

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

## 1. Name

historic William Breese, Jr., House

and/or common Colonial Inn

## 2. Location

street & number 401 E. Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Brevard N/A vicinity of congressional district

state North Carolina code 037 county Transylvania code 175

## 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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Seymour Chotiner

street & number 401 E. Main Street

city, town Brevard N/A vicinity of state North Carolina 28712

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Transylvania County Courthouse

city, town Brevard state North Carolina 28712

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Western North Carolina Reconnaissance Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978-79  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N. C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Asheville state North Carolina 28805

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The William Breese, Jr., House is a grand Neo-Classical Revival style structure built ca. 1902 on the east side of Main Street in the Transylvania County seat of Brevard. The house occupies a tree-shaded corner lot in the 400 block of Main Street, just outside of the town's small commercial district and only three blocks south of the Transylvania County Courthouse at the town's center. The house is basically a double-pile plan cubical mass rising two stories beneath a hipped roof, with a single-story porch (now enclosed) to either side of its symmetrically composed facade and featuring a central, two-story Ionic entrance portico. A two-story ell extends the building by a two-room depth toward the rear. A two-story board-and-batten motel-type structure of simple, functional design was constructed on the site to the rear and north of the Breese House in the 1950s, but it has been excluded from the boundaries of this nomination.

The Breese House rises two full stories from a brick foundation. It is of frame construction but its exterior walls are covered in a rough stucco popular in the area at the turn of the century known as "pebbledash" and its corners are articulated with brick quoining. A full entablature cornice surrounds the building at its eave. The hip roof is covered in slate and is pierced by paired interior chimneys which rise astride the walls of the central hallways. The chimneys display simple corbeled heads.

On its facade the building's central mass is divided into three bays: the central two-story portico and flanking three-part windows. Each three-part window is composed of a central 12/1 sash with narrower 9/1 sash to either side. The central portico shelters entrances on each floor. The entrance compositions are similar--lighted double doors flanked by broad sidelights--except the ground-floor doorway and sidelights are surmounted by leaded glass transoms.

Paired Ionic columns support the portico's pedimented roof. Boxed and paneled Ionic pilasters support the roof where it joins the building mass. A railing with close-set square balusters and a robustly molded handrail circumscribes the balcony created at second-floor height.

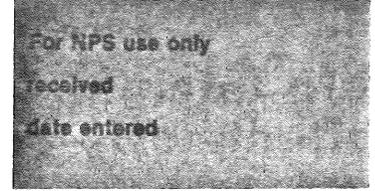
One-story porches which originally extended to either side of the building have both been enclosed--the north porch during the forties, the south porch more recently. Both were sheathed in German siding. The north porch received metal casement windows, the south porch metal-framed roll-out type windows.

The Breese House displays a modified double-pile plan with two-story ell. One enters into a broad stair hall featuring paneled wainscotting and a large Louis XVI style mantelpiece. The mantel, whose high shelf is supported by voluted urns, occupies the south wall of the hallway across from the stairway which rises in two runs along the north wall. The wainscotting rises with the stairs. The staircase is also paneled. Turned balusters support a molded handrail between a boxed and paneled starting newel and boxed newels at the intermediate landing.

Pocket doors open to both front parlors forward of the stairway. These and all the original doors and windows feature three-part molded surrounds typical of the period. The original dining room, first room in the rear ell on the ground floor, boasts a paneled wainscotting, but most other spaces in the house are simply finished with plaster walls, simple cornice and baseboard moldings, and plain, bracketed mantels. The second-floor hall displays a chairrail as well. The northwest bedroom features a built-in window seat between two original closets.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

Page one

Numerous changes have accompanied the building's conversion to a restaurant and inn. On the second floor a wall was removed from between the south rooms creating a large meeting room. On the ground floor the doorway to the original dining room has been enlarged. One fireplace has been closed off. Most of the building's ceilings have received facing materials such as acoustical tile. However, the institutional kitchen manages to function out of the original kitchen space and overall the original character of the building has not been seriously compromised.

The Colonial Inn remains one of Brevard's finest examples of turn of the century architecture. Through its use of the locally popular pebbledash to execute the familiar Neo-classical Revival design it makes a strong statement about propriety in turn of the century western North Carolina.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** ca. 1901      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

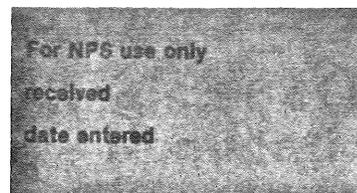
The William Breese, Jr., house is a grand Neo-Classical Revival style house built on East Main Street in Brevard, North Carolina, by Mrs. Martha Woodbridge shortly after 1901. The house combines features typical of the Neo-Classical Revival style, such as its imposing two-story Ionic portico, with elements of a more local building vocabulary, as in its pebbledash (rough stucco) on frame exterior, to make a strong statement about propriety in turn of the century Brevard. Mrs. Woodbridge's daughter and son-in-law, William Breese, Jr., lived in the house with her from its construction until her death in 1930. Mrs. Woodbridge deeded the property to the Breeses in 1920 and they held it until 1936. Bill Breese recovered from a childhood case of tuberculosis to become captain of the University of North Carolina's first football team. He was a lawyer, local politician--serving as mayor of Brevard in 1900 and 1910--and owner and editor of the Sylvan Valley News. The house was lost to the Breeses in 1936 and changed hands several times before Mr. and Mrs. Karl Harbin opened it as an inn and restaurant around 1955. Known locally as the Colonial Inn the house continues to serve as a small mountain resort under the management of Mr. David Chotiner, son of the present owner.

### CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:

- B. The William Breese, Jr., house was for many years the home of William Breese, a figure of great political and civic importance in early twentieth century Brevard.
- C. The house combines characteristics typical of the Neo-Classical Revival style with elements of a more local building vocabulary to produce a strong statement about propriety in turn of the century western North Carolina.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8

Page one

At the turn of the century, Transylvania County maintained a rather peculiar conglomeration of societies. Numerically it was dominated by the rural mountain farmers who struggled to scratch up enough cash each year to pay the taxes on their land and buy a few household necessities. In the county seat of Brevard, though, lived a handful of well educated, relatively urbane citizens who were boosters for progress and the economic development of their town and county. Mrs. Martha A. E. Woodbridge, who built the home now known as the Colonial Inn, came to Brevard from Richmond, Virginia, where her family had enjoyed wide political and social influence. She lived in the home with her daughter, Rebekah, who had married William Breese, Jr., a second cousin.<sup>1</sup> Bill Breese was a lawyer and a man of public affairs in the community. The Breese family was raised in this home, but after three and a half decades it was lost to them during the Depression. For years, the survival of the home was rather uncertain, until, in 1956, Mrs. Annie Harbin opened it up for summer guests, and converted part of the downstairs into a fine quality restaurant. She called it the Colonial Inn, and so it remains today, catering to the many tourists who are attracted to the mountains of Transylvania County.

Around 1900, Brevard was still an outpost in the Appalachian wilderness. There was a twice daily railroad link to Hendersonville,<sup>2</sup> but on the whole the roads made any other form of transportation a laborious and expensive proposition. The abysmal condition of these roads made cash farming in Transylvania County nearly impossible, so life for most inhabitants had been frozen into what must have seemed a permanent frontier style. A man could make money in the various logging outfits and some did.

Activity for progressive development broke out in Brevard full force at the turn of the century. The population doubled in the two years prior to 1900.<sup>3</sup> The new leaders of the town wanted it to be a model of progress. It had long been a summer refuge for the Southern gentry and with the improvements of better roads, sewerage systems, and public water, tourists would flock, they hoped to Brevard and perhaps bring along some industry as well. In 1907 in an article headlined "Brevard: Its Past, Present and Future," a writer for the local newspaper described the enticements of the town:

In the central part of Transylvania County, lies one of America's most beautiful towns. Its beauty is both internal and external--internal because of its wide and well paved streets, lined on either side with shade trees...[T]he residence section of the town are like great parks, where there are beautiful homes with extensive, well kempt and shaded lawns; external because of the surrounding hills and mountains....

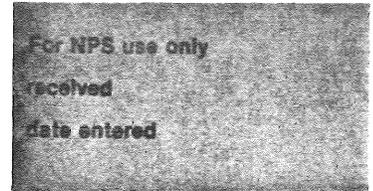
Brevard's stride has ever been forward; no falling off in population... a record of clean, steady growth and development....

An important feature of Brevard is, it has the largest number of people owning their own homes of any town of its size in the state, and a standard of living is one unknown in most towns.<sup>4</sup>

Martha Woodbridge, Bill and Rebekah Breese and the latter's children lived in one of the finest homes in Brevard. On November 25th, 1901, Mrs. Woodbridge had purchased from the Toxaway Company a lot of 2 1/3 acres "Known as the 'Franklin Park': being

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8

Page two

contiguous to and a part of the Franklin Hotel property."<sup>5</sup> This lot, and the others so sold, were restricted to one dwelling only. There were to be no stables, cribs, barns, tenement houses, shops, warehouses or granaries. The purchase price was one thousand dollars,<sup>6</sup> a hefty price for a lot in that day, but any structure that may have existed was certainly not the very fine house now standing. Colonel E. W. Breese, who grew up in the house, is sure that his grandmother, Martha Woodbridge, built the house soon after purchasing the lot in 1901.<sup>7</sup> The large columns and spacious porches speak to the Southern heritage of both the Breeses and the Woodbridges.

The home was too large for a single widow, and so she must have planned from the very start to live with her daughter and son-in-law. By 1901, Bill Breese had launched his political career and enjoyed a thriving law practice. He was not only elected mayor on two occasions (1901 and 1910) but also town alderman and county attorney.<sup>8</sup> In 1906, he was nominated by the Democratic party to run for the state senate. On the eve of the general election, the Sylvan Valley News endorsed Bill Breese.

Our people know the fight he has made before the Board of Commissioners to preserve the public roads for the use of the people who made them, and they know that he made the fight without reward or the hope of reward... The News would be pleased if the verdict of the people was unanimous for W. E. Breese, Jr.<sup>9</sup>

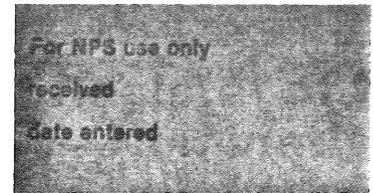
Bill Breese worked hard to win, covering his district that included not only Transylvania County, but Haywood, Swain and Jackson as well. He worked effectively, and on election day led the democratic ticket in western North Carolina with the largest majority.<sup>10</sup> In Raleigh, Senator Breese proposed laws to protect wildlife in his home county, to secure building of a railroad from Knoxville to Greenville through Brevard, and to prevent drunkenness on passenger trains. The laws passed.

Bill Breese devoted himself to a wide variety of public duties. He served as the president of the County Bar Association, was the fuel administrator for Transylvania County during the First World War, and served as chairman of the county board of elections. He was also owner and editor of the Brevard News during the 1920s. In 1935, he was appointed the district director of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, serving until he suffered a heart attack in 1939.<sup>11</sup> He was a trustee of the University of North Carolina for three and a half decades, and was chairman of the Board for Western Carolina Teacher's College (now Western Carolina University) from 1933 until his death.<sup>12</sup> At Western, he "...instituted a building program which is still going forward on a large scale."<sup>13</sup> He was a member of the Dunn's Rock Masonic Lodge and belonged to the honorary Society of Cincinnati, honoring the descendants of Revolutionary War officers.<sup>14</sup> He was also the instigating force behind the formation of the local chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Rebekah Breese, along with her mother Martha Woodbridge, maintained the family household while Bill pursued his ambitions in the community. Martha often went back to Richmond to visit her kinfolks. When she died, the Brevard News described her as "...one of the best loved and most widely known woman in Brevard....The deceased...

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet    HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE    Item number    8    Page    three

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was known for her alertness and keen intellect that seemed to increase rather than diminish with age."<sup>15</sup> She was a pillar of the local Episcopal Church where she shone most brightly at the Wednesday Book Club meetings.<sup>16</sup> Her daughter Rebekah was a noted horsewoman. She was a fine jumper, carrying out her maneuvers sidesaddle.<sup>17</sup> Rebekah fell ill and died in 1937, preceding her husband by two years.

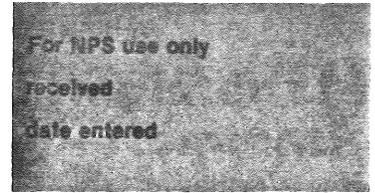
The home had been officially deeded over to Bill and Rebekah Breese in 1920 by her mother Martha "...for and in consideration of the sum of Ten Dollars and natural love and affection...."<sup>18</sup> During the Depression, the family struggled to keep their house as so many people did. In the fall of 1936, "Whereas there was default in the payment of the indebtedness...the said Carl McCrary, Substitute Trustee, did, on the 12th day of October, 1936, at twelve o'clock at the courthouse Door in the City of Asheville, North Carolina, expose to public sale the lands hereinafter described, where in when R. G. Jennings became the last and highest bidder for the same at the price of \$5,000.00...." Jennings bought the house as a favor to Breese, as they were old friends. Whether Bill Breese remained in residence there or not is unclear, but the Jennings family never lived in the house.<sup>20</sup>

In 1942, the house was sold to Dewitt T. and Lee Ola G. Abercrombie.<sup>21</sup> They owned a local furniture store,<sup>22</sup> and remained in the house for three years. For the next ten years, from 1945 to 1955, the home was owned by Exie F. Hatfield.<sup>23</sup> She began to explore possible ways to make income from the building by renting out upstairs rooms and, for a long period of time, she rented the entire house to the Elks Club.<sup>24</sup> In 1955 the back half of the lot was sold, and Annie and Karl Harbin purchased the old Breese home.<sup>25</sup> The Harbins made the landmark into a small summer resort. Visitors came from May to September to enjoy those fabled cool breezes of summertime. They built up a fine regular trade of people by maintaining high standards. Annie Harbin's restaurant was well known for excellent cuisine. Rooms were rented upstairs and a motel addition made on the side of the property.<sup>26</sup> In 1972 the Harbins sold it to two couples, the Browns and the Holcombes,<sup>27</sup> who sold it again later that year to Doyce and Lillian Hunter.<sup>28</sup> The Hunters were never able to overcome their indebtedness, and in 1974 "...became in arrears under the payments specified in the aforementioned promissory note."<sup>29</sup> The Browns repurchased the property and it has continued to change hands regularly ever since.

Today, David Chotiner is managing the business. One only hopes that he can keep the old Breese home open to the public, so that the structure can be enjoyed in the future. The memories of the old place include the wonderful gathering together, in 1911 of some of "Stonewall" Jackson's old troops. Mrs. Jackson came for the occasion.<sup>30</sup> The great personality of the house, however, belongs to Bill Breese, Jr., who led his neighbors in the pursuit of progress.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet      HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE      Item number      8

Page      four

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Colonel E. W. Breese, June 13, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> From the newspaper articles reprinted on a Colonial Inn menu, in the possession of Mary Jane McCrary.

<sup>3</sup> The menu, op cit.

<sup>4</sup> Sylvan Valley News, August 16, 1907.

<sup>5</sup> Transylvania County Deed Book 19, page 193.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Col. E. W. Breese.

<sup>8</sup> Obituary for William Breese, Jr., appearing in the Transylvania Times, April 6, 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Sylvan Valley News, November 2, 1906.

<sup>10</sup> Asheville Citizen, November 9, 1906, page 4.

<sup>11</sup> Obituary.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Col. E. W. Breese.

<sup>13</sup> Obituary.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Col. E. W. Breese.

<sup>15</sup> Brevard News, June 18, 1930.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Col. E. W. Breese.

<sup>18</sup> Transylvania County Deed Book 43, page 45.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Book 68, page 442.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Mary Jane McCrary.

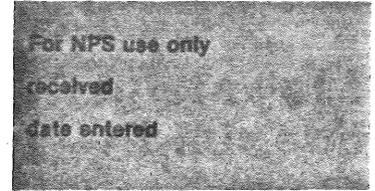
<sup>21</sup> Transylvania County Deed Book 80, page 97.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mary Jane McCrary.

<sup>23</sup> Transylvania County Deed Book 87, page 139.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet      HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE      Item number      8

---

Page      five

- 24 Interview with Mrs. Annie Harbin.
- 25 Transylvania County Deed Book 193, page 588.
- 26 Interview with Annie Harbin.
- 27 Transylvania County Deed Book 193, page 588.
- 28 Ibid., Book 197, page 288.
- 29 Ibid., Book 207, page 58.
- 30 Photograph of the Confederate Veterans Reunion, 1911.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property ± 1

Quadrangle name Brevard, North Carolina

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

**UMT References**

A 

1	7	3	4	2	4	2	1	0	3	1	9	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing									

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

C 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

D 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

E 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

F 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

G 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

H 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

See plat map - property outlined in red

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Architectural description prepared by Douglas Swaim, Preservation Specialist  
 Historical Significance prepared by John Ager, consultant to Division of Archives and History

organization N. C. Division of Archives and History date October 14, 1982  
 street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone (704) 298-5024 (Asheville)  
(919) 733-6545 (Raleigh)

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

# 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.

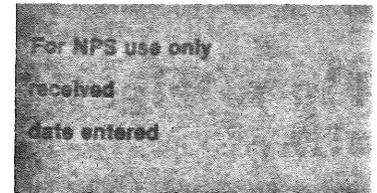
State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William S. Rice Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date

<b>For NPS use only</b>	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	date
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

Page one

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Asheville Citizen, 9 November, 1906.

Breese, Colonel E. W. Interview conducted June 13, 1982.

Brevard News, 18 June, 1930.

Colonial Inn Menu with reprints of various local newspaper articles, in the possession of Mary Jane McCrary.

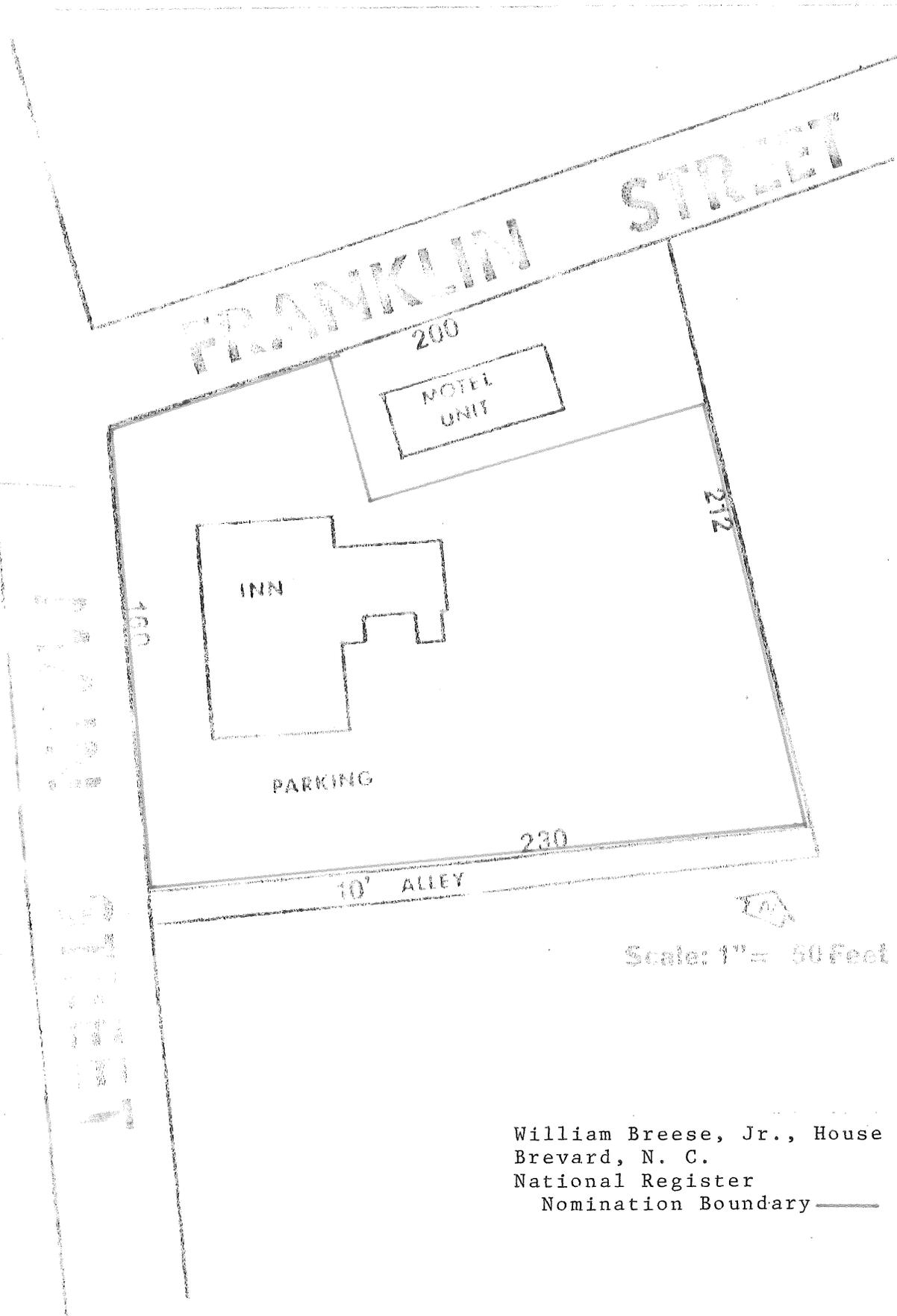
Harbin, Mrs. Annie. Interview conducted June 15, 1982.

McCrary, Mary Jane. Interview conducted June 13, 1982.

Sylvan Valley News, 2 November, 1906; 3 November, 1905; 16 August, 1907.

Transylvania County Deeds. Transylvania County Courthouse.

Transylvania Times, 6 April, 1939.

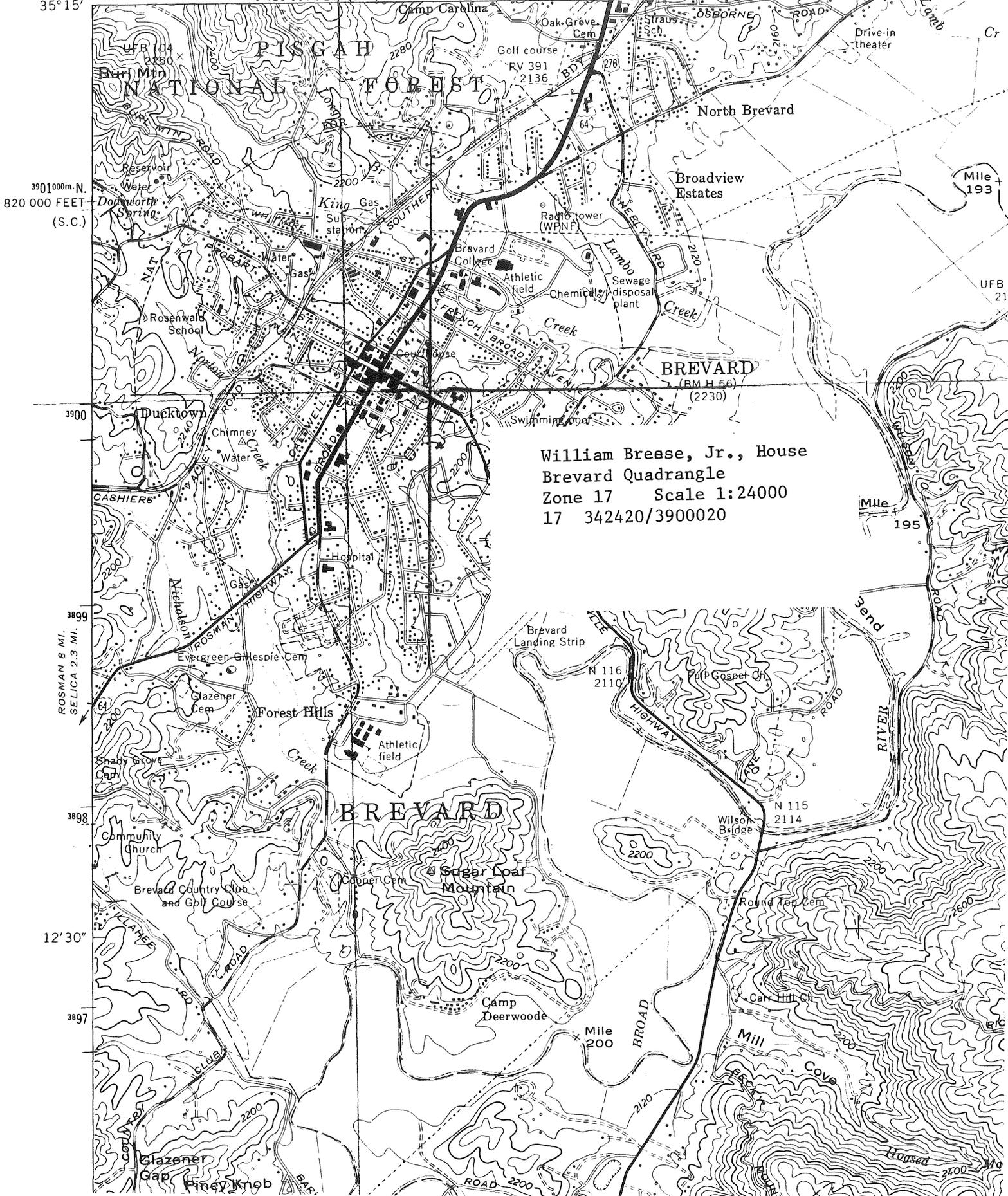


Scale: 1" = 50 feet

William Breese, Jr., House  
 Brevard, N. C.  
 National Register  
 Nomination Boundary

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

82°45' 341000m.E. 1 480 000 FEET (S.C.) 343 WAYNESVILLE 38 MI. 1.9 MI. TO N.C. 280 344 42°30' HENDERSONVILLE PISGAH FOREST O.



William Bresse, Jr., House  
Brevard Quadrangle  
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000  
17 342420/3900020

45°41' N 5° SE  
ROCK 184-5E

3901000m.N.  
820 000 FEET  
(S.C.)

3900

3899  
ROSMAN 8 MI.  
SELICA 2.3 MI.

3898

12°30'

3897

Mile 193

Mile 195

Mile 200



SERVING  
LUNCH  
&  
BREAKFAST

COLONIAL  
INN