

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Forsyth	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Korner's Folly

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Kernersville (Fifth Congressional District, The Hon. Wilmer D. Mizell)

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Forsyth	CODE 067
-------------------------	------------	--------------------	-------------

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Korner's Folly, Inc. % Jack White, President

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Harmon Court

CITY OR TOWN: Kernersville	STATE: North Carolina	CODE: 37
-------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Forsyth County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Winston-Salem	STATE: North Carolina	CODE: 37
--------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina

COUNTY: Forsyth

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Korner's Folly, which stands very near the main street of Kernersville, is a large, severe brick house two-and-one-half stories high beneath an extremely high cross-gable roof. The outsize brick is laid in mechanical bond and is said to be of eight different sizes. All four sides of the main block are forty-eight feet long and of essentially identical design, with large recessed panels in a variety of geometric shapes defining the bays of the walls and gables.

Each facade is four bays wide, with the two central bays beneath the gable within a large rectangular panel with the upper corners sliced off diagonally, following the angle of the gable above. Three large corbels ornament the top border of the panel. The flanking bays under flat roofs are outlined by narrow round-arched panels. Most of the bays at both levels are marked by tall, narrow, round-arched windows, which are irregularly spaced, reflecting the interior arrangement of the house.

The building is said to have served originally as combination dwelling, stable, and carriage house, with an open arch leading into the center part of the structure. The large round-arched opening in the front (northwest) central first-story bay is now occupied by a doorway flanked by wide side-lights and surmounted by three large panes that fill the arch. The entrance is protected by a gable-roof porch supported by heavy diagonally-braced posts resting on brick piers. Across the rest of the main facade and continuing along both sides of the house is a porch enclosed by an open-arcaded brick balustrade. The floor is of tiny circular multicolor tiles arranged in ornamental patterns, some imitating small rugs, others forming words like "Witches Corner," "Korner's Folly," and the date, "1880." Part of the porch across the front is roofless. The side porches have flat roofs with stick-style supports. That on the northeast is fronted by a one-story brick wall with a round-arched entrance and little corbeled turrets. The rear facade has a one-story frame addition to the west.

The lower half of the tall gable on each side of the house is nearly filled by a panel trapezoidal in outline, with a central arch over a single arched opening. (At front and rear these openings are doors leading onto small balconies; on the sides, windows.) The apex of the gable is occupied by a triangular window set in a triangular panel. From each of the flat areas of the roof at the corners rises a tall individually shaped chimney. In addition, on the east end of the rear facade an exterior chimney pierces the broad overhang of the roof. The roof was originally covered by wood shingles, now by standing-seam tin.

The exterior appearance of Korner's Folly is rather unusual but severe, giving little indication of the character of the interior, where an extremely eccentric floor plan is combined with a profusion of exuberant ornament. There are in all twenty-two rooms at seven different levels. The central section of the house has three floors, including a high-ceilinged room which occupies all of the space under the cross gables. The flanking sections, however, have three floors fitted within the level of the first two stories of the central part.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	North Carolina	
COUNTY	Forsyth	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE

(Number all entries)

7. A

The first floor of the center section has a small entrance hall leading to a long dining room with some smaller rooms to the north; the second floor has a very large reception or ballroom; and all of the third (attic) floor is occupied by a theater. The north front room on the first floor is the master bedroom. The remainder of the first floor in the flanking areas is a confusing warren of small rooms most of which have tile floors and are slightly below ground level, and occur at a variety of levels. They include wine cellars, a library, a serving room, a kitchen, and a "smoker" (which is finished entirely with fireproof materials and is said to have been the only place Mr. Korner allowed smoking). The second level of the flanking areas has very low ceilings, from 5 feet 8 inches to 6 feet in height; those on the north side are said to have been children's rooms and the long room on the south, a dressing room for the theater above. The third level has two bedrooms on the north and a long room on the south (said like that below to have been the loft when that side of the building was a stable). The main stair, with very heavy octagonal balusters and elaborate posts, rises in six flights in the middle of the north side of the house. A wainscot with a double range of panels occurs along the wall. On the other side of the house an irregularly arranged series of extremely narrow stairs connects the floors.

The strangeness of the arrangement of rooms is complemented by the extravagance of the ornament. Most of the major rooms have wide plaster cornices composed of several elaborate moldings. The twenty-two mantels are all of different design, but most employ twisted freestanding Ionic colonnettes and have heavy shelves ornamented by dentils, egg-and-dart, and ovolo moldings. Overmantels with mirrors appear on many. Many doors feature scrolled consoles supporting heavy cornices, above which often appear transoms flanked by colonnettes. Some of these transoms can be opened to let hot air rise into rooms above, part of an ingenious heating system. Wainscots with double or triple ranges of raised panels occur frequently, most of them having the panels outlined by a beaded astragal band. Appearing in unexpected places are lions' heads, demons, cupids, and other creatures in three-dimensional wood or plaster. In many rooms, plaster ceiling medallions illustrate the purpose of the room or the interests of its occupant. Some of the rooms have damask panels outlined by molding, which is in turn outlined by an elaborate plaster motif. The eccentric decor is continued in the heavy, ornate furniture, much of which was executed following Mr. Korner's instructions; the elements of the interior trim are repeated, especially the egg-and-dart and beaded astragal motif as well as twisted Ionic colonnettes. Some pieces said to have been executed in the house are too large to be removed.

The most pretentious room is the large salon or ballroom on the second floor of the center section. The ceiling and wide cove cornice have a series of panels framed by foliated plaster borders and painted with idyllic scenes, most of which feature cupids. Flanking the doors and the mirrors over the fireplaces are herms, some with old men and some with undraped women over heavy scroll consoles. The walls have paneled dados below heavy chair rails and crossetted panels containing mirrors or paintings above. The upper parts

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	North Carolina	
COUNTY	Forsyth	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	

(Number all entries)

7. B

of the windows are covered with twisted openwork fans and flanked by pilasters, beneath consoles that support broken cornices. The room is filled with ornate furniture, including some gilded chairs. A massive movable coat closet with Corinthian colonnettes and an elaborately worked entablature is especially remarkable.

Occupying the upper floor beneath the steep pitch of the gables is the theater. Above a vertically sheathed wainscot the plaster walls are painted, some with scenes of boats and others with cupids gamboling in sylvan settings. The upper and lower borders of the plastered wall are painted with floral scrolls, enlarged versions of medieval manuscript motifs. The original proscenium, backdrops, curtain equipment, and other theatrical accoutrements including costume trunks still remain.

To the rear of the main building is picturesque brick outbuilding, repeating somewhat the configuration of the house. It is approached by a path leading through a heavy stick-style shelter.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1880

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art          | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |                                      |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Joseph Korner, born in 1769, was a younger son of a landowning family of Furtwangen, Schwarzwald, Germany. In 1785 he was sent to the United States as a sales representative of a clock-making firm, but instead of returning to Germany as planned, he settled in the Moravian community in the Wachovia area of North Carolina. He purchased 200 acres of land from Moravian leader William Frederick Marshall, set up shop as a clockmaker, married Christinia Kastner, and, despite being a Catholic among Moravians, soon became a prominent member of the Wachovia community. In 1817 Korner purchased 400 acres and moved his wife and three children to a house there known as "Dobson's Tavern." The village soon came to be called "Kerner's Cross Roads," and later, as the family thrived and the town grew, "Kernersville." (The spelling difference between family and place names seems to stem from the pronunciation of the unlauted German o.)

The youngest son of Joseph Korner's youngest son was Jule Korner, born in 1851. During the Civil War, young Jule was sent to school in Indiana, where he developed a talent and interest in art. He went on to Philadelphia to study art as well as "designing and the decorative arts." At the death of his father in 1875 he returned to Kernersville where he established himself as a photographer, sign painter, and portrait painter. (One of his subjects was the soft-drink magnate, Dr. J. K. Pepper.) He increased his wealth through successful real estate ventures. In 1878 he purchased from his brother Joseph a lot located near the main street, where he began construction of a building intended to be "a combination of studio, office, reception halls, ballroom, carriage house, and stables." He planned to erect a dwelling nearby later on, but, according to his son,

Pygmalion-like he became so attached to his first creation that he transformed it eventually into his home. He constructed a brick-yard where he made specially designed brick of very large size; bought a huge chestnut tree [and the land around it] and had shingles made for the roof; and generally made the building as unique as possible. As it grew, the oddness of its appearance excited curious comment and his cousin Nathaniel M. Kerner dubbed it the "Folly" and it has borne that name ever since.

Another account credits a passing farmer with supplying the name. The Folly, said to have cost \$200,000, was christened at a great party there, Easter Monday, 1880. Besides the unusual appearance of the Folly, it was notable for a variety of innovations, mostly Jule's ideas for extra comfort and

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE North Carolina	
COUNTY Forsyth	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. A

convenience, including a complicated series of vents and tunnels to supply warm and cool air.

By 1882, Jule had "extended as far as Durham his business reputation for designing, decorative art and sign writing." He was employed by the Blackwell Tobacco Company to publicize their Bull Durham Tobacco. Jule, who had already adopted the pseudonym "Reubin Rink," created a grand-scale advertising campaign that made Bull Durham a household word. Advertisements featuring handpainted bulls, no two alike, appeared across the country; it was said one was even put on the Rock of Gibraltar. "'Reubin Rink' slyly fomented uproars by having writers to the vox populi inveigh against the 'unconcealed realism' of the bulls, and then having others to reply in defense . . . which never failed to attain the utmost in advertising attention and publicity." After the Blackwell Company was absorbed by the Duke tobacco firm, Reubin Rink continued in the same capacity until the company headquarters was moved to New York. Jule was invited to go along, but "he told Mr. Duke that becoming a millionaire was not his ambition; that he loved North Carolina and wanted to remain a Tar Heel. . . ." He turned to a career as a decorator, having among his clients the "tobacco tycoons of the day."

In preparation for his wedding in 1886, Jule began the decoration of the Folly and employed an Italian artist named Quintini to execute a series of murals in the major rooms of the house. He himself painted the wainscot frescoes on the main stair. (Quintini's work was later replaced by that of a German artist; Jule's painting is said to be still there under the present paneled wainscot.)

For nearly forty years the Reubin Rink company flourished, with Jule and his brother Henry decorating "churches, theatres and residences throughout the South and as far north as Pennsylvania and as far west as Indiana." Jule and his family remained at the Folly, which was "Kernersville's social gathering place for entertainment, music, dramatics, house parties, dancing and gaiety in general." Jule apparently delighted in making continual additions and changes to the fantastic decor of the house. One project was the finishing of the large upper room as a theater. According to Mrs. Korner, six of the high walls of that room were painted by Cesar Milch (a young German artist who continued to work with Jule for many years) with "allegorical scenes of cupids and flowers, while two of the walls were painted with large seascapes of Holland of which Jule made sketches and designs." Mrs. Korner began a children's theater group in 1896, and in the following year the attic room was equipped with a large stage and full theater equipment. She recalled that the grand piano, "one of the old fashioned square type, . . . could not be brought up any stairs so he had to cut trap doors through the floors beneath to get it up there. I do not suppose it will ever come down again." It is still there. Kerosene footlights, an ingenious circular curtain rod arrangement conceived by Jule, and a variety of backdrops were installed.

Jule Korner died in 1924 and his wife ten years later. For many years the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	North Carolina	
COUNTY	Forsyth	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE

(Number all entries)

8. B

Folly was owned but not lived in by his two children, most recently Dore Korner Donnell. It was used for a variety of purposes, including a funeral home and an antique shop, but with extended periods of disuse the building began to fall into disrepair. In 1970, however, Korner's Folly was purchased by a group of citizens who formed a corporation to preserve it. Necessary exterior repairs have been accomplished to prevent further decay. The grand interior has suffered some damage from neglect, but it is essentially intact, retaining an air of past splendor and gaiety.

Korner's Folly, one of North Carolina's few spectacularly eccentric buildings, is a unique monument to one man's extraordinary imagination, combining a sense of fun and fancy with the ingenuity of the immigrant German clockmaker and the exuberant, full-blown extravagance of the nineteenth century tobacco tycoons.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(Winston-Salem) Journal, March 17, 1970.  
 Korner, Gilmer, Jr. Joseph of Kernersville. Durham, North Carolina: Seeman Printery, Inc., 1958.  
 Korner, Polly Alice Masten. I Remember. Privately printed, 1956.  
 "Korner's Folly, 1880," pamphlet printed by Korner's Folly, Inc., P.O. Box 849, Kernersville, North Carolina.  
 (Winston-Salem) Sentinel, February 18, 1968.  
 Stokes County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds).  
 Stokes County Records, Stokes County Courthouse, Danbury, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	36°	06'	52"	80°	03'	54"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/2 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History      DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET AND NUMBER:  
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh      STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National       State       Local

Name H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 4 August 1972

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

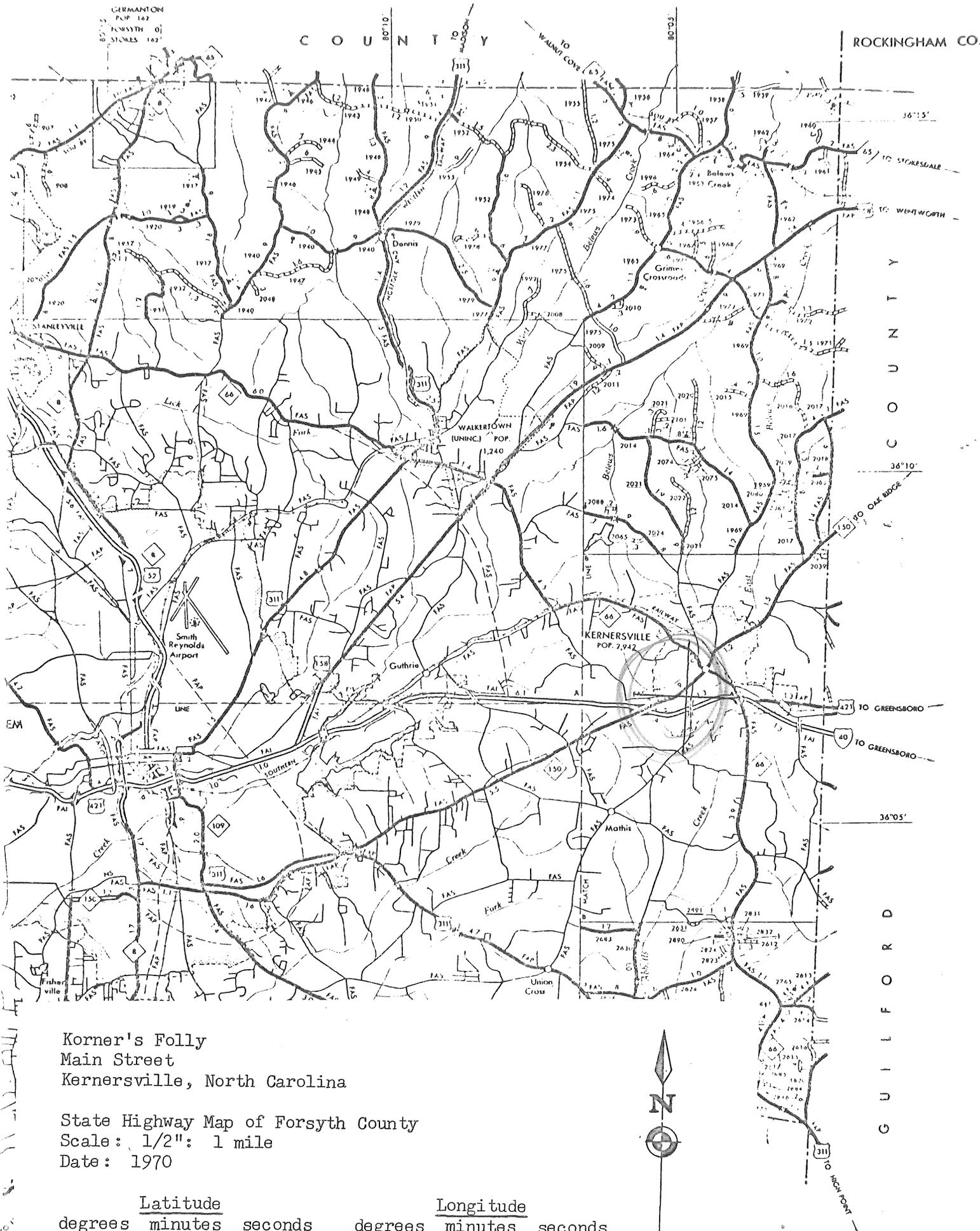
\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_



Korner's Folly  
 Main Street  
 Kernersville, North Carolina

State Highway Map of Forsyth County  
 Scale: 1/2": 1 mile  
 Date: 1970

Latitude			Longitude		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
36	06	52	80	03	54



ROCKINGHAM CO.  
 36°15'  
 TO STOKESDALE  
 TO WESTWORTH  
 36°10'  
 TO OAK BRIDGE  
 TO GREENSBORO  
 TO GREENSBORO  
 36°05'  
 GUILFORD  
 TO HIGH POINT

