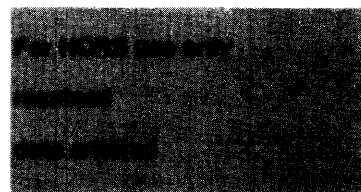


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga

and/or common Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga, Sycamore Shoals State Park

## 2. Location

street & number Watauga River 2 miles west of Elizabethton \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Elizabethton \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district First

state Tennessee code 047 county Carter code 019

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> other:</span>

## 4. Owner of Property

name State of Tennessee

street & number

city, town Nashville \_\_\_ vicinity of state Tennessee

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Carter County Courthouse

city, town Elizabethton state Tennessee

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 Sycamore Shoals are picturesque rapids located along the Watauga River in Happy Valley, about two miles southwest of the center of Elizabethton, Tennessee. Archeological investigation in the area of the Shoals has produced evidence of occupation by two prehistoric cultures, Woodland and Middle Mississippian. There are also traces of "Old Fields" clearings, reclaimed by cane, which were probably attractive to early white settlers since they could be put under cultivation with relative ease. The most direct access to the Shoals is State Highway 91 (U.S. 321), which parallels the south bank of the Watauga River in that area at an average distance of 400 feet. A county road along the north bank provides a view of the site but not direct access.

The historic setting of Sycamore Shoals has been substantially altered by modern construction. The traditional site of Fort Watauga and the associated courthouse and jail, located on a low ridge along State Highway 67 about one-half mile southwest of the western end of the Shoals, has been completely obliterated by residential development. A stone and concrete marker erected by the Daniel Boone Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution is all that remains to identify the site. Large plants operated by the Bemberg Corporation and North American Rayon stand on the south bank of the river just east of the Shoals. To the south and west, State Highway 91 is lined with residences and small business establishments. Only an island in the Shoals, wooded land adjacent on the south bank, and fields on the hillside above the north bank remain undeveloped.

Early in 1975, the State of Tennessee, Department of Conservation, acquired the Shoals, the island, and the wooded land on the south bank for development as a State park (see accompanying site plan, dated 1976, prepared for the State by H. T. Spoden and Associates, Consulting Engineers). Construction of a superintendent's building has already begun. The principal feature of the park, in addition to the Shoals themselves, will be a reconstruction of Fort Watauga, a log structure consisting of blockhouses connected by a palisade. Other facilities proposed for the park include a visitors center, picnic area, and nature trail. Screen planting will be used to reduce the impact of parking areas and support buildings. At the present time, the Department of Conservation does not expect to acquire title to any of the open land adjacent to Sycamore Shoals on the north bank of the river; instead, the State hopes to maintain that area in its current undeveloped condition by obtaining scenic easements on it.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1770's, 80's **Builder/Architect** not applicable

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sycamore Shoals are picturesque rapids located on the Watauga River some two miles west of the town of Elizabethton, Tennessee. During the 1770's the Shoals were the location of the administrative center of the Watauga settlements, a pre-Revolutionary experiment in independent government and the "germ-cell" of the present State of Tennessee. In 1775 the Shoals were the scene of the treaty which led to the settlement of Kentucky and in 1780 they became the rendezvous for the frontiersmen who fought in the decisive Battle of Kings Mountain.

The site of Fort Watauga and the associated courthouse and jail, about one-half mile southwest of the lower end of the Shoals, has been completely obliterated by residential development. Though bordered on the east and west by commercial and residential development, the Shoals themselves and adjacent land on the north and south banks of the Watauga River have been successfully preserved through the efforts of the Watauga Historical Association. Early in 1975 the State of Tennessee assumed control of the historic area and is now preparing for its operation as a State park.

## Historical Background

Settlement of the area that was to become East Tennessee began in 1769 when William Bean built a cabin on the banks of Boone's Creek near the Watauga River, some 20 miles downstream from Sycamore Shoals. A number of other settlers came within the next three years to build cabins up and down the valley of the Watauga, among them James Robertson, who soon attained leadership of the settlement. By 1772, several hundred families were settled in eastern Tennessee, grouped into four settlements: Watauga, Carter's Valley, Nolichucky, and North-of-Holston. When the Treaty of Lochaber that year threatened to turn their lands over to the Cherokee, the Wataugans negotiated a long-term lease for those lands; then, to achieve a stable government, they organized the Watauga Association.

When the Cherokees assembled at Sycamore Shoals in March 1775, to sell 20 million acres of Kentucky land to Richard Henderson and the other members of the Transylvania Land Company, the Watauga settlers took advantage of the situation to turn their own lease into a purchase. Their title was more firmly established by the Treaty of Long Island of the Holston in July 1777, by which the defeated Cherokees gave up all claims to the Watauga lands.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See continuation sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property  $\pm$  17 acres

Quadrangle name Johnson City

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A	1 7	3 8 7 5 1 0	4 0 2 2 4 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 7	3 8 7 2 8 0	4 0 2 2 2 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 7	3 8 7 1 6 0	4 0 2 2 4 0 0
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D	1 7	3 8 7 1 6 0	4 0 2 2 6 2 0
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E	1 7	3 8 7 3 4 0	4 0 2 2 6 2 0
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F			
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G			
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H			
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

### 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 Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original study by Hugh A. Lawing, Historian, 1964

organization Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service date 2/11/76

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone 202-523-5464

city or town Washington state D.C.

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature N/A National Historic Landmark

title	date
For NCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is eligible for the National Register	
Keeper of the National Register	3/20/85
Agent	
Chief of Registration	

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet    Significance

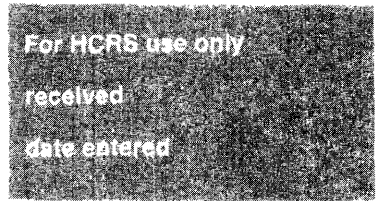
Item number    8

Page    2

Although Fort Watauga, at Sycamore Shoals, was attacked unsuccessfully by the Cherokee when they launched their unhappy campaign against the frontiersmen in the summer of 1776, the Revolutionary War seemed remote until 1780. Then, when the Tory leader Patrick Ferguson threatened to invade the Watauga County, the mountain men gathered at Sycamore Shoals on September 25 and marched into South Carolina to administer a stinging defeat to Ferguson's men at Kings Mountain.

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Continuation sheet Bibliography

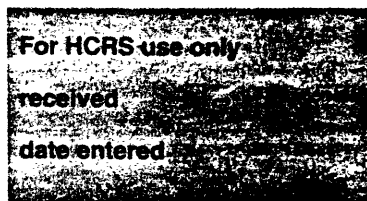
Item number 9

Page 1

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

The historic structures associated with this site have been destroyed or impacted to such a degree to have no integrity. The structures which appear on the plat map are either reconstructions (Fort Watauga) or modern constructions and therefore have no direct historic association with the site. The boundary was drawn to include only the shoals and surrounding areas that provide the natural setting for the shoals.

Verbal boundary description

Beginning at Point X on U.S. Highway 321, (USGS map-Johnson City, Quad, Tenn.) proceed northwest 950', more or less, to a point; thence west 450', more or less, to a point; thence south 750', more or less, to a point; thence southeast to the west curb of US 321; thence northeast along the said curb to the point of origin.