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 Hillsdale Brick Store  
and/or common  

2. Location  

street & number Northwest corner NC 150 and SR 2347  

3. Classification  

Category Ownership Status Present Use  
X district building(s) public X occupied agriculture  
X structure private X unoccupied commercial  
X site both X work in progress educational  
Public Acquisition in process N/A Accessible transportation  
X object being considered N/A yes: restricted military  

4. Owner of Property  

name Mr. Claibourne H. Darden  

5. Location of Legal Description  

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Guilford County Courthouse  

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  

Architectural Resources: High Point, Jamestown, Gibsonville,  
title Guilford County by McKelden Smith has this property been determined eligible? yes X no  
date 1979  
depository for survey records Survey & Planning Branch, Division of Archives & History  

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611
7. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Check one</th>
<th>Check one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>__________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>__________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>__________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________</td>
<td>__________</td>
<td>__________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hillsdale Brick Store is an interesting structure, exhibiting forms that reflect the transition from traditional domestic to commercial building forms. Located at a crossroads in northwest Guilford County its rectilinear, substantial two-story, two-by-three bay brick mass resting on a low basement proclaims its domestic origins but the absence of exterior decoration, the location of doors, windows and steps proclaim its use for other purposes. It is not, however, without a certain grandeur.

The low hip roof of standing seam tin (which undoubtedly replaced wooden shingles); the triple molded cornice beneath deep eaves which rest on simple, widely spaced brackets, and the window jambs set within triple molded frames relate it to the more severe Greek Revival forms which characterized important domestic building. Similarly, the regularly spaced large six-over-six sash windows of the second floor—two on the short sides, three on the long—suggest Greek Revival symmetry. The first floor lacks this harmony. Two pairs of double doors are set on each side of the southeast corner: the entrance on the south elevation has steps, while the other on the east elevation opens onto a platform which could be used for sitting or loading. The first floor window on the east side is not aligned with the one above. On the south face a window is centered below the one above and at the far end is a door. Another door is located in the wall at the northwest corner. These irregular elements, like the shed roof sheltering the southeast corner, the bricks set in common bond, and the location itself create a business-like air appropriate to a store.

The contrasts which are present on the exterior continue on the interior which is an adaptation of the German or Quaker house plan. This plan consists of three bays: a large hall or parlor of two bays with a pair of rooms along its side in what would be the third bay. The entry door would have been into the hall near the corner of the space suggesting a symmetry which the plan does not in fact possess. In the case of the Brick Store there is no such apparent symmetry. Entry is into the corner of the great hall. Set in a row down the long axis of the hall are substantial chamfered posts approximately 10' apart. These permit a wide, long, open commercial space. At the end of the room a wall creates two much smaller rooms. Passage through a cased opening reveals a fireplace centered in the west wall. To the left of the fireplace is a window and at the south end of the room a door. The remaining space, screened by a door and wall, is the stairhall which can also be entered through the door at the west end of the building. The stairway rises on the north and east walls in front of a window to a landing and small room above. On the landing and in the adjoining room back-to-back corner fireplaces have been created from the shared chimney of the first floor fireplace. This is also a characteristic feature of the Quaker or German plan. From the landing and from the small room one may enter the great hall, the size of the commercial space below. This room was probably used for Masonic meetings and neighborhood gatherings. A raised dais at the end confirms its use for other than commercial or residential purposes.
The windows in this room, like all the others in the building have plain surrounds with a bead on the inside edge and a single raised flat molding on the outside edge. Unlike the others they rest on a deep baseboard. The dais, raised on three shallow steps, fits in front of this panel which runs around the room on all four sides. The walls are plaster on brick and join a flat ceiling. This is characteristic of the building as a whole. The door frames are identical to those of the windows and have double recessed panel doors like those on the exterior. This door type is characteristic of the Greek Revival style. All the interior doors and jambs of the second floor are painted in a fine simulated wood graining. The fireplaces are simple: flat pilasters support a plain broad entablature and flat mantel shelf. These too show traces of paint. The handrail and balusters of the stair are very plain with traces of a greenish mottled paint.

An unexpected and unique feature of this otherwise simple building is the ceiling of the small upstairs room. Painted in faded pink and black swirling, curling patterns it may be smoked—a decorative technique using a smoking pine torch to create a pattern on a newly painted or plastered ceiling. It makes one wonder about what other decorations are hidden, deteriorated or destroyed.

The Hillsdale Brick Store summarizes physically the sources of antebellum domestic and commercial building in this area. Adapted from the German or Quaker plan its details are Greek Revival, probably made more austere by their use on a commercial building. Its interesting history as a gathering place is enhanced by the embellishments found on the second floor. The remnants of a log icehouse and blacksmith shop on the premises enhance its local significance as a business center.
8. Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ prehistoric</td>
<td>archeology-prehistoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ 1400-1499</td>
<td>archeology-historic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ 1500-1599</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ 1600-1699</td>
<td>architecture <em>X</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ 1700-1799</td>
<td><em>X</em> art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ 1800-1899</td>
<td>commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_ 1900-</td>
<td>communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria Assessment:

A. The Hillsdale Brick Store is associated with the broad patterns of economic and social development in rural communities where the general store served as the area's most important retail business and social gathering place.

B. The store is associated with the Bevill and Florance families of Hillsdale.

C. The Hillsdale Brick Store is an interesting example of simple Greek Revival styling used on a building caught in the transition from traditional domestic to commercial building forms. The survival of interior details such as the woodgrained trim and smoked ceiling add to the store's architectural significance.

D. The store, with its remains of a log icehouse and blacksmith shop, is likely to yield information about activities associated with a rural country store in the last half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Hillsdale Brick Store in northern Guilford County was built shortly before the Civil War, probably by the locally prominent planter, Archibald Bevill. For more than a hundred years the store served as an important business and social center for the small crossroads community and today is representative of the country general stores which were once commonplace in North Carolina and elsewhere, but which are rapidly vanishing in the face of increased mobility, commercial change, and urbanization. Probably the most architecturally significant rural store in the county, the Brick Store reflects the transition from traditional domestic patterns to commercial building forms. Of added interest is the interior finish with its woodgrained trim and smoked ceiling in an upstairs room.

Specific dates: N/A

Builder/Architect: Unknown
The old brick store in the Hillsdale community of northern Guilford County is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of NC 150 and SR 2347 (Lake Brandt Road). The small, rural community of Hillsdale is situated between the somewhat larger Browns Summit and Summerfield, and several miles to the north of metropolitan Greensboro. When, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Greensboro began its rapid transformation toward urbanization and industrialization, Hillsdale was largely unaffected by the forces of change.¹

Lying between Mears Fork Creek to the north and Reedy Fork Creek to the south, Hillsdale rests on a ridge of land which traverses northern Guilford County from east to west—an agriculturally rich area characterized by fertile soil and by smooth to gently rolling topography.² During the last half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this area, like much of Guilford County, produced substantial quantities of corn, wheat, oats, hay, and tobacco. In addition, garden vegetables, sweet and Irish potatoes, and fruits were cultivated for home use and for trade or sale in local markets.³ It was within this agricultural and rural context that the Hillsdale store was established and long operated as a locally important mercantile center and hub of community life.

The Hillsdale brick store, said to be the most architecturally significant rural store still standing in Guilford County, was apparently constructed just prior to the Civil War.⁴ Unfortunately, the extant records do not reveal the name of its original owner, but circumstantial evidence indicates that the store was built by or for the locally prominent planter, Archibald Bevill. In 1850, at the age of 45, Bevill was the owner of 16 slaves and more than 1,000 acres of farmland in the Hillsdale area, 543 acres of which were under cultivation.⁵ By 1860 he had accumulated 34 slaves and nearly 1800 acres of farmland, with 743 under cultivation.⁶ It would appear that Bevill built and operated the brick store at Hillsdale in close conjunction with his activities as a planter and plantation owner.

Aside from architectural evidence, there are at least two documentary indications that the store was in operation prior to the Civil War. Among the estates papers of one of Archibald Bevill's relatives, there is a reference to the fact that he had died in April of 1860, indebted "to the Wall & Bevill, store" in the amount of $40.00.⁷ The Wall mentioned as Bevill's partner or associate was almost certainly one Pinkney Wall, whose wife, Victory, had formerly lived in the household of Archibald Bevill as his ward. Archibald Bevill and Pinkney Wall were later codefendants in a lawsuit involving the latter's bankruptcy. The brick store was not specifically mentioned in this case, but it is significant to note that the plaintiff was alleged to have been "largely indebted to the defendant Bevill on account, for goods, merchandise, bacon, and family groceries," as early as 1861.⁸

Since at least the early decades of the nineteenth century, there had been a close relationship between the Bevill and Bowman families of northern Guilford County; and this relationship was subsequently important in the operation of the brick store at Hillsdale.⁹ By 1860 a William Bowman, aged 35, was residing in the household of Archibald Bevill. Also in the household at this time was Bevill's son, William E. Bevill, aged 21.¹⁰ These two men subsequently took over the operation of the store, presumably at the close of the Civil War, even though Archibald Bevill, himself, was still alive in the 1870s.¹¹

As early as 1867–1868 the Hillsdale mercantile firm of Bevill and Bowman was listed in a business directory for the state of North Carolina.¹² This directory also indicates that Pinkney Wall had begun to operate a separate Hillsdale firm by this time, one which
he continued to operate as late as 1884. The census of 1870 reveals that William E. Bevill and William Bowman were still members of Archibald Bevill's household; and both men were listed as merchants.

The earliest deed which can definitely be associated with the Hillsdale store was executed in April of 1873 between William E. Bevill and the trustees of Centre Grove School. In return for their "erecting a good and permanent School at Centre Grove . . . for the purpose of educating the youth of the state and more particularly those of the surrounding vicinity of Hillsdale," Bevill granted two acres of land "on the north side of the public road leading from Bevill's X Roads to Bruce's X Roads [Summerfield] about two hundred yards west of the store house." This school to the rear of the store continued in use at least through the early years of this century.

Business directories indicate that William E. Bevill was operating the store alone by 1872. By the mid-1880s, however, he had been joined in the business by his younger brother, Charles L. Bevill, with the firm operating under the name W. E. Bevill and Brother. Soon afterwards, Charles L. Bevill assumed sole ownership of the store.

On 13 March 1890 Charles L. Bevill sold the store and 10 3/4 acres of surrounding land to George T. Florance of Hillsdale, for a recited consideration of $1,000. A directory of 1896 indicates that Florance's firm was, again, the only store in Hillsdale. The population of the community totaled 40 souls.

Despite the fact that Florance continued to operate the store until the mid-1890s, he and his wife, Jennie E. Florance, had, in fact, sold the store in April of 1890 to Mrs. Florance's father, John H. Smith of Hillsdale. The price had been $1,000, the same as that paid to Bevill. This transaction seems to have gone all but unnoticed at the time, and more than seven decades later it was to cast a cloud of uncertainty over the store's ownership.

By the 20th of February 1897, John H. Smith had died intestate, and Jennie E. Florance was appointed administratrix of his estate. It was about this time, if not a little before, that George T. Florance also passed away. In the final but uncertain disposition of the Smith and Florance estates, Jennie E. Florance (nee Smith) assumed control over the brick store property. As early as January of 1898 she made use of this property as collateral for a loan. Within the next three years she married B. B. Miles of Hillsdale, and in November of 1901 the store property was again used as collateral for a loan.

Even though ownership had actually passed from John H. Smith to his only child, Jennie, the brick store was operated for many years on the assumption that ownership was vested in the heirs of George T. Florance. Indeed, the conflicting and rather murky claims of ownership were not finally resolved until the 1960s, as a result of complex legal proceedings.

It is not entirely clear who operated the store in the early years of this century. In 1902 and 1903 the Hillsdale firm was listed under the name "Strades and Mills"—a name which was very probably related to W. P. Strater and W. F. Miles who had played a role in the settlement of John H. Smith's estate several years earlier. Somewhat later, the store is said to have been operated by a man whose last name was Warren.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the brick building served several other purposes in addition to housing the general store. Local tradition maintains that the upper floor was long used as a Masonic lodge. Fortunately, two of the
deeds relating to the property serve to confirm this tradition. In the deeds of 1890 from Charles L. Bevill to George T. Florance, and from George T. Florance and wife to John H. Smith, the property was conveyed with identical provisions protecting the Masons' interests:

... subject however to the right and privileges of the "Order of Free Masons" to have and to hold the aforesaid tract or parcel of land and all appurtenances thereto...  

It has not been determined when the Masons ceased to use the building as a meeting place. Local tradition also maintains that the building was used as a post office and, possibly, as a jail during the early years of this century; and there appears to be some physical evidence that this is true.

From the 1920s to the 1960s the Hillsdale store was operated primarily by Mr. A. A. Florance and other members of the Florance family. Above the store, on the second floor, Mr. Florance maintained a residence. During all this time the store continued to be run as a general merchandise firm, much as it had since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Soon after the death of A. A. Florance in January of 1962, the century-old general store ceased to operate. The long and complex settlement of the A. A. Florance estate finally culminated in special proceedings before the Guilford County Superior Court. As a result of these proceedings, the Hillsdale store and 14.17 acres of surrounding land were sold at public auction on 16 May 1966, at which time the last and highest bidder was James L. Henson at $24,800. Henson, however, assigned his bid to the present owner, Claibourne H. Darden of Greensboro, who took formal possession of the property through a deed of 17 November 1966.

For more than a century the brick store in Hillsdale served as an important business and social center of the small crossroads community. Still structurally sound and relatively unaltered, it remains as a representative of the rural general stores which were once commonplace in North Carolina and elsewhere, but which are rapidly vanishing in the face of increased mobility, commercial change, and urbanization.

The structure of course is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archeological record. Therefore, archeological 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.
FOOTNOTES


4 H. McKelden Smith, director and editor, *Architectural Resources: An Inventory of Historic Architecture; High Point, Jamestown, Gibsonville, Guilford County* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1979), 31; and see discussion below.

5 Guilford County Census of 1850, Population, Agricultural, and Slave schedules.


7 Guilford County Estates Papers, Philip Bevill folder. Archibald Bevill was the executor of Philip Bevill’s estate.

8 Guilford County Estates Papers, Philip Bevill folder.

9 For evidence concerning the early relationship between the Bevill and Bowman families, see, for example, Guilford County Deeds, Book 36, pp. 49 and 50; and Guilford County Estates Papers, Richard Bowman folder.

10 Guilford County Census of 1860, Population Schedule.

11 Guilford County Census of 1870; and Guilford County Estates Papers, Archibald Bevill folder. Apparently, Bevill was dead by 1881.


14 Guilford County Census of 1870, Population Schedule.

15 Guilford County Deeds, Book 48, pp. 221-222.

16 Telephone interview with Harry Blackburn on 24 June 1981. Mr. Blackburn, now in his 80s, attended this school. It was subsequently converted into a residence and later destroyed by fire.
FOOTNOTES (continued)


18 Branson, North Carolina Business Directory (1884), 349.

19 Guilford County Deeds, Book 79, pp. 609-610.


21 Guilford County Deeds, Book 99, p. 397. This deed was not recorded until 1895.

22 This uncertainty was not finally resolved until the mid-1960s, as a result of special proceedings before the Guilford County Superior Court. See below p. 3.

23 Guilford County Estates Papers, John H. Smith folder. Smith's wife Nancy, aged 70, waived her rights as administratrix in favor of her daughter, who was described as "the only heir" of John H. Smith.


26 See below, p. 3.

27 North Carolina Year Book (Raleigh: News and Observer), (1902), 260 (1903), 278; and Guilford County Estates Papers, John H. Smith folder.

28 Telephone interview with Harry Blackburn, on 24 June 1981.

29 H. McKelden Smith, Architectural Resources: An Inventory of Historic Architecture; High Point, Jamestown, Gibsonville, Guilford County, 154; and telephone interview with Claibourne H. Darden, on 25 June 1981.


31 In a telephone interview of 25 June 1981, the present owner, Claibourne H. Darden, stated that a large room on the second floor of the building is still identifiable as a meeting hall. There is also a rather vague tradition that the building was used as a meeting place by the Ku Klux Klan; but this has not been documented.

32 Telephone interviews with Claibourne H. Darden and Billy Miles, on 19 June 1981. A sorting box or cabinet was found in the store itself, and some of the upstairs windows are reported to be barred.

33 Telephone interviews with Billy Miles, on 19 June 1981, and with Claibourne H. Darden, on 25 June 1981; and H. McKelden Smith, Architectural Resources: An Inventory of Historic Architecture; High Point, Jamestown, Gibsonville, Guilford County, 154.
FOOTNOTES (continued)

34 Telephone interview with Claibourne H. Darden, on 25 June 1981. A. A. Florance's will was dated 5 January 1962 and was probated on 16 January 1962. It makes no specific mention of the store. See Guilford County Wills, Book 18, pp. 18-19.

35 Guilford County Deeds, Book 2304, pp. 310-313. In order to clear the title, it was subsequently necessary for Mr. Darden to obtain an additional deed from M. B. Miles and his wife. Miles was the son of Jennie E. Miles, the thrice-married daughter of John H. Smith. This deed is recorded in Guilford County Deeds, Book 2330, p. 557.
9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _14.17 acres_

Quadrangle name __Lake Brandt__

UMT References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>6 0 0 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>6 0 6 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quadrangle scale _1:24000_

Verbal boundary description and justification

See survey map outlined in red, Robert E. Wilson, Reg. Surv., Greensboro, N. C., April 5, 1966.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title __Charlotte V. Brown, Architectural Historian__

organization __Archaeology & Historic Preservation Section__

date __September, 1981__

street & number __109 East Jones Street__

telephone (919) 733-6545

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. Paic__

date __April 26, 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIBLIOGRAPHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guilford County Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darden, Claibourne H. By telephone on 19 and 25 June 1981.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles, Billy. By telephone, on 19 June 1981.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hillsdale Brick Store
NW corner NC 150 & SR 2347
Hillsdale, N. C.
Lake Brandt Quadrangle
Zone 17  Scale 1:24 000

A 17 603510/4060650
B 17 603840/4060690
C 17 603880/4060540
D 17 603600/4060500
E 17 603520/4060580