

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 29 1975

DATE ENTERED JUN 26 1975

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

** Brabson's Ferry Plantation District

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NW of Sevierville
Boyd's Creek Area off Sevierville Pike

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Sevierville *UTC*

VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Tennessee

CODE

47

COUNTY

Sevier

CODE

155

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Owners

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Sevierville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sevier County Register's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Sevierville

STATE

Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Brabson's Ferry Plantation District comprises a half-dozen architecturally or historically significant buildings, with a like number of outbuildings and a ford and ferry site, important in the history of the area. The District encompasses an area of approximately 76 acres in the Boyd's Creek area, at its confluence with the French Broad River, on both sides of the Great Indian Warpath Road.

The original dwelling there, a three room log home, was constructed by John Brabson, II who settled the site under a North Carolina land purchase of 10,000 acres in 1794. The log structure was later removed to a site upon the hill which stands above the river and farm. There a bachelor son of Benjamin Davis Brabson made his home in the late nineteenth century. It still stands near the family cemetery, east of the Great Indian Warpath Road.

John Brabson and his sons operated the ferry across the French Broad below "Big Island" (Buckingham Island). The road which the ferry connected was part of the Indian Warpath which became one of the major transportation routes for early settlers. Traces of the road can be seen today on either side of the river. The bell used by travelers to summon the Brabsons is now at the B. D. Brabson home. The other major transportation route which crosses the Brabson Plantation is the Old Knoxville-Sevierville Pike. Once the major route between the two cities, it is now a rough, black-topped road. At the point where the Pike crosses Boyd's Creek, John Brabson had built a tannery. The tannery still stands today; it is a two story structure (the lower of stone, the upper of clapboard). It was used as a stage stop and post stop for mail carriers where horses could be watered and fed.

John Brabson had ten children to whom he subdivided his large land holding. Two sons, Thomas Croy Brabson and Benjamin Davis Brabson, stayed on the original tract and built nearly identical homes around 1865. Both homes were constructed in the Tennessee vernacular style (although the facade of the B.D. Brabson home was "Victorianized"); they are about a quarter of a mile apart. The floors of the homes are wide planks of heart pine. The walls are also of heart pine. Paintings by Cora Rorex Brabson are scattered throughout. There have been few alterations on either home. Large fireplaces are located on either end of the homes. Smokehouses stand outside each house. Still standing at the B. D. Brabson home is one building which served as slave quarters. It is a two room structure with a huge central hearth that opens to either room. Although it is deteriorated, it is an interesting remnant of the pre-Civil War period and is unique in the local area.

Perhaps the most awesome facet of the Brabson Ferry Plantation is the fascinating cemetery high above the river and the incredible view from that site. The cemetery contains the graves of John Brabson (b. 1773, d. 1848) and many of his descendents. The view includes the islands on French Broad, the Pigeon River as it meanders into Sevierville, the homes and buildings of the Plantation, and the river beyond and the magnificent Smokies on the horizon.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

Inventory of Historic Structures and Sites located within the Brabson's Ferry Plantation District

1. B. D. Brabson House (east side Great Indian Warpath Road): 1856, Tennessee Vernacular, later "Victorianized", two stories with ell, clapboard.
2. Slave house (across road from B. D. Brabson House): 1850's, two room with attic, central chimney, clapboarded.
3. War Ford, ferry site (over French Broad River): location of War Ford, and later Brabson's Ferry.
4. Log House (east side Great Indian Warpath Road, south of Brabson Cemetery): built circa 1795, later moved to present location; one story log and clapboard, original stone chimney replaced by a brick one.
5. Thomas Brabson House (west side Great Indian Warpath Road): 1856, Tennessee Vernacular, two stories with ell, clapboarded.
6. Tannery (east side of Old Sevierville Pike at intersection with Great Indian Warpath Road): early 1800's, two stories, lower of stone, upper of clapboard, used as a stage and post stop.
7. Brabson Cemetery (east side of Great Indian Warpath Road): burial place of early settlers in the area.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The vicinity of Brabson's Ferry Plantation is rich in early East Tennessee history. In 1776 a force of 1800 men (most of whom were Virginians or settlers of the Holston and Watauga River Valleys) were led by Colonel William Christian across the French Broad River at War Ford, the same site as the Brabson Ferry. The force continued up Boyd's Creek toward the Overhill Cherokee towns to offer retaliation for Cherokee raids upon the Holston-Watauga settlements. Isaac Thomas, guide for the expedition, later settled in the Sevierville area a few miles from the Plantation.

In 1780 John Sevier led another force of settlers upon the Cherokees. He and his militia of about 100 frontiersmen crossed at War Ford and engaged in battle with the Cherokees in the area of the Brabson land. This first of 35 encounters that Sevier had with the Indians became known as the Battle of Boyd's Creek. The county was later named in honor of Sevier.

John Brabson, one of the earliest settlers in Sevier County, came to the Boyd's Creek area in 1794 from Frederick County, Virginia (now Berkeley County, West Virginia). He farmed his homestead of 10,000 acres which was purchased from North Carolina (B. D. Brabson, II still has the purchase note); he ran the ferry service at War Ford, only a hundred yards from his log home; and he raised ten children. Two sons, Thomas and Benjamin Davis, followed in their father's ways in continuing the various operations on the property. They were the original owners of the two homes which are part of the described district. A daughter, Mary Reece Brabson Shields, married second Dr. Robert Hogsden who was attending physician on "The Trail of Tears."

The Brabson's were pro-Confederacy during the Civil War. Under extreme harassment from the local majority Unionists, they left their Boyd's Creek homes and moved to Texas. They returned to a neglected farm after the War. One son, William Brabson, fought under General McCowan of the Confederacy and was captured at Chickamauga. The homes described previously have not been modernized or appreciably altered. The exteriors and woodwork of the interiors are fine examples of 19th century architecture of the East Tennessee area.

The Brabson's Ferry Plantation District is located on land important in early military history of Tennessee. It was also an important industrial site, and buildings of architectural importance still exist on the property. One of the houses was the home of Cora Rorex Brabson, a talented though little-known artist.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Selected notes of Joe Sharp, former Sevier County historian, Sevierville Library, Sevierville, Tennessee.
 Allen Family History, a geneology, "The Brabson Family". A copy is at the Sevierville Library, Sevierville, Tennessee.
 Carberry, Michael, Historic Sites in Blount, Cocke, Monroe, and Sevier Counties (Knoxville, 1973).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 76
 UTM REFERENCES

UTM OK a/c / -M

A	1 7	2 6 1 3 7 0	3 9 7 9 4 0 0	B	1 7	2 6 0 5 7 0	3 9 7 8 6 6 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1 7	2 6 1 0 4 1 5 0	3 1 9 7 1 8 8 3 0	D	1 7	2 6 1 0 8 1 3 0	3 1 9 7 1 9 4 1 9 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The northeast corner of the Brabson's Ferry Historic District is located at a point on the east side of the French Broad River, which was the eastern terminus of the War Ford and later Brabson's Ferry. From this point the eastern boundary line of the district runs southwest for a distance of approximately 3500 feet to a point; thence northwestwardly along the southern boundary line 700 feet to a point; thence northeastwardly along the western boundary line 2500 feet to a point; ~~thence eastwardly along the northern boundary line app. 1800 feet to the point of~~ beginning.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Michael Carberry, Research Associate

ORGANIZATION
East Tennessee Development District

STREET & NUMBER
1810 Lake Avenue

CITY OR TOWN
Knoxville

DATE
July, 1973

TELEPHONE

STATE
Tennessee

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 Lauren C. Seay 5/23/75

TITLE Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

R. B. Maxwell DATE 6/26/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: [Signature] DATE JUN 25 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER