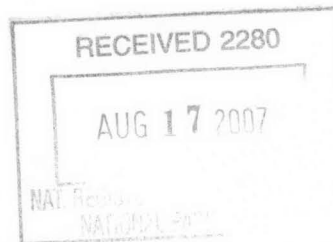


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



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

1. Name of Property

historic name Mills Cemetery

other names/site number LR0086

2. Location

street & number County Road 40, approximately 1/8 mile West of Hwy 71 N

☐ not for publication

city or town Wilton

☒ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Little River code 081 zip code 71865

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Cathie Tharion  
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/31/07  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National  
Register.

☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

9-27-07

Mills Cemetery  
Name of Property

Little River County, Arkansas  
County and State

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
walls N/A  
roof N/A  
other STONE: Granite  
CONCRETE

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)  
See attached sheet

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

### SUMMARY

The Mills Cemetery, which consists of 39 recorded and marked graves, is located roughly two miles north of Wilton, Little River County, Arkansas. The cemetery sits on the upward part of a three and a half acre tract of land that is set aside for burial use. The rest of the cemetery slopes downward and is lower with the majority of the land being flat. Trees and vegetation mark the western and northern boundaries, the eastern boundary is marked by a field, while County Road 40 marks the southern boundary. Concrete coping, about six inches in width, encircles some of the graves dating from the 1950s forward.

### ELABORATION

The Mills Cemetery is located on County Road 40, approximately 1/8 of a mile west of Highway 71 North in Little River County, outside of Wilton, Arkansas. A barbed wire fence, covered with vines and greenery, surrounds three sides of the cemetery at this time. There are purple Iris that bloom in the Spring months around the entrance and front side, as well as along the back and west sides of the cemetery. One of the Mills descendants, *Annie Laurie Mills Beverly (1903 – 1986)*, planted the flowers. She is buried in this cemetery.

The entrance to the cemetery is marked by a large, century-old, pine tree that sits slightly to the left of the drive that leads into the cemetery. As one proceeds north on the drive into the cemetery, a gigantic old dead oak tree that is at least 100 years old can be seen near the western edge of the fence line. The tree is dying and its once huge, strong and stately limbs have turned downwards towards the ground and are returning to nature. Here, *Phoebe Mills (1810 – 1885)* is buried with a headstone and foot marker marking her grave site. The grave is covered with green, leafy vegetation.

### BREAKDOWN OF BURIALS BY DECADE

Of the 39 marked burials in the Mills Cemetery, 33, or 84.6%, are historic, pre-dating 1957. Six burials, or 15.4%, are non-historic. Few burials will occur in the Mills Cemetery in the future, but not enough to detrimentally alter or shift the contributing/non-contributing burial ratio.

#### *Historic Burials*

1855 – 1864 -2  
1865 – 1874 -4  
1875 – 1884 -4  
1885 – 1894 -1  
1895 – 1904 -3  
1905 – 1914 -3

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### *Historic Burials, continued*

1915 – 1924 -3  
1925 – 1934 -1  
1935 – 1944 -5  
1945 – 1954 -4  
1955 – 1957 -3

### *Non-Historic Burials*

1958 – 1959 -1  
1960 – 1969 -0  
1970 – 1979 -1  
1980 – 1989 -2  
1990 – 1999 -2  
2007 – 2007 -0

### LANDSCAPE DESIGN

A dirt and grass drive leads the way into Mills Cemetery from County Road 40. As you turn in, you almost touch the large old pine tree on the left. Next you see the Mills Cemetery sign, which has recently been relocated and attached to new posts, as the old posts were made of wood, and rotting. As you continue up the slightly inclined road, located ahead is a smaller pine tree with a plethora of purple iris flowers planted all around the bottom of the tree, as is a hearty mix of grass. You will now be at the base of the concrete coping that encircles many of the graves. From the appearance of the Mills Cemetery, and from Mills family oral history, the burials began with the oldest burials on the west side of the cemetery, moving to the east as the burials occurred through the years. The graves are in rows and stay within a rather uniform line of order. At the time that it was established, the Mills Cemetery was simply a small family cemetery located near the old Mills homestead and not far from the Mills Ferry that *Joel Mills I (1808 – 1871)* operated. The Mills family buried here at the cemetery is in close proximity to the relatives as they were related. There are some burials that are not blood relation, and those have been kept either to a corner or on the outside part of the family burial sites. One such burial is *Owen Patty (1826 – 1899)*, who worked at Mills Ferry on Little River.

### GRAVE MARKERS AND MONUMENTS

The markers all face east. Most of the older markers are broken and cracked with many sinking deeply into the ground. There are roughly six stately markers that tower over the other, smaller, markers in the cemetery. The inscriptions on many gravestones have been obscured by age and the elements. As mentioned earlier,



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this cemetery houses mostly the Mills family and descendants. The Mills family moved into Little River County, Arkansas, in the fall of 1850, with Joel Mills I being the first to move to the state. The first marked burial in the cemetery is that of Mary Meca Mills (1852 – 1855), the second daughter born to Kitura and Joel Mills I.

The tombstone inscriptions in the Mills Cemetery are touching and interesting.

### *Joel Mills I (1808 – 1871)*

This marble, tab in socket marker, with its original pointed arch form encased in six inches of concrete to form a rectangular marker, has the word “FAREWELL” inscribed above a circle which contains two clasped hands. The name “Kitury” is inscribed above the clasped hands. Below the relief is the inscription, “JOEL MILLS/ BORN/ in Halifax Co., Va./Sept. 15, 1808/DIED/ Oct. 23, 1871.” The repair work was done at an unknown time. Though not sympathetic in design or materials, the repair work has prevented the monument from collapsing and deteriorating further. This marker has sunken into the ground roughly eight inches.

### *Catherine Kitura Burke Bird Mills (1818 – 1875)*

The wife of Joel Mills I, Kitura Mills’ stone is similar to her husbands in material, form, and funerary art. This segmented arch, tab in socket marker is crafted of marble. Like Joel Mills’ marker, Kitura’s has also had a small concrete frame added to its perimeter to keep it from falling apart. This marker has the word “FAREWELL” inscribed above a circle which contains two clasped hands. Below the relief is the inscription “KITURA B./Wife of/JOEL MILLS./BORN/Jan. 15, 1818./DIED/Oct. 14, 1875.” The following verse is inscribed close to the base of the marker: *Hard it is from thee to part/Though it rend my aching heart/Since an heir to glory’s gone/Let the will of God be done.* About four inches of this marker has sunken into the ground.

### *Amelia Mills Wright Lawrence (1838 – 1871)*

The marker of the first born daughter of Kitura and Joel Mills I, is topped with a rectangular arch, and surrounded by roughly four inches of concrete on the top and sides. About half of the marker has sunken into the ground, with only “AMELIA/Daughter of/J & K MILLS/BORN/July 9, 1838/DIED” still visible. Photographs dating to 1999 reveal that the rest of the inscription reads “October 30, 1871.” The following verse, located at the bottom of the marker, which is under the earth, reads: *Hard it is from thee to part/Though it rend my aching heart/Since an heir to glory’s gone/Let the will of God be done.* This is the same verse on her mother’s marker.

### *George Winfield Mills (1849 – 1878)*

This marble, segmented arch, tab in socket marker is encased in six inches of concrete to form a rectangular marker. The Masonic chain, in this case a broken one, decorates the upper half of the marker. “G.W. MILLS/BORN/Feb. 7, 1849/DIED/Feb. 16, 1878” is inscribed on the bottom portion of the marker. A verse is inscribed on the very bottom of the front face of the marker, however, because the marker has sunken several

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inches into the ground, the verse is hard to see and read. A crack incises the marker from the mid point on the left side to a slightly lower point on the right side.

### *Mary Meca Mills (1852 – 1855)*

The tab-in-socket monument is topped with a rectangular arch. Made of marble, the name “MARY MECA” is set in raised block letters in an arch at the top portion of the marker. The inscription of the stone reads as follows: dau of J & K MILLS/BORN/ November 24, 1852/DIED/March 16, 1855. Towards the bottom of the marker, the verse, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not” is inscribed.

### *Phoebe Mills (1810 – 1885)*

Underneath a stately, but dead oak tree, and south of the main graves, is the grave of Phoebe Mills. The marble, segmented marker reads, “PHOEBE MILLS/BORN/in Richmond, Va./DIED/March 10, 1885.” Above the raised lettering of her name is a laurel wreath. This marker has sunken into the ground a foot, or so. A foot marker, with her initials (P.M.), is situated at the foot of the grave. Phoebe was enslaved by Joel Mills I.

### *Seargent S. Prentiss Mills (1844 – 1912) and Catherine Rebecca McCord Mills (1846 – 1916)*

The oldest son of Kitura and Joel Mills I, Seargent and his wife, Rebecca, share a double monument. “FATHER” is noted on the pointed arch above Seargent’s name, and “MOTHER” noted on the pointed arch above Catherine’s name. “Mills” is declared in the center of the base of the die-on-base marble monument. “SEARGENT S/PRENTISS/ DEC. 9, 1844/JULY 26, 1912” is inscribed on the left half of the monument, while “CATHERINE/ REBECCA/JULY 1846/FEB. 10, 1916” is inscribed on the right half.

### *Henry S. Mills (1878 – 1895)*

The fourth child born to Seargent and Catherine Mills, Henry’s monument is one of the most ornate in the Mills Cemetery. The marble, die on base marker has a rectangular top, with the name “Mills” set in raised letters in the center of the sculpted mid-level base. The top portion of the monument is very heavily decorated with flora and fauna relief art work, with the following raised lettering located at the center of the upright: HENRY S./ SON OF/ S.S.P. & C.R./ MILLS/ BORN DEC. 25, 1878/ DIED NOV. 11, 1895.

At the foot of Seargent and Catherine’s graves is buried their son, *Joel Mills II (1876 – 1952)*, and his wife, *Mary Florence Mills (1878 – 1950)*. This double monument is a replica of Seargent and Catherine’s. There are two exceptions: A Masonic compass is carved over Joel Mills II’s name, just below the pointed arch with “Father” noted in raised lettering, and the Eastern Star is carved over Mary Florence Mills’ name, just below the pointed arch with “Mother” noted in raised lettering. The left half of the monument reads “JOEL MILLS II/OCT. 22, 1876/MAY. 5, 1952,” while the right half of the monument reads “MARY FLORENCE MILLS/MAR. 5, 1878/JAN. 16, 1950.”

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### *Winfield Scott Mills (1899 – 1935)*

This tall, marble, Veterans' tombstone is very simple in design. The stone is topped with a segmented arch, with a cross at the top of the facing surface of the stone, just above his name. The stones reads "WINFIELD/SCOTT/MILLS/ARKANSAS/PVT: 109 M. C. EN./ 25 DIV./NOVEMBER 12, 1899/AUGUST 24, 1935." The words "Asleep in Jesus" are inscribed on the marker below his birth and death information, and the Masonic compass decorates the stone, a foot or so, above the earth. He is the son of Catherine and Joel Mills II.

### *S. S. Prentiss Mills (1906 – 1955)*

This former mayor of Wilton has a fairly simple, typical mid-20<sup>th</sup> century monument. Made of polished granite with minimal decorative etching, the die-on-base stone simple reads "S.S.PRENTISS MILLS/SEPT. 14, 1906/OCT. 9, 1955."

### *Owen W. Patty (1826 – 1899)*

In the Eastern corner of the cemetery lays Owen W. Patty. He ran the Joel Mills I-owned ferry across Little River, close to Wilton, during his lifetime. Patty's marker is a marble, tab-in-socket marker, with a *Cyma recta* shaped form on top. A hand with the index finger raised and pointing towards Heaven decorates the upper portion of the facing side of the marker. With the exception of the name, the inscription on the marker is intelligible, as weather and the elements have not been kind through time. Concrete brackets, about a foot tall and four inches thick, have been applied to the bottom of the marker to provide stability and to prevent the marker from falling over.

There are two marble commemorative markers in the Mills Cemetery for family members buried in other cemeteries. One raised-top marker is inscribed with the words "IN MEMORY OF LOVED/ONES BURIED IN SYKES/ CEMETERY RICHMOND, ARK.," while the other marker is inscribed with the words "IN MEMORY OF LOVED/ONES BURIED IN MCCORD/CEMETERY." This second commemorative marker is also a raised-top marker.

Other monument forms in the cemetery include: tab-in-socket with discoid arch, rectangular arch tab-in-socket, plaque markers; and pedestal tomb-vaulted roof markers.

The oldest markers are closest to the western-most boundary of the cemetery, and these markers, as with all other markers in the cemetery, face east. The generations to follow are buried to the east of the original graves, with children seemingly buried at the foot of each set of parents.

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### INTEGRITY

The Mills Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in Little River County, and interred herein are several of the first settlers in the Wilton area, and Little River County. Its location in the outskirts of Wilton, in a rural area that was near Joel Mills I's homestead, and near the Mills Ferry that he operated on Little River, illustrates the elements of integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. This area is commonly referred to as "Red Hill" due to the red clay in the ground. The design and layout of the cemetery is the same as it was when it was first established with the first burial dating to 1855. Although footstones for several of those interred have been knocked and broken by those mowing the cemetery, the materials and workmanship of the markers and monuments retains good integrity.

**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☒ **C** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☒ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Levels of Significance** (local, state, national)

LOCAL

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

**Period of Significance**

1855 – 1890

**Significant Dates**

1855 – 1890

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Joel Mills

**Cultural Affiliation** (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Family records \_\_\_\_\_



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## SUMMARY

Located in the Wilton vicinity, the Mills Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in Little River County, Arkansas. Interred herein are several of the first settlers of Little River County. The first people buried in this cemetery were members of the Mills family, who early in the 1850s helped explore and settle Little River County and more specifically the towns of Richmond and Wilton.

Several war veterans are interred in the cemetery as well: Joel Mills I fought for Texas Independence; his son, S.S.P. Mills, fought in the Civil War; a grandson, Winfield S. Mills, died as a result of being gassed in France during World War I.

Later burials in this cemetery are those of relatives and family who contributed to Little River County in other business and educational aspects. Mills Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance** because it contains the graves of many men and women who played prominent roles in the settlement of Little River County and the Wilton area. The property is eligible for inclusion under **Criterion B** because it is the final resting place of Joel Mills I, and because there are no other extant properties directly related to his productive life. The Mills Cemetery is eligible under **Criteria Consideration C**, as the grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance, as there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with the productive life of Joel Mills I. Lastly, the cemetery is eligible under **Criteria Consideration D**, as the cemetery derives its primary significance from the graves of persons of transcendent importance, from the age of the burials, and from the association with historic events such as the exploration and settlement of the Wilton area.

## ELABORATION

### *Community and County History*

Little River County was organized March 5, 1867, by an act of the State Legislature of Arkansas. The Little River is on the North side of this county. It is bounded north by Sevier and Howard Counties, east by Hempstead, south by Lafayette County, Arkansas and Bowie County, Texas, and west by Oklahoma State.

The City of Wilton began with a few pioneers whose purpose was chiefly the homesteading of choice and fertile lands. It was originally called Millkin in honor of S.S.P. Mills and P.S. Kinsworthy, merchants who owned the land on which the town was settled in 1890. However, Millkin became known as Wilton on July 1, 1892, in honor of a stockholder of the Texarkana and Fort Smith railroad whose home was Wilton, England.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### *Cemetery History*

Mills Cemetery was near the homestead of Joel Mills I, who moved to this county in the fall of 1850. It began as a family cemetery and is still used today as a family cemetery. The burials date as far back as 1863, and span through the year 2006.

### SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THOSE BURIED IN THE MILLS CEMETERY

#### **Joel Mills (1808-1871)**

Joel Mills I was born in Halifax County, Virginia, on September 15, 1808, and died in Little River County, Arkansas, on October 23, 1871. His family Bible that he kept is on file in the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Joel Mills' father was James Mills, who married Milcah Street on November 7, 1804, in Halifax County, Virginia. Joel Mills' grandfather was John Mills, born around 1754 in Halifax County, Virginia, and died in 1818 in Halifax County, Virginia. John Mills was married in the fall of 1772 in Henrico County, Virginia, to Sarah (maiden name unknown). She was born in 1754 and died on June 20, 1848 in Virginia. John Mills was a Lieutenant in the 1st Virginia Regiment of the American Revolution. Sarah applied for a pension but died before it was paid. Therefore, it went to the six surviving children: James Mills, John Mills, Jr., Samuel Mills, Hezekiah Mills, Elizabeth Mills Harper and Nancy Mills Tuck.

In 1836, Joel Mills married Catherine Kitura Burke Bird near Lexington, Henderson County, Tennessee. She was born in Orange County, North Carolina, on June 15, 1818, and died on October 14, 1875. She was the daughter of David Bird and his wife, Catherine Kitura Priddy Bird, who had married in Halifax County, Virginia. The Priddy family had a large farm in Henderson County, Tennessee, and Catherine Kitura is a descendant of Thomas Priddy of Virginia, who fought in the American Revolution. A great-great-granddaughter was admitted to the Daughters of the American Revolution based on this family line. Catherine Kitura is also the descendant of Cornelius Empson of New Castle, Delaware, who was a documented and verified land owner prior to 1701. Also, a great-great-granddaughter was approved for membership into the Colonial Dames of the XVII Century based on this ancestor.

By 1837, Joel Mills and Catherine Kitura Burke Bird Mills had moved to Yalobusha County, Mississippi, and in 1850, Joel Mills and Kitura (as she was commonly known) were living in Yalobusha County, Mississippi, north of the Yalobusha River. Listed in the census were: Joel, 42-year old planter born in Virginia; Kitura 32-year old born in Virginia; and the following children: Amelia, 12; Josephine, 9; Prentiss, 6; Winfred, 2; and Sarah, 6 ½ ; all born in Mississippi.

Soon after the 1850 census, Joel Mills moved his family from Mississippi to a large plantation near Wilton, Arkansas, which at that time was in Sevier County. From the county records, we learn that he was a ferry

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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owner and the plantation was the center of much activity. His home was on what is referred to as "Red Hill," not far from the Little River.

His grandson, Curry Wright, wrote, "My Grandfather, Captain Joel Mills, was a great boatman, built steam boats and sailed on the Guadalupe River (in Texas). He was one of the most prominent men in the county and was one of three men chosen to locate the geographical center of Little River County."

In 1860, Joel and Kitura Mills were listed in the census as living in Richmond, Red River Township, Sevier County, Arkansas, with their children; Josephine 18, Prentiss 15, George Winfield 11 and Napoleon 5, the only one of the children born in Arkansas. Joel is listed as a farmer with real estate valued at \$5000 and personal estate valued at \$10,000. The slave schedule of 1860 listed five slaves, a 50-year old female, a 20-year old male (listed as a fugitive from the state), an 18-year old male, a 12-year old female, and a 10-year old male, and one slave house. The oldest female, Phoebe Mills, was buried in the Mills Cemetery with the Mills family and her tombstone states that she was born in Richmond, Virginia, and died March 10, 1885.

It appears that Ransom was Phoebe's son, and that they had lived with Joel Mills or his son, S.S.P. Mills, all of their lives.

Sevier County records tell us that Joel Mills was a ferry owner in 1853, through at least January 1869, at which time he was charged \$12.50 for his fee for his ferry on Little River near his domicile

In 1870, in Rocky Comfort, Lick Creek Township, Little River County, Arkansas, Joel Mills, age 61, was listed as having \$325 worth of real estate and \$200 worth of personal estate. With the emancipation of the slaves, the value of Joel's personal estate decreased dramatically. Prior to the 1870 Census, Joel Mills was listed in the 1860 Sevier County Arkansas Slave Index as owning five slaves.

An article in *The Little River News*, January 31, 1934, "Reminiscences of Mrs. J.D. Freeman" reads:

My grandfather, Captain Joel Mills, who had served in the Mexican War, came to this county in the fall of 1851 and settled what is known as Mill's Ferry, one half mile this side of the present steel bridge. Besides his home, he had a flourmill, gristmill, cotton gin, bolting chest, black smith shop and general store.

An article in the *Little River News*, dated January 20, 1932, states:

In 1864, an expedition from this section, headed by Mr. Mills, set out for Mexico with wagons loaded with cotton to exchange for necessities and luxuries. Mr. McCrary's grandfather was in the expedition, which required six months to make the trip to and from Mexico City. There were no well-defined roads in those days, and no bridges. When the troop came to a river which was up, it

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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was necessary for them to camp until it went down. At last the trip was over, and among the things brought back were sugar, coffee, bolting cloth, and other things.

There were no railroads in southern Arkansas in those days and very few anywhere. What people didn't make or raise was brought by boat from Shreveport (Louisiana) or New Orleans. Grandfather (Joel Mills I) would have his Negroes build a keel boat during the winter, then when cotton was ginned and marked, it was put on the keel boat and floated down Little River into Red River and on down to Shreveport where it was sold. The keelboat was sold, too, and barrels of sugar, coffee, rice, iron utensils for cooking and other things were brought back on the steamboat, which had a landing at the steep bluff just below the steel bridge.

Things people now consider absolute necessities were unknown in those days. I remember well the first cook stoves ever brought to this part of the country. I was eleven years old. Grandfather (Mills) brought several on the boat. I don't remember all who bought one at that time but my father-in-law, William Madison Freeman, Mark and Eph Payton of Peytonville and Grandfather (Mills) were among the number. Those stoves were considered with more wonder than an aeroplane was a few years ago.

Joel Mills I and Catherine Kitura "Kittie" Bird Mills had the following children;

1. Amelia, born July 29, 1838, died October 30, 1871.
2. Josephine, born September 12, 1841, died January 15, 1866.
3. Sargent S. Prentiss, born December 9, 1844, died July 25, 1912.
4. George Winfield, born February 9, 1849, died February 16, 1878.
5. Sarah, born May 1850, died before 1860.
6. Mary Meca, born November 24, 1852, died March 16, 1855.
7. Napoleon Bonaparte, born January 25, 1855, died March 15, 1872.

### **Catherine Kitura Burke Bird Mills (1818-1875)**

Born in Orange County, North Carolina on June 15, 1818, and died on October 14, 1875, in Little River County, Arkansas, she was the daughter of David Bird and his wife, Catherine Kitura Priddy Bird, who had married in Halifax County, VA. She married Joel Mills on June 15, 1818, near Lexington, Henderson County, Tennessee, on the Bird farm. They had 8 children: Amelia, Josephine, Sargent S. Prentiss, George Winfield, Sarah, Mary Meca, Napoleon Bonaparte and Kate Mills. Catherine Kitura Mills was also called Kittie. According to the *Centennial History of Arkansas*, on page 1047, she was described as:

A woman of marked literary attainments, who was conversant with and well informed upon current events of the times, keeping particularly posted concerning all the political issues of the day. She was an admirer of Sargent Smith Prentiss, the Mississippi orator, in whose honor her eldest son was named.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

### **Amelia Mills Wright Lawrence (1838-1871)**

Born July 9, 1838, in Mississippi and died October 30, 1871, in Little River County, she was the daughter of Joel and Catherine Kitura Burke Bird Mills. Her marriage to James Monroe Wright, son of James Wright and Rebecca Ward Wright, on October 4, 1855, at the home of Joel Mills in Sevier County, ended when her husband was killed in the Civil War after fighting in the Battle of Shiloh. He died in Corinth, Mississippi. They had the following children: Charles H., Mecha Catherine and Curry Willard Wright. Her second marriage was to John Ben Lawrence on July 29, 1863, and resulted in two children, Ida Ann and Robert L. This marriage ended in her death at age 33.

### **Josephine Mills (1841-1866)**

Born to Joel and Catherine Kitura "Kittie" Burke Bird in Mississippi on September 27, 1841, and died on January 13, 1866, in Little River County.

### **S. S. P. Mills (1844-1912)**

Born in Yalobusha County, Mississippi, on December 9, 1844, to Joel and Kitura Burk Bird Mills, he married Katherine Rebecca McCord, on January 17, 1867, in Little River County, Arkansas. They were the parents of five children, Amelia Mills Sykes, Ada Mills, Joel Mills II, Henry S. Mills and Kate Clara Mills. S. S. P. Mills served in the Confederate States of America in Company K Regiment 27th Texas Calvary and in Colonel Robert C. Newton's Regiment 10th Arkansas Calvary. He also built and ran the Grande Central Hotel in Richmond, Little River County, Arkansas, in 1875, and in 1889, he owned the newspaper, *The Pilot*. He was also appointed postmaster in Richmond on January 28, 1898. Mills served as Sheriff of Little River County from 1886-1892. He established a general store in Wilton (*S. S. P. Mills and Son Building*, NR listed 06/20/1996), and also became President of the Bank of Wilton during his lifetime. The community of Wilton was first named Millkin in honor of S.S.P. Mills and P.S. Kinsworthy, who owned the land on which the town was settled. He was instrumental in obtaining the railroad right-of-way from Red River to Wilton. S.S.P. died of Bright's disease on July 25, 1912, in Little River County. He served in the Confederate States of America in Company K, Whitfield's Texas Legion where he participated in the battles of Corinth and Iuka and was at Holly Springs during the capture of that place. He later joined Company C of Colonel Newton's Regiment of Arkansas Calvary.

### **George Winfield Mills (1849-1878)**

Born on February 9, 1849, in Mississippi to Joel and Catherine Kitura Burke Bird, he died on February 16, 1878.

### **Napoleon Bonaparte Mills (1855-1872)**

Born January 25, 1855, and died as a young man on February 5, 1872, he was the son of Joel Mills and Catherine Kitura Burke Bird Mills.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

### **Mary Meca Mills (1852-1855)**

Born November 24, 1852 and died March 16, 1855, she was the daughter of Joel and Catherine Kitura Burke Bird Mills.

### **Catherine Rebecca McCord Mills (1846-1916)**

Born in Alabama on July 11, 1846, to Mary Glover and John McCord, she married S. S. P. Mills on January 17, 1867, in Arkansas. They were the parents of five children: Amelia Mills Sykes, Ada Mills, Joel Mills II, Henry S. Mills and Kate Clara Mills. She and her husband were among the pioneer citizens of Little River County and have been identified prominently with every important move that was for the betterment and development of the county and its institutions. She was a noble character, and referred to as a prominent Wilton woman in her obituary. She died on July 11, 1846, of pneumonia in Little River County.

### **Ada Mills (1873-1957)**

Born in Little River County on August 27, 1873, she was the daughter of S. S. P. Mills and Katherine Rebecca McCord Mills. She had two brothers, Joel Mills II and Henry S. Mills, both buried in Mills Cemetery. She had two sisters, Amelia Mills Sykes and Kate Clara Mills, both also buried in this cemetery. She was very active in the Wilton Methodist Church, where she played the piano and was very generous financially to this church. She helped organize a bank at Wilton and served as its cashier, being the first woman cashier of a bank in Arkansas at that time. She was associated with the S. S. P. Mills and Sons mercantile business for 55 years. She was married for approximately 10 years to Harry Mizell, with the marriage ending in divorce. There were no children to this marriage. She was survived by a foster son, J. L. Mesamore, Sr., of Wilton. During the years of 1894-1895, she was a teacher in Richmond, Little River County, Arkansas. Ada Mills was very generous in her will with the land that she had accumulated during her career and with the money that she had acquired which was given to her relatives, friends and the Methodist Children's Home in Little Rock

### **Joel Mills II (1876 – 1952)**

Born near Rankin (between Ashdown and Wilton), Arkansas on October 22, 1873, he died of a heart attack on May 5, 1952, in Wilton. He married Mary Florence Wilson Butler of Arkansas on August 14, 1897, in Little River County, Arkansas. He was a lifelong resident of Little River County, a merchant at Wilton since 1900, a member of all Masonic bodies, including the Mystic Shrine, Peytonville Lodge, when he was presented with a 50 year Masonic badge. He and his wife are buried in Mills Cemetery along with his parents, S.S.P. and Katherine Rebecca McCord Mills, two of his sons, S. Prentiss Mills, Winfield Scott Mills, two of his daughters, Annie Laurie Mills Beverly and Catherine Mills Kimball and his sister, Ada Mills. They had one other son, Joel Mills III, who is buried in the Ben Lomond Cemetery, Ben Lomond, Sevier County, Arkansas. Joel Mills II ran his father's general merchandise store in Wilton and was President of the Bank of Wilton.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

### **Kate Clara Mills (1883-1883)**

Born to S. S. P. and Catherine Rebecca McCord Mills in Little River County on February 9 1883 and died September 6, 1883, in Little River County.

### **Henry S. Mills (1878-1895)**

Born on December 25, 1878 and died on November 11, 1895, he was the son of S.S.P. and Katherine Rebecca McCord Mills

### **John McCord (1799-1863)**

Born in 1799 and died November 1, 1863, he married Mary Glover McCord. They are the parents of Catherine Rebecca McCord Mills, who married S.S. P. Mills of Wilton, Arkansas.

### **Mary Glover McCord (1809-1895)**

Born on February 25, 1809, and died February 20, 1895, she was married John McCord. They were the parents of Catherine Rebecca McCord Mills, who married S.S.P. Mills of Wilton, Arkansas.

### **Mary Florence Wilson Butler Mills (1878-1950)**

Born in Arkansas on March 5, 1878, to Annie Laurie Rodgers and William Posey Wilson, her mother died very early in her life and she was raised by Dr. John Thomas Butler and his wife, Maggie Head. She married Joel Mills II on August 14, 1897, in Richmond, Little River County, Arkansas. They had the following children: Winfield Scott Mills, S. S. Prentiss Mills, Joel Mills Jr., Annie Laurie Mills, Ada Catherine Mills, and Henry Mills. She had a half sister, Mrs. A.J. (Minnie) Hudson and a step brother, J. W. Head. She was a member of the Wilton Methodist Church. Mary Florence died January 16, 1950 in Shreveport, Louisiana.

### **William Henry Rodgers (1865-1940)**

Born on July 29, 1865, in Waverly, Tennessee and died on March 28, 1940, he was the uncle to Mary Florence Wilson Butler Mills. W .H. was a carpenter during his lifetime. The *Little River News* dated April 4, 1940, had his obituary entitled "Well Known County Resident Passed Away at Wilton". He was a resident of Little River County for more than 60 years. "Uncle Will" as he was commonly known, was a familiar figure who will be greatly missed according to the local newspaper.

### **S. S. Prentiss Mills (1906-1955)**

Born September 14, 1906, and died October 9, 1955, in Little River County, he was the son of Joel and Mary Florence Mills of Wilton. He married Athelene Smith and he had one step son, Donald Williamson. Mr. Mills was a merchant and a farmer of Wilton. He was a member of the Methodist Church in Wilton, was a Mason and was the mayor of Wilton in 1947. He and his wife lived in the Penny Hill construction house which still stands on Highway 71 in Wilton behind the stately oak trees which are well over 100 years old. Prentiss, as he was known, died of a heart attack at age 49.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

### **Winfield Scott Mills (1899-1935)**

Born November 12, 1899, in Little River County to Joel and Mary Florence Mills, he died on August 24, 1935, at age 38, at the home of his parents. He died following a lingering illness, due to the after-effects of being gassed in World War I. He was married to Bessie Throckmorton Mills and they had one daughter, Anna Florence Mills. Winfield had three brothers, S.S. Prentiss Mills, Joel Mills Jr. and Henry Mills. He had two sisters, Annie Laurie Mills and Ada Catherine Mills. Mr. Mills was a Mason and served as worshipful master.

### **Amelia Mills Sykes (1869-1940)**

Born in Foreman, Little River County, in 1869, she was the daughter of Sargent S. Prentiss Mills and Catherine Rebecca McCord Mills. She had one brother, Joel Mills II and one sister, Ada Mills. She married Walter Madison Sykes on October 27, 1887, who died October 26, 1940. They had a daughter, Lillian, born on August 20, 1894, and died in December 1977, who married W.H. (Dutch) Oberrender. They had one daughter, Mary Sykes Scott. Amelia was also the mother of three sons, Walter M. Sykes, Jr., John Moffet Sykes and Henry A. Sykes. She was a life-long resident of Little River County and died at her home in Wilton on October 28, 1940.

### **Walter Madison Sykes (1861-1935)**

Born in 1861 and died November 26, 1935. He married Amelia Ann Mills in Richmond, Little River County, on October 27, 1887. He was a widely known and successful pioneer, Little River County planter and merchant. He died from shock and injuries received in a fall from the porch of his home in Richmond, Little River County, Arkansas, in which he suffered a broken hip. His funeral was held in his home. He was the father to three sons, Walter M. Sykes Jr., John Moffet Sykes and Henry A. Sykes, and two daughters, Lillian Sykes Oberrender and Mary Sykes Scott. According to the *Little River News*, he was a loyal member of the Methodist church, a liberal contributor to all church causes and was a devoted husband and father, a true friend and neighbor.

### **Walter M. Sykes, Jr. (1903-1945)**

Born to Walter M. and Amelia Mills Sykes, he was a native of Little River County. He died on January 21, 1945, in Texarkana, Miller County, Arkansas, as the result of a stroke one day earlier. He owned the Richmond Gin, and had farming and other business interests. He was survived by two brothers, Henry Sykes and John M. Sykes, two sisters, Mrs. Mary Scott and Mrs. Lillie Oberrender and one daughter, Mary Louise Sykes.

### **John Moffett Dunn Sykes (1908-1949)**

Born September 4, 1908, to Walter M. and Amelia Sykes, he died January 21, 1949, after a lengthy illness in a Texarkana, Miller County, Arkansas, hospital. He had made his home in recent years prior to his death

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

with his aunt, Ada Mills of Wilton. He had one brother, Henry A. Sykes, and two sisters, Mrs. Paul F. Scott and Mrs. W. H.(Dutch) (Lillian) Oberrender

### Phoebe Mills (1810-1885)

Born in Richmond, Virginia, as a slave and died April 10, 1885, in Little River County, Arkansas, she had a son, Ransom, and they lived with Joel Mills I or his son, S.S. Prentiss Mills, all of their lives. Phoebe is buried under the large old oak tree in Mills Cemetery, south of the main graves. Ransom has his own marker and foot stone.

### Owen W. Patty (1826-1899)

Born on May 18, 1826, and died on October 5, 1899. He is buried in Mills Cemetery because he ran the ferry across Little River, near the mouth of the Cossattot River. The ferry was owned by Joel Mills I. When his wife died suddenly and unexpectedly, the wish of the family was to bury her next to her husband's grave. Just before her death, there was quite a bit of rain and the rivers were out of their banks with all areas around flooded. They waited as long as they could before burial; but could not get her remains across the river because of the flood (the ferry was closed). She could not be buried next to her husband, and was buried in Wrights Chapel Cemetery, north of Cowlingsville, Sevier County, Arkansas.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mills Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in Little River County. Interred here are several of the first settlers of that county. The first people buried in this cemetery were members of the Mills pioneering family, who, early in the 1850s, helped explore and settle Little River County along with the towns of Richmond and Wilton. Joel Mills I fought for Texas Independence and his son, S.S.P. Mills, fought in the Civil War. A grandson, Winfield S. Mills, died as a result of being gassed in France during World War I. Later burials in this cemetery are those of relatives and family who contributed to Little River County in other business and educational aspects. Because of the contributions of the people interred here regarding the establishment and settlement of Little River County and the towns of Wilton and Richmond, the Mills Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance**, and under **Criterion B** because it is the final resting place of Joel Mills I, who was a prominent businessman in Little River County. No other properties associated with Joel Mills I's productive life are extant. The Mills Cemetery is eligible for inclusion under **Criteria Consideration: C**, as the grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance, as there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with the productive life of Joel Mills I, and under **Criteria Consideration: D**, as the cemetery derives its primary significance from the graves of persons of transcendent importance, from the age of the burials, and from the association with historic events such as the exploration and settlement of the Wilton area.

Mills Cemetery  
Name of Property

Little River County, Arkansas  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.5 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 393392 3737355  
Zone Easting Northing  
2

3  
Zone Easting Northing  
4

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

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

### Boundary Justification

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary F. Mills Jackson; Edited by Sarah A. Jampole/Survey Historian  
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date April 11, 2007  
street & number 1600 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone 501.324.9874  
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

### Additional items

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

## Property Owner

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

name Mary F. Mills Jackson and other Mills family descendants  
street & number 434 Heritage Oaks Road telephone 903.793.0951  
city or town Texarkana state TX zip code 75503

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Goodspeed Publishing Company. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*. 1890.

*Little River News*. Volume XXXVI, January 31, 1934. "First Settlers Came to Wilton in Year of 1880."

----- July 27, 1912; February 12, 1916; 1935; August 28, 1936; April 4, 1940; October 10, 1940; October 31, 1940; January 15, 1945; January 27, 1949; January 19, 1950; October 13, 1955; September 12, 1957.

Herndon, Dallas T. *Centennial History of Arkansas Volume III*. S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922.

Research by Mary F. Mills Jackson from the National Archives, DAR and Colonial Dames of the SVII Century Applications.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Part of the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section Twenty Five (25) Township Eleven (11) South Range Thirty (30) West containing originally 68.33 acres more or less. It currently consists of 47.15 acres due to Highway 71 going through part of it. The cemetery consists of 3.5 acres.

### VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The above verbal boundary description includes all land historically associated with the Mills Cemetery, Wilton vicinity, Little River County, Arkansas.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Mills Cemetery  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Little River

DATE RECEIVED: 8/17/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/31/07  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/15/07 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/30/07  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07000992

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 9.27.07 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

~~Entered in the~~  
~~National Register~~

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





- ① Mills Cemetery
- ② Little River County, AR
- ③ Sarah Jampole
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ AHPP
- ⑥ Cemetery sign; far SE of property boundaries;  
view looking NW
- ⑦ #1





- ① Mills Cemetery
- ② Lake River County, AR
- ③ Sarah Jampole
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ AHPP
- ⑥ SE corner of burials, looking NW
- ⑦ #2





- ① Mull's Cemetery
- ② Little River County, AR
- ③ Sarah Jampole
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ AHP
- ⑥ SW corner, looking NE
- ⑦ #3





- ① Mills Cemetery
- ② Little River Co, AR
- ③ Sarah Jampole
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ AHHP
- ⑥ NW corner, looking SE
- ⑦ #4.





- ① mids cemetery
- ② Little River CO, AR
- ③ Sarah Jampde
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ ~~ATTP~~
- ⑥ NE corner, looking SW
- ⑦ #5





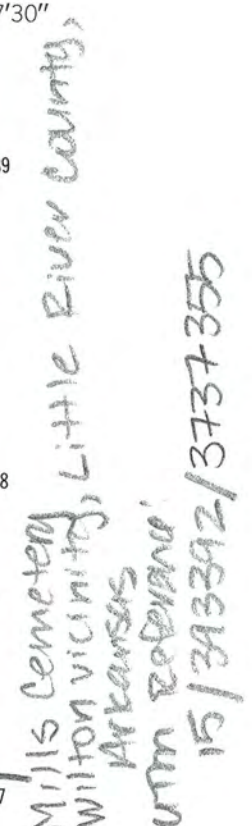


- ① Mills Cemetery
- ② Little River CO, AR
- ③ Sarah Jampole
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ AHTP
- ⑥ Joel Mills I grave marker; looking west
- ⑦ #6.



- ① Mills Cemetery
- ② May 30, 2007
- ③ Sarah Jampole
- ④ May 30, 2007
- ⑤ AHPP
- ⑥ Thoebe Mills grave marker, looking W
- ⑦ #7





ARDEN



1950  
PHOTOREVISED 1975  
AMS 7151 | SW—SERIES V884





## The Department of Arkansas Heritage

Mike Beebe  
Governor

Cathie Matthews  
Director

Arkansas Arts Council

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Arkansas Natural Heritage  
Commission

\*

Delta Cultural Center

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Historic Arkansas Museum

\*

Mosaic Templars  
Cultural Center

\*

Old State House Museum



## Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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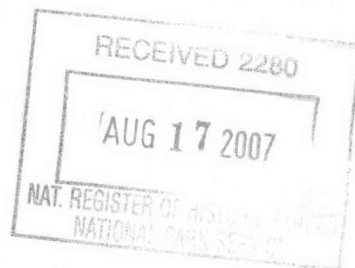
[info@arkansaspreservation.org](mailto:info@arkansaspreservation.org)

website:

[www.arkansaspreservation.com](http://www.arkansaspreservation.com)

August 1, 2007

Dr. Janet Matthews  
Chief of Registration  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1201 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005



RE: Mills Cemetery; Wilton vicinity, Little River County

Dear Dr. Mathews,

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Sarah A. Jampole of my staff at (501) 324-9874. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews  
State Historic Preservation Officer

CM:sj

Enclosure

