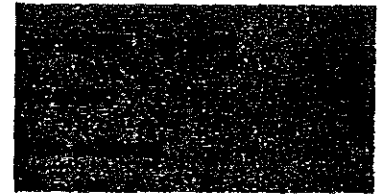


United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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 Balsam Mountain Inn

and/or common Balsam Springs Mountain Hotel

2. Location

street & number West side SR 1700 at junction with SR 1701 not for publication

city, town Balsam vicinity of congressional district Eleventh

state North Carolina code 037 county Jackson code 099

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied seasonally | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: resort |

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. E. P. Stillwell, Jr.

street & number Route 1

city, town Six Mile vicinity of state South Carolina 29682

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jackson County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Sylva state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None None 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 type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input 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

The Balsam Mountain Inn is sited grandly atop a wooded ridge that directs the Southern Railway through the Appalachians from Waynesville to Sylva, North Carolina. The three-story, one-hundred-and-seven room inn draws the tiny hamlet of Balsam at the foot of the hill--Balsam being little more than "Mayor" Knight's general store and a new post office at a fork in the Balsam Road. Native grasses cover the steep hillside from the road up to the inn. Scattered trees and bushes merge into mature forest at its sides and rear, softening its out-of-scale silhouette.

The facade presented those arriving from below is a symmetrically organized Colonial Revival composition, dominated by a broad double-tier shed porch that sweeps from corner to corner. Behind this principal elevation the building is massed like a large horseshoe with a wing: arms project rearward (west) at either end, the wing projects southward from the end of the south arm.

The building is full height throughout: two full weatherboarded floors, a third behind a curb, or gambrel roof, covered in pressed-tin shingles painted black. Narrow gabled dormers lighting the third-floor rooms pierce the lower slope of the roof at regular intervals on all but the principal elevation. Narrow brick piers raise the structure two or three feet above its casually prepared site. At present the building is painted white and has no shutters. All windows carry two-over-two sash.

Along the principal elevation the roofline is more varied: a broad pedimented dormer holding four windows side by side and featuring a semicircular attic vent in its tympanum fixes the center of the facade directly above the main entrance. On either end the last two bays of the eleven-bay facade project forward (and to the sides) and, tower-like, continue weatherboarded a full three stories--one story above the porch roof--to their own boxed cornices and independent hip-roof caps. Rhyming the center gable these "towers" each carry four windows side by side at their third-floor level. Two narrow gabled dormers sit irregularly to either side of the pedimented centerpiece, between it and the towers.

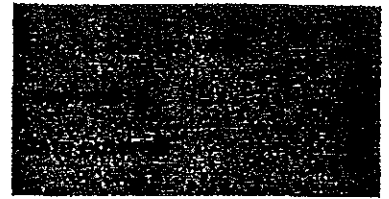
The inn's primary exterior amenity is its broad double-tier front porch which overlooks the crossroads below and the mountains to the southeast. Noncontinuous Tuscan columns support the eleven-bay appendage. Closely spaced turned balusters and heavy, simple rails form its balustrade. Dozens of heavy, green rocking chairs line the porches during tourist season.

On the first floor, broad double doors lead from the center of the porch into the inn's spacious lobby, which occupies the whole base of the horseshoe plan. Two freestanding fireplaces and two rows of round columns help subdivide the space into smaller sitting areas. The original registration desk and many-coved mail box occupy a back corner of the room.

Only minor cosmetic alterations have been made to original conditions throughout the inn. The pattern of woodwork is basically: narrow beaded sheathing installed vertically below a molded chairrail as wainscoting, installed horizontally as wall sheathing above, with broad, capped baseboards, and narrow picture and cornice molds. All interior doors are five-panel, set in symmetrically-molded surrounds with corner blocks. Floors and ceilings are narrow-width boards as well. The several functional stairways--none is featured nor

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Continuation sheet DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

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more elaborately detailed--display heavy, turned starting newels and turned balusters set between, asymmetrically molded hand rails and toe rails.

Eight-foot wide double-loaded corridors run the length of each arm on each floor of the structure providing access to one-hundred-and-seven small bedrooms. Doors from the hallways to the rooms have tall, lighted transoms. Some rooms near the front of the building contain fireplaces with light, millwork mantels. Some have received later bathroom additions. Many share bathroom facilities off coves out in the hallways. Others remain facility-less, as they were originally, and these are not currently in use.

The only deviation within the inn from this functional plan of double-loaded corridors occurs on the first floor of the south "wing." Here the building is divided into two large spaces, one for dining, the other for kitchen and other services within its smaller subdivisions. Some modern kitchen equipment has been installed in this area. Again, the character of the dining room is functionally plain, informal, spacious, and airy. Only two rows of Tuscan columns with molded capitals and bases--which carry the weight of the upper floors across the building-width space--attempt any architectural statement.

Cosmetic alterations to the building's interior include the introduction of accoustical ceiling tiles in the lobby area and the application of a textured wallpaper over the wood sheathing in the dining area. The great majority of spaces and materials in the massive wooden structure remain in there original condition, save seventy-two years of wear by tourists enjoying the inn's relaxed atmosphere on the fragrant mountain ridge.

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 type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Tourist industry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

Specific dates 1908 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Balsam Mountain Inn is one of southwestern North Carolina's largest and most popular inns. It is located in the scenic mountain hamlet of Balsam in Jackson County. The one-hundred-and-seven room Colonial Revival structure was built by Joseph Key Kenney in 1908, the same year that the railroad first reached Balsam. Like many mountain inns, the three-story frame building features a broad double-tier porch across its principal elevation. Originally called a hotel, the inn was modeled after the famous Saratoga Inn. It has changed hands several times, but has been owned by the Stillwell family since 1937. The inn is currently leased by Donald and Elizabeth LaBrant. It has been altered little over the years.

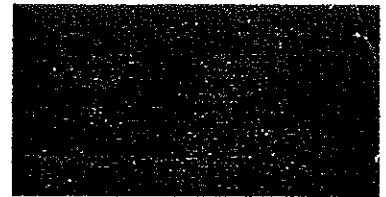
CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. The Balsam Mountain Inn is associated with the tourist and entrepreneurial boom which attended the extension of rail service into mountainous western North Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

C. The inn embodies in informal terms the distinctive characteristics of the grand frame hotels that were built to accommodate the swollen ranks of locomotive-launched victorian tourists.

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The Balsam Mountain Inn was built in 1908 in the town of Balsam. It is located in Jackson County, in the heart of the North Carolina mountains. Balsam was, and is, a favorite resort area for tourists because of its spectacular scenery and the cool summer weather caused by the town's 3,500 foot altitude.

The inn was built by Joseph Key Kenney, a Jackson County native, on property he had purchased from O. D. Davis ten years earlier.¹ In 1908, the same year that the inn was built, the Southern Railway extended its branch from Murphy to Balsam, and built a depot that was, at 3,470 feet, the highest depot east of the Rockies. The extension of the railroad opened up Balsam to a greater volume of summer visitors than had previously been able to reach the area. Kenney, with assistance from Atlanta financier Walter R. Wiggs built the inn, which was then called the Balsam Springs Mountain Hotel, in response to this new demand for hotel facilities.²

Kenney's Balsam Hotel was built with 105 rooms, which made it "one of the largest summer resort hotels in western North Carolina."³ In 1909 the Balsam Hotel Company was formed, with Wiggs as president, Kenney as vice-president, and William Hutchinson as secretary-treasurer.⁴ The company purchased the hotel from Kenney for \$75,000.⁵ In 1921 Hutchinson purchased the property from the company. He and his wife Myrta Wiggs Hutchinson operated the hotel until 1937, when they were forced to give it up because of economic setbacks suffered during the Depression.⁶

Ephrium P. Stillwell, a prominent Sylva attorney purchased the inn at a 1937 auction, outbidding J. C. Stiles, who had been the hotel's manager for many years under the Hutchinsons.⁷ The inn maintained its reputation for "excellent accommodation,"⁸ under its new ownership and continued to be "popular with those who prefer high altitudes."⁹ As the quality of roads into Jackson County has improved, Balsam has become an increasingly popular tourist spot. The current visitor arrives by automobile, however, instead of by train.

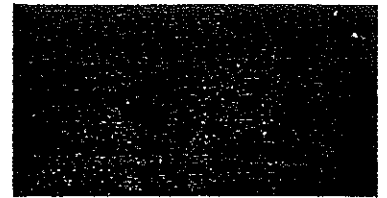
The Stillwell family continues to own the inn, although it has been leased several times. In 1952 Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Schlegelmick and Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Upson of Daytona Beach, Florida leased the establishment and greatly remodeled it. It was repainted and redecorated, new furniture was added, modern plumbing was put in, and all new kitchen equipment was purchased. The building's exterior was painted white.¹⁰

The inn is currently leased by Donald and Elizabeth LaBrant of St. Petersburg, Florida. It has approximately 600 visitors each summer, who come to Balsam "where the spicy aroma of the balsam gives the upper levels a peculiar charm," and make the inn "a cool haven during the summer months."¹¹

The structure, of course, is 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 structure. 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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FOOTNOTES

¹Jackson County Deed Book 24, p. 19; Maggie Whitesides, "Research Report on Balsam Mountain Inn," copy in file, hereinafter cited as Whiteside Report.

²Whiteside Report; Quay Grigg, "Things of Interest in Jackson County," The State, Vol. XVII, No. 9, July 30, 1949, p. 6, hereinafter cited as Grigg, "Jackson County."

³Asheville Citizen-Times, June 5, 1932.

⁴Whitesides Report.

⁵Jackson County Deed Book 85, p. 102.

⁶Jackson County Deed Book 123, p. 254; Whitesides Report.

⁷Jackson County Deed Book 123, p. 254; Whitesides Report.

⁸Grigg, "Jackson County," 6.

⁹Asheville Citizen-Times, June 14, 1936.

¹⁰Asheville Citizen, June 8, 1952.

¹¹Whitesides Report; Asheville Citizen, June 8, 1952.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation page

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nomlnated property 26 acres

Quadrangle name Hazelwood, N. C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UMT References

A

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|----|
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 19 | 2 | 12 | 3 | 18 | 10 |
| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

B

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|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 10 |
| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

C

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|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|----|
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 19 | 2 | 11 | 9 | 14 | 10 |
| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

D

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|----|---|---|---|----|---|----|----|
| 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 18 | 10 |
| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

E

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|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
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| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

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|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
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| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

H

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|------|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Twenty-six acres described as tract one in Jackson County Deed Book, February 3, 1954, from H. C. Schelgelmilch and wife, and R. C. Upson and wife, to E. P. Stillwell.

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 Description prepared by Douglas Swaim, Preservation Specialist; Significance prepared by Jim Sumner, Research Specialist and Maggie Whitesides, Research Consultant

organization N. C. Division of Archives and History date December 15, 1981

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 704-298-5024 (Asheville)
919-733-6545 (Raleigh)

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

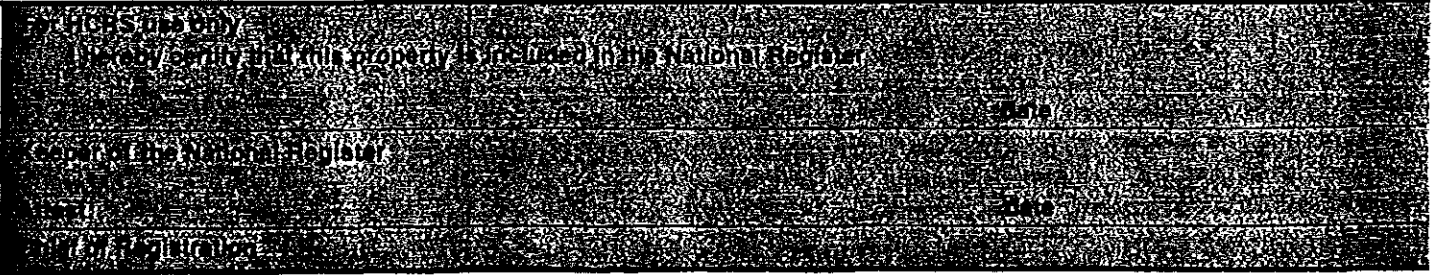
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

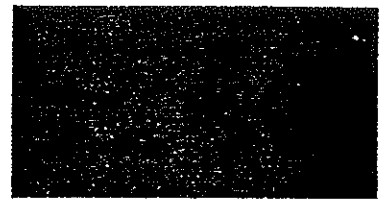
national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

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

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 14, 1982



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Continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Jackson County Deed Book. Microfilm copy. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

Whitesides, Maggie. "Research Report on Balsam Mountain." Copy in file.

