

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| STATE: North Carolina | |
| COUNTY: Polk | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |

1. NAME

COMMON:
Blackberry Hill

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Mills House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
On S.R. 1516, 0.1 mi. north of junction of S.R. 1516 and S.R. 1501

CITY OR TOWN:
Tryon vicinity
Eleventh Congressional District
The Hon. Roy Taylor

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| STATE North Carolina | CODE 3/ | COUNTY: Polk | CODE 149 |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Henry Burrus, Jr.

STREET AND NUMBER:
Hunting Country

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| CITY OR TOWN: Tryon | STATE: North Carolina | CODE 37 |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------|

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| CITY OR TOWN: Columbus | STATE: North Carolina | CODE 37 |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------|

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Frances Benjamin Johnson Collection

DATE OF SURVEY: 1938 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Capitol and Independence Avenue

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|
| CITY OR TOWN: Washington | STATE: D. C. | CODE |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Blackberry Hill is a five-bay, two-story frame house with exterior end chimneys and one-story wing additions at each of its two-bay gable ends. The house, which was moved, is pleasantly sited on a prominence which affords a sweeping mountain view. The approach (south) side of the house, which was probably the original rear, is three bays and has a one-story shed across its length which has a one-bay room on each end. The central space is open as a porch at the entrance bay. A two-story colonnaded porch has been added to the original main (north) facade.

The interior of the main block features a center-hall plan one room deep. Beaded, horizontal sheathing prevails throughout most of the house as well as a Federal style wainscot and rather deeply molded cornices. In addition, the house has an enclosed stair, three-part molded architraves, raised panel doors, and some exposed, beaded beams. The outstanding feature of this house, however, is the strikingly individualized vernacular ornament of the mantels in the rooms to the east and west of the hall and in the shed room to the west. The vigor and eccentricity of this ornament give it a folk-art quality.

In the room to the east of the hall is a Federal form mantel with robustly carved detailing. The pilasters are wide, shallow panels until they rise above the fire opening where a molded band of necking marks the beginning of reeded end blocks. The center tablet is unusually large, comprising about one-half of the frieze. Applied to the center tablet, which is outlined by a molded band, is a large reeded lozenge. In each corner of the tablet are heart-shaped fans with gougework radiating from the point of the heart. Flanking the tablet, and occupying the remainder of the frieze, are inset paneled areas with Federal molding, containing an applied disk, pierced in the center, with gougework radiating from the center. In each corner are quarter fans displaying similar gougework. Between the frieze and molded shelf is a very robust cable molding. The mantel in the room west of the hall is similar but varies in some details. The pilasters are not so wide and the center tablet is not raised. The reeded lozenge is set into this center section. In the inset panels flanking the center section are large fans which are deeply scored to their outer molded edges. The cable molding above the frieze is similar except for unadorned, square blocks at each end. The shelves appear to be identical. The third mantel is in the shed room to the west. It bears little overall resemblance to the other two. It is a tall mantel with reeded pilasters extending from floor to shelf with only a simple band of molded necking marking the beginning of the frieze. A molded band outlines the fire opening, above which is a frieze, twice the height of the others. The frieze contains four equal-sized flat panels with Federal moldings grouped in a square; one square is located on each side of a tall, vertical central block. The central block is filled by a large, applied reeded circle which has had its sides clipped to give an oblong appearance. Appearing above the frieze, once again, is the heavy cable molding and molded shelf.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Blackberry Hill is one of a small group of Federal era dwellings in Polk County. Despite being moved, the traditional two-story frame house retains most of its original fabric. Its chief architectural significance lies in the remarkable vernacular treatment of the mantels; the ornament has a naive vigor that makes it among the most interesting folk-art versions of the Adamesque style in the state. The house is of local historical importance because of its connection with Ambrose Mills, who was involved in the founding of Polk County.

"Blackberry Hill," like its sister house "Seven Hearths," is said to have been built on land originally owned by Colonel Ambrose Mills, a noted Loyalist of the Revolutionary period. Like its counterpart, it was unquestionably in the possession of the Mills family of present-day Polk County for a number of years; unfortunately no reliable data could be found to establish the identity of the builder. This absence of data probably stems from a law enacted by the General Assembly in 1777 which decreed that the property of "divers persons who have . . . attached themselves to Enemies of the United States of America . . ." be confiscated. Because Mills was a notorious Loyalist, it is likely that his landholdings on Green River were confiscated for at least a time. The Safety Committee of Tryon County, corresponding with its counterpart in neighboring Rowan, referred to Mills as "one of the greatest Enemy's of our pesse" and remarked that "his Character is so netorious [sic] that we expect that every gentelman in Rowan is acquainted with it. . . ."

Colonel Mills fought as a colonel on the side of the Tories at Earle's Ford and King's Mountain, where he was captured and later taken to Biggerstaff's Fields near Rutherfordton and hanged in October, 1780. This action apparently offended the sensibilities of Lord Cornwallis, who later wrote that "the hanging [of] poor old Colonel Mills, who was always a fair and open Enemy . . . , was an act of the most Savage barbarity."

Colonel Mills is said to have had at least two sons, Ambrose and William. William Mills was also a Loyalist and served as a major under his father at King's Mountain. He is said to have been seriously wounded there, but was later set free and settled in the present-day Fruitland section of Henderson County. Why he failed to relocate on the family's landholdings on Green River is uncertain, but one of his sons, Marvill Mills, returned to this area sometime before 1812. The house in which the younger Mills

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(Number all entries)

8.

lived is believed to be "Seven Hearths," the restored dwelling now located in the town of Tryon.

Of Colonel Mills's other son, Ambrose, much less is known. It is he who is thought to have been the first owner of the house now called "Blackberry Hill." Whether or not he was an active Loyalist is uncertain, but he apparently remained on or near his family's landholdings on Green River, where he held a number of minor local offices. In February, 1847, Ambrose Mills acted as "presiding justice" at a meeting of a group of commissioners empowered by the General Assembly to lay off and organize the proposed new county of Polk. He was married to Miss Nancy Jones and was the father of William E. Mills, who inherited his father's plantation sometime after the latter's death in October or November, 1848.

William E. Mills is said to have studied law and to have been admitted to the bar in January, 1835. Later that year he was elected county solicitor and three years later was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons. He served in this capacity continuously from 1838 to 1846 and in 1842 married Miss Eliza Bryan of Rutherfordton. He continued to practice law for several years and also published The Carolina Gazette (Rutherfordton) in partnership with Weldon Hall from 1837 to 1840. He is said to have died at a young age during the summer of 1850.

William E. Mills's will provided that all his real estate lying on Green River should become the property of his three children, Ambrose, Sarah, and Ann Eliza, "to have & to hold jointly and separately as may be for the benefit of the parties, subject to the Dower of their mother." It is not known when Mills's wife died, but the property apparently passed to his son Ambrose sometime before 1870. At this time the younger Mills's landholdings amounted to 1,500 acres. Ambrose Mills died in 1873; his will devised to his wife Phalba a tract of land "lying on both sides of the Green river and including the buildings where I now live during her lifetime . . . and after her decease to A. B. F. Mills my son. . . ."

It is not clear what became of the property between 1873 and 1890, but in the latter year W. A. Mills and his wife conveyed to J. C. Powell a tract of land containing 132 33/100 acres lying "on the North side of Green River." Powell paid \$380.00 for the tract. In August, 1918, J. C. Powell sold the tract, now said to contain 123 acres, to Q. M. Powell, who paid \$1,000 for it. In 1933 Powell conveyed the property to his wife, who three years later sold "One old house . . . known as the old Ambrose Mills house . . ." (but not the land), to Mrs. Josephine U. Bowes. Mrs. Bowes was given "until January 1, 1937, to remove the house from its present location."

Mrs. Bowes and her husband had the house moved to the "Hunting Country" section of the town of Tryon, where it stands today. The present owners of the house are Mr. and Mrs. Philip Henry Burrus, Jr., who have lived there since 1957. It is unclear when the house was named "Blackberry Hill," but no reference was found to that or any other name during the period of ownership by the Mills family.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Research by Robert Topkins, survey specialist; architectural description by Charles Greer Suttlemyre, Jr., survey specialist.
 Carroll, Grady L. E., ed. Francis Asbury in North Carolina: The North Carolina Portions of the Journal of Francis Asbury. Nashville: Parthenon Press, n.d.
 Clark, Walter, ed. The State Records of North Carolina. Winston and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 16 volumes, numbered XI-XXVI, 1895-1906, XIV, XXIV.
 Draper, Lyman C. King's Mountain and Its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1870, and the Events Which Led to It.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY | | | | O R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|---------|---------|---------|---|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | | | | LONGITUDE | | | LATITUDE | | | LONGITUDE | |
| | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds |
| NW | 0 | ' | " | 0 | ' | " | 35° | 12' | 20" | 82° | 12' | 34" |
| NE | 0 | ' | " | 0 | ' | " | | | | | | |
| SE | 0 | ' | " | 0 | ' | " | | | | | | |
| SW | 0 | ' | " | 0 | ' | " | | | | | | |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 9 acres

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Survey and Planning Unit
 ORGANIZATION: Division of Archives and History DATE: 28 August 1974
 STREET AND NUMBER: 109 East Jones Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

National State Local

Name Thornton W. Mitchell
 Title Acting Director, Division of Archives and History
 Date 28 August 1974

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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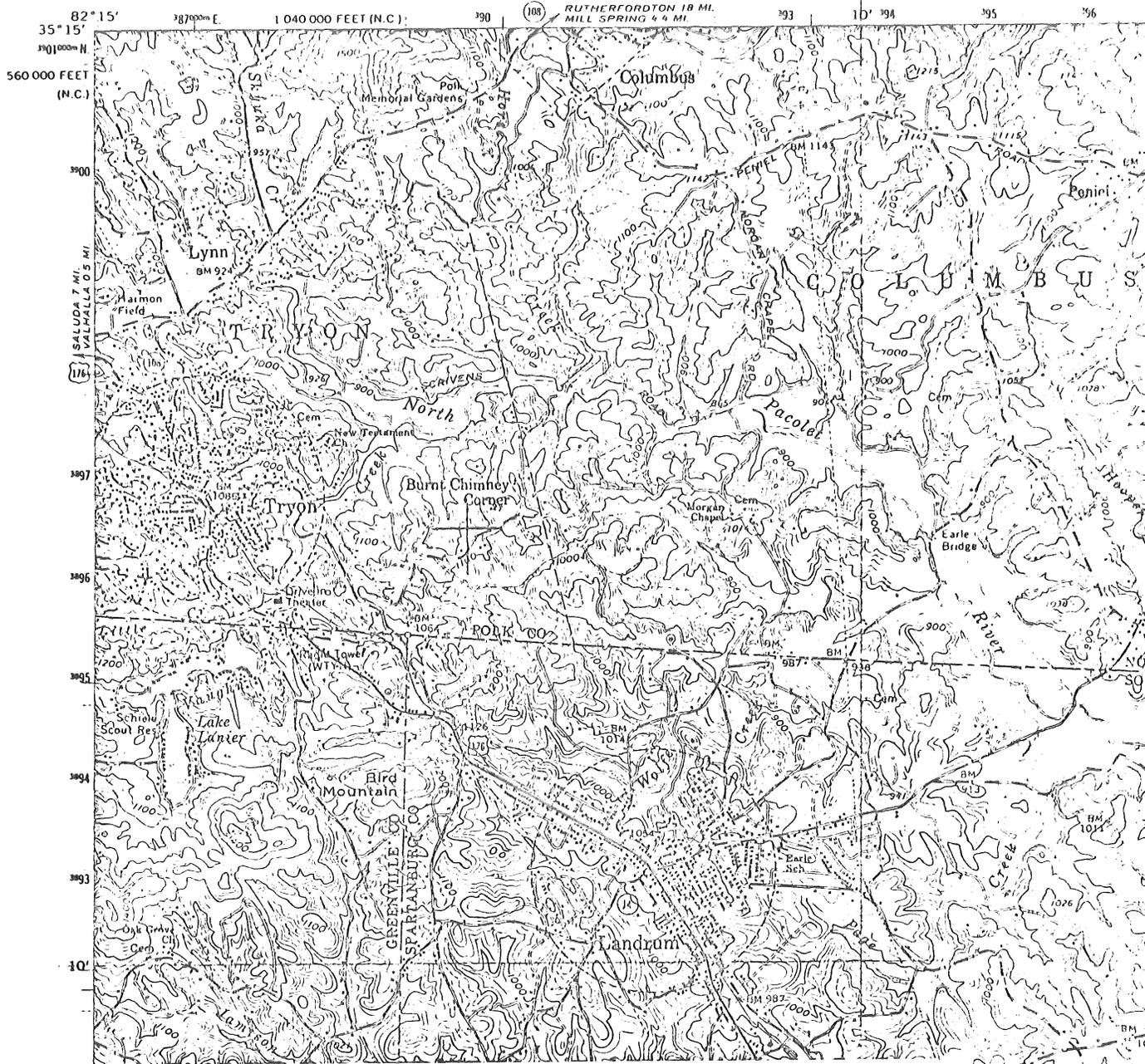
(Number all entries)

9.

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State of North Carolina, 10 volumes, 1886-1890, X.

CLIFFFIELD MTA
1:24,000
4556 III SE 202 SE

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Blackberry Hill
Tryon vicinity
North Carolina

USGS Map, Inman Quadrangle
Scale: 1: 62,500
Date: 1961

| Latitude | | | Longitude | | |
|----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| degrees | minutes | seconds | degrees | minutes | seconds |
| 35 | 12 | 20 | 82 | 12 | 34 |

