

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Peterson, John N., Farm
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number E side SR 1321 just N junc. SR 1321 & 1322 N/A not for publication
city, town Poplar N/A vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Mitchell code 121 zip code 28705

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

William S. Paine October 23, 1990
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. _____
- See continuation sheet. _____
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet. _____
- determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
- removed from the National Register. _____
- other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling
AGRICULTURE/ Animal Facility
AGRICULTURE/ Agriculture Field
OTHER/ Timberlot

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ Single Dwelling
AGRICULTURE/ Animal Facility
OTHER/ Woodland

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Folk Victorian
Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Weatherboard
roof Asphalt
other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The John N. Peterson farm is located on an irregularly-shaped, partially cleared tract in the rural community of Poplar (formerly Hollow Poplar) in Mitchell County, North Carolina.

The Peterson house, about 100 feet from the road, is partially hidden by a heavy growth of trees and shrubs. Between the house and the road lies an overgrown boggy area fed by a spring located in the woods behind the house. North of the house are four traditional southern homestead structures said to date from the turn of the century or later: a smokehouse, cellar hole with shed, a crib, and a small board barn.

Altered at various times over the years, the house retains its integrity as John N. Peterson's home from its construction about 1870 until his death in 1910. The main block is of the traditional, 3-bay, single-pile, 2-story I-house form common throughout the mountain counties. It has vernacular folk Victorian (c. 1870-1920) sawn detailing. The house features symmetrical placement of the windows and doors, front entry transom and sidelights, wide cornice band under the eaves of the end walls (a vernacular diversion from traditional styling), and six-pane glazing.

Built of poplar weatherboard over wood framing and set on a fieldstone foundation, the main block measures approximately 40 feet wide by 16 feet deep. According to the present owner, the original shake roof was replaced by a tin roof about 1900 and by asphalt shingles in 1960. In the latter year, a one-story rear kitchen wing with a porch and a gable end chimney was demolished and replaced with a weatherboarded, shed-roofed ell with interior stove stack. Two interior chimneys were removed from the main block at this time.

The double-tier, semi-engaged, broken-slope, shed-roofed front porch is detailed on the upper level with original simple railing and sawn balustrade. A documentary photograph shows no other upper level ornament. On the first story are an original sawn frieze and spandrels. Each porch has six solid posts, chamfered

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from near the ceiling to just above the top of the balustrade, then square to the floor. Porch ceilings are clad in painted boards rimmed with cove molding. The lower porch floor is presently plywood over oak flooring. The second story porch retains its original oak floor. About 1940, the first story sawn balustrade was removed and the bottoms of the posts were encased in plywood. At the same time, center facade cement block steps replaced wooden steps at the east end of the porch.

On both stories, a central entry has a single sash window on each side. The first story front door, handmade of curly yellow poplar and put together with pegs, features four slender vertical panels in stacked pairs and a pottery knob set high in the stile. Sidelights are three panes over a solid panel and a fixed transom has three rectangular panes. The 6 over 6 sash windows feature slender sashing and plain board frames. On the second story, the entry sidelights are duplicated, but the transom is omitted. This four-panel yellow poplar door has been decorated in symmetrical, yet unsophisticated, painted graining. Although slightly worn on the outside, the painted design, in pale green and buff on a cream colored background, is protected by the porch roof, keeping it in good condition.

On the side elevations, fenestration consists of a single 6 over 6 window on each floor, one directly above the other. Wide cornice boards form a raking cornice and extend beyond the front plane of the house to form the porch cornice. On the rear elevation, a pair of windows, one each upstairs and down, remaining in the intact south (left) end of the main block wall. The remainder of the exposed wall was clad with compatible new materials when the kitchen wing was replaced. A bathroom window was installed at this time in the far north (right) end of the first story rear wall.

Inside, a central hall flanked by single rooms features an open stringer staircase on the north (left) wall. The stair risers and treads are of chestnut, with rails, turned balustrade, and newel posts of walnut. The hall ceiling and two walls are of single bead horizontal siding, while the other two walls are of poplar and chestnut horizontal shiplap. All are painted. On the rear wall, original molding surrounds a replacement door to the rear wing. A single room on each side of the hallway has original sashes, doors and hardware. A long closet and a large chimney have been removed from the hall-side wall of the south (right) chamber. In 1960, oak flooring was installed over chestnut floors on the first floor; a closet was built under the rear of the stairs; a second door to the room on the south (right) was installed; and the room on the north (left) was altered by

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installation of a transverse passageway across its rear. At the end of this passage a small bathroom was installed in the northeast corner of the original room and a second door to the rear wing installed.

The upstairs center hall has painted chestnut flooring. Three doors open off this hall: one at the top of the stairway to the north room, and one towards the front of the hall into the south room, and one to the porch. The painted decorative graining on the interior of the porch door is varnish covered. The door on the north side has graining similar to that on the porch door. The hall side paint is obscured. On the bedroom side, the graining is clear and noteworthy. The third door is stained pine.

Flush horizontal poplar siding, aged to a deep red color, covers all walls and ceilings on the second story. In both upstairs rooms the hearth prints remain as places patched when the chimneys, about five feet wide, were removed. In one room an original carved and chiseled mantel remains, attached to the chimney wall.

Other features (see sketch) of the Peterson Farm include:

1) Barn, second half of nineteenth century, (C).

Located in the clearing to the north of the house, the barn, has end doors, center aisle, loft, and stalls and storerooms the length of both sides. The siding is chestnut; the roof is tin. This is identified by the family as dating to John Peterson's lifetime.

2) Corncrib, first half of twentieth century, (NC).

Located north of the house and east of the barn, the corncrib is a gable roofed structure of wide chestnut planks. According to tradition it dates from later than the period of significance.

3) Shed over a rock cellar, first half of twentieth century, (NC).

Located east of the corncrib, the rock walled cellar hole shed foundation is said to have been constructed by John N. Peterson. Of board and batten chestnut lumber, the shed has a tarpaper roof.

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4) Smokehouse, first half of twentieth century, (NC).

Located east of the shed, the smokehouse is a sturdy gable-roofed structure of board and batten on rock piers.

5) Site, (C).

The Peterson Farm buildings sit in a flat-to-sloping grassy area surrounded by the farm's hardwood-covered mountain coves and ridges. Much of the land beyond is part of the Pisgah National Forest, established after John N. Peterson's lifetime. The irregularly shaped, approximately 36-acre farm property is bounded on the east by a mountain ridge and on the north by a stream that feeds into Hollow Poplar Creek. On the southern border is Hughes Creek, which empties into Hollow Poplar Creek just beyond a southern corner. Hollow Poplar Creek is the main western boundary landmark. State Road 1321 parallels the creek's eastern bank. The house, adjacent farm buildings, a hay meadow, a boggy area, and a large garden spot sit on an approximately 1-acre clearing at the southern end of the tract. Standing about 100 feet from the road, the house faces west. A dirt driveway leads from SR 1321, arcs around the house and ends at Hughes Creek, bisecting the clearing. In front of the house stands a dense growth of boxwood and cedar trees. On a hillside north of the house is the remains of a 2-acre orchard. The rest of the property is covered with mixed growth forest. According to the family, Peterson's store/post office building and blacksmith shop stood between the house and Hollow Poplar Creek. Along the creek were a gristmill and sawmill. No archaeological work has been done so that the possibility exists of an amendment establishing the property's significance under Criterion D.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
AGRICULTURE
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1870-1910

Significant Dates

1870

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Peterson, John N.

Architect/Builder

Peterson, John N.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Statement of Significance

The John N. Peterson farm property in rural Mitchell County reflects the life of a subsistence farmer in this mountain area during the period 1870-1910. The farmhouse was built by Peterson, a farmer, tradesman, and public official in the community of Hollow Poplar (now Poplar), Mitchell County, North Carolina. Peterson also is believed to have built the 19th-century barn north of the house, which, with the surrounding acreage of meadow, garden, orchard, and woodlot, recall the historic agricultural focus of the property. Peterson served as county magistrate/justice of the peace and was the Hollow Poplar postmaster for at least twenty years. An accomplished carpenter with a reputation for being an excellent craftsman, he is said to have built his own house and handcrafted some of its furnishings. The house, despite certain alterations, remains representative of an ornately decorated Folk Victorian I-house, retaining integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The property has local significance, agriculturally, architecturally and in the context of politics/government.

Agriculture and Politics/Government Contexts

John Nead Peterson (1844-1910), son of pioneer settler Solomon Peterson, lived in Hollow Poplar, in a part of Yancey County that in 1861 was formed into a section of Mitchell County, one of North Carolina's most remote areas of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Jason B. Deyton, in his "History of Toe River Valley to 1865," writes that Mitchell County and its neighbors, Avery and Yancey Counties, were cut off from the rest of the state because of the lack of roads. When roads later were built, they went through the area, not to it, encouraging emigrants to go on west to other territories. The railroad had not come into Mitchell County as late as 1893, thereby delaying Mitchell County's involvement with the expanding post Civil War market

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economy. These transportation and isolation factors fostered the self-sufficiency, initiative, and versatility necessary to survive in the western North Carolina mountains.

The agricultural statistics of the 1880 census are the primary source of the agricultural data in the following discussion.

In 1880, Peterson's farm was one of 1,451 farms in Mitchell County. He owned a total of 297 acres of land. In addition to his Hollow Poplar farm of a little more than 100 acres, he owned acreage elsewhere. Of his total holdings of 297 acres, he tilled 37 acres, somewhat more than the county average of 28.5 acres and a little less than the state average of just over 40 acres. Peterson's livestock was valued at \$200, while Mitchell County as a whole reported \$171,099 worth of livestock, or an average of \$118 worth per farm, putting his livestock value in considerable excess of the average for the county. His farm produced typical subsistence crops of butter, eggs, buckwheat, oats, rye, wheat, beans and potatoes. He reported an apple orchard of 75 trees; a peach grove, and wax production from his own honey bees. His timberland produced some or all of the woods Mitchell County cut for export: oak, chestnut, pine, white pine, hemlock, sugar maple, poplar, walnut, cherry and ash.² Of North Carolina's production of nearly 27 million pounds of tobacco in 1880, Peterson raised none of the Mitchell County contribution of just 30,000 pounds. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture reported in 1886 that tobacco had only "recently" been introduced to the county.³ Nor did Peterson grow cotton, typical of his fellow Mitchell County farmers, who altogether produced only 6 bales of cotton on 15 acres in 1880. This may reflect a shortage of field laborers in the area.

While Peterson's tilled acreage and the value of his animals were above the county average in 1880, he fell below average in the raising of only 75 bushels of corn and the cutting of 30 cords of wood, according to the census. S.W. Blalock, a Mitchell County farmer, reported production of 75 bushels of corn per acre in 1879,⁴ indicating that Peterson probably planted corn on about one-half the acreage planted by the typical area farmer.

While records from this period are scarce, Peterson's versatility provides a clue to the reason for these production discrepancies. Skilled in animal husbandry, a good carpenter,

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apparently literate, and a man of good judgment (based on his farm activities and his service as postmaster and magistrate), Peterson supplemented his agricultural activities in a number of creative ways. According to his descendants, he operated a gristmill,⁵ sawmill, and blacksmith shop, all run with water power from Hollow Poplar Creek, yet no contemporary records available list him as a businessman or a manufacturer.⁶ In North Carolina in the 1880s, the majority of flour and grist mills were usually of limited capacity, grinding locally grown wheat and corn and operated only for the convenience of the community.⁷ It is probable that Peterson ground grain and corn, not for money, but on shares, collecting a portion of the ground meal as his payment, thereby reducing the amount he would have to grow on his own land. A similar arrangement with his sawmill would have provided for his timber needs. Peterson also owned a dry goods store.⁸ The store building was the site of the Hollow Poplar Post Office, of which he was Postmaster from at least 1879 to about 1899.⁹ Some of his cash needs would have been met by his federal salary for this service.

A strong family tradition that Peterson served as a community official is confirmed by secondary sources: he was listed as a Justice of the Peace in the NC Legislative Manuals for 1874 and 1893 and Branson's North Carolina business directories list him as a magistrate in 1878 and 1896. There were 32 magistrates in the ten county townships. He was one of three in Hollow Poplar. Branson records that a John Peterson served as chairman of the Mitchell County Commissioners in 1884.

Architectural Context

Strong family tradition holds that Peterson built his own house. In the Greek Revival influenced vernacular I-house idiom common to the Blue Ridge, it has a full height, full facade, two-story porch distinguished by curvilinear sawn spandrels, balustrade and arched frieze. The decoration is applied to a symmetrical, side-gable frame structure built mainly of poplar timber cut from the Peterson property and milled in the Peterson mill. Traditionally, vernacular folk Victorian (c. 1870-1920) sawn detailing is applied to a simple, most frequently symmetrical, Greek Revival influenced house form. The most usual place for the detailing is across the porch and along the cornice line. The detailing can feature either spindlework or flat,

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jigsaw cut trim. Chamfered square posts are common on the Italianate variations. This detailing is the most striking exterior feature of the Peterson House. A 1985 county inventory identifies it as one of the most flamboyant examples of folk Victorian noted in the county. Despite alterations, the main block retains many early features, including exterior siding; porches; interior poplar ceiling and wall paneling; window sashes; walnut balustrades; some chestnut flooring; hardware; painted doors; and exterior ornamentation. There is sufficient original fabric to retain the building's importance in the historical record.

Other buildings on the property are the barn, said to have been built about the turn of the century; corncrib; smokehouse; and 19th century cellar hole covered by a later shed. The front and rear gable barn has a center aisle, stalls and storage rooms on either side of aisle, and a full loft.

Historical Background

John N. Peterson, son of Solomon Peterson, was born in 1844. He married about 1868 and in September, 1869, he bought from his father a 100-acre tract in the mountains of Yancey County (now part of Mitchell County) on the eastern side of Upper Poplar Creek.¹⁰ In October, 1869, Peterson purchased from a neighbor an additional tract of about seven acres.¹¹ Although some landmarks mentioned in the deeds no longer exist, it appears from extensive study that this parcel adjoined Peterson's original 100 acres and lay just north of Hughes Creek near its junction with Upper Poplar Creek and probably is the spot on which Peterson, according to strong family tradition, built his house about 1870.

With his wife Emaline, he had at least ten children,¹² including Jerry (Jeremiah, b. 1879), to whom Peterson transferred 25 acres in 1902 and another 5 acres in 1909.¹³ John N. Peterson died in 1910. Over the years, portions of the Peterson farm were sold off, subdivided, or conveyed to other family members. Jerry's holdings increased in 1936, when another acre was conveyed to him from a cousin in settlement of a boundary dispute,¹⁴ and he purchased another 2-acre piece of the original John N. Peterson acreage in 1916 from Marcus Miller, who had married into the Peterson family. Of approximately 35 acres,¹⁵ the farm property is presently owned by James A. Peterson, through his father, Wesley, son of Jerry Peterson, and is used as timberland, garden place, and woodlot. The house is presently maintained as a seasonal residence.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Sumner, James. North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Services. Memorandum to Mary Hooper, dated August 23, 1989, and "Agricultural Context for Mitchell County," a memorandum to Claudia Brown, NC National Register Coordinator, dated June 20, 1990. These documents detail information on Mitchell County agriculture in the 1880 census records and various compilations of information taken from that census.
- 2 Hand-Book of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC Dept. Agriculture, 1886, pg. 135. These woods are listed as typical of Mitchell County production by 1886. An unsigned bill of sale dated Dec. 5, 1906, and now among the Peterson family papers indicates that Peterson may have sold large amounts of timber from his properties to out-of-state interests. Among the tree varieties specifically identified for sale were poplar, ash, oak and chestnut. The deed concerns acreage north of the nominated property, but the wood species are comparable to the varieties found on this land.
- 3 Ibid, pg. 136.
- 4 Hand-Book of North Carolina, N.C. Dept. of Agriculture, Raleigh, 1879, pg. 248.
- 5 An unrecorded deed dated September 27, 1890, and held by the family, indicated that Peterson sold one-half interest in about one acre of land on Hollow Poplar Creek. The deed mentions "John N. Petersons old griss Mill." The family can identify the sites of Peterson's other businesses, the general store/post office, sawmill and blacksmith shop.
- 6 Only one other surviving building in the county is reported to be associated with Peterson. This is a one-room school moved from its original site and said to have been built with lumber from Peterson's mill.
- 7 Hand-Book of North Carolina, NC Dept. of Agriculture, Raleigh, 1886, pg. 306.
- 8 A bill of sale in the family possession indicates he sold out the contents of the store in 1901, although estate records indicate that at the time of Peterson's death in 1910 he owned store merchandise valued at approximately \$300.
- 9 "Post Offices and Postmasters in North Carolina, 1829-1899." Photocopy in NC State Archives.

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-
- 10 Despite the difficulty of tracing property sales not recorded in official records and the lack of county records from the time of the formation of Mitchell County in 1861, the many original documents still held by the family and the strong oral tradition facilitate tracing the history of this property.
 - 11 Unrecorded deed, James Hughes to John N. Peterson, October 2, 1869.
 - 12 Census Records 1870, 1900; and Mrs. Wesley Peterson.
 - 13 Mitchell County Register of Deeds, 69/484 and 58/98.
 - 14 According to present owner. All these parcels are described in deed recorded in Mitchell County Register of Deeds, 207/007.
 - 15 Changes in surveying techniques result in smaller acreage than specified in deeds. The Peterson property has not been recently surveyed, and the property size indicated on the Mitchell County tax map is based on deeded acreage rather than surveyors' measurements.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 35.79 acres (+ -)

UTM References

A 17 380120 3994300
 Zone Easting Northing

C 17 380420 3994820

D 17 380320 3994350

B 17 380020 3994740
 Zone Easting Northing

D 17 380540 3994670

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Peterson property is identified as parcel 3210 on the Mitchell County tax map # 0816.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all of the land with John W. Peterson's house and outbuildings that is historically associated with Peterson and retains integrity. The property has not been surveyed in modern times, so that today there is a slight discrepancy between total acreage calculated on the basis of the deeds and the actual acreage calculated by tax authorities.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary J. Hooper, Preservation Consultant

organization _____ date 8/8/90

street & number 102 Shady Oak Drive telephone 704/274-3988

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28803

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9.1 References

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Documentary photographs keyed alphabetically to sketch map. All negatives in collection of Archives and History Western Office, Asheville, NC. Photographs dated July, 1985, show the property as it remains today.

- A. Documentary: Original of the ca. 1900-1910 photograph of John N. Peterson and some of his family is in the possession of James A. Peterson. Photographer unknown.
- B. Facade
Mary Hooper, photographer
August 1989
- C. Rear and south elevation
Ted Alexander
July 1985
- D. North elevation
Ted Alexander
July 1985
- E. Upper porch detail
Mary Hooper
August 1989
- F. Exterior detail of front porches, also showing cornice
Mary Hooper
July 1989
- G. Barn, view from southeast
James A. Peterson
April 1990
- H. Crib and cellar (left to right), view from the east
James A. Peterson
April 1990
- I. Smokehouse, from southwest
James A. Peterson
April 1990
- J. Upstairs front door, inside, showing balustrade and paneling
Mary Hooper
July 1989

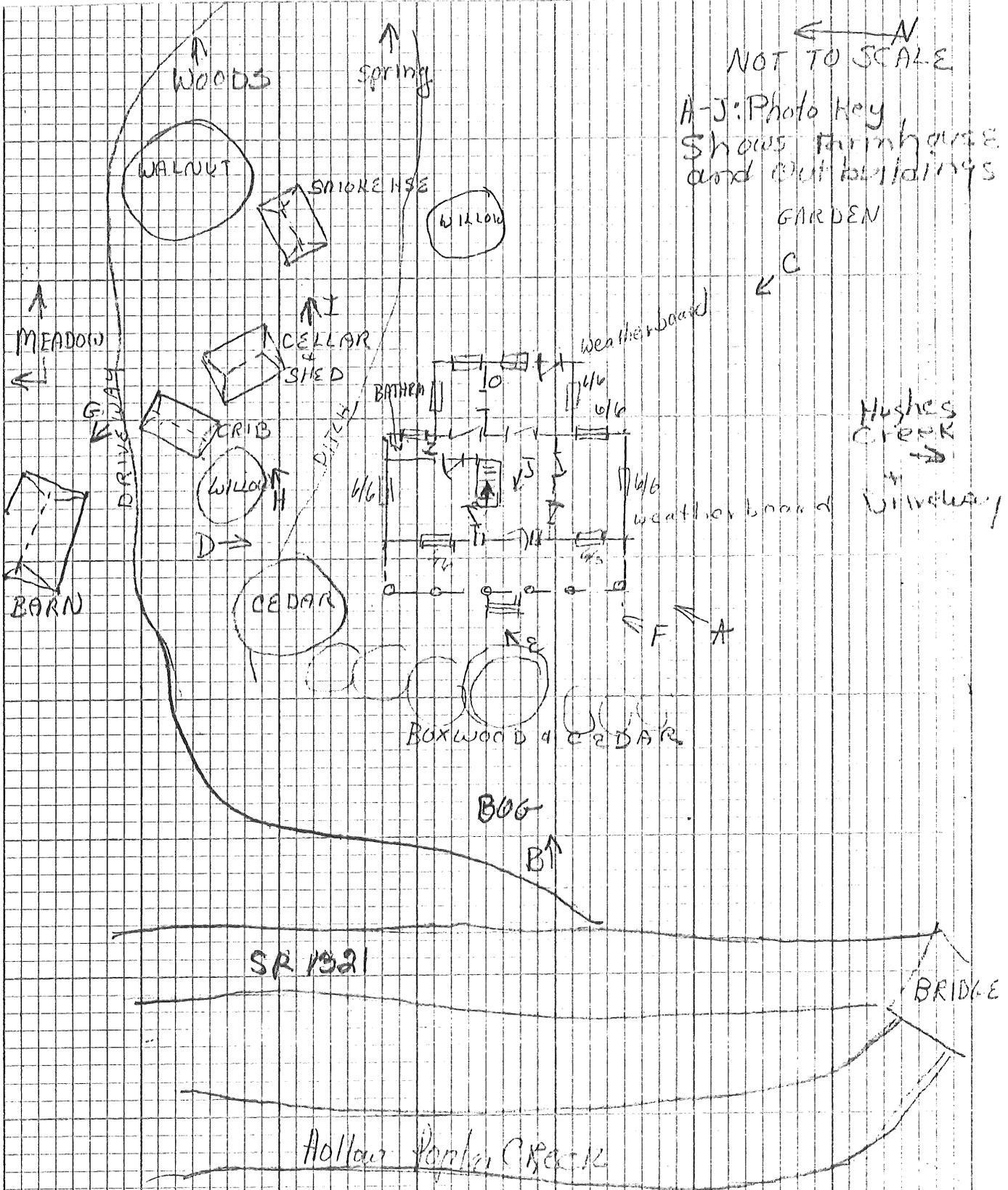
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SKETCH MAP

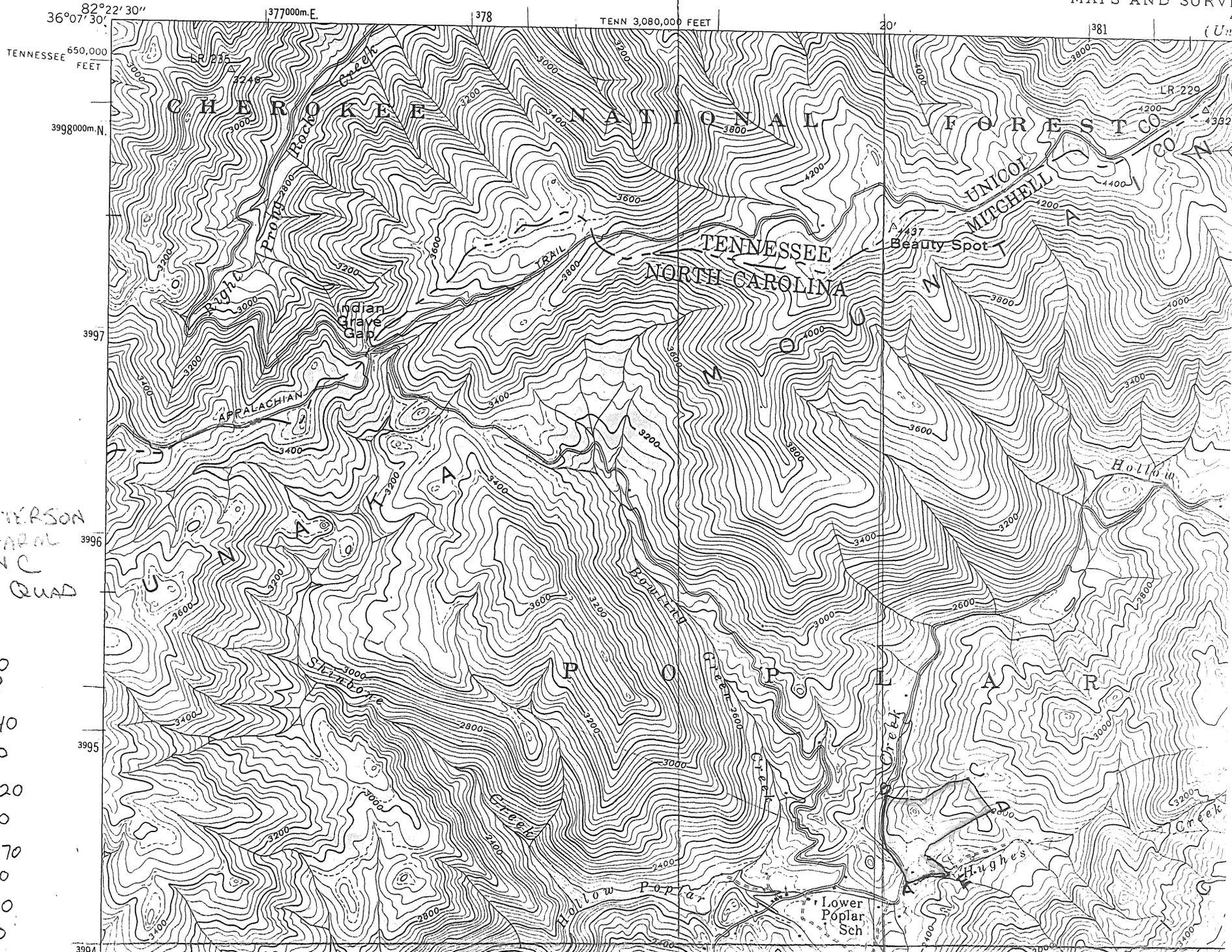
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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES
TENNESSEE VALLEY
MAPS AND SURVEYS



JOHN N. PETERSON
FARML
POPLAR, N C
HUNTDAL E QUAD
ZONE 17

- A: N 3994300
E 380120
- B: N 3994740
E 380020
- C: N 3994820
E 380420
- D: N 3994670
E 380540
- E: N 3994350
E 380320

4556 (11 NW)
(Elevn 199-NW)

82°22'30"
36°07'30"

377000m.E.

378

TENN 3,080,000 FEET

20'

381

(U)

3994

3995

