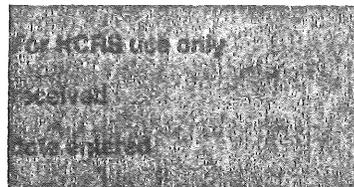


United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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



1. Name

historic Nu-Wray Inn

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Southside of Burnsville Town Green not for publication

city, town Burnsville vicinity of congressional district Eleventh

state North Carolina code 37 county Yancey code 199

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 type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Rush Wray

street & number The Nu-Wray Inn

city, town Burnsville vicinity of state North Carolina 28714

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Yancey County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Burnsville state North Carolina 28714

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N.A

city, town state

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## 7. Description

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

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

The Nu-Wray Inn is prominently sited on the south side of the Burnsville Town Green. The rambling frame structure reflects at least three major stages of construction, and in its various forms it has been the principal hostelry of the Yancey County seat since pre-Civil War times. In its present form, the inn is a long, two-and-one-half-story, L-shaped structure, with the principal ten-bay north facade facing the Town Green, and an eight-bay rear ell extending to the south. A monumental gable portico supported by pairs of massive brick piers is centered on the north facade.

The original portion of the inn is now contained within the west side of the structure. Though the massive changes made ca. 1870 and ca. 1915 have obscured most evidence of the original inn, the first inn appears to have been a two-story, two room deep building with a center hall. A few interior features of a late-Georgian character survive from the early period, including three mantels of nearly identical form, each having a richly molded shelf set above a simple but wide board frame. Also surviving in the second floor hall are two doors with six raised panels. The original appearance of the inn can only be imagined, but the quality of these vestiges suggests a sophistication of finish rare in the mountain region in the antebellum period.

The inn received its first major transformation after its purchase by Garrett and Elizabeth Ray after the Civil War. The Rays made extensive additions to the structure on the east, more than doubling the original floor space. The extension contained a central lobby and numerous additional rooms opening off an east-west center hall. Much of the hand-dressed sheathing, doors, and other fabric of the period survives in the east half of the building. A late nineteenth century photograph shows the exterior appearance after this first major expansion. The north facade had achieved its present width, with a long double-gallery shed porch centered on the facade. Also visible in the photograph is the projecting three-story gable roof bay on one side of the facade; this survives on the present building, as do occasional exterior details of this period, such as the triangular heads over some of the windows.

The final transformation was accomplished between 1915 and 1917 during the first years of ownership of William and Julia Wray. This included the addition of the rear ell housing dining and kitchen areas on the first floor and guest rooms above, the finishing of the attic for additional guest rooms, and the application of extensive Colonial Revival details on the exterior and interior. The principal change to the facade was the removal of the old double gallery porch and its replacement with the gable portico. Also added was a one-story shed porch with turned posts that runs the full width of the facade. Numerous Colonial Revival details were added, including the fanlight over the front entrance, a balustrade along the roof of the lower porch, shutters, and other features. A major renovation was made in the interior. The present stair was installed off the center hall of the original portion of the inn on the west side. This is a wide closed-string stair with paneled spandrels and wainscot, chamfered newels, and square-in-section posts. Guest rooms added in this period are finished with simple Colonial Revival era details, including horizontal-panel doors and post-and-lintel type door surrounds. In its final form, the inn contains forty bedrooms, thirty-five of which are available for guests.

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Page one

During the ca. 1915 alterations or sometime thereafter, the central lobby was extended with a one-story addition to the rear between the main block and the east side of the rear ell. The lobby is finished with mid-twentieth century paneling, and a "rustic" stone fireplace is set at the back end of the lobby area. The mixture of the interior finish of the various stages of construction encountered through the inn heightens its overall character of informal comfort.

To the rear of the inn stands a nineteenth century frame smokehouse with a gable front entrance. A small stone well under a shingled cover, now a purely ornamental feature, stands off the back patio. The back yard is screened with tall latticework fences.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates ca. 1833?; ca. 1870; ca. 1915; Builder/Architect Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located near the foot of Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in eastern America, Burnsville became the county seat of Yancey County in 1833, and the Nu-Wray Inn has been a landmark on the Burnsville Town Green since the earliest years of the establishment of the county and town. The loss of early records obscures the inn's origins, but local tradition attributes the original portions of the structure to Backhaus Smith in the early 1830s. Architectural evidence supports an 1830s date; several early features survive that indicate the original inn was a substantial two-story, double pile structure with a sophistication of detail unusual for the mountain region at the time. The inn was purchased after the Civil War by Garrett and Elizabeth Ray, who made extensive Victorian additions in the 1870s, and the hostelry became known as Ray's Inn. The Rays' daughter Julia married William B. Wray in 1894, and the couple took possession of the inn in 1915. The Wrays made numerous alterations and improvements in the Colonial Revival mode, giving it its present appearance, and renamed it Nu-Wray Inn. Today the inn remains with the Wray family, and thrives as one of the most popular mountain inns in the Southern Appalachians.

### Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the early economic and social expansion of western North Carolina, with the establishment and Yancey County and Burnsville, and representative of the mountain inn important to travel, communication, and early tourism in western North Carolina.
- C. Embodies elements of three major stages of construction and improvement, reflecting the course of architectural development in the region through the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It began as a substantial two-story frame house with interior detail of late Georgian character rather sophisticated for the region, and received extensive overbuilding during the Victorian era. It acquired its final appearance with Colonial Revival improvements made in the early twentieth century.

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The Nu-Wray Inn is located on the court square in Burnsville, the county seat of Yancey County, in the heart of the North Carolina mountains. It is one of the most celebrated inns in the state and has been a focal point in the community for well over a century. It is not certain when the inn was first constructed, but its origins lie in an antebellum inn/tavern built by Backhaus Smith, possibly as early as the 1833 founding of the town. The building changed hands several times, but remained small until it was purchased by Garret Ray from Milton Penland shortly after the Civil War.<sup>1</sup>

Ray greatly expanded the inn, which he called Ray's Inn. He added wings and a third story.<sup>2</sup> In the middle 1880s Burnsville was visited by New Englander Charles Dudley Warner, who was undertaking a tour of the North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee mountains. Warner, who published his travelogue, called Burnsville "more like a New England village than any hitherto seen . . . mildly picturesque, but very pleasing."<sup>3</sup> The inn was described as "an inviting tavern, with a long veranda."<sup>4</sup> Warner further describes the inn:

The tavern had recently been enlarged to meet the new demands for entertainment, and is a roomy structure, fresh with paint and only partially organized. The travelers were much impressed with the brilliant chambers, the floors of which were painted in alternate stripes of vivid green and red. The proprietor, a very intelligent and enterprising man, who had traveled often in the North, was full of projects for the development of his region . . . But it should be said that before the country can attract and retain travelers, its inhabitants must learn something about the preparation of food. If, for instance the landlord's wife at Burnsville had traveled with her husband, her table would probably have been more on a level with his knowledge of the world, and it would have contained something that the wayfaring man, though a Northerner, could eat.<sup>5</sup>

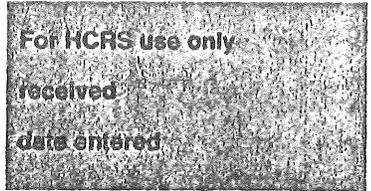
Garret Ray and his wife Elizabeth continued to operate Ray's Inn until their deaths in 1912. In 1915 Julia Wray, a daughter of Garret and Elizabeth Ray purchased complete control of the inn from her brothers and sisters. Mrs. Wray and her husband William B. Wray renovated and modernized the inn, adding electricity in 1917. They changed the name of the establishment to the Nu-Wray Inn.<sup>6</sup>

Under the ownership of William and Julia Wray the Nu-Wray Inn became one of western North Carolina's most celebrated commercial establishments. William Wray died in 1931, but his widow survived him until 1966. The inn was best known for "its bountiful meals and hospitality."<sup>7</sup> Bill Sharpe, writing in the State magazine in 1945 praised the Nu-Wray as "one of the outstanding eating places in the country," and added that it was "known all over the Appalachian region and far beyond." At this time dinner consisted of no less than twenty dishes.<sup>8</sup>

In 1950 the Nu-Wray Corporation was founded and took over ownership of the inn. The corporation consisted of members of the family.<sup>9</sup> For many years the proprietor of the inn has been Rush Wray, son of William and Julia Wray. He has maintained the inn's reputation. The Nu-Wray Inn is the only North Carolina inn listed in Architectural Digest's Classic Country Inns series, where it is described as "a big, comfortable three story country house that has been providing down-home hospitality for more than one hundred years."<sup>10</sup>

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The Nu-Wray Inn is prominently mentioned in the popular guide book Country Inns and Back Roads. Author Norman Simpson dwells at length on the quality of the Nu-Wray's food.<sup>11</sup> Tal Heel magazine writes that "This vintage hostelry . . . may be the best known of the mountain inns."<sup>12</sup> The inn has also been recognized by Southern Living magazine, Life, Ford-Times, the Mobil Travel Guide, Gourmet magazine, and the Duncan-Hines travel guide.<sup>13</sup>

The Nu-Wray Inn is still owned by Nu-Wray Enterprises and operated by Rush Wray. It closes December 1 and reopens in the spring. "The traditions of the Inn have been retained up to the present day. The tables are always loaded and hams are still being cured out in the smokehouse. The qualities of such a fine boarding place have lured people from far and wide."<sup>14</sup> The Nu-Wray Inn continues as one of the state's finest inns.

The structure is, of course closely related to its surrounding environment. Archaeological resources which may be present, such as trash pits, wells, and subsurface structural remains, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning social standing and mobility, as well as structural details and patterns of land use are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological resources may well be an important component of the significance of this structure. At this time, no investigation has been conducted to prove the presence of these remains, but it is probable that they exist and should be considered prior to any development of the property.

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<sup>1</sup>Telephone interview with Mr. Rush Wray, November 25, 1980, notes in file, herein after cited as Wray Interview; News and Observer (Raleigh), October 8, 1967; Asheville Citizen-Times, January 26, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Wray Interview.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Dudley Warner, On Horseback: A Tour in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888), 76, hereinafter cited as Warner, On Horseback.

<sup>4</sup>Warner, On Horseback, 76.

<sup>5</sup>Warner, On Horseback, 76-77.

<sup>6</sup>Wray Interview; Yancey County Deed Book 49, p. 193; Asheville Citizen, October 17, 1966. When she purchased the inn in 1915 Mrs. Wray paid each of her five siblings \$1,000.

<sup>7</sup>Asheville Citizen, October 17, 1966.

<sup>8</sup>Bill Sharpe, "Where Folks Really Eat," The State, Vol. XII, Number 41, March 10, 1945, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Wray Interview; Yancey County Deed Book 107, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup>Peter Andrews, Inns of the Mid-Atlantic and The South: An Architectural Digest Book (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 101.

<sup>11</sup>Norman Simpson, Country Inns and Back Roads (Stockbridge, Massachusetts: The Berkshire Traveler Press, Volume X, 1976), 202-203.

<sup>12</sup>Randy Johnson, "Fresh Air and Elemental Things," Tar Heel, Vol. VIII, Number 4, May, 1980, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup>Wray Interview; News and Observer (Raleigh), October 8, 1967.

<sup>14</sup>Wray Interview; Asheville Citizen-Times, January 26, 1967.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately 0.7 acres

Quadrangle name Burnsville

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UMT References

A 

1	7
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3	8	2	7	2	0
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3	6	7	5	2	6	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification 150' x 1170' square, southeast corner of southern boundary road of the Town Green and southern access road to the Green, bounded by right-of-way lines of aforesaid roads on west and north, and fencings and hedgerows on east and south; includes inn, a smoke house, a wellhouse and associated landscaping.

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Statement of significance by Jim Sumner, Researcher  
Property description by Michael Southern, Survey Specialist

organization Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section  
N. C. Division of Archives and History date January 8, 1981

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 919-733-6545

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date February 16, 1982

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

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National Register of Historic Places  
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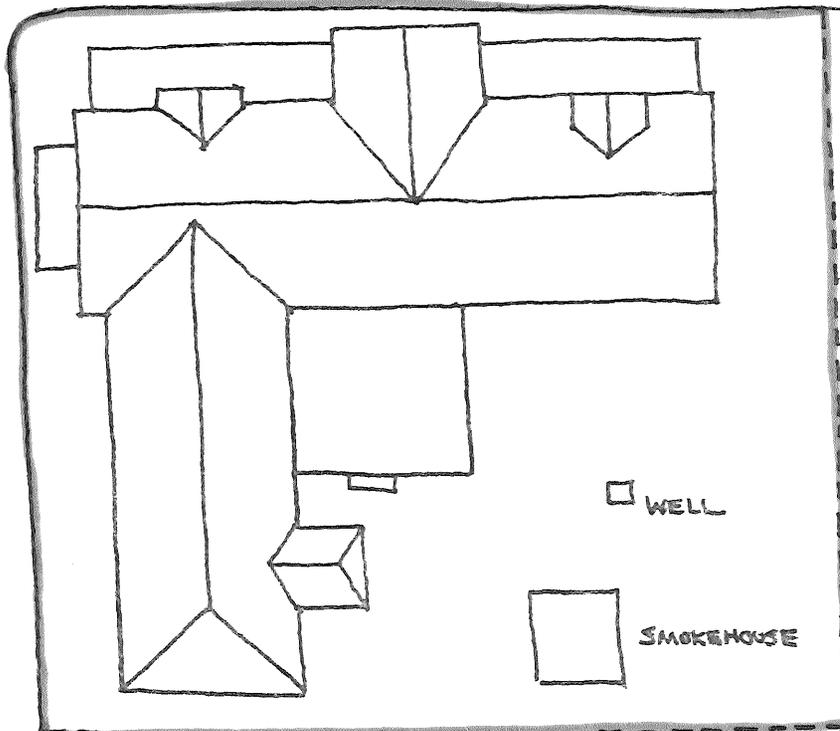
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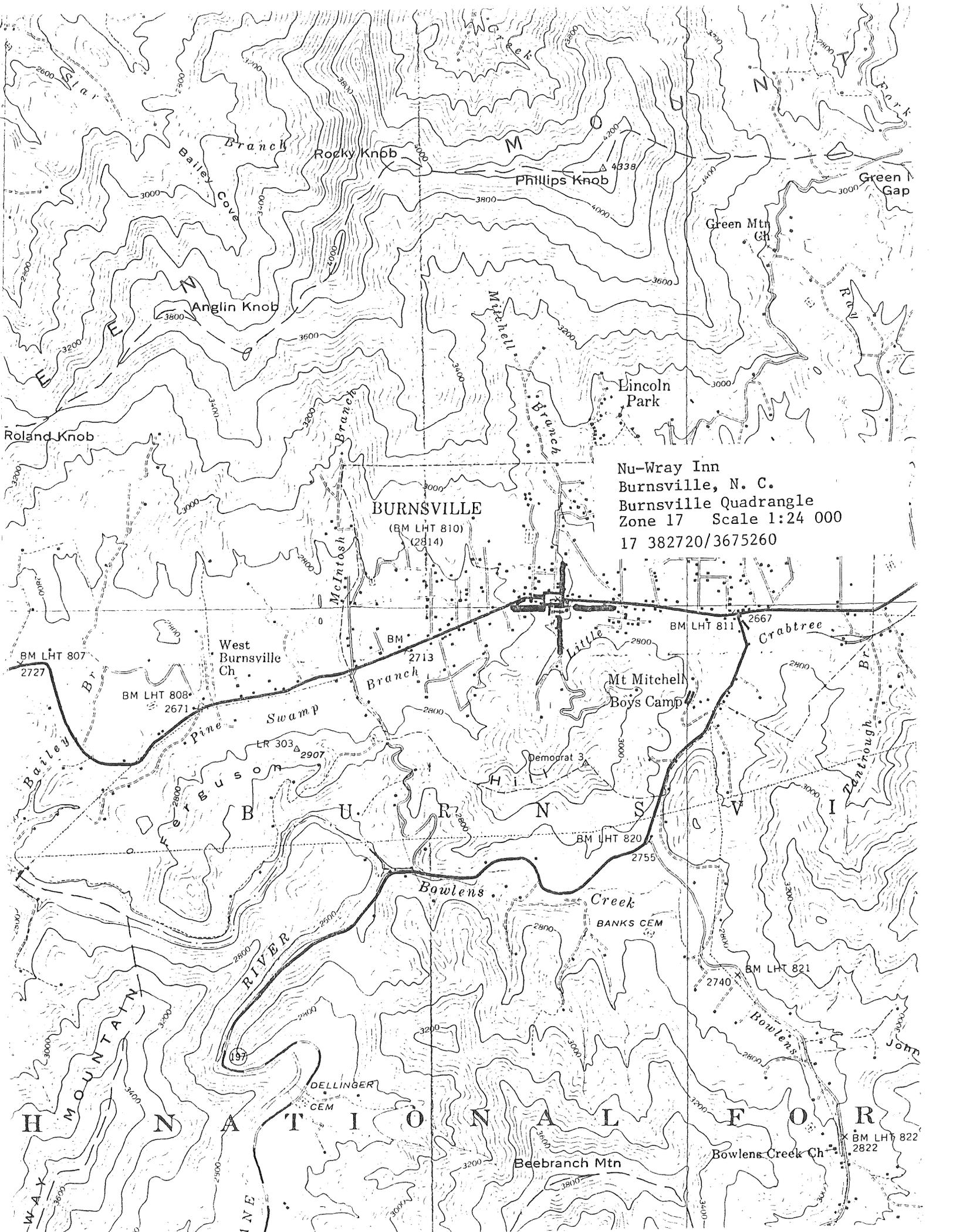


TOWN GREEN

NU-WRAY INN  
BURNSVILLE  
YANCEY COUNTY, N.C.



APPROXIMATE SCALE



Nu-Wray Inn  
Burnsville, N. C.  
Burnsville Quadrangle  
Zone 17 Scale 1:24 000  
17 382720/3675260

BURNSVILLE  
(BM LHT 810)  
(2814)

Mt Mitchell  
Boys Camp

NATIONAL FORK

