

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Sunnybank

AND/OR COMMON

The Inn at Hot Springs

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Southwest corner of NC 209 (Bridge St) and Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Hot Springs

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eleventh

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Madison

CODE

115

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES - RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES - UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Elmer Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Box 233

CITY, TOWN

Hot Springs

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 28743

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Madison County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Marshall

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sited above the town of Hot Springs on a grassy, one-acre lawn, Sunnybank remains as one of the last major representatives of the late-nineteenth century resort heyday of this remote mountain community. The house is bounded on the northeast by Walnut Street, and on the northwest by Bridge Street (N. C. 209); most of the surrounding lots are vacant or occupied by small, modern houses.

The rambling frame structure is of irregular form and ornamented with a variety of sawn, turned, and molded elements largely derived from the Italianate Revival and typical of the period. The house is covered in weatherboard and rests on a low brick foundation. It rises two stories under a complex roof system of intersecting gables covered partly with standing seam tin, and partly with tin shingles. The deep eaves of the gables are everywhere supported by large curvilinear sawn brackets with turned drop pendants; these brackets are set on a wide frieze board that runs along the top of the wall, following the pitch of the gables. All windows are of one-over-one sash, and most are set in simple frames with segmental-arch heads. Everywhere corners are framed with narrow corner posts, with molded caps set where the corner posts meet the frieze board.

The house faces the town at an angle, and the Walnut Street and Bridge Street facades are treated as entrance facades of almost equal importance. The Bridge Street elevation which is reached by a long, steep flight of steps rising from the street level, is asymmetrical. It is composed of a two-story shed roof porch extending across the left three bays and connecting on the right to a two-story, gable roof projection. The porch is supported by chamfered posts; those on the first floor level have small brackets at the top. The second level of the porch has been fitted with large, multi-pane sliding windows to create a sleeping porch; this alteration probably dates from the early twentieth century. On both levels of the porch is a sawnwork balustrade forming a pattern of alternating urn shapes and drop pendants. The entrance is a double leaf door of four panels with wide applied moldings, set in a simple frame under a transom of etched glass.

A two-story, rectangular-in-section bay projects from the gable front extension on the right side of this elevation. Each level contains a pair of windows at the front and one on each side. A band of horizontal panels with wide applied moldings runs beneath the windows on both levels, and the two levels are separated by a wide molding supported by pairs of small brackets. At the top of this bay a frieze board runs the width of the bay and at either side of it under the tympanum of the gable; on this are attached brackets supporting a projecting eave that sets off the tympanum. A louvered attic ventilator in a segmental-arch surround is centered on the gable.

The Walnut Street facade is symmetrical. It consists of a pair of two-story projecting bays under broad gables, both identical in composition to the right section of the Bridge Street elevation. These flank a one-story flat roof porch supported by chamfered posts with brackets. The first floor entrance is a double leaf door of four panels, the upper ones glazed with etched glass. An unsheltered second floor door opens onto the porch roof; this is a single door of four panels, with the upper panels glazed.

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(11/78)

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The long, eight-bay southwest elevation is fronted its entire length by a two-story shed roof porch. The balustrade--which here appears only on the second level--and the porch posts are identical to those of the Bridge Street elevation. The last two windows on both levels on the right end of this elevation have triangular, rather than segmental-arch heads, and a faint seam line appears in the weatherboard between these windows and those to their left. This indicates that the two end bays are of slightly later construction than the main body of the house, though the porch posts and balustrade remain consistent across the entire elevation.

On the southeast elevation, a one-story, hip roof addition is attached between the end of the main block and this two-story extension. A hip roof storage room is set at the very end. Attached to the southwest corner of the two-story extension is a one-story, gable roof annex of two rooms around a central brick flue. A screened porch shelters the east side of the annex. Its windows are of four-over-four sash in plain surrounds.

The interior of Sunnybank follows a modified center-hall plan. A long hallway runs from the Bridge Street entrance to the rear of the house; this is divided midway down its length by a transverse arch. Both sections of the hall contains a separate open string stair with turned balusters. The front hall stair is ramped, rising along the east wall of the hall and curving gently to the second floor. The rear stair rises along the east wall to a landing before turning to complete the flight.

Opening onto this long hall from the right is a succession of four rooms, the last one being the kitchen. A secondary hall extends from the center of the main hall to the Walnut Street entrance; this is flanked by a parlor on each side. The second floor plan duplicates the first floor arrangement.

The interior is finished with good quality millwork typical of the period. Most doors are of five panels, with pairs of vertical panels above and below a single horizontal one, and are set in symmetrically molded surrounds. Some surrounds have mitered corners; others have corner blocks with rondels or foliate designs. Mantels vary widely in form. Several are of the Colonial Revival type with over-mantels with mirrors; others are varying compositions of panels, attached plates, brackets, and molded shelves. The interior walls are plastered, and in many rooms retain their early wallpaper.

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The village of Hot Springs (known as Warm Springs until 1886) is located in a fertile valley on the French Broad River, six miles east of the Tennessee border, and is surrounded by high crests of the Pisgah and Unaka Mountains. The warm mineral springs around which the settlement grew were known and visited by the Cherokee long before they were discovered by Henry Reynolds and Thomas Morgan in 1778. The Governor of North Carolina conveyed a grant of 2,000 acres to Gaser Dagg, which included the Warm Springs, in 1788.¹

The Warm Springs Hotel, which developed from an early tavern in the village, became known for its hospitality and its guests as early as 1800. Francis Asbury, the pioneer Methodist Bishop in America, recorded having visited the village inn in 1800, 1801, and 1803.² By 1827 the Buncombe Turnpike, said to be the finest toll road in the State, was opened along the banks of the French Broad River north of Asheville, linking the settled plantation country of the Eastern Carolinas to the western frontier lands in Tennessee and Kentucky. Situated on the major trade and emigration route through the Southern Appalachians, Hot Springs' taverns and inns flourished, and the curative reputation of the mineral springs began attracting visitors from the whole eastern seaboard.

In 1832 James and John Patton bought the Warm Springs Hotel and rebuilt it into one of the most beautiful resort hotels in the East. According to published notices, it had the largest ballroom in the State, a resident orchestra, and attracted as many as 1,000 guests at a time.³ At the close of the War Between the States, the Warm Springs Hotel and much of the surrounding property was bought by Confederate Colonel James H. Rumbough. Daily stagecoaches and later special trains brought even greater crowds to the thriving resort in the 1870's and 1880's, as the town reached its zenith as a fashionable Victorian watering place.

The late Victorians who came to take the baths and escape the low-country heat began building palatial summer residences on the hills surrounding the Warm Springs. Sunnybank, built in 1875, was one of a half-dozen elegant Victorian summer houses built in Hot Springs in the 1870's. It is the only structure from this period to survive essentially intact.

The house was built for Charles D. Merritt and his wife Lizzie S. Merritt on a six-acre tract of land acquired from Colonel Rumbough.⁴ Nothing can be learned about Merritt from existing local records; Colonel Rumbough's granddaughter can relate only that the Merritts were a wealthy family "from the north," who stayed in town a few years and then moved on; apparently the Merritts were the first to call the house "Sunnybank."⁵

In 1884, fire destroyed the nearby Warm Spring's Hotel that James Rumbough had purchased. The property was put on the market and acquired by a group of New York investors called the Southern Improvement Company.⁶ Around that time, the name of the town was changed from Warm Springs to Hot Springs (possibly because of the discovery of another mineral spring, with higher temperatures). The investment company built a new hotel, named the

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Mountain Park Hotel, on the same site, but was not able to manage it successfully. In 1885, Colonel Rumbough re-purchased the hotel property.⁷

During this period the Merritt family evidently decided to leave town, and in 1886 the family sold Sunnybank to Colonel and Mrs. Rumbough, who resided there while their new home, "Loretta," was being built nearby.⁸ In 1894 Sunnybank was acquired by Mrs. Frances Shaw, widow of a wealthy Rhode Island businessman to be used as a family summer home; Mrs. Shaw and her children vacationed and entertained lavishly in Sunnybank throughout the summer seasons until 1912.⁹

During this second heyday of Hot Springs as a resort area, the Mountain Park Hotel was the hub of activity. The hotel was four stories high with 200 bedrooms lighted by electricity and heated by steam.¹⁰ The summer social life was gay and varied. Many tourists were attracted by the supposed curative effects of the mineral waters, but also many came for such recreational pursuits as tennis, bowling, theatricals, swimming, riding, and dancing every evening in the ballroom. The nine hole golf course, according to reports, was one of the first in North Carolina.¹¹

However, the turn of the century witnessed a sharp drop in the popularity of health resorts and initiated a period of slow decline in business and population in Hot Springs. In 1912 the Shaw family sold Sunnybank to a local merchant, James E. Rector, who was the first to open the house to the public as a boardinghouse, a tradition that has continued to the present time.¹² Later the same year Rector sold the property in turn to a Mr. B. I. Nicholson, of whom little is known, but who continued to operate the property as a boardinghouse.¹³

The slow decline of business induced the Rumbough family in 1914 to lease the Mountain Park Hotel to the government as an internment camp for 2,700 German Naval Officers captured at the beginning of the war. Some German wives were allowed to board at Sunnybank and at other town boardinghouses. Town legend has it that the only successful escape from the hotel-prison was planned by a German hausfrau from her room in Sunnybank. The wife, naval officer, and their dog made good their escape, traveled to Mexico, and eventually back to Germany.¹⁴

After much cultural intermingling between the friendly Hot Springs natives and the "enemy," who lived the lives of everyday civilians, although constrained, while in town, and a few months after the exit of the Germans and the soldiers at the end of the War, the Mountain Park Hotel again burned to the ground, and the baths degenerated into a state of disrepair, as they exist today.¹⁵ Though a third hotel was built at the site (also to eventually burn), Hot Springs never recovered from its loss, and in the next decades became a quietly declining mountain village, reflecting on and remembering its splendid past.

In 1919 Sunnybank was acquired by James W. and Jane Gentry, and it was to remain in the Gentry family for over half a century.¹⁶ During the Gentry ownership the

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house became associated with the Dorland-Bell Institute, a nearby Presbyterian school for Appalachian girls. Many of the Dorland-Bell teachers boarded at the inn, and Mrs. Jane Gentry and her daughter, Mrs. Maude Gentry Long, musicians and folklorists of note, taught music, and shared mountain food, songs, and tales with hundreds of students, boarders, and travelers who passed through Hot Springs. The most famous visitors, Cecil Sharp, the English folklorist and noted authority on ancient ballads, and Mrs. John C. Campbell, were touring the mountain areas, collecting songs for his famous volume of English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians.¹⁷ They stopped at Hot Springs in 1916 (prior to the Gentry's purchase of Sunnybank), and collected over sixty-four ballads from Mrs. Gentry for the book.¹⁸ Mrs. Maude Gentry Long, an alumna of Dorland-Bell, presided over Sunnybank in the succeeding generation and carried on the Gentry tradition of fine music and warm mountain hospitality. In the 1940s and 1950s, Maude Gentry Long was recorded, singing a large repertoire of ballads and reciting The Jack Tales, both in her home, Sunnybank, and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. Her seventh grade students, under her direction, were also recorded singing Jacky Boy, and this recording is also in the Library of Congress collection.¹⁹

In 1972, the children of Maude Gentry Long sold the property to Terrance and Nancy Baker, who made some initial efforts at rehabilitation.²⁰ In 1976, the Bakers sold the property to Elmer O. Hall, who is proceeding with careful and sensitive rehabilitation work and who continues to offer rooms and meals to lodgers.²¹

During the depressed 1930s, most of the land surrounding Hot Springs became part of the Pisgah National Forest. This development restricted the town limits, prohibiting further growth or significant industrial development. The national forest lands began to attract visitors, campers, hunters, and fishermen, and the development of the Appalachian Trail, which runs right past Sunnybank and through the village, brought several thousand hikers each season, hikers who usually stop for mail, lodging, and food. Sunnybank Inn, having witnessed and shaped part of Hot Springs' 19th century glory, now shares a glimpse of that past with the passing traveler who comes seeking rest, relaxation, and hospitality in the midst of the mountain wilderness.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Jinsie Underwood, This is Madison County (Mars Hill: n.p., 1974) p. 24.
Hereinafter cited as Underwood, This is Madison County.

²Underwood, This is Madison County, p. 19.

³Underwood, This is Madison County, p. 8.

⁴Madison County Deed Book P, p. 498.

⁵Elmer Hall Interview with Elizabeth Rumbough Dotterer, Hot Springs, N. C.,
October 16, 1979, hereinafter cited as Dotterer Interview.

⁶Underwood, This is Madison County, p. 25.

⁷Manly Wade Wellman, The Kingdom of Madison (Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 1973), p. 115.

⁸Madison County Deed Book U, p. 355. Dotterer Interview.

⁹Madison County Deed Book 7, p. 160. Dotterer Interview.

¹⁰Underwood, This is Madison County, pp. 25-26.

¹¹Underwood, This is Madison County, pp. 25-26.

¹²Madison County Deed Book 29, p. 333. Dotterer Interview.

¹³Madison County Deed Book 30, p. 86. Dotterer Interview.

¹⁴Wellman, The Kingdom of Madison, p. 116.

¹⁵Wellman, The Kingdom of Madison, p. 116.

¹⁶Madison County Deed Book 39, p. 51.

¹⁷Ina W. and John J. Van Noppen, Western North Carolina Since the Civil War (Boone:
Appalachian Consortium Press, 1973), p. 229. Hereinafter cited as Van Noppen, Western
N. C. Since the Civil War.

¹⁸Van Noppen, Western N. C. Since the Civil War, p. 229.

¹⁹A catalogue of Mrs. Long's recordings may be obtained from the Archives of
Folk Song, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. 20540.

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²⁰ Madison County Deed Book 69, page 17.

²¹ Madison County Deed Book 124, page 684.

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Wellman, Manly Wade. The Kingdom of Madison. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES

ca. 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Situated on a knoll overlooking the village of Hot Springs in northwestern Madison County, Sunnybank is the town's last major link to its era of importance as a resort community of national reputation. The ornate, two-story frame structure was built about 1875 for northerner Charles D. Merritt as a fashionable summer residence during the zenith of the town's resort period. In 1886 it was purchased by Colonel J. H. Rumbough, owner of the fabulous Mountain View Hotel (destroyed), and from 1894 to 1912 it was occupied by the family of Mrs. Frances Shaw, widow of a wealthy Rhode Island businessman. As the resort's popularity began to fade in the early twentieth century, the house entered a long period of local ownership, first as a boarding house, and, after 1919, as the home of the family of Mrs. Jane Gentry, a noted mountain ballad singer and storyteller, sixty-four of whose songs were collected by English folk musicologist Cecil Sharp in 1916. Mrs. Gentry's daughter, Mrs. Maude Gentry Long, continued the family's music traditions and was recorded extensively by the Library of Congress both in Washington and here at her residence. The Gentry and Long families retained ownership of the house for over half a century, and offered hospitality to many guests and lodgers during that period. The present owner, Mr. Elmer Hall, has begun a careful program of repair and improvements to the house, and continues to offer rooms and meals to guests.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. The structure is the last prominent reminder of the nineteenth century resort heyday of Hot Springs in remote Madison County, which at its zenith enjoyed a national reputation and attracted visitors from the entire eastern seaboard.
- B. The house is associated with the lives of Mrs. Jane Gentry and her daughter, Mrs. Maude Gentry Long, who made a major contribution to the study of Anglo-American folksong, first through the work of British folk musicologist Cecil Sharp, and later through recordings of the Library of Congress.
- C. The large, rambling frame structure survives essentially unaltered as a significant example of architectural tastes and mountain resort lifestyles of the late nineteenth century.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Madison County Records
Deeds

Underwood, Jinsie. This is Madison County. Mars Hill: n.p., 1974.

Van Noppen, Ina W. and John J. Western North Carolina Since the Civil War. Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1973.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.0

UTM REFERENCES

A

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3	3	4	8	4	5
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3	9	7	3	2	3	5
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

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D

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of the house and one acre of land shown by the enclosed plat.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Ms. Randi Knofsky, consultant, with research by Elmer Hall
Edited by Michael Southern, Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION Western Office, N. C. Division of Archives and History DATE Jan. 10, 1980

STREET & NUMBER 13 Veterans Drive TELEPHONE 702-298-5024

CITY OR TOWN Asheville, STATE North Carolina 28805

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Famy celin

TITLE

DATE 3/7/80

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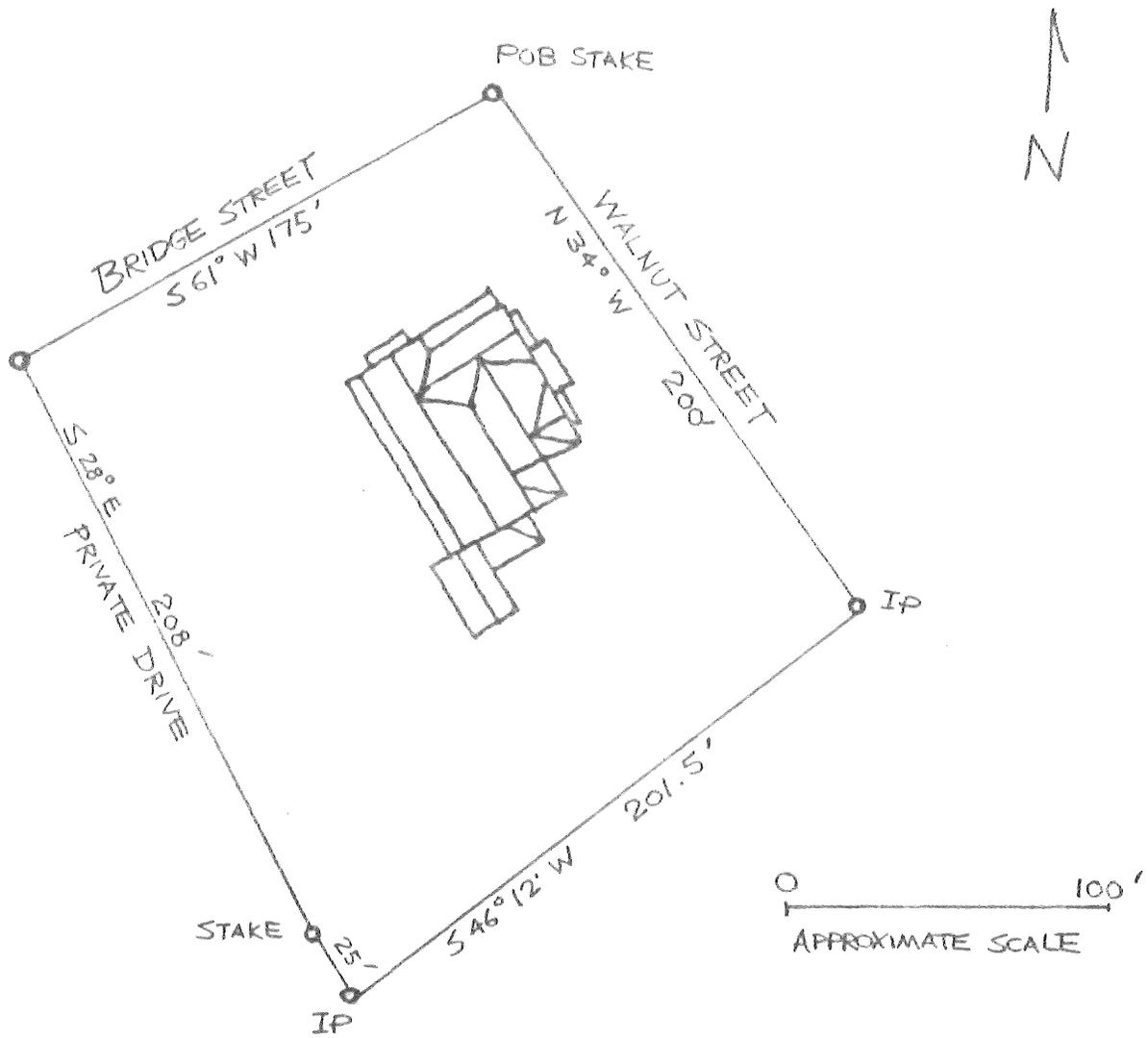
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



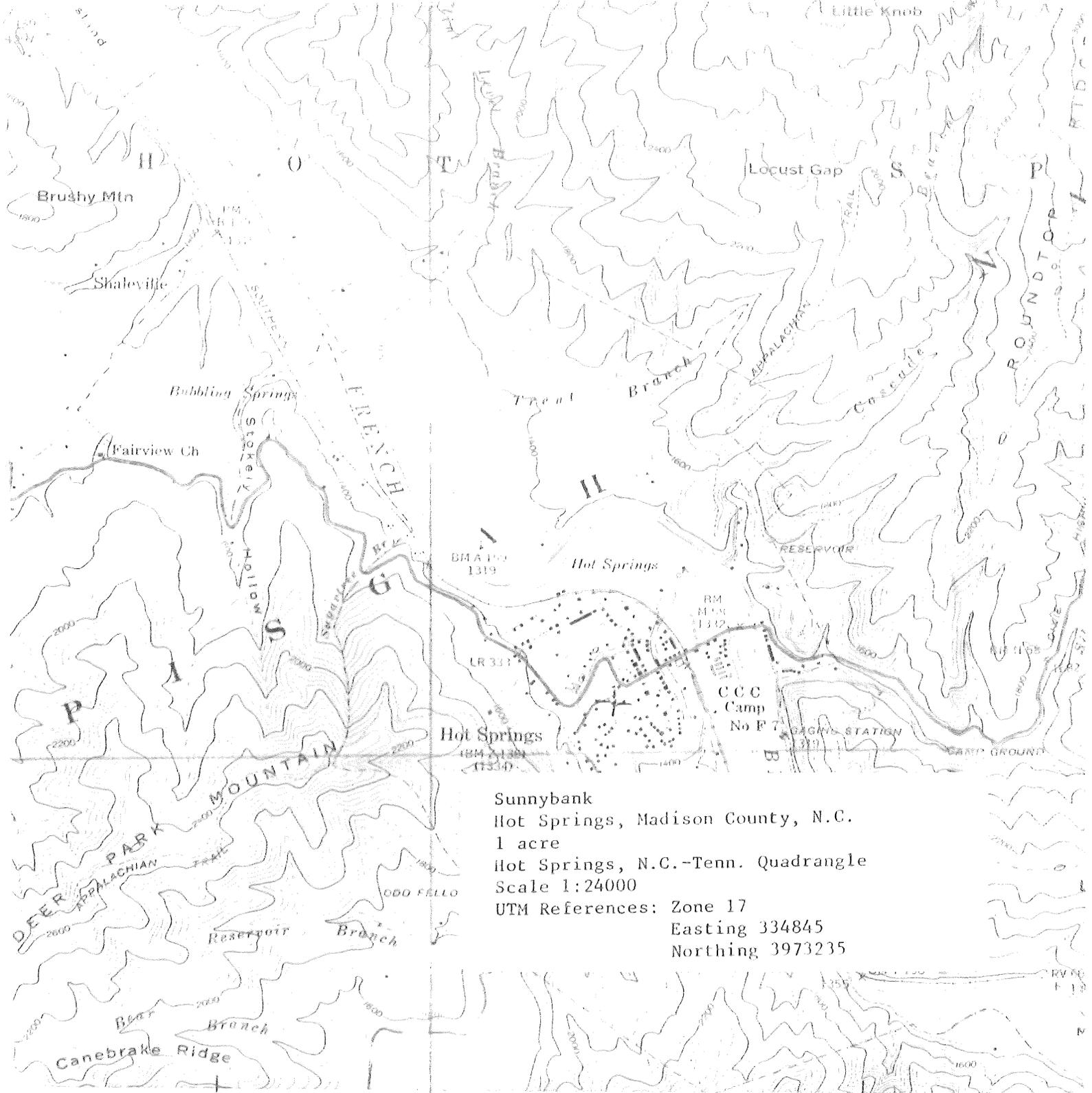
SUNNYBANK

HOT SPRINGS

MADISON COUNTY, N.C.

PLAT OF ELMER O. HALL PROPERTY

JANUARY, 1980



(Spring Creek 182 SE)
4455 IV SE

SCALE 1:24000



Contour interval 30 feet with 20 foot contours shown

Datum is mean sea level

UTM GRID AND 1940 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VA
 AND BY U.S. TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY, CHATTANOOGA, TENN. 37
 AND TENNESSEE DIVISION OF GEOLOGY, NASHVILLE,
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS

