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 Holbrook Farm Complex
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION
North and south sides of SR 1743, 0.2 mi. east of the junction with SR 1742

| CITY, TOWN | Traphill |
| STATE | North Carolina |
| CODE | 37 |

3 CLASSIFICATION

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| | | | OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME Dr. J. Samuel Holbrook also Miss Beatrice Holbrook
STREET & NUMBER 211 North Race
CITY, TOWN Statesville
STATE North Carolina
VICINITY OF 28677

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Wilkes County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN Wilkesboro
STATE North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
DATE
_FEDERAL_ STATE_ COUNTY_ LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
DESCRIPTION

CONDITION
- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR
- DETERIORATED
- RUINS
- UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE
- ORIGINAL SITE
- ALTERED
- UNALTERED

DATE __ __

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Holbrook farm complex consists of a frame house, a log granary, a log spring house, a log smokehouse, a log corn crib, a frame barn, and a board-and-batten two-room school dormitory moved to the farm from the nearby community of Traphill. The farm is sited in a small clearing surrounded on all sides by forested mountains in a remote section of north Wilkes County.

The house is a typical, traditional vernacular two story, three bay frame dwelling. Shed rooms extend across the rear and a shed porch across the front, composing the perennially used house form of the region. It rests on a low stone foundation and has brick exterior end chimneys with single stepped shoulders. The front-porch exhibits interesting trellis-like supports linked by a simple Federal style balustrade; flush sheathing occurs on the facade sheltered by the porch. The main (south) facade has six-over-nine sash at the first level and six-over-six at the second, both contained in simple molded frames. A well-executed molded cornice carries across the front and rear of the house with a small, neat, molded return. The gable ends have six-over-six sash and the east end has a stone potato house attached to the chimney base. The rear originally had two shed rooms flanking an open rear entrance but a one-story, three-room wing has been added to the rear of the east shed room.

The interior follows a central plan one room deep plus shed rooms. Woodwork is predominantly vernacular Federal style with some raised panel doors used. The walls are covered with both horizontal and vertical sheathing. The door and window frames are simple molded ones. The west room mantel has a molded crossetted fire surround; end blocks and center tablet rest directly on the fire surround. A molded shelf conforms to the three part frieze. The shed rooms were not heated, and the east room mantel has been replaced. Rising from near the rear door along the east wall, the closed string stair begins with a short series of winders and proceeds in an unbroken run. The newel occurring where the winders conclude, is slender and square in section with beaded edges and extends from first to second floor. The molded stringer is set with simple square balusters which support a squarish beaded handrail similar to the newel. The second floor post has a curious four sided geometric finial carved from its top. The second floor balustrade, similar to the stair, has an unusual pattern of allowing the balusters to intersect the top of the handrail as they both near the second floor newel.

The second floor seems to have been finished at a later date. There is one Greek Revival door (with two vertical panels) and one raised panel door which is weathered. This may have been the original front door which has been replaced by a mid to late nineteenth century door. The second floor mantels are very simple. A great deal of early hardware and furnishings remain in the house.

To the rear is a mid-nineteenth century addition with an early twentieth century room attached still further back.

Four nineteenth century log outbuildings remain at the site, all of which are constructed of hewn logs joined with half-dovetail corner notches. Northwest of the house are the smokehouse and springhouse, set side by side and nearly identical in appearance; on each the gable end of the roof extends to shelter the entrance. A larger gable roof log granary is sited southwest of the house, and a narrow, shed roof log corn crib stands northwest of the granary.
At the west end of the complex is a large frame shed roof barn fronted on two sides by a deep shed porch; this barn dates from the early twentieth century and contains stables for livestock.

Set across the road south of the house is a one-story gable roof frame structure, covered in board and batten and heated with a central stone chimney. According to the owners, the building served as a dormitory at the nearby Trap Hill Institute, a Baptist school that operated in the late nineteenth century; J. S. Holbrook had served as chairman of the board of trustees for the school. The building was moved to its present location in the early twentieth century sometime after the school closed.

*The name Trap Hill has recently been standardized as Traphill.*
8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

| 1400-1499 | 1500-1599 | 1600-1699 | 1700-1799 | 1800-1899 | 1900-

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SPECIFIC DATES 1826?

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located in a clearing surrounded by steep, wooded mountains in a remote section of Wilkes County, the Holbrook Farm Complex embodies the vernacular building traditions and evokes the quality of nineteenth century rural life in western North Carolina. The exact date of construction and the first occupants of the dwelling are uncertain, but it appears likely that the house—a traditional two-story frame structure embellished with simple Federal style trim—was built for William and Jenny Bauguess Spicer in the 1820s. In the early 1870s the farm was purchased by Joseph Samuel Holbrook, a locally prominent businessman and farmer who was vigorously active in the civic, religious, and educational affairs of Wilkes County. At one point Holbrook's estate included 1,000 acres, and twenty-nine outbuildings of various functions surrounded the house; several of these outbuildings survive. The unspoiled character of the complex of log and frame buildings, the beauty of the setting, and the associations with a leading local figure make this a site important to Wilkes County and western North Carolina. The farm remains in the Holbrook family.

Criteria: (A) The farm complex is representative of the self-sustaining agrarian society in remote areas of western North Carolina throughout the nineteenth century.

(C) The house embodies the form, plan, and construction techniques of the vernacular traditions of house construction; its interior trim reveals the influence of the Federal style. The log outbuildings demonstrate the techniques of log construction important to the settlement and development of the state.
Near the banks of the East Prong of Roaring River, just west of Traphill in Wilkes County, stands an antebellum house now owned by Dr. J. Samuel Holbrook and his sister Beatrice Holbrook. Remodeling of a chimney in the early 1970s produced a brick testifying to an 1826 construction date, according to Miss Holbrook. The character of the house would support such a date. No definite evidence was discovered which would refute the 1826 date in the course of this research; however, the history of the house and property before 1870 is vague and confusing.

About the only certain fact is that the land on which the house stands was among that granted to William Spicer (the elder) and his son Joseph between 1779 and 1820. Father and son accumulated more than 550 acres of contiguous land along the East Prong of Roaring River and began doling parcels to other family members as they married or decided to set up their own homes. Pinpointing the exact piece of property is made more difficult because the Spicers intermarried with the Bauguesses and Holbrooks, thus uniting three substantial landholding families along the river. In all, several thousand acres of adjoining land were available for a residence by any member of the three families. All of William Spicer's children, except Joseph, eventually moved to Tennessee or Kentucky where wills and estates papers, if any exist, are recorded and thus not readily available for research purposes. Finally, there is evidence to show that some transfers of property were never recorded, the extent of which is unknown but nevertheless frustrating for the researcher. Consequently, the history of the Holbrook Farm until 1873 is based largely on circumstantial evidence, consisting of available records, oral tradition, and interpretation of events.

Through evaluation of subsequent property transfers it appears that the house site was part of the land which the state granted to Joseph Spicer shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century. Joseph retained title to his lands but allowed other family members to construct houses and farm portions of it. In 1817, Joseph's half brother William Spicer married Jenny Bauguess who was Joseph's sister-in-law. Sometime after their marriage, William and Jenny moved into the house now standing on the Holbrook Farm. The exact date of occupation is uncertain, but if the 1826 construction date is accurate, as indicated on the chimney brick, then it seems logical that the house was built by or for William and Jenny Spicer. Four children were born of the marriage: Gideon, Abigail, William, and Delphia. Jenny Spicer died between 1850 and 1853 and William, at the age of fifty-four, married twenty-two year old Permilia Hooteg. Three children were born of William's second marriage: Nancy, John, and Mary. During or shortly after the Civil War, William moved his family to the West. The next resident of the house remarked some years later that he was "living where old Billie [William Spicer] lived before he moved to Ky."

Although William Spicer lived in the house, he never owned the property and the chain of title is somewhat vague. As was stated earlier Joseph Spicer appeared to be
in possession of the land when his brother resided there. Joseph died intestate in late 1845 or early 1846 and the property was divided among his wife and children. Apparently the land on which William Spicer was then residing passed to Joseph's son James, who allowed his uncle continued use of the property.

James Spicer married Tamsen Johnson in 1842 and established a homeplace elsewhere on his father's property. During the decade of the 1840s, he added more than 500 acres to his inheritance, all in the vicinity of Roaring River. One tract, a grant from the State of North Carolina joined the tract on which William lived. James died sometime between 1854 and 1859 leaving a widow and seven children. No will was recorded so the court gave Tamsen Spicer a life estate in 100 acres of the property and invested ownership to all the land in common to the seven children. On February 16, 1859, Tamsen Spicer sold her dower in the homeplace to Ralph Holbrook. This, however, was the James Spicer home and not the current Holbrook House in which William Spicer was residing at the time of this transaction. When "old Billie" moved to Kentucky, the heirs of James Spicer sold 365 acres, including the present Holbrook House to Joseph Samuel Holbrook from whom the structure took its name.

J. S. Holbrook, born March 4, 1842, was the son of Ralph Holbrook and Nancy Spicer, daughter of Joseph and sister of James Spicer. J. S. Holbrook married Frances (Fannie) Alexander on March 18, 1866 and the couple may have lived in the house for several years before purchasing the property in the early 1870s. Holbrook was a successful businessman and farmer whose landed estate at one point reached 1,000 acres. In the late nineteenth century, the Holbrook Farm was virtually a self-sufficient establishment with the dwelling house surrounded by twenty-nine outbuildings serving a variety of functions.

J. S. Holbrook was active in civic, religious, and educational matters. Service included being a trustee of Traphill Seminary (1874) and Traphill Institute (1888-1897), an officer in the Traphill Lodge, and chairman of Wilkes County Board of Commissioners (1895). He was elected to the General Assembly for one term (1893) but had no real taste for politics. A very religious man, Holbrook was an active member of the Baptist Church for nearly half a century.

Holbrook's business pursuits established him as one of the incorporators of the Stone Mountain Railway Company in 1895. Two years later he was employed as the local agent for Stone Mt. Granite and Timber Company. The company went through several reorganizations but Holbrook retained his position until his death. The Holbrook House became local office headquarters for the granite and timber companies developing the area for a decade around the turn of the century.

While on his way to church to attend a meeting on December 3, 1920, J. S. Holbrook's buggy broke its shaft. Holbrook attempted to halt the horse and was thrown beneath the buggy, suffering a broken neck in the fall. He died a few minutes later; he was
just past his seventy-eighth birthday. His survivors included his wife Fannie and three grandchildren whom he had raised as his own. Holbrook's only son, John A. Holbrook, died in 1910 leaving the minor children. Joseph S. Holbrook's will, dated June 12, 1919, was probated December 18, 1920. Fannie, his wife of fifty-four years, was given a life estate in all real and personal property. Grandson John A. Holbrook was bequeathed a large farm (201 acres) separate from the homeplace which passed to his other grandchildren, Samuel Herbert and Beulah Beatrice Holbrook. In addition to the 250-acre home tract, they received adjoining land totaling five and one half acres. Samuel Herbert Holbrook was frequently confused with a relative named Hardin Samuel Holbrook. To rectify the situation, and out of love for his grandfather, Samuel Herbert began calling himself J. Samuel Holbrook II. A long time resident physician in Statesville, he is probably better known locally as Dr. Sam. Beatrice Holbrook now spends her winters in Raleigh but much of the warmer months finds her at her Traphill property. Resident caretakers maintain the house during her absence. According to Miss Holbrook, she and Dr. Sam Holbrook intend to pass the house to their heirs just as they received it from their grandfather.

FOOTNOTES

1 Beatrice Holbrook, "Information on the J. S. Holbrook Home" (Unpublished typescript in possession of the author, undated), I, hereinafter cited as Holbrook, "J. S. Holbrook Home"; and researcher's interview with Beatrice Holbrook, May 6, 1976, hereinafter cited as Holbrook interview.

2 Land Grant Records of North Carolina, Office of the Secretary of State, Raleigh, Land Grant Book 39, p. 108; Book 72, p. 166; Book 116, p. 245; Book 121, p. 362; Book 128, p. 456; and Book 134, p. 478, hereinafter cited as Land Grant Book. Survey warrants with attached plats are also recorded in the Land Grant Office. See also Genealogical Chart of the Spicer Family, in possession of Miss Beatrice Holbrook, hereinafter cited as Spicer Genealogy.

3 Spicer Genealogy.

4 A scrapbook of deeds, now in possession of Miss Beatrice Holbrook, contains original deeds, some of which are not recorded in the Register of Deeds Office for Wilkes County. The scrapbook was loaned to the researcher to assist in compiling this report. The source will hereinafter be cited as Deed Scrapbook.
5 Land Grant Book 116, p. 245; Book 128, p. 456; and Book 134, p. 478. Compare descriptions with Wilkes County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Wilkes County Courthouse, Wilkesboro, Deed Book Q, 456 (Heirs of Joseph Spicer to George W. Spicer); Deed Book T, 435 (Tamzen Spicer to Ralph Holbrook), and Deed Book B-2, p. 127, hereinafter cited as Wilkes County Deed Books.

6 Wilkes County Marriage Bonds, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Wilkes Marriage Bonds; and Spicer Genealogy.

7 These were children living when 1850 Census was taken. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Wilkes County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Seventh Census, 1850.

8 Wilkes Marriage Bonds; Seventh Census, 1850; and Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Wilkes County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.


10 Wilkes County Deed Book Q, 456. James's inheritance of the property is based on the fact that James's heirs sold it to J. S. Holbrook in 1873. See Wilkes County Deed Book B-2, p. 127. James did not acquire land in his own right early enough for the house to have been constructed by 1826 nor was it among the few pieces of recorded property purchased by James Spicer from relatives and neighbors.

11 Wilkes Marriage Bonds. See also Wilkes County Deed Book T, 435, in which Tamzen Spicer sells her dower in the James Spicer dwelling house to Ralph Holbrook.

12 Original land grant was never recorded and is still in possession of Miss Holbrook.

13 Wilkes County Deed Book T, 435; Deed Book B-2, p. 127; and Spicer Genealogy.

14 See fn. 11.

15 Wilkes County Deed Book B-2, p. 127. See also Spicer Genealogy.

16 Spicer Genealogy; Seventh Census, 1850; and Family Scrapbook.

17 Wilkes Marriage Bonds; and Family Scrapbook.

18 Wilkes County Deed Book C-2, pp. 62, 71, 124; Deed Book 4, p. 350; Deed Book B, pp. 321, 322, 324; and Family Scrapbook.

20. Family Scrapbook.


22. Family Scrapbook; and age recorded in Seventh Census, 1850.

23. Family Scrapbook.

24. Wilkes County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Wilkes County Courthouse, Wilkesboro, Will Book 8, p. 278; and Family Scrapbook.

25. Holbrook interview.

26. Holbrook interview.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF Nominated PROPERTY: approx. 25 acres

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Holbrook Farm boundary is determined by the contours of the surrounding mountainous terrain, creating a complex figure enclosing land on both sides of SR 1743 and forming a visual barrier of steep wooded land around the farm. All nominated property is still owned by the Holbrook family. Beginning at a point 600 feet north of the house, at an elevation of 1240 feet on the slope of the hill behind the house, follow the 1240 foot elevation along the slope in a southeasterly direction to the point from whence a line drawn due south would intersect SR 1743 at a point 600 feet east of the house. Follow that due south line about

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

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FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Description prepared by Greer Suttlemyre, and Michael T. Southern, Survey Significance prepared by Jerry Cross, Researcher Specialist

ORGANIZATION: Division of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER: 109 East Jones Street

TELEPHONE: (919) 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh

STATE: North Carolina

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: May 11, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
200 feet south of SR 1743 until it intersects the small branch which flows westward into East Prong Roaring River. From that point follow a line running about 500 feet southwest to the crest of the ridge which runs southeast to northwest, overlooking the house to the north. Follow a line on the crest of the ridge running northwest, down the northwest slope of the ridge, and intersecting SR 1743 at a distance 800 feet west of the house. From that point follow a line running northeast to a point at elevation 1200 feet, about 750 feet northwest of the house. From that point follow a line east to the beginning.
Holbrook Farm
Trap Hill, N.C.
Wilkes County
March, 1978

(Rural Nomination Boundary Based on Topographical Features)
Holbrook Farm Complex
N and S sides of SR 1743,
0.2 mi. E of jct. with SR 1742
Traphill vicinity, Wilkes County
North Carolina

UTM References
A--17/495130/4021790
B--17/494910/4021550
C--17/494590/4021820
D--17/494800/4022060