Town of Boone
Historic Preservation Commission Advisory Meeting
3:00 PM, November 4, 2025
Planning & Inspections Conference Room
680 W. King St., Suite C
Boone, NC 28607

The public may attend the meeting in person at the Planning and Inspections Conference Room at 680 West King Street, Suite C, or online via WebEx, a video conferencing software.

Public Comment: To give public comment, you should appear in person at the physical location of this meeting. Persons who attend the meeting remotely via WebEx may be permitted to speak during public comment but are not assured of that opportunity.

WebEx Participation: To join online or by phone, email Planning and Inspections at planning@townofboone.net or call 828-268-6960, and you will receive an email invitation. Requests must be submitted no later than one hour before the meeting begins.

I. Call to Order

II. Adoption of Agenda

III. Town Attorney Discussion on Expert Witnesses/Testimony

IV. Public Comment

V. Approval of Meeting Minutes

1. October 7, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission Advisory Meeting Minutes

VI. Review of Boone/Kraut Creek Historic Marker Report

1. Boone/Kraut Creek Marker Draft Report

VII. Other Matters

VIII. Adjournment

TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES
October 7, 2025, 3:00 p.m.
Planning & Inspections Department & WebEx Video Conferencing

Historic Preservation Commission Members Present: Vardell Smyth-Chair, Krystal Carter, Bennie Gaetano, and Melody Oxendine

Historic Preservation Commission Members Absent: Bettie Bond-Vice Chair

Council Liaison Present: Virginia Roseman (via WebEx)

Town Staff Present: Jessica Mitchell-Advanced Planning Specialist, Dale Presnell-Human Resources Director/Interim Town Manager (via WebEx)

Call to Order

Chair Smyth called the Boone Historic Preservation Commission meeting held in the Planning & Inspections Conference Room at 680 West King Street and via WebEx to order at 3:01 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Commission Member Carter made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Gaetano, to adopt the agenda.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Bond)

The motion passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

Commission Member Gaetano made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Carter, to approve the August 12, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission Quasi-Judicial meeting minutes and the September 2, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission Advisory meeting minutes.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Bond)

The motion passed.

Approval of Written Decision

Jessica Mitchell, Advanced Planning Specialist, provided a brief explanation and a reminder to the newest members about the Commission's role in reviewing written decisions. Commission Member Carter made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Oxendine, to approve the Written Decision for Cases A25-0195 Rivers House – Bathroom Renovation, Case A25-0466 Speckled Trout Outfitters – New Stairs, and Case A25-0482 Qualls Block – Waterproofing.

Vote: Aye – 4

Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Bond)

The motion passed.

Discussion of Revised Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panel Text

Ms. Mitchell opened this topic, explaining that this latest version reflects suggestions by Town Attorney Meade. She provided direction to members that after today's discussion, this text can be sent to the Civil War Trails (CWT) program for their review, and that she anticipates a subsequent update to HPC before sharing with Town Council. After Town Council review, this project would move on to the next phase with CWT for panel design.

She introduced the material in the packet, noting specifically the changes to the references to the "Home Guard" and "Kirk's Raiders." She reminded the Commission that previous CWT reviews had both instances of referring to Colonel George Kirk and Kirk's Raiders. Discussion ensued among members on these two specific comments. Chair Smyth noted that the command was referred to as "Kirk's Raiders," and members agreed to keep that reference in the text.

Chair Smyth requested to add a comma in the last sentence of the second paragraph for it to read: "Priority was placed on destroying rail lines and materiel that could be used by the retreating Confederate Army, and avoiding battle."

Discussion continued that the reference to the Home Guard needed to remain. Members agreed to Ms. Meade's suggestions to spell out the military titles throughout the text. Ms. Mitchell shared the text on the screen for the members to discuss the suggested changes. The suggested change of "Union cavalry" in paragraph three was accepted by members. Members discussed the suggestions for references to the Home Guard in paragraphs three and four. Chair Smyth noted that the text should still mention that it was the "Home Guard," and that the suggestion of adding "Confederate" was reasonable. He added that adding "Confederate" may be helpful to readers. Then, members discussed the reference to "Kirk's Raiders" and whether to keep it in the text. As Ms. Mitchell shared this on the screen, members discussed these changes to where the text reads as follows: (changes discussed in the meeting are bolded)

Stoneman's Raid

"The Fight Got Real Hot"

Campaign Banner [in red bar] – Stoneman's Raid

On the morning of March 28, 1865, Union cavalry under **Major** Myles Keogh rode into Boone on the road to your left, surprising about 100 Confederate Home Guard members who had gathered to drill near the courthouse, then located a short distance north of here.

Keogh's detachment was the vanguard of Union **General** George Stoneman's 6,000-man cavalry command ordered into Virginia and North Carolina to "dismantle the country." Priority was placed on destroying rail lines and materiel that could be used by the retreating Confederate **Army, and** avoiding battle.

As Keogh's **Union calvary** approached, shots rang **out and** some of the **Confederate Home Guard** fell back to the home of James W. Councill, which stood to your right. According to one account, Mrs. Councill, hearing the noise, stepped outdoors with her child in her arms – but hurried back inside after the house was struck by a volley of gunfire.

"The fight got real hot," Sheriff A.J. McBride, one of the **Home Guard**, recalled. The Union cavalry charged, sending the defenders fleeing up the slopes of Howard's Knob.

Union cavalry poured into town for the rest of the **day and General** Stoneman requisitioned the Councill house for his headquarters. Stoneman and most of his force left Boone the next day.

Beginning April 6, **Colonel** George W. Kirk's **Union troops – the Second and Third North Carolina Mounted Infantry, "Kirk's Raiders" –** occupied Boone for several weeks, blockading major routes through the mountains. At least 13 Union loyalists from Watauga County served in the regiments that occupied Boone, and another 5 volunteered with Union forces after Boone's occupation.

Both Union and Confederate soldiers are interred in the nearby Boone Cemetery.

There was consensus among members of the text as discussed. Ms. Mitchell shared that she would forward this revised text to the CWT program for review.

Review Boone/Kraut Creek Marker Draft Report

Ms. Mitchell opened the discussion on this topic with a recap of the progress from the September 2, 2025, Advisory meeting. She reminded members that the previous discussion was to continue researching and for Commission Member Oxendine to make the grammatical changes as shared previously. Ms. Mitchell also noted that while it was not within the published draft, Commission Member Oxendine had addressed the Digital Watauga citation for the image used in the report (packet page 31, report page 6) and the reference about the donations for the Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture (packet page 35, report page 10). She also discussed the previous suggestion to check the Watauga Democrat archives for any additional information.

More specifically, Ms. Mitchell provided that since this marker started with the draft provided by Dr. Deathridge's class at App State, the Commission's task is to carefully review the report for accuracy, checking the referenced citations. From previous discussions, Ms. Mitchell added that, for now, to hold on to the idea of conducting oral interviews, and to focus on document-based research. Before Commission members began their discussion, she reminded them that other members could assist Commission Member Oxendine with the report.

Discussion began with a review of the proposed draft marker text on packet pages 35 and 36. Chair Smyth mentioned that there is room to put more information in the report than in the marker text. Ms. Mitchell then clarified that the marker text should focus on the key points, whereas the marker report can include any other information for anyone reading the marker to find answers to their questions.

Ms. Mitchell also noted the word counts of the existing markers as: the Councill's Store marker, 168 words; Hayes-Bryan-Greene Cemetery marker, 151 words; the Junaluska Community marker, 149 words; the 1940 Flood marker, 165 words; and the Ginseng Marker as part of the North Carolina Highway marker program, 23 words. Chair Smyth mentioned that the maximum number of words should be 170 words for the Boone/Kraut Creek marker, and Ms. Mitchell suggested 170 at the absolute most with a focus more between 150-165 words.

Ms. Mitchell referenced that Commission Member Carter had provided additional research for this topic beginning on packet page 59. Commission Member Carter then explained a resource she found from App State's Library of the Doris Stam Collection, which includes kraut can labels and deeds to the kraut factory. She added that there were deeds and labels for the North State Canning Company. Chair Smyth and Commission Member Carter discussed how this was a local family's collection that covers from 1867 to 2007.

Chair Smyth returned to the topic of what goes into the historical marker, explaining that he explored resources, including the National Park Service guidance on wayside markers. He then identified that the marker needed to explain why this would be relevant to anyone and what elements readers would care about, which he added are already mostly addressed. He added that some technical information needed to be decided, including when the operation was "North State Canning Company," and when it was "North State Foods," along with the corresponding dates.

Discussion continued that the marker text should include that it was locally referred to as "Kraut Creek" and address the pollution sensitively, with the suggestion of using the term "runoff." Members discussed the importance of letting readers know that cabbage was grown here, since most visitors did not realize it.

Discussion returned to the dates of North State Canning Company's operation and whether the marker should list the one company name with the associated dates of 1923 through 1981. Although the company name changed three times, the marker text would be limited to include those three company names.

Town Council Liaison Roseman joined the meeting at approximately 3:30 pm.

During this item's discussion, Ms. Mitchell called on Council Liaison Roseman if she had any questions. Ms. Mitchell summarized the conversation of Stoneman's Raid, showing Council Liaison Roseman the discussed changes. Council Liaison Roseman asked when this would come before Town Council, and Ms. Mitchell stated that she hoped it would be before the end of the year. Council Liaison Roseman then asked if it was possible for the Stoneman's Raid Interpretative Panel to be completed in early 2026 to coincide with the 250th anniversary celebrations. Ms. Mitchell said she would ask CWT about the timing of this project.

The discussion returned to the Boone/Kraut Creek marker report. Chair Smyth mentioned that it would be difficult to track those who operated the facility, as it changed ownership, but that it should include the names of those who were big in the production, like John B. Steele and H. Neal Blair.

Chair Smyth noted that an interesting fact to add to the marker would be the amount of cabbage produced, since the amount of money earned then will not reflect current dollar amounts. Members added that it would be interesting to include the fact that the operations changed to a candy company run by Nina and Tom Ennis because it is intriguing.

Chair Smyth then also questioned if the Blue Ridge Farmers Association is still active. Ms. Mitchell added that it would be worth checking into, as a quick search indicates the information is unclear. A suggestion was to add "former" before that reference in the marker text if it was not currently active.

Chair Smyth returned to the idea of including the amount of cabbage produced, in tons, and also noted that operations were ranked 32nd in the nation (packet page 35, report page 10), and that operations were important to the Southeast United States. He questioned where the farthest place the cabbage was shipped. He suggested that adding a fact like that would give readers an idea of the scope and magnitude, and how much economic influence cabbage production had on the area. He also asked how many farmers were involved in the height of the operations.

Commission Member Gaetano added to the conversation that if she were reading the marker, she would want to know if cabbage is still being produced now, and if so, who is making and where? And, how much do we export now if there is still a market for it?

Chair Smyth added that, to end the marker, the text should reference about the production's closure, the end of decades of crop production, and the loss of that manufacturing in the area.

Ms. Mitchell then asked the question to Chair Smyth, based on his comments, if he was interested in assisting Commission Member Oxendine on the marker text. Chair Smyth and Commission Member Oxendine agreed. Ms. Mitchell added it would still be open for the other members to add research to future conversations.

There was consensus among the Commission for Chair Smyth and Commission Member Oxendine to work on this topic.

Other Matters

Ms. Mitchell referred to the Statements of Conformity report presented in the packet (packet page 71) and noted that both are for installation of signs.

Ms. Mitchell then announced that there would be further information following the upcoming Town Council meeting, and that the trail at the R.L. Clay (Rivers) House would have a groundbreaking ceremony scheduled for November 7, 2025, at 4 pm, with limited on-site parking and a shuttle available.

Then, Ms. Mitchell announced that Town offices would be closed on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, which conflicts with the scheduled quasi-judicial meeting for November. She asked members if they were available for Tuesday, November 18, 2025. Chair Smyth and Commission Member Gaetano confirmed their availability; Commission Members Carter and Oxendine will confirm their availability with Ms. Mitchell via email.

Ms. Mitchell concluded Other Matters by reminding members that there would be an Advisory meeting on Tuesday, November 4, 2025.

Adjournment

Commission Member Oxendine made a motion, seconded by Commission Member Gaetano, to adjourn the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

Vote: Aye – 4
Nay – 0
Absent – 1 (Bond)

The motion passed.

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Vardell Smyth, Chair **Jessica Mitchell, Advanced Planning Specialist**

DRAFT

Proposal for a Town of Boone Historical Marker

Prepared by Brianna Anctil, Melody Oxendine, and Lara Morgana Cording
May 2025 [DRAFT]

A. SUBJECT OF PROPOSED MARKER:

North State Canning Company (Boone Kraut Factory)

B. SITE TO BE MARKED:

Parcel ID: 2900-69-7872-000, 971 West King Street

C. PROPOSED LOCATION OF MARKER:

913 West King Street located roughly 15 yards east from the building that used to be part of the factory. Next to the lower (northwest) entrance to the parking lot near the front facade in a landscaped green space.



Fig. 1. Google, *Google Maps*, screenshot of 971 West King Street, Boone, NC.

D. HISTORICAL SKETCH:

The North State Canning Company, more commonly remembered as the Boone Kraut Factory, was founded in 1923 in Boone, North Carolina.[1] County Agent John B. Steele recognized that Watauga cabbage farmers were not getting fair prices for their extraordinary cabbage and saw it as an opportunity to develop a cabbage processing facility in Boone. He saw farmers, such as H. Neal Blair, who had been growing cabbage for generations, that could make more money on their crop if they organized with other farmers to sell cabbage and kraut to bigger markets.[2] In 1923, Blair was on board with Steele's plan and published a short piece defending his reasoning as to why the kraut factory should be built in Watauga County and how it would operate. Blair argued that North Carolina's kraut had been coming from Northern and Midwestern states, and Watauga farmers were not seeing financial gains from growing cabbage or canning kraut, but they could if they sold their cabbage to the factory.[3]

The cabbage processing factory was established at the west end of Boone through the collective efforts of local farmers under the Blue Ridge Farmers Association.[4] According to a 1947 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the facility was located on upper King Street.[5] The facade faces Green Street, and the southernmost side of the building faces Poplar Grove Road. The Geographic Information System (GIS) maps of the building provided by the Watauga County Property Records prove that the continued use of this building has been consistent until the company's liquidation in 1981. Contemporary records from the Watauga County tax database place the site at 971 West King Street, now occupied by the Agricultural Services Center.[6] The parcel of land was sold to Watauga County on November 24th, 1987, for 400,000 dollars.

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[1] Jeter, F. M. "Kraut Industry Now on Its Feet." *Watauga Democrat.* (Boone, NC), Dec. 18, 1924. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn82007642/1924-12-18/ed-1/seq-1/#pageinformation

[2] Jeter, F. M. "Kraut Industry."

[3] Blair, H. Neal. "Kraut Factory for Watauga County," *Watauga Democrat.* (Boone, NC), Jan. 11, 1923. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn82007642/1923-01-11/ed-1/seq-4/#words=CREEK+kraut+krauted

[4] "Watauga's First Kraut Factory Is Now Running At Full Blast." *Watauga Democrat.* (Boone, NC), September 27, 1923. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn82007642/1923-09-27/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Creek+kraut

[5] *Boone, Watauga County, North Carolina 1947*, Map, New York, Sanborn Map Company 1947, Library of Congress, Digital Sanborn Maps 1867-1970. https://digitalsanbornmaps-proquest-com.proxy006.nclive.org/browse_maps/28/5139/24744/25818/329032?accountid=7980

[6] Watauga County Property Records. Parcel Map. 971 King Street. 2024. https://tax.watgov.org/WataugaNC/maps/mapadv.aspx#2.

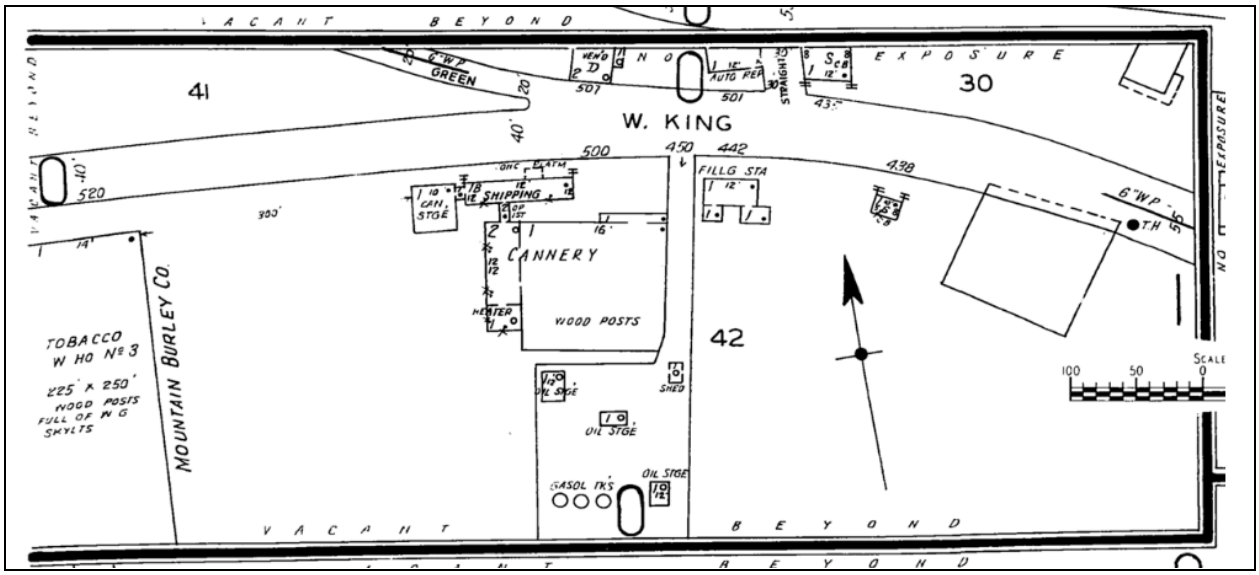


Fig. 2. *Boone, Watauga County, North Carolina 1947*, Map, New York, Sanborn Map Company 1947, Library of Congress, Digital Sanborn Maps 1867-1970.

Based on the available maps and photos of the building during its operation, it is not possible to conclusively determine what original architectural features of the North State Canning Factory remain. The 1947 Sanborn map suggests that the cannery building has been torn down, and the current structure is what was used for shipping. The architectural characteristics—consistent with mid-20th-century industrial construction—suggest that the existing building likely retains most of its original architectural elements, but it is unclear what exactly has been altered or renovated.

The old North State Canning Company building is situated on the western edge of Boone's historic downtown corridor in a transitional zone between commercial, civic, and residential land uses. King Street, a primary artery through Boone, connects the site to the central business district to the east and to more suburban and rural landscapes to the west. The immediate surroundings are characterized by a mixed-use context. To the north, across Green Street, the area transitions into a residential neighborhood, with modest single-family homes and small apartment complexes nestled into the hillside. To the south and west, near Poplar Grove Road, the landscape becomes more utilitarian and open, with parking lots, service entrances, and low-density development. The proximity to Appalachian State University just a few blocks east also contributes to a lively, student-influenced atmosphere in the broader area.



Fig. 3. Google, *Google Maps*, screenshot of 971 West King Street, Boone, NC.

The building, now occupied by the Agricultural Services Center, is representative of mid-20th-century utilitarian industrial architecture. The structure is a large, rectangular, single-story complex, reflecting functional priorities over decorative considerations. The north elevation faces the opening of Green Street, across West King, and serves as the building's primary facade. It is constructed primarily of red brick laid in a running bond pattern and has a row of symmetrical metal-framed windows. It has a flat roof with no overhang, consistent with mid-20th-century utilitarian industrial design. The east elevation does not have a brick facade and has plain gray siding. It features a service entrance, reflecting its use as a loading and shipping building for the factory, which would have facilitated the movement of goods. The rear elevation faces Poplar Grove Road.

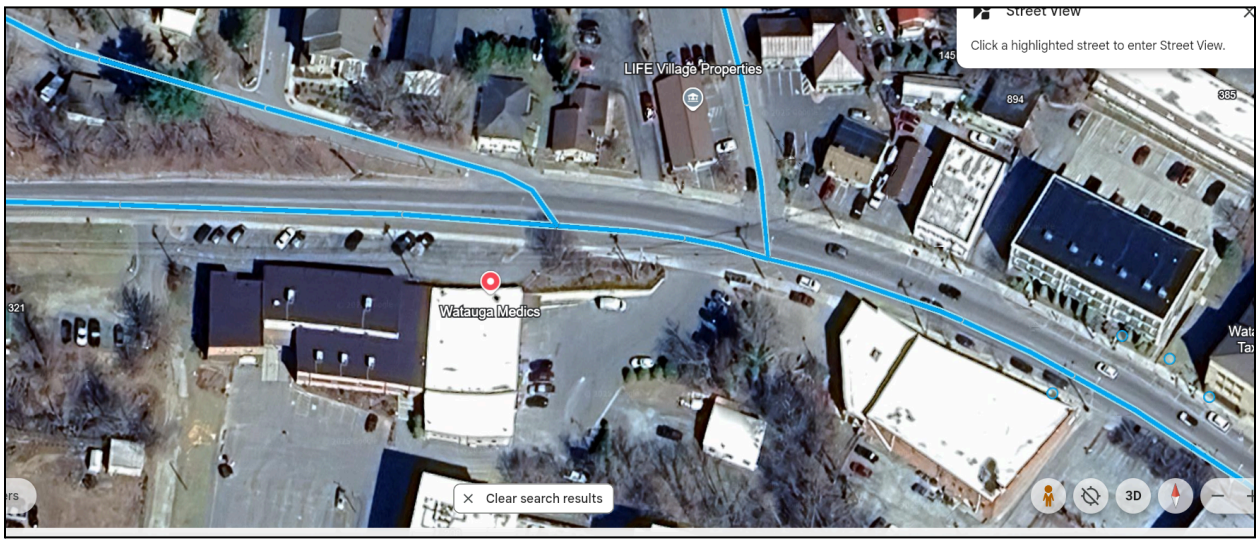


Fig. 4. Google, *Google Maps*, aerial view of 971 West King Street, Boone, NC.

To construct the kraut factory, Blair, in his 1923 article, asked for $40 from the 125 farmers and businessmen in the county to help build the $5,000 factory in Boone. About 90 cabbage farmers were organized into the Blue Ridge Farmers Association, which helped fund the construction and later grew cabbage to sell to the factory. They were organized under Blair and Steele.[7] At the time, Blair believed that the factory would handle 50 acres of kraut cabbage and 50 acres of market cabbage, but that it would grow into a large trade business.[8] In the first season in 1923, 350 tons of cabbage were delivered to the factory by Association members– a good sign for the new local industry. The factory was prepared for the surplus, and farmers earned a better price than usual by selling to them, which bolstered the local economy.[9] The next challenge was marketing the North State kraut. They found it difficult to market sauerkraut to places like Raleigh, as kraut was considered a "low-brow" food for that region of the state.[10] A highly reputable doctor from Raleigh, Dr. Lowery, helped to market it by highlighting the health benefits of fermented foods, which helped some, but many grocers had contracts for a couple of years already and could not contract with North State Canning Company yet.[11] With the help of a local salesman, Mr. Betty, the kraut factory was able to sell their product in nearby grocery stores and get the word out about the kraut made from cabbage grown in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.[12] By the late 1920s, the factory was handling 1,000 tons of cabbage per season and had become an important factor in the local economy.[13]

The association between the sauerkraut manufactured in Boone and the cabbage grown in Watauga County was integral to the marketing of the product. The can labels had an image of blue mountains with a note that said, "Pride of the Blue Ridge" and "Grandfather Mountain."[14] It is implied that the sauerkraut in the can is one of the great prides of the mountains and a staple in the region's culture, and it has historically been a staple in the diet. They also included a brief recipe for spare ribs with kraut that presumably any consumer of the canned kraut could make at home.[15] Additionally, newspaper articles from western North Carolina offered information about how to make kraut and what side dishes to pair it with, which highlighted the importance of cabbage and sauerkraut as a staple in the mountain diet.[16] Some newspapers from the North

[7] Jeter. "Kraut Industry."
[8] Blair, "Kraut Factory."
[9] Jeter. "Kraut Industry."
[10] Jeter. "Kraut Industry."
[11] Jeter. "Kraut Industry."
[12] Jeter. "Kraut Industry."
[13] "Will grow cabbage for making Kraut" *Forest City Courier* (Forest City, NC), June 13, 1929. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068175/1929-06-13/ed-1/seq-10/#words=Creek+Kraut+kraut+KRAUT
[14] North State Canning Company, "10 oz. Chopped Kraut Label From North State Canning Co.," *Digital Watauga*. https://digitalwatauga.org/items/show/20894.
[15] North State Canning Co. "10oz. Chopped Kraut."
[16] "Make Sauer Kraut for Winter Meals." *Alleghany News.* (Sparta, NC), Sept. 11, 1947. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn90057235/1947-09-11/ed-1/seq-4/#words=Creek+kraut+Kraut

Carolina coast include recipes for sauerkraut in the winter, which demonstrates how the North State Canning Company had successfully marketed to the coastal regions of the state as an "old-fashioned," homely food for when they faced cold temperatures like the mountain region.[17]



10 oz. Chopped Kraut Label From North State Canning Co." Image courtesy of Eric Plaag Collection, Digital Watauga Project.

Shortly after the kraut factory was up and running, John B. Steele wrote about his observations of the factory on the local economy and the cabbage market. Essentially, by manufacturing sauerkraut, it stopped some cabbage from entering the market and left only the highest grade cabbage to be sold, which prevented oversaturation and a drop in prices.[18] The kraut factory, with the help of the Blue Ridge Farmers' Association, had tremendous benefits for Watauga farmers and consumers by maintaining high-quality crops and regulating market prices.

By the 1960s, Watauga County was the number one cabbage producer in the state and 32nd in the nation.[19] The cabbage economy was integral for Watauga County folks. In 1967, only about 60 farmers were under contract to supply the factory with cabbage, but the factory was more profitable than ever.[20] That same year, the kraut factory added 12 40-ton vats to the 32 vats

[17] Cecily Brownstone. "For Good Winter Supper, It's Old-Fashion Kraut." *Carteret County News-Times.* (Morehead City and Beaufort, NC), Jan. 28, 1955. steehttps://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn94058246/1955-01-28/ed-1/seq-10/#words=Creek+kraut+Kraut

[18] Steele, B. John. "County Agent Makes Usual Monthly Report." *Watauga Democrat.* (Boone, NC), Oct. 4, 1923. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn82007642/1923-10-04/ed-1/seq-1/#words=CREEK+Creek+kraut

[19] North State Canning Company, "10 oz. Chopped Kraut Label From North State Canning Co.," *Digital Watauga*, accessed September 26, 2025, https://digitalwatauga.org/items/show/20894.

[20] Minor, Joe. "New Boone Cannery Building to Double Production of Kraut," *Watauga Democrat.*

that were in use the year prior in order to double the factory's production.[21] The old vats, made of cypress lumber that last indefinitely with minor maintenance, were moved to a new building and continued to be used.[22] This new facility was a wooden building that housed the vats. It, along with a rock building and a large two-story warehouse, made up the buildings of the factory.[23] Generally, farmers across Watauga and Ashe counties delivered their cabbage crops to the south of the new building. The season for growing kraut began in July and lasted through October when the first freeze usually hits.[24] It took about 30 days to turn cabbage into kraut that is ready to be canned, so the vats were filled two to three times per season.[25] The factory processed as many as 24,000 cans of kraut per day, but when the expansion was completed, it was projected that more than 3,000 tons of kraut would be produced each year.[26] When the kraut was canned, the cans were placed upright, labeled, and prepared for shipment. Consumers as far north as Maryland and as far south as Florida bought the kraut and its juice.[27]

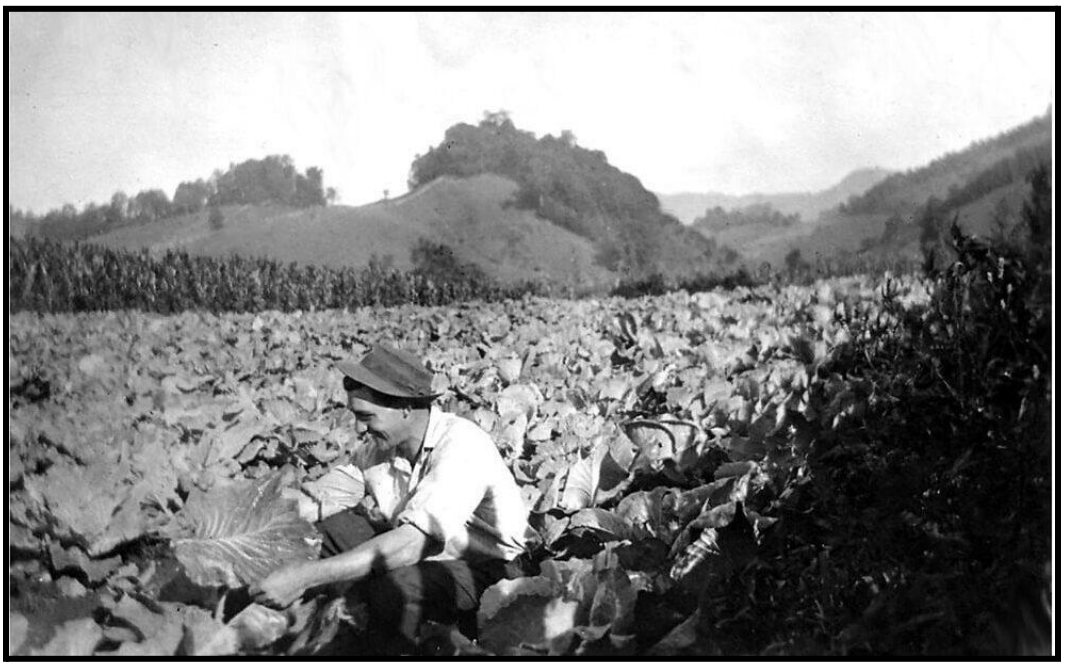


Fig. 6. Man harvesting cabbage with the mountains in the background, date unknown, *Our State Magazine.*[28]

(Boone, NC), May 25, 1967. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn82007642/1967-05-25/ed-1/seq-1/

[21] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[22] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[23] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[24] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[25] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[26] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[27] Minor. "New Boone Cannery."
[28] Our State Magazine. "Green Cabbage Remains a Symbol of Old Mountain Ways and Comforting

The factory raked in $225,600 for the Watauga County economy in 1968.[29] The county agent in 1969, L.E. Tuckwiller, estimated that the market cabbage would take up a total of 300 acres in the county, and kraut cabbage would take up about 80 acres of land in the county.[30] Typically, kraut cabbage is larger and more brittle than the market cabbage.[31] This was a slight increase for kraut cabbage, but a significant decrease for market cabbage from 1959. Tuckwiller argued that the drop in acreage does not indicate that cabbage was becoming less desirable, but that there was a shortage of labor and a higher cost of labor, requiring farmers to cut back on how much they grew.[32] By this time, most of the cabbage was handled through four local product companies: V. C Shore and Sons, Hollar and Greene Product Company, Critcher Brothers, and Goodnight Brothers Produce Company.[33] And of course, the North State Canning Company took the majority of the kraut cabbage grown in the county to produce Watauga Kraut.

The North State Canning Company continued to operate at full capacity as an economic powerhouse for farmers in the county, but ten years later, in 1978, the factory underwent drastic changes. The company had been in the family of W. F. Miller Jr. since 1928, but he and his wife sold it to Nina and Tom Ennis, who took it over during the first of the year.[34] Nina's father, Charles P. Minges, loved sauerkraut and became obsessed with the kraut produced in Watauga, so he and Nina called Miller to ask if he would consider selling the company.[35] He and his wife had been considering retiring, so Miller sold them the company.[36] The Minges family, who also had connections to the Pepsi-Cola bottling industry, had owned a candy manufacturing company in Rockingham in Richmond County, North Carolina, but they moved their operations to Boone and combined it with the kraut manufacturing plant and renamed it North State Foods.[37] The candy continued to be produced under the label of Nina-Menz.[38]

Later, in 1981, there was a discussion that North State Foods would cease operations, but it is not clear why they would close their doors. Many Watauga County locals saw the production

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Suppers." Our State. September 26, 2019. https://www.ourstate.com/where-the-cabbage-is-king-the-history-of-green-cabbage-in-watauga-county-north-carolina/

[29] "Market and Kraut Cabbage in Watauga Bring $225,600," *Watauga Democrat* (Boone, NC), Aug. 28, 1969. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn82007642/1969-08-28/ed-1/seq-12/#words=Creek+kraut+Kraut

[30] "Market and Kraut Cabbage." *Watauga Democrat.*

[31] "Market and Kraut Cabbage." *Watauga Democrat.*

[32] "Market and Kraut Cabbage." *Watauga Democrat.*

[33] "Market and Kraut Cabbage." *Watauga Democrat.*

[34] Conrad Paysour, "Candy and Kraut Do Mix," *Watauga Democrat* (Boone, NC), May 7, 1978. https://digitalwatauga.org/items/show/33569

[35] Paysour. "Candy and Kraut."

[36] Paysour. "Candy and Kraut."

[37] Paysour. "Candy and Kraut."

[38] Paysour. "Candy and Kraut."

of sauerkraut at the factory as an enlargement of the home operation and bought from them once it began operating.[39] They were largely thankful that the company turned their cabbage into a cash crop, bolstering the local economy.[40] A closure of the factory would mean that locals would have to return to the home fermentation process, which was a long tradition for mountain families prior to the 1920s. A 1924 article from the *North Wilkesboro Hustler* advised readers not to rely entirely on the factory kraut and keep their barrel fixtures and other kraut-making supplies.[41] Hopefully, the high country farmers listened to the *Hustler* and kept their supplies because in 1981, the company officially liquidated its assets, paid out their shareholders, and ended their manufacturing operations for good.[42]

Despite the company's economic success during its operating years, it had some downsides for Boone. Since the building was located with Boone Creek directly behind it, parallel to Poplar Grove Road, it became heavily polluted from kraut drainage flowing directly into the water. The pollutants in the water gave it the distinct smell of sauerkraut. The smell became so synonymous with the creek that it gained its nickname, "Kraut Creek." The creek had been piped, paved over, and faced pollution during the factory's operation. The contaminants in Boone Creek from the North State Canning Company "killed off everything" in the stream.[43] While the wildlife and trout that now inhabit the stream had to be reintroduced and manually stocked into the stream, it is unclear when this was done.

After the closure of the North State Canning Company, the building sat vacant for about six years until the Watauga Agricultural Center opened in 1987 in the same location. Currently, the Town of Boone and Watauga County use the building to hold conferences, educational seminars, classes, and offer equipment rentals. This Agricultural Center functions as a section of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension led by North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T University. The Extension's goal is to establish a branch in each county to be a research-based educational resource that identifies problems and issues within the discipline of agriculture while providing solutions. This information is then broadcast to communities at seminars hosted at the Agricultural Centers across the state.[44]

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[39] Rogers Whitener, "Cabbage for sauerkraut was important crop in mountains," *Black Mountain News* (Black Mountain, NC) Feb. 12, 1981. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn96086030/1981-02-12/ed-1/seq-2/#words=Creek+kraut+Kraut

[40] Whitener, "Cabbage for sauerkraut."

[41] "Mountain Cabbage and Kraut. *North Wilkesboro Hustler.* (North Wilkesboro, NC), Oct. 8, 1924. https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92072938/1924-10-08/ed-1/seq-1/#words=Creek+kraut+Kraut

[42] Robert and Mary Capps to Watauga County. *Deed of Sale.* Book 83, p. 187, Watauga County Register of Deeds, Boone, North Carolina.

[43] Department of Geography and Planning, *Boone Creek.* 5.

[44] "How Extension Works," n.d. NC State Extension, https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/how-extension-works/

Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture (BRWIA) manages the High Country Food Hub, and it has been housed in the Agricultural Center since September of 2016. Watauga County Commissioners approved the use of the building for the operation, and BRWIA secured funding from sources such as NC A&T Extension, The Golden Leaf Fund, Z. Smith Reynolds, and Appalachian State University's Appalachian Studies Department. Locals requested more areas for food storage and supplies within Boone, especially during the winter months, and the Agricultural Center, with its familiarity to farmers and gardeners, proved to be the ideal location.[45] The Food Hub operates as an online farmers' market selling vegetables, fruits, flowers, meat, and body care products. Its large selection of goods can be picked up in several locations, including Boone, Banner Elk, Blowing Rock, West Jefferson, and Deep Gap. The Food Hub now proves to be a useful tool for farmers to work within the local community, sharing and selling their goods.[46] It also plays a key role in keeping local heritage and traditions alive while maintaining the spirit of the building, based on providing the community with nutrition. The connection between the current Watauga Agricultural Center and High Country Food Hub to its birth as a locally focused major supplier of high-quality sauerkraut and other farm products through the North State Canning Company shows a deep correlation and connection to the heritage of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

E. PROPOSED MARKER TEXT:

Option 1:

The North State Canning Company operated near here from 1923 to 1981. County agent John B. Steele and local farmers, including H.N. Blair, created the Blue Ridge Farmers Association, which managed the company. By the 1960s, Watauga County was the number one cabbage producer in the state and 32nd in the nation, and was essential to local farmers. During processing, the Canning Company drained into local water, polluting Boone Creek over the years. The smell was so pungent across the Town of Boone that the waterway gained its nickname "Kraut Creek." In 1978, North State Canning Company, then owned by W. F. Miller, Jr., sold the company to Nina and Tom Ennis, who merged kraut production with their candy business, Nina-Menz. In 1981, the factory shut its doors and stopped production. [132 words]

Option 2:

The North State Canning Company, operating from 1923 to 1981, was a local company established at the west end of Boone through the collective efforts of county agent John B. Steele and local farmers like H. N. Blair under the Blue Ridge Farmers Association. By the 1960s,

[45] "About," High Country Food Hub, 2016. https://www.highcountryfoodhub.org/about.html
[46] "Local Food at the Click of a Button." n.d. High Country Food Hub. https://www.highcountryfoodhub.org/

Watauga County was the number one cabbage producer in the state and 32nd in the nation. The factory raked in $225,600 for the Watauga County economy in 1968. During processing, the Canning Company dumped Kraut drainage into the creek, which led to the pollution of the Boone Creek over the years. The smell was so pungent across the town of Boone that it gained its nickname "Kraut Creek." In 1978, North State Canning Company under W. F. Miller Jr. sold the company to Nina and Tom Ennis, who merged kraut production with their candy business, Nina-Menz. In 1981, the factory shut its doors and stopped producing kraut and candy. [156 words]

F. FURTHER RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

Despite group efforts to fill in the historical narrative about the North State Canning Company, there are still some gaps in the narrative that our collective research was unable to fill. Shortly after the company was founded in a cooperative effort under Steele and Blair, a *Watauga Democrat* newspaper article confirmed that the ownership was then transferred to W. F. Miller around 1928. It is unclear how and why he acquired the company. We were not able to determine what the full name of Miller is, which makes it difficult to find more information about him. It would be possible to find more information about how this ownership change happened by determining Miller's full name and digging through more deeds at the Watauga County Register of Deeds website.[47]

It is also unclear if and what the Canning Company building was used for between the closing of the factory and its use now as The Agricultural Center. Property tax records and a 1987 deed indicate that it was bought by the county from Robert and Mary Capps; however, it is unclear if and how the Capps used the building or how the county used the building.[48] It is also unknown how the Capps family came to own the property. It has been difficult to track down deeds in the Watauga County Register of Deeds, but with more time, it may be possible to fill in the gaps. It would be helpful to collect all the deeds and property tax records[49] related to that parcel of land to help determine who owned it and then look for information about that person in newspapers. Getting in touch with Watauga County and/or Boone community members about it could also shed light on what the building was used for after the factory closure.

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[47] For further research into the Watauga County deeds look at the Watauga County Register of Deeds Website, https://www.wataugacounty.org/AppPages/Dept/Deeds/home.aspx.
For further information about the deed trail as of writing, https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/1kkRa-XCKCnhNF9xIAbFie1t7wzoe3zZz

[48] Watauga County Property Records. Parcel Map. 971 King Street. https://tax.watgov.org/WataugaNC/maps/mapadv.aspx#2.

[49] For further research into property tax records, look at the Watauga County Tax Administration Website, https://www.wataugacounty.org/App_Pages/Dept/Tax/searchbills.aspx

In regard to the building itself, it is confirmed that the current building is the same one that the factory was operating its shipping functions out of; however, it is unclear what exactly the outside of the building looked like when it was operating at full capacity. The only photos the group found in our research were aerial photos that made it difficult to tell what the architectural features looked like in the early 1900s. In 1967, a new building was built on the property, but it is unknown where exactly this building was and if it is still standing. It is possible that old maps of Boone may be able to help determine this information. Local community members may have photos of the building prior to its closure and can confirm some of its basic architectural features.

A 1923 article in the *Watauga Democrat* noted that when the factory first opened, it was being powered by a Fordson Tractor in the basement, but it would later be powered by a steam engine.[50] As a group, we were unable to confirm if the factory ran on steam or for how long, but this would help shed light on the environmental impacts of the factory. Speaking with local community members may be the only way to find out more about what powered the factory. Additionally, there is no documentation that our group has found prior to the 2000s about the pollution of Boone Creek. It is possible that there are student articles written by Appalachian State University students in their school newspaper, *The Appalachian*, about studies or research about the pollution or student complaints of the smell, but this would require more time for research.[51]

[50] "Watauga's First." *Watauga Democrat.*
[51] For further research into *Appalachian*, https://omeka.library.appstate.edu/

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