white pine. The numbers for white pine remained relatively steady throughout the decade, but the production of Fraser fir grew exponentially and in 1991, the county produced 474,479 Fraser fir Christmas trees.²⁴⁶ The industry today is the largest agricultural endeavor in Ashe County, which leads the state in Christmas tree production. This is the twelfth largest agribusiness in the state with receipts in excess of \$100 million a year.²⁴⁷ The Christmas tree industry has helped to bring about several important changes in the county's landscape and social makeup. The influx of migrant labor used to service the vast numbers of Christmas trees has brought a new Hispanic population into the region with a period of adjustment as the two cultures learn to live together.

While dairying and other types of agriculture have now been completely superseded by the production of Christmas trees, the beef cattle industry still has a strong presence. In fact, Ashe is ranked fifteenth in the state in terms of the number of cattle. Receipts from the beef cattle industry in 2003 were well over five and a half million dollars.²⁴⁸ The continued production of beef cattle and their associated need for hay helps to keep pasture and meadow open, protecting the historic land use patterns in the county.

These patterns are threatened, however, by the increasing shift in land use for vacation homes. Areas of the county with river views or Blue Ridge Parkway access have been among the first targeted for vacation home development. With areas away from the river under pressure to develop, in 2001 the county initiated a

243 U.S. *Agricultural Census*, 1950 and 1960 and Jim Cary, "Agriculture," *Mountain Life Magazine*, March 1993, 47, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

244 Jim Thompson, "Milk Cow Blues: State's Dairy Cow Industry Collapse Spurs Higher Prices," *Mountain Times*, 1998 in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

245 Center for Improving Mountain Living, "County Development Information for Ashe County, 1980," Western Carolina University.

246 "Christmas Tree Summary -- Ashe County," report in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

247 North Carolina Department of Agriculture website.

248 Ibid.

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Voluntary Farmland Preservation Ordinance that is providing a new tool to preserve open space and the agricultural heritage in the county. The ordinance is designed to “increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life; encourage the economic and financial health of farming; increase protection from undesirable non-farm development; and increase the protection of farms from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.”²⁴⁹

Damming the New River

The 2001 ordinance is only one facet in the battle for preservation of the region. The best known and hardest fought battle was to prevent the damming of the New River. In 1962, Appalachian Power Company undertook a two-year feasibility study that began a fourteen-year battle over the future of the New River. In 1965, the company applied for a permit to build a two-dam hydroelectric plant in Virginia with an upper and lower reservoir. The scheme would have flooded 40,000 acres along the New River Valley in Virginia and North Carolina. By 1968, the size of the proposed facility had doubled and an inventory demonstrated that 893 dwellings, fifteen churches, twelve cemeteries, ten industrial establishments, and twenty-three commercial buildings would be flooded, displacing 2,700 people.²⁵⁰

Floyd Crouse and Ed Adams, both of Sparta in Alleghany County, became two of the chief spokesmen of the grass-roots opposition to the project. Folk songs were written in support of preserving the river, but other locals saw a potential economic boon that would be made possible by the new recreational lake. Official opposition to the project arose in 1973. Over the next three years, bills to designate the New River as a Wild and Scenic River led to a large-scale political and legal battle. The full weight of the crisis is expressed by Governor Holshouser, a Watauga County native, when he designated July 18, 1976 as a state-wide Day of Prayer for the preservation of the New River. The signing of the bill designating the river as Wild and Scenic halted the project in September of 1976 due to the controls legislated to the Wild and Scenic program.²⁵¹

Religion

Since 1955, church growth in the county has remained steady. As in the previous period, new construction of sanctuaries has often been driven by an increase in congregation size rather than the organization of new churches. The Baptist denomination continues to have a strong presence as illustrated by the following surveyed properties: Big Laurel Baptist (AH 91) built c. 1960, and Pleasant Grove Baptist (AH 515) founded in 1892 with the present building constructed in 1961. Additionally, Transou Methodist (AH 481), organized in 1873, built its extant sanctuary in 1956, and Todd United Methodist Church (AH 43)

249 “Farm Preservation Places 1800 acres in Voluntary Program,” 27 December 2001, *Mountain Times*, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library and www.ashecounty.gov

250 Schoenbaum, 47-51.

251 Ibid, 60-173.

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which began as Blackburn's Chapel in the eighteenth century, dates from 1960. From an architectural standpoint, all of the churches dating from the late 1950s and early 1960s are virtually indistinguishable from their early 1950s counterparts.

Although the Christian Church emerged in the 1860s, by 1981 there were only three of these churches in the county.²⁵² The West Jefferson Church of Christ, 1965, is a non-denominational congregation, organized in 1964.

Education

School consolidation continued after 1955, but the pace slowed. An intact example from this period is the 1955 Fleetwood School (AH 511). The horizontal character of the brick building and the classrooms that open to the exterior are representative of mid-twentieth century school design. Elkland School (AH 36) was also built during the late 1950s.

Ashe Central High School, 1958-1959, was the first of the large-scale consolidated schools built during the late twentieth century. Ashe Central brought together students from Jefferson, Healing Springs and Nathan's Creek Schools. In 1965, Northwest Ashe High School was built in Warrensville consolidating Riverside and other high schools in the northwestern part of the county. Finally, Ashe County High School was built in 1999 to consolidate Northwest Ashe High School, Beaver Creek (now demolished), and Ashe Central High schools.²⁵³ In a 1986-1987 report it was noted that Ashe County had ten schools and one career center, a building in West Jefferson dedicated to technology and vocational classes, with construction dates ranging from 1928 to 1982. These included seven elementary schools (grades K-6) and three junior/senior high schools (grades 7 – 12). Student populations ranged from 137 to 442 per school, with a total student population of 3,800.²⁵⁴

Architecture

The architecture of the late 1950s and 1960s continued the trend of following popular-style models. In domestic architecture, construction of bungalows and period cottages slowly gave way to the Minimal Traditional style. The Minimal Traditional style is so named because of its reliance upon a simple, usually rectangular form with little or no ornamentation. The style was utilized nationally after World War II because of its ease of construction and low cost. The modest house built for Elmer Brooks (AH 182) in Piney Creek in 1958 is representative of the new style in its rectangular, one-story form and unadorned exterior. The Ranch style came into widespread use in North Carolina during the mid-1950s and is distinguished by its low

252 Rev. D.V. Osborne, A.D., B.K., compiler, *Church, United Christian International and Ministerial Association, Doctrine of Churches of Ashe and Surrounding Counties*, 1981.

253 Mountaineer Heritage, Volume 20 (West Jefferson, NC, Northwest Ashe Journalism Class) 44.

254 North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Planning 1986-'87, *Ashe County Schools, 1986-'87: A Study of Facilities and Their Utilization*.

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horizontal character and long rectangular form. Few Ranch style houses were built until well into the 1960s in Ashe County, however, and houses such as the Modernist-influenced Ranches on North Main Street in Jefferson (AH 433) are extremely rare in the county. Wide eaves emphasizing the building's horizontality along with the use of banks of windows featured on these houses reflected the Modernist style, utilized in North Carolina during the 1950s and 1960s. The scarcity of the Modernist style in Ashe County reflects the failure of Modernism to take hold in most of the country. Ranch houses on the other hand, were built in huge numbers throughout the state and nation. Ashe County reflects this trend although most of the county's examples were built in the late 1960s and 1970s, which is about a decade later than was typical in the state's urban areas.

Ranch houses remained one of the most common house types well into the 1970s and early 1980s. Following national trends in the mid-1980s and 1990s, houses with traditional motifs like dormers and full-facade porches were reintroduced into the county's architectural palette. These neo-traditional dwellings used motifs common on a variety of historic architectural styles in a limited and restrained manner.

As previously noted, there is currently a boom in the vacation home industry in the county. The vacation houses tend to reflect an idealized rustic style, with log houses being a favorite. In contrast, an early example of a vacation house (AH 211), built in the 1940s, in a naturalistic setting on the New River in Grassy Creek, reflects the Modernist movement with a low-slung form and wide eaves on an asymmetrical gable roof.

Few commercial buildings were surveyed from the post-1955 period except those in the town of West Jefferson, and these differed little from their early 1950s predecessors. One new building type that began to appear during this period, however, is the motor court, which helps illustrate the national trend of vacations centered upon travel by automobile. The 1955 Highlander Motel (AH 467) on N.C. Highway 88 outside of Jefferson is a well-preserved example.

Newer churches continue to emulate traditional designs in the county with the front gable form being dominant as seen at two c.1960 churches: Big Laurel Baptist Church and Pleasant Grove Baptist. The Transou Methodist also uses the front gable form, but adds decorative features such as the round-head arched windows. Brick veneer remains prevalent and is seen at both Big Laurel Baptist Church and Transou Methodist Church.

The architecture of schools during this period is drawn from popular institutional models. As seen in the 1955 Fleetwood School (AH 511), the brick-veneered school buildings became rectangular in shape, often with flat roofs and banks of windows emphasizing their horizontality.

Conclusion

Although Christmas trees have become Ashe County's most important agricultural commodity, cattle and tobacco farming are still practiced in a modest way, often by part-time farmers. This continued activity helps to maintain agricultural fields, pasture, and meadow yet on a greatly reduced scale. Today, Ashe County is far more wooded than it was during the historic period and oral history participants in the county

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often comment about how many more trees there are today than there were when they were children in the early twentieth century. These physical changes are the ramification of the economic transition begun in the 1950s. Farms have fallen into disuse or have had their fields and pastures planted in Christmas trees which threatens traditional land use patterns. Further, the small outbuildings that made up the historic farm complexes are virtually useless to modern farmers and thus unlikely to be preserved. Even more significant, large portions of agricultural land along the New River have been subdivided and developed with vacation homes and cabins. These changes threaten both the historic character of the county and the remaining historic resources, making the documentation of these resources more important than ever.

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SECTION F: ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Property Type 1: Agricultural Properties

- A. Farm Complexes and Individual Outbuildings

Property Type 2: Houses

- A. Log
- B. Frame
- C. Masonry

Property Type 3: Institutional Properties

- A. Churches and cemeteries
- B. Schools
- C. Government Buildings
- D. Medical Buildings
- E. Transportation Resources

Property Type 4: Commercial Buildings

- A. Stores, Stores/Post Offices and Gas Stations
- B. Recreational Properties

Property Type 5: Industrial Buildings

*Indicates a property on the National Register (NR) or Study List (SL) in more than one associated property type.

Property Type 1: Agricultural Properties

Introduction

Ashe County's architecture is most notable for the number of extant historic farm complexes. Of the hundreds of farms remaining, about ninety farms with historic houses and outbuilding complexes (about sixteen percent of the surveyed properties) retain sufficient integrity to merit recording. Many more recorded houses have associated domestic outbuildings and one or more agricultural buildings that may be the remnants of larger complexes. The farms generally range in date from the second quarter of the nineteenth century through about 1950. No farms are known to survive intact from before the mid-nineteenth century although there are a handful of double-pen log barns and a few other log outbuildings scattered across the county that represent the earliest period. Ashe County farms often have outbuildings that date to the construction of the house, sometimes even pre-dating it, through the mid-twentieth century, as farming

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continued to be an important part of life and the economy in Ashe County. No surveyed farms contain a unified complex that was constructed all at once. Most of the extant outbuildings were built during the twentieth century, although there are some dating from the late nineteenth century and a few notable survivors from the early nineteenth century. Until well into the twentieth century, the farms in Ashe County were mostly self-sufficient, minimal-cash operations. Cash crops did not become prevalent until after 1930. Farms in the county were modestly sized, averaging between 148 and 62 acres in size in 1880 and 1940 respectively. The decrease in average farm size is attributable to the subdivision of large farms over time to create many small farms by 1940. Very few of these farms were ever more than 500 acres.

The agrarian prosperity of the period 1880 to 1915 is well represented by farm complexes. These complexes often have a two-story, side-gable, single-pile house, referred to as an I-house, with a one or two-story rear wing and tend to have numerous outbuildings that almost always include a barn, granary, cellar, spring house, and sometimes a meat house and privy. The outbuildings are usually of frame construction, although log outbuildings, especially barns, are sometimes present. Large front-gable barns were typical until 1910 when the shed-roof form achieved dominance.

In addition to these c.1880- c.1915 farms, there are also a large number of early twentieth-century farm complexes. A simple one-and-a-half-story, side-gable bungalow is the typical seat of farms built from about 1930 through about 1945 when the Period Cottage and Minimal Traditional houses became increasingly common. The farm complex during this period remained little changed, but tended to have fewer outbuildings. By 1940, the house, barn, granary, and cellar made up the typical farm. Notable changes in outbuilding construction included the use of concrete blocks, especially for banked cellars. Gambrel-roof barns were built in large numbers after 1930, but never replaced the shed-roof barn, which is still being built today. By the 1940s and 1950s, milking parlors were constructed as dairy farming reached its zenith. There are relatively few free-standing milking parlors since most were constructed inside the existing barn.

DescriptionA. Farm Complexes and Individual Outbuildings

Regardless of age, the buildings on a farm in Ashe County always reflect the topography in their seemingly haphazard arrangement. Topography also often determined building type, which is perhaps best illustrated by the frequent use of banked barns and cellars. Mountainous terrain laced with waterways, led to irregular field patterns and building placement. Single-use outbuildings of various sizes are another hallmark of farms in the region. Furthermore, the span of development impacts the configuration of a farm. Where there has been an extensive period of development, a wide range of agricultural technologies were put into place as they became available through the years, resulting in more outbuildings and a less ordered pattern of development. Naturally, the needs and preferences of the farmer also affected the building arrangements.

While numerous factors conspired to minimize regularity in the layout of farmsteads, some basic patterns do emerge. The house is often sited on an eastern, western, or southern-facing slope in order to be away from flooding waterways and to open the facade of the house (and the primary living spaces within) to

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the warm winter sun. The domestic outbuildings associated with food preparation -- the springhouse, cellar, meat house or smokehouse -- were usually clustered near the kitchen door for ease of use by the farm family. The kitchen was typically near the rear of the house. The privy and sometimes a wash house were also located nearby. By the mid-twentieth century many of these outbuilding types were built with less frequency, particularly the meat house, privy, and wash house. This was due primarily to the increased use of commercial food products, the installation of indoor plumbing, and rural electrification, which made electric refrigeration possible.

The assortment of domestic outbuildings illustrates perishable food as the basic product of Ashe County's self-sufficient, minimal cash farms during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The domestic outbuildings also reflect the intangible element of work patterns that were so much a part of the farm family's life. There is little evidence of formal, rectilinear building layouts, yet there are overarching principles at work in the fenced domestic yard and the farm's driveway and rough service roads. Typically there is a greater degree of formality in outbuilding placement near the house which fades quickly just outside the adjacent yard area where both building placement and road layout are ordered by the prevalent topography.

Just as there are many types of outbuildings, the use of the land on the farms in Ashe County is divided into several categories including cultivated fields, hay meadows, pasture for grazing livestock, woodlands, the barn yard with small holding pens, and the domestic complex with yard and the family's vegetable garden. These elements are preserved to varying extents on the surveyed farms, although none maintain all of the elements of their historic land use patterns. While cultivated fields might have produced corn, wheat, rye, buckwheat, tobacco and other crops during the historic period, only corn and tobacco are commonly produced today. The pasture and meadow, one grazed and the other mown, are often intact on the county's farms because the topography that made these sensible land use choices historically still hold true. Meadows and pastures are often in low-lying areas coursed with small streams or creeks whereas agricultural fields are more typically on sloping hill sides with southern or southwestern exposure. It should be noted that agricultural fields are today often managed as meadows because the lack of streams makes them easier to mow with today's large round-baler equipment. Woodlands, although far more extensive than they were during the historic period, are often in the vicinity of their historic locations; usually on the steepest slopes of the farm where cultivation is impractical.

Land use patterns are closely related to fencing practices in the county though few historic fences remain on the county's farms. One of the best examples of a historic fence is at the 1884 Cicero Pennington Farm (AH 153). The white-painted fence of narrow wood pickets encloses the domestic yard and includes a gate at the front walk. Fences encircling domestic yards tend to be picket or painted board fences. The decorative nature of domestic yard fences is in keeping with its dual role of ornament and protection of the yard, its plantings, and the house itself from damage by livestock. Historically, fences that define agricultural fields, pasture, and meadow would have been split-rail worm type fences, but no examples of this type were surveyed. After about 1915, grid wire became increasingly common and was used well into the mid-twentieth century when it was replaced with barbed wire. Fence posts were most often made of locust. On

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today's farms, both barbed wire and high-tension wire fences are used except on farms planted in Christmas trees where fencing has been removed altogether. It is difficult to discern historic fencing patterns, due to the propensity for change to accommodate new crops and larger or smaller cattle herds, but the fence patterns at the Joel and Hattie Walters Farm described below may be close to the historic configuration.

The Joel and Hattie Walters Farm (AH 517) has a large and complete collection of outbuildings and its domestic buildings illustrate the classic arrangement patterns. The outbuildings date from 1906, when the house was constructed, through the mid-twentieth century. The large Queen Anne-style house is near the road and faces north, which is atypical. At the southeastern corner of the fence that encircles the domestic yard is the smokehouse (actually a meat house for salt-curing hams) and nearby is the springhouse. Also framing the back yard is a blacksmithing forge, an unusual building type on county farms. Behind (south of) these clusters the agricultural buildings follow the slope of the hillside and are less regularly placed, with a very large, fenced garden in a flat area framed by a banked cellar, chicken house, and mid-twentieth century calf shed. The original barn and its 1957 successor are situated east of the house, on either side of a small stream. The barns face the road. A milk cooling room and silos illustrate the intensive livestock production that was part of this farm's history. Beyond the garden and barns, which are fenced with smaller holding lots, is the meadow and pasture. Agricultural fields are fenced as well and lie on the hillsides of the farm.

The well-preserved complex at the Alexander and Rebecca Oliver Farm (AH 329), which has buildings dating from c.1900 to c.1930, is illustrative of the many types of farm buildings on Ashe County farms as well as their irregular arrangement. The large, two-story house with a complex hip roof and double-gable, double-tier front porch is situated near the road and faces southwest. Across the road from the house is Big Laurel Creek. The house yard is still partially enclosed by a double-loop wire fence. The rear (north) corner of this fence is defined by the wash house and centered along the rear fence is the granary. Immediately outside of the fence, clustered around the wash house, are the cellar, privy, hog shed, and wood shed. Further up the slope, away from the house, are a series of sheds culminating in the large, gambrel-roof barn. The farm's 110 acres encompass most of the southwestern-facing slope, ending at a ridge line. Both the road and the house are at the foot of the slope, while pasture and cultivated fields (now pasture) follow the slope behind the house. Woodlands are found on the steeper slopes to the northwest and southeast of the house.

While the Walters and Oliver farms represent the typical organization of farmhouse with domestic and agricultural outbuildings to its rear, several Ashe County farms have land on either side of the public road. In these cases, the road itself serves as an organizing feature. At the c. 1890 Isham and Elizabeth Goss Farm (AH 106), the house is situated near the northwest side of Little Horse Creek Road and the yard is edged by a stone retaining wall with stone steps up from the road. Behind the house is a cellar with a generator room and an unusual, two-story, board and batten spring house. Across the road from the house and situated very near the road's edge is an unusually large, shed-roof banked barn and a two-story granary. Behind the barn is a small frame building that was used as a livestock scale house.

Roads on the farms themselves also help to organize the farm layout. Roughly-made dirt roads are present on many farms and provide access to domestic area, barn yard, and fields. At the Glen King Farm

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(AH 143), the farm drive rather than a fenced yard is the organizing principal. The one-story house with double-gable front porch was probably built about 1900 and most of the outbuildings appear to date from the 1900 – 1930 period. The house faces south and is located near the intersection of N.C. Hwy 194 and SR 1519. The drive curves as it leaves SR 1519, but then straightens and runs parallel to the creek to its east and Hwy 194 to its west. The house and the garage frame the drive and create an entry into the outbuilding complex beyond. The barn picturesquely terminates the drive. Located immediately behind the house are the granary, cellar, and a front-gable building that was probably the meat house, which define the boundary between house yard and barn yard.

Another important feature of Ashe County's farms are the numerous waterways. Wells were uncommon historically, but virtually every farm in the county has a spring, and most also have a small stream or creek. The Tyre and Esther Rash Farm (AH 384) is a well-preserved, early twentieth-century farm anchored by a one-and-a-half-story, side-gable house. The outbuildings and house lie along the farm's drive, which follows a small stream flowing down the valley in which the farm is situated. The spring house and cellar are both located across the stream from the house, which sits perpendicular to the public road. The banked cellar is a very well-preserved example of a stacked-stone building. Likewise, the granary is notable as a variation of this building type with an overhanging gable front. The barn is a modest gable-roof building with vertical board siding.

The Squire and Blanche Graybeal Farm (AH 293) illustrates how the organizational patterns as well as many of the various outbuilding types and forms that continued well into the twentieth century. The farm is a rare example of a complex constructed over a short period of time around 1940. The cross-gable roof bungalow faces east from a hill overlooking the North Fork of the New River and NC Hwy 88; a field separates the river from the road. Typical of mid-twentieth century farms, there are fewer outbuildings associated with this complex than found on earlier farms, but the outbuildings built by the Graybeals are of unusually high quality. The kitchen is at the northwest corner of the house and its door opens onto a small utility porch, which was common on houses from most periods. A few steps from the porch is the shed-roof building that accommodates both the wash house and spring house. This ingenious arrangement provides easy access to water on laundry days via a doorway between the two rooms in the building. A flue on the wash house side provided ventilation for the stove used to heat the water. Framing the side yard is a large side-gable building that housed both the woodshed and the corn crib. Further north at the base of a steep slope is the two-story, gable-roof barn. Here, the barn marks the junction between grazing land on the steep slope and meadow or agricultural fields along the river valley.

It is helpful to review the various types of outbuildings as their use dictated their form. Every farm in the county originally included one or more barns used for sheltering livestock and storing hay and other animal feed. A sequence of barns from the late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth century and even into the modern period is common on farms that were used over a long period of time. The Walters Farm mentioned above has both a 1906 and 1957 barn as does the Zeb and Maude Graybeal Farm (AH 285) where there is an early twentieth century gable-roof barn as well as a mid-twentieth century gambrel-roof barn. While most barns through the early-twentieth century housed horses and cattle (in addition to feed), a few farms had

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dedicated horse barns such as those found on the McCarter-Thomas (AH 160) and William Clark (AH 114) farms. Hay lofts, for storage of hay, are ubiquitous among the county's barns.

The dairy barn is an early-twentieth century innovation built to accommodate large numbers of cows (usually about ten) being milked at one time, rather than only one or two cows that might provide milk for the farm family. The design of dairy barns is distinctive with the two-story gambrel-roof form being very common. A dairy barn is defined, however, by its interior of milking stalls, often with feeding troughs. Milk storage rooms were present at Grade A dairy barns, but Grade C dairy's were served by daily milk can pick-up. These barns sometimes had concrete floors for improved sanitation. The areas set aside for milking were sometimes called milking parlors. By the mid-twentieth century the milking parlor was occasionally housed in a separate building, usually a long concrete block structure located near the barn.

Finally, there are a handful of burley tobacco barns in the county. These gable-roofed frame barns usually date from the mid-twentieth century and feature tall, narrow doors or vents to provide ventilation for the air-cured tobacco. Rough poles were suspended from the rafters and joists inside tobacco barns to create racks from which tobacco was hung.

The earliest barns in the county are constructed of log. The double-pen type may have been prevalent and only a handful of examples remain. The oldest is probably the c.1821 Levi Gentry Barn (AH 541), which is individually eligible for the National Register. Here the pens are arranged in a dog-trot plan with a wide, gabled roof that originally had cantilevered eaves creating sheltered spaces on either side of the bays. Similar barns are found at the mid-nineteenth century Drury Senter Farm (AH 496), which is a rare example of a complex with both a log house and log barn, and at the c.1900 David Blevins Farm (AH 193).

During the c.1870 - c.1910 period, barns were often front-gable, two-story buildings like the large center-aisle barn at the Cleveland Shepherd Farm (AH 220). Even more spectacular are the gable-roof, two-story horse barns at the McCarter-Thomas (AH 160) and William Clark (AH 114) farms. These center-aisle buildings held ten horse stalls along with hay storage. The McCarter-Thomas Barn is banked such that the horses entered on the lower level through private stall doors and the hay loft was accessible from the road above allowing easy feeding by throwing hay down into the stalls.

After 1910, barns were increasingly shed-roof structures like those found at the Isham Goss Farm (AH 106) and the James Anderson Farm (AH 138). The reason for this shift is unknown, but it may be because the shed-roof form gave a full second story for hay storage unlike the gable roof with slanting sides. Another example of the shed-roof form is on the Byron Sexton Farm (AH 166) in the proposed Helton Rural Historic District (AH 323). This barn is shed-roof with vertical board siding and has been expanded with frame construction over time (c.1900 - c.1945) from a double-pen log barn into a three-level building. The upper level of the barn has narrow doors or vents that aided its use as a tobacco barn while the basement area was a milking parlor with concrete floor and waste trough, four-over-four windows, metal stanchions creating stalls, and white-painted board walls. Illustrating the enduring character of the shed-roof barn is the 1920s Jacob and Sallie Oliver Farm (AH 187), which has three shed-roof barns lining a farm road. The first barn, and the largest, is a banked shed-roof barn with vertical-board siding that is contemporary with the early twentieth-century house. Two other barns, similar in their design to the original, but constructed during

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the late twentieth century, are located nearby.

Gambrel-roof barns were constructed between 1930 and 1960 as shed-roof barns continued to be built. One of the best examples of a gambrel barn is at the James and Clara Daugherty Farm (AH 83). Built about 1950, the barn is distinguished by diagonal board exterior sheathing and a concrete block banked basement that served as the milking parlor. The story- and-a-half upper section was used for hay storage as well as for tobacco drying. Another well-preserved gambrel-roof barn is located at the Gwyn and Pauline Price Farm (AH 338). The two-story gambrel-roof barn was built about 1932 and has vertical-board siding and a hay hood, an uncommon feature in Ashe County that is a projecting roof or hood at the peak of the barn roof. Pulleys could be attached to the hood to facilitate loading hay into the second floor hay loft. The Price barn is attached to a one-story milking parlor by a hay mow.

The Gwyn Price Farm is also illustrative of other outbuildings that were specific to dairying. The one-story clipped-gable milking parlor is a rare example of a milking parlor in the county and has an attached metal silo providing easy access to the feed given to cows to calm them during milking. The building has nine-over-nine light windows, and rolling doors. This farm also has the only known example of a milk bottling plant on an Ashe County farm. The Walter and Kate Pennington Farm (AH 451) retains its concrete block side-gable milking parlor, built c. 1955. This parlor is a standard form seen frequently in neighboring Alleghany County, but is a rarity in Ashe. On the Byron Sexton Farm and the Joel Walters Farm (AH 166 and AH 517) there are examples of mid-twentieth century milk cooling rooms. Necessary to achieve Grade A status, these rooms, which are more accurately described as buildings, are gable-roofed concrete block buildings. At the Sexton Farm, a concrete walkway connects the milking parlor found in the basement of the shed-roofed barn with the milk cooling room. Water from a cistern behind the farmhouse was piped to the parlor and under the floor of the cooling room to keep the milk chilled.

Although wheat was grown in notable quantities, corn was the most abundant staple crop in the region. In the fall, the corn was cut with the stalk intact and shocked (stacked into an upright bundle) to dry in the field. The dry corn was stored in the granary by late November. The granary was used most frequently for storage of corn, although wheat may sometimes have been stored here as well. It was not usually necessary to store wheat in bulk, however, since wheat could be ground into flour at the end of the season. Corn, on the other hand, could not be ground into cornmeal in large batches since the meal would quickly become musty. Corn with the stalks still intact was placed in the loft of the granary, or on the granary floor in smaller buildings. When the ears were removed from the stalk they were thrown into the slatted area of the building, the corn crib. Often the granary served as a storage facility both for the family's supply of corn as well as the corn that would be crushed with a hammer mill and fed to the livestock. When the family needed more cornmeal, the best ears would be shelled (removed from the ear usually with a hand-cranked sheller) and taken to a local grist mill. The granary was sometimes placed near the barn, but more frequently it was located in the space between barn and domestic outbuildings, reflecting its dual role as shelter for both livestock and human food.

The log granary at the Winfield Perkins Farm (1898, AH 157) is representative of the earliest granaries. The front-gable building rests on piers to raise it off the ground, away from rodents and dampness.

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The center door is shielded from the weather by an overhanging gable roof. A similar granary is found at the John and Mary Johnson Farm (AH 129). The log granary is of half-dovetail construction with a front-gable roof that overhangs to create a wide covered area at the central entry.

Some of the traits of the earlier log granaries were carried over into the later frame granaries like the one found at the Cicero Pennington Farm (AH 153). The Pennington granary has board and batten sheathing with diagonally-laid slats on each side and at part of the rear creating cribs that flanked a center aisle or work area. The slats, now covered with Masonite siding, allowed air to circulate, keeping the corn dry and free of mildew. Another example from the early twentieth century is found at the Hash-Handy Farm (AH 231). Located near the house, the one-and-a-half-story, front-gable building is sheathed in board and batten siding and has an attached slat-sheathed corn crib. Some granaries had shed roofs, like at the James Anderson Farm (AH 138), and others were just shed-roof, free-standing cribs made of slats, like at the Millard Wyatt House (AH 356). One of the most elaborate granaries is at an early twentieth-century Farm (AH 218) in Grassy Creek. Here the typical front-gabled granary with slatted crib is extended by engaging a second crib in front of the building, all under a single gable roof with a drive-through passage between the granary door and the additional crib.

The spring house was used not only as the water source for farms, but as the refrigeration for crocks of food as well. While the spring house was sometimes incorporated into the design of the house itself after 1915, it was more common for it to be a small, separate building, usually frame with a shed roof although log examples at the Landon Snyder Farm (AH 238), the Foster and Viola Eldreth House (AH 96), and the Thomas "Red" Sutherland Farm (AH 244) are extant. The one-story, front-gable example at the Snyder Farm is constructed of logs approximately two feet in width with half-dovetail joints. It stands on a stacked stone foundation with access underneath where there is a stone-lined spring box. This is an extremely rare example of an original stone spring box or trough. These were made of concrete after about 1915 and most of the original stone examples have been replaced. The spring house at the McCarter-Thomas Farm (AH 160) is an unusually large example of this building type. Here, the shed-roof building has two rooms, a lattice-covered space with a cistern and a board-and-batten-sheathed space with a concrete trough. The spring house at the Tyre and Esther Rash Farm (AH 384) is an intact example with a small cistern located on the exterior near the entry of the small, weatherboard building. The entry and cistern are shielded by the overhanging gable roof.

Interchangeably called the smokehouse or the meat house, this is usually nothing more than a small frame building sheathed in vertical boards or weatherboards under a shed or gable roof. The interior is equipped with rows of nails or poles suspended from the rafters for hanging the cured hams. Most meat houses had temporary tables put in place to hold the curing meat. The unusually late 1937 example at the Arthur and Fanny Paisley Farm (AH 198) has a shed roof as does the example at the McCarter-Thomas Farm. Both of these anchor a rear corner of the fenced yard. Because of their small size and ephemeral frame construction meat houses survive less frequently than do barns, granaries, and spring houses.

One smokehouse stands in sharp contrast to the modest buildings described above. The brick smokehouse at the Tam Bowie House (1916, AH 455) features a temple-like design with full-height classical

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columns and a hip roof. Hooks for hanging meat are still visible. In fact, the Bowie House is extremely rare for its extensive collection of brick outbuildings including a brick woodshed, which also contains the generator room (a Delco generator provided power to the house early on) and a shed-roof brick chicken house. Only one other surveyed farm, the Graybeal House and Outbuildings (AH 314) has examples of brick outbuildings. The two ca. 1875 brick outbuildings are nearly identical with common bond walls and front gable roofs. The western outbuilding is an apple house or cellar with shelves and wood bins still lining its walls. The eastern outbuilding is a spring house with a concrete floor and concrete trough.

The apple house as a building type is often synonymous with the cellar in oral histories as both were used for keeping fruits and vegetables in the cool, dark conditions that promoted good preservation. The production of apples in the county was generally limited to orchards for the use of the farm family although excess produce was sometimes sold or traded. There are a few examples of commercial apple orchards, however. Cellars and apple houses tended to be built of stone or concrete block although there are a few examples using frame construction. The ca. 1900 apple house at the Isham Thompson House (AH 235) is a small, front-gable, frame building with weatherboard sheathing and original slatted apple bins on its interior. The building is entirely above-ground, which is unusual as most were of banked construction. The apple house at the Lee Little Farm (AH 118) is indistinguishable from the cellars found throughout the county with a banked concrete foundation and vertical board sheathing on its upper level that is typical of Ashe County's early and mid-twentieth century cellars. Another intact example is the cellar at the Alexander and Rebecca Oliver Farm (AH 143) which typifies the one-and-a-half-story, front-gable design of early twentieth century cellars where the banked foundation is poured concrete and upper storage area is frame with vertical-board sheathing. Earlier cellars tended to be one-story stone building banked into a hillside. The nineteenth-century, front-gable cellar built of dry-laid, stacked stone at the Drury Senter Farm (AH 496) is typical of the early cellars. At the Dave Welch House (AH 345) is a similar cellar with a replacement flat concrete roof. By the mid-twentieth century, cellars continued to be banked into a hillside, but were more commonly one-story concrete block buildings with gabled roofs such as those at the Henderson and Mary Graybeal Farm (AH 294) and the Lundee-Donnelly House (AH 253).

Another common building type on Ashe County farms is the chicken house, which housed the fowl kept for meat and egg production. The most unusual chicken house surveyed is the early-twentieth century round chicken house at the Jess Allen House and Mill (AH 281). The small house has a main circular section with screened openings and a smaller, semicircular section on the north side. Baby chicks were raised in the coop with the aid of an incubator, and the chicks had access to a small chicken yard through openings near the base of the building. Typically, chicken houses were modestly sized, one-story shed-roofed buildings with rows of windows, or sometimes screened openings, that provided the light and air essential to healthy productive chickens. An intact example is the small shed roof building with vertical board sheathing at the early-twentieth century Hillary and Laura Jones Farm (AH 498). The chicken house at the McCarter-Thomas Farm (AH 160) is a relatively low, shed-roof, vertical-board building with a single entry in one end built in the early twentieth century. Situated near the farmhouse, the chicken house is still in use and has an attached chicken-wire pen.

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In addition to individual farm complexes, there is also a handful of intact farming areas with historic buildings. These sparsely settled rural historic districts are usually located along creeks or rivers within arable mountain valleys. They are characterized by open farmland with animal pastures and crop fields leading up to wooded mountain sides. Farmsteads with a variety of outbuildings, individual residences, churches, commercial and small industrial buildings are typically found along a single secondary road at these rural settlement areas.

The Sutherland Rural Historic District is located along a one and a half mile stretch of Sutherland Road, just to the south of where it intersects with NC Highway 88. The road runs along the wide valley at the North Fork of the New River, and it retains its open, rolling crop fields and cleared pastures. Associated with the Sutherland family who settled the area in the early nineteenth century, most of the buildings date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The 1885 Gothic-style Sutherland Methodist Church is located at the western end of the district, and five contiguous farmsteads extend southeast along Sutherland Road. One of the most extensive farmsteads is the Hardin Sutherland Farm (AH156) with its ca. 1880 farmhouse, tannery, post office, corn crib, sheds and gambrel-roofed barn.

The Helton Rural Historic District stretches along NC 194 and the Helton Creek valley located between rolling, wooded hills. Intact farm properties border the road on the north, and late nineteenth-century textile and grain milling complexes on the south. Blankets were produced at the frame Helton woolen mill, and the company store and two houses with outbuildings still stand near the mill. Early twentieth-century residences and farmsteads are located within the valley's open farmland. Helton's industrial and agricultural economic base is also reflected in the late nineteenth century Helton Methodist Church and the 1885 frame roller mill.

National Register and Study List properties

Farm Complexes

Drury Senter Farm, Nathans Creek, mid 19th (SL, AH 496)
McCarter - Thomas Farm, Greenwood, c.1870 (SL, AH 160)
Patterson Graham Farm, Husk, mid-late 19th (SL, AH 557)
Thomas "Red" Sutherland Farm, Sutherland, c.1800/1880 (SL, AH 244)
A.S. Cooper Farm, c.1875, (AH 40), NR 2001
Cicero Pennington Farm, Helton, 1884 (SL, AH 153)
Hardin-Sutherland Farm, Sutherland, c.1880 (SL, AH 156)
Winfield Perkins Farm, Helton, 1898 (SL, AH 157)
Isham Goss Farm, Little Horse Creek, c. 1890 (SL, AH 106)
John Pierce Farm, Grassy Creek, c.1890 (SL, AH 199)
Davis Mahala Farm, Rock Creek, late 19th (SL, AH 291)

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Aaron Roark Farm, Rock Creek, late 19th / early 20th (SL, AH 287)
Graybeal-Oliver Farm, Hemlock, late 19th (SL, AH 310)
Peak Cove Farm (Maxwell Farm), late 19th (SL, AH 57)
Miller Homestead, 1900 (AH 23), NR 2001 under Criterion B
David Blevins Farm, Sussex, c. 1900 (SL, AH 193)
Glen King Farm, Lansing, c. 1900 (SL, AH 143)
Alexander Oliver Farm, Big Laurel Creek, c. 1900 (SL, AH 329)
Eleck Miller Farm, Idlewild, c. 1900 (SL, AH 551)
William Clark Farm, Little Horse Creek, c. 1906 SL, (AH 114)
Joel Walters Farm, Jefferson, 1906 (SL, AH 517)
Cleveland Shepherd Farm, Crumpler, c. 1910 (SL, AH 220)
Price-Phillips Farm, Silas Creek, c. 1910 (SL, AH 184)
James Daugherty Farm, Flatwoods, c. 1915 (SL, AH 083)
Grubb-Combs Farm, Tuckerdale, c. 1920 (SL, AH 137)
Farm, Grassy Creek, c. 1920 (SL, AH 218)
Estes Gambill Farm, Chestnut Hill, early 20th (SL, AH 500)
James Anderson Farm, Tuckerdale, c. 1925 (SL, AH 138)
Farm & Store, Little Laurel Creek, early 20th (SL, AH 280)
Zeb Graybeal Farm, Big Laurel Creek, early 20th (SL, AH 285)
Ovan Worley Farm, Mill Creek, c. 1930 (SL, AH 522)
Walter Pennington Farm, Nathans Creek, c. 1933 (SL, AH 451)
John Pennington Farm, Little Laurel Creek, 1883/ c. 1935 (SL, AH 282)
Arthur Paisley Farm, Grassy Creek, 1937 (SL, AH 198)
Gwyn Price Farm, Fig, 1939 (SL, AH 338)
Squire Graybeal Farm, Ashland, c. 1940 (SL, AH 293)

Individual Outbuildings

Levi Gentry Barn, Nathans Creek, c. 1821 (SL, AH 541)
McEwen Barn, Creston, c. 1918 (SL, AH 302)

Rural Historic Districts

Helton Rural Historic District (SL, AH 323)
Grassy Creek Historic District, c. 1875-1924 (AH 5), NR 1976
Sutherland Rural Historic District (SL, AH 46)

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Significance

The historic farm complexes of Ashe County may meet National Register criterion A for their local significance in the history of agriculture and settlement, and criterion C for their architectural significance and construction craftsmanship or as representative examples of early or rare construction techniques. The county's historic farms are associated with the self-sufficient, minimal cash agriculture of the settlement period through the early twentieth century as well as the shift by the mid-twentieth century to cash-crop agriculture in the form of dairy and beef cattle as well as tobacco and other crops. The farms retain clusters of both the domestic and agriculture outbuildings related to food storage and preparation, livestock care, grain or crop storage, and occasionally the harvesting or processing of a cash crop. Most farm complexes also retain historic patterns of cultivated fields, meadows, pastures, woodlands, fences, farm roads, and a dwelling that convey information about the patterns of life, work, and agricultural production on the county's farms.

An individual outbuilding may meet Criterion C as an excellent, representative example of an important agricultural building type or form.

Rural historic districts are contiguous collection of two or more intact farm complexes with their historic setting of agricultural fields, meadow, pasture, and woodland. Historic commercial buildings, grist mills, churches and schools may also be part of rural historic districts and they reflect the character of the agrarian communities that were once common throughout the county.

Registration Requirements

In order for a farm complex in Ashe County to qualify for listing in the National Register, it must meet one of the criteria for evaluation named above as well as retain its historic integrity from the period of significance, including setting, location, materials, design, feeling, and association. A farm complex meets Criterion A if sufficient farm acreage is intact to convey the historic practices of the farm, and the farm dwelling and at least one barn are standing. Most of the farm's buildings, structures, and field patterns should be fifty years old or older. Intact farms dating after about 1940 will typically have fewer outbuildings since rural electrification and indoor plumbing eventually replaced the need for the meat house, wash house, cellar, spring house and privy.

The farm complex derives its integrity and significance from the presence of multiple components rather than the integrity or significance of a single resource. Farms often exhibit modifications made over time such as the addition of new siding material to agricultural buildings, the relocation of buildings within the complex (and within historic patterns), and the removal of buildings. Such changes are often important indicators of the farm's development during the historic period. Also, the addition of other agricultural outbuildings may have take place after the period of significance. These changes do not necessarily result in such a severe loss of integrity that the farm would be ineligible, as long as the general layout and most of the historic buildings and materials survive relatively intact.

The integrity threshold for dwellings that are part of a complex is lower than that required for individual houses. Exterior remodeling, including replacing or covering the original siding or replacing

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original windows, does not significantly detract from its integrity as long as the building retains its overall form, fenestration, and identifying details. Interior integrity is desirable but not essential.

Individual outbuildings must retain a high level of integrity in order to meet Criterion C. Modifications made during the historic period to accommodate changing agricultural practices do not significantly reduce integrity if most of the historic fabric is intact. This type of alteration includes the addition of lean-tos or the reconfiguration of interior stall arrangements.

Rural historic districts may qualify for listing in the National Register if they meet one of the criteria for evaluation named above as well as retain historic integrity from the period of significance, including setting, location, materials, design, feeling, and association. Rural districts should have an unaltered rural setting, a continuation of agricultural land use patterns, and a majority of the structures important to the district history extant. There can be new construction present as long as it is minor and does not detract from the integrity of the rural district.

It is unlikely there are other known extant rural districts other than the ones listed above that retain an adequate level of integrity for listing in the National Register.

Property Type 2: Houses

Introduction

Approximately 300 houses were recorded in the survey. Many properties retain some historic outbuildings; however, very few are part of a full farm complex. Only about five percent of the recorded houses were built before 1860. Most of the surviving antebellum houses are log, although there are two brick houses and one frame house. Overt stylistic expression is rare in these earliest houses and the only style utilized, in a modest way, was the Federal.

The majority of historic houses surveyed in Ashe County, approximately fifty-five percent, were built between 1860 and 1910, with most of these dating from c.1880 to c.1910. These houses are typically one or one-and-a-half story side-gable single pile houses or two-story I-houses. They tend to display a higher level of stylistic detail than their predecessors. These details were primarily drawn from Queen Anne and Eastlake sources, with limited Italianate references. There are virtually no Queen Anne or Italianate houses in the high style manner. Rather than employ asymmetry, irregular footprints, and elaborate rooflines, Ashe County builders tended simply to attach Italianate and Queen Anne decorative elements such as fanciful sawn brackets and trim, turned posts, and spindle-work to traditional forms and employed the gable-roof, double-tier porch to enliven the rectilinear I-house facade.

During the c.1860 – c.1910 period, there is also a notable shift from the predominance of log construction to frame construction, although log houses continued to be built through about 1900. The increasing numbers of saw mills in the county during the late nineteenth century helped to further this shift. Additionally, after 1880 there is an increased use of brick instead of fieldstone for chimneys. These brick chimneys are often single-shouldered and constructed on the exterior gable ends of the dwelling, yet paired

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interior chimneys, constructed at either side of a center hall, are also very common.

The c.1910 – c.1935 period also is well represented with residential construction. Approximately twenty-three percent of the houses surveyed date from this period, which was a time of transition from the I-house and side-gable, single-pile dwellings of the earlier period, to the one-and-a-half-story, side-gable bungalow. During the transition, the hip-roof cottage and hip-roof, two-story house also enjoyed some popularity. The bungalow had become the house of choice on Ashe County farms as well as in the small towns that sprang up after the construction of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad in 1914. Town bungalows, however, tended to rely more heavily upon Craftsman stylistic models than did their rural counterparts.

After 1935, there was a very slow shift away from the bungalow, although examples continued to be constructed well into the 1950s. Approximately eighteen percent of the surveyed Ashe County houses were built between c.1935 and c.1955. By the late 1930s, the Period Cottage appeared, although it was never built in great numbers. Both on farms and in town, this style featured brick, which had been rare in earlier periods. Stone started to be used for houses of this era, perhaps playing off institutional and church models built during the late 1920s and 1930s. Typically stone was reserved for details on the chimneys and doorways of Period Cottages, but a few Period Cottage exteriors are stone veneered. By the mid-1950s, new dwellings were primarily in the Minimal Traditional style or, to a lesser extent, were Cape Cods. The Colonial Revival style is seldom seen outside the town of West Jefferson. Ranch houses usually date from after 1955.

Description

A. Log Houses

Plentiful timber made log the most common and accessible construction method for most of the nineteenth century. People of all income levels, especially before the 1870s, used it to build their houses. While the vast majority of Ashe County's earliest houses were of log construction, relatively few of them survive. About thirty examples dating from c.1799 through 1897 were surveyed, but only about half still express their original form with exposed logs and minimal later additions. The rest are in poor condition or have been extensively altered over time. A few have been moved, and an additional thirteen properties have an older log building covered by later frame additions.

Most of the recorded log houses were originally single pens with lofts and were almost square in plan. Log houses were usually built to a height of one or one-and-a-half stories; surviving examples suggest that two-story log houses were rare. Half-dovetailing is the most common method of joining logs in the county. Full dovetail and V-notching were also recorded, but far less frequently. Original chimneys on log houses are invariably made of dry-laid fieldstone. The earlier houses tend to exhibit the largest, well-constructed stone chimneys surveyed.

The 1821 Levi Gentry House (AH 369) is an example of a two-story log house. It has been moved from its original site about 1960 and altered by the removal of the central chimney that was the defining feature of the saddle-bag form house built in two phases using v-notch construction. Another two-story log house is the western section of the John and Martha Graybeal House (AH 518). Altered with a 1924 two-

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story brick addition on its east end, the original ca. 1860 three-bay log section has half-dovetail construction.

More typical is the one-and-a-half-story single-pen log house (AH 264) in Brushy Fork that is likely the county's earliest surviving dwelling. It is described by local tradition as having been built in 1799. The wide logs are sawn into thick planks and joined with half-dovetail joints. The original house is a single room (17 x 20 feet) with a loft and a massive fieldstone chimney on the south gable end. The house has both historic and modern additions at its rear. Similar in form, although somewhat larger, is the one-and-a-half-story single-pen log house built by Charles B. Roark and his wife Letitia (AH 274) about 1832, the year they were married. The Roark house is standard log construction and uses half-dovetail joinery. The house has at least three phases of additions, which is typical. There is an early log addition, an early twentieth century board-and-batten (perhaps boxed) expansion of the kitchen, and a small, concrete block addition from the early 1950s. The interior of the house is intact with plank-sheathed walls and a stone hearth in the original single-pen section.

Nearby is the only known dog-trot house in the county, built for Stephen and Mary Osborn (AH 239) during the 1830s or 1840s. The dog-trot has been enclosed, probably during the early twentieth century. A one-story porch spanning the width of the facade is supported by a continuous forty-five-foot beam. The logs of the house, some measuring more than two feet in width, are joined with half-dovetails and are exposed on the facade. Each gable end has a massive fieldstone chimney with elegant stone cap marking its fine craftsmanship.

Illustrating the continuation of log construction well into the nineteenth century is the 1897 Millard and Maggie Wyatt House (AH 356). This single-pen house features full dovetail joints. The interior of the house includes a historic board and batten partition wall in the front room and a narrow, boxed staircase leads to the loft area above.

B. Frame Houses

With the arrival of improved mechanized milling and the availability of dressed lumber in the 1870s, frame became the standard construction method for Ashe County houses. Heavy timber framing using large posts and beams does not appear to have been prevalent in the county at any time. Light frame construction using standard studs, sills, and top plates was commonly used, however. Light framing fit neatly into the historic building patterns of Ashe County since the dispersion of this quick, inexpensive building method coincided with the appearance of steam sawmills in the county during a period when the population was expanding and a spree of new construction was underway. I-houses, one and one-and-a-half-story single-pile houses were built in large numbers throughout the county during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century and were commonly built with light frame construction.

Boxed-frame construction also was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but usually only for one-story single-pile dwellings. This framing method was especially common during the boom period of the mid-1910s and 1920s when a quick building method was preferable. Boxed houses were constructed without regularly spaced studs. Instead, vertical framing members are only at the corners or, in many cases, widely spaced (three feet or more) and used only as nailers. In some examples, the board and

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batten siding functions as both the interior and exterior sheathing. Plain vertical planks were also used as exterior sheathing and often later were covered with rolled asphalt. Today, few boxed houses survive, owing to the method's lack of long-term stability although a relatively intact example is the early-twentieth century Willie and Maude Roten House (AH 336), which has a board-and-batten exterior and a well-made fieldstone chimney. A shed-roof addition spans the width of the house in the rear and appears to be an early addition. Another well-preserved example is the Jonah and Dona Mayberry House (AH 307) a one-story, side gable, single pile, board-and-batten-sheathed dwelling with a gabled rear ell with a fieldstone chimney. A shed-roof porch spans the facade.

The earliest known frame dwelling in Ashe County is the c.1820 Bower-Cox House (NR, AH 3). This is the only example of a Federal-style frame house in the county. The Federal stylistic features in the Bower-Cox House are quite modest and include boxed eaves, flush sheathing under the porch, and an austere two-bay facade. The original two-story hall and parlor front section was built about 1820 and a rear ell was added in the late nineteenth century. The house originally featured two front doors, but one has been enclosed. Weatherboards cover the exterior except for the wall under the shed-roof front porch, which is flush sheathed.

Many frame houses from about 1870 to 1915 survive in the county; in fact these make up about one-third of all the houses surveyed. The most common frame house types are one-room-deep (single-pile) and one, one-and-a-half, or two stories in height under a side-gabled roof. It should be noted, that one-and-a-half-story houses are defined by their lack of full-height windows in the upper story of the facade. The basic house types usually have a perpendicular rear wing often with a gabled roof, although shed-roof one-room deep wings running parallel to the rear elevation were also built. Among the one-room-deep frame houses, the one and one-and-a-half-story versions are the most prevalent types in the county. These houses usually lack a clearly defined style, but are commonly ornamented with motifs derived from Queen Anne and Eastlake models and are evenly distributed across the county with concentrations in larger communities such as Helton and Grassy Creek. The ornamentation is generally concentrated on the porch with the application of sawn brackets, spindlework, and turned posts. The use of flat boards sawn in a decorative silhouette for porch posts is especially common. Other common ornamentation includes decorative shingles in the gable ends, sawn bargeboards, gable trusses, or fascia boards, and occasionally the use of decorative sawn window and door surrounds.

The one- and one-and-a-half-story, single-pile houses are often hall and parlor in plan, although a few have a center-hall plan. An intact example of a hall and parlor plan house is the turn-of-the-century Jake and Elizabeth Hoosier House (AH 93). The one-and-a-half-story house has a one-story shed-roof front porch shielding the three-bay facade with a central entry. There is a full-height gabled rear ell with a shed-roof porch that wraps around the junction of main house and rear ell on the east side. The house is sheathed in weatherboard and has its original standing seam metal roof.

Far more ornate is the one-story, center-hall plan Asa Brown House (AH 524) built in 1893. Ornamentation includes decorative shingles, a sawn bargeboard, flower-motif attic window, and ornately sawn fascia board. The wainscoting in the center hall has alternating light and dark wood. The eastern

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mantelpiece also features light and dark woods. The finishes in the western front room are simpler with plank sheathing and a less ornate mantel. The early twentieth century rear addition has chestnut interior sheathing.

The two-story, single-pile house, also known as an I-house, is the second most common house form in the county and is most often found with a three-bay, center-hall plan. Ashe County's I-houses tend to be later and larger (two-story rear wings are often part of the original design) and with proportions that are less vertical than those of their Piedmont and Eastern North Carolina counterparts. Further, while the tri-gabled I-house with a one-story porch is very common in most of North Carolina, it is seldom seen in Ashe County. Instead, the use of a decorated, double-tier porch in the center bay of the house is a common feature. A connection to romantic architectural styles such as the Italianate and Gothic Revival that relied heavily on ornamentation of entry porches or entry towers; the use of plan book designs and mass-produced ornament; and the increasing awareness of the irregularity and high level of ornament associated Queen Anne and Eastlake styles of the late-nineteenth century were likely contributors to the development of the double-tier porch in northwestern North Carolina and Southwestern Virginia during the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries.

The double-gable porch type that is common in Ashe County appears to be a local variant. The history behind it is unknown although extant examples are concentrated in the northwestern section of the county. It seems reasonable to presume that the form was derived from the desire to use the popular gable-roof two-tier form while still providing a full or nearly full-facade porch.

One of the most elaborate examples of an I-house with a gabled double-tier porch at its center bay is found at the Cicero Pennington Farm (AH 153) near Helton. Built in 1884, the house has a double-tier porch both on its facade and the side of the rear ell. The house has a highly decorated weatherboarded exterior featuring cornerboards with caps. Most of the ornament is found on the porches, which are supported by sawn silhouette posts with a sawn balustrade and brackets. The attic windows in the gables are a circle over triangle design. The faux-grained, six-panel front door is flanked by sidelights and a transom. Half-round pilasters with a small cap molding also accent the entry. Inside, the center hall plan house features faux graining and some of the county's best woodwork. Equally elaborate on the exterior is the I-house built for Foster and Viola Eldreth (AH 96) about 1890 in northwestern Ashe County. It has a double-tier porch under a double-gable roof that is common in this part of the county. The Queen Anne and Eastlake-inspired ornamentation is prominently featured on the porch in small details such as the tiny brackets at the cornice. These brackets were observed on several I-houses in this part of the county including the houses at the Perry-Shepherd Farm (AH 108) and at the William Clark Farm (AH 114). At the entry is scalloped trim bordering the sidelights, a feature that was also noted on several area houses. The Eldreth House interior is typical with beadboard wainscoting and a heavy turned newel post. The Perry-Shepherd house has silhouette newel posts that mimic the sawn, silhouette posts on the porch's upper level.

An identifying feature of Ashe County's houses is the silhouette posts that are interpretations of the curvaceously turned porch posts common on Queen Anne-style houses. Unfortunately, little is known about the development of the silhouette posts. Two possible explanations are that the silhouette posts came about either to save money over purchasing turned posts or because turned posts were not available to the builder.

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The latter is unlikely since turned porch posts are found in large numbers in the county suggesting that they were readily available and reasonably affordable; even turned spindles are occasionally found on porch friezes.

The decorated I-house built for William Clark (AH 114) in 1906 exhibits both the silhouette posts and turned posts. The front-gable double-tier porch has turned balusters and a turned spindle frieze. Yet, the porch is supported by sawn silhouette posts. Oral history for this house documents that the interior mantelpieces were purchased in Marion, Virginia, illustrating the accessibility of purchased ornaments to the original owner. The combination of both purchased and homemade ornamentation here suggests two things: the silhouette posts were used so frequently in the area that Clark felt them to be "nice enough" for his home and that they were easier and/or cheaper for him to obtain. It is also interesting to note that the practice of silhouette sawn work was utilized for interior newel posts as in the Perry-Shepherd House noted above as well as for spindle-like friezes such as those found at the Alexander and Rebecca Oliver House (AH 329).

The ability of Ashe County builders to interpret popular style motifs in their own way is readily seen in the silhouette posts, as well as in fanciful window surrounds. The circa 1900 I-house built for John and Alice Yates house (AH 529) is ornamented with peaked window frames in the gable ends and sawn "dog-eared" window frames on the facade. The double-leaf front entry has arched lights in the upper-third of each door and a "dog-eared" surround. At the ca. 1890 George McMillan house (AH 205), the rather plain two-story gable-ell form is enlivened with unusual, curvilinear window surrounds and turned porch posts.

The gable ell house form, which has a gabled wing on the facade, is relatively uncommon in Ashe County in either its one or two-story variations. Yet one of the most ornate interiors recorded during the survey is at the Wilcox House (AH 353), a two-story gable ell house distinguished by a polygonal front porch flanked by polygonal bays. The eight fireplaces in the house display mantels decorated with raised panels or applied carvings of varying motifs in light and dark woods. Board sheathing, diagonal beadboard wainscoting with alternating dark and light woods, and built-in cupboards are some of the other interior details.

Even more rare than the gable ell house, the double-pile house is seldom found in Ashe County before about 1910. One notable exception is the late-nineteenth century side-gabled Rufus and Laura Hamilton House (AH 355) in Beaver Creek. Here, a gable centered above the main facade features flush siding and diamond attic window with diamond-pattern muntins. The interior is organized around a central hall partitioned into front and rear sections and the front two rooms have ornate mantelpieces. The two-story rear ell with a kitchen and a washroom on the first floor is of note for the intact two rooms in the upper floor. These rooms were thought to have been housing for servants and were originally accessed only by the steep stair off the ell's porch. Another example of the double-pile house is the unusually large and well-preserved centerpiece of the McCarter-Thomas Farm (AH 160) built about 1870. Features such as burlled maple door panels make its center-hall interior highly significant.

As revealed in the use of silhouette posts, fanciful window surrounds, and the double-gable roof on some double-tier porches, builders in Ashe County often interpreted popular motifs in their own way. There are several similar houses in the northwestern part of the county that reflect this tendency. Houses such as

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that at the Alexander and Rebecca Oliver Farm (AH 329) probably built during the late nineteenth century illustrate combination of the hip-roof double-pile houses with the common I-house form. Possibly inspired by large Queen Anne-style houses with complex roofs, here the high hip roof encompasses gabled bays at the sides of the front section that appear to mimic the I-house form. The effect is made more noticeable by the use of the double-gable, double-tier porch that is common on I-houses in this part of the county. Likewise, the interior uses the center hall plan with a clear delineation between the front and rear sections, as is typical in the I-houses surveyed. Similarly, the two-story double-pile hip-roof form is found at the Graybeal House (AH 313) also located on Big Laurel Creek Road.

As noted above, Queen Anne and Eastlake-inspired ornamentation is common, yet only about ten fully expressed Queen Anne-style houses were surveyed. These houses are generally large double-pile houses with complex hip and gable roofs under which are equally complex elevations featuring polygonal projections and recessed and projecting bays such as those found at the 1912 Dr. Thomas Lester Jones House (AH 148) in Lansing. An important part of the style is a high level of ornamentation, usually featuring turned or sawn wood ornaments. One of the best preserved examples of a Queen Anne-style house in Ashe County is the Winfield and Bell Perkins House (AH 157) built about 1900. The large dwelling has a hip-roof with gabled ends on the front and rear corner. The house features details such as a bracketed cornice, a wraparound porch with paired, bracketed porch posts, decorative shingles in the gable ends, and a frieze of sawn motifs. The house is sheathed in weatherboard siding and has two-over-two windows.

Many of the decorative features that were common on houses from the 1880s through 1910 endured after 1915, but the level of ornamentation was reduced. Houses built between about 1915 and 1930 were often in the one-and-a-half-story, side-gable form, but a new form, the double-pile hip roof cottage, was added to the county's palette. About twenty of these cottages, usually one-story in height, were surveyed. One of the most ornate is the Queen Anne cottage built in 1914 for Avery Butry (AH 161). A steam-powered lathe was brought in to turn the white oak ornamentation on the porch and interior. White oak was also used for the interior plank walls and flooring. Wainscoting is found in some rooms and the mantelpiece is paneled with decorative pilasters and mirror. More modest is the early twentieth-century William Osborne House (AH 278). This house is notable for its double-gabled front porch.

A two-story version of the hip roof house was also built during the period, usually with a center hall, double-pile plan. About fifteen examples of this house form were surveyed, including the well-preserved c.1914 Walter and Lessie King House (AH 373) with a one-story porch wrapping around three sides. The center-hall plan house has beadboard wainscoting, beadboard and plank sheathing, and a walnut mantelpiece. The Hoke and Lenna Wagoner House (AH 471) is another early twentieth century example distinguished by prominent, gabled dormers on each slope of the high hip roof. The dormer gables are sheathed with an intricate decorative wood shingle pattern that is laid in bands with three diamond motifs. Ornate paired brackets decorate the eaves of the roof.

Beginning in the 1920s, there was a gradual shift in the county's domestic architecture to the one-and-a-half-story, side-gable bungalow, which was built extensively until about 1950. About forty-five bungalows were surveyed, making this the third most common historic house type in Ashe County. Most of these have

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minimal stylistic references, although some display distinct Craftsman motifs. The 1937 house at the James Anderson Farm (AH 138) is representative in its commodious one-and-a-half-story size and in its side gable roof and inset porch. Modest Craftsman-style references include exposed rafter tails at the front and rear eaves and at the eave of the shed-roof dormer and three-over-one windows. The early twentieth-century Mun Welch House (AH 342) has a side-gable roof and a full-width shed-roof porch supported by battered posts on brick piers. Other Craftsman-style elements include knee braces at the eaves, three-over-one light windows, and exposed rafter tails. The side-gable roof form was most widely used, but the front-gable roof form was also built in the county. A one-and-a-half-story front-gable bungalow (AH 262) from the early twentieth century on Brushy Fork Road is a representative example. The house is sheathed in German siding and has two-over-two light windows with the exception of the facade, which has three-over-one light windows. A hip-roof porch with paired, squared posts on brick piers extends across the width of the facade.

Despite the differences in their roof forms all of the above examples illustrate the typical modest use of Craftsman-style motifs. At opposite ends of the spectrum are houses that exhibit both more and less stylistic elements. The c.1920 Craftsman bungalow (AH 422) located at 409 College Avenue in West Jefferson is among the county's most stylish bungalows. This is one-story brick-veneered house, and it has a front-gable roof with pedimented projecting end bay sheltering a partly recessed porch across much of the facade. The porch is supported by brick posts on brick piers. Windows are Craftsman style with diamond and vertical-light upper sash over single light. Two other very stylish examples (AH 257 and AH 251) are located in Sutherland. These front-gable c.1930 houses have knee braces located under the wide eaves, and a partial-width, front-gable porch supported by paneled, battered posts on brick piers. In contrast is the unadorned 1916 house built for Walter and Virginia Cook (AH 27) in Todd. The simple, one-and-a-half-story bungalow has a side-gable roof, shed-roof dormer, and inset porch with plain posts and few stylistic motifs.

An important feature of the county's domestic architecture is the reliance upon wood interior finishes prior to 1930. Plaster was recorded only four times in pre-1930 buildings, only one of which is a frame house, the ca. 1870 Latham House (AH 341). Walls are typically sheathed with rough sawn wood boards as well as store-bought beadboard and trim that range from simple handmade wood elements that mimic popular stylistic details to ornate, purchased moldings. Well-preserved wood interiors from the late nineteenth and very early twentieth century are found at the William Clark House (AH 114) and the Isham Goss House (AH 106). The Clark House is particularly well-made with hand-planed tongue-and-groove wood walls and ceilings. At the c.1900 David Blevins House (AH 193), the beadboard interior sheathing alternates light and dark woods on both the horizontal upper wall and the vertically-laid wainscoting. The persistence of wood is illustrated by the extremely intact interior of the 1931 Constant and Leona Woodie House (AH 543). The house is primarily sheathed in chestnut although white oak, hickory, poplar and maple are also used in the beautifully made tongue-and-groove walls and ceilings throughout the house.

C. Masonry Houses

A handful of brick houses were constructed during the nineteenth century including the now-gone 1812 Federal-style Aquilla Greer House and the demolished c.1840 Armfield McMillan House. Each house

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had modest Federal stylistic features, such as a simple fenestrated façade. Since the 1976 survey when several brick houses were recorded, five nineteenth-century brick houses have been demolished, and only four pre-1900 brick houses were surveyed during this project. Two of these are antebellum, but neither example retains its original appearance. The two-story William Waddell House (NR, AH 2) built about 1825 displays Eastlake-inspired ornamentation in the fanciful sawn porch trim that was added after a fire gutted the interior about 1870. The c.1860 John Osborne House (AH 292), a two-story, single-pile house of common bond brick is distinguished by a scalloped fascia board. At some point during the early twentieth century, a large, two-story frame addition was added to the rear of the house changing the original slope of the rear roof. The 1886 J. H. Carson House (AH 472), the only brick house surveyed from the late nineteenth century, is heavily deteriorated. The Carson House has a center hall plan and is constructed of seven-course common bond brick with header courses at the window lintels and penciled joints. The one-story, full-façade porch is now collapsed but was originally supported by Tuscan columns. The best preserved brick house from the late nineteenth-century is the c.1880 Hardin-Sutherland House (AH 156) in Sutherland. This I-house features a lovely, gabled, two-tier porch with highly ornate sawn work. The house is further distinguished by an unusual cross-motif attic window in the porch gable and a scalloped fascia. The brick joints were originally penciled although much of this has faded.

Brick continued to be a rarity in Ashe County until well into the twentieth century although more examples are found in the county's towns. The 1916 Tam Bowie House (AH 455) is the largest and most high-style Colonial Revival house in Ashe County. Situated on a hill above the town of West Jefferson, this house is purported to have been built of bricks made on site by an itinerant brick maker who also made the bricks for the West Jefferson Hotel. The one-story wing and the porch date from the 1940s. The front door opens into a large living room with oak floors, paneled wainscoting, and beamed ceiling. The trophy room in the addition is fully paneled with walnut, but the walls of the rest of the house, including the attic, which served as Bowie's law office, are plaster.

The use of brick became more common during the 1930s as shown by the small number of brick veneer bungalows in the county. Much more modest than Bowie's mansion, the c.1935 house at the Walter and Kate Pennington farm (AH 451) is representative of Ashe County's brick bungalows. This house has a modest degree of Craftsman-style features including battered posts on brick piers supporting the inset porch.

While bungalows are common in the county, the E. E. and Hazel Trivette House (AH 416) stands apart due to its size and Craftsman style. Its veneer of local stone is also notable. The use of stone veneer in the county was relatively common for institutional buildings built between about 1930 and 1940, but there are only a handful of stone houses from the period, this being one of the finest. Trivette, a local store owner, designed and built this house in 1928. The interior has a large stone fireplace and mantelpiece. Following a more rustic aesthetic are four houses in the Jefferson area that exhibit river stone veneer.

Houses designed in the Period Cottage style were built in small numbers on Ashe County's farms and in the towns between about 1935 and about 1945. Pulling its stylistic references from the Tudor Revival and other English sources, these houses tended to be built in brick or stone. Often brick examples were ornamented by stone accents such as quoins or random stones. These accents were typically found near the

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door, which was often in an entry pavilion, or on the facade chimney which was a common feature. Asymmetrical gables on the facade, often with curved rooflines added to the "cottage" feel of the house. The late-1930s Claude Shatley House (AH 446) is the largest and best detailed example. Its notable features include subtle details such as the round stone centered over the entry encircled by smaller stones. Another well-preserved example is 329 South Main Street in Jefferson (AH 459). The one-and-one-half-story, side gable house has a front gable projection with a recessed entry in a pedimented pavilion. The house is clad in brick veneer, with soldier course headers, and has a brick chimney located adjacent to the entry with a contrasting brick circle near the top.

By the early 1950s, bungalows and Period Cottages, though still being constructed, were less popular. The preference was for the Minimal Traditional style, which is distinguished by its lack of ornamentation and the frequent use of the small one-story side-gable form. Numerous examples were built across the county after 1955, but most date after the time period examined during the architectural survey. The only Minimal Traditional style house individually surveyed is the modest one-story house built for Elmer Brooks (AH 181) in Piney Creek in 1958. Covered by a low-pitched hip roof, the house is sheathed in German siding. The only ornamentation is exposed rafter tails. Three-over-one windows and a picture window with three-over-one sash flanking it make up the fenestration. The off-center entry is shielded by a shed-roof stoop. The basement is accessed by a drive-in entry on the north end of the house.

The Ranch style is marked by the use of side-gable and low-pitched hip roofs on long low houses to emphasize the horizontality of the building. Common features are the use of brick, two-over-two horizontal light windows, picture windows, and engaged garages or carports. Few Ranch style houses were built until well into the 1960s in Ashe County, thus only two examples were surveyed individually. The two Ranches (AH 438) on North Main Street in Jefferson are extremely rare in the county due to their Modernist design. The Modern style is noted for its use of flat roofs and distinctive window configurations such as banded windows. The flat roof and wide sculptural eaves of 320 North Main emphasize the building's horizontality, while the outwardly tilted bank of windows at 330 North Main accents its otherwise typical side-gable, brick Ranch form.

National Register and Study List Properties

Log House, Brushy Fork, c. 1799 (SL, AH 264)
Bower-Cox House, c.1820, (AH 3), NR 1976
William Waddell House, c.1825, (AH 2), NR 1976
Charles Roark House, Maxwell, c. 1832 (SL, AH 274)
Worth House, Creston, c. 1835, 1875 (SL, AH 320)
Stephen Osborn House, Brushy Fork, c.1840 (SL, AH 239)
Joshua Sturgill Log House, Sturgills, 1840 (SL, AH 581) SL
John Pierce House, c.1850, (AH 4), NR 1976
Zachariah Baker House, Creston, mid 19th .(AH 53)

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Stephen Ward House, Topia, mid 19th (SL, AH 236)
John Tucker House, c.1875, (AH 21), NR 1985
Worth House, Jefferson, c.1879 (SL, AH 24)
Samuel Cox House, (AH 1), NR 1976 – moved since 1976 survey
Isham Thompson House, Grassy Creek, c.1820/1890 (SL, AH 235)
Rufus Hamilton House, Beaver Creek, late 19th (SL, AH 355)
Foster Eldreth House, Apple Grove, c. 1890 (SL, AH 096)
George McMillan House, Chestnut Hill, c.1890 (SL, AH 205)
Joseph Neal House, Jefferson, 1893 (SL, AH 042)
Millard Wyatt House, Comet, c.1897 (SL, AH 356)
Wilcox House, Comet, late 19th (SL, AH 353)
Asa Brown House, Brownwood, late 19th (SL, AH 524)
Poindexter Blevins House, Helton, c.1900 (SL, AH 470)
Welch House, Dresden, c. 1900 (SL, AH 345)
John Yates House, Yates, c.1900 (SL, AH 529)
Idle House, Jefferson, 1908 (SL, AH 454)
Avery Butry House, Greenwood, c.1910 (SL, AH 161)
Tam Bowie House, West Jefferson, 1914 (SL, AH 455)
Walter King House, Bina, c.1914 (SL, AH 373)
William Osborne House, Hemlock, early 20th (SL, AH 278)
Dolinger House, Lansing, early 20th (SL, AH 142)
Jacob Gentry House, Baldwin, early 20th (SL, AH 519)
Sexton House & Store, Piney Creek, 1926 (SL, AH 178)
E.E. Trivett House, West Jefferson, 1928 (SL, AH 416)
Claude Shatley House, Jefferson, c.1938 (SL, AH 446)

Significance

Houses are significant under Criterion C as representative examples of popular architectural high styles, specific methods of construction, and distinctive house plan types. They exhibit local building traditions as well as adaptations of nationally popular styles. The prosperity gained by farmers during the late nineteenth century is illustrated by the many relatively large and highly ornamented houses built during this time.

Registration Requirements

In order for a dwelling in Ashe County to qualify for listing in the National Register, it must meet certain registration requirements. Houses qualify under Criterion C as representative examples of local residential architectural styles, plans, types, or construction techniques dating from before c. 1955. Individual houses must retain a high level of integrity of materials and form. In very rare cases a house with synthetic

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siding or replacement windows may be eligible individually under Criterion C in the area of architecture if all the other original features, particularly the architectural elements that lend the house its significance, remain intact. Modern replacement siding does not automatically preclude individual eligibility under Criterion C if it matches the original's dimensions and texture and all other architectural features are visible and intact, specifically, window and door surrounds and sash, decorative work, and roof detailing. The integrity threshold is lower for houses within a historic district where it is the group, rather than the individual buildings, that is of primary importance. Houses must occupy their original sites, although in rare cases buildings of historical or architectural merit that have been moved would be eligible if the architectural integrity is maintained and the general character of the new site, as well as the building's placement on it, is similar to the original. Due to their rarity, houses dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can sustain more alterations than more numerous later dwellings and still be considered eligible as long as the design, general plan, and most original materials are largely intact.

Several houses in Ashe County illustrate the progression of distinctive stylistic influences and developing construction techniques through additions or remodeling over time. Alterations made at least fifty years ago may contribute to the building's significance if they have taken on an architectural significance of their own and they retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

Property Type 3: Institutional Properties

Introduction

Ashe County has a wide range of institutional buildings from the expected churches, schools, and governmental buildings -- to medical and transportation facilities -- to unusual properties such as the Upper Mountain Research Station. These disparate uses are united in their service to the people of Ashe County. They were community gathering places where the social and political life of the county was staged, but they are also functional, serving the population's varied needs from health care to the movement of goods and people. Churches, schools, and the county's government were originally housed in log buildings, but all of these have been replaced by frame or brick buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Frame churches are generally gable-front structures with very modest late Greek Revival, Queen Anne, or Gothic Revival decorative elements. Historic school buildings range in size and style from unadorned one-room, gable-front buildings to large brick or stone veneer buildings with restrained Colonial Revival styling.

Description

A. Churches and Cemeteries

Ashe County churches are most often rectangular buildings with simple, front-gable roofs. The main entrance is almost always found in the gable end. Gable-front church interiors usually have a single aisle dividing pews into two groups facing a pulpit at the back of the building, opposite the front entrance. The

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pulpit is generally located on a raised platform and sometimes extends into a small rectangular or three-sided apse. The county's earliest extant churches date from the 1870s and 1880s and there are many examples dating from the early and mid-twentieth century. A total of fifty churches were surveyed and the majority of them portray the simple, rectangular, front-gable form sometimes with subtle Greek or Gothic Revival references. Alterations are quite common and a number of the surveyed churches have replacement windows or vinyl siding.

Covenant Baptist Church (AH 88), dating from just after the turn of the twentieth century, is representative of churches throughout the county during this period in its one-room plan, lack of ornamentation, and front gable roof. Picturesquely situated on a hill, the building retains many of its original materials. The exterior is sheathed in narrow-exposure German siding, and the building has six-over-six windows. The interior of the church has its original tripartite pulpit, which has a central podium flanked by lower free-standing pedestals on a small raised stage.

A common exterior feature of nineteenth-century Baptist churches is the use of two entries on the facade; this feature is sometimes found on Methodist churches as well. Very few churches retain the double door arrangement, however. Horse Creek Primitive Baptist Church (c.1880, AH 110) is a rare surviving example of a two-entry church. The one-room, weatherboarded building is austere, lacking any ornamentation. Like many rural churches, the grounds retain privies and supports for tables used during gatherings such as association meetings and revivals.

Methodist churches tend to exhibit more stylistic detail than their Baptist or Primitive Baptist counterparts in their use of belfries and alternate building forms and plans as can be seen by comparing Helton United Methodist Church (AH 155) to Big Helton Primitive Baptist Church (AH 123), both built in the late nineteenth century. The basic rectangular composition features a pedimented front gable at both churches. At Big Helton Primitive Baptist Church, the late-Greek Revival stylistic references are very subtle, restricted to the pedimented gable, wide cornice board, and capped corner boards. Whereas Helton United Methodist is adorned with a small, gabled entry porch with an arched opening and a modest belfry. Similarly, the c. 1884 Cranberry Methodist Church (AH 513) is another example of a simple one-room church that retains its belfry and original interior plank walls and prayer railing, which is a Methodist feature. This church also has a small associated cemetery. By the turn of the century, Gothic Revival elements appear more frequently. The 1902 Orion Methodist Church (NR, AH 60) is a modest interpretation of the Gothic Revival style expressed solely through Gothic arch windows and peaked window and door surrounds.

In addition to the dominant front-gable type, the tower-entry church form was also common in the in the county during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as documented in historic photographs. Only four examples of the tower-entry form survive, however. These are all from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and all happen to belong to Methodist congregations. The tower-entry type has the primary entry, usually double-leaf doors, in a tower capped by a hip roof. The church building may have either a hip or cross gable roof. The Grassy Creek United Methodist Church (NRHD, AH 9) is a well preserved example from 1904. This church features a front-gable roof and corner tower, and a Gothic arch stained glass window in its gable end. The tower is rather simple in design with a pyramidal roof, Gothic

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arch vent, and Gothic arch transom over the entry. Worth's Chapel (Creston United Methodist Church, NR, AH 45) from 1902 is far more ornate. This church has a hip roof with cross gables sheathed in beadboard laid in a v-pattern on each facade and features Gothic arch windows. A prominent three-tier corner tower contains the main entry and is highlighted by a tall pyramidal roof with small turrets adorning each corner. Each elevation has a large, stained glass, Gothic arch window flanked by one-over-one light windows centered under the cross gables. Among the extant tower-entry churches, only Grassy Creek United Methodist Church has a front-gable roof. There is historic photographic evidence showing several examples of both Baptist and Methodist churches that had front-gable roofs with central, rather than corner entry towers, but these have either been demolished or have lost their integrity.

Two Episcopal churches in the county share the high level of ornamentation found on the tower-entry churches. St. Mary's Episcopal Church (1905, AH 54) and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (1901, AH 536) both use Queen Anne motifs such as decorative shingles in addition to weatherboard or German siding. Holy Trinity is in the front-gable form, but has two gabled wings extending asymmetrically while St. Mary's has an unusual gabled, side-entry vestibule. Both churches have elaborate interiors featuring beadboard sheathing, truss screens, and ceiling trusses. Each church also contains fresco paintings by Ben Long from the 1980s.

After 1910 the pace of church building declined among most denominations, with one notable exception. The Presbyterian movement in Ashe County did not come into full flower until the late the 1920s and 1930s when the denomination built ten churches. There is a tendency among these Presbyterian churches towards Craftsman or Rustic Revival stylistic motifs such as the use of river stone. The Lansing Presbyterian Church (1928, AH 47) is the fullest expression of the Arts and Crafts movement with its veneer of local river rock. The front-gable building has a corner tower entry that leads to a vestibule with arched doors and the sanctuary has a double aisle plan, recessed altar area, and textured plaster walls. The 1931 granite-veneered Foster Memorial Presbyterian Church (AH 64) displays the common front-gable form expanded by an attached gable-front vestibule notable for its interior veneer of white quartz. The sanctuary retains original pews in a center-aisle plan, recessed altar, and tin ceiling. Gillespie Presbyterian Church (1932, AH 95) has a similar design, executed in brick veneer with stone accents and foundation.

The use of the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles, so common among urban churches, are seldom seen in Ashe County. The 1929 First Baptist Church (AH 424) in West Jefferson, within the West Jefferson Historic District (NR, AH 475), is the only Neoclassical Revival-style church surveyed. The two-story, brick-veneered church rests on a raised basement with a pedimented front-gable roof portico supported by monumental Doric columns. The pediment is sheathed in wood shingles and has a lunette accented by a keystone.

A new wave of church rebuilding occurred in the wake of economic prosperity during the 1945-1960 period. The gable-front rectangular plan was still favored, but in the second half of the twentieth century it was often executed in brick veneer. Senter Primitive Baptist Church (AH 408) is a typically austere example that appears to date from after World War II. The absence of adornment is indicative of church teachings where the focus was to be on salvation, uninterrupted by outside distractions. At the same time, the

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building has subtle details that illustrate a good level of craftsmanship in the brickwork such as the soldier course water table and the modest arched brick pattern filled with stack bond brick that surmounts the double-leaf entry. The front-gable roof steps down in two sections to the gabled entry pavilion shielding the recessed entry. Another well-preserved brick church from this period is Green Valley Methodist Church (AH 265). As in the earlier period, Methodist churches often exhibit more architectural detail than Baptist examples. Green Valley Methodist Church is entered through a front-gable pavilion with an arched entry. A stained glass transom window tops the entry doors. Above the entry is an octagonal, wood belfry with single spire. The windows in the sanctuary are Gothic arch and feature various religious scenes in stained glass. Even more notable is the building's cruciform plan, a rarity in the county.

There are, however, several examples illustrating the perseverance of the frame, gable-front form. Built near a pre-existing cemetery in 1942, Farmer's Memorial Baptist Church (AH 130) is a simple front-gable building resting on a raised foundation. Of note is the Craftsman-influenced belfry, which has a pyramidal roof with exposed rafter tails and is supported by four posts with cross braces. The raised altar and pulpit are intact in the polygonal apse. With a well-preserved interior, the c.1951 Zion Hill Baptist Church (AH 124) is another late example of the common front-gable form. The sanctuary retains the center-aisle layout, tripartite pulpit (here in a rectangular apse), and plank walls with beadboard wainscoting. The associated privies are also extant.

African American congregations formed during Reconstruction and built sanctuaries in rural sections of the county. Most of the historic buildings have been replaced or altered. A notable exception is Mt. Olive Baptist Church (AH 171) built in 1907-1910 in Grassy Creek. The front-gable building has weatherboard siding and a belfry. The interior retains beadboard sheathing and its tripartite pulpit.

A number of Ashe County's rural churches have an associated cemetery in close proximity to the sanctuary, most often behind or beside the church building. Modern chain link fencing usually surrounds the site. Following the norm for both church buildings and cemeteries, church cemeteries are typically sited on a hill or rise. The cemetery at Senter Primitive Baptist Church (AH 408) is among the oldest church cemeteries surveyed with graves dating to at least 1863. This cemetery is located immediately behind the church and enclosed by a chain link fence. The cemetery at Blue Ridge Baptist Church (AH 530) is located across the road from the church building and has graves from as early as 1907. This cemetery is also surrounded by a chain-link fence, but its entrance is flanked by modern stone memorial benches. Though none of the church cemeteries are large, the one at Cranberry Methodist Church (AH 513) is unusually small with less than fifty graves. Lying behind the church, the cemetery has modest headstones and enclosed is by a chain-link fence. Early graves include those from 1905, 1912, and 1913. The cemetery at the 1942 Farmer's Memorial Baptist Church (AH 130), located on a high hill, is unusual in that it pre-dates the church building. The earliest grave marker noted is that of Erney L. Farmer (19 March 1896 - 18 December 1897). Other grave markers include an unusual number of early-twentieth century stones that feature photographs of the deceased. Additionally, there are two obelisks, five tablet markers, and several segmental arch-shaped stones in addition to field stone markers and several modern grave markers. The use of vegetation, cedars in particular, was noted on many of the county's family and church cemeteries.

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Family cemeteries are more common than church cemeteries in rural Ashe County and are usually sited on a hill within view of the family's house. Few family cemeteries were documented in detail due to overgrown vegetation and difficult topography that prevented access to the sites within a reasonable time frame. As indicated by the family cemeteries that could be seen, most have popular-style markers with simple arched or segmental arch shapes, stylized raised or incised lettering, and common funerary motifs such as flowers, willow trees, and lambs. Stone types vary over time, but tend to be dark slate or granite during the early and mid-nineteenth century; unpolished gray granite and white granite or quartz during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and polished gray granite during the mid-twentieth century. The use of homemade fieldstone markers or un-worked fieldstones is also common during the nineteenth century. One of the largest family cemeteries surveyed is at the late nineteenth-century Susan Richardson House (AH 485) in Furches. The cemetery retains many historic grave stones including some that are examples of primitive, home made markers such as the one marking the grave of John Richardson where a crude pediment has been carved on the roughly peaked stone head and the last name has been roughly carved over two lines. The marker made to mark Frank Richardson's death in 1916 is similar. The earliest known grave dates from 1876.

The only cemetery documented individually is the West Jefferson town cemetery (AH 418), but it fails to meet the threshold of significance in terms of the criteria consideration. This is the only example of a historic municipal cemetery known to exist in the county, where family and church cemeteries predominate. The cemetery, which is situated on a hill overlooking downtown West Jefferson, may have been established soon after the founding of the town in 1914. It is surrounded by a painted board fence and metal gates with a brick sign board mark the entrance. An oval drive and a single, straight drive give access to the south and north of area of the cemetery respectively. The monuments are primarily granite stones dating to the mid-twentieth century. A single marble mausoleum for the Bowie family is located near the center of the grounds and is in the Greek Revival style with dentil molding and columns in antis. White pine, boxwood, and mature cedars dot the landscape with a row of cedars along the southern fenceline.

National Register and Study List Properties

Churches

Baptist Chapel Church and Cemetery, Helton, 1872, NR 1976 (AH 6) – has been altered

Horse Creek Primitive Baptist Church, Little Horse Creek, c.1880 (SL, AH 110)

Cranberry Methodist Church, Cranberry, c.1884 (SL, AH 513)

Big Helton Primitive Baptist Church, Sturgills, late 19th (SL, AH 123)

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Glendale Springs, 1901 (SL, AH 536)

Orion Methodist Church, Orion, 1902 (SL, AH 60)

Worth's Chapel (Creston United Methodist Church), 1902 (AH 45) NR 2005

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Beaver Creek, 1905 (SL, AH 54)

Covenant Baptist Church, Flatwoods, early 20th (SL, AH 088)

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Pleasant Hill Church, Hemlock, early 20th (SL, AH 277)
Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Grassy Creek, c. 1920 (SL, AH 171)
Lansing Presbyterian Church, Lansing, 1928 (SL, AH 047)
Foster Memorial Presbyterian Church, Husk, 1931 (SL, AH 064)
Gillespie Presbyterian Church, Apple Grove, 1932 (SL, AH 095)
Green Valley Methodist Church, c.1940 (SL, AH 265)
Farmer's Memorial Baptist Church, Farmers Store, 1942 (SL, AH 130)
Zion Hill Baptist Church, Sturgills, c.1950 (SL, AH 124)

B. Schools

There were ninety-four schools in Ashe County in 1900, most of them one-teacher schools. Despite the once large number of school buildings erected prior to 1955, only twelve were recorded during the survey and only one of these is a one-room school. The c. 1900 Flatwoods School (AH 86) is simply designed with subtle details such as a wide cornice board. The plank-sheathed interior is intact with a raised platform and original painted-board black board.

Two-teacher schools became more common during the early twentieth century. The hip roof, T-plan building with either two rooms and a vestibule or three rooms seems to have been especially common for two-teacher schools as there are three surviving examples. The Little Helton School (AH 174), which was built in 1914, is the more intact of two similar extant schools. The entry opens into a narrow vestibule flanked by cloak and coal rooms. From here, doors lead into the two original classrooms. The stage area survives in one of the rooms as well as the panel in the wall between the two rooms that could be lowered or raised to join the two spaces for assemblies. The interior is sheathed in beadboard with a beadboard wainscoting. Landmark School (AH 186), dating to 1924, is similar in concept to Little Helton School having two classrooms connected by operable wall panels, but differs significantly in form and plan. Landmark School features two full classrooms, each with a raised platform, as well as a smaller third room in the front ell that was used as an activity space. Each of the two front doors led into a classroom with the third room on the front of the building being accessible from either classroom.

Road improvements during the 1920s and 1930s contributed to school consolidation that entailed the construction of larger schools and the removal of almost eighty-five percent of the one-teacher schools from the system. The first consolidated school was Healing Springs School (AH 545), which was built in 1929. The building was constructed with donations from the local community and its long, brick form is a departure from the small, frame schools built during the earlier period. The entry portico and belfry give the building a Colonial Revival aspect. Inside, the entry opens into a large auditorium with multiple classrooms in each wing accessed by lateral hallways. Also on the property is a 1934 frame gymnasium built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It is identical to the gymnasium at Elkland School (AH 36) in Todd.

Also constructed by the WPA is the 1937 Lansing High School (AH 58), the largest and most architecturally significant of Ashe County's historic schools. Built of small random-coursed granite blocks, the impressive two-story school is a full nineteen bays wide with modest Colonial Revival details such as the

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lunette windows and the pedimented entry porch carried by paired Tuscan columns on granite plinths. The building has a hip roof with parapeted gables above the three bays at each end of the facade. A one-story porch consisting of a pediment carried by paired Tuscan columns on granite plinths frames the slightly recessed central entry.

National Register and Study List Properties

Schools

Flatwoods School, Flatwoods, c.1900 (SL, AH 086)
Little Helton School, Helton, c.1914 (SL, AH 174)
Healing Springs School, Crumpler, 1929 (SL, AH 545)
Elkland School Gymnasium, Todd, c.1934 (AH 26) NR 2003
Lansing High School, Lansing, 1937 (AH 58) NR 2009

C. Government Buildings

Covering a broad range of uses, these properties have the common theme of being built by either the federal, state, or local government for purposes other than education. The former Ashe County Courthouse in Jefferson (AH 7) was built in 1904 from a design by Wheeler and Runge. It is one of six similar Neoclassical Revival courthouses in the state designed by Oliver Wheeler of Charlotte²⁵⁵. The building features a distinctive mansard-like dome and Ionic portico. The interior is well-preserved and is currently under rehabilitation. Downstairs, many of the offices flanking the central hall retain their original mantels, while on the second floor the courtroom and balcony are intact.

Two of the county's extant historic government buildings were erected by the Works Progress Administration. The State Prison Camp at Smethport, built in 1939, includes the main cell block building, a dining hall, workshop, water tower, and solitary cell. The main cell block building has subtle Art Deco brick patterning at the entry. The granite-veneered West Jefferson Community Building of 1938 is virtually intact. On the interior there is a notable double-sided stone fireplace.

A rare and highly significant property, the Upper Mountain Research Station (AH 479) was built by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture in 1944 as a place to conduct agricultural research and provide educational opportunities for regional farmers. The farm, which is still in operation at the intersection of NC Hwy 88 and Peak Creek Church Road, is significant for its well-preserved collection of farm buildings within a vast agricultural landscape. Set in a wide creek valley flanked by rolling hillsides, the test farm's landscape includes pasture on the upland areas and cultivated fields along the creek bottom. Locally referred to as the "test farm," the facility includes nearly twenty buildings and structures. The small, former station office is a c.1920 hip-roofed building with German siding that was originally the Laurel Springs Post Office. Nearby are two large burley tobacco barns sheathed in board and batten siding with narrow, full-height doors or vents along the sides to aid in the air-curing process. Off of Peak Creek Church Road on a rise

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overlooking the farm is a tripartite sheep barn and a beautiful board and batten-sheathed gambrel-roof stocker barn that is flanked by long, one-story wings. Also on the property are a number of sheds and several modern houses for the farm's employees.

National Register and Study List Properties

Government Buildings

Ashe County Courthouse, Jefferson, 1904 (AH 7) NR 1979

State Prison Camp, Smethport, 1939 (SL, AH 383)

West Jefferson Community Building, West Jefferson, c.1938, (SL, AH 415)

Upper Mountain Research Station, Transou, 1944 (SL, AH 479)

D. Medical Buildings

The medical history of Ashe County focuses on the solitary rural doctor, of whom there is little architectural evidence remaining today. A notable exception is Dr. Joseph Robinson's Office (AH 303) in Creston. Built during the early twentieth century, this small front-gable frame office building with weatherboard siding and a pressed tin shingle roof was located near the doctor's home, which burned. The two-room office provided waiting and exam space.

The Jones Memorial Infirmary (AH 147) built by Dr. Thomas Jefferson Jones began in 1882 as a small two-room facility similar to Dr. Robinson's. About 1935, Dr. Jones's son, Dr. Thomas Lester Jones, made a significant two-story addition to the office taking advantage of the topography as it falls to the west. The building is sheathed in weatherboards and has four-over-four, six-over-six, and two-over-two windows. The two-story section has a double-tier porch spanning the southern end with a sawn balustrade between the sawn board posts with sawn brackets on the upper porch; the lower porch has replacement battered posts. A double-gable roof faces N.C. Highway 194 to the west. Original painted lettering reads: "Jones Memorial Infirmary." Both doctors' homes are extant near the Infirmary (AH 146 and AH 148).

The 1939 Ashe Memorial Hospital (AH 460) is one of three Works Progress Administration buildings extant in the county, all with similar stone veneer. The hospital is simply designed as a long rectangular, one-story building with a hip roof, a hip-roof entry pavilion, and a small, hip-roofed rear wing. Hipped wings are found at the ends of the rear elevation. Extending from the original rear wing is a 1951 two-story, L-shaped gray brick addition with a flat roof. Although portions of the interior were altered during its use as the county office building in the 1970s, hallways and other significant spaces such as the lobby and an operating room are intact. The interior of the original building is organized on along a central hall running the length of the building. Modern paneling and dropped ceilings cover most of the original finishes but some plaster and original light fixtures remain. Wide doors built to accommodate beds, an early air conditioning unit, and built-in supply cabinets are other intact historic features.

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Medical Buildings

Dr. Robinson's Office, Creston, early 20th (SL, AH 303)
Jones Memorial Infirmary and Houses, Lansing, 1882/ c.1935 (SL, AH 147)
Ashe Memorial Hospital, Jefferson, 1939 (SL, AH 460)

E. Transportation Resources

The winding, single-lane road is as ubiquitous in Ashe County now as it was during the historic period, although most of the roads have been paved or improved since then. By the 1920s the bridges carrying these roads over the county's many streams were usually truss types, but today only one survives: a c.1930s double-span Pratt truss bridge (AH 365) crossing Buffalo Creek in Warrensville. Concrete bridges began to be built in the 1920s, but were fewer in number and only one is known to survive from the pre-1950 period: the very large and elegant concrete bridge No. 39 in Scottsville (DOE, AH 62). Built in 1922, the ten-span bridge rests on eight, tall concrete pylon-like piers with wide recessed panels on each side. The solid concrete bridge railing features rectangular recessed panels and short piers with square recessed panels.

The Virginia-Carolina (later Norfolk and Western) Railroad built nine depots in the county between about 1914 and 1916, but only two survive. The West Jefferson Depot (AH 414, part of the West Jefferson Historic District) is the more intact, featuring side-gable, rectangular form sheathed in board and batten with a standing seam metal roof. The roof has exposed rafter tails with shaped ends and knee braces. This depot and the Brownwood Depot (AH 512) are both examples of the standard design used by the Virginia-Carolina Railroad along its entire line. The c.1888 Elkland Depot²⁵⁶ (AH 31) in the Todd Historic District was moved to Todd from Abingdon, Virginia, after the original depot burned in 1920. The side-gable depot is typical of modest late-nineteenth century railroad architecture with small cross-gable bays on the front and rear and board and batten siding with curved rafter tails and diagonal board panels under the bay windows. The railroad also constructed numerous bridges and trestles to carry its tracks over waterways and ravines. The tracks were completely removed in the 1980s and today only two trestle bridges remain. Both trestles are heavy timber structures with distinctive railroad bed supports made up of three sets of posts (two of which slant in at the top) supporting the railroad bed and are reinforced with cross members. The larger of the two (AH 120) is located near Husk while the smaller (AH 315) is near Tuckerdale; both cross Big Horse Creek. The dates of the trestles are difficult to determine. They may date from the railroad's original construction in 1914, but they could also date from a period after one of the major floods that destroyed many bridges in 1916, 1930, and 1940.

256 The Virginia-Carolina Railroad designated the names of its depots when they were constructed. These names were not always the same as that of the pre-existing community.

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Transportation Resources

Norfolk & Western Railroad Trestle, Husk, c.1915 (SL, AH 120)
Norfolk & Western Railroad Trestle, Tuckerdale, c.1915 (SL, AH 315)
Truss Bridge No. 353, Warrensville, c. 1931 (SL, AH 365)

Significance

Institutional buildings are historically significant as centers of community development and as places of community identity. In the county's churches, schools, courthouse, community building, and other institutional buildings, neighbors and fellow citizens gathered to worship, be educated, conduct civic business, socialize, and be healed. Institutional buildings may be eligible under Criterion A as important educational, medical and governmental institutions. The buildings and structures related to the county's transportation history, such as bridges and railroad depots represent the change that improved transportation systems brought to the county in the form of economic prosperity through greater access to goods and trade. Bridges are important as examples of particular structural types. Institutional buildings may also be architecturally significant under Criterion C as representative examples of building forms, plans and styles popular nationwide. A property owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes may meet Criterion Consideration A if it derives its primary significance from its architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.

Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, an institutional building, structure, or complex in Ashe County must be fifty years old or older and meet at least one of the Criteria for Evaluation as described above. Buildings and structures must retain their location, setting, and overall architectural integrity of materials, design and workmanship. If a building is significant for its architecture under Criterion C, alterations should be minimal on both the exterior and interior. Modern replacement siding does not automatically preclude individual eligibility under Criterion C if it matches the original's dimensions and texture and all other architectural features are visible and intact, specifically, window and door surrounds and sash, decorative work, and roof detailing.

Buildings that are significant under Criterion A for their importance in history or as part of a district may display a lower degree of architectural integrity and still be considered eligible or a contributing resource in a district. Similarly, if institutional properties are a collection of buildings rather than a single building, the integrity of the individual buildings within the eligible complex may display a lower degree of architectural integrity provided that the collection as a whole remains intact.

Cemeteries may be a contributing resource as part of the setting for a significant church property. The cemetery's layout or plan, markers, or other features such as fences must retain their integrity. None of the surveyed cemeteries have been evaluated as individually eligible under Criteria Consideration D.

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Historic school buildings are particularly rare in Ashe County. Therefore, architectural integrity thresholds are slightly lower than for other building types. Integrity of original setting, overall form, location, fenestration, and significant elements of the plan should be retained. If the school is the one- or two-room type, the plan should be thoroughly intact, but the removal or covering of some interior materials and replacement of the windows might be acceptable.

To be eligible under Criterion C a bridge or trestle must be an intact local representative example of a particular bridge or trestle structural type.

Property Type 4: Commercial Buildings

Description

A. Stores, Store/Post Offices and Gas Stations

The earliest commercial structures in Ashe County were log buildings with the exception of the brick Jefferson Inn (destroyed). Most extant commercial buildings appear to date from the twentieth century or very late nineteenth century. In a county where travel was difficult until the Good Roads program of the 1920s, stores were located within walking distance of one another. Thus, they were abundant throughout the county, and many still exist. Thirty-seven independent commercial buildings were surveyed in addition to the numerous stores recorded as part of farm complexes.

Stores are most often very small, shed-roof buildings, although hip roof and front-gable examples exist. Shed-roof one-story porches spanning the facade are a common feature of the county's store buildings. A majority of the stores are of frame construction with most having a simply finished interior with plank walls, occasionally with beadboard, shelves lining two walls and counters.

While most stores exhibit common features noted above, the stores vary in size and form. The c.1900 Charles Tucker Store (AH 102) is thought to be the oldest store building in the northwestern part of the county. The unassuming exterior is sheathed with board-and-batten siding and exhibits a metal front-gable roof while on the west side there is a shed-roof lean-to that is given prominence on the facade through the use of a flat parapet. Structurally, the building is boxed construction with a beautiful stone foundation. The open interior retains some beadboard wainscoting and original plank flooring. This small store contrasts with one of the earliest and largest stores surveyed, the c. 1900 John Sturgill Store (AH 122). While most early general stores were one-story structures, Sturgill's shed-roofed store stands one-and-one half stories tall and retains a one-story porch on the facade.

The Hurdle Hash Store (c.1916, AH 168) is situated over a small stream, a quirky, but somewhat common practice in the county. This may have been done to help keep the building and perishable stock cool. Although common in its one-story height, this store has a hip roof and two entry doors at the facade. It is located near the public road and behind it are an associated farmhouse and agricultural outbuildings.

One of the best-preserved rural store complexes, the Coy Ham House and Store (AH 97) in Apple Grove, includes both store owner's house and store. This complex consists of an early twentieth-century

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concrete block house, a commercial ham house and two stores from about 1920 and 1940 respectively. The 1940 store, which has a shed-roof, as is typical of Ashe County's rural stores, is well preserved with original counters, wall shelves and coal stove. The house is a one-and-one-half story bungalow (c.1925) with a wrap-around porch and shed roof dormer. The original c. 1920 store is a one-story, shed roof building with board-and-batten siding, but is in a very deteriorated state. A concrete block ham house where country hams were sugar-cured was built about 1950 and features a flat roof with stepped parapet and high, two-light metal windows, and a single garage bay is on the facade.

Post offices were often located within already-established stores which served as local gathering places. The Wagoner Store (AH 539), built in the 1920s, fits this model while also demonstrating the less common trend of combining a rural store and the storekeeper's residence. The Wagoner Store stands out due to the building's two distinctive units: on one side, the shed-roofed unit clearly contained the store, while a double-tier porch identifies the gable-roofed unit to the other side as residential space. Another example of a multi-purpose commercial building is the large and well-preserved Crumpler Post Office and Miller Store (AH 227) built by Worth Miller about 1940. The interior has original flooring, shelves and counters, and a large feed room at the rear of the building is cantilevered over the creek. Two apartments are on the second floor. Like most stores operating after about 1930, this store has gas pumps in front.

Buildings dedicated to servicing the automobile appeared in the county in the 1920s and most included an engaged canopy covering the area where gas pumps stood. Service stations were sparsely scattered across the county on primary roadways. The early twentieth century service stations in Nathan's Creek (AH 409) and downtown Lansing (AH 376) are both hip-roof examples; one being frame and the other brick. Another example is the c.1940 Dorsey Bear House and Store (AH 491), which is a brick structure that is banked into the hillside, providing entry to the second story dwelling. The ground-level store was on the downhill facade and gas pumps were located at the southern end of the porch rather than covered by it. The 1930s Ray Farmer House and Store (AH 327) features a frame, front gable store with a separate modern canopy over the modern gas pumps that are situated just in front of the store. This store is still operational and continues to function as a gathering place for local residents as well as a store and gas station. The one-story, German siding-clad, front gable bungalow Farmer House stands southwest of the store building.

The large two-story, concrete block store (AH 286) built by J. T. Pennington about 1948 illustrates the continued prevalence of rural stores well into the mid-twentieth century. The two-story, shed-roof, concrete block building was used for a varied retail operation that included ladies apparel and furniture upstairs and other goods and sundries downstairs. Adjacent to the store is the Penningtons' 1948 side-gable Period Cottage-style brick veneer house with gabled front projection and facade chimney ornamented by the initial "P" executed in white brick.

In two of Ashe County's three municipalities, largely intact collections of building represent the towns' commercial growth after the arrival of the railroad in 1915. In Lansing's commercial district, a modest streetscape consists primarily of one-and two-story brick buildings. The 9300 block of Highway 194 contains several frame and masonry commercial buildings that include: a two-story structure with pressed tin siding and a recessed entry flanked by plate-glass windows, and a one-and-one-half story, shed-roof building

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with weatherboard siding and a center entry with transom and hip-roof porch. Just behind the standard commercial buildings, the Lansing Boarding House (AH 380) is a two-story frame building with a hip roof and one-story, hip roof, full facade porch. It retains its original varnished beadboard interior sheathing throughout, French doors and mirrored mantels downstairs, and several bedrooms arranged on a long hallway upstairs.

West Jefferson is the quintessential railroad town, built after the depot was located there rather than in the long-established town of Jefferson, approximately two miles northeast. Occupying approximately six blocks, the West Jefferson central business district retains the county's largest concentration of early to mid twentieth-century commercial buildings. One of the oldest and most architecturally distinctive is the brick 1916 West Jefferson Hotel (AH 55) with dual main facades—one addressing the prominent Jefferson and Main streets intersection with storefronts and a corner entrance and the other addressing the former location of the railroad tracks with a two-tiered porch. The hotel lobby and commercial spaces occupied the first floor while hotel rooms took up the second. Most of the commercial buildings in downtown West Jefferson are common building forms such as 10 South Jefferson Street, which is a two-story brick building with a sign panel and corbeling above the storefront. One-story structures are also common forms, such as 101-107 South Jefferson Avenue, a brick building with a flat roof and four, plate-glass storefronts with shed metal and wood shingle awnings. Included in the variety of buildings styles is the Art Deco style Parkway Theater at 8 East Main Street, a two-story, narrow, stuccoed facade with a stepped parapet flanked by fluted pilasters topped by stylized finials, and the Modernist two story building at 1 South Jefferson Street, with unbroken pilasters that define five bays with brass circle-motif screens in the upper story. Originally a bank, the building is now the town hall. As is typical of downtowns across the state, the storefronts of many of these buildings have been altered, but the majority of the upper facades retain much original detail.

B. Recreational Properties

The provision for lodging by the Lansing Boarding House and West Jefferson Hotel hints at a secondary enterprise within the county: tourism. The history of tourism in Ashe County began with the discovery of Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs (AH 20, also known as Healing springs) in 1885 and the construction of a hotel there in 1888. The hotel at Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs is no longer extant; however several of the cabins survive. Each one-story, side-gable frame cabin dates to the early twentieth century and has a full facade porch. The cabins are located near the original spring, which is housed in a historic wooden gazebo. Glendale Springs Inn (AH 8), in the small community of Glendale Springs near the Blue Ridge Parkway, was built in 1895. The Inn is a two-story T-plan building with a double tier porch on the front gable and a one-story porch that wraps around most of building. The interior includes a dining room on the first floor with upstairs rooms along a lateral hall.

Tourism increased significantly with the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway (AH 531) during the 1930s, resulting in the development of new resorts and inns and the expansion of earlier enterprises. Shatley Springs (AH 405) had begun as a resort around 1900 when a small bathhouse was erected. Cabins and a tearoom were added in the 1920s and the property expanded to become a destination restaurant beginning in

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the late 1950s. The original Shatley Springs bath-house, thought to be from c.1900, is extant, but it has been incorporated into a sprawling modern restaurant. The small side-gable weatherboarded frame cabins have gabled porches and central entries that lead to a small vestibule with a bedroom on each side. Baths were added later at the back of the vestibules. A later illustration of the development of the local tourism industry is the Highlander Motel (AH 467), built c. 1955. It is one of the earliest of a handful of motor courts built in Jefferson and near the Blue Ridge Parkway. One story in height, this motel retains its original appearance with brick veneer and a stepped roofline that follows the topography above NC Hwy 88. With fourteen rooms, the building was constructed with a slight curve rather than a continuous straight line of rooms. The southwestern end of the building, nearest Hwy 88, is an apartment, currently occupied by the owners and their family. A wide, Formstone chimney accents this end of the building. The small rooms are intact with original tongue-and-groove pine paneling and tiled baths.

National Register and Study List Properties

Stores, Stores/Post Offices, and Gas Stations

Oval Store and Post Office, Oval, early 20th (SL, AH 569)
Charles Tucker Store, Little Horse Creek, c. 1900 (SL, AH 102)
John Sturgill Store, Sturgills, c.1900 (SL, AH 122)
Hurdle Hash Store, Helton, c.1916 (SL, AH 168)
Coy Ham Store and Houses, Little Horse Creek, c.1920 (SL, AH 097)
Joines-Huffman Store, Scottville, early 20th (SL, AH 063)
Lansing Historic District, early 20th century (SL, AH 476)
West Jefferson Historic District, early 20th century (AH 475) NR 2007
Todd Historic District, early 20th century (AH 25) NR 1999*
Wagoner Store, Post Office, and House, Wagoner, c.1925 (SL, AH 539)
Ray Farmer House and Store, Big Laurel Creek, early 20th (SL, AH 327)
Crumpler Post Office and Store, Crumpler, 1941(SL, AH 227)
Seagraves Oil Company and House, Jefferson, 1941 (SL, AH 437)
Pennington House and Store, Big Laurel Creek, c. 1948 (SL, AH 286)

Recreational Properties

Glendale Springs Inn, 1895 (AH 8) NR 1979
Tuckerdale Inn, c.1915 (SL, AH 61)
Lansing Boarding House, Lansing, c.1915 (SL, AH 380)
West Jefferson Hotel, West Jefferson, 1916 (SL, AH 055)
Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs, early 20th (AH 20) NR 1976
Shatley Springs Cottages, Shatley Springs, c. 1938 (SL, AH 405)
Highlander Motel, Jefferson, c.1955 (SL, AH 467)

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Significance

Commercial buildings are historically significant as centers of commerce and trade, which were essential to their communities' development. These buildings reflect the economic fortunes of the county as influenced by transportation systems, including railroads and the automobile in the twentieth century. In rural areas, stores and later gas stations served as outposts where residents could socialize as well as purchase needed goods. The commercial buildings reflect the broad scope of business within the county's towns and villages and include post offices and resort-related lodging. Commercial buildings are important resources within a larger community's central business district, such as West Jefferson, or a rural service community, such as Lansing and Todd. The buildings are important for their role in the history of local commerce and community development. Therefore, commercial buildings may be eligible under Criterion A for their importance in association with the county's community, commercial, recreational and transportation development.

Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a commercial building in Ashe County must be fifty years old or older, meet one of the Criteria for Evaluation as described above, and retain integrity of location, setting, materials, design, and workmanship, feeling and association. With the development of the railroad came villages and towns and the proliferation of commercial buildings in concentrated areas to accommodate various businesses and tourism. First-floor storefront alterations and interior remodeling of will not render two-story commercial buildings in downtown business historic districts noncontributing if these changes do not dominate the façade, the upper levels remain intact, and the building's size and form have not been altered. In rural parts of the county, commercial buildings fell into disuse rather than undergoing the changes urban commercial buildings usually experienced over time. Deterioration precipitated by neglect is typical of rural commercial buildings; unless it is extreme and entails loss of structural integrity it should not disqualify a building for listing.

Property Type 5: Industrial Buildings

Description

While mining was among the earliest industrial ventures in Ashe County, no extant associated resources have been identified. Much more common were the grist and roller mills that served the local farmers. Like stores, these were scattered throughout the county, although only four are known to survive: the c.1885 Helton Roller Mill (AH 59), the c.1900 Cockerham Mill (AH 56), the Clark-Miller Grist Mill built in the early twentieth century (AH 105), and the Jess Allen Mill built about 1936 (AH 281).

These mills were constructed in various forms, but they usually were a two-story side gable or shed roof building with vertical board siding and often a stone foundation. The Cockerham Mill is probably the best-preserved example. Perched at the Mouth of Dog Creek into the New River, the two-story mill retains

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its wheel and other equipment as well as part of the dam. The Clark-Miller Mill is three stories and retains its mid-twentieth century roller mill, a sack packer, and portions of the belt drive system. At the Jess Allen Mill the equipment has been removed, but the raceway and remnants of the dam remain. Standing taller, the Helton Roller Mill (AH 59) is a front gable three-story frame building, clad in weatherboard siding and rests on a raised, stacked stone foundation on the bank of Helton Creek..

Manufacturing plants were seldom built in Ashe County before 1950. With so few examples of industrial properties in the county, broad industrial themes cannot be drawn. In most respects the few surviving manufacturing buildings are similar to those built throughout North Carolina during the historic period. Utilitarian in style and form, their designs were a factor of their use. The earliest extant industrial plant in the county is the Helton Woolen Mill (AH 158). Begun in 1884 by local brothers, Winfield and William Perkins, it is an extremely early and rare example of a textile mill within the county. The original mill building burned in 1895, but the original, two-story company store is extant as is the long, one-story mill building (with historic machinery still inside) that was built shortly after the fire by the mill's new owner, John Littlewood. The complex also includes two associated residences. The tradition of textile production was carried into the twentieth century by plants such as Knox Knitting Mill (AH 319), built in 1940 in Creston. This building is one-story in height with a flat roof and is constructed of concrete block.

While the use of water power was typical before the 1930s, it was not widespread. The Northwest Power Company Hydroelectric Plant and Dam (AH 349) of 1931 heralded the changes that occurred in manufacturing after rural electrification. The uncut, random coursed granite building has a shaped parapet with distinct corners above the flat roof. The windows are metal hopper-style and the entrance has two six-light metal doors. The interior has stucco walls and houses a 1970s-era relay and electro-mechanical meter, a 1952 Westinghouse generator, and some of the original 1931 equipment.

By the 1950s, a handful of modern manufacturing plants appeared in Ashe County. These buildings, such as the Hanes plant in Jefferson, are generally very large, one-story brick buildings. In the case of Hanes, modest Modernist styling is found in the banded windows and cantilevered aluminum canopy at the entry.

National Register and Study List Properties

Helton Woolen Mill, Helton, 1884/ c.1895 (SL, AH 158)

Helton Roller Mill, Helton, 1885 (SL, AH 59)

Cockerham Mill, c. 1900 (SL, AH 56)

Clark-Miller Grist Mill, Lansing, c. 1910 (SL, AH 105)

Northwestern Power Company Hydroelectric Plant and Dam, Dresden, 1931 (SL, AH 349)

Jess Allen Mill and House, Little Laurel Creek, c.1936 (SL, AH 281)

Significance

Industrial buildings are historically significant for their association with the county's economic development. Small industries such as grist, and later roller, mills were common throughout the nineteenth

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century and a few small textile mills were in operation as well. Large-scale factories did not appear until the mid-twentieth century, however. Historically, the county's economy was primarily agrarian, but by the mid-twentieth century the family farm began to be superseded by manufacturing as more people joined the industrial workforce and kept farming as a supplemental income source. There are very few extant industrial buildings constructed prior to 1956, making those that do survive prior to this time period significant under Criterion A in the area of industry for their important contribution to the county's economy and potentially under Criterion C as significant examples of an important industrial building design or construction technique.

Registration Requirements

To be eligible for the National Register industrial buildings in Ashe County must be fifty years old or older, meet at least one of the Criteria for Evaluation as described above, and retain integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Rural industrial buildings are so rare in Ashe County that alterations made to keep the structure technologically viable or changes caused by neglect and decay should not prevent these buildings from being listed as long as their historic overall form is still visible and a majority of the historic materials are present. It is likely that twentieth century industrial resources are significant through the fifty year cut off date, and therefore alterations made more than fifty years ago should be considered part of the historic fabric of the building.

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G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

Ashe County and the Ashe County Historical Society received a matching grant to fund the survey work from the Federal Highway Administration through the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Office of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) in 2004. Historic preservation consultant Sherry Joines Wyatt with Lori Tolliver-Jones were hired to conduct the survey. The first phase undertaken in the fall of 2004 included a reconnaissance survey of the county by automobile; mapping potential resources on USGS maps and conducting preliminary research on the county's history.

The second phase of the project consisted largely of field work conducted in 2005 and the spring of 2006 for 590 resources and included further research. The actual number of properties recorded is higher than 590 as multiple buildings on farms and in towns were covered by a single survey site number. Properties were chosen for documentation because they were over fifty years of age and retained a sufficient degree of architectural integrity or had otherwise notable qualities. Buildings less than fifty years old were recorded if they exhibited a significant architectural style or were associated with an exceptionally important historical event or person. Some properties that fall just shy of the fifty-year mark were included as well.

Surveying previously undocumented sites involved standard field documentation techniques. For most properties, the site was photographed and a North Carolina Historic Structures Survey form was completed. The survey form includes both standard information as well as site sketches and notes of varying levels of detail. Historical information on each site was obtained when possible through informal oral interviews with knowledgeable individuals and from primary and secondary source materials. Narrative descriptions combining historical and architectural information were composed and filed with each surveyed property.

Properties that were already listed on the National Register of Historic Places and properties that have previously been recorded were updated with new photographs, notes on photocopies of the original survey forms, and/or new narrative descriptions.

Historic properties that were severely deteriorated, had a low degree of architectural integrity, or were examples of a very common building type were documented only via map-coding on the USGS maps. The best or most representative examples of common property types were fully documented with the remainder being map coded.

At the completion of the survey, a report was written in the National Register's Multiple Property Documentation Form format. The report, drafted in 2006, provides necessary contexts and property type descriptions for the county's potentially eligible National Register resources. The consultants and the staff of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's Survey and Planning Branch used standard National Register criteria to evaluate the eligibility of new properties

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for consideration in the state Study List, the preliminary step in North Carolina toward National Register listing. In February 2006, 106 properties were presented before the National Register Advisory Committee and accepted for inclusion on the Study List. Five additional properties were presented and accepted in February 2007.

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