

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Rock Spring Camp Ground, Boundary Increase

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 6831 Campground Road not for publication N/A

city or town Denver vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Lincoln code 109 zip code 28037

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 2/20/2017
Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

4-17-2017
Date of Action

Rock Spring Camp Ground, Boundary Increase

Name of Property

Lincoln County, NC

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
2	0	sites
1	1	structures
0	0	objects
4	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
LANDSCAPE	forest
LANDSCAPE	natural feature
LANDSCAPE	parking lot
OTHER	spring house
OTHER	spring

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
OTHER	spring house
LANDSCAPE	parking lot
OTHER	restroom
COMMERCE	restaurant
GOVERNMENT	public works

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	BRICK
roof	METAL
walls	BRICK
	STONE
other	WOOD
	METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

[x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

[x] A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[] B removed from its original location.

[] C a birthplace or a grave.

[] D a cemetery.

[] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[] F a commemorative property.

[] G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Period of Significance

1830-1967

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

[] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

[] previously listed in the National Register

[] previously determined eligible by the National Register

[] designated a National Historic Landmark

[] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

[] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

[x] State Historic Preservation Office

[] Other State agency

[] Federal agency

[] Local government

[] University

[] Other

Name of repository: _____

Rock Spring Camp Ground, Boundary Increase
Name of Property

Lincoln County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 25

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 _____
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
4 _____
 See continuation sheet for longitude/latitude coordinates

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date November 7, 2016

street & number 59 Park Boulevard telephone 336/727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27127

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Rock Spring Camp Ground, c/o Forest Ross Jr., Trustee (See continuation sheet for additional owner.)

street & number 1170 Davis Road telephone 704/472-3022

city or town Lincolnton state NC zip code 28092

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Lincoln County, North Carolina

DESCRIPTION

Materials, cont'd.

Foundation: CONCRETE

Roof: ASPHALT

Summary and Setting

Rock Spring Camp Ground is located at 6831 Campground Road in Lincoln County's northeast corner. When established in 1830, the camp ground was surrounded by an area characterized by forests and some farm lands. Over time, this began to change. By the 1870s, the small farming community of Denver had developed approximately a half mile southwest of the camp ground along old NC 16. The greatest change, however, came after Duke Power Company impounded the Catawba River to the east in the mid-1960s, creating Lake Norman, the largest lake in the Carolinas, whose shores come within two miles of the camp ground.¹ The lake soon became a major recreational center north of the city of Charlotte, spurring the construction of countless homes along its shores and in its vicinity, followed by sprawling commercial development. This has brought mounting pressures for development in the near vicinity of Rock Spring Camp Ground. Today, two two-lane paved roads – Campground Road and Catawba-Burris Road – run through the camp ground property. Campground Road, which leads to Denver, runs in a northeast-southwest direction immediately next to the southeast side of the core camp ground, and Catawba-Burris Road runs in a north-south direction east of the core camp ground, meeting Campground Road at its south end. The heavily forested and agricultural lands that once surrounded the camp ground property have greatly diminished, replaced, in part, by residential and light industrial growth in the Denver vicinity to the southwest, recently clear-cut land to the northwest where a high-density residential development is being built, residential subdivisions to the north, a large ministry outreach building constructed in 2005 at the northeast corner of the camp ground property (not included in the Boundary Increase), and a trailer park and light industrial and commercial buildings to the east. The historic Brevard's Chapel remains adjacent to the camp ground property on the east.

The Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase is an expansion of approximately twenty-five acres owned by the camp ground and historically associated with it that surrounds the eight-acre Rock Springs Camp Meeting Ground listed in the National Register in 1972. Research conducted in conjunction with this Boundary Increase nomination determined that

¹ "Lake Norman North Carolina History," <http://www.lakenorman.com/content/lake-norman-north-carolina-history.html>.

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“Rock Spring Camp Ground” is the correct historic name of the property, and this name is documented in an accompanying Additional Documentation nomination. The 1972 National Register listing includes a tightly drawn boundary encompassing only the central square with its 1832 mortise-and-tenon-framed arbor and the rows of frame “tents” that form concentric squares around it. Not included in the 1972 nomination are the roads – the camp ground-owned road, Catawba-Burris Road, and Campground Road – that run through the camp ground property, the iconic Rock Spring and its spring house on the southeast side of Campground Road, the Mud Spring south of the core camp ground, three non-contributing resources, and additional wooded and open acreage surrounding the core camp ground on the north, east, southeast, south, and west.

Boundary Increase Acreage, 1830-2017, contributing site

For the most part, the undeveloped acreage of the Boundary Increase is flat land, with only minor variations in elevation. The land slopes gently away from the slightly raised elevation on which the eight-acre core camp ground, already listed in the National Register, stands. An exception to the minor variations in elevation is that part of the Boundary Increase on the southeast side of Campground Road. There, the land slopes more noticeably downhill toward an east-west running branch, only a short length of which is in the Boundary Increase. There is a more precipitous change in elevation where a rocky hillside drops from the southeast side of Campground Road down to the Rock Spring, the source of the east-west branch. The land on the south side of the core camp ground also has a more noticeable decrease in elevation in the vicinity of the Mud Spring.

The land in the Boundary Increase is largely wooded, although the density of the woods varies. Much of the land, including that to the northeast and east of the core camp ground on either side of Catawba-Burris Road and running along the midsection of the southeast side of Campground Road, is covered with lightly wooded groves of trees. The land west of the core camp ground is heavily wooded, as is the land on the southeast side of Campground Road on either side of the central open grove. A smaller area of heavily wooded land is located in the northeast corner of the Boundary Increase, although those woods are interrupted by a northwest-southeast clearing with power transmission lines. A 1970 USGS map and an aerial photo from 1993 provide a sense of the appearance of the camp ground Boundary Increase areas at those times. These sources show that, in terms of tree cover, the present appearance is much the same as it was at those times, with two exceptions. The land on the east side of Catawba-Burris Road was more heavily wooded than the grove of trees there now, and in 1970, the land west of the core camp ground was unwooded. By 1993, that land was heavily wooded.

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Several roadways are within the Boundary Increase area. Among these are two public roads: Campground Road, which runs northeast-southwest through the property immediately southeast of the core camp ground, and Catawba-Burris Road, which runs north-south through the property east of the core camp ground. The south end of Catawba-Burris Road tees into Campground Road. Both are two-lane paved roads. Close to the road on the southeast side of Campground Road are a stone-veneered sign carrying the name of the camp ground and a stone-veneered and decorative-metal gate that opens to the walkway leading down to the Rock Spring and Spring House (see below). Both were erected in 2002.

A paved private road owned by the camp ground encircles the core camp ground on the north, west, and south. There are also three dirt lanes running roughly north-south on the west and east sides of Catawba-Burris Road. The west lane leads from the north end of the Boundary Increase southward to a parking area. The two lanes on the east side of the road lead from the north and south to a parking area. The parking areas are informally laid and covered with gravel.

Rock Spring, 1830, contributing site, and Spring House, early 1940s, contributing building

The Rock Spring and Spring House are located at the base of a rocky hill below the south side of Campground Road. A broad, concrete walkway (1940) with a metal handrail (1995) leads, in a series of steps and landings, from the road to the Rock Spring and Spring House. Prior to the building of the walkway, campers fetching water often slipped on ground rendered muddy by the sloshing of water from pails. Large boulders and rocky ground are exposed on the hillside behind (north of) the Spring House.

The Rock Spring is ageless, but it was in 1830, when the camp ground was established, that it was put into use. Originally it was uncovered. Later (date unknown), a simple shelter composed of four posts and a shed roof covered the spring. In the early 1940s, the present one-story Spring House was erected.² The brick building, laid in an irregular common bond, has a front-gable wooden roof sheathed in standing-seam metal. Flush boards cover the two gable ends. The Spring House faces southeast away from the road and has two doors, one to the spring room and the other to the pump room. A concrete retaining wall runs southward from the west side of the Spring House because the land on that side slopes sharply upward. The original five-panel wood doors of the spring house were replaced (date unknown), with plain wood doors. In the 1990s, the east door to the spring room was replaced with plexiglass so that people could see the spring without risk of falling into it. (This was after campers no longer needed to go to the spring for water.) Around 2013, a roll-up metal door was added over the plexiglass door. As a

² Terry Brotherton, compiler, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. II: 1970-2002 (Denver, N.C.: Terry Brotherton, 2003), 678.

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safety precaution, it remains down during the year when the annual August camp meeting is not in session. The two rooms of the spring house have exposed brick walls. The Rock Spring, itself, is in the east room and has a water-filled natural rock basin. The rock appears to have been cut away to create a squarer basin for easier use. This was likely done in 1830. Now used for storage, the west room originally housed the pump.

An underground pipe runs from the spring to a rectangular, concrete catch basin, south of the Spring House, which likely dates from the early 1940s. It was constructed so that people could get spring water without having to go into the spring room. A small water branch, whose source is the spring, runs from the catch basin eastward along a short stretch of this portion of the property before turning south and continuing beyond the property line.

Mud Spring, early 1940s, contributing structure

The Mud Spring is located in the woods south of the south rows of tents, beyond the camp ground road and an electrified fence along the tree line, which is set back from the road. This secondary spring on the camp ground property was less desirable than the Rock Spring, because its water always was slightly muddy. It was used for watering horses, but some campers also used the spring water for themselves when they chose not to walk farther to the Rock Spring. The Mud Spring has a rectangular concrete basin. (See Fig. 1, Mud Spring, 2002.) Unlike the Rock Spring, the Mud Spring simply bubbled up from the ground (thus its water's lack of clarity), and the concrete basin helped to containerize it. The basin was likely built in the early 1940s, around the same time as the brick Spring House and concrete catch basin at the Rock Spring.

The Shack, 1948/2002, noncontributing building

Immediately north of the south entrance to the camp ground and south of the south rows of tents is the Shack, a concession stand that serves the camp ground during camp meeting week. Constructed in 1948, it is a one-story, concrete-block building that was stone-veneered in 2002. The building has a very low-pitched, east-facing gable roof with exposed rafter ends. The east half of the building has widely overhanging eaves supported by plate extensions that shelter a concrete wraparound walk on the north, east, and south sides. Designed for walk-up service, the east half of the Shack has large, horizontal-board shutters, hinged at the top. They remain closed when the concession stand is not in use, but when the stand is open for business, the shutters are raised outward and hooked to the rafters. Until 1975, a full-service restaurant was in the west half of the building. Today, the north side of the building's west half is used for storage, while the south side houses two restrooms. A shallow shed roof overhangs the west end of the building.

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Although the Shack retains the location, one-story form, roof line, and concession windows from when it was built, the added rustic stone veneer significantly changes its exterior appearance.

Restroom Building, 1979/ca. 1995, noncontributing building

A public restroom building stands on the north side of the encircling camp ground road and close to a lane leading through the rows of tents to the central camp ground square. Built in 1979 and stone-veneered ca. 1995, it is a one-story, rectangular building with an asphalt-sheathed front-gable roof, a front pent eave, and two front entrances.

East Lincoln Sewer District Pump Station #2, 1996, noncontributing structure

In 1996, approximately .07 acres (3,024 square feet) of the camp ground property on the southeast side of Campground Road just east of its junction with Catawba-Burris Road was sold to the East Lincoln County Water and Sewer District for the construction of a sewer district pump station.³ The small metal structure with adjacent concrete pad is separated from the camp ground property by a chain-link fence with barbed-wire across the top.

Integrity Statement

The Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase, composed primarily of the acreage historically associated with the camp ground but not included in the original National Register nomination, retains very good integrity. The landscape, composed of wooded land, open space, two springs, a branch emanating from one of the springs, and the roadways, remains largely as it appeared during the period of significance (1830-1967). The Rock Spring, the Spring House, and the Mud Spring remain little altered. The two buildings and one structure that are noncontributing resources are small and have little impact on the historic appearance of the camp ground.

Statement of Archaeological Potential

The camp ground is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash deposits and privy pits which are likely present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the meeting ground. Information concerning daily life at the camp, as well as the economic status and health of the participants, can be obtained from

³ Lincoln County Deed Book 929: 844.

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the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the meeting ground. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Rock Spring Camp Ground in Lincoln County was listed in the National Register in 1972. Established by the Methodists in 1830 as part of the evangelistic camp meeting movement, it is the oldest camp meeting ground in North Carolina and is one of the largest. Camp meetings at Rock Spring continue to meet annually during the first week in August.

The original National Register nomination includes the core camp ground of approximately eight acres that encompasses the central square with its arbor worship space and the surrounding rows of frame residential tents. The Boundary Increase nomination adds approximately twenty-five acres surrounding the core camp ground to the National Register. Historically, substantial acreage surrounding the core camp ground was required to provide for the operation and spatial needs of the annual, week-long, camp meetings at Rock Spring Camp Ground. The Boundary Increase land includes the primary Rock Spring and the secondary Mud Spring that supplied the camp ground with water, the areas beyond the tents where rows of over 200 frame privies stood and were used until the 1970s, beyond that, the wooded areas where, originally, the carriages, wagons, horses, and mules and, later, the motorized vehicles that brought campers and their supplies to the camp ground were kept during camp meeting week.

Historically, the Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase area was integrally tied to the core camp ground, because it was essential to the functioning of everyday life at camp meetings. The Boundary Increase has local significance in the area of religion and meets Criterion A and Criterion Consideration A for its association with and support of the evangelical camp meeting movement, which was a major factor in the spread of religion to frontier America during the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, camp meetings continued to be an important part of religious life for many North Carolinians, especially those in the Western Piedmont section of the state. The period of significance spans the years from 1830, when the land for Rock Spring Camp Ground was purchased and began to be used, to 1967, fifty years ago, when camp meetings at Rock Spring were still going strong. The years after 1967 are not of exceptional significance.

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Historical Background and Religion Context: The Development of Camp Meetings in North Carolina⁴

In the late eighteenth century, when Methodist circuit riders first traveled to settlements in North Carolina and to the state's vast backcountry, they initially held religious services in homes, barns, or other available buildings. These spaces quickly proved inadequate, as those who came for the preaching or simply out of curiosity multiplied. To accommodate the growing numbers, services moved outdoors.⁵

The favored outdoor location was a wooded site with an available water source and nearby pasturage. Underbrush was cleared to create a grove where worshippers could stand or sit, and an elevated wood platform was constructed to provide a temporary stage for the preacher. Services consisted primarily of preaching, praying and singing. As the crowds grew, and as people came from greater distances – particularly in the sparsely settled backcountry – services extended for several days. Attendees slept in their wagons or in tents made of cloth or brush. Born of necessity and encouraged by the fervor of the Great Revival of religion in America during the early decades of the nineteenth century, these services evolved into the annual camp meeting. Other denominations – most notably the Baptists and the Presbyterians – also held camp meetings prior to the Civil War. But it was the Methodists who capitalized on this form of worship, developing it into a powerful and lasting means of evangelism. Churches often were established as a product of the camp meetings. Conversely, over time some church congregations built their own camp grounds, knowing their importance as a method of drawing people to God. Up through the first quarter of the twentieth century, Methodist periodicals regularly published calendars and advertisements for upcoming camp meetings.⁶

During the first half of the nineteenth century in North Carolina, enslaved persons often attended camp meetings with their masters, but after the Civil War, the emancipated slaves were no longer welcome at most camp grounds. Missing all that camp meetings offered, several groups of former slaves established their own camp meetings in the ensuing decades.⁷

⁴ This section is taken directly from Laura A. W. Phillips, *Legacy of Faith: Rural Methodist Churches in North Carolina* (Charlotte: The Duke Endowment, 2010), xii-xiii. The notes to that section of the book are included below.

⁵ Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 74; Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 127.

⁶ Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, Portable Edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 214; W. L. Grissom, *History of Methodism in North Carolina, from 1772 to the Present* (Nashville, Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1905), Vol. 1, 329-330; Guion Griffis Johnson, "The Camp Meeting in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 1933): 95; Tucker, 75-76, 78.

⁷ Catawba County Historical Association, *Catawba County: An Architectural History*, Sidney Halma, Project Director (Virginia Beach: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1991), 14.

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Continuing to be set in a wooded area with a good water source and nearby pasturage like the earliest places for outdoor worship, the typical Methodist camp meeting ground consisted of two primary, communal and private, parts: the arbor and the tents. This hierarchal arrangement placed the site of worship services at the heart of the complex. Evolving from the early preaching stages, the central arbor stood within a square grove. Open on at least three sides, the arbor was a large structure with a hewn-timber open framework supporting a massive, usually hipped, roof. A raised platform at the west end held the pulpit and seating for several preachers and often the choir. Facing the preaching platform were rows of simple, wood-slatted pews set on the straw or sawdust-covered packed earth.⁸

Concentric rows of tent lots surrounded the central camp ground square. In the earliest days, the tents were likely made of cloth or brush, but soon rustic log or frame structures – still called tents – replaced them. The contiguous tents provided the most basic of habitations. One-story, and later two-story, structures had no windows but slatted upper walls for ventilation, a gable roof, a single ground-floor room with a packed earth floor, and a sleeping loft. A shed-roofed front porch sheltered a bench attached to the front wall by brackets, and a rear open or closed shed housed a food preparation and eating area. The narrow tent lots were sold to individual families, who used their tents year after year and passed them down to future generations. Still greatly prized, these tents have been modified in various minor ways through the years, while still retaining their basic appearance. Those that have been rebuilt through the years follow the same traditional pattern.⁹

Camp meetings remained popular throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, particularly in the western Piedmont. Several are still active, continuing to convene annually during the customary first week of August when, historically, crops had been planted but harvesting had not yet begun. Among these in the western Piedmont are the oldest, Rock Spring Camp Ground (NR, 1972), established in Lincoln County in 1830; the largest, Balls Creek Campground (NR, 1990), begun in Catawba County in 1853; and Tucker's Grove Camp Meeting Ground (NR, 1972), a post-Civil War African American camp ground founded in the 1870s in Lincoln County. As in the nineteenth century, when camp meetings provided a welcome opportunity for often-isolated farm families to worship and socialize, they continue to be greatly anticipated times of worship and fellowship for many people.

⁸ Tucker, 76.

⁹ Bishir, 214; Lily Estelle Sigmon, "History and Traditions of Rock Springs Camp Ground," Rock Springs Camp Meeting, 144th Annual Session, August 4-12, 1973, Denver, N.C., 10, 12; Johnson, 96.

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The Development of Rock Spring Camp Ground

Camp meetings in this area of North Carolina began when Methodist circuit rider Daniel Asbury was sent from Virginia to form the Lincoln Circuit that included not only Lincoln but several surrounding counties. In 1794 he and John McGee conducted outdoor religious services near present-day Rehobeth Church in Catawba County. From this, area camp meetings evolved. Tradition claims that camp meetings near Rehobeth moved within several years to a site near Bethel Church. A camp meeting was held at Bethel until around 1815, when it moved to Roby's Church about nine miles south of present-day Denver.¹⁰

The Third Quarterly Conference of the Lincoln Circuit, held on October 3, 1829, appointed James Bivings, Richard Proctor, and Truman Shelton to serve as a committee whose charge was to lease or purchase Roby's Campground or any other site they judged to be most appropriate for the holding of camp meetings. The men were also given the power to lay off and regulate a camp ground on the selected property.¹¹

At the First Quarterly Conference of 1830, held on May 8, the recommendation of the committee to purchase a camp ground was approved, and the committee was given the power to "devise ways and means for the payment of the same."¹² On August 7, 1830, Truman Shelton, Richard Proctor, and James Bivings, as trustees of the Methodist Society of the Lincoln Circuit, proceeded to purchase an estimated forty-five acres from Joseph M(athias) Monday (later Munday or Mundy) for ninety dollars for use by the Methodists of the Lincoln Circuit.¹³

The amount of land purchased was considerably more than what would be needed for the core camp ground – the central worship space and the surrounding tents to house the attendees during the multi-day camp meetings. But the trustees understood that to be successful, a camp ground would also need land surrounding the core camp ground for the more mundane aspects of life, such as space for privies and for keeping the horses and wagons that brought the attendees to camp meetings. This additional land beyond the core camp ground is included in the Boundary Increase.

The particular site of the camp ground, located at what later became the outskirts of the farming community of Denver, was chosen because it had a rock spring that provided an abundant supply of water. Annual week-long camp meetings were attended, at that time, by hundreds of people, and the presence of such a water supply was critical to supporting living

¹⁰ Terry Brotherton, compiler, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. I 1794-1969 (n.p.: Terry Brotherton, 2002), 23-25.

¹¹ Brotherton, Vol. I: 92-94. This source contains a photocopy of the related pages from the Minutes of the Third Quarterly Conference, October 3, 1829.

¹² Brotherton, Vol. I: 96. This source contains a photocopy of the related pages from the Minutes of the First Quarterly Conference, May 8, 1830.

¹³ Lincoln County Deed Book 34: 303.

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arrangements – for both the people and the animals that came with them – during the meeting. The rock spring is located in the Boundary Increase.

Even before the purchase of the property, the committee proceeded to lay out the new camp ground, which was to consist of a central open square for an arbor and surrounding rows of small, rectangular lots on which individual family shelters, called tents, would be built. The rows were organized by squares – North Square Lots, East Square Lots, South Square Lots, and West Square Lots for the rows closest to the arbor, and North Square Back Lots, West Square Back Lots, and so on for the back rows.¹⁴

The first sale of lots occurred on May 15, 1830, one week after the quarterly conference and nearly three months prior to the committee's actual purchase of the land, with lots selling for from one to three dollars.¹⁵ Given that lots were being sold prior to the actual purchase of the land, it must be assumed that this "pre-selling" of lots, like an advance subscription, constituted the committee's solution for finding the funds needed to purchase the site. When the trustees sold a lot, it was for "camping, or tenting on said Lot for the purpose only, of attending Divine Worship," and only when camp meetings were being held. When camp meetings were removed from the place, the lot would revert to the trustees. All the innermost rows were sold in 1830 for a total of \$167.01. Most of the back-row lots had been sold by 1836.¹⁶

Construction of the massive timber-frame arbor was not completed until 1832, so the earliest worship services were held under a brush arbor. Initially, attendees at the camp meetings slept in their wagons or in tents of cloth or brush until they could build frame "tents" on their lots. The easily constructed tents went up much faster than the substantial arbor.¹⁷ The 1832 arbor is still in use, while the present-day tents are the result of an organic process over a span of many years that saw the building of new tents and the replacement of other tents that had deteriorated or burned.

In 1851, the North Carolina General Assembly incorporated Rock Spring Camp Ground and established a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees to number not less than five nor more than ten members. The trustees were given powers to sue or be sued, plead or be impleaded in court, buy or sell property, demand and receive rents or profits from the property for the purposes of the camp meeting, and establish rules and regulations for the observance of order, decorum, and the removal of all nuisances from the camp ground.¹⁸

¹⁴ Brotherton, Vol. I: 99.

¹⁵ Brotherton, Vol. I: 99-100.

¹⁶ Brotherton, Vol. I: 15.

¹⁷ Lily Estelle Sigmon, "History and Traditions of Rock Springs Camp Ground" (Denver, N.C.: Rock Springs Camp Meeting, 144th Annual Session, August 4-12, 1973), 6.

¹⁸ *Laws of the State of North Carolina, Passed by the General Assembly at the Session of 1850-1851* (Raleigh: Star Printing Office, T. J. Lemay, State Printer, 1851), 629-630.

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Through the years, the trustees have made use of their established powers. For example, on August 7, 2015, they purchased just over ten acres adjacent to the west side of the original camp ground property.¹⁹ Although not owned by Rock Spring Camp Ground prior to 2015, the land was utilized historically during camp meeting time for privies and for the keeping of horses and wagons, and later motorized vehicles, during camp meeting week. Until 2015, the land had remained in the ownership of the Mundy (Munday/Monday) family who had sold the original property for the camp ground in 1830. Mathias Monday, himself, had purchased three of the tent lots sold in 1830,²⁰ and there was likely an agreement between him, and then his descendants, and the camp ground trustees regarding the use of that acreage during camp meeting time. The ten acres is within the Boundary Increase area.

Established in 1830, Rock Spring Camp Ground is known as the oldest religious camp meeting ground in North Carolina. It was established as a permanent site for the holding of Methodist camp meetings in this western Piedmont section of North Carolina, its purpose to bring the word of God to many frontier families at one place. In so doing, it became an important evangelical tool of the Methodist denomination. But while religion was the focus of the camp meeting, the camp meeting also served as an important vehicle for socialization in the back country. Camp meetings were held, annually, during the first week in August, when farmers had a short break in the agricultural cycle. People came from miles around – and eventually multiple other states, especially South Carolina – to attend. For many, it was a rare opportunity to experience an extended period of preaching, singing, and praying. But people also looked forward to the camp meeting at Rock Spring as a time to be reunited with old friends and make new ones. The religious and social aspects of the camp meeting became irrevocably entwined. Once families began to attend camp meetings, they continued to come, and the tradition of attending the Rock Spring Camp Meeting has been passed down from one generation to the next over the course of nearly two centuries. Over time, the crowds grew, and numerous accounts tell of thousands in attendance, especially for the opening and closing Sunday services and for the Saturday night sing, held on the evening before the first Sunday. One observer in 1870 marveled at the thousands in attendance and referred to Rock Spring as “the famous London of campgrounds.”²¹ The additional acreage of the Boundary Increase area was necessary to support these large crowds.

¹⁹ Lincoln County Deed Book 2537: 697.

²⁰ Brotherton, Vol. I: 99.

²¹ Brotherton, Vol. I: 146.

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Daily Life During Camp Meeting Week at Rock Spring Camp Ground

Worship was central to daily life at camp meetings, but when camp meeting attendees were not at the services under the arbor, they spent much of their time visiting with friends and extended family up and down the rows of tents.²²

Then, there were the more mundane aspects of camp meeting week, those that maintained the campers during their stay. It took a substantial amount of preparation for campers to spend a week away from home. Although campers had their tents awaiting them at the camp ground, that was about all. They did not leave furnishings or other possessions in the tents during the year between camp meetings, which meant they had to bring everything with them, including bedding, a table, some chairs, and cooking implements. They also had to bring all their food for the week, and since there was no refrigeration, that usually included many live chickens, which were killed as needed. The chickens were kept in cages or coops beyond the tents.²³ In addition, campers had to bring hay and fodder for the horses and mules that pulled their carriages and wagons filled with their supplies. In 1932, Joseph Benjamin Ivey (1864-1958) recalled that in the nineteenth century, the camp ground was surrounded on three sides by virgin forests. Among the trees were parked the campers' covered wagons, and their horses and mules were tethered among the trees. Thus, hundreds of wagons and horses and mules were stationed on the camp ground acreage beyond the tents throughout camp meeting week.²⁴ In 1870, "vast numbers of cloth tents, like hills of snow" were reported to be positioned at some distance beyond the tents.²⁵ The Boundary Increase area was essential for these aspects of life at camp meetings.

Once campers settled into their tents, there were needs that had to be met. Foremost was fresh water, which was essential for drinking, cooking, washing, and the animals. The Rock Spring, located on the south side of Campground Road, and the Mud Spring, located in the woods south of the tents – both within the Boundary Increase area – took care of that. For more than a century, campers walked down the steep, rocky hill to the Rock Spring, bringing water back uphill in buckets. Animals were also watered by the same means or by water brought from the Mud Spring, which was less clear than the water from the Rock Spring.²⁶ Animals could also be watered along the branch emanating from the Rock Spring near the southeast boundary of the property. When the present brick spring house was built in the early 1940s, a pump was installed and water from the spring was piped up to the core camp ground, where it was directed to four

²² Brotherton, Vol. I: 146.

²³ Terry Brotherton, compiler, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. II: 1970-2002 (Denver, N.C.: Terry Brotherton, 2003), 23; Brotherton, Vol. I: 441.

²⁴ Brotherton, Vol. I: 22, 280.

²⁵ Brotherton, Vol. I: 146.

²⁶ Butch Ross, *Conversations with Laura Phillips*, September 2016.

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spigots. That made the collection of water by the campers much easier.²⁷ Even after that, however, some campers continued to get water directly from the spring, and today many people go down the steep hill simply to see the iconic spring. In the 1970s, the camp ground was connected to county water, and since then campers have had water accessible from their tents.

There was also the need for the appropriate disposal of bodily waste. Privies were built far enough away from the tents not to be offensive. Each tent had its own privy, with its own lock and key. With tents ranging over time from 200 to 300, this meant that there were at least 200 privies. To accommodate so many, rows of privies were arranged in linear fashion well beyond the tents on the south side beyond Campground Road, on the east side of Catawba-Burris Road, and in the woods north, west, and southwest of the tents, all within the Boundary Increase area.²⁸ (See Fig. 2, row of privies ca. 1970.) Each row served the tents closest to it. When privies were first built at Rock Spring Camp Ground is not known. Initially, campers may have just used chamber pots, but with so many tents involved, an organized disposal of waste would have soon become necessary. After the privies were built, campers either used them directly and/or carried their chamber pots to them to dispose of the waste. Beginning in 1915, four-hole frame privies were built for the general public. One was located on each side of the grounds within the Boundary Increase area. Privies were used at the camp ground until the 1970s, when county water became available. Campers could then have toilets in their own tents by using crude septic systems composed of a tank and gravel.²⁹ No longer needed, the individual privies were removed from the camp ground. In 1979, the present-day public restroom was built beyond the north side of the camp ground road encircling the tents, and the earlier frame public privies were removed. Public restrooms were also provided at the concession building, known as the Shack, immediately south of the tents.³⁰

In addition to the camp ground's connection with county water, which allowed for easier access to water and the ability to have private toilet facilities and public restrooms, other changes came. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, a frame concession stand was built. In 1948, it was replaced by a permanent concession stand, the Shack, still standing south of the tents in the Boundary Increase area. The Shack became a favorite place for camp meeting attendees, because they could purchase soft drinks, snacks, ice cream, and sundries there. While not essential to the functioning of the camp meetings, the Shack has enhanced the experience of camp meeting week for most campers. Rock Spring Camp Ground does not operate the Shack directly, but leases it to individuals or organizations who operate it during camp meeting week.³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brotherton, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. I, 399.

²⁹ Butch Ross, Email to Laura Phillips, September 16, 2016.

³⁰ Brotherton, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. II, 683-684.

³¹ Brotherton, Vol. II, 662.

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Another change came with the evolution of transportation. In the twentieth century, as automobiles and pick-up trucks replaced earlier modes of transportation, the areas once used for parking wagons, buggies, horses, and mules were required for parking modern vehicles. The last year in which a horse and buggy provided transportation to the camp ground was 1934, and 1939 was the last year in which a family moved to and from the camp ground by means of a horse and wagon.³² Hundreds of automobiles soon filled the places in the camp ground Boundary Increase that had been used earlier by wagons, buggies, horses, and mules.³³ Following the 1993 camp meeting, some, but not all, of the trees on the east side of Catawba-Burris Road were cut to create space for additional parking. Still, the area retains the feel of a grove. Instead of being paved, the ground is covered partly with gravel.

Historically, the size of the property also allowed Rock Spring Camp Ground to earn a little money during most of the year when it was not camp meeting time. At least during the years from 1892 to 1906, the trustees allowed area farmers to graze their cattle in the core camp ground and Boundary Increase area, charging a fee of from fifty to seventy-five cents per cow.³⁴ This had the added benefit of keeping the grass cut.

The 1972 National Register nomination included only the core camp ground, made up of the arbor, the rows of tents, and approximately eight acres on which they stand. However, the additional acreage owned by Rock Spring Camp Ground has also been essential to the operation of camp meetings throughout its history, for these acres contain the Rock Spring, the Mud Spring, the privies (now removed), and the parking areas for both old-time and modern modes of transportation.³⁵ Approximately twenty-five acres of this additional land make up the Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase.

³² Brotherton, Vol. I: 285, 294.

³³ Butch Ross, Email to Laura Phillips, September 16, 2016.

³⁴ Brotherton, Vol. I: 189, 206, 209, 220.

³⁵ Approximately four additional acres at the northeast corner of the camp ground property is not included in the boundary increase nomination because of the construction of a large community ministry building and paved parking on the site in 2005.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Coordinates

1. Latitude: 35.542148
Longitude: -81.027429
2. Latitude: 35.542061
Longitude: -81.024682
3. Latitude: 35.541520
Longitude: -81.024597
4. Latitude: 35.541433
Longitude: -81.022108
5. Latitude: 35.540333
Longitude: -81.022065
6. Latitude: 35.539949
Longitude: -81.022773
7. Latitude: 35.538552
Longitude: -81.022923
8. Latitude: 35.537915
Longitude: -81.025069
9. Latitude: 35.538491
Longitude: -81.027408
10. Latitude: 35.539434
Longitude: -81.028008

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Boundary Description

The National Register boundary of the Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase is defined as Lincoln County Tax Parcel 3695-77-6701, excluding the existing National Register acreage at the center of the parcel and a rectangle of land on the east side of Catawba-Burris Road at the north tax parcel boundary line. Instead of following the north tax parcel line beginning at the west side of Catawba-Burris Road, the Boundary Increase boundary runs south along the west side of Catawba-Burris Road 229 feet and then heads 741 feet east, crossing Catawba-Burris Road and continuing along the south side of a paved parking lot to the east property line.

Boundary Justification

The Boundary Increase includes all the Rock Spring Camp Ground property that is historically associated with the Rock Spring Camp Meeting and that retains its historic integrity. The area at the northeast corner of the Rock Spring Camp Ground is not in the Boundary Increase property because a large, one-story building and parking lot were built there in 2005.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information for #1, 2, 3, and 5 applies to all nomination photographs.

- 1) Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase
- 2) Denver, Lincoln County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) Photos 1-7 and 9-11 were shot in September 2016. Photo 8 was shot in October 2016.
- 5) CD: NCHPO, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 6-7)
 - 1: Overview of arbor and tents in core camp ground (NR, 1972), view to southwest.
 - 2: Tents on north side of Campground Road, view from south side of road to northeast.
 - 3: Rock Spring spring house, view to northwest
 - 4: Rock Spring spring house and steep steps leading up rocky hill to Campground Road and tents on north side of road, view to northwest.
 - 5: Land on south side of Campground Road, view to northeast showing sloping hill down to branch east of spring.
 - 6: The Shack, view to west.
 - 7: Site of Mud Spring in woods at south end of camp ground, view to southwest.
 - 8: View to southeast and north corner of tents, as seen from woods.
 - 9: View to southwest from north edge of property at Catawba-Burriss Road.
 - 10: East side of Catawba-Burriss Road, view south across parking area toward tents.
 - 11: View to southeast from north edge of nominated property on east side of Catawba-Burriss Road across parking area and grove of trees toward Campground Road.

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Fig. 1. Mud Spring, 2002. (Terry Brotherton, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. II: 683.)



Fig. 2. Row of privies, ca. 1970. (Terry Brotherton, *Rock Spring Campground*, Vol. II: 683.)

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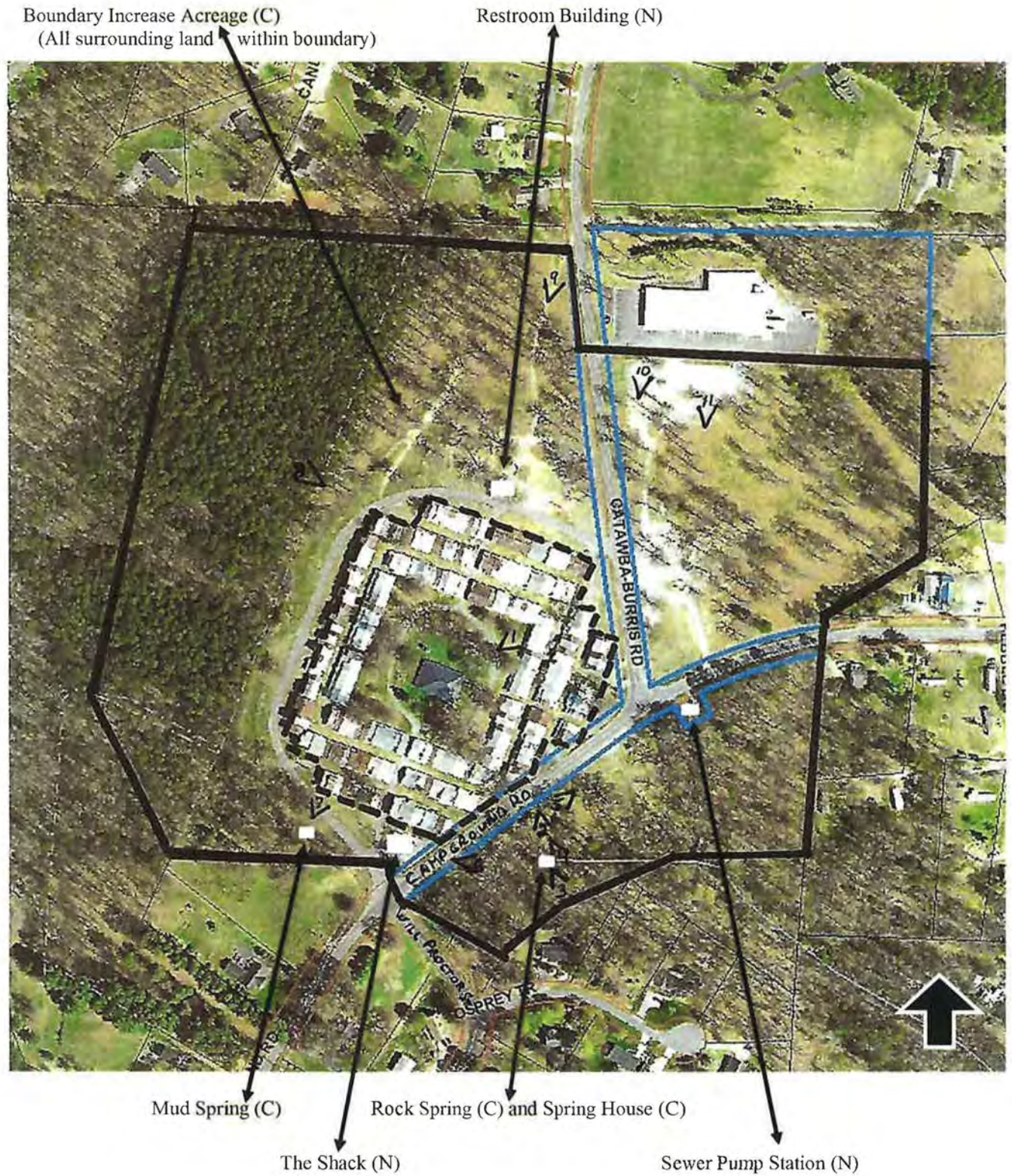
PROPERTY OWNER, cont'd.

East Lincoln County Water and Sewer District (Pump Station #2)
115 West Main Street
Lincolnton, NC 28092

Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase

6831 Campground Road, Denver, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Site Map



Scale: 1" = approx. 500'

Heavy black line = Boundary Increase boundary
 Dashed line = 1972 National Register boundary
 C = Contributing resource
 N = Noncontributing resource
 1> = Photo number and view

Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase

6831 Campground Road, Denver, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates Map



Scale: 1" = approx. 550'

Heavy black line = Boundary Increase boundary
Dashed line = 1972 National Register boundary





ROCK
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Est.



















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Discipline

Telephone Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary Suzi Hamilton

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

February 20, 2017

Ms. Stephanie Toothman, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
1201 Eye Street, NW (2208) Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Rock Spring Camp Ground Additional Documentation and
Rock Spring Camp Ground, Boundary Increase – Lincoln County, North Carolina

Dear Ms. Toothman:

Enclosed please find the Rock Spring Camp Ground Additional Documentation and the Rock Spring Camp Ground Boundary Increase National Register nominations for your approval. As regards the additional documentation form, we are requesting that the historic name given the property in the original nomination, Rock Springs Camp Meeting Ground, become the "Other name" in the NRIS database.

We trust you will find the nominations to be in order. If you have any questions please call Claudia Brown, Survey and National Register Branch head, 919-807-6573.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Cherry".

Kevin Cherry, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer

KC/avs

Enclosure