

Form 10-360
(July 1959)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Lincoln	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME			
COMMON: Rock Springs Camp Meeting Ground			
AND/OR HISTORIC:			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: West side of SR 1373, 0.5 miles north of intersection with Highway 16			
CITY OR TOWN: Lincolnton vicinity (Ninth Congressional District, The Hon. C. R. Jonas)			
STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Lincoln	CODE 109

3. CLASSIFICATION		CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS		ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC	
☐ District	☐ Building	☐ Public	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied	☐ Yes: ☐ Restricted ☒ Unrestricted ☐ No				
☒ Site	☐ Structure	☒ Private		☐ Unoccupied					
☐ Object	☐ Both	☐ Preservation work in progress							
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)									
☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments					
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☐ Other (Specify)						
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☒ Religious							
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific							

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: Western North Carolina United Methodist Church c/o Bishop E. G. Hunt, Jr.			
STREET AND NUMBER: 310 Cole Building, 207 Hawthorne Lane			
CITY OR TOWN: Charlotte	STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Lincoln County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Lincolnton	STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37	

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY:			
DATE OF SURVEY: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

 STATE: North Carolina
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 DATE

7. DESCRIPTION	
CONDITION	(Check One)
	☐ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed
	(Check One) ☐ Altered ☒ Unaltered (Check One) ☐ Moved ☒ Original Site
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	
Rock Springs Camp Ground, a well-known Methodist August camp meeting complex located in a wooded plot near Rock Spring, consists of 288 numbered wooden "tents" placed in two and a partial third concentric square rows enclosing a large grove approximately two hundred and fifty feet wide. In the center of the oak-planted square is the "arbor," a roofed shelter with open sides under which the camp meetings take place. An alley breaks the squares at each corner and in the center of each side. Wooden privies, numbered to correspond to the tents, stand in rows several hundred yards behind the tents. The spring is located a short distance from the grove. The arbor, which was constructed for the camp meeting of 1832, probably predates all existing tents. The focus of camp activity, it is a rectangular structure with a deep hip roof featuring a ventilation cap at the apex. Hand-hewn mortise-and-tenon roof timbers, which are exposed, rest on inner and outer rows of upright posts braced with plain brackets. The roof, originally covered with boards, was shingled in the mid-nineteenth century, and received its present standing-seam tin roof in the late 1860s. The camp bell is located in the west end of the ventilation cap. Inside the arbor, at the west end is a raised platform containing a pine pulpit with pine slat choir seating occupying the rear portion of the platform. A large open area separates the pulpit platform from the congregation seating which consists of three sections of pine slat pews, capable of seating 1,000, divided by two side aisles. The mourner's bench (also known as the seeker's bench or the "anxious seat") is placed before the pulpit. The hard clay ground is covered with straw. The frame tents, each one designed to house a single family, are numbered from one to 288, and vary greatly in age and condition. The tents are built as row houses, sharing party walls. Each tent is a one-story frame structure nearly square in plan. The name "tents" indicates the derivation of these structures from the earlier makeshift tents of cloth, pine bark, and other materials. These portable tents were gradually replaced by permanent "tents." Each tent conforms closely to a standard form although, having been constructed by an individual family, it exhibits minor variations. The typical tent has a gabled main block with a shed room in the rear, covered by an extension of the main roof or by a separate roof. The main facade is sheltered by a shed porch either bracketed out from the facade or supported on plain posts. An open lean-to porch extends from the rear of many tents. Flush sheathing covers the main facade of the typical tent, and the sides and rear are covered with weatherboards. Beneath the front eaves several weatherboards form ventilation louvers, and the siding beneath the side eaves is spaced loosely for the same reason. The main facade has a side entrance with a vertically sheathed door, and beside the door is a long bench bracketed out from the wall surface. The front porches of the tents form a continuous protected promenade said to be enjoyed particularly by young camp-goers in the evening.	

SEE INSTRUCTION

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
North Carolina	
COUNTY	
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7.

The crude interior of the typical tent features a hard clay floor covered with straw or sawdust, unfinished walls, and an open loft, reached by a ship's ladder stair which ascends in the front left corner of the main block, which is a single room. A large platform elevated above the straw-covered dirt floor serves as a base for sleeping pallets. The stair well is surrounded by a plain railing. The loft is only partially floored, and is protected at its outer edge by a simple railing. An opening in the rear wall of the main block, sometimes containing a vertically sheathed door, leads to the rear shed room. This room, furnished with built-in benches and shelves and containing an open pass-through shelf in the rear wall, serves as the eating area.

Tent No. 1 traditionally is believed to be the oldest standing tent. It is thought to be the sole tent remaining from the original building activity at Rock Springs, which occurred several years after the lots were laid out and sold in 1830. The structure is built, as were all of the original permanent tents, of squared saddle-notched logs. No mortar seals the interstices. The upper wall surfaces are sided. The vertically sheathed door in the front central entrance is hung on a wooden pegged hinge. The other original tents, many said to have been burned during the Civil War, have been replaced.

Although the tents vary greatly in age and condition, the weathered patina of the wood complex gives it a homogenous appearance which belies its accretive growth. No ornamentation distinguishes one tent from another, but the minor differences exhibited within the over-all standardization provide variety. Occasional tents are free-standing, placed with the gable to the front. Some of the main facades are covered with large flush wood shingles, and smaller wooden shakes cover some porch and main roofs. On either side of the central facade entrance of tent number 64 is a sash window covered by louvered shutters. Number 69, the only painted tent, has a concrete floor. Two adjoining tents in the first row, numbers 68 and 69, have garret-level porches (upper galleries) enclosed by simple railings and supported by plain posts. Number 147 is a gable-to-front structure with no eave overhang. The walls of tent number 150 are board-and-batten.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 15th Century☒ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 16th Century☐ 17th Century☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☒ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry

losophy

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☐ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The development of individual camp meeting sites is obscured within the spontaneous, simultaneous growth of the Great Revival Movement throughout the frontier areas of the United States in the early nineteenth century.

The camp meetings fulfilled a need for fellowship in the lives of the settlers who infiltrated the frontier areas. Western Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina were especially fertile breeding grounds for these religious revivals. As recorded by a contemporary observer, the behavior of the participants swept up by religious fervor was often quite strange. A contemporary observer of camp meeting conduct wrote:

To see those proud young gentlemen and young ladies dressed in their silks, jewelry, and prunella, from top to toe take the jerks would often excite my risibilities. The first jerk or so you would see their fine bonnets, caps and combs fly and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a waggoner's whip.

This Christian frontier crusade was most actively carried by the Methodist Church, and in 1790, Daniel Asbury, a young Methodist circuit rider from Fairfax County, Virginia (related by marriage to the great Methodist bishop, Francis Asbury), was sent to North Carolina to form the Lincoln Circuit which included Lincoln County and several adjoining counties. Herbert Asbury, the bishop's biographer, stated that in 1794, the members of Rehoboth Congregation in Lincoln County, which was organized by Daniel Asbury, held a camp meeting in the forest near the church which was so successful that it continued for several days, resulting in more than three hundred converts. According to Mrs. Gabriel Sigmon, a campgoer and author of the "History and Traditions of Rock Springs Camp Ground," this camp meeting moved to Robey's Camp Ground near Denver in Lincoln County three years after its establishment. Mrs. Sigmon stated that the camp meeting moved for the third and last time in 1826, when the Third Quarterly Conference of the Lincoln Circuit designated Rock Springs as the site of a permanent camp meeting. The journal of Bishop Asbury, who traveled continuously through North Carolina spreading the Methodist gospel during these years, provides verification for the early history of this camp meeting, for the bishop mentioned a visit to "Daniel Asbury's meeting house" in Rehobeth in 1794, a visit at the home of Daniel Asbury in Lincoln County in 1799, and a stop at "Robey's" in 1814.

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(Continuation Sheet)

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A deed of August 7, 1830, records that Joseph Mathias Mundy deeded 40 acres of land to the Rock Springs Camp Ground trustees for Methodist use. The original handwritten account book that recorded the first sale of lots to individual owners of May 15, 1830, is extant and indicates that the site was divided into squares, each containing twenty-two lots. The inner section of lots--consisting of the east square, north square, west square, and south square--was sold in 1830. Lot number one, for example, was sold to Philip Whitener and Mecon Shelton for \$1.25, with the remaining lots sold for similar prices. Several years passed, however, before permanent shelters were erected. The arbor (or "harbour" as it is spelled in the original record book), which was constructed in 1832 for \$255, was built before any of the tents. The camp ground was incorporated in 1851, and a self-perpetuating board of trustees was established.

Rock Springs Camp Ground is not only the earliest camp meeting organization in North Carolina and possibly one of the earliest in the country, but is also one of the few camp meeting sites in the state which is still active. The camp meeting occurs during the first week in August each year, and appears to have lost none of its vitality, for new tents are still being added. The Rock Springs Camp Ground complex is an embodiment of the communal religious spirit which is still in existence in the Piedmont and western areas of North Carolina.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Asbury, Herbert. A Methodist Saint: The Life of Bishop Asbury. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927.

Carroll, Grady L. E. Francis Asbury in North Carolina. Nashville, Tennessee: The Parthenon Press, no date.

Graber, Paul Neff. The Romance of American Methodism. Greensboro: The Piedmont Press, 1931.

Johnson, Guion Griffis. "The Camp Meeting in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," The North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. X, No. 2, April, 1933.

Lincoln County Records, Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincolnton, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroup: Deeds).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE			
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	35°	32'	25"
NE	° ' "	° ' "	81°	01'	40"
SE	° ' "	° ' "			
SW	° ' "	° ' "			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Eight Acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: <u>Survey and Planning Unit Staff</u>	
ORGANIZATION: <u>State Department of Archives and History</u>	DATE: <u>17 February 1972</u>
STREET AND NUMBER: <u>109 East Jones Street</u>	
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Raleigh</u>	STATE: <u>North Carolina</u>
	CODE: <u>37</u>

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 17 February 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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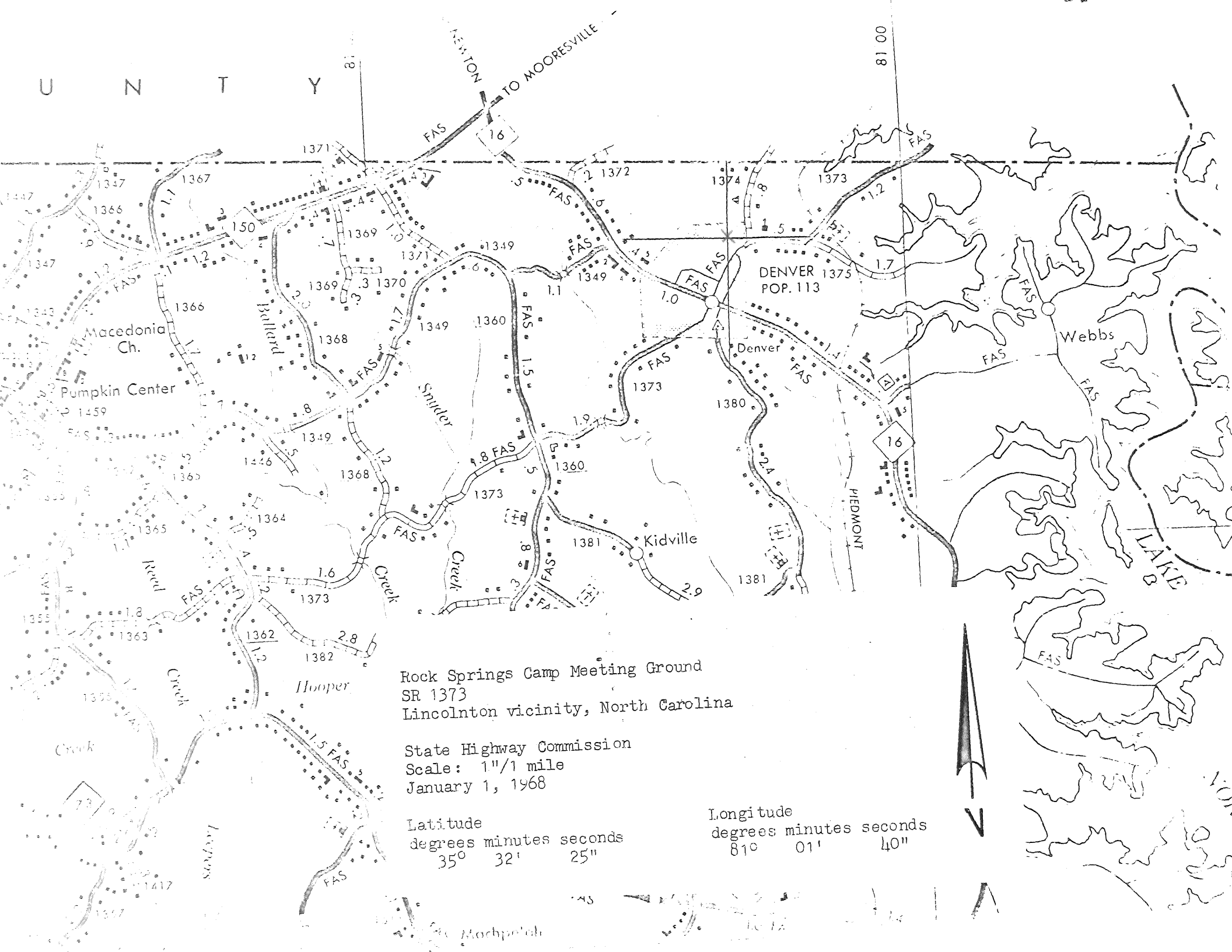
(Number all entries)

9.

Lincoln County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh,
North Carolina. (Subgroup: Deeds).

Sherrill, William L. Annals of Lincoln County North Carolina. Baltimore:
Regional Publishing Company, 1967.

Sigmon, Mrs. Gabriel. "History and Traditions of Rock Springs Camp Ground."
no publisher, no date.



Rock Springs Camp Meeting Ground
SR 1373
Lincolnton vicinity, North Carolina

State Highway Commission
Scale: 1"/1 mile
January 1, 1968

Latitude
degrees minutes seconds
35° 32' 25"

Longitude
degrees minutes seconds
81° 01' 40"

