

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
**Office of Archives and History**  
**Department of Cultural Resources**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Berkeley Mills Ballpark**

Hendersonville, Henderson County, HN1903, Listed 9/19/2016

Nomination by Dan Pezzoni

Photographs by Dan Pezzoni, November 2015



Grandstand



Ballfield

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Berkeley Mills Ballpark

Other names/site number: HN 1903

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 69 Balfour Road

City or town: Hendersonville State: North Carolina County: Henderson

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:   
Public – Local   
Public – State   
Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)   
District   
Site   
Structure   
Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility (ballpark)

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility (ballpark)

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, Metal, Concrete, Asphalt

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Berkeley Mills Ballpark is located at 69 Balfour Road in Hendersonville, Henderson County, North Carolina, approximately two miles north of the city center. The resource is a baseball sports complex consisting of a 1949 baseball field, 1949-50 grandstand, and other resources dating from the late twentieth century (some or all from the late 1970s) and early twenty-first century. The ballpark lies to the north of Berkeley Mills (now Kimberly Clark), the historic textile mill which had the ballpark constructed and which sponsored its home team, the Berkeley Spinners. The ballpark exists in a park-like setting, tucked against a wooded hill to the southwest scattered with picnic shelters and other amenities, and reached by a gravel road which passes through rolling lawn areas to connect to Balfour Road. A modern sign and wooden split rail fence is at the entrance to the property. The ball field's level topography is the result of cut and fill that took earth from the grandstand area to create a level raised outfield. The area to the northwest and northeast of the ball field is wooded. A narrow dirt drive encircles the ball field.

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### Narrative Description

#### *Inventory*

1. Field. 1949. Contributing site.
2. Grandstand. 1949, 1950. Contributing structure.
3. Home Dugout. Late 1970s. Non-contributing structure.
4. Visitors Dugout. Late 1970s. Non-contributing structure.

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5. Concession Building. 1978. Non-contributing building.
6. Restrooms. 2012. Non-contributing building.
7. Field Maintenance Shed. 2000s. Non-contributing building.

1. Field, 1949.

The field has the standard squarish baseball field form and is oriented on an approximate forty-five-degree angle so that the infield occupies the south corner, the outfield occupies the northeast and northwest sides, and the batter and spectators face north. As constructed in 1949 the field measured 325 feet along the foul lines and 365 down center field. The current measurements appear to be the same or almost so. Early in the field's existence it was enclosed by a high board fence; it is currently enclosed by a wire mesh fence. Around its perimeter are drains with rebar grates. So that the field is level it is built up along its northeast and northwest sides. Chunks of refuse concrete protrude from the fill beyond the outfield fence. Surrounding the field are tall wooden light poles with steel cleats for climbing when maintenance is required. Transformers are mounted on some of the poles. High cables link the poles—the cables forming a multi-sided polygon around the circumference of the field—and diagonal cables guy the poles to the ground, the system of poles and cables creating an overall tensional structure braced against the wind. Although the field is known to have had tall light poles by 1950, the current poles are unlikely to be the originals. Outside the fence to the northeast of the field is a section of stone retaining wall that supports the fill that elevates the field.

2. Grandstand. 1949, 1950.

The grandstand is a roofed open-air structure of quarter-circular form constructed in 1949 and roofed a short time later, apparently in 1950. The grandstand occupies the south corner of the field, behind home plate, and is built into a slope in amphitheater fashion. The shed roof, which is sheathed with asphalt sheeting over roof boards and wood framing, is supported by steel trusses which stand on slender steel supports. The front supports are tubular and are connected by secondary horizontal reinforcing rods and wire mesh forming a backstop. About halfway back from the front is an arc of t-section supports. These have manufacturer's stamps such as "Carnegie 1903 ET" and "850 OH Tennessee 2 1911." Along the back run paired tubular posts. The outer post of each pair reaches from grade to the roof. The much shorter inner posts rest on the top of the railing behind the uppermost seats. The paired-post structure is a change from the original; a 1957 photo shows single posts along the back of the stands. All full-length posts rest on poured concrete footers which are either form-poured rectangular or irregular non-form-poured.

The stands themselves have a braced wooden substructure and, across the back and east side, a slatted board enclosure. A modern sign reading "Berkeley Park, Field of Dreams, Since 1946" (the date is wrong) is mounted high on the south side. The southwest side is cinder block and the adjacent portion of the rear elevation is cinder block and poured concrete. This masonry structure continues at a tangent behind the grandstand as a buttressed retaining wall for the slope into which the grandstand is built. The east side has a door to a store room under the stands, wooden steps, and modern lattice along what appear to be historic-period wood railings.

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The stepped seating is of two types, divided by a walkway. The lower seats or “runners” have open supports and, mounted behind each runner, footrests for spectators seated on the runners above. The upper portion of the stands consists of wider platforms with enclosed treads and risers. The dividing walkway leads to a modern centrally-located scorer’s platform with a plywood floor and particle-board walls. Above it, on the back wall of the stands, is the original announcer’s booth with novelty weatherboard siding and a shed roof. The booth projects slightly on the exterior. An early 1970s photograph shows siding at the location of the current entrance to the booth. Other features of the grandstand include a Nevco scoreboard suspended under the roof at the west corner; 2x4 handrails interspersed among the upper stands; a small shelf mounted high on the mesh of the front (for a former loudspeaker?); and a narrow wooden rack near home plate which may have held baseballs. Signage includes the messages “No cleats in stands” and “Players and coaches only past his gate,” the latter hung on a wire mesh gate that leads to the field. Electrical service with old ceramic insulators enters the stands at the top east corner.

### 3. Home Dugout. Late 1970s.

The home dugout has a standard open-fronted linear form. It is above-ground rather than true dug-into-the-ground form, and has cinder block construction, a wood-framed shed roof sheathed with asphalt sheeting, a poured concrete floor, an interior wood bench, and a wire mesh front. A metal drinking fountain stands at the end of the dugout. On the mesh near the dugout is mounted a faded plywood sign that reads “No pepper in ball park.” The dugout may have been built in the late 1970s, about the time the current concession building (1978) was built.

### 4. Visitors Dugout. Late 1970s.

The visitors dugout has a standard open-fronted linear form. It is above-ground rather than true dug-into-the-ground form, and has cinder block construction, a wood-framed shed roof sheathed with asphalt sheeting, a poured concrete floor, an interior wood bench, and a wire mesh front. A metal drinking fountain stands at the end of the dugout. The dugout may have been built in the late 1970s, about the time the current concession building (1978) was built.

### 5. Concession Building. 1978.

The concession building is a one-story building of cinder block construction with a shed roof of asphalt-sheathed wood-framed construction. A seam in the block suggests the north end, which has a door facing the field, is either an addition or was altered. A long, narrow, barred counter window also faces the field. On the back (east) side is a reinforced metal door that appears to have been the building’s original sole entrance and may have been reinforced against theft. On the south end is a black granite plaque dedicated to the Henderson County Babe Ruth Baseball team which finished fifth place in the world series in 2002.

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6. Restrooms. 2012.

The restrooms are in a one-story gable-fronted building of stuccoed cinder block construction with metal roofing and his and hers metal doors facing the field.

7. Field Maintenance Shed. 2000s.

The field maintenance shed is a simple plywood-sided frame building with an asphalt-shingle gable roof.

*Integrity Assessment*

Berkeley Mills Ballpark retains good overall historic integrity. The principal character-defining resource—the baseball field itself—occupies the same area and has the same configuration it did historically, although its original fence has been replaced. Also important to defining the historic character of the property is the grandstand, the property's largest structure. Research suggests the grandstand was constructed in two or three phases: the primary stands of wood and metal seats (which survive) and concrete block seats (which do not survive) constructed in 1949 and a roof constructed in the early 1950s. The portion of the roof over the wood and steel seats, apparently built in 1950, survives, whereas the portion over the no-longer-extant concrete block seats, which has the appearance of an addition to the other roof in a 1951 aerial photo, does not. The no-longer-extant section, which was slightly smaller than the surviving section, extended from the west end of the surviving section. Secondary historic resources such as the concession stand and dugouts have been replaced by non-historic versions (the current dugouts in approximately the same location as the original dugouts) and there are a modern restroom building and field maintenance shed. None of these resources is so large or obtrusive as to significantly detract from the overall historic character and integrity of the ballpark. In fact the non-historic resources are comparable and appropriate in form, size, and placement to the historic resources they replace. The ballpark's park-like setting retains the basic character seen in historic period photos.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1949-1966

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1949

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Dan Waddell and Company (grading)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Berkeley Mills Ballpark, located in Hendersonville, North Carolina, was established in 1949 as the home field of the Berkeley Spinners, the baseball team of the Berkeley Mills textile plant. Organized in 1948 at the height of baseball's post-war popularity, the Spinners played as part of the Western North Carolina Industrial League composed of teams drawn from the workforces of various regional industrial plants. The following year Berkeley Mills contracted with Dan Waddell and Company, a Hendersonville grading company, to construct a ball field in a park-like setting to the north of the mills' factory and mill village. Mill employees assisted with the construction of stands and associated structures. The wood and steel grandstand, built in 1949 and roofed in 1950, is accompanied by an intact ballfield. In 2008, the Kimberly Clark Corporation, successor to Berkeley Mills, donated the ballpark and surrounding park area to the City of Hendersonville. Berkeley Mills Ballpark meets National Register Criterion A in the Entertainment/Recreation area of significance at the local level of significance for its association with industrial league and community baseball in Hendersonville during the historic period. The period of significance extends from initial construction in 1949 through 1966 embracing the years the park served as the home field of the mill-supported Berkeley Spinners baseball team (1949-1961) and the early years of the post-Spinners period (1962-1966) when it was used exclusively for non-industrial league ball by a number of teams. Although local teams continued to play at the facility after 1966, this later period is not of exceptional significance.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Historic Context*

Baseball, the "National Pastime," experienced its first flush of popularity in the northeastern United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The sport was adopted by southerners after the Civil War and its earliest known organized development in Hendersonville dates to 1909 with the formation of the short-lived Hendersonville Planets team, a member of the Western North Carolina League.<sup>1</sup> Industrial workers represented an important and early cadre of baseball

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<sup>1</sup> Holaday, *Professional Baseball in North Carolina*, 85. A number of individuals assisted the project, foremost among them staff with the City of Hendersonville including Sue Anderson (former Planning Director), Susan G. Frady (Development Assistance Director), and Lu Ann Welter (Human Resources). The principal contact at the state was Annie Laurie McDonald, Preservation Specialist with the Western Office of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office in Asheville. Patrick Gallagher, author of *The Berkeley Spinners: A Baseball History, 1948-1961*, provided information and historic photographs and commented on the draft. Former Spinners player Dewey Hunnicut, who played with the team from 1948 to 1959, shared his recollections of the construction and early years of the ballpark. Other who provided assistance

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enthusiasts, as demonstrated by the Brooklyn, New York, Eckford Baseball Club formed by shipwrights and dock laborers in 1855, and by the early twentieth century company-sponsored teams had appeared.<sup>2</sup> Plant owners sponsored industrial teams as a way to promote company identity and workplace morale. Historian John DiMeglio writes, “A winning ball club meant a stable workforce. Who would want to leave a mill with a title team to take a job with a competitor that field losing nines?”<sup>3</sup> Historian Larry Powell, writing of industrial leagues in Alabama, notes a diversity of opinion on the subject: “Some critics cited industrial-league and company-sponsored baseball as examples of corporate paternalism in which companies used the sport as a way to manage their workers’ behavior and manipulate their attitudes toward work . . . Others disagreed, arguing that the teams had a positive impact by increasing employee identification with that company and providing entertainment for the workers and their families.”<sup>4</sup> Historian John Schleppe, writing of coalfield industrial teams, notes, “Many men gained or improved their jobs in the coal companies as a result of their baseball abilities. Even during the Great Depression, when the workweek was shortened for the typical miner, ball-playing miners continued to be paid for a full week’s work.”<sup>5</sup>

It was in the context of southern and industrial league ball that Hendersonville’s Berkeley Spinners organized in 1948. The team took its name from Berkeley Mills, established as Balfour Mills in the early 1920s by Ellison Adger Smyth (Balfour Mills was originally named after its host community of Balfour located to the north of Hendersonville). In addition to the mill, which produced cotton calico cloth, Smyth’s complex included seventy-five mill houses. In 1946 International Cellucotton Products Company acquired Balfour Mills and its mill village (then numbering over one hundred houses), changed the name to Berkeley Mills, and converted to the production of cotton gauze.<sup>6</sup>

The ownership change at Balfour/Berkeley mill coincided with a period historian William Marshall calls baseball’s “pivotal era.” Marshall writes, “following World War II, baseball experienced one of the most colorful, exciting, and eventful periods in its history.” Major league baseball had continued during the war, encouraged by President Roosevelt who saw the game as an important morale booster, but military service took most players out of the game and decimated the minor leagues.<sup>7</sup> Industrial-team baseball, however, continued during the war, at least in North Carolina, as indicated by the career of Ecusta Papermakers and later major league

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included Michael Baldwin and Edith Bayne of Kimberly Clark; Ann Wright of Pack Memorial Library; Jeannie Lindsey, Leon Pace, and Richard Wilson of the Henderson County Genealogical and Historical Society; Jewel Brooks, Andrew Edmonds, Ken Fitch, Joyce Hall, Barbara Pace, Ann Swallow, and the staffs of the Henderson County Heritage Museum and the Henderson County Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> Eckford Social Club Scrapbook finding aid.

<sup>3</sup> DiMeglio, “Baseball,” 1211.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, “Industrial Baseball Leagues in Alabama.”

<sup>5</sup> Schleppe, “Baseball,” 1370.

<sup>6</sup> Barber and Bailey, *Hendersonville and Hederson County*, 153; Henderson County Deed Book 247, pages 226-229.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, *Baseball’s Pivotal Era*, 3-4.

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player Gil Coan. On account of a missing thumb Coan was exempted from the draft and worked from 1941 to 1944 at the Ecusta Paper Corporation near Brevard where he played for the mill's team, the Ecusta Papermakers. In a 2013 interview Coan noted the quality of war-time industrial-team ball "was similar to today's Class A minor league teams."<sup>8</sup>

Among the returning GIs were young men eager to play ball, and spectators, flush with disposable income from the post-war economic boom, were eager to watch them play.<sup>9</sup> North Carolina shared in the post-war resurgence. Historian Chris Holaday writes in *Professional Baseball in North Carolina* that the state's citizenry "wanted to put the war behind them . . . What better or more American way to spend money than attend a baseball game?" Holaday demonstrates the phenomenal popularity of post-war minor league professional baseball in the state by noting that even relatively small communities such as the towns of Elkin and Red Springs drew over 33,000 in attendance to games during the 1949 season.<sup>10</sup> Hendersonville sports historian Patrick Gallagher points to another factor in the popularity of small-town baseball during the period: lack of competition from television, which was in its infancy in the late 1940s. "Since most homes did not yet have a television set," Gallagher notes, "supporting the local baseball team was an inexpensive and popular leisure time activity that the whole family could enjoy."<sup>11</sup>

In Hendersonville, players formed the Skylarks professional baseball team in 1948. The Skylarks, owned by a group headed by Hendersonville automobile dealer T. Lee Osborne, belonged to the Class D Western Carolina League and played home games at the Western North Carolina Fairgrounds in East Flat Rock, however the team was a "disappointment both on the field and at the box office," writes Patrick Gallagher, "finishing last in both the won-loss standings and in attendance during their two years in Hendersonville." The Skylarks transferred to Gastonia following the 1949 season.<sup>12</sup>

While the Skylarks failed to impress fans, another local team formed in 1948 enjoyed considerable success. Berkeley Mills management asked its employees what recreational activities they would like the mill to support and the answer was a baseball team. The Berkeley Spinners team was the result, its name a nod to the machinery used in the textile mill and its players drawn from the mill workforce. The Spinners joined the Western North Carolina Industrial League (WNCIL) which was composed of eight teams fielded by regional industrial plants and communities and is described by Gallagher as the "most competitive semi-pro baseball league in the area" in its day. The Spinners' first game was against Ecusta Manufacturing on April 17, 1948. During its first season the Spinners were to play home games at the fairgrounds field when it was not in use by the Skylarks and at the Hendersonville High School field when it was.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Vrechek, "Interview with Former Ballplayer Gil Coan."

<sup>9</sup> Marshall, *Baseball's Pivotal Era*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Holaday, *Professional Baseball in North Carolina*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2; Patrick Gallagher personal communication.

<sup>13</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 2.

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According to Patrick Gallagher and confirmed by former Spinners player Dewey Hunnicutt (who played with the team from 1948 to 1959), the Spinners home games attracted larger crowds than the Skylarks games and Skylarks management had the rival team barred from playing at the fairgrounds.<sup>14</sup> Of this hiccup in the Spinners' first season an Asheville newspaper account noted, "Everything went fine until about mid-season, and the crowds poured out to watch the boys play. Then, Skylark officials decided that they could no longer allow the use of their field by the Berkeley Mill team."<sup>15</sup> Consequently Berkeley Mills management decided it would build its own field in time for the 1949 season, selecting a park-like setting to the north of the mill and mill village. The mill hired the Dan Waddell and Company grading firm to prepare the field. The company, formed by Hendersonville business leader Dan Waddell after the war, advertized "all forms of excavating, land clearing," and related services in a 1948 city business directory.<sup>16</sup> An Asheville newspaper account noted, "A sloping hillside was selected for the site of the new ball park, and the bulldozers got down to business. Trees were pushed over, sawed up and moved away by willing hands. The hillside was shaved off to fill a gully which became the outfield."<sup>17</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt recalls that mill employees did most of the construction work, supervised by supervisor Dennis Taylor and maintenance superintendent "Haig" Sheely.<sup>18</sup> An April 1, 1949, article in the local paper noted, "work on the new Berkeley park has been delayed by unfavorable weather and the team will have to play on the road for at least a couple of weeks while the new home is being completed." (Also available was an informal ball field near the Berkeley Mills mill village which was used for a few games in 1949 prior to the opening of the new ballpark.) When completed, noted the paper, the new field would "include a stand for spectators and showers and dressing rooms for the players. The entire field will be enclosed by a wooden fence."<sup>19</sup> Berkeley Mills Ballpark was at last ready for play on May 28, 1949, when the Spinners competed against the WNCIL team from Martel Mills.<sup>20</sup>

Asheville sports writer Red Miller described the new ballpark in glowing terms in his July 7, 1949, *Asheville Citizen* column: "There are steel and wood construction seats on the first base line and concrete block seats behind the home plate. And already plans are going forward for the erection of more concrete block stands on the slope down third base line. There is a finely constructed screen towering some 40 feet in the air behind home plate to protect fans in the stands and catch high fly balls. There are modern dressing rooms, with lockers and showers, both for the home and visiting teams. There is a concession stand where employees serve soft drinks to sweating fans. There are modern dugouts for both home and visiting teams and modern, neatly kept rest rooms for spectators. The field itself is still without grass, but that will be remedied this fall when the season is over. Manager Shaney says it will be shining with brand new orchard grass next spring. There are also plans afoot for lighting the field for night games." Miller

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 6; Patrick Gallagher and Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>15</sup> *Asheville Citizen*, July 7, 1949.

<sup>16</sup> *Miller's Hendersonville, N.C., City Directory, 1948-1949*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Asheville Citizen*, July 7, 1949.

<sup>18</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>19</sup> *Hendersonville Times-News*, April 1, 1949.

<sup>20</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 18.

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concluded by noting, “Along with other large industrial plants, who also believe in a broad athletic program for their employees, Berkeley Mill is taking the lead in bringing more and better industrial and independent sports to Western North Carolina.” Miller’s description of “steel and wood construction seats on the first base line and concrete block seats behind the home plate” does not seem to fit the known historic configuration, which featured (and still features) a quarter circle of wood and metal seats centered on an axis through the pitcher’s mound and home plate, but perhaps Miller was recalling the former two-part construction of the stands with wood and metal seats making up the left portion of the grandstand and concrete seats the right. The concrete seats, which existed as late as 1973 but were subsequently removed, presumably served the dual purposes of seating and a retaining wall to hold up the steep slope on the third base side.<sup>21</sup>

Lighting for night games, the coming attraction noted by Miller in his July 1949 column, had only recently come to the fore in professional baseball. Early experiments in electric field lighting date to around 1880, soon after the commercially viable Edison bulb went on the market, but the concept had to wait until the development of more powerful lighting before artificial lighting gained widespread acceptance in the 1930s and 1940s. The ability to play ball during after-work evening hours was a boon to players and spectators and spurred attendance during the post-war era.<sup>22</sup> As historian David Pietrusza writes in his history *Lights On!*, when the electrification of major and minor league ballparks was more or less complete by 1950, baseball had “become more accessible, more popular, more profitable—a game for all America.”<sup>23</sup> Berkeley Mills Ballpark was the only field in the WNCIL equipped with lights which made it popular for league tournaments, though players from other teams of the league complained that the opportunity for the Spinners to play more under artificial illumination gave them an unfair advantage.<sup>24</sup>

Other details of the ballpark’s construction and the Berkeley Spinners years is recalled by Dewey Hunnicutt who played with the Spinners from 1948 to 1959. When Hunnicutt was fourteen, during the latter part of the Great Depression, he went to work for the Green River Mill and played ball on its industrial team. He served in the navy during the war and returned to the Green River Mill in 1946 and played on its WNCIL team in 1947. Hunnicutt was approached by personnel at Berkeley Mills who “offered me a job with a little more money” and the opportunity to play ball with the Spinners. Hunnicutt, who worked first with the mill’s outdoor crew before joining its electrical shop, recalls that electrical service was run to the park from the mill village and amenities like lights in the stands and concession building, the public address system, and so forth were added over time.<sup>25</sup>

Evidence of incremental improvements is also provided by an April 1951 newspaper article which noted that “new comforts have been added for the fans under the covered stands” since the

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<sup>21</sup> *Asheville Citizen*, July 7, 1949.

<sup>22</sup> Morris, *Game of Inches*, 375-380.

<sup>23</sup> Pietrusza, *Lights On!*, ix.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Gallagher and Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>25</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

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end of the preceding season.<sup>26</sup> Grass for the infield and outfield was one of the amenities that had to wait until after the first season.<sup>27</sup> Hunnicutt recalls that the original dugouts were dug by players from a black ball team in Hendersonville in exchange for the opportunity to use the field.<sup>28</sup> A Berkeley “second” or “B” team, which played in the Blue Ridge League of eight Henderson County teams, may also have used the field in the early years.<sup>29</sup> The grandstand roof was built by the mill’s machine shop crew.<sup>30</sup> A September 1951 newspaper article noted that the ballpark “seats approximately 2,000 fans under cover of a grandstand.”<sup>31</sup>

Historic photographs show other aspects of the ballpark during the Spinners years which ended with the team’s last season in 1961. A tall board fence surrounded the field, painted with advertisements for local businesses (Houston Furniture, Sinclair Power), Coca-Cola, and the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post. The fence included a scoreboard and, by 1953, a billboard advertising Kleenex and featuring the cartoon character Little Lulu (Kleenex was a Kimberly Clark product). An early 1970s photo indicates that the upper part of this billboard, Lulu’s head, had been replaced by a new board backing and painting by the date of the photo. Light poles about the height of the present poles surrounded the field, though they appear spindlier and were presumably replaced by the current poles at some point later in the century. The original dugouts were long narrow shed-roofed structures built into the ground.<sup>32</sup> Hunnicutt recalls that they were generally too hot to use during the summer and the players sat in front of them.<sup>33</sup> Photos often show players using them this way. A combination concession stand/dressing rooms/restrooms building stood off the northeast end of the grandstand at approximately the location of the present concession stand. The shed-roofed frame building had novelty weatherboard siding like the surviving announcer booth in the grandstand and a long counter window with a flip-up shutter. The concession stand was run by workers from the mill office and sold such items as crackers, candy, colas, and lemonade.<sup>34</sup> Aerial photos from 1951 and 1973 show the no-longer-extant extension of the grandstand on the third base side. The concrete stands on this side were an original 1949 feature of the park but in the aerial photos its roof has the appearance of an addition.<sup>35</sup> A partial retaining wall and aspects of the roof structure of the surviving grandstand relate to this former extension.

Berkeley Mills Ballpark, with its electric lights and covered grandstand, was the favorite field for WNCIL games. More typical of the league’s fields was the Ecusta ballpark in Brevard which had low unroofed wooden bleachers, a low wire-mesh backstop, and little else. At Ecusta, notes historian Leon Pace, most spectators “brought lawn chairs or sat on the hood of a car,” and

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<sup>26</sup> *Hendersonville Times-News*, April 12, 1951.

<sup>27</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick Gallagher personal communication.

<sup>30</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>31</sup> *Asheville Times*, September 4, 1951.

<sup>32</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 69, 89, 114.

<sup>33</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Soil Conservation Service aerial photos.

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photos show fans lying on the grass around the field.<sup>36</sup> At Berkeley Mills Ballpark, too, overflow crowds sat on the slope above the west foul line. The Spinners did not limit themselves to playing only teams in the WNCIL; as Dewey Hunnicutt notes, “if we thought [a game] would draw a crowd, we’d play.”<sup>37</sup> The Spinners dominated the WNCIL from 1949 through 1953, winning four of five regular season titles during the period. After the 1953 season management searched for a more competitive league and found it in the Spartanburg, South Carolina-based Eastern Carolina League which the Spinners nevertheless swept in 1954. The Eastern Carolina League did not operate in 1955 and the Spinners switched to the Western Carolina League based in Greenville, South Carolina, and played in the league until its last season in 1961. (The Western and Eastern Carolina leagues were industrial leagues).<sup>38</sup>

In March 1962, the president of the Western Carolina League announced the league would be suspended. The Spinners decided not to continue playing, citing a shortage of players and lack of attendance.<sup>39</sup> A 1963 newspaper article pointed to a reduction in the Berkeley Mills workforce from 670 employees to approximately 250 as the main factor in the discontinuation of the team.<sup>40</sup>

By 1961 baseball’s local popularity had bucked national trends for over a decade. Signs of impending decline were apparent even during the sport’s peak national popularity in the late 1940s as economic forces drew players away from the game and the new medium of television began to have an effect. In 1948 up to ninety percent of taverns in certain urban areas had sets, diverting fans from attendance at live games in an early manifestation of the “sports bar” phenomenon. With the gradual increase in home television ownership during the 1950s, “fans stayed home in droves” notes historian William Marshall.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Spinners stopped playing after the 1961 season, Berkeley Mills Ballpark continued in use for baseball. In the early 1960s two local Buncombe County Independent Baseball League teams, the Hendersonville All-Stars and Brock’s Bombers, used the park.<sup>42</sup> Brock’s Bombers was sponsored by Brock’s Ice Cream Bar and Drive-In in Hendersonville. The Hendersonville Stingrays and the Sportsman Bombers used the park in 1964 and 1965, respectively. From 1969 to 1972 the teams of the Western North Carolina Independent Baseball League played their games at the park. Hendersonville High School made the ballpark its home field, winning state championships in 1964 and 1990.<sup>43</sup> In 1975 the park was used for Senior League (teenaged Little League) games.<sup>44</sup> The Henderson County Babe Ruth Baseball “13 Year Old All Stars” used the park in 2002 when it finished fifth place in the league’s world series for their age bracket.

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<sup>36</sup> Leon Pace personal communication; *Echo*.

<sup>37</sup> Dewey Hunnicutt personal communication.

<sup>38</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 2-3.

<sup>39</sup> Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 151-152.

<sup>40</sup> Hendersonville Times-News, August 7, 1963.

<sup>41</sup> Marshall, *Baseball’s Pivotal Era*, 256-257.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Gallagher personal communication; Gallagher, *Berkeley Spinners*, 152; Hendersonville Times-News, August 7, 1963.

<sup>43</sup> Patrick Gallagher personal communication.

<sup>44</sup> *Hendersonville Times-News*, June 23, 1975.

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The ballpark evolved physically during the post-Spinners era. As early as 1963 mill manager H. T. Rindal vowed to “put the field in first class condition” with anticipated repairs to the grandstand roof, fence, and buildings.<sup>45</sup> The board fence and its iconic Little Lulu billboard were removed in 1975 and a chain link fence, possibly the current one, installed.<sup>46</sup> The original concession stand was removed at some point, possibly by the early 1970s when a concession stand of different form and location is shown in a photo (this interim concession stand no longer stands). The current concession stand was built by the Babe Ruth club in 1978 and the current dugouts may have been built about the same time.<sup>47</sup> The wooded knoll on the south side of the ballpark was apparently used as a picnic area during the Spinners period; photos that may date to the 1950s and/or 1960s show trestle picnic tables set up under trees that appear to have been in this area.<sup>48</sup> The picnic shelters that currently stand in the area were apparently built about 1964. About the same time, possibly slightly later, an earlier recreation area closer to the mill was abandoned and redeveloped.<sup>49</sup> The picnic grounds/shelters were used for family outings and reunions and mill-organized summertime employee picnics that are not known to have been associated with ballgames, although at least one photo shows uniformed Little Leaguers at a picnic and some attendees at the employee picnics used the grandstand for seating.<sup>50</sup> Kimberly Clark donated the field and the 59.59-acre park in which it stands to the City of Hendersonville in 2008 and in 2012 the city constructed the current restroom building. A “Berkeley Mills Park Master Plan” prepared in 2012 shows retention of the ballpark’s historic resources and addition of an “outfield picnic patio” along the west foul line and improvements to adjoining car and pedestrian infrastructure.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Hendersonville Times-News*, August 7, 1963.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, June 23, 1975.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1979.

<sup>48</sup> *Kimberly-Clark 50 Years*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*; Edith Bayne personal communication.

<sup>50</sup> *Kimberly-Clark 50 Years*; Ken Fitch and Jewel Brooks personal communication.

<sup>51</sup> Wirth and Associates, “Berkeley Mills Park Master Plan.”

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

\_\_\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

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- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** HN1903

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** approx. 30 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.353623 | Longitude: -82.470451 |
| 2. Latitude: 35.350316 | Longitude: -82.467297 |
| 3. Latitude: 35.347640 | Longitude: -82.469056 |
| 4. Latitude: 35.351576 | Longitude: -82.473348 |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

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- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated area is the approximately thirty-acre northeast portion of the 54.83 parcel in which the ballpark is located. It is bounded by Balfour Road on the south and the current east and north parcel lines north of the road. The west boundary is a line that follows the main access drive to the ballpark leading north from Balfour Road, a branch of that road that leads northwest to the picnic area on the south side of the ballpark, and a straight line following the line of the branch located immediately southwest of the ballpark to where it meets the north parcel line. The area west of the access road extending west to the current parcel line of the tax parcel north of Balfour Road is excluded from the nominated area.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the main character-defining historic resources—the baseball field and grandstand—and a portion of the surrounding parcel which serves as an appropriate historic setting for the ballpark.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
organization: Landmark Preservation Associates  
street & number: 6 Houston St.  
city or town: Lexington state: VA zip code: 24450  
e-mail: gilespezzoni@rockbridge.net  
telephone: (540) 464-5315  
date: April 25, 2016

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark

City or Vicinity: Hendersonville

County: Henderson State: North Carolina

Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni

Date Photographed: November 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Grandstand. View facing west. Photo 1 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark

City or Vicinity: Hendersonville

County: Henderson State: North Carolina

Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni

Date Photographed: April 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Infield, grandstand, and other resources. View facing northeast. Photo 2 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark

City or Vicinity: Hendersonville

County: Henderson State: North Carolina

Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni

Date Photographed: November 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Grandstand interior. View facing southwest. Photo 3 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark

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City or Vicinity: Hendersonville  
County: Henderson State: North Carolina  
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
Date Photographed: November 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Restrooms (left) and concession stand (right). View facing northeast. Photo 4 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark  
City or Vicinity: Hendersonville  
County: Henderson State: North Carolina  
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
Date Photographed: November 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Grandstand and third base line dugout. View facing southwest. Photo 5 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark  
City or Vicinity: Hendersonville  
County: Henderson State: North Carolina  
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
Date Photographed: November 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Detail of 1951 Soil Conservation Service aerial photo showing ballpark. Photo 6 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark  
City or Vicinity: Hendersonville  
County: Henderson State: North Carolina  
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
Date Photographed: April 2016  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: View of ballpark, entrance drive, and setting. View facing north. Photo 7 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark  
City or Vicinity: Hendersonville  
County: Henderson State: North Carolina  
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni  
Date Photographed: April 2016  
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: View of entry on Balfour Road. View facing north. Photo 8 of 9.

Name of Property: Berkeley Mills Ballpark  
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County: Henderson State: North Carolina  
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni

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Name of Property

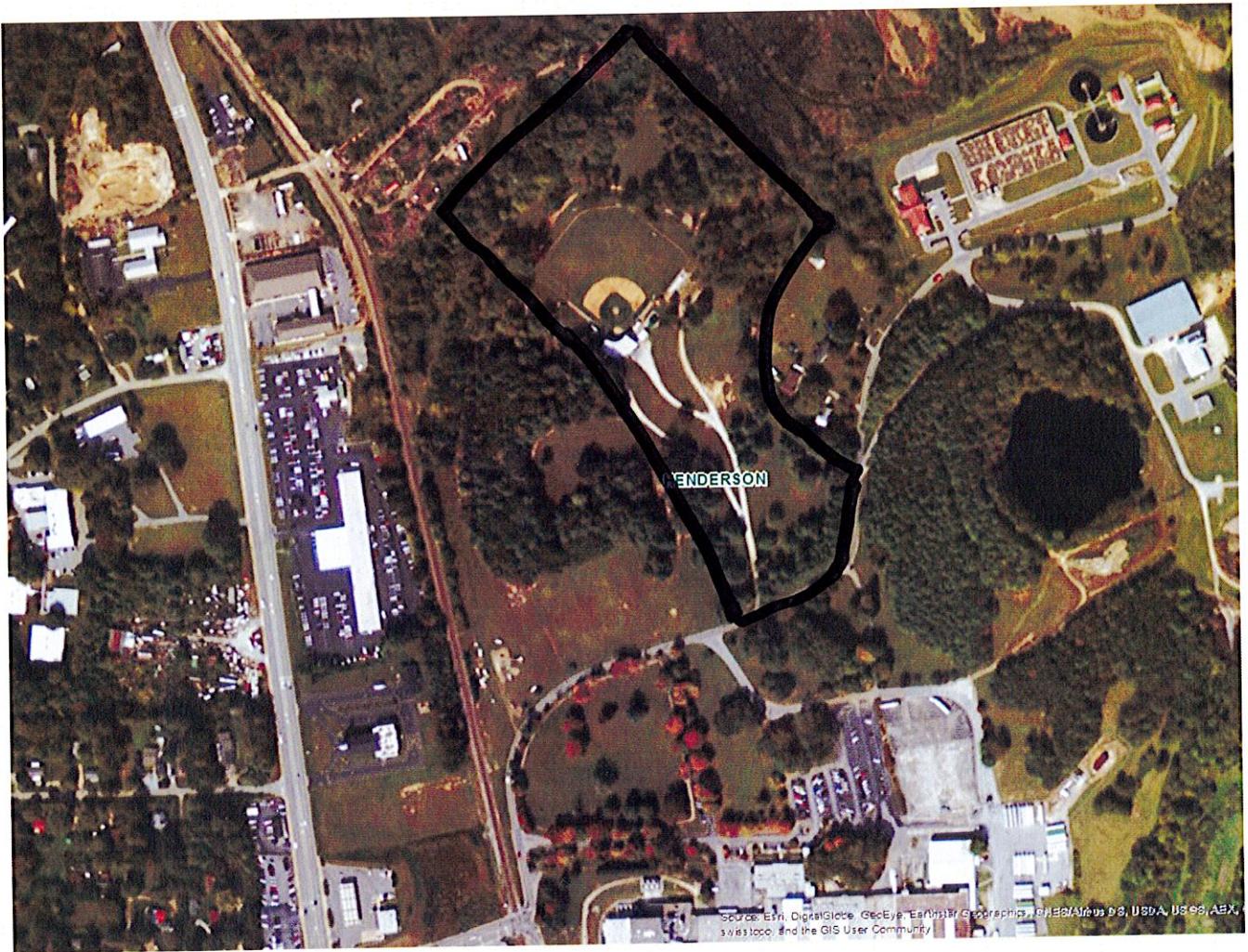
Henderson Co., N.C.  
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Date Photographed: April 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: View of area to west and north of ballpark. View facing northeast. Photo 9 of 9.

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



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— National Register Boundary