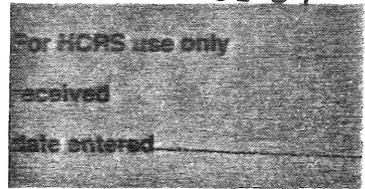


United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service



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 Elbert Crouse Farmstead

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Northeast side of the Blue Ridge Parkway 2 miles West of the junction with SR 1130 not for publication

city, town Whitehead vicinity of congressional district Fifth

state North Carolina code 037 county Alleghany code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Paul E. Church

street & number Route 4

city, town Sparta vicinity of state North Carolina 28675

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alleghany County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Sparta state North Carolina 28675

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

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" 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 date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located along the crest of the Blue Ridge in southwestern Alleghany County, the Elbert Crouse Farmstead is representative of the small, self-sufficient, subsistence farming operations that supported families in the remote sections of the western North Carolina mountains from the time of settlement through the first decades of the twentieth century. The property consists of 139 acres of pasture and orchard, and contains a small log dwelling, a few surviving outbuildings, and the scattered ruins of others. A short distance to the south, the wall of the Blue Ridge begins to drop dramatically into the foothills of Wilkes County below, and for generations this barrier inhibited communication between settlements of the higher elevations and the trading centers of the Piedmont. Along this particular section of the Blue Ridge summit, the terrain is not rugged or forbidding, but deeply rolling and suited for grazing, orchard cultivation, and row crop agriculture along the gentler slopes of the hills, and an independent people managed a quiet and isolated living here. Today the area is easily reached by the Blue Ridge Parkway, which borders the Crouse Farmstead on the southwest, but until the late 1930s it was one of the least accessible and least understood parts of western North Carolina.

The centerpiece of the farm is the small log dwelling. Its date of construction is not firmly established; Tom Pruitt, a close neighbor who knew the Crouse family, reports that it was built by Elbert Crouse's uncle, Isaac Reynolds, about 1905 on the occasion of Elbert's marriage to Bettie Wady. But documentary evidence can be interpreted to suggest that it was built as early as the 1870s for Elbert's father, John W. Crouse (see statement of significance). In any case, the house is a significant example of the persistence and strength of the log building tradition in this region into the late nineteenth or even the early twentieth century. It is a well crafted log house of traditional two-room plan with an attic under a steeply pitched gable roof of tin. Its square-hewn logs are tightly joined with half-dovetail notching. The logs are covered with clapboards, and these in turn received asbestos shingle siding over most parts of the house in the mid-twentieth century. The present brick chimney on the northeast gable end was probably added after World War II by Elbert's son, Lawrence. The stones of the earlier rock chimney lie scattered close by. The deep, tin-covered shed front porch is supported by rough posts and is probably also a second quarter of the twentieth century replacement; the frame shed rooms to the rear and on the southwest gable end are likely to be also of that period. The interior of the dwelling was not available for study.

The largest structure on the property is the frame barn, of uncertain date but probably of the 1920s or 1930s. It is set into the slope of a hill east of the house, its tin gable roof on a northeast-southwest axis. The central sections of the gable ends are clad in horizontal board siding, with the deep shed extensions on the sides covered with vertical boards. The central portion rests on a concrete block (possibly rebuilt) foundation which projects from the slope of the hill on the southwest side, giving that side a full three-level height, with pairs of windows flanking the foundation door and aligned three-high in straight rows up the wall. The upward slope of the hill allows the narrow door in the northeast gable end to open directly into the second level.

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Three other structures remain standing. A small shed storage building with vertical board siding stands just north of the house. Farther north is a latticed gable roof structure; neighbor Tom Pruitt says this was originally a grave cover in the family cemetery located on the hill above. A concrete block silo, coverless and overgrown with vines, stands on the eastern edge of the property. The ruins of a small frame outbuilding lie near the latticed structure, and a second outbuilding ruin is found southeast of the house along a small branch.

A special feature of the property is the splendid variety of fruit, nut, and ornamental trees and plants, untended now for over a decade, that were planted and cultivated by Bettie Wady Crouse; these were doubtless an important source of food, occasional cash income, and pleasure for the Crouse family. In the orchard and scattered about the property are apples, peaches, cherries, black walnuts, chestnuts, and fox grapes; among the ornamentals are Osage orange, persimmon, hydrangea, cedar, and hemlock. Today bull thistle and trumpet vine have unmolested run of the abandoned farm.

On the northwest side of the property, the family cemetery lies on a hill adjacent to a Parkway camping area. In it are the graves of Elbert and Bettie Wady Crouse, Elbert's grandfather and great grandfather and their wives, neighbors Martin and Caroline Brinegar and their infant son, and members of the Hopper family, another neighboring clan.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates N/A

Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located on the summit of the Blue Ridge in southwestern Alleghany County, the Elbert Crouse Farmstead is representative of the small subsistence family farms, now almost extinct, that characterized life in the remote sections of western North Carolina for many generations. The farm includes a small log dwelling, frame outbuildings, and hillsides planted in a variety of fruit and ornamental trees and plants. The half-dovetailed log house dates from the late nineteenth or very early twentieth century, and is a notable example of the persistence of the log tradition in domestic building in this region. From the beginning of this century it was the home of Elbert and Bettie Wady Crouse and their children, a reclusive family who made a simple living raising stock and growing fruit on their 139 acre holding. The Blue Ridge Parkway now borders the property on the southeast, and the Parkway Service is currently negotiating for the purchase of the abandoned farm to preserve it and include it as part of a program of interpretation of traditional mountain life.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the traditional patterns of settlement and subsistence in remote areas of the Blue Ridge Mountains from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century.
- C. The small log dwelling embodies traditional log building methods, proportions, and craftsmanship, and represents the strength of the tradition into comparatively recent times in the mountain region.
- D. May be likely to yield information important in the study of folkways of the Southern Appalachians.

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The Elbert Crouse House took its name from a fourth generation member of one of the first families to settle south central Alleghany County in what later became known as the Whitehead community.¹ Benjamin Crouse (1800-1891), Elbert's great-grandfather, was living in the area when Alleghany was carved from Ashe in 1859, and he may have resided there as early as 1835 when his son Henderson Crouse was born.² Henderson (1835-1913) and his wife Mary Ann (1837-1912) became the parents of John W. Crouse in 1857.³ When John W.'s wife, Nancy, gave birth to their first child, Elbert, in 1879, they were living on a 164 acre tract joining the southern end of Henderson Crouse's home tract.⁴ Thus, while Elbert represented only the second generation of the family born in Alleghany County, he was descended from a pioneering family who, for at least four generations, had owned and occupied land south of Little River, stretching from near present Whitehead to Low Notch on the Alleghany-Wilkes County line.⁵

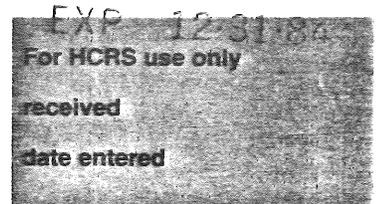
The house now standing near the Blue Ridge Parkway was constructed on land long held by the Crouse family, but precisely when it was built cannot be determined from the documentary records. Tom Pruitt (b. 1904), a long time neighbor of Elbert Crouse, recalled that the house was built about 1905-1906, at the time of Elbert's marriage;⁶ however, there are strong indications that the house may have been built some years earlier. The original structure was a small, well constructed, half-dovetail notch log house with a stone chimney, a building type prominent in the nineteenth century but rarely seen after 1900.⁷ Alone, the building pattern could represent the persistence of a tradition, but the ca. 1905 date can be questioned by other factors.

Pruitt stated that Henderson Crouse's (Elbert's grandfather) home stood on the adjoining farm not far distant. A map of Alleghany County in 1915 shows only two houses in the general vicinity.⁸ Since Henderson lived until 1913, one of the houses (one to the north) is obviously his, and the other was then occupied by Elbert Crouse. The 1880 census showed that Henderson and his son John W. (Elbert's father) were next door neighbors which, if Pruitt were correct, should have indicated a third house unless John's house was destroyed before 1915.⁹ While the latter is possible, it seems improbable since the local tradition makes no mention of a house being destroyed and the on site inspection did not indicate such a likelihood. Furthermore, the records suggest a story somewhat different.

John W. Crouse disappeared from the records between 1880 and 1900. He seems to have left the area as his absence from the family cemetery would also indicate. He did not appear in the North Carolina census for 1900 nor did any evidence of his wife Nancy or their children.¹⁰ Pruitt could not remember Elbert's father while clearly recollecting Henderson Crouse, giving further evidence that John W. departed the region before 1900. John's disappearance seems to have caused the confusion concerning the construction of the house.

While the sequence of events cannot be documented beyond question, it appears most probable that the original log house was constructed for John W. Crouse about the time of his marriage in the late 1870s.¹¹ He lived there (Elbert was born in the house) until his departure and for some years the house apparently stood vacant. When Elbert returned about 1905 to get married, the old house was repaired and sheathed by his uncle Isaac "Ike" Reynolds as the "new" home of Elbert and his bride, Bettie Wady Crouse.¹² There is no official transfer of the property from John W. to Elbert, but the records strongly suggest that Elbert came into possession of the land formerly owned by his father in 1880.¹³ At the

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time Ike Reynolds renovated the house, Tom Pruitt was only one year old, and what he learned about the house and family came from word of mouth. The stories of marriages and a house built for newlyweds and rebuilt for newlyweds probably became confused as three-quarters of a century passed.

Elbert Crouse lived in the house for over sixty-five years. Much of the time he and Bettie sequestered themselves in their mountain home, preferring seclusion and solitude to socializing with neighbors. Crouse was neither an ambitious nor a very successful farmer.¹⁴ He contented himself with the raising of hogs, sheep, and turkeys while Bettie Crouse cultivated a sizable orchard of fruits and nuts (apples, peaches, cherries, black walnuts, chestnuts, and fox grapes).¹⁵ Life on the Crouse farm, as elsewhere in isolated pockets of the North Carolina mountains, felt virtually none of the impact of the rapidly changing face of American society during the first half of the twentieth century. Subsistence was not merely a description of existence but the basic element of a traditional lifestyle.

Only a few changes have been made over the years. Following the remodeling of the house about 1905, Crouse constructed a large barn near the house, apparently in the 1920s. Sometime after he returned from World War II, Elbert's son Lawrence (deceased) decided to improve the farm for his aging parents. Using his own money Lawrence had frame additions built on to the rear and side of the house, constructed a silo, and replaced the deteriorated stone chimney with new brick.¹⁶ The changes were probably costly for the time but did little damage to the integrity of the farm setting.

Elbert Crouse died in 1973, three years after his wife Bettie. A family squabble ensued among the three children, Lawrence, Earl, and Sadie, over the property rights. Lawrence claimed a vested interest, but it was Sadie and her husband Paul Reed who finally acquired title to the house tract.¹⁷ The Reeds, who had moved to Galax, Virginia, transferred the 139 acres to Paul E. Church who is the present owner.¹⁸ Church's interests in the old homestead are purely financial but there is hope that the Blue Ridge Parkway, which runs along the southern edge of the property, may acquire it and thereby preserve the historical integrity of the farm and the natural beauty of the Parkway vista.

Once there were numerous mountain cabins nestled among the valleys of the Blue Ridge, but only a few remain. One of these, the Brinegar Cabin, now stands in Doughton Park, which adjoins the Crouse property. Martin and Caroline Brinegar were neighbors of the Crouse family from the middle of the nineteenth century until Caroline Brinegar left the homestead in 1933.¹⁹ The cabin was acquired by the Blue Ridge Parkway Service and is open to park visitors wishing to see an old time weaving loom in operation. The Brinegars are buried in the hilltop cemetery on the Crouse land, a burial ground that apparently served a number of mountain families.²⁰

The condition of the Crouse House and outbuildings, the proximity to Doughton Park, and the naturalness of its setting offer the Parkway Service a superb opportunity to fully develop its historical interpretation of mountain life:

This late 19th century mountain farm is typical of the scattered homesteads that dotted the southern mountains and now are all but obliterated by the passage of time and the elements. However, this farm has survived and represents an era that exactly coincides with the Doughton Park interpretive theme "Man and

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His Environment." Also, the location near the campground is ideal as a walk-in interpretive site and as a scenic backdrop for the Parkway travelers. The outbuildings, and particularly the sheathed log house, are very valuable units and should be incorporated into the Parkway story before they are lost to outside interests or removed for display elsewhere.²¹

The true historical significance of the Crouse Farm lies not within its own internal history, but as the above observation notes, it is "typical" of a cultural element that is rapidly disappearing.

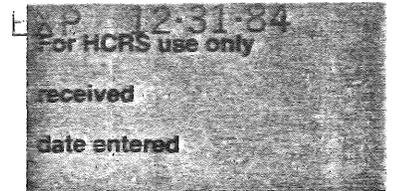
The opportunity to preserve forms of a frontier lifestyle should not be overlooked because it represents the genesis of North Carolina. Every settlement from Roanoke Island to the Tennessee border had a frontier, however brief it may have been. The lifestyle of the mountain people was characteristic of a settlement pattern, always on the fringe of a developing society, that was gradually pushed west until it found a stronghold in the isolation of the mountains. There the lifestyle made its final stand. A sophisticated society developed in the valleys while the ridges and coves became the last frontier, stubbornly resisting the progress of the world at its heels. Nowhere east of the mountains have the earliest frontier pattern of settlement or the lifestyle of the wilderness pioneer been preserved. The opportunity there has long since passed, but a remnant of that frontier still exists in parts of the mountains. It is embodied in the Crouse Farm; it should not be lost.

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

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NOTES

¹History of Alleghany County 1859-1976 (Sparta: Alleghany County Historical Committee, 1976), 31, hereinafter cited as Alleghany County History.

²See tombstone for Benjamin Crouse in family cemetery on property; interview with Tom Pruitt, long time neighbor of Elbert Crouse, by Michael Southern, September, 1979, hereinafter cited as Pruitt interview; and David Leroy Corbitt, The Formation of the North Carolina Counties 1663-1943 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950), 3.

³Life dates on tombstones in family cemetery; and Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: North Carolina - Alleghany County, Population Schedule, Gap Civil Township (vol. 1, ED 11, Sheet 23, line 38). Census records hereinafter cited by number, date, and schedule.

⁴Pruitt interview; and Tenth Census, 1880, Agricultural Schedule, Gap Civil Township, 22.

⁵Alleghany County History, 31; Pruitt interview; and "Tract Report on Crouse Property," prepared by Blue Ridge Parkway Service (1978), hereinafter cited as "Crouse Property Report."

⁶Pruitt interview.

⁷See notes from architectural survey conducted by Michael Southern, September, 1979, on file in Elbert Crouse Farmstead Folder, Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Elbert Crouse Farmstead File.

⁸R. T. A. Burke and H. D. Lambert, Soil Survey of Alleghany County (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917), map dated 1915, hereinafter cited as Soil Survey Map, 1915.

⁹Compare Pruitt interview; Tenth Census, 1880, Agricultural Schedule, Gap Civil Township, 22; and Soil Survey Map, 1915.

¹⁰Check of 1900 census index (soundex) for all members of Crouse family. Microfilm copy C 620, State Archives, Raleigh.

¹¹Marriage date estimated from ages of John W. Crouse and first child in Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule (see fn. 3).

¹²Data concerning Ike Reynolds from Pruitt interview.

¹³Elbert Crouse eventually owned nearly 150 acres located in the same area where his father had owned 164 acres. For substantiation see fns. 8 and 9; and "Crouse Property Report."

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¹⁴Pruitt interview.

¹⁵Pruitt interview; and Elbert Crouse Farmstead File.

¹⁶Elbert Crouse Farmstead File; and Pruitt interview.

¹⁷Elbert Crouse Farmstead File; and dates on tombstones in family cemetery.

¹⁸Pruitt interview; and interview with Dr. Harley Jolley and Robert Hope, Blue Ridge Parkway Service, by Jerry L. Cross, July 20, 1981, hereinafter cited as Jolley and Hope interview.

¹⁹"Crouse Property Report"; Pruitt interview; and Elbert Crouse Farmstead File.

²⁰Families include the Crouses, Brinegars, and Hoppers. See tombstones in family cemetery.

²¹See "Crouse Property Report."

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 139 acres

Quadrangle name Whitehead, N.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1,7	48,67,8,0	4,03,22,4,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

1,7	48,69,4,0	4,03,19,0,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

1,7	48,67,6,0	4,03,16,2,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

1,7	48,71,2,0	4,03,12,2,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

E

1,7	48,67,2,0	4,03,08,8,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

F

1,7	48,63,6,0	4,03,12,0,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

G

1,7	48,62,0,0	4,03,15,8,4
Zone	Easting	Northing

H

1,7	48,63,0,0	4,03,19,6,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property includes the entire 139 acres in association with the Crouse Farm, including the log house, outbuildings, and adjoining cropland, pastures, and orchards. See attached surveyor's plat.

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 Michael T. Southern, Restoration Specialist
Jerry L. Cross, Researcher
 Survey & Planning Branch.
 organization Archeology & Historic Preservation Section date September, 1981
Division of Archives & History
 street & number 109 East 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. Rice, Jr.*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date June 24, 1982

For HCRS use only
 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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Elbert Crouse Farmstead File. Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

History of Alleghany County, 1859-1976. Sparta: Alleghany County Historical Committee, 1976.

Interviews

Tom Pruitt, September, 1979

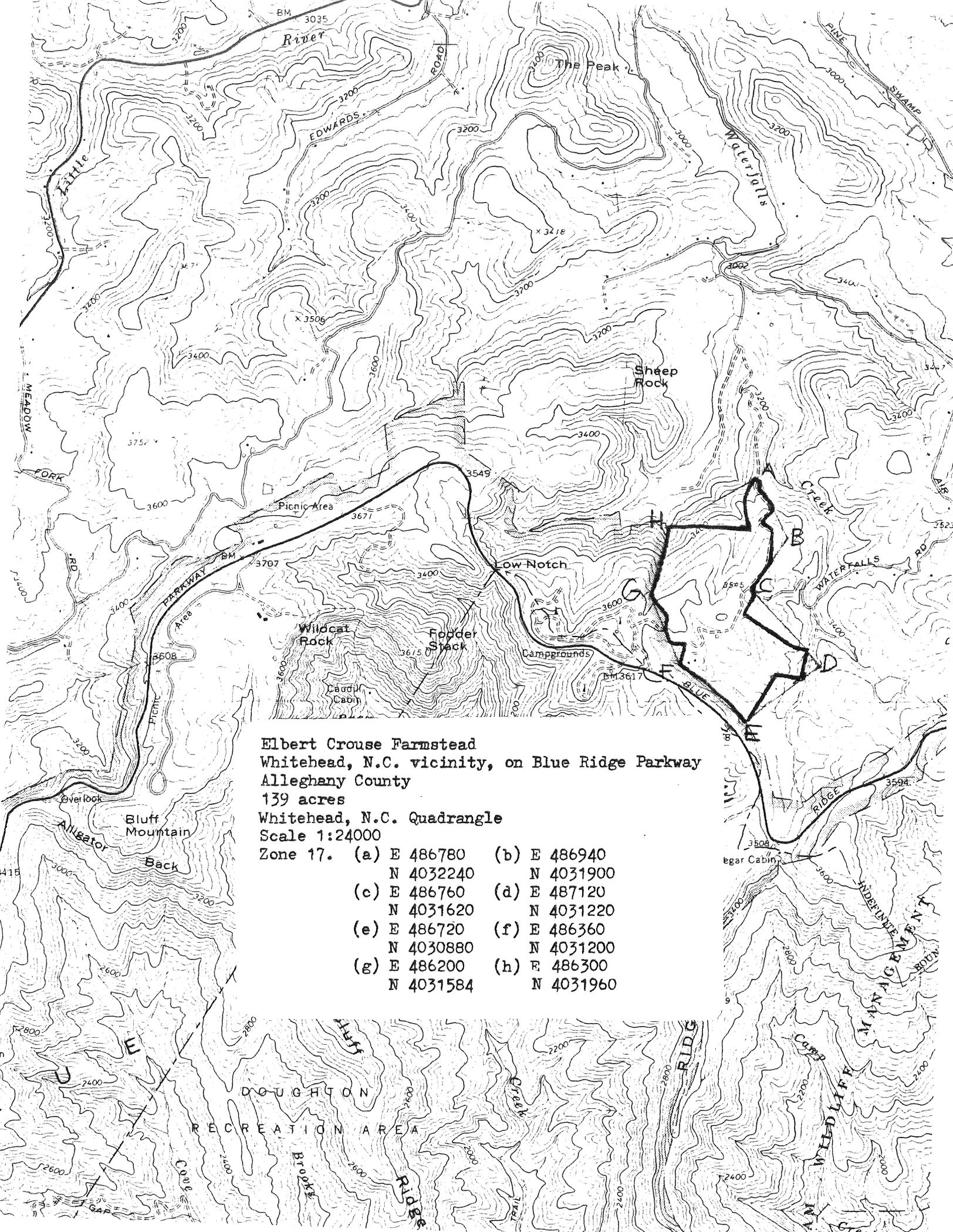
Harley E. Jolley, July 20, 1981

Robert Hope, July 20, 1981

Powell, William S. The North Carolina Gazetteer. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

"Tract Report on Crouse Property." Prepared by Blue Ridge Parkway Service, 1978.

United States Census Records. Alleghany County, North Carolina, 1880-1900.



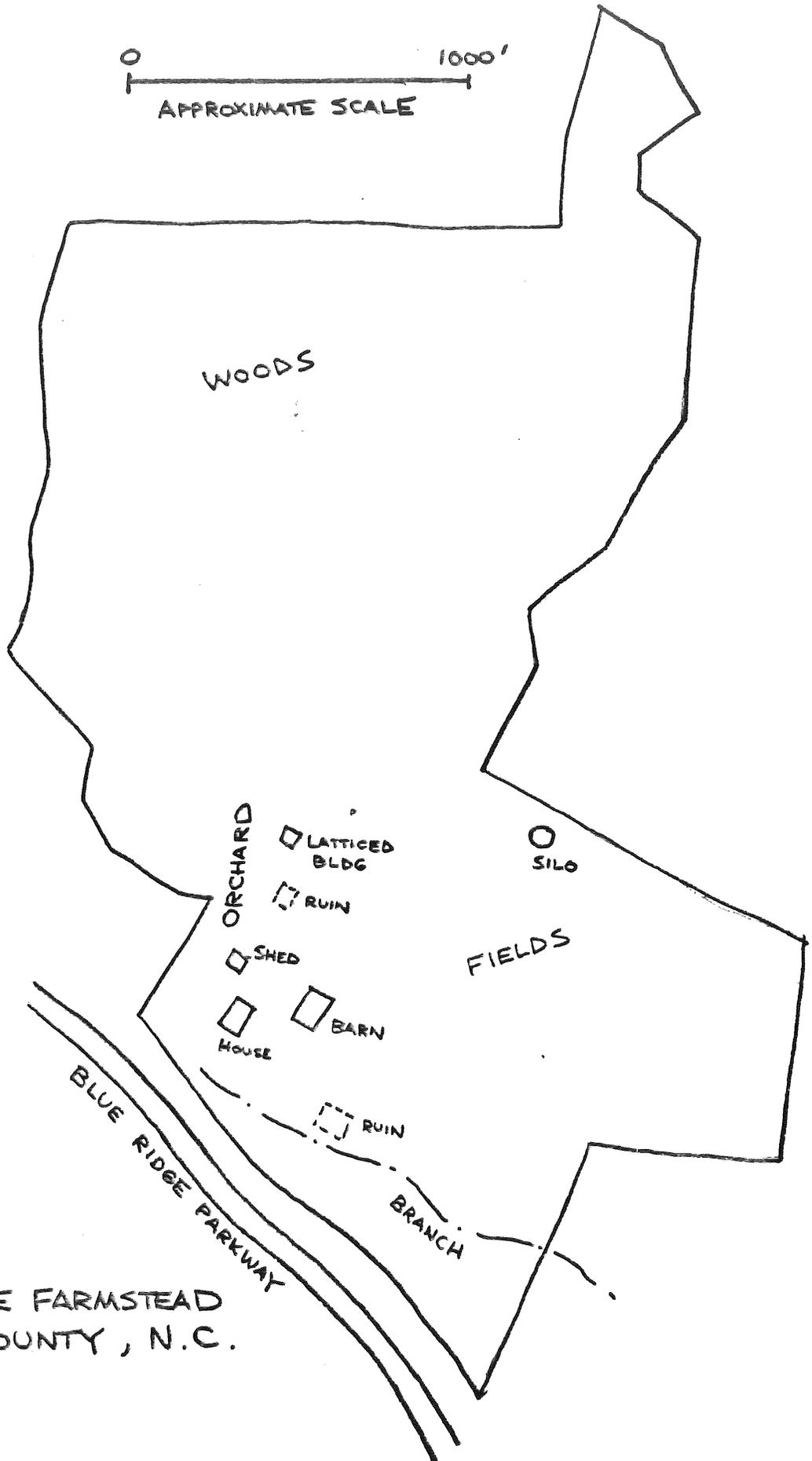
Elbert Crouse Farmstead
Whitehead, N.C. vicinity, on Blue Ridge Parkway
Allegheny County
139 acres

Whitehead, N.C. Quadrangle
Scale 1:24000

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Zone 17. (a) E 486780 | (b) E 486940 |
| N 4032240 | N 4031900 |
| (c) E 486760 | (d) E 487120 |
| N 4031620 | N 4031220 |
| (e) E 486720 | (f) E 486360 |
| N 4030880 | N 4031200 |
| (g) E 486200 | (h) E 486300 |
| N 4031584 | N 4031960 |



0 1000'
APPROXIMATE SCALE



ELBERT CROUSE FARMSTEAD
ALLEGHANY COUNTY, N.C.

