United States Department of the Interior
National Park 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 Henry Ottinger House

And/or common The Willows

2. Location

St. & number 391 Boys Home Road

City, town Hot Springs

State North Carolina 28743 code 037

3. Classification

Category district

Ownership building(s)

status occupied

Present use X agriculture

X site structure

X unoccupied

X work in progress

X accessible

X yes: restricted

X no

State North Carolina 28743

4. Owner of Property

Name Mr. Harold Baker

St. & number 391 Boys Home Road

State North Carolina 28743

5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

St. & number Madison County Courthouse

State North Carolina 28753

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title Statewide Survey of Historic Buildings

Has this property been determined eligible? _yes _no

Date Ongoing

Depository for survey records N. C. Division of Archives and History

State North Carolina
7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Henry Ottinger House is a substantial vernacular Greek Revival dwelling sited in the floodplain of the French Broad River one and one-half miles northwest of Hot Springs, in mountainous Madison County, North Carolina. The mid-nineteenth century brick structure faces southwest, the French Broad River flowing southeast to northwest less than one hundred feet to its rear. Pasture and lawn surround the house, providing an undisturbed agricultural setting. The Asheville to Newport, Tennessee, branch of Southern Railway passes in front of the house at a distance of about four hundred and fifty feet, running parallel to the river where its floodplain yields to wooded hillside. A large barn, former carriage house and slaughter house, stand several hundred feet to the north of the brick dwelling, roughly centered in the floodplain. A small concrete springhouse stands behind the dwelling.

The Henry Ottinger House is a double-pile plan structure with hipped roof and paired interior chimneys. The house is constructed of local brick laid in a mechanical bond pattern. Centered on the building's three-bay facade is a two-story, single-bay entrance portico which originally carried a full second-story tier. Around 1950 the present owner reduced the second-story tier, which was badly deteriorated, to a railed balcony and replaced the paired, boxed columns with continuous two-story columns of slightly larger section. From about 1910 until the 1930s a large frame addition adjoined the rear of the building. During this same period a pair of small, hipped dormers flanked the entrance portico.

Greek Revival detailing on the building's exterior includes the entrance portico which is fully pedimented and features a denticulated raking cornice, a denticulated cornice which circumscribes the building and carries across the portico, and horizontal timber window lintels ornamented with Greek keys at their ends. Narrow pilasters with exaggerated capitals flank the doors at both levels under the portico, dividing doorways from sidelights. The ground floor entrance is surmounted by a lighted transom. Curious curvilinear brackets were apparently added to the heads of the major portico columns in the late nineteenth century. The house's windows originally carried twelve over twelve sash but now display twelve over one.

The dwelling's interior is basically intact except for a new kitchen that has been added in the ground-floor north room. Original ground-floor partitions are brick and a full foot thick. Doorways through them are finished with paneled reveals. Original doors are four-panel compositions. All panels are flat.

Mantels are handsome post and lintel compositions with broad pilasters and gracefully arched friezes. Reeded blocks placed between the pilasters' heads and the cornice molding expose the vernacular hand at work in what is otherwise a restrained and elegant design.

The house's stairway rises from the front of the central hallway and ascends to the rear in a single continuous run. It is an open-stringer stairway with molded hand rail and simple square balusters, and it is anchored at its lower end by a decidedly vernacular newel composed of two stages of thickly chamfered posts resting on a molded base, separated by a molded platform, and crowned by a molded head. The outer edge of the intermediate platform is decorated with an incised diamond pattern and the lower post displays a raised shield or fleur-de-lis.
Original wood flooring and plaster walls provide finish surfaces throughout much of the house. These materials along with the sturdy and restrained vernacular woodwork determine the character of the place. It is a stout and solid edifice, capable of withstanding the occasional flooding of the nearby French Broad River.

Three early twentieth-century outbuildings—major barn, carriage house, and slaughter house—stand several hundred feet north of the dwelling house. All three were built during the period the farm served as Dorland Institute Farm School. Each is a simple gable-roofed structure with vertical board siding. The barn, built in 1908, is larger than the typical mountain barn and features an earthen ramp providing vehicular access to great doors at its second-floor level, an arrangement unusual for the southern mountains. A shallow gabled agricultural shed of recent construction stands south of the house.

The Henry Ottinger House is a rare antebellum mountain brick house. No other antebellum brick structures are known to survive in Madison County. The house was unusually large and stylish for its day. Today it survives in a mountain valley setting little changed since the nineteenth century.
The Ottinger Farm archaeological site, 31MD6, was first recorded in 1966 during a reconnaissance level survey. It was described only as a surface scatter of projectile points and chips in the area marked D on the enclosed map.

In 1983 the site was revisited by a representative of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. At that time the landowner stated that relic-hunters had collected artifacts from his farm for years and that artifacts were found scattered everywhere in the floodplain (25 acres outlined in red on the enclosed map). Most of this area is pasture today but an examination of the surface and several shovel tests were conducted in areas A, B and C; areas which the landowner reported were collected most heavily. The shovel tests indicated that there was a possibility of buried deposits. Artifacts gathered at areas A and B included projectile points, bifaces, miscellaneous debitage and ceramics. Most notable were numerous large rhyolite quarry blades. Rhyolite artifacts are unusual in this region and their plentiful occurrence here suggests involvement in interregional trade.

It is possible systematic testing may identify distinct archaeological components within the 25 acre floodplain. At this time the boundaries are known only from the scatter of artifacts which occurs across the entire floodplain.
### 8. Significance

**Specific dates** ca. 1855  
**Builder/Architect** Unknown

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Henry Ottinger House on the south bank of the French Broad River in Madison County is a large, two story, vernacular Greek Revival style brick structure probably built in the late 1850s. Henry Ottinger, who moved to the area from Tennessee, was a farmer and ferry boat operator. Ottinger died in 1891 and his wife Catherine died eight years later. In 1902 her executor sold the 300-acre farm to the Presbyterian Church. The farm was made second campus for the Dorland Institute, founded in nearby Hot Springs fifteen years earlier. Increased enrollment at the farm, known at that time as the "Willows," led to the addition of a three-story rear wing to the building around 1910. That wing was torn down after the school moved to a new location. The Dorland-Bell Institute, as it was known after 1918, was merged with the Asheville Farm School to form Warren Wilson College in the 1940s. After that time the Ottinger place reverted to its original use as a private residence and farm. The present owner changed the original second tier of the entrance portico to a balcony in 1949.

#### CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. The Henry Ottinger House is associated both with developments in transportation in mountainous western North Carolina--Ottinger operated a ferry across the nearby French Broad River--and with the educational and religious missionary activity of the Presbyterian Church in the southern Appalachians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

C. The Ottinger House is significant architecturally as an unusually substantial and stylish dwelling for mid-nineteenth rural western North Carolina. No other brick Antebellum structures are known to exist in Madison County.

D. Archaeological resources, both historic and pre-historic, are known to be present on the site, and although no investigation has been undertaken to document these resources, they may well be an important component of its significance.
The Henry Ottinger House is located two miles east of Hot Springs in Madison County. It sits less than one hundred yards from the French Broad River. Probably built in the late 1850s, the house is unusually large for its period and for its mountain location. It is a two-story brick structure with a two-level pedimented front porch and other Greek Revival details. The house was used as a residence by Henry Ottinger and his family through the end of the nineteenth century. For the first three decades of the present century the house and farm, known as the "Willows," were home to students attending the Dorland (later Dorland-Bell) Institute. Since the late 1930s the building has again served as a private residence. A large frame addition, built around 1910 as additional dormitory space, was torn down in the 1930s. Most of the outbuildings on the property, notably a barn and several sheds, were constructed by the students and faculty of the Presbyterian-operated school. The total farm, dating to the time when it was owned by Ottinger, has always been about 300 acres in size. The house, outbuildings, and immediate grounds are spread over about forty acres.

Prior to the construction of the house the tract of land had several notable owners. John Gray Blount (1752-1833) of Washington, North Carolina, speculated heavily in western North Carolina land at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1796 Blount received a grant for over 320,000 acres, an expanse which included much of present-day Madison County (created from Buncombe County in 1851). Within a few years Blount sold 320 acres on the French Broad River to Waightstill Avery (1741-1821), best remembered as North Carolina's first attorney general. The next owner was Avery's son-in-law William Ballard Lenoir (1775-1852), who had wed Elizabeth Avery (1781-1855) in 1802. Lenoir was the oldest son of General William Lenoir of Fort Defiance, prominent military and political leader during the Revolutionary War and Federal era. Unlike other Lenoir heirs, William and Elizabeth (Betsy) chose not to remain in Happy Valley, settling instead on a 5,000-acre estate in eastern Tennessee. Lenoir acquired the Buncombe property from Avery during the 1810s and owned it until the 1850s, but almost certainly did not improve it himself during that time. William B. Lenoir was after 1810 an established farmer, manufacturer, and surveyor in Roane County, Tennessee (Lenoir City was later named for him). Although he continued to acquire land and make periodic visits to his family, Lenoir's ties to his native state were tenuous. It is said that during his lifetime he never sold any of his property. This was at least the case with the tract on the French Broad. Lenoir died in 1852. The next year his widow Betsy sold that property to James and John Patton of Buncombe County, members of a family of particular significance to the history of Asheville. The Pattons and the next owner William Blair held the title to the property until 1869. Little is known about Blair. However, the point of tracing the title up to his time is to establish the connection of the tract to Blount, Avery, Lenoir, and the Pattons, individuals and families of central importance to the history of western North Carolina.

Henry Ottinger (1816?-1891) bought the property from William Blair in 1869. Yet there is reason to believe that Ottinger was living there before he acquired full title to the tract. The house, according to strong local tradition, has been associated from the outset with Ottinger. Although it is possible that Blair was responsible for its construction, Ottinger and his family soon after became the primary residents. The house, according to architectural historians, was probably built in the late 1850s. Blair was then the owner but Ottinger may have moved to the area from Tennessee about that time. Ottinger and his brother, according to family tradition, had farmed near
Greeneville in Cocke County, just across the state line, up to that time. Tradition holds that one of Ottinger's four daughters was born in the house in 1862. This is contradicted, however, by census records in 1870 and 1880 stating that Ottinger, his wife, and four children (the youngest born in 1865) were all native to Tennessee. A possible explanation for this may be that Catherine Ottinger (1822?-1899) returned to her family's place a few miles away in Tennessee each time a child came due. Henry and Catherine Ottinger's first child was born in 1859, indicating that they were probably married about the time the house was built. Unfortunately there are no census records for Ottinger in either Tennessee or North Carolina in 1860; nor is there any record of Confederate service by Ottinger, who would have been in his late forties by the time of the Civil War.

What little is known about Henry Ottinger is derived from family tradition, later census records, estate records, and deeds. It is said that Ottinger operated a ferry across the French Broad River from a landing located very near to his house. Other evidence indicates that he was primarily a farmer. In 1870 he cultivated 145 of his 435 acres, growing mainly wheat, oats, and corn. He kept a fairly small herd of cattle and some hogs. By 1880 Ottinger was farming only 100 acres. Of that seven acres were given over to 300 apple trees. In 1876 he sold ninety percent of all mineral rights on his land in a deed effective for ninety-nine years; apparently little came of this sale. During the course of the 1880s Ottinger's four daughters married. Each of his sons-in-law—A. V. Lawson, E. N. Fry, T. B. Gorman, and C. E. Trollinger—received tracts of up to 100 acres. Ottinger's daughter Hester and husband Ed Fry built a house one-half mile up the river from the homeplace. The two houses, similar in design, both sat on the bank of the French Broad. The Fry's house was destroyed in the flood of 1916. The Ottinger house apparently suffered no damage.

Henry Ottinger died intestate in February 1891 at the age of seventy-five. His widow Catherine retained the estate, valued at $1,700 (with $1,500 of that being real estate). Her son-in-law Ed Fry challenged the settlement of the estate claiming that he had lived with the Ottingers between 1884 and 1891, had helped run the farm, and was thus entitled to a share. Fry further claimed that Ottinger owed him $800. Catherine Ottinger denied that this was the case, claiming that if her late husband had forwarded Fry such an amount it was only because he was "old and infirm and plied with spirituous liquors." Later he had a weakness and fondness for spirituous liquors and when under the influence was easily persuadable," she explained. At her death in 1899 at age seventy-seven Catherine Ottinger requested that the estate be equally divided by the four sets of heirs. Fry, though included in this division, challenged the terms of the will preventing any partition of the property. As a result her executor sold the house and 223 acres in 1902 to J. F. Redmon for $5,000. In 1889 Henry and Catherine Ottinger gave a small tract and building to the Methodist Episcopal Church South for use as a chapel. In the deed they reserved a small lot for a family graveyard. Ottinger's Chapel was lost during the 1920s but the now-overgrown graveyard, lying just over a hill from the main house, remains.

The Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church purchased the Ottinger house and land from Redmon in 1902. The Presbyterians had quite an active "missionary" or educational program in the North Carolina mountains at the turn of the century. In Madison County alone they sponsored nineteen schools and a hospital. As more public schools were built their schools were gradually phased out. The most enduring of these was the Dorland-Bell Institute in Hot Springs. The Reverend Luke Dorland (1815-1897)
came to Madison County to retire after a long career as an educator. Among his accomplishments was the founding of Scotia Academy, a school for Negro girls in Cabarrus County (now part of Barber-Scotia College). In 1887 Dorland began teaching a group of girls in his home in Hot Springs. The school grew rapidly and in 1893 its operation was assumed by the Presbyterian Church. With the acquisition in 1902 of the Ottinger farm, two miles east of Hot Springs, the Dorland Institute added a campus for boys. The "Willows," as the farm was known, housed thirty boys with sixty more as day students by 1910. The additional enrollment led school officials to build more dormitory space. According to a 1924 circular,

... the comfortable brick farmhouse of ante-bellum days... accommodated 25 boys. A 3-story addition was soon added to increase the accommodations to 50. The boys home at this time was called Whitney House with Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Daniels in charge.

Several outbuildings were added, including a barn in 1908, a slaughter house, carriage and tool house, and wood house. The entire place was operated as a demonstration or model farm. In 1918 the Dorland school was consolidated with the Bell Institute in Hot Springs. In 1926 the boys campus was moved to the Asheville Farm School leaving the "Willows" to the exclusive use of the girls. In 1942 Dorland-Bell Institute formally merged with the Asheville Farm School to form Warren Wilson College. One of the practices instituted at the "Willows," whereby students earned their keep through farmwork or other duties, is still observed at Warren Wilson.¹³

With the merging of the schools the buildings in Hot Springs were sold and used as private homes. In 1938 the "Willows" was sold by the Board of National Missions (the name was changed from the Board of Home Missions in 1929) to Sherman Ramsey of the Walnut community in Madison County.¹⁴ Apparently the three-story rear addition to the house was torn down about the time of the sale. Ramsey, who paid the Presbyterians $9,000 for 635 acres, sold the portion which included the house to Jack Nix in two deeds, the first in 1942 and the second in 1946.¹⁵ Nix in turn sold the property in a series of transactions to Harold Baker for $18,000. Baker, the present owner, born in 1921, is a vocational education teacher at Madison High School. He currently farms portions of the 300-acre farm, growing primarily tobacco and corn.¹⁶ Appropriately Baker's two pursuits coincide with the two aspects of historical significance associated with his house. The Henry Ottinger House, built around 1858 and thus almost as old as Madison County, is of particular significance to the agricultural and educational history of the area.
The Ottinger House archaeological site (31 Md 6) encompasses up to twenty-five acres of bottomland on the west bank of the French Broad River north of Hot Springs. Artifactual material recovered from surface collections represents aboriginal utilization of the site from the early Archaic period (ca. 8,000 B.C.) through the Mississippian period (ca. A.D. 1500). The site's location along the French Broad River places it at a juncture between the Ridge and Valley Province of east Tennessee and the Blue Ridge Province of western North Carolina. Aboriginal interaction between these two physiographic regions is particularly important during the middle and late Woodland periods, as extensive trade networks were utilized throughout the southern Appalachian mountains.

No systematic survey or testing has been conducted on the site but the potential exists for intact subsurface deposits. There is also a high potential for historic period remains associated with the 19th century farm occupation.
NOTES


3 Madison County Deed Book E, p. 381, and Deed Book 17, p. 254.

4 Interview with Sharon Baker (by telephone), 26 July 1983; Seventh and Eighth Censuses, 1870 and 1880, Population Schedules.


6 Seventh and Eighth Censuses, 1870 and 1880, Agricultural Schedules.

7 Madison County Deed Book G, p. 196.

8 Madison County Deed Book K, p. 13; Deed Book U, p. 273; Deed Book W, p. 461; and Deed Book T, p. 538; Baker interview.

9 Madison County Estates Records, Henry Ottinger folder, North Carolina State Archives.

10 Madison County Will Book B, p. 218; Madison County Estates Records, Catherine Ottinger folder, North Carolina State Archives.

11 Madison County Deed Book 15, p. 356.

12 Madison County Deed Book 2, p. 441; Baker interview.


14 Madison County Deed Book 64, p. 312.

15 Madison County Deed Book 68, p. 431, and Deed Book 74, p. 79.

16 Madison County Deed Book 77, p. 253; Baker interview.
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 48± acres
Quadrangle name: Hot Springs, N. C. - Tennessee
Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification
See attached survey plat, with boundary marked in red.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Significance by Michael Hill, Research Specialist, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.; Description by Douglas Swaim, Preservation Specialist, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Asheville, N. C.
organization: N. C. Division of Archives and History
date: October 20, 1983
street & number: 109 E. Jones Street
telephone: 704-298-5024 (Asheville)
919-733-6545 (Raleigh)
city or town: Raleigh
state: North Carolina

12. 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: [Signature]
date: August 14, 1985

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Chief of Registration
Baker, Sharon. Interview (by telephone), 26 July 1983.


Moore, John W. Roster of North Carolina Troops in the War Between the States. 4 volumes. Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1882.


Henry Ottinger House
Madison County
Hot Springs, NC - Tenn. quadrangle
Zone 17 1:24,000 Scale

A 17 331860/3975980
B 17 331470/3975000
C 17 331860/3975000
Henry Ottinger House
Madison County
Property of Harold Baker
Surveyor's plate dated 7/7/65
Nominated property outlined in red

Bearing & Distances
Around the Perimeter of Farm

1. S11°40'E - 235'
2. N18°50'W - 295'
3. S39°30'W - 445'
4. S67°W - 138'
5. S22°00'W - 462'
6. S17°30'W - 200'
7. S18°15'E - 200'
8. S0°10'W - 251'
9. S22°00'E - 132'
10. S20°30'W - 231'
11. S29°30'E - 100'
12. S28°30'W - 96'
13. S38°30'E - 87'
14. S0°30'W - 215'
15. S44°30'W - 141'
16. S59°00'E - 96'
17. S10°00'W - 276'
18. S57°15'N - 345'
19. E57°15'N - 385'
20. E57°15'N - 385'
21. S35°45'N - 325'
22. N35°45'W - 325'
23. S35°45'E - 325'
24. S35°45'N - 325'
25. N35°45'W - 325'

39 to 40 - Along the West bank of the French Broad River.
40-41. S55°15'W - 363'
41-42. S37°15'W - 356'