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
The Meadows

AND/OR COMMON
The Blake House

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
South side SR 1547
0.2 mile west of junction with SR 1545

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF
Fletcher

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Eleventh

STATE
North Carolina

CODE
37

COUNTY
Henderson

CODE
089

3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>DISTRICT</em></td>
<td><em>PUBLIC</em></td>
<td><em>X_OCCUPIED</em></td>
<td><em>AGRICULTURE</em></td>
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<td><em>X_BUILDING(S)</em></td>
<td><em>PRIVATE</em></td>
<td><em>UNOCCUPIED</em></td>
<td><em>COMMERCIAL</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>STRUCTURE</em></td>
<td><em>BOTH</em></td>
<td><em>WORK IN PROGRESS</em></td>
<td><em>PARK</em></td>
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<td><em>SITE</em></td>
<td><em>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</em></td>
<td><em>ACCESSIBLE</em></td>
<td><em>EDUCATIONAL</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>OBJECT</em></td>
<td><em>IN PROCESS</em></td>
<td><em>YES: RESTRICTED</em></td>
<td><em>ENTERTAINMENT</em></td>
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<td><em>BEING CONSIDERED</em></td>
<td><em>YES: UNRESTRICTED</em></td>
<td><em>RELIGIOUS</em></td>
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<td><em>NO</em></td>
<td><em>GOVERNMENT</em></td>
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4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
The Kellwood Company

Attention: Mr. Dudley Hall

STREET & NUMBER
Post Office Box 5515

CITY, TOWN
Asheville

VICINITY OF

STATE
North Carolina

28803

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Henderson County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN
Hendersonville

STATE
North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

_ _ _ _ FEDERAL _ _ _ _ STATE _ _ _ _ COUNTY _ _ _ _ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE
**DESCRIPTION**

<table>
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<th>CONDITION</th>
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<td><em>UNALTERED</em></td>
<td><em>ORIGINAL SITE</em></td>
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<td><em>GOOD</em></td>
<td><em>RUINS</em></td>
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<td><em>FAIR</em></td>
<td><em>ALTERED</em></td>
<td><em>DATE</em></td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance:

The Meadows stands on a ten acre tract outside the town of Fletcher in northern Henderson County. The property is now surrounded by modern industrial development, and construction has begun on a manufacturing plant less than two hundred feet to the west of the structure. But the immediate landscaping around the house survives— including enormous boxwoods reaching heights of up to twenty-five feet and reputed to be among the county's largest—and undeveloped, partially wooded land extends to the north, east, and south of the structure. The imposing stone residence remains as one of the county's principal nineteenth century landmarks.

The boxy exterior is executed in a simplified version of Italianate style. It is constructed of coursed granite rubble and rises two stories under a low hipped roof pierced with three interior chimneys; centered on the roof is a small square-in-section cupola under a pyramidal roof. The house is built on a square plan with an original, two-story, shallow extension set across three bays of the four-bay rear (west) elevation, giving the house a modified L plan overall. It is sited to face towards Cane Creek and Cane Creek Road to the east, though today its only access road approaches from the west and ends in a circular drive on the south side of the house.

The front (east) elevation is symmetrical, with a double-door entrance centered on the first level. Each leaf is composed of four panels with one large vertical panel over a horizontal one and a pair of small vertical panels below. Panels are trimmed with wide applied moldings. A two-light transom is set above the door. A one-bay porch supported by narrow chamfered posts with neck moldings shelters the entrance. The porch is flanked by semi-hexagonal bays, each containing three windows which, like all others throughout the structure, are of two-over-two sash between projecting stone sills and lintels. The second floor level on this elevation is five bays wide, with the central bay occupied by a narrow window of four-over-four sash opening onto the roof of the porch. A narrow corbeled stone stringcourse carries across the wall near the top; curvilinear sawn brackets rise from the stringcourse to support the overhanging eaves of the roof. This treatment continues along every elevation of the structure.

The four-bay north elevation is fronted by a deep, full-length, one-story porch supported by heavy chamfered posts with neck moldings. The posts are connected by a low balustrade with a molded handrail and turned balusters. The four openings on the first floor level on this elevation are floor-length windows with four-over-four double-hung sash.

The five-bay south elevation is asymmetrical, with a side entrance placed at the second bay from the left. Each leaf of the double door has five panels, with pairs of vertical panels above and below a single horizontal one, all with wide applied moldings. The transom above the door and the porch sheltering this entrance are identical to those of the front elevation.

The shallow rear extension on the west elevation extends three bays across the right side of the main block. A rear entrance occupies the left bay of this extension and consists of a single door with five panels. To the left of the extension, on the west face of the main block of the house, is a semi-octagonal bay identical to those of the front elevation.
The spacious interior follows a center hall plan, two rooms deep, with two small rooms occupying the rear extension on each level. Virtually all of the original interior finish survives. All wall surfaces are plastered, and rooms are embellished with bold mid-nineteenth century millwork executed in a variety of woods, including mahogany, maple, black walnut, cherry, and oak. Mantel forms vary from room to room, though most other millwork is consistent throughout the house. A rather narrow molded baseboard occurs everywhere. All doors are of five panels, similar to exterior doors, with wide applied moldings. Doors and windows are set in wide mitred and molded architraves, though those of the second floor are more simply executed than those of the first. An exception to this architrave type is found in the southeast first-floor parlor, where the surrounds are composed of a single flat boards with chamfered edges that overlap at the upper corners.

The mantel of this southeast room is the most elaborate in the house. This is composed of a paneled frame of beaded boards under a molded shelf, embellished with pairs of chamfered pilasters with beaded edges flanking the fire opening and terminating in brackets supporting the shelf. Crossbands are superimposed on each of the two horizontal beaded panels of the frieze. Other mantels follow simpler variations of this type, or follow a simpler theme altogether, being wide frames of flat panels under molded shelves; the side panels in this group of mantels vary in form from a simple rectangle (northwest room), to panels with Gothic (northeast parlor) or semicircular (second floor, northeast room) arched heads.

The lighting in three of the first floor rooms—the southeast, northeast, and northwest—is enhanced by the bay windows; these are set in the walls beneath broad segmental arches with deep, plastered soffits.

In the center hall a wide open-stringer stair rises in a single long flight along the left wall of the hall. The ramped and molded handrail is supported by thin turned balusters and terminates in a tapered, hexagonal newel post capped with an acorn-like pendant. The stair is supported mid-way in its rise by a reeded octagonal post.

In the southwest corner of the main block is a small rear stair hall with an exterior entrance through the side door on the south elevation. The simple stair here rises in two flights broken by a corner landing, and the molded handrail is supported by square-in-section balusters. The room between this hall and the southwest parlor has been remodeled into a kitchen.

The ruins of three outbuildings associated with the early history of the Meadows survive. The remains of a two-story frame dwelling, said to have been servants’ quarters, lie to the south. This is in a state of almost total collapse, but the massive gable-end brick chimneys and the mortise and tenon construction indicate this structure may predate the present main house. Between this and the main house stands a brick chimney with a broad fire opening under a stone lintel; this served the detached kitchen. To the southeast are the remains of an ice house built in
coursed rubble. The only other structure on the property are a three sided shed and a small gable-roof frame outbuilding of twentieth century origin.
Located just outside the town of Fletcher in northern Henderson County, the Meadows is a large stone Italianate style dwelling built sometime after 1860 for South Carolinian Robert Blake. Like many other wealthy low-country planters and merchants of South Carolina, Blake's father, rice planter Daniel Blake, was attracted to the mild climate of mountainous western North Carolina as a refuge from the sweltering summers of the Charleston area. In 1827 he purchased a tract of 950 acres along the newly completed Buncombe Turnpike from William Murray, who operated Murray's Inn, a well-known hostelry on this important road. Local legend recounts that the Catawba grape, America's only native wine-producing grape, was first identified in its wild state on the Murray's Inn property. About 1829 Daniel Blake constructed a frame house on the property, landscaped with English boxwoods that survive today and are reputed to be among the world's largest. This house burned about 1860 and was replaced by Robert Blake with the present stone structure constructed sometime shortly thereafter. This dwelling remains today in an essentially unaltered state, retaining its fine quality interior woodwork, and is one of the principal nineteenth century landmarks of the county. It served as a private residence until 1979, when the encroaching development of an industrial park finally resulted in its sale to a textile manufacturing firm. Though adjacent development is inevitable, the company intends to preserve the house and its associated landscaping for appropriate adaptive use as offices or guest house.

Criteria Assessment:

A. The house is representative of low-country South Carolina influences in this region so important to its nineteenth century development and subsequent popularity as a resort and tourist area.

C. The large stone dwelling, its exterior executed in a simplified Italianate style and its interior embellished with high quality mid-nineteenth century woodwork, is one of few grand residences of the period in this region and a chief nineteenth century landmark in the area.
The Blake House, also known as The Meadows, is exemplary of the period in which wealthy Southern planters seeking a cool climate settled in the mountainous area around Hendersonville for the summer months. There was a marked contrast between the grand wealth and prosperity they brought to this region and the existing lifestyle of the mountain natives, and the effects of their interaction are still evident today. The Blakes were one of the first of such families to discover this area. Their house, the second constructed for the family on the site, is a two-story, Italianate style stone structure complete with a cupola and surrounded by boxwoods reputed to be some of the world's largest. It is a fine, little-altered example of the grand architecture brought to this area by those from the low-country. While its exact date of construction is unclear, it appears that it was built for Robert Blake sometime after 1860. The architecture of the house has greater significance than the historical background; consequently, only a minimum effort was made to document the largely traditional material presented in this report.

About the beginning of the last century summer visitors from South Carolina and Georgia began to visit Asheville and its vicinity; with the building of the Buncombe Turnpike between 1824 and 1827 their numbers increased greatly. They would bring their families and servants and spend months in these mountain resorts. As they began to build summer residences this practice resulted in villages being owned chiefly by these summer visitors, most notably the community of Flat Rock south of Hendersonville.

The effect of this on the native mountain settlers was great. The mountain population included wealthy owners of large tracts of land, a group who lived in substantial dwellings and enjoyed a "good living," 

The tract he purchased was known as Murray's Inn, which was owned and operated by William Murray and had become a favorite stopping place for travelers along the Buncombe Turnpike. William Murray conveyed the property consisting of 950 acres to Daniel Blake in December, 1827. The property lies in the Hoopers Creek Valley on the waters of the Cane Creek near the town of Fletcher.
Associated with its location is the legend that this tract of land was the place where the Catawba grape originated. Shortly after 1800 a boundary commission, with members from North and South Carolina, was staying at Murray's Inn while working out the line between the states. One of the South Carolina men noticed a type of grape (fox grape) producing both red and purple fruit, which their host had found growing wild along the banks of a stream. He carried cuttings and roots of the wild specimen home to South Carolina and propagated and cultivated it under the name of Catawba. The Catawba grape was not long in becoming more widely known as wine from its fruit gained fame for its splendid qualities. This variety found growing wild on lands at Murray's Inn is said to be the only native wine grape this country has ever produced.

The tradition related by his descendants is that Daniel Blake, a wealthy rice planter of the low-country who was educated in England, had for a long time visited Rhode Island every summer, until friends urged that he make a trip into the mountains of western North Carolina. It has been said that he had relatives in Tennessee and that he planned extending his journey to that place while in the mountains. En route, he stopped at Murray's Inn, where lameness of his horse necessitated his spending several days. He later decided to purchase the property from Murray and allegedly paid him $10,000 in gold coins.

Daniel Blake is said to have built a house in 1829 which he called "The Meadows" and employed an English gardener to lay out and plant the lawn which included the famed boxwoods imported from England. The boxwoods are reputed to be among the largest of their kind in the United States today. This original house was built of wood on the same site the present house is now situated. Eventually the house became a full-time residence, and slave quarters and stables were built. Other tracts of land in the vicinity were also acquired by the family.

In 1857 Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Blake gave a dinner party which was attended by low-country members of Episcopal families who had made their home or visited frequently in the Fletcher area. At this party the Calvary Episcopal Church was organized as there was no church conveniently located for them to attend. The low-country people in the Hoccers Creek Valley spent a far greater part of their time in the mountains than did those of nearby communities such as Flat Rock and thus felt they should form their own church, for the nearest Episcopal church was a thirty mile distance. Daniel Blake gave four acres of land for the church. Later thirteen additional acres of land were deeded to the church by Fannie Blake. She was one of Daniel Blake's children and she eventually built a schoolhouse near the church for teaching the mountain children.

The original house burned, probably in the early 1860s. As the second house was not built immediately, the family lived in the servants' quarters in the interim. Robert Blake, Daniel's son, then built the current structure on the same site some time after the burning of the original—the exact date is unclear. This house was
built primarily with local materials—the stone of the exterior was said to be extracted from a quarry on Burneys Mountain just to the northeast. 19

Daniel Blake was twice married and the father of eight children. He died in 1873. 20 His will stated that all of his estate should be given and devised to R. B. Blake and B. H. Rutledge and granted them power to sell any part or the whole of the estate and the proceeds thereof to be used to pay all just debts and the remainder to be divided in seven shares. 21 Apparently R. B. Blake, who was responsible for the building of the existing house, must have chosen to keep this home tract for himself. In 1920 Benjamin Rutledge deeded his interest to R. B. Blake, making him the sole owner of the tract which is in this deed described as consisting of approximately 100 acres. 22

According to his niece, Mrs. Emma Blake Rutledge, Robert Blake lived a fairly quiet life. He was Daniel Blake's son by his second marriage. He attended the Naval Academy briefly and then returned home to "The Meadows" (for that name had continued to be used for the second house). He never married and pursued no active career. Apparently he cultivated very little of the land and largely derived his income from selling parts of the estate. His mother lived with him until she died in 1913. 23

In 1925 R. B. Blake sold this tract (resurveyed and described as 126.54 acres) to M. E. Gruber, a resident of Florida. 24 M. E. Gruber, then, in the same year sold the property to A. J. Cleary who then in 1926 sold the tract to Eugene C. Ward. 25 The property was then transferred back to M. E. Gruber in 1927. 26 During this period of ownership a mortgage naming R. B. Blake had been in effect, but in 1920 this was foreclosed and the trustee then sold the property to P. H. Branch, M. E. Plain, Edwin L. Ray, and W. E. Shufford jointly. 27 In 1938 Charles F. Speed bought the property and in 1941 sold it to Edwin Tracy Edgerton, whose family occupied the home for about thirty years. 28 In 1972 the property was once again sold to John C. Youngblood and William T. Justice. 29 During these years of ownership the house was used as a private residence with no particular significance being attached to those occupants. The property is adjacent to an industrial park and was recently (July, 1979) purchased by the Kellwood Corporation. Adjacent development has begun, though the company has stated its intentions to preserve the old stone house. The house and its associated landscaping survive as important remnants of nineteenth century low-country influences in this region.
FOOTNOTES


5. Blackmun, Western North Carolina, 294.


11. Telephone Interview 5/19/79 with Emma Blake Rutledge, a resident of Charleston and granddaughter of Daniel Blake, hereinafter cited as Rutledge Interview 5/19/79.


15 Patton, Story of Henderson County, 189.


17 Henderson County Deed Book 16, p. 84.

18 Calvary Episcopal File.

19 Rutledge Interview 5/19/79.

20 Rutledge Interview 5/19/79; and 1873 is shown as death on headstone in cemetery adjoining Calvary Episcopal Church, Fletcher, N. C.


22 Henderson County Deed Book 105, p. 176.

23 Rutledge Interview 5/19/79.

24 Henderson County Deed Book 139, p. 6.

25 Henderson County Deed Books 151, p. 162 and 172, p. 89, respectively.

26 Henderson County Deed Book 175, p. 338.

27 Henderson County Deed Book 195, p. 56.


29 Henderson County Deed Book 501, p. 59.
The nominated area includes the final 10 acres that have remained in continuous association with the house and have been undisturbed by modern development. The boundary line encompasses the house, the large boxwoods adjacent, the remains of associated early outbuildings, and undeveloped acreage to the north, east, and south. To the west, grading and excavation for an industrial plant have already begun. The western boundary is provided by the easternmost edge of this new ground disturbance.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL X

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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
Henderson County Records

Deeds
Tax Records
Wills


Telephone Interview 5/19/79 with Emma Blake Rutledge, granddaughter of Daniel Blake. Mrs. Rutledge's address is 59-B King Street, Charleston, South Carolina, 29401, phone number (803) 722-4440.

a line running south-southwest along the eastern edge of a new access road from its intersection with SR 1547 a distance of approximately 1000 feet to the southernmost boundary of the Kellwood property. The southern boundary is given by the southern property line of the Kellwood tract, running east a distance of approximately 800 feet to the intersection with the Southern Railway right-of-way. The eastern boundary follows the railroad right-of-way north to the intersection with SR 1547. The northern boundary follows the southern edge of the SR 1547 right-of-way west back to the beginning
The Meadows (Blake House)
South side of SR 1547, 0.1 mile west of
junction with SR 1545.
Fletcher vicinity, Henderson County, N.C.
10 acres
Fruitland, N.C. Quadrangle. Scale 1:24000
UTM References: Zone 17
(A) Easting 364290 (C) E 364370
Northing 3922420 (D) E 364440
(B) E 364220 N 3922130
N 3922200 N 3922320