

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 Hyatt, Abel House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number E. side SR 1168, 0.2 mi. N. of jct. w/SR 1191  N/A not for publication  
city, town Bryson City  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Swain code 173 zip code 28713

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>4</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>2</u>	<u>4</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: None  
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. Train, Jr. Signature of certifying official 1-28-91 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Tin Shingle

other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Abel Hyatt House is located on the banks of the Tuckasegee River approximately three hundred yards east of Highway 74 and three miles northeast of Bryson City, the seat of Swain County. Positioned on a mountainside, the house rests on fill dirt which was dug out of the hillside to create an "elevated site" above the flood plain of the adjacent river. The Hyatt House is surrounded by native black walnut trees growing naturally above the house throughout the forested mountain terrain and numerous trees planted by members of the Hyatt family which adorn the front lawn and bottom land directly in front of the house. The mountainous setting of the house, evident in all directions, provides panoramic views from the elevated hillside site. The encompassing 24.5 acre tract is mainly wooded with native trees of oak, elm, and black walnut. The Hyatt House property contains six resources: two contributing and four noncontributing. The two contributing resources include the main farmhouse and contoured landscape while two domestic dependencies—one agricultural outbuilding and one modern implement shed – are considered noncontributing due to their period of construction outside of the period of significance.

1. Abel Hyatt House - 1880, contributing

Based on land records and other records held by descendants of Abel Hyatt, it is believed that Mr. Hyatt had his house constructed by local builders Manus Welch and Thad Buchanan who received payment in cash and produce harvested by Abel Hyatt during 1880 and 1881 (as indicated in a payment book owned by Zenith Hyatt). Two etched and painted date bricks are located on each corner of the front facade of the house with the inscription "Buchanan 1880". The finely executed two-story brick I-house with an original one-story brick rear ell is distinguished primarily by a centrally-located single-bay, two-tiered portico with a gable roof and modest Greek Revival detailing exemplified by the design of interior woodwork, doors and front entrance. The portico features original lattice-work, trebled posts, pilaster responds, plain balustrade and a weatherboard-sheathed gable with a single, round-arched, traceried window. The house is constructed with a six-to-one common bond brick coursing pattern that continues to the top of the gables of the end walls. Two semi-engaged chimneys are located at each end of the house and laid in a complete stretcher bond pattern; each stack, with two corbelled bands at the top, penetrate the deep gable overhang. The symmetrically-balanced front facade has a central, single door entry with sidelights and transom which is flanked by nine-over-six sash windows on the first floor and six-over-six on the second – all features characteristic of simple Greek Revival houses. All windows are noted for the well-crafted mortise-and-tenon construction which can be seen not only in the jointing of the sash but also in the fastening of sills and lintels. Other notable exterior features include a sweeping eave with boxed, gable-end returns ornamented with four courses of applied molding. Although probably a turn-of-the-century replacement, the pressed-tin shingle roof contributes to the sense of craftsmanship and attention to detail exhibited by the dwelling on both the exterior and interior.

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Abel Hyatt House, Swain County, North Carolina

The overall modest Greek Revival appearance of the house is further evidenced by the center hall floor plan (Exhibit A) on both the first and second floor which provides space for a nicely-executed, vernacular, open-string stair accented with square balusters, a tapered newel and shaped handrail. Like all interior woodwork, the stair is constructed of black walnut reportedly cut from native trees located on the property when purchased by Abel Hyatt. Interior doors consist of both two- and four-panel designs with hand-planed, raised panels surrounded by standard board architraves. All doors and windows retain original late-nineteenth-century manufactured hardware including box locks and ornamental hinges on doors. Floors are laid with random-width pine boards while walls are surfaced with plaster. Mantelpieces in all four principal rooms as well as the rear kitchen/dining ell, are plain post-and-lintel designs.

The Hyatt House maintains a high degree of architectural integrity. The only alterations to the original character and appearance of the house include the enclosure of the rear kitchen/dining ell side porch for the addition of bathroom facilities and the introduction of modern sheet paneling in the first floor parlor. The original spring-cooled dairy is still in place on the former ell side porch.

### 2. Cut and Fill Landscape, 1880, contributing

The technique of cut and fill landscaping as depicted in Exhibit B at the end of the nomination was an early method of protecting a dwelling from flood waters, which prior to the advent of dams was a major problem in many mountain communities. Cut and fill landscaping such as that executed at the Hyatt House site involved excavating a portion of a hillside above the bottom lands and extending the plateau with the removed earth which provided an elevated, but level site to construct a house. The diagram in the Exhibit shows the approximate slope of the hillside before the Hyatt House was built and the elevation of the site after the cut and fill was executed.

NOTE: Although the following outbuildings associated with the Hyatt House are intact examples of early twentieth-century agricultural and domestic dependencies, lack of a comprehensive survey of the county precludes preparation of contexts for the buildings. Until contexts can be developed, they are classified as noncontributing for the purposes of this nomination because they fall outside the period of significance.

### 3. Meathouse - c. 1900, noncontributing

Located directly opposite the rear kitchen door is a one-story, gable-front meathouse/curinghouse of frame construction clad in board-and-batten siding. The meathouse has an extended front gable which shelters a single-door entry. The exterior cladding extends all the way to the ground and provides for a tight enclosure. The building is covered with a replacement standing seam metal roof.

### 4. Woodshed/Garage - early 20th century, noncontributing

Located directly behind the meathouse but facing the same direction as the main house is a two-story, frame woodshed also clad with board-and-batten siding and covered by a shed roof. The woodshed has a central portal on the front ground level and paired second story openings above. Now used only as a garage, the building retains its original appearance.

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### 5. Bank Barn – early 20th century, noncontributing

Located approximately 20 yards north of the main house is a large, multi-purpose bank barn, with a rough-faced molded block lower story built into the hillside. The barn is aligned with the main house similarly positioned above the adjacent flood plain. The upper story of the barn is balloon-frame construction sided with vertical planks spaced approximately one inch apart. The upper story functioned as a hay loft, with easy access to the hillside from a rear entry, and the lower level was used for stables and storage. A gable roof shelters the barn and is covered with replacement standing seam metal.

### 6. Implement Shed – mid 20th century, noncontributing

Located in the flood plain in front of the main house is a frame gable roof implement shed with two side portals and a central feed crib with louvered ends. The shed has a standing seam metal roof and functioned as storage for farm equipment and feed for farm animals.

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NOTE: Most of the photographs with this nomination were taken in 1982, shortly before a nomination was drafted but never completed; at that time, a complete set of nomination photos, all 8 x 10s, were printed. When the current nomination was prepared in 1990, the property was field checked by both the consultant preparer and North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office staff, who determined that the property remains unchanged from its depiction in the 1982 photos. Rather than waste the good 1982 photos, we are submitting them with two 1990 photos which confirm the accuracy of the earlier prints.

**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

Period of Significance  
1880

Significant Dates  
1880

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Welch, Manus, builder  
Buchanan, Thad, builder

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

Summary Paragraph

The Abel Hyatt House, located on the banks of the Tuckasegee River near the Swain County seat of Bryson City, is eligible for the National Register under criterion C for architecture. It is the county's only known example of nineteenth-century domestic masonry architecture and is exceptional in its local context due to the relative lack of brick construction in rural western North Carolina. Hyatt, a farmer of moderate means, had his house built in 1880 by local builders, Manus Welch and Thad Buchanan, who were paid in part in cash and the remainder in produce from Hyatt's farm. In addition to the rarity of brick dwellings, the architectural significance is enhanced by well-crafted walnut woodwork throughout and an exceptional two-tiered central portico featuring lattice-work. Contributing further to the significance of the house is its siting on a broad shelf dug out of the surrounding hillside. An early example of cut-and-fill landscaping, this was a technique used in mountainous terrain to elevate a house above the flood plain of an adjacent river. Although this technique is common today aided by the use of heavy earth-moving machinery, its execution at the Hyatt House site during the late-nineteenth century involved labor-intensive activity in a sparsely-populated region.

Historical Background

The mountain county of Swain was formed from parts of Jackson and Macon Counties in 1871. Five years after the creation of Swain County, Abel A. Hyatt, a native of Haywood County and resident of Jackson County, purchased a 173-acre tract from Jimmy Little for \$300. Swain County was sparsely populated during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and most of its residents were small farmers, like Hyatt.<sup>1</sup> The 1880 census shows that he had 70 improved acres and 100 unimproved and that his real estate was valued at \$1,600. Hyatt owned livestock valued at \$200, including two oxen, three cows, 12 other cattle, 17 sheep, 25 swine, and 23 chickens. He grew 450 bushels of corn, and 120 bushels of wheat. Hyatt was 55 in 1880 while his wife Sarah was 43. They had four children: Rubin, 18; Harvey Albert, 14; Uta, 12; and Martha, 8.<sup>2</sup>

Abel Hyatt died in the early 1890s. In 1893 Harvey Albert Hyatt purchased the house and land from his siblings, paying \$3,000 for 201 acres. Harvey Hyatt continued to farm, growing a variety of crops. He and wife Emma DeHart had four children. He died in 1939 and the farm was run by his son Dallas Eugene Hyatt until the late 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

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Dallas Hyatt died in 1960 at the age of 48 and his mother died in 1964 at the age of 88.<sup>(4)</sup> Dallas Hyatt and his wife, Ruth Franklin Hyatt, had three children, one of whom died in infancy. Their only son, Daniel Hyatt, a mechanic, inherited the house upon the death of his grandmother. Daniel Hyatt married Judy Dogan in 1970 and they have two children.<sup>5</sup>

### Architectural Context

The Hyatt House is an exceptional and rare example of brick construction built in an area and time when such material was generally reserved for the wealthiest of mountain residents and most often employed in the erection of town houses. Although Abel Hyatt's agricultural output was perhaps slightly more productive than other local farmers, he would still not be considered a wealthy landowner and cash crop exporter. Consequently, his finely-crafted home is even more remarkable in its local context. Aside from the ambitious dwelling, the Hyatt farm is typical of the modest farms that have dotted Swain County since its creation.

As stated by Margaret Owen in her Big Ten Reconnaissance Survey essay: "The advent of trains to the mountains heralded a major revolution." Prior to the coming of railroads into the mountainous sections of western North Carolina, the Buncombe Turnpike, completed in 1827, had served as the major means of overland transportation into the region, although it actually provided access to only a small segment of the area. The Turnpike provided improved transportation on the north-south corridor, but transportation through the mountains in a westerly direction was slower to improve.<sup>6</sup> Although the railroad arrived in Asheville in 1879 from the east, it was not until 1890 that it was extended all the way to Murphy providing for greater progress and settlement of North Carolina's western most section of the state.

The development of railroad transport in the mountains had an immediate impact on the region, particularly on the local economy. In addition to increasing the influx of people into the region, the railroad also provided increased communication and greater import and export of goods. The development of a cash crop economy, in contrast to the traditional subsistence activity practiced by many farmers in the region, allowed for the accumulation of cash to purchase the goods and services arriving in the towns and communities blessed with a rail stop.

This increase in the availability of goods and labor can be seen in the region's surviving architecture and the changes in technology and construction employed by local builders throughout the area.<sup>7</sup> The largest number of surviving brick houses date from the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. The rare use of brick as a building material in the mountains prior to 1880 is well illustrated in Buncombe County with only ten such buildings remaining from the period. Owen cites the Malachiah Reeves House, c. 1850, in the Little Sandymush Creek vicinity of Madison County as one of the rare examples of a surviving antebellum brick house in the mountains. As indicated by Owen, "while handmade bricks were sometimes used in place of stone for chimneys during this era, houses of brick were still quite rare." The majority of brick houses inventoried during the reconnaissance survey postdate the Reeves House by about thirty years. The construction of brick houses throughout the region during the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century was, by all accounts, still rare and quite often executed for the region's wealthiest residents.

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The increase in the availability of manufactured building materials had an impact on local building practice. Several of the brick dwellings recorded by Owen reflect trends which began to impact the indigenous architecture of the western North Carolina mountains. Prior to the widespread availability of manufactured building materials and growing influence of evolving national architectural styles, the indigenous architecture of the region consisted primarily of log and heavy, timber-frame construction distinguished with vernacular or localized interpretations of popular architectural idioms. The impact can be seen on several examples cited by Owen. The Albert Swain Bryson House (1872) in Franklin, Macon County, is distinguished by a bracketed cornice and sawnwork balustrade while the Harshaw House (1880-1882) near Murphy, Cherokee County, has a two-tiered full-width porch embellished with sawnwork brackets and balustrade. These examples, like others cited by Owen, were part of a growing architectural trend during the post-Civil War period whereby the application of manufactured sawnwork ornament derived from pattern book designs was gradually replacing the more traditional vernacular expressions. In comparison, the Hyatt House, as stated by Owen, is "of the same vintage but a slightly less elaborate style . . . is of the more symmetrical I-house plan, and its decoration is confined to a sedate boxed cornice and unusual latticed trim on the two-tier gabled porch." The Hyatt House, stylistically, departs from other brick houses built during the late nineteenth century, representing the more common vernacular expressions of very modest domestic Greek Revival architecture such as hand-planed, two-panel doors, plain board surrounds on windows and doors, and typical unadorned post-and-lintel mantelpieces. The two-tiered front portico also exhibits vernacular elements in contrast to more academic treatments found on other brick houses in the region, including a site-specific example of lattice work on both first and second tiers. Though its construction in brick separates it from the more common frame I-houses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its vernacular treatments in terms of ornament and finish bind it thoroughly with its more common sister dwellings of frame and log.

The Hyatt House, excepting its brick construction, depicts the form and plan most readily used by the local builder in the mountain regions of western North Carolina during the late-nineteenth century. Doug Swaim comments that "A review of the plans of all ten pre-1880 brick dwellings in Buncombe County reveals a striking commonality. . . every building is organized symmetrically around a central element"; the hallway. This attention to formality and symmetry in design arrived on the rural landscape of western North Carolina during the mid-nineteenth century, as exemplified by some of the region's most impressive brick and frame Greek Revival I-houses; once embraced, it remained as the overriding design principle irrespective of style.

The James Adolphus Gillespie House in rural Buncombe County perhaps provides the best comparison to the Hyatt House. Although constructed c. 1860, some 20 years prior to the Hyatt House, the Gillespie House depicts striking similarities including a well-balanced three-bay facade (originally graced with a two-tiered central portico) and boxed cornice with eave returns beneath the gable roof, and vernacular Greek Revival detailing on the interior including two-panel doors and simple classical mantels. The most evident contrasting feature between the houses is the use of interior chimneys on the Gillespie House while the Hyatt House employs the more common exterior end chimney. The similarity, particularly in interior detailing, places the Hyatt House, architecturally, in closer kinship with the pre-Civil War dwellings of simple vernacular Greek Revival design rather than the host of post-War houses catering to more academic expressions of Italianate and Victorian styles which arrived on the local scene following the introduction of the railroad.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lillian Franklin Thomasson, *Swain County: Early History and Educational Development* (Bryson City: n.p., 1965), 5-9; Swain County Deed Book 1, p. 397.

<sup>2</sup>Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Swain County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule.

<sup>3</sup>Swain County Deed Book 14, p. 295; Telephone interview with Daniel Hyatt, June 11, 1982, notes in file, hereinafter cited as Hyatt interview.

<sup>4</sup>Asheville Citizen, July 12, 1960; March 1, 1964.

<sup>5</sup>Hyatt interview; Swain County Will Book 2, p. 471. Since Dallas Hyatt's death preceded the death of his mother, he never actually owned the house. His son Daniel Hyatt inherited the property from his grandmother Emma Hyatt.

<sup>6</sup>Due to the lack of comprehensive surveys in several of the mountain counties of western North Carolina, the analysis and comparison of resources within and between counties throughout the region is tenuous at best and often involves professional supposition and conjecture. The Big Ten Reconnaissance Survey (1978), which included Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Swain, and Transylvania Counties, and the comprehensive survey of Buncombe County (1978-80) were used in establishing a mountain context. Therefore, the basis of the following contextual statement on the architectural significance of the Abel Hyatt House is based primarily on the survey report issued upon completion of the "Big Ten Reconnaissance Survey" and Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina, 1981, edited by Doug Swaim. Swaim's chapter "1827 - 1880: The Turnpike Era" (pages 63-77) and pages 13-20 in Owen's Survey Report provide the basis for the following discussion of the architectural significance of the Hyatt House.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Owen, Big Ten Reconnaissance Survey Report, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, Survey Branch, (Raleigh: n.p., 1978), 8.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Asheville Citizen. July 12, 1960; March 1, 1964.

Hyatt, Abel ledger book and payment schedule. Dated 1880. In possession of Daniel Hyatt.

Hyatt, Daniel. Telephone interview, June 11, 1982. Notes in file. Personal interview May 25, 1990 at the Hyatt House, Swain County, North Carolina.

Swain County Records (subgroups: deeds, wills, microfilm copies), Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Thomasson, Lillian Franklin. Swain County: Early Historical and Educational Development. (Bryson City: n.p., 1965).

Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule, microfilm copy, archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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 24.5

UTM References

A [1,7] [2|8,2|3,1,0] [3,9|2,4|0,7,0]
Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C [1,7] [2|8,2|5,8,0] [3,9|2,3|8,2,0]

D [1,7] [2|8,2|2,9,0] [3,9|2,3|9,8,0]

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is all of tract 3 of the division of lands of Gene Hyatt surveyed by W. G. Davis on May 18, 1962. An enlarged copy of a portion of the survey is enclosed for reference.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This 24.5 acre tract is the home tract of the Abel Hyatt farm. This parcel of land is a portion of the original 173 acres purchased by Abel Hyatt in 1876 when he first migrated to Swain County. Although portions of Abel Hyatt's acreage have been sold throughout the 20th century, the home tract has remained in the Hyatt family since its original purchase and is currently owned by Abel Hyatt's great grandson. Thus, the nominated property is all of the area historically and currently associated with the historic resource and provides an appropriate setting for the house.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

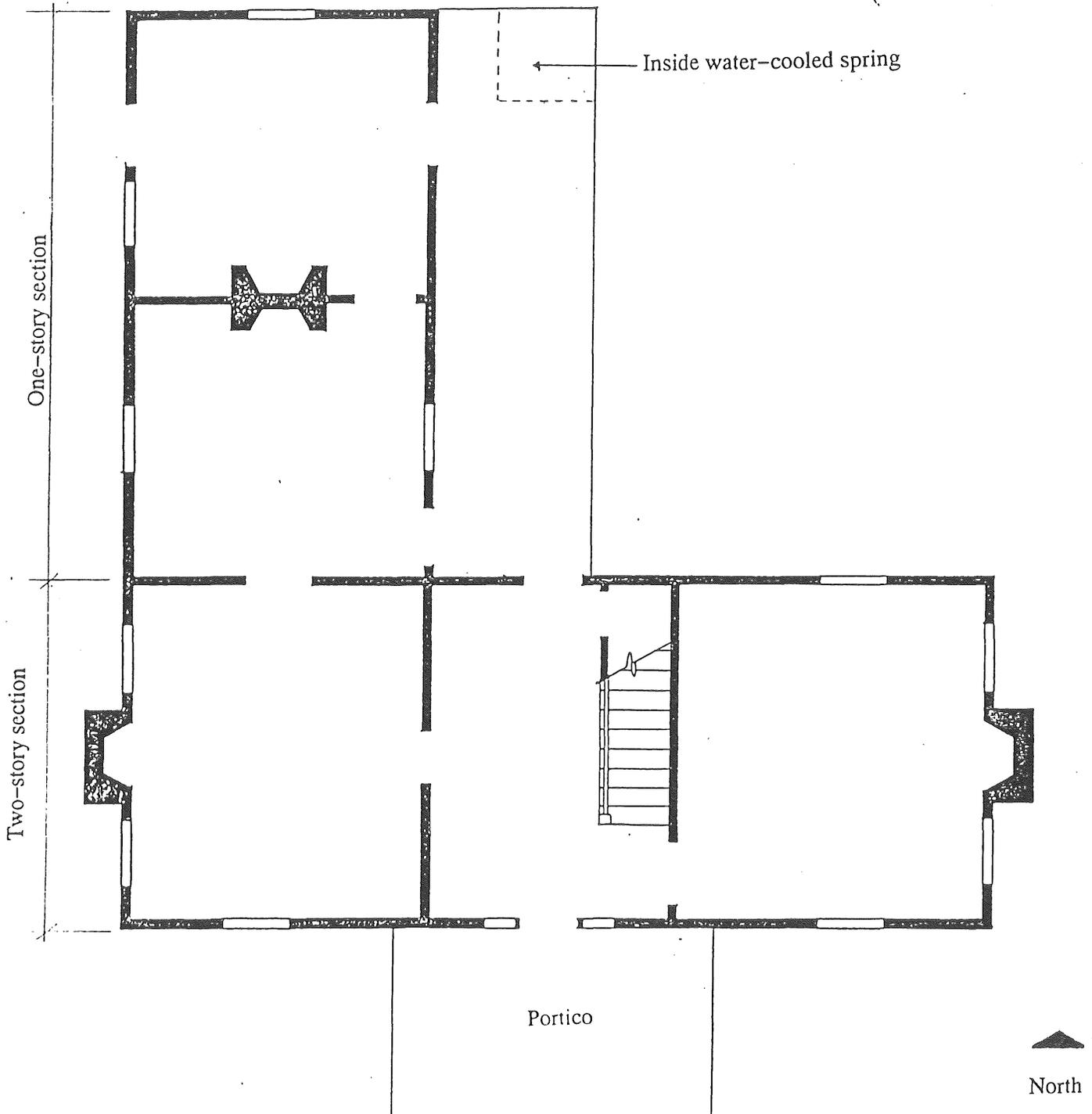
name/title Scott Power
organization
date December 1, 1990
street & number 43 Hindman Drive
city or town Greenville
telephone (803) 370-0168
state SC zip code 29609

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Section number Exhibit A Page \_\_\_\_\_

Abel Hyatt House, Swain County, North Carolina



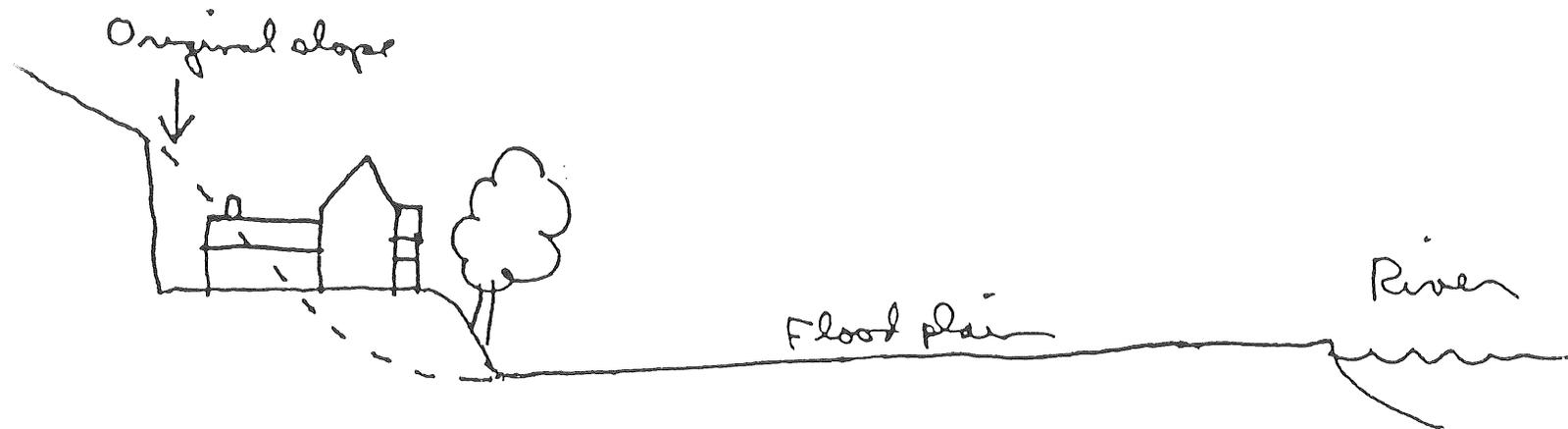
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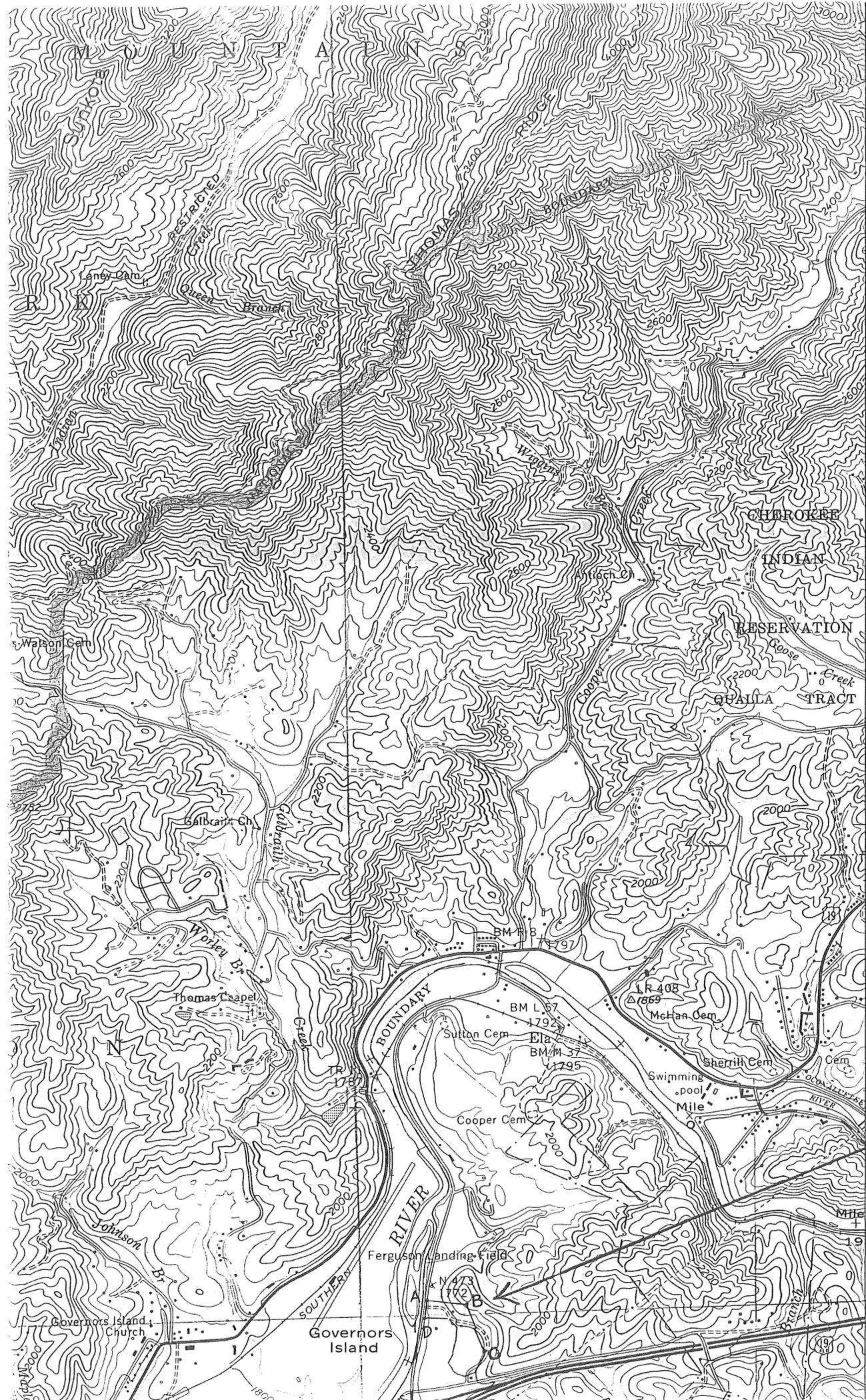
Section number Exhibit B Page \_\_\_\_\_ Abel Hyatt House, Swain County, North Carolina

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Diagram explaining early cut-and-fill landscaping of Hyatt House.



Drawn by Michael Southern, 1979



3930  
660 000  
FEET  
3929  
3928  
3927  
27' 30"  
3926  
CHEROKEE 4.0 MI.  
ASHEVILLE 52 MI.

BRYSON CITY QUAD  
ZONE 17

ABEL HYATT HOUSE  
SWAIN COUNTY  
NORTH CAROLINA

A:	E 282310
	N 3924070
B:	E 282500
	N 3924050
C:	E 282580
	N 3923820
D:	E 282290
	N 3923980

(WHITTIER 166-NE)  
4354 IV NE  
1.0 MI. TO WHITTIER EXIT  
SYLVA 15 MI.

ABEL HYATT HOUSE  
SWAIN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

SCALE: UNKNOWN

Map taken from Division of Lands of  
Gene Hyatt surveyed by W.G. Davis,  
May 18, 1962

Tract No. 3 = 24.5 acres is the property under nomination  
#> = photograph

