

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING
(Headquarters Building)
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
107 Park Headquarters Road
Gatlinburg
Sevier County
Tennessee

HABS TN-256
HABS TN-256

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HABS No. TN-256

Location: 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, Sevier County, Tennessee

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Administration Building is located at latitude – 35.687114, longitude – 83.536799. The coordinate represents a point at the center of the center block. It was obtained using Google Earth imagery, dated September 18, 2005. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Administration Building location has no restriction on its release to the public.

Present Owner: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Present Occupants: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Present Use: Park administrative offices

Historian: James A. Jacobs, HABS

Significance: The headquarters building at Great Smoky Mountain National Park holds significance as the administrative center of one of the largest national parks in the eastern United States and the most visited park in the entire national park system.¹ At the time of its completion, the headquarters building anchored the main administration area of the park, facing the landscaped intersection of two prominent roads, and would provide basic visitor services in the area until the construction of the Sugarlands Visitor Center. The Colonial Revival design was also noteworthy as one of the first major buildings constructed in the implementation of the park’s initial master plan. It was intended that the design of the headquarters would guide the establishment of an architectural theme thought to be appropriate for the park and its geographic region.

Frank E. Mattson, the park’s resident landscape architect, was one of the principal designers of the final scheme for the building and the manager of its overall design process. He observed early in 1941 that while the headquarters building “gives an idea of

¹ In the 1930s, both “headquarters” and “administration” could be used to refer to the building, although “administration building” seems to be the preferred term by the time of the building’s construction. In this report, “headquarters building” and “administration building” will be used interchangeably.

a fair sized residence,” it was a thoroughly modern office building.² Its scale, five-part arrangement, and finely worked and laid-up stone cladding, quarried within the park and laid-up by Civilian Conservation Corps-trained masons, have no direct historical precedents in the region. Still, the form of its center pavilion and the finish of the lobby were a nod, however inventively, to “the character of the best early domestic architecture of Tennessee.”³ Indeed, the formal character of the façade and the rustic architectural details present in the lobby convey a vague impression of the genteel domestic architecture that began appearing in the region around 1800.

For the final design, Mattson collaborated with Charles I. Barber, an eminent Knoxville architect, championed by park superintendent J. Ross Eakin. In addition to Barber and Eakin, Mattson, as a staff member for the National Park Service’s Branch of Plans and Design, also considered the input of the branch’s chief architect and engineer as well as the director of the National Park Service and his advisors. This varied group was able to shape the design of an administration building, and surrounding landscape, having a quietly sophisticated presence within the larger natural landscape that conveyed its importance to the establishment and development of the park. While the building maintains a high degree of physical integrity to its period of construction, the construction of the Sugarlands Visitor Center (1957-58; 1961) drastically altered its original siting at an important road intersection, lessening its visual prominence in the park.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of construction:** 1938-40

2. **Architects:**

The Branch of Plans and Design and Frank E. Mattson

Both the preliminary phase and the actual design of the administration building occurred under the National Park Service’s Branch of Plans and Design. The design of park buildings within an architectural theme that was both appropriate to the region and sensitive to the natural environment had long been a concern of the National Park Service. This idea was further codified and folded into an integrated system of park design and planning devised under the leadership of Thomas C. Vint, first as chief landscape architect in the Landscape Division (renamed the Branch of Plans and Design in 1933) of the Western Field Office (1927-33) and then as the head of the Branch of Plans and Design at the National Park Service headquarters in Washington, DC. Vint structured the Branch of

² Frank E. Mattson, “Park Administration Building: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” [*The Mountaineer* (ca. Jan. 1941)], typescript in folder—I-12, “Design & Construction,” Headquarters Building, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library, Gatlinburg, Tennessee (hereafter GRSM Library).

³ *Ibid.*

Plans and Design in a comprehensive manner that reflected contemporary private practice. A multidisciplinary staff made up of architects, landscape architects, engineers, and draftsmen generated designs, specifications, and estimates out of two primary offices, one in the East and one in the West.⁴ Historian Linda McClelland explained: “all designers in the service were consolidated into the western and eastern offices, where the architect, structural engineer, mechanical engineer, specifications writer, and estimator could work together and efficiently complete the massive volume of public works projects.”⁵

The design of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) began within the Eastern Division of the Branch of Plans and Design, headquartered in Yorktown, Virginia. The eastern field office had been established in 1931 to design the Colonial Parkway, a scenic roadway connecting Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown. Charles E. Peterson, a landscape architect hired by Vint in 1929 who became chief of the Eastern Division, toured what would soon be established as the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in 1931 along with other park service personnel. This multi-week visit was the start of the detailed development of a master plan for the park. In 1932, at the behest of GRSM Superintendent J. Ross Eakin, Peterson began collaborating with esteemed Knoxville architect Charles I. Barber on the establishment of an architectural theme for the park buildings.⁶ This collaboration continued into 1934 at which time Peterson completed a preliminary design for the administration building. The Branch of Plans and Design had, by this time, developed a corpus of standard plans for many types of park buildings and structures, which could then be individualized according to the architectural theme and their locations within a park.⁷ As the institutional focus and among the most prominent constructed landmarks in a park, however, headquarters buildings were unique and individual, one-off designs. Nothing came of Peterson’s effort in 1934. It is not known for certain whether this was because of an apparently fraught relationship between Peterson and Eakin regarding Barber’s involvement in the design process for the park or merely because funding for the building was not available until later in the decade.

The Branch of Plans and Design completed the master plan for the GRSM administrative area in 1937.⁸ By that time, Charles Peterson had been transferred to St. Louis as the senior landscape architect for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and Frank E. Mattson had arrived at GRSM as the resident landscape architect. Thomas Vint had

⁴ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building The National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 330.

⁵ McClelland, 332.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the development of an architectural theme and designs for the headquarters building, see: Section I:B: “Historical Context.”

⁷ McClelland, 243-44.

⁸ For more about master plans, see: Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape, Architecture & the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 239-47.

previously hired Mattson around 1930.⁹ In 1938, Mattson began working with Charles Barber on the design of the administration building. Barber was much more closely involved in the process than four years earlier with Peterson and the final attribution for the design can be shared by Mattson and Barber. Although the duo are considered the architects of record, it should be stressed that the design of the building was a larger collaborative process, which included considerable input by Superintendent Eakin, Director Cammerer, as well as the guidance and approval of Thomas Vint, the branch's chief architect, and Oliver Taylor, the branch's deputy chief, and later chief, engineer.

Charles I. Barber (1887-1962)

Charles I. Barber was one of Eastern Tennessee's most important architects during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Barber moved with his parents to Knoxville when he was one year old and the city was Barber's home for his entire life. His father, George Franklin Barber, was a self-taught architect and builder who specialized in residential design. The senior Barber became a highly successful author of pattern books and house plan catalogues, and his houses were constructed across the United States and even overseas. Charles Barber's upbringing in this environment would have exposed him early on to architecture and provided his earliest architectural education. In 1907, Barber traveled to Italy and Greece to immerse himself in architectural study. Two years later, he entered the University of Pennsylvania where he studied under Paul Cret and became familiar with the Beaux-Arts planning and design principles. Barber earned a "Certificate of Proficiency in Architecture" in 1911 and returned to Knoxville to practice, later forming a partnership with his cousin D. West Barber and Benjamin McMurry both of whom were also certified in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania.

Established in 1915, the firm of Barber & McMurry flourished and was responsible for scores of houses, churches, and institutional and educational buildings in Tennessee in the 1920s and 1930s, including a number at the University of Tennessee. During the Great Depression, Barber was not only involved in the architectural development of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but was also named chief architect for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Barber & McMurry remained prolific designers after World War II and the firm is still existence today. Charles I. Barber died in 1962 and was buried in Knoxville's Greenwood Cemetery.

⁹ Although little is known about Mattson's education and background, he seems to have remained with the Branch of Plans and Design for the duration, or at least the bulk, of his career. In the late 1950s, for example, he was involved with the Mission 66 development at Big Hole National Battlefield. See: Theodore Catton and Ann Hubber, "Commemoration and Preservation: An Administrative History of Big Hole National Battlefield," 1999, chapter 5, accessed online, 6 Feb. 2012, <http://www.nps.gov/history/>.

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all information about Charles I. Barber is drawn from: Katherine Wheeler, "Barber & McMurry Architects," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, accessed online, 8 Feb. 2012, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/>, and BarberMcMurry Architects, "Company, History," accessed online, 8 Feb. 2012, <http://www.bma1915.com/company/history.html>.

3. **Builders, suppliers, materials:**

Builders

The construction of the headquarters building occurred through two New Deal programs: the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA).¹¹ Operating from 1933 through 1942, the CCC was instrumental to the development of national park infrastructure throughout the country. The young, single, and unemployed men who were enrolled in the CCC engaged in a wide variety of activities in the parks, including road and trail construction, tree planting and erosion control, picnic ground and recreational area development, and fire suppression and prevention and emergency work such as snow removal. While much of the work was unskilled in nature, the CCC did provide different kinds of vocational training and educational opportunities, although these varied from region to region and camp to camp. At GRSM, the CCC was a critical part of park development prior to its official establishment in June 1934, at which time it became eligible for congressional appropriations.

The CCC was greatly involved with the creation of the administration area and the headquarters building at GRSM. The enrollees constructed two stone bridges, roads, culverts, a septic tank and filtration ditches, and laid water pipes.¹² They graded the headquarters building site in preparation for construction, excavated the basement and foundations, and quarried and cut stone for the building. CCC labor was also used to “build basement, foundations, and rock walls up to the plate line”¹³ Work on the headquarters building was one instance of enrollees receiving training in skilled trades. Frank E. Mattson noted in his ca. 1941 article about the headquarters building: “It is mentioned with pride that most of the masons on the contract job were boys who had been trained in stone work by the Park Service while in the CCC.”¹⁴ The “contract job” to which Mattson refers was the portion of the construction funded by the PWA.

In October 1938, GRSM received \$108,000 in PWA funds for the construction of park buildings, of which \$65,000 was allocated for the headquarters building.¹⁵ The PWA contracted with private sector companies in contrast to its better-known sister program, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which directly hired workers already on the

¹¹ For a thorough discussion of the relationship of New Deal programs, particularly the CCC, and the development of the national parks, see: Carr, Chapter 6.

¹² For records of work completed by the CCC in GRSM, see the superintendent’s monthly reports, GRSM Library.

¹³ J. Ross Eakin to Arno B. Cammerer, “Memorandum for the Director,” 28 Oct. 1938, Folder 620 (Administration Building), Box 1132, Entry 9 (Central Files, 1907-39), RG 79 (Records of the National Park Service), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (NARA). See also superintendent’s monthly reports dated 12 May and 13 Jun. 1939, GRSM Library.

¹⁴ Mattson, “Park Administration Building.”

¹⁵ Superintendent’s monthly report, 14 Nov. 1938.

government relief rolls. In November 1938, construction of the headquarters began using CCC labor for preparation of the stone and excavation and laying the foundations and basement walls. During this first phase, PWA funds were reserved for materials. By April 1939, construction was nearing the top of the basement walls and, as planned, the government solicited bids to complete the building.¹⁶ Thirty-two companies submitted proposals and the bid by Southeastern Construction Company of Charlotte, North Carolina for \$76,950 was accepted; the contract between the National Park Service and the construction firm was approved on June 30, 1939.¹⁷ Except for sand, cement, and building stone, which the government provided from sources within the park, the Southeastern Construction Company would complete or subcontract out all of the remaining work on the headquarters building.

Materials and Suppliers

Exterior masonry (cladding and flagging)—sedimentary sandstone or “quartzite”¹⁸
Quarried at Ravensford (North Carolina) within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Lobby floors—sandstone
Quarried near Crab Orchard, Crossville, Tennessee
Treated with a waterproofing agent known as aquabar, and a floor wax more commonly used on wood surfaces

Lobby fireplace surround—soapstone
Alberene Soapstone Company, Nelson County, Virginia

Roof slate
Buckingham Slate Company, Buckingham County, Virginia

Wormy chestnut paneling
Cockrum Lumber Company, Knoxville, Tennessee

Iron light fixtures in lobby
Frank Hendrick, blacksmith, Wears Cove, Sevier County, Tennessee

Exterior light fixtures (copper)
Scott Electric Company, Knoxville, Tennessee

¹⁶ “Specifications for Constructing the Administration Building, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, PWA, Official Project No. 752-05-245, Contract No. I-1P-15191,” 18 Apr. 1939, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

¹⁷ Ibid. The contract is appended to the back of the specifications.

¹⁸ The core information in this list drawn from Mattson, “Park Administration Building.”

4. **Owners:** The National Park Service has owned the building since its completion.¹⁹
5. **Original and subsequent occupants:** The Park Headquarters Building has housed the principal administrative offices for GRSM since its completion and occupation in 1940.
6. **Original plans and construction:**

The Site

Comprehensive planning and development of GRSM was officially launched in 1934, but the history of the park extended back over nearly a decade. Congress authorized the creation of the park in 1926. The legislation stipulated that North Carolina and Tennessee needed to acquire and deed a total of 150,000 acres to the federal government in order for the National Park Service to assume administrative responsibility for the lands (1930), and 300,000 acres to be formally established as a national park unit (1934).²⁰ J. Ross Eakin became the first superintendent of GRSM in January 1931, a post he would hold until March 1945. Eakin was well qualified for the daunting task of overseeing the development of the new park. He had previously served twice as the superintendent of Glacier National Park (1921-24 and 1927-31) and as the superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park (1924-27).²¹ He was superintendent of Glacier during much of the initial construction of the ambitious Going-to-the-Sun Road (1921-33; NHL, 1997) and at Grand Canyon during a period of significant physical and administrative additions to the park. Unlike these large western parks, where development of tourism and facilities was aided by concessionaires, GRSM was a more-or-less blank slate and would require particularly able leadership.

The location of the “headquarters unit” for the park was a significant concern for Eakin as he worked with National Park Service landscape architects, engineers, and administrators to devise a master plan for the development of GRSM. In October 1931, Eakin wrote to A.E. Demaray, Associate Director of the National Park Service, about two locations—one in North Carolina and one in Tennessee—being considered for the headquarters area. Smokemont in North Carolina and Sugarlands in Tennessee were both located along the Newfound Gap Road, which ran between the states at approximately the center of the park. It was intended that the recently completed roadway would be improved as part of the park’s development.

¹⁹ See Part I:A:6, “Original plans and construction: The Site” for more information about the landowner just prior to the government purchase.

²⁰ The present-day size of GRSM is 522,419 acres.

²¹ U.S. National Park Service, “Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials, Superintendents of National Park Service Areas,” accessed online, 16 Apr. 2012, http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/tolson/histlist7g.htm

In his letter to Demaray, Eakin succinctly counseled: “Either the Sugarlands or Smokemont would be a strategic location. Other locations should be disregarded.”²² The proposal of two locations, one in each state, was both a wise political move as well as a politic one. NPS photographer George A. Grant observed after a November 1931 visit: “...it is very pleasing to note so much enthusiasm shown by the local people of both Tennessee and North Carolina. A spirit of rivalry seems to have developed between the two states over the project, making it necessary at times for Supt. Eakin and his staff to exercise a great deal of diplomacy.”²³ Still, despite the superficially balanced proposal, Eakin’s site descriptions submitted to Demaray indicate that he most likely had already chosen the Sugarlands site. He explained that the setting of Sugarlands was “fairly scenic” while that of Smokemont was “very poor, low hills prevent [a] view of [the] mountains.”²⁴ These observations were followed by practical statistics that further supported the superiority of the Tennessee site. Sugarlands was only three miles from the nearest town (Gatlinburg) where Smokemont was seventeen miles from the nearest (Bryson City). Sugarlands had considerably better overall access to existing utilities (telegraph, telephone, and electric lines). Although Smokemont had better access for rail passengers (freight depots were roughly equidistant), this advantage was reduced because access to the park by automobile was far better on the Tennessee side.²⁵

Superintendent Eakin’s bias towards the Tennessee location was more firmly, and publicly, established with the completion of his new house in Gatlinburg in June 1932. An article appearing in *The Knoxville News-Sentinel* on June 19 reported: “The [Eakins’] house was finished two weeks ago, when [they] left Maryville for their new home... [which] was designed by Charles Barber, Knoxville architect.”²⁶ Eakin’s office was previously located in rented space in Maryville and his move to Gatlinburg may have been a strategic part of a campaign to have the park headquarters located in nearby Sugarlands. Despite this evidence, the issue of the headquarters location seems to have remained unresolved as late as February 1934 when Colonel David C. Chapman wrote to Congressman Gordon Weaver Browning (D-TN), stating:

I have for years worked very quite-ly [*sic*] to get the headquarters of the Park located on the Tennessee side. This is always the focal point of any park. I have

²² Eakin to A.E. Demaray, 21 Oct. 1931, Folder—“Great Smoky Mountains, National Park Development Outline,” Box 305, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

²³ George A. Grant, “Report of Trip to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park,” 16 Dec. 1931, Folder—“Great Smoky Mountains, Lands, Buildings, Roads & Trails; Lands, December 19, 1901 – November 25, 1932,” Box 305, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

²⁴ Eakin to Demaray, 21 Oct. 1931.

²⁵ Grant, “Report of the Trip to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.”

²⁶ “Park Superintendent Moves into His New Home,” *The Knoxville News-Sentinel* 19 Jun. 1932, Sec. C: 5, clipping in Folder—“Great Smoky Mountains, Lands, Buildings, Roads & Trails; Lands, December 19, 1901 – November 25, 1932,” Box 305, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

never asked in so many words that this be done[,] but it is in the minds of all of them that this is the proper place to put it. However, if there is enough trouble kicked up, they could just go over the divide and put their headquarters in Smokemont.²⁷

Chapman was a Knoxville businessman who was instrumental in the land negotiations necessary for establishing the park. He was a member and also served as chairman for both the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association and the Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission. Chapman's letter to Browning expressed worry about unrecorded remarks made by Tennessee senator Kenneth Douglas McKellar, presumably about the establishment of the park: "he did us no good and this is the third time he has upset our relations with the Interior Department."²⁸

Chapman's concern about the location of the park headquarters was ultimately unnecessary due, in no small part, to the practical and logistical advantages offered by the Tennessee site. In the first months of 1935, negotiations were underway about the purchase of the Keener tract as the site of the park's administrative area. The Keener tract was one of over 6,000 acquired by North Carolina and Tennessee and then deeded to the federal government to establish the park. Most of the acreage was owned by a half dozen large timber companies, but many were small freeholders who had lived in the area for centuries. While not typical of the individual landowners, the Keeners were doubly impacted during the period of land acquisition for the park.

The Keeners, an affluent Knoxville family, had owned a summer retreat at Elkmont, a resort community established by Knoxville elite after the Little River Lumber Company began running trains from Knoxville to the lumber town of Elkmont in 1909. The company began selling land and the rarified "Appalachian Club" was founded in 1910, with the nearby "Wonderland Club" following in 1919. By the onset of the Great Depression, there were about seventy five cabins situated in the two club areas.²⁹ Families with cabins at Elkmont, including David Chapman, had initially been in support of the creation of a national park in the area; however, many eventually came to oppose the condemnation of land for the park when it was clear that the Elkmont area would be included within the park boundary. After much legal maneuvering, Congress agreed to allow long-term leases and a lump sum payment equal to half of the assessed value to owners in the area, both seasonal and year-round residents.³⁰ Some owners, the Keeners among them, chose to sell their properties to the government for their full assessed value.

²⁷ David C. Chapman to Honorable (Gordon W.) Browning, 13 Feb. 1934, Folder—II-14 (Chapman), GRSM Library.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Phillip Thomason and Michael Ann Williams, National Register of Historic Places form for the "Elkmont Historic District," National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1994, Section 8, 12.

³⁰ Ibid., 13.

It is not known when the Keeners sold their property at Elkmont, but evidence suggests this occurred before 1929.³¹ They purchased acreage at the confluence of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River and Fighting Creek and “built a large beautiful house with extensive landscaping, including a swimming pool.”³² The Keeners were undoubtedly and justifiably angered when Superintendent Eakin eyed this property as the preferred location for the new park headquarters. Correspondence suggests that they attempted to procure a long-term lease like those offered to property owners at Elkmont.³³ Unfortunately, lacking the influential numbers of the Appalachian and Wonderland clubs and owning one of the most consequential sites in the planned development of the park, the NPS only offered a lifetime lease to Nevada Keener, the family’s matriarch. That aspect of the negotiations was rendered moot in February 1935 with Mrs. Keener’s death, at which time Eakin wrote to Director Arno B. Cammerer, explaining: “Mrs. Keener died yesterday. Colonel Chapman believes this may complicate acquisition of this very important property, but my guess is that it will make acquisition easier since none of her children are interested in the property beyond its money value.”³⁴

Bruce Keener, Jr. immediately entered into negotiations on behalf of himself and his sisters Ruth Keener McCormick and Elizabeth Keener Holloway. Eakin’s assessment of the heirs’ interest in the property was correct. While Keener seems to have initially investigated the possibility of retaining a lease on the property, he quickly agreed to a compromise price of \$36,000 and signed an option for the two tracts totaling approximately 183 acres on March 27, 1935.³⁵ The house was vacated by early June, but the close of the sale dragged on into 1936, to the unhappiness not only of the Keeners, but also Eakin, who desired to begin site preparation and infrastructural improvements. He stated in a March 1936 letter to the director: “The Keener property is the site selected for

³¹ Some of the information in park naturalist Henry Lix’s typescript history of the park (1958) about the Keener property is cited to testimony made before the Tennessee general assembly in 1929. Also, Bruce Keener, Sr., who with his wife Nevada built the house in the Sugarlands area, died in April 1929. See Henry W. Lix, “Short History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” 1958, 67, GRSM Library.

³² Lix, 67. The location and footprint of the Keener house was included on the site plan titled “Administration Area of the Master Plan” completed in 1937. It was located approximately 550 feet to the southwest of the headquarters building. See: Branch of Plans and Design, “Administration Area Part of the Master Plan for Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” 1937, Master Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, RG 79, Cartographic and Architectural Section (hereafter Cartographics), NARA.

³³ Cammerer to R.B. Newman, Jr., 15 Mar. 1935, Folder—Land Acquisitions III-17 (Bruce Keener), GRSM Library.

³⁴ Eakin to Cammerer, 11 Feb. 1935, Folder—Land Acquisitions III-17 (Bruce Keener), GRSM Library.

³⁵ Cammerer to Newman, 15 Mar. 1935; Eakin to Cammerer, 27 Mar. 1935 and 29 Mar. 1935, both in Folder—Land Acquisitions III-17 (Bruce Keener), GRSM Library.

our administrative group. The realignment of the roads and a new bridge makes it imperative to purchase this property as soon as possible.”³⁶

Within the large Keener tract, the site selected for the construction of the headquarters building was at the prominent intersection of the Newfound Gap Road (U.S. Route 441) and the Fighting Creek Gap Road (now Little River Road or Tennessee State Route 73), which are two of the most important roads in the park. The Newfound Gap Road was constructed in the approximate location of a trail blazed by the Cherokee.³⁷ This trail was improved by white settlers for wagons in the nineteenth century. In the 1920s, North Carolina and Tennessee began construction of the Indian Gap Highway to provide a better link between Asheville and Knoxville. This initiative occurred at the same time that the National Park Service began planning the new GRSM. The government unsuccessfully lobbied to have the project delayed until the NPS began construction of the park roadways and the completed highway, in a 1936 opinion by Director Cammerer, would “never be anything more than a through highway.”³⁸ The road remains the area’s primary link between North Carolina and Tennessee.

The Fighting Creek Gap Road is a historic name referring to the portion of Little River Road extending from Sugarlands to Elkmont.³⁹ Unlike the Little River Road between Elkmont and Townsend, which had a varied history that included Cherokee trails and a logging company railroad right-of-way, the initial wagon road from passing through Sugarlands on its route from Gatlinburg to Elkmont was not constructed until early in the twentieth century. The state of Tennessee improved the road around 1930, which provided a modern connection between Townsend and what was then the new Indian Gap Highway, soon to become the park’s Newfound Gap Road.

With the full establishment of the park imminent, Tennessee stopped maintaining the Little River Road and Fighting Creek Gap Road in 1933. The federal government immediately began roadbed, drainage, and bridge improvements to the existing Little River Road to the east of Elkmont, and began planning for the full reconstruction of the Fighting Creek Gap Road to the west of Elkmont. This reconstruction began in June 1938

³⁶ Eakin to Cammerer, 9 Sep. 1935, 5 Nov. 1935, and 20 Mar. 1936, the latter for quote, all in Folder—Land Acquisitions III-17 (Bruce Keener), GRSM Library.

³⁷ All information about the history of the Newfound Gap Road and its predecessors is drawn from: Cornelius Maher and Michael Kelleher, “Great Smoky Mountains National Park Roads and Bridges, Newfound Gap Road,” HAER No. TN-35-A, Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1996.

³⁸ Cammerer to Harvey Broome, 25 May 1936, as transcribed and cited in Maher and Kelleher, “Newfound Gap Road,” 18.

³⁹ All information about the history of the Little River Road and its predecessors is drawn from: Cornelius Maher and Michael Kelleher, “Great Smoky Mountains National Park Roads and Bridges, Little River Road,” HAER No. TN-35-C, Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1996.

and was completed the following January by which time the excavation and the laying of foundations for the headquarters building were underway. This consequential building was prominently sited at the intersection of the Newfound Gap Road and Fighting Creek Gap Road. The front of the building was placed on axis with Newfound Gap Road as it approached from North Carolina, sitting conspicuously at the center of a “V” formed by a bend in the Newfound Gap Road as it traveled towards Gatlinburg and the Fighting Creek Gap Road approaching from the west. A ca. 1937-38 description for a draft of the park master plan commented on the site and roadways:

The site selected for the Park Headquarters Area is advantageous from the scenic as well as the administrative standpoint. It commands a delightful view of the canyon of the West Prong Little Pigeon River to Mt. Mingus, one of the higher peaks of the Smokies, making an exceptionally dramatic entrance to the Tennessee side of the park. It also is at a point of vantage at the juncture of the New Found [*sic*] Gap Highway (Tenn. 71) and State Highway 73, both primary arteries of circulation...The plot plan for this area necessitates the relocation of approximately 1900 feet of Highway 73 and 1700 feet of Highway 71.⁴⁰

The relocated roads framed a superb site that added gravitas to the handsome, but deliberately understated, headquarters building.

The Building

The design process for the headquarters building began late in 1931, and continued in fits and starts for much of the decade.⁴¹ On November 8, 1938, Director Cammerer telegraphed Superintendent Eakin his “approval of the plans” for the headquarters building.⁴² Construction began later in the month, as CCC enrollees began quarrying stone, excavating the basement, and laying the foundation. The basement was nearing completion by April 1939 and the government put out a proposal for bids to complete the upper portions of the building.⁴³ The bid by the Southeastern Construction Company of Charlotte, North Carolina was accepted and the contract approved on June 30, 1939.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Branch of Plans and Design, “Headquarters Area,” typescript, ca. 1937-38, Master Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, RG 79, Cartographics, NARA.

⁴¹ For a more detailed discussion of the development of an architectural theme and design process for the headquarters building, see: Section I:B: “Historical Context.”

⁴² As noted in a letter from Cammerer to Charles I. Barber, 8 Nov. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁴³ “Specifications for Constructing the Administration Building, Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” 18 Apr. 1939. For more information about the labor involved in the construction, see I:A:3 “Builders, suppliers, materials.”

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* The contract is appended to the back of the specifications.

The building was “finished by contract in seven months and was occupied in February, 1940.”⁴⁵

Superintendent Eakin had considerable input on the form and function of the completed building, a design, a notable Colonial Revival design in the national parks. The 1937 version of the park master plan for the administration area included two schemes, one that combined a museum and headquarters in a single building and another having separate facilities each facing the triangular intersection of the Newfound Gap Road and Fighting Creek Gap Road.⁴⁶ The decision for two separate buildings, strongly supported by Eakin, had been made by November 1938 when the final plans were being refined.⁴⁷ Eakin was also successful in involving Knoxville architect Charles I. Barber in the design process and in championing a concept that he felt was architecturally suitable to the region. Eakin wrote to Director Cammerer in October 1938: “Mr. Barber has succeeded, we think, in giving [the building] the feeling of a large mountain cabin.”⁴⁸

The sprawling headquarters building of beautifully laid-up stone would have hardly been mistaken for a “mountain cabin,” but its seemingly simple, yet sophisticated design possessed an unpretentious dignity appropriate to the region and to its function within the park. From the front, the headquarters appears to be a low-slung, one-story building having more a domestic scale than an institutional one. Frank E. Mattson, the park’s resident landscape architect who was one of the principal designers of the building and liaison for those involved in the design process, observed early in 1941 that it “gives an idea of a fair sized residence.”⁴⁹ Any sense of verticality in the building was diminished with its five-part massing and broad expanses of unbroken roof. The spacious porch and gable-end chimneys (the east one false) of the center pavilion make the strongest reference, if grandiosely, to a “mountain cabin.” The center pavilion is flanked by gable-fronted end pavilions linked to the center by setback hyphens having roof ridges slightly lower than that of the end pavilions. The low-key presence of the principal façade was reinforced by stone cladding and roof slates having varied, subdued hues of gray. At the time of completion, the unobtrusive architectural character of the headquarters from the front was somewhat more amplified in a, then, treeless landscape and through its siting on axis with the Newfound Gap Road as it approached from the North Carolina side of the park.

⁴⁵ Mattson, “Park Administration Building.”

⁴⁶ Branch of Plans and Design, “Administration Area Part of the Master Plan for Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” 1937, Cartographics, NARA.

⁴⁷ For this preference, see: Eakin to Peterson, 8 Mar. 1934 and H.K. Roberts to Eakin, 6 Jun. 1939, both in Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁴⁸ Eakin to Cammerer, 31 Oct. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁴⁹ Mattson, “Park Administration Building.”

The full extent of the building was fully revealed at the sides and the rear. The principal story was set over a full raised basement. Retaining walls, “carried out from the front corner[s] of the building...in line with the front façades,” allowed for large double-hung windows on the sides and rear of the end pavilions on the basement level.⁵⁰ In contrast to the front, the rear massing of the building was more unified in a shallow U-shaped arrangement with the hyphens and center pavilion sharing a single unbroken wall extending between the end pavilions.⁵¹ Retaining walls perpendicular to the rear wall allow the center pavilion to drop down a full story, allowing windows with the same dimensions as on the principal story and two doors into the basement level. A pair of external stairs, both sheathed in stone and one integrated into a stone retaining wall, provide access to the two exterior doors on the principal story. Shed dormers pierce the roofs of the hyphens and the center pavilion, indicating the presence of usable space on the upper level of building. The simplified massing and reduced ornamentation such as shutters and decorative light fixtures at the rear of the building results in a considerably more institutional presence, which was appropriate given that this side of the building faces the rest of the original “administrative area” for the park.

The interior of the headquarters building housed most of the park’s administrative functions, and was arranged and finished to meet these needs.⁵² When staff moved into

⁵⁰ Roberts to Eakin, 6 Jun. 1939.

⁵¹ A drawing dated November 22, 1938, depicts an alternate concept for the rear elevation that fully articulated the five parts as on the front. This concept seems to have primarily been developed to address the reconciliation of the roof pitch between the center pavilion and hyphens. As constructed, the roof is continuous over center pavilion and the hyphens and they share a single, unbroken rear wall as depicted in an earlier floor plan from October 1938. The question of the roof pitch was not merely an aesthetic one as the architects seem to have been struggling with the placement of the stair accessing the upper level of the center pavilion. The stair was positioned in the east hyphen, whose roof ridgeline is considerably lower than that of the center pavilion, providing few options for the location of a full-size doorway on the upper level between the sections. Both the October and November 1938 floor plans depict a stair running perpendicular to the rear wall in the east hyphen, an orientation considerably impacted by the location of the rear wall and the pitch of the roof. As built, the stair runs along an interior corridor parallel to the rear wall and the roof ridgeline, a more logical orientation allowing for a more straightforward connection to the upper level.

A shed dormer provides natural light to the stair and is paired with another in an upper-level room over the west hyphen. Neither dormer appears on the October 1938 plans and they were more likely an outgrowth of the decision to unite the roof planes over the center pavilion and hyphens than a desire for additional interior space. See the drawings for the headquarters building (“Proposed Administration Building”), Branch of Plans and Design, “First Floor Plan” and “Second Floor Plan,” Oct. 1938, and “Section Thru Stairway” and “Floor Plan Showing Revisions Recommended for Roof Pitch,” 22 Nov. 1938, accessed on-line at the Technical Information Center, NPS Denver Service Center (ETIC), 10 Feb. 2012, <http://etic.nps.gov/>. See also: Mattson, “Memorandum for the Chief of Planning,” 8 Nov. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁵² A “secondary administrative center” was also established at the southern entrance to the park outside Cherokee, North Carolina. This smaller “sub-administration” building was constructed simultaneously with the headquarters and was intended to house the ranger and road and park maintenance units for the North Carolina side of the park. It also contained a museum of “mountain culture.” The design of the building echoed that of the larger headquarters building on the Tennessee side and it functioned as the Oconaluftee Visitor Center until completion of a new facility in 2011. Branch of Plans and Design,

the building early in 1940, nearly all of the completed rooms and spaces were located on the principal floor and under the east hyphen and end pavilion. Frank E. Mattson described the functional layout of the building in a January 1941 article:

The floor plan of the building was arranged so that the Superintendent's office would be in the middle of the building with the clerical staff in one end and the technical staff in the other. The rangers and naturalists are located in the front where they are accessible to the public. The lobby is used as a public information center and it also has a use for public and official meetings. The conference room is used only by the park staff. The building has a full basement which houses the steam heating plant, radio and telephone rooms, blue print rooms, and storage space. There is also provision for three extra offices on the second floor which is now being used for museum storage and museum preparation work.⁵³

The Colonial Revival lobby was the most highly finished of all the interior spaces. It was fully paneled with beaded planks laid horizontally and divided into lower and upper portions by a molded chair rail. The chair rail is interrupted only by doorways and windows set off by architrave molding having a profile common to many late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century buildings. The four front windows are further embellished with molding below the deep sills that suggest panels. A large fireplace with a decorative wood mantel and surround, and faced in soapstone, is the focus of the west side of the lobby. All of the woodwork was rendered in wormy chestnut, which was desirable for its worn looking quality and, perhaps, one of the few outcomes of the catastrophic chestnut blight experienced during the first four decades of the twentieth century that might be considered positive. Decorative iron light fixtures hung from the ceiling between plastered beams. These were crafted by a local blacksmith and "parts of them were made from an old lumbering skidder which was used in the Little River area many years ago."⁵⁴

Frank Mattson observed, generally, that the building's design was "influenced largely by the character of the best early domestic architecture of Tennessee," and the lobby, specifically, was "influenced by the living room of the Blount Mansion."⁵⁵ William Blount was instrumental in the founding of Tennessee, and in 1792-96 he built the first phase of his frame house after he moved the capital of the "Territory South of the River Ohio" to Knoxville. This building temporarily served as Tennessee's capitol after the state's establishment in 1796 and was designed a National Historic Landmark in 1965.

"Secondary Administrative Area" and "South Side Administrative Area," typescript, ca. 1937-38, Cartographics, NARA.

⁵³ Mattson, "Park Administration Building." The October 1938 plans included a basement only under the center pavilion with all other areas marked as "unexcavated." Branch of Plans and Design, "Basement Floor Plan," Oct. 1938, ETIC.

⁵⁴ Mattson, "Park Administration Building;" original drawings for the "Lobby Light Fixture," 5 Mar. 1940 and the "Exterior Lighting Fixtures," 8 Mar. 1940, both in ETIC.

⁵⁵ Mattson, "Park Administration Building."

The paneling, architrave molding, and fireplaces documented at the William Blount Mansion in 1934 by the Historic American Buildings Survey are similar enough to elements installed in the lobby of the headquarters building that these drawings could very likely have served as an actual guide for their creation.⁵⁶

Even with a probable design source for a handful of individual elements, the scale of the lobby, its waxed sandstone floor, and fanciful light fixtures partially constructed of reused machine parts have, at best, a tenuous relationship with the “early domestic architecture of Tennessee.” Still, the rustic character of the room and its finishes at least suggests a sense of the genteel domestic environments that began appearing on what was, around the turn-of-the-nineteenth century, the American frontier. In the tradition of fine Colonial Revival edifices, the room is a delightful architectural conceit. It is a full, three-dimensional interpretation of historic American architecture installed within a modern space roughly defined by reinforced concrete floors and ceilings carried on steel I-beams, and hollow clay tile partition walls.

The lobby of the headquarters building initially had to serve both as a waiting area for guests of the superintendent and other staff members and as a visitor center for the general public. An information desk stood on the east side of the lobby, adjacent to the rangers’ office, and the restrooms were located in a hallway just beyond the lobby on its west side. Opening directly onto the lobby were four rooms arranged in a row—offices for the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and a secretary, and a conference room—that, along with the chief clerk’s office in the west hyphen formed an administrative suite linked by interior doors. The partition walls between the middle two rooms—originally the superintendent’s and secretary’s offices—were embellished with wormy chestnut paneling. Two small private toilet rooms were positioned between these two offices and the ones for the assistant superintendent and the chief clerk.

The “clerical staff” and “technical staff” occupied the remainder of the principal floor in individual and shared offices, “modern in all respects,” having floors “of white oak with a natural waxed finish” and “plastered and painted” walls.⁵⁷ The clerical staff occupied a large room in the west pavilion adjacent to a file room and near the chief clerk’s office.⁵⁸ The naturalist’s office was located in the front of this pavilion. The east pavilion and hyphen featured offices for the rangers, people involved in land acquisition, the landscape

⁵⁶ See seven sheets for the building: H.D. McMillan and Edward Peckinpaugh, delineators, “William Blount Mansion,” HABS No. TN-101, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1934.

⁵⁷ Mattson, “Park Administration Building.”

⁵⁸ Original room assignments and uses drawn from Mattson, “Park Administration Building,” the October 1938 first-floor plan (ETIC), and a schematic plan and index appended to the August 12, 1940 superintendent’s report. A second copy of the schematic plan and index is located in folder—I-12, “Design & Construction,” Headquarters Building, GRSM Library.

architect, draftsmen, and the engineer, as well as the stairs to the upper and lower levels. Both the “clerical” and “technical” sides of the building could be accessed via the main lobby or, directly, from the employee parking lot through rear doors. The rooms under the east pavilion and hyphen were finished at the time the building was completed and included space for the radio and telephone rooms, additional restrooms, mechanical equipment, and storage. The upper level rooms were used for storage and spillover workspace.

The Landscape

When it was first occupied, the headquarters building had both public and park administrative functions, and decisions about the landscape surrounding the building reflected this duality. The formality of building’s façade, its high-profile siting at a major park intersection, and the initial need to provide access to the public all impacted the discussion of how best to develop the landscape at the front. The lack of a dedicated museum and visitor center in Sugarlands required Superintendent Eakin to accept that the headquarters building would need to, at least temporarily, serve a more public function; however, his thoughts on landscaping and parking near the building were clearly looking forward to a time when the building would be used only for park administration. This outlook caused H.K. Roberts, the acting regional director, a degree of consternation, as expressed in a June 1939 memorandum to Eakin:

We appreciate the expressions of opinion from your Office regarding the part this building will play in the general park picture and the statement of your feelings concerning its setting and functional purposes....The stress laid on restricting use of this building seems to us as rather an unusual point of view and one not wholly consistent with the design and location. The building will house the administration of the largest and one of the most important Eastern National Parks; its location is at one of the most important road intersections in the park, and the setting, by reason of its location, is conspicuous. The architecture of the building, while modest in scale, is formal; both the plan, with a large central lobby and public information booth and the elevations dictate and demand an approach serving the principal entrance.⁵⁹

A set of “sketch plans” dated October 24, 1939 depicted nine distinct “circulation and parking” schemes.⁶⁰ Schemes 1 and 2 are most like what was eventually implemented and reflect Eakin’s seeming aversion to providing anything but the most basic visitor amenities at the headquarters building. The schemes had no driveway at the front, placed minimal public parking to the east of the building along the access road (Park Headquarters Road) connecting to residential and utility areas, and located staff parking and garages to the rear of the building with connections to the access road. Most of the

⁵⁹ Roberts to Eakin, 6 Jun. 1939.

⁶⁰ “Sketch Plans, Circulation & Parking, Administration Bldg., near Gatlinburg[,] Tennessee” (ten sheets), 24 Oct. 1939, ETIC.

other schemes depicted public driveways or turnarounds at the front of the building and/or larger public parking lots.

A “Grading Plan” developed by the Branch of Plans and Design, Region I office dated November 18, 1939 confirmed that a modified version of Scheme 2 had been selected, but with two planned garages instead of three.⁶¹ Annotation on the drawing explained that the rough grading had already occurred and would not be significantly changed in the final landscaping. This preliminary grading had already significantly changed the landscape at the front, in particular the perception of the building from the intersecting roadways. The grading plan included a landscape section depicting a cut from the triangular intersection of the Newfound Gap Road and the Fighting Creek Gap Road to the road at the back of the employee parking area north of the headquarters building. The building sat at an elevation below the level of the important road intersection, and the rough grading sought to lessen the perception of this grade change, as explained by Frank E. Mattson ca. 1941: “The building itself was oriented in relation to the park entrance roads and the views to and from the building. Because the existing grade placed the building below the road level, grading had to be done to correct this and create a setting which gives the appearance that the building is on a slight rise of ground.”⁶² Mattson and his staff gently reversed the natural downward slope of the site between a point just below the road intersection and the front façade of the headquarters building. This landscape intervention necessitated extending stone retaining walls out from the building on its east and west sides to allow for large windows in the basement rooms under the east and west pavilions.

In contrast to the finely tuned landscape design at the front of the building, which focused on aesthetic subtleties and visual perception, the approach at the rear was straightforward, utilitarian, and conventionally formal. The designers created a service court composed of a drive in the shape of a squared-off “U” enclosing a central, rectangular lawn on axis with the building and flanked to the east and west by garage structures. The U-shaped drive opened to the north, away from the headquarters, starting and terminating on the road providing access to the residential area. A short drive extending between a parking area at the closed end of the U (adjacent to the building) and the access road to the east provided another means of entrance and egress to the service court.⁶³ The plan anticipated a pair of

⁶¹ Branch of Plans and Design, Region I, “Grading Plan,” 18 Nov. 1939, ETIC.

⁶² Mattson, “Park Administration Building.” Thomas C. Vint wrote a memorandum to the Region I director and the regional landscape architect in January 1940 noting that Director Cammerer was concerned that in the final plan the grading at the front of the building “might look too much like a lawn area, which is the direct opposite of the results which he would prefer.” He thought that the area should “be retained in effect as much like a meadow as possible,” planted with grasses, shrubs, and trees common at the elevation and dotted with “boulders of considerable size.” It is not known whether the original landscaping more closely followed Cammerer’s vision, but the area in question is planted largely as a lawn today. Thomas C. Vint, “Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region I, Attention: Regional Landscape Architect,” 19 Jan. 1940, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁶³ H.K. Roberts commented in a June 1939 letter to Eakin: “We see no justifiable need for the rear parking area and recommend that it be eliminated entirely from the scheme of development. Government employees who have occasion to park official cars can use the parking area provided for the public without

walkways extending from the exterior staircases and framing a sunken lawn situated between the building and the parking area. The walkways continued around the U-shaped drive, terminating at the forecourts of the garages. Although not incorporated into the formal landscape, a historic cemetery was retained and is situated to the east of the drive on a small hill located between the drive and the access road.

Most of the design for the service court seems to have been implemented. The garage planned for the east side of the court is the only significant omission. The one on the west side was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1941.⁶⁴ The Branch of Plans and Design, Region I developed the basic design for a “Garage, Administration Area” at the end of 1937.⁶⁵ Although this ten-bay garage with a single unbroken gable roof bears clear similarity with the one later constructed in 1941, it was probably designed for the nearby utility area. In total, the park’s “Administration Area” included three distinct groups of buildings: park administration, a residence area, and a utility area. The 1937 version of the master plan did not show a garage adjacent to the headquarters building (a decision apparently not considered until the end of 1939); however, it did depict a garage with a similar type of footprint in the utility area and may have been intended for that facility.

Three years later in March 1940, the Branch of Plans and Design, Region I prepared drawings for “Garages for Government Autos, Administration Area” that was essentially the same design, but with some enhancements.⁶⁶ The ten-bay garage was made slightly longer than the one devised in 1937. Instead of a single open interior space, the 1940 design separated the four groups of bays (in a 2-3-3-2 pattern) by solid block firewalls. Additional drawings made in April 1940 detailed the truss design and the construction of the gable-end louvers, reduced the number of panels in each overhead bay door, and inserted doors at both of the gable ends.⁶⁷

undue hardship. We agree that government cars should be parked ‘preferably in the garage when not in use’” Roberts wrote this letter a number of months before the various circulation and parking schemes were developed and he very likely envisioned a large lot for the public that could have also accommodated employees. The much reduced public area of parking championed and adopted by Eakin and his staff required the creation of the rear service yard for employee vehicles

⁶⁴ Building report for the “Administration Building Garage, Headquarters Area,” 13 Dec. 1950, Folder—Building No. 231: Park Headquarters, File Box number 80235, Sugarlands Structures Reports, GRSM Library. See HABS No. TN-257 for four photographs of the garage taken in 2011.

⁶⁵ Branch of Plans and Design, Region I, “Garage, Administration Area,” 1 Dec. 1937, ETIC.

⁶⁶ Branch of Plans and Design, Region I, “Garages for Government Autos, Administration Area,” 29 Mar. 1940, ETIC.

⁶⁷ Branch of Plans and Design, Region I, plans, elevations, sections, and details for “Garages for Govt Autos, Administration Area,” two sheets dated Apr. 1940 and 11 Apr. 1940, ETIC.

7. Alterations and additions:

The Building

On the whole, the headquarters building has not been significantly changed since 1940. Its formal design and extremely robust construction—load-bearing stone, reinforced concrete, and steel—discouraged large-scale additions. Interior partitions composed of hollow clay tile blocks made reconfiguring spaces a difficult proposition. The exterior cladding, roofing, and architectural details are all intact. Most of the significant alterations were interior ones anticipated at the time the building was occupied—the division of unfinished space into offices. Frank E. Mattson explained ca. 1941: “the building has room for some expansion of the park staff, and if the Great Smoky Mountains National Park builds up a staff as large in comparison as other National Parks, it will not be long before the extra office space will need to be finished.”⁶⁸

The principal floor has seen the fewest physical changes overall. All of the original room partitions remain in place as do the doors, windows, and trim. The wood floors have been covered with wall-to-wall carpeting, fluorescent fixtures and forced air circulation vents installed in the ceilings. The most dramatic change—the installation of glass partition walls in the lobby sometime before March 1983—has recently been reversed, only the vestibule around the front doors remains.⁶⁹ The installation of the vestibule and office partition walls resulted in the loss of four of the six original chandeliers, three of which have been recreated.⁷⁰ This floor still hosts the main administrative functions of the GRSM, although office allocation has, in some cases, changed as space was made available in the building and elsewhere in the park. There are three functional changes of note on the principal floor. By 1950, the superintendent’s office had moved from one of the partially paneled rooms opening onto the lobby to the front room in the east pavilion, which was more spacious and in a more private location.⁷¹ It remains in this location. The large drafting room at the rear of the east pavilion has been repurposed as a conference room. Finally, the building ceased accommodating visitor services after the construction of the Sugarlands Visitor Center in 1957-58.

⁶⁸ Mattson, “Park Administration Building.”

⁶⁹ Schematic plan with an index providing a key space allocation entitled, “Main Floor, Administration Building.” The lower right-hand corner of the page includes the marking “3/83,” which has been interpreted as “March 1983,” Folder—I-12, “Design & Construction,” Headquarters Building, GRSM Library.

⁷⁰ While there is no documentary or graphic evidence known at present to confirm six chandeliers, it is likely that there was originally one just inside the front door later lost when the glass-walled vestibule was constructed. Only two of the current chandeliers are original, the others probably disappeared when the lobby divided into offices, and were recreated during the lobby’s recent restoration.

⁷¹ Building report for the “Administration Building located in the Headquarters area,” 13 Dec. 1950, Folder—Building No. 231: Park Headquarters, File Box number 80235, Sugarlands Structures Reports, GRSM Library.

The upper level and basement level were only partially finished at the time the building was occupied. Over time, all of the interior spaces have been subdivided into offices. In general, the finishes are asphalt tile flooring, wood paneling, acoustic ceiling tile, and fluorescent light fixtures. On the upper level, offices and active support and storage spaces occupy the entirety of the center pavilion and hyphens with additional storage rooms located over the east and west pavilions. In the basement, offices and staff rooms were completed as planned in the west pavilion. Offices now also occupy most of the west hyphen and center pavilion. These open areas originally housed equipment for heating and other utility systems, and fuel. As the building was modernized, equipment became both cleaner and smaller, which allowed much of the this interior space to be subdivided and repurposed for staff offices and rooms.

The Landscape

While the physical integrity of the headquarters building remains very high, its presence within the park landscape as one of its most important buildings was severely compromised with the construction of the Sugarlands Visitor Center in 1957-58 and the related relocation of the intersection of the Newfound Gap Road (U.S. Route 441) and the Little River Road (Fighting Creek Gap Road at the time of initial construction; Tennessee State Route 73). The importance of the handsome and formal, but architecturally restrained headquarters was strongly expressed through its brilliant siting at a triangular intersection and its axial relationship with the Newfound Gap Road as it approached from North Carolina. The construction of the Mission 66 visitor center, the new traffic pattern, and mature landscaping have all lessened the visual importance of the building.

The final design for the headquarters building did not include museum space and the 1937 master plan depicts a facility south of the headquarters, facing the triangular intersection on axis with the Newfound Gap Road as it approached from Gatlinburg. The accompanying text for the master plan noted: "The museum, one of two proposed for the Park, will feature the natural history (Plants and Animals) of the region and will house the Park Naturalist's office, auditorium, laboratories, etc."⁷² A June 1942 "sketch" for a natural history museum depicts a sprawling building having a main floor that featured a central lobby opening on to wings containing exhibits on the flora and fauna, an auditorium, and a library and office for the naturalist.⁷³ A large parking lot was included as part of the facility. Although construction would be delayed during the war, Superintendent Eakin was clearly planning for continued realization of the master plan and signed off on the sketch on June 26.

Neither the 1942 design nor anything architecturally similar to it were ever realized for the park's primary administration area. The years after the war saw increased park visitation throughout the country, severely taxing the existing facilities that dated mainly from the

⁷² Branch of Plans and Design, "Headquarters Area," typescript, ca. 1937-38, Cartographics, NARA.

⁷³ Branch of Plans and Design, Gatlinburg Field Office, "Natural History Museum, Tennessee Administration Area," Jun. 1942, ETIC.

1920s and 1930s; parks were, in the words of Director Newton Drury in 1949: “victims of the war.”⁷⁴ No funding for the construction of park museums was made before 1950, and GRSM remained without one on the Tennessee side of the park by the time Mission 66 was approved and began to be implemented later in that decade.⁷⁵ Mission 66 was a visionary program of infrastructural modernization conceived under Director Conrad Wirth to address the woeful state of visitor services and amenities in the national parks. The program showed a deep commitment to Modern architecture and site development and very quickly made such design as familiar within parks as the rustic parkitecture that preceded it. The program also gave rise to a new building type, the “visitor center,” which centralized a number of visitor-related functions under one roof with particular emphasis on park interpretation and orientation.⁷⁶ The consolidation of visitor services in one location also required extensive parking facilities. At GRSM, the concept for the natural history museum, developed in the late-1930s and given form on paper in 1942, was abandoned at the outset of Mission 66 in favor of an up-to-date visitor center.

The Sugarlands Visitor Center, constructed in 1957-58 and landscaped and planted in 1961, was a multipurpose facility for visitor services, education, and orientation.⁷⁷ It was a Modern, T-shaped one-story building with a cross-gable roof having prow-shaped ends. The west wing dropped to a full two stories at the back.⁷⁸ The main level featured a lobby at the center with an auditorium, museum, and offices and restrooms occupying wings extending east, north, and west, respectively. The office wing (west) provided access to a lower level that included a library, laboratory, and storage under that wing, and a climate/humidity controlled storage room in a partially excavated area under the lobby.

The siting of the visitor center was more-or-less in the location where the natural history museum had been planned in 1942, but there were no other similarities in the executed design. The museum was conceived as a complement to the headquarters building, with its entrance façade facing the triangular intersection and providing visual focus for cars approaching from Gatlinburg. The center (north) exhibit wing of the Sugarlands Visitor Center remained on axis with the Newfound Gap Road; however, it faced away from the road and the headquarters building toward a large parking area.⁷⁹ Despite retention of the axial orientation, the decision to turn the building 180 degrees, alone, would have

⁷⁴ As transcribed in Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000), 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 259, for dates.

⁷⁸ Numerous drawings of the building and immediate landscape available through ETIC.

⁷⁹ Division of Design and Construction, Eastern Office, “Planting Plan, Sugarlands Visitor Center,” 8 Nov. 1960, ETIC.

detracted from the formality and importance of the intersection had the intersection not been entirely relocated and reconceptualized as part of the site development for the visitor center.

The creation of the Sugarlands Visitor Center included the reconstruction of the final stretch of Little River Road as a sweeping curve passing to the south of the visitor center and its parking lots, connecting with the Newfound Gap Road about 400' southeast of the original intersection. This change was a pragmatic decision that made sense from the perspective of traffic management. The 1942 scheme for the museum building positioned its parking lot entrances on the Newfound Gap Road, the most heavily trafficked road in the park. The generous entrances into and out of the visitor center parking lots were located on the new arc of the less traveled Little River Road. The new road pattern also simplified the intersection between the two roads and emphasized the relative importance of the Newfound Gap Road as an artery.

As practical as it was for the new visitor center and traffic circulation, the reconfigured/relocated intersection had a deleterious aesthetic impact on the administrative area and the perception of the headquarters building. Two of the three arms giving shape to the original triangular intersection had been the Newfound Gap Road where it makes a significant bend. The intersection capitalized on this bend and gave the impression that three roads were intersecting in one location. While the actual spatial relationship between the Newfound Gap Road and the headquarters building was not dramatically altered, the loss of the triangular intersection changed their visual relationship. After the relocation of the intersection, the headquarters building sat back from the bend in the Newfound Gap Road at a perplexing angle, exacerbated by a softening of the bend in the road and the reversed orientation of the visitor center. Mature plantings and extension of a fourth wing on the side of the visitor center facing Newfound Gap Road have further muddled understanding of the integrated merger of architecture, landscape, and traffic circulation called for in the original design of the GRSM administrative area.

After occupying space in two different visitor centers in the park and in the basement level of the headquarters building, the Great Smoky Mountains Association moved into part of the garage behind the headquarters in 1983. The association was occupying the entire structure by 1991 when it was fully renovated. The garage bay doors are not longer operable and have had new window and standard doors opened through them. A single, continuous shed dormer extends across the back slope of the roof, which created more office space. A concrete block stair provides exterior access to the upper level. The dormer does not extend to the roof's gable ends, preserving some sense of the original building profile.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ For existing conditions (exterior) in 2011, see photographs for HABS No. TN-257.

B. Historical Context

Introduction: The Design of the Administration Area

The master plan for GRSM was under development as soon as J. Ross Eakin arrived as the first superintendent in January 1931. He submitted a tentative outline of development to A.E. Demaray, the Associate Director of the NPS, in October of that year. Beginning in 1929, superintendents were required to create a park development outline, which was “intended to be a written statement of all items necessary for the development of the park and was organized according to geographical areas and within each area according to use.”⁸¹ The park development outline was followed by a general plan, “a graphic representation of each park area,” which ultimately became known as the “master plan” that was described in text and represented in maps and other drawings.⁸²

A site plan entitled “Administration Area Part of the Master Plan for Great Smoky Mountains National Park” was completed by the Branch of Plans and Design in early 1937.⁸³ The plan anticipated a park administration area composed of three distinct parts: an administrative group, a residential area, and a utility area. The administrative group featured two major buildings and associated parking lots—one for park administration and another for a natural history museum and research center. These buildings faced the triangular intersection of two major park roads. An access road (Park Headquarters Road) traveled from Newfound Gap Road just east of the headquarters along the west bank of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River and continued along the waterway, past its confluence with Fighting Creek, to an isolated utility area. The utility area contained all of the buildings needed for the day-to-day function and maintenance of the park and included: wood and machine shops, a warehouse, equipment sheds, garages, a gas station, and, at the entrance near a bridge over Fighting Creek, a central power and heating plant. Just beyond the parking area for the administration building, a road extended to the west from the access road, across Fighting Creek and up a hill to a residential area containing houses for park staff. Given the symbolic and functional value of the administration building, it was among the earliest buildings designed and constructed for GRSM.

The Preliminary Design Stage for the Headquarters Building

The process for the design of the GRSM headquarters building took a number of years and went through three distinct phases of development. These phases involved a varied cast of National Park Service staff members as well as the considerable input by Charles I. Barber, one of Eastern Tennessee’s most respected architects. The first phase predated the

⁸¹ McClelland, 294.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 294, 301.

⁸³ All information about the administration area from: Branch of Plans and Design, “Administration Area Part of the Master Plan for Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” 1937, and two similar typescripts dating from ca. 1937-38 providing details about the plan. All in Master Plan, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, RG 79, Cartographics, NARA.

official establishment of the park in June 1934. It was part of the preliminary development of the park and focused on “the working out of an appropriate architectural style” for the park buildings.⁸⁴ The second phase, which occurred early in 1934 in anticipation of the park’s establishment, resulted in an actual design for the headquarters building that was ultimately not constructed. The third and successful design phase occurred in 1938 as the park prepared for the anticipated allocation of Public Works Administration (PWA) funds to construct the headquarters building.

The design of park buildings within an architectural theme that was both appropriate to the region and sensitive to the natural environment had long been a concern of the National Park Service.⁸⁵ The work toward identifying an architectural theme for GRSM began within the first year of Eakin’s superintendency. In November 1931, Charles E. Peterson, chief of the Eastern Division of the Branch of Plans and Design, was part of a group gathered to begin more substantive planning. Peterson and the others in the group familiarized themselves with the area’s natural character as well as the qualities of its local building vernacular. Their three-week-long tour seems to have elicited interest, and rumors, among people living in the area. On January 13, 1932, then Associate Director Arno Cammerer responded to an inquiry from a concerned resident of Asheville, North Carolina:

I cannot imagine what sketches of permissible buildings within the park were prepared that the newspapers refer to...Some of our landscape and engineering staff have made a preliminary study of the area, which will doubtless be followed by other inspection trips leading up to a definite report for decisions on buildings, roads, and trails and the like, but, as I say, so far no style of architecture has been adopted for the park.⁸⁶

Cammerer was not in any way being disingenuous with his response—the question of an architectural style for the GRSM remained unanswered. Ten days later, Charles Peterson wrote to Knoxville architect Charles I. Barber about “the choice of a suitable architectural style to be used in designing buildings for the area.”⁸⁷ Peterson outlined a process through which “some type of architectural style practical and peculiarly appropriate could be discovered or invented.” Such a process would focus on the study of local architectural forms and traditions, and the settler and settlement history of the area. At the time, Peterson seems to have turned to Barber to act as a liaison in the process, contacting “those who have made a particular study of the origin of the early pioneers in the Smoky Park areas” to produce a “historical statement.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Charles E. Peterson to Barber, 23 Jan. 1932, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁸⁵ McClelland, 243

⁸⁶ Cammerer to S. Grant Alexander, 13 Jan. 1932, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁸⁷ Peterson to Barber, 23 Jan. 1932.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

It does not appear that Peterson had met with Barber during his visit to the area the preceding November. Rather, Eakin had, during Peterson's visit, noted "Mr. Barber's interest in the matters of the Clingmans Dome lookout tower and of the general type of trailside shelter cabin."⁸⁹ Eakin's endorsement of Barber for the design of park structures and buildings was not only dependent on the architect's reputation in Eastern Tennessee—he and his wife were also, by then, clients of Barber's as well. The Eakins and Barber were almost certainly in the process of designing, and possibly already constructing, a house in Gatlinburg by the time of Peterson's visit in November 1931. The Eakins moved into the house in early June 1932, which was described in *The Knoxville News-Sentinel* as having "a commanding view of Mt. Harrison" and a living room that "has the appearance of a sportsman's lodge."⁹⁰

Eakin continued to champion Barber's involvement with design work at the park through at least the construction of the park headquarters building, although the degree to which this was Eakin's appreciation of the architect's abilities versus Barber's campaign for involvement is not known. The Great Depression in the 1930s was particularly hard on architects. As the preeminent firm in Knoxville, Barber & McMurry seems to have remained relatively busy with design work at the University of Tennessee and elsewhere in Knoxville; however, given the severity of the economic downturn, Barber likely needed or wanted to keep a vigilant eye out for potential projects. A lifelong resident of Knoxville, Barber likely also had a keen interest in the development of the nearby national park. Eakin obviously had a good experience working with Barber on his own house, and it was probably a mixture of enthusiasm on the part of Eakin and Barber's own desires for work, specifically in the park or otherwise, that contributed to their collaboration at GRSM.

The nature or extent of Barber's involvement with the park's architecture envisioned by J. Ross Eakin seems not to have been shared by Peterson. Eakin saw a more active role while Peterson viewed Barber as a local collaborator, providing insight about regional building traditions rather than producing actual designs. In April 1932, A.E. Demaray forwarded to Peterson sketches made by Barber, to which Peterson replied: "These sketches are really not part of the study which Mr. Barber and I are going to make of Early American architecture for possible use in the National Park there."⁹¹ It is not known whether Peterson and Barber were ever able to identify a specific theme for the park's architecture, but there seems to be little movement on the design of actual buildings until 1934.

⁸⁹ Peterson to Demaray, 30 Apr. 1932, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁹⁰ "Park Superintendent Moves into His New Home," 19 Jun. 1932.

⁹¹ Peterson to A. E. Demaray, 30 Apr. 1932.

Version One: A Failed Concept

With a location for the headquarters area generally identified and the full establishment of the park on the horizon, J. Ross Eakin began thinking more specifically about the design of key buildings early in 1934. He wrote to Charles Peterson at the end of January 1934, suggesting: “it seems to me someone should be working on designs for the various structures.”⁹² Again, Eakin put forward the possibility of Barber’s involvement:

In the event you are unable to assign a man to this work, I should like to suggest that some high class architect, Charley Barber, for instance, be given this assignment if that is possible. Perhaps if Charley were retained as consulting architect some relatively inexperienced men could do the work. Any way [*sic*] the matter can be worked out by you will be perfectly satisfactory to me.⁹³

Eakin professed that whatever Peterson decided about how to proceed with the design would be “perfectly satisfactory to me,” yet Peterson’s preliminary designs for the administration building presented to Eakin a bit more than a month later were met with, at best, ambivalence.

Peterson claims to have used the “Klepper House” in Limestone, Tennessee—located roughly 70 miles northeast of Gatlinburg and constructed in 1792—as the inspiration for his design, although the eighteenth-century building and the proposed headquarters shared very little affinity.⁹⁴ Peterson was almost certainly referring to “The Old Stone House,” which would be documented two years later by the nascent Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS).⁹⁵ Peterson himself proposed the creation of what became HABS in 1933 as a means of establishing “a public archive of America’s architectural heritage.”⁹⁶ One of the intended uses of such an archive was to provide useful graphic source material to architects engaged in restoration work of Colonial-era survivors and in the design of new Colonial Revival buildings. Peterson had previously been working with Charles I. Barber to broadly identify a vernacular architectural tradition that could be used to structure an architectural theme for the new park. This exercise acquainted him with the architectural heritage of Eastern Tennessee of which the Old Stone House was one of the oldest surviving buildings.

⁹² Eakin to Charles E. Peterson, 29 Jan. 1934, Great Smoky Mountains, National Park Development Outline, Box 305, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Peterson to Eakin, 5 Mar. 1934, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

⁹⁵ Hugh M. Klepper was listed as the owner in the HABS documentation. See: W. Jeter Eason, “The Old Stone House,” HABS No. TN-96, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1936.

⁹⁶ Catherine C. Lavoie, “Laying the Groundwork: Prologue to the Establishment of HABS,” in *American Place: The Historic American Buildings Survey at Seventy-five Years* (Washington, D.C., [2008]), 1.

At two-and-one-half stories, the limestone building with two chimneys rising on the gable ends had a solid appearance that may have appealed to Peterson. The Old Stone House was comparatively imposing for its time and more exceptional than representative of the region's eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century domestic vernacular. Despite the fact that the house was larger and more robustly built than others in the area, extant drawings of the proposed headquarters indicate that the Old Stone House was not august enough for Peterson.⁹⁷ The drawing of the front elevation depicts a five-part Georgian Revival estate house with a five-bay two-and-one-half story center block with end chimneys flanked by one-story wings connected to the center block by arcaded hyphens. The proposed building bore similarities to such colonial-era landmarks of Virginia's Tidewater region as Westover (ca. 1750; NHL, 1960) or Mt. Airy (1758-62; NHL, 1960), not surprising given that Peterson and the Eastern Division were based in Yorktown. The center block of the Colonial Revival effort would also not have been out-of-place in affluent suburban communities in contemporary metropolitan America. Aside from the proposed material—masonry that the drawings depict as much more finely worked and laid-up than in the Old Stone House—the design was a fanciful reinterpretation of the late-eighteenth century dwelling. Peterson was clearly aware that the design might not suit Eakin's vision as he noted in his March 5, 1934 letter accompanying the sketches: "The building on the drawings appears more formal than it will be when built."⁹⁸

Eakin officially acknowledged receipt of the drawings in a reply on March 8, and provided a light critique of the function of various rooms and the number of porches.⁹⁹ He was most adamant about repurposing the designated exhibit space as a drafting room, stating: "I am firmly of the opinion that there should be no exhibition room or museum in the administration building. Undoubtedly, there will some time [*sic*] be a museum building erected nearby." While Eakin superficially seemed willing to work with Peterson on changes to the design, he may have already decided to reject it. Although not signed or dated, "I don't think [this] building [is] appropriate for Great Smoky" was handwritten on the back of Peterson's March 5 cover letter to Eakin.

Eakin may have been disinclined to accept Peterson's design in any form because of his apparent unwillingness to work more closely with Eakin's preferred architect, Charles I. Barber, but other factors also gave pause the design process at this point. Great Smoky Mountain National Park was formally established as a park unit on June 15, 1934, but it would be four more years before funds were appropriated for the construction of the headquarters. During this time, Charles E. Peterson had relocated to St. Louis to become the senior landscape architect for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. By the time funds were earmarked for the construction of the headquarters building in October

⁹⁷ Branch of Plans and Design, Eastern Division, four sheets of elevations and plans for the "Proposed Administration Building, Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 3 Mar. 1934, ETIC.

⁹⁸ Peterson to Eakin, 5 Mar. 1934.

⁹⁹ Eakin to Peterson, 8 Mar. 1934, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

1938, its design was nearly complete, the result of a collaboration between Frank E. Mattson, a landscape architect for the Branch of Plans and Design, and Charles I. Barber.

Version Two: A Successful Public-Private Collaboration

In October 1938, Director Arno B. Cammerer contacted Charles I. Barber about the possibility of reviewing the design for the headquarters building developed by the Branch of Plans and Design.¹⁰⁰ Up until that point, Frank E. Mattson, the resident landscape architect in the Branch of Plans and Design assigned to Great Smoky Mountain National Park, appears to have been the lead designer in a collaborative process that involved various NPS personnel within and outside the park.¹⁰¹ It is not known when exactly Mattson began working on the design, but he was far enough along by June 1938 to be considering levels of interior finish for the lobby and the superintendent's office.¹⁰² A 1937 site plan titled "Administration Area of the Master Plan" and checked by "F.E.M." indicates that the building's basic parti—with an H-shaped footprint—had already been decided.¹⁰³ On the drawing, two alternatives were given for the headquarters building, one that included a museum and one that did not, but evidence strongly suggests that the one with separate administration and museum buildings was the preferred arrangement, at least for the park superintendent.

Eakin addressed the desire to limit the function of the building on at least two occasions. In 1934, he told Charles Peterson that he did not want an "exhibition room or museum in the administration building."¹⁰⁴ Eakin's apparent aversion to the idea that the headquarters building might also need to serve the public was also evident after construction was underway. H.K. Roberts, the acting regional director of Region One, responded to Eakin's thoughts about the administration building in June 1939.¹⁰⁵ While Robert's specific concern was that there be "an approach [driveway] serving the principal entrance," his comments make it clear that Eakin remained intent on the building primarily serving the park administration rather than the public.¹⁰⁶ Details evident on the 1937 site plan of the administration area suggest that Mattson had subscribed to Eakin's

¹⁰⁰ Cammerer to Barber (telegram), 22 Oct. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

¹⁰¹ For Mattson's involvement with the design see: Mattson to Eakin, 15 Jun. 1938; Eakin to Cammerer, 28 and 31 Oct. 1938; Mattson, "Memorandum for the Chief of Planning," 8 Nov. 1938; all in Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA. Mattson also authored the article "Park Administration Building: Great Smoky Mountains National Park," [*The Mountaineer* (ca. Jan. 1941)], typescript in folder—I-12, "Design & Construction," Headquarters Building, GRSM Library.

¹⁰² Mattson to Eakin, 15 Jun. 1938.

¹⁰³ Branch of Plans and Design, "Administration Area Part of the Master Plan for Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 1937, Cartographics, NARA.

¹⁰⁴ Eakin to Peterson, 8 Mar. 1934.

¹⁰⁵ H.K. Roberts to Eakin, 6 Jun. 1939. For relevant text, see block quote on page 17.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

functional limits on the building. Although including two options for the administration building, the one with separate buildings for the museum and park administration was depicted as part of the larger plan with the combined building shown in a box as an “alternative.” The footprint of a single-function administration building was very close to what was actually built and lacked the curved front drive that was included in the “alternate” version.

On October 22, 1938, Director Cammerer telegraphed Charles I. Barber, stating: “We have finished [the] design for new smoky mountain administration building and your comment and criticism on it would be of inestimable value to me. While I have no funds with which I could pay you for such review it occurred to me that you might be willing to do same as matter of cooperation.”¹⁰⁷ On the same day, Cammerer wrote to Eakin, providing him a copy of the telegram to Barber. Cammerer explained that the telegram was “in line with my discussion with you recently,” indicating that, again, Eakin was still very keen to have Barber involved with the project.¹⁰⁸ Cammerer also informed Eakin that there were “two schemes” and that “we are in the opinion that this building...should be designed with great care, since the design will influence design of later buildings in the park to a marked degree.”¹⁰⁹

Barber agreed to provide pro bono consulting services with the park as the design was finalized. Barber met with at least Eakin and Mattson three times between the 22 and 28 October, and Eakin informed Cammerer on 28 October that “Mr. Mattson is now preparing a sketch that will incorporate all of Mr. Barber’s ideas.”¹¹⁰ Perhaps remembering the failed first attempt to the design the building, which had more regional affinity with the Tidewater than Eastern Tennessee, Eakin proposed to Cammerer that the final drawings should be completed at GRSM as Barber was “afraid architects unfamiliar with the region might miss the feeling and make things too elaborate.”¹¹¹ Cammerer relented and allowed the drawings to be completed at the park.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Cammerer to Barber (telegram), 22 Oct. 1938.

¹⁰⁸ Cammerer to Eakin, 22 Oct. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

¹⁰⁹ The impact of the headquarters building on the design of other buildings in the park was limited at best. Implementation of the master plan stopped with the entrance of the United States into World War II, Funds remained limited for major projects until the advent of Mission 66, which strongly embraced Modernism.

¹¹⁰ Eakin to Cammerer, 28 Oct. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² In a 8 Nov. 1938 letter to Barber, Cammerer commented: “I have received your letter of November 4 and your simply stunning revised sketches of the Great Smoky Administration Building...My architects here share my enthusiasm for your plans in every respect.” Cammerer to Barber, 8 Nov. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA

On October 31, Eakin again wrote to Cammerer, conveying that “Mr. Barber accepted Mr. Mattson’s original sketch which he has greatly improved.”¹¹³ Barber’s critique of Mattson’s initial attempt was the building was “too high” and the “central chimney was awkward, both in plan and elevation, as well as being contrary to custom in these parts.”¹¹⁴ Barber suggested two chimneys positioned at the ends of the main block, which better reflected local building traditions. One would carry the flue for the fireplace in the lobby and the other would be a “false” one to create a balanced design. Eakin also noted that Barber and Mattson’s collaboration resulted in a slightly larger building with the “offices somewhat rearranged.”¹¹⁵ In contrast to Peterson’s grand statement, Barber’s involvement “has succeeded, we think, in giving the feeling of a large mountain cabin.”¹¹⁶ By early November 1938, the design of the new headquarters building was more or less complete. In a true collaborative effort, Frank Mattson and the Branch of Plans and Design worked with Superintendent Eakin and Charles I. Barber to create a design that was both functional and architecturally appropriate to the park’s region.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

- 1. Architectural character:** The headquarters building is a stone Colonial Revival edifice with two distinct faces. The public side of the building has a relatively low profile and is domestic in character. The one-and-one-half story center pavilion with end chimneys and a broad front porch with a roof held up by simple square posts most strongly addresses the vernacular domestic forms of the region. This pavilion is connected to flanking gable-fronted end pavilions by setback hyphens. While the overall effect of this organization is decidedly domestic, the building’s formal five-part arrangement, its scale, and the masonry exterior walls both demonstrate the flexibility of sources and inspiration in Colonial Revival design and also suggests that the building serves a non-domestic function.

The full extent of the building is evident in the back, where a declining grade change results in a significantly raised basement and shed dormers indicate space for offices on the upper level. The five-part massing of the building at the front is not replicated at the back where the end pavilions step beyond a continuous rear

¹¹³ Eakin to Cammerer, 31 Oct. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

¹¹⁴ Barber to Cammerer, 4 Nov. 1938, Folder 620, Box 1132, Entry 9, RG 79, NARA.

¹¹⁵ Eakin to Cammerer, 31 Oct. 1938.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

wall, resulting in a U-shaped arrangement having a more unified and institutional character.

2. **Condition of fabric:** Very good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** approximately 64' x 162'
2. **Foundations:** Poured concrete foundations faced in stone above grade.
3. **Walls:** The exterior walls of the principal story are primarily composed of load-bearing random ashlar masonry featuring blocks with rusticated faces.
4. **Structural systems:** The building is robustly constructed.¹¹⁷ The walls throughout are reinforced concrete or load-bearing stone blocks, backed in hollow clay tile blocks on the principal story and rubble stone on the upper level of the center pavilion. Steel I-beams laid at regular intervals provide support for the concrete decks on the principal and upper stories. These beams are primarily carried by the exterior walls, although four steel posts positioned in the back (north) wall of the lobby provide additional support in that portion of the building.
5. **Openings (doorways, doors, and windows):**

General: All of the windows on the principal and basement stories feature lintels and sills composed of a single slab of stone. Except for the six windows in the hyphens on the front façade and two narrow casement windows on the rear façade, all of the windows on the principal story are identical twelve-over-twelve, double hung units. Narrow operable louvered shutters embellish all of the windows on the front façade, but do not appear elsewhere on the building. The windows on the basement story vary in size because of the grade drop from front to back.

Front Façade (South Elevation; five-part composition): The front façade is bilaterally symmetrical and its mass is organized in a five-part Palladian form. A porch extends across the center pavilion and its roof kicks out slightly from the main roof plane. Six square posts painted white support the front of the porch roof and define five equal sized bays. The center bay frames the main entry, which features paneled double doors topped by a simple rectangular transom with six fixed lights. Two lanterns hang from the wall on either side of the door. The entrance is flanked by pairs of windows. The hyphens connecting with the end pavilions each feature three windows having reduced dimensions from those

¹¹⁷ An excellent collection of photographs documents the construction of the building. See: Folder—"Headquarters Building Construction," File Box number 80235, Sugarlands Structures Reports, GRSM Library.

elsewhere on the façade. Most of these contain the original six-over-nine double-hung sash. Two windows are located at the front of each of the end pavilions and ventilating louvers screened on the exterior with narrow slabs of stone are positioned near the peak of their gables. There are four stone wells that contain pairs of openings, one well is centered on the wall of both hyphens and both end pavilions. Most of the openings are fitted with a single, eight-light sash hinged to vent open. The pair in the well positioned at the west hyphen opens onto a mechanical room and no longer contains sash.

East and West End Pavilions: The side walls of the end pavilions have an identical organization of windows from front to back. There are six vertical bays with one large double-hung window used elsewhere on the principal story placed above a smaller one in the wall of the partially the raised basement. Stone retaining walls extend out from the building in line with the front wall plane of the end pavilions. These allow the grade to drop two to three feet, eliminating the need for areaways to accommodate the basement windows. The four windows nearest the retaining walls on both walls contain a single sash with eight fixed lights hinged to vent open. A gentle decline in the grade toward the back of the building below the retaining wall allows for larger openings fitted with eight-over-eight double-hung windows in the two bays nearest the back of the end pavilions. The same type of windows are located in pairs in the rear walls of the end pavilions and one each in the short segments of wall facing into the U-shaped court.

Rear Façade (North; center pavilion and hyphens): Aside from slight differences in door and window placement in west hyphen, the rear facade is largely symmetrical and has a generally ordered arrangement of vertical bays. The center pavilion is fully symmetrical and arranged in four vertical bays. The four windows on the basement level are the same size and type as those on the principal story, an increase in dimensions over the other basement level windows made possible because of a gently sloping sunken lawn extending between the building and the parking area. A narrow casement window on the principal story is situated between the middle bays of the center pavilion. The roof of the center pavilion is pierced on the upper level by a continuous shed dormer centered between the two end chimneys/stacks. Three pairs of six-over-six double-hung windows are set into the slate-clad wall dormer wall, which is visually separated into thirds by downspouts.

The openings in the rear of the hyphens, which on this elevation share a continuous wall with the center pavilion, are not mirror images of each other. The east hyphen contains three aligned vertical bays, while the west hyphen has a more ad-hoc arrangement of openings.

The east hyphen is the more regular of the two having two vertical bays of windows nearest the east end pavilion and two doors placed one over the other in

the bay nearest the center pavilion. The basement level door is not apparent in elevation as it is located behind the stairs and under the stoop providing access to the upper door. The basement door can only be accessed from the sunken lawn behind the center pavilion that is defined on the east by a retaining wall integrated with the stair. This limited access may have been an accidental outcome or possibly something more deliberate to direct most foot traffic up to the door on the principal story. The upper and lower doors in the east hyphen open onto short hallways that lead to the major east-west circulation routes on each floor.

The west hyphen lacks the clear vertical bays that characterize the rest building because of interior room arrangements as well as the function and unfinished state of the west hyphen and west pavilion on the basement level at the time the building was occupied. A second external stair providing access to the principal story is located near the west pavilion and connects to a short hallway. This location allowed what was intended to be the chief clerk's office to be part of an office suite running behind the lobby and connected by interior doors. The large window next to this exterior door opens into the original chief clerk's office and the nearby narrow casement window provides light and ventilation to an adjacent toilet room. This casement window is not aligned squarely over the door on the basement level. A descending exterior stair located between the west pavilion and the ascending exterior stair provides access to a door into the basement of the west pavilion. A coal chute door, no longer in use, is positioned in the west hyphen between the basement door and stairs up to the main level.

The two doors on in the east hyphen (upper and lower), two in the west hyphen (upper and lower), and one in the west end pavilion (lower) have a "cross-and-bible" arrangement of panels common to Colonial Revival design and are topped by simple rectangular transoms with four fixed lights.

- 6. Roof:** The roof is framed with steel beams, which carry concrete panels sheathed in slates. The kicked segment of roof over the front porch was separately framed as the porch stands entirely outside the masonry structure. The roof kick at the rear is within the building envelope and is an integrated part of the roof and wall structure.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Plan:** The building footprint is an irregular H. All three floors contain a single dominant double-loaded corridor running east-west. The corridor runs from end pavilion to end pavilion on the basement and principal stories, although its course is implied on the main level where it passes through and becomes contiguous with the lobby. On the upper level, the passage is limited to just the area in the center pavilion. The rooms above the hyphens do not open onto this corridor, but rather through offices or a small jogged passage leading to the stair. On the basement

and principal stories, short hallways running perpendicular to the main corridor provide access to rooms in the end pavilions and to the building's rear doors

2. **Flooring:** The floor decks are reinforced concrete. On the principal story, slabs of polished sandstone are set on the concrete deck in the lobby. Elsewhere on this level, the floors are covered with wall-to-wall carpeting. The flooring on the upper level and in the basement is predominately asphalt tile or carpet. The interior stairs up to the upper level and down to the basement have steel treads, risers, and balustrades.
3. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Plaster ceilings and walls are the standard finish throughout the first floor and the rooms in the basement of the east pavilion that were finished at the time the building was originally occupied. The walls of the large entrance lobby are fully paneled in wormy chestnut. The ceiling is plastered and divided into sections by steel support beams that have been cased and plastered over. The two offices at center behind the lobby each have a single wall paneled in wormy chestnut. In general, upper level and basement level rooms and offices completed after the initial construction have paneled walls and acoustic tiles on the ceiling.
4. **Doorways and doors:** Most of the interior doors installed during the original construction have a "cross-and-bible" arrangement of six panels common for Colonial Revival buildings and are painted white. Pairs of closet doors visible in some rooms on the principal story feature three panels each, similar to the arrangement on the front entrance doors. Light hollow core interior doors with no panels, known as "flush," appear in the parts of the building finished after the initial construction.
5. **Trim and woodwork:** Simple, but elegant architrave molding, toe molding, and crown molding common to buildings of the period is evident throughout the principal story and, except for the two offices on center behind the lobby, is painted white. The later door openings have architrave molding of the most minimal type, featuring a single, concave return and no other embellishment.

The Colonial Revival lobby has the most opulent interior finish. It is fully paneled with beaded planks laid horizontally and divided into lower and upper portions by a molded chair rail. The chair rail is interrupted only by the doorways and windows framed by architrave molding having a profile common to many late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century buildings composed of an ogee, backband, and beading. The four front windows are further embellished with molding below the deep sills that suggest panels. A large fireplace with a decorative wood mantel and surround, and faced in soapstone, is the focus on the west side of the lobby. All of the woodwork was created from wormy chestnut.

6. **Mechanical:** The building was wired for electric, plumbed for water and sewer, and heated from the time of construction. These utilities and mechanical systems have all been upgraded over time, and fluorescent light fixtures and forced air heating and cooling introduced throughout the building.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library (GRSM), Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Four groupings of records provided much of the essential information about the design, construction, and changes to the Administration Building. Specific sources within these groups that provided a high degree of insight and understanding are called out individually in the list of selected sources.

Superintendent's Monthly Reports. 1936-40.

"Design & Construction," I-12, Headquarters Building (folder)

"Sugarlands Structures Reports, 2 of 2" (box)

 "Building No. 231: Park Headquarters" (folder)

 "Headquarters Building Construction" (folder, construction photographs)

Land Acquisitions, III-17, Bruce Keener (folder)

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland

Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service

Within this record group, records related to Great Smoky Mountains National Park under "Central Files, 1907-39" (Entry 9) were most useful. These boxes and folders included a limited range of correspondence about the location, design, and construction of the administration building as well as records about Superintendent Eakin's earliest "Development Outline" for the park. The "Branch of Plans and Design, Monthly Narrative Reports, 1936-38" also contained useful information. The Cartographic and Architectural Section of NARA holds oversize and graphic materials related to the park's master plan as it was finalized ca. 1937-38.

The Technical Information Center, National Park Service, Denver Service Center (ETIC)

This database provides on-line access to a variety of drawings, maps, and other graphic materials. It can be accessed at: <http://etic.nps.gov/>

Selected Primary and Secondary Sources

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Visuals

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National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Region I. "Garages for Govt. Autos, Administration Area." 11 Apr. 1940. ETIC.

National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Region I. "Garages for Government Autos, Administration Area." 29 Mar. 1940. ETIC.

National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Region I. "Grading Plan." 18 Nov. 1939. ETIC.

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PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

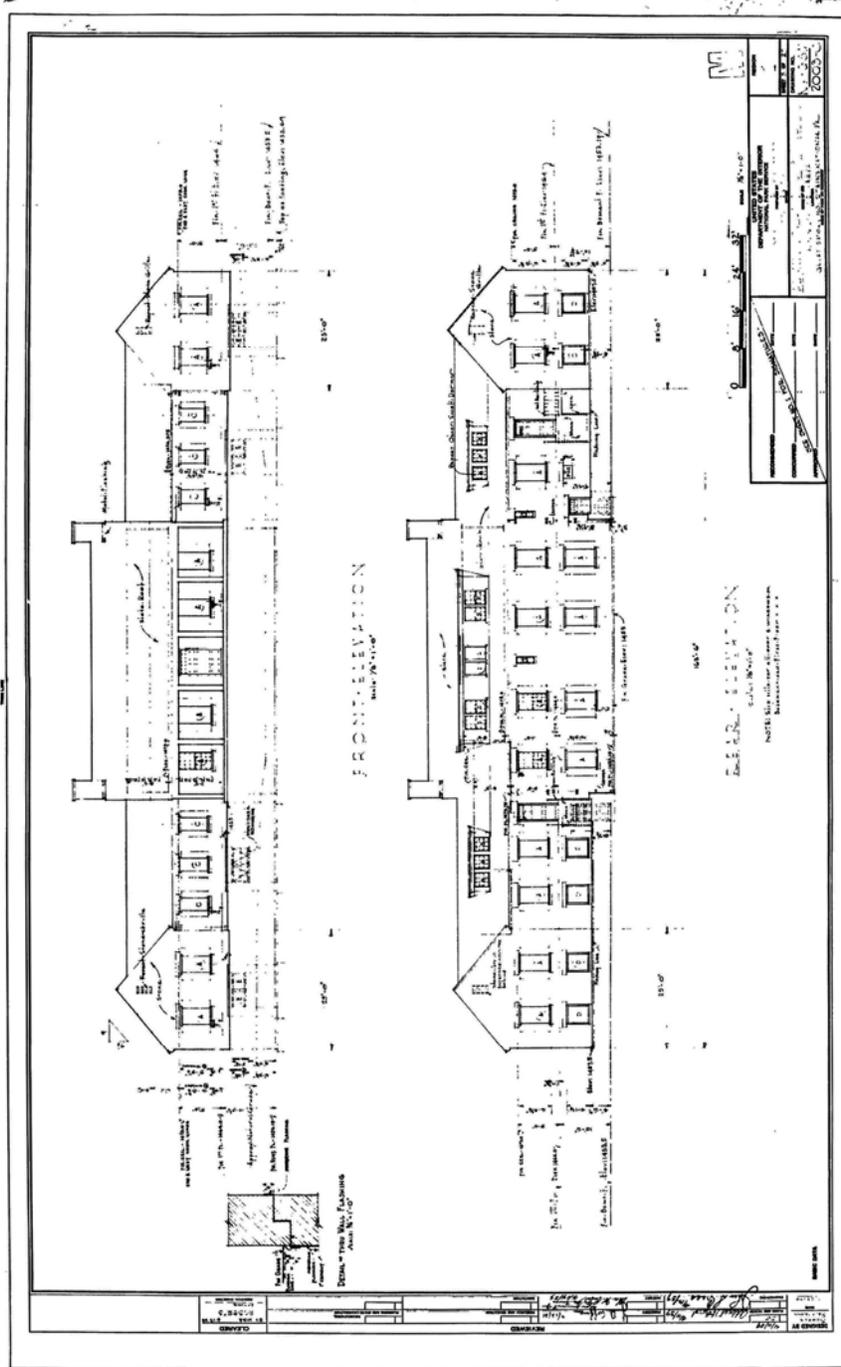
The recording of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Administration Building was co-sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, both of the National Park Service. Support provided by Erik S. Kreuzsch, Supervisory Archaeologist and Cultural Resources Program Manager, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The documentation was undertaken in 2011-12 by HABS under the direction of Richard O'Connor, Chief of Heritage Documentation Programs, and Catherine C. Lavoie, Chief of HABS. The project historian was James A. Jacobs and HABS photographer James Rosenthal produced the large-format photographs.

APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS



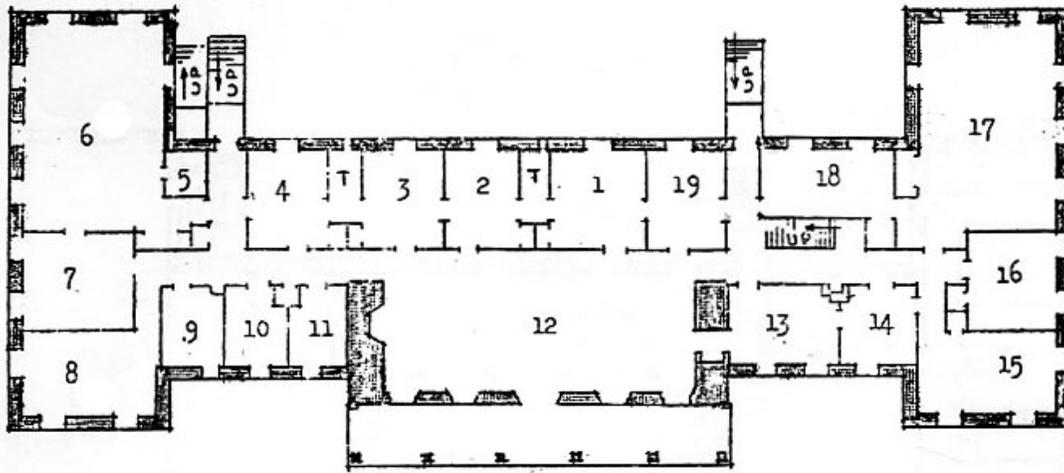
National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, "Administration Area Part of the Master Plan for Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 1937, ETIC. This detail shows the relationship of the planned intersection of the Newfound Gap Road and Fighting Creek Gap Road, the administration building, and the anticipated museum.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
HABS No. TN-256 (Page 43)



Front (south) and rear (north) elevations of the administration building, April 1939, ETIC.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
HABS No. TN-256 (Page 44)



MAIN FLOOR
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

25'
Scale

INDEX

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 - Superintendent | 10 - Women |
| 2 - Secretary | 11 - Men |
| 3 - Assistant Superintendent
(currently--Wildlife and Forestry) | 12 - Lobby and Information Center |
| 4 - Chief Clerk | 13 - Rangers |
| 5 - Vault | 14 - Rangers |
| 6 - Clerical Office | 15 - Commissioner
(currently--Land Acquisition) |
| 7 - Files | 16 - Landscape Architect |
| 8 - Naturalist | 17 - Drafting Room |
| 9 - Mail and Mimeograph | 18 - Engineer |
| | 19 - Conference Room |

A schematic plan of the main floor of the administration building appended to the August 12, 1940 superintendent's report. The plan includes a key locating the offices of various park personnel. GRSM Library.