

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

**NRIS Reference Number:** 94000389

**Date Listed:** 5/5/94

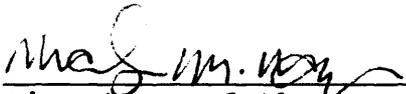
Elder's Mill Covered Bridge  
& Elder Mill  
**Property Name**

Oconee  
**County**

GEORGIA  
**State**

**Multiple Name**

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
for **Signature of the Keeper**

5/5/94  
**Date of Action**

=====  
**Amended Items in Nomination:**

Section No. 8

This nomination is amended to show that the property meets the conditions of Criteria Consideration B. The covered bridge was moved to its present site in 1924.

This change was confirmed by phone with the Georgia SHPO (5/5/94)

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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MAR 28 1994

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill  
other names/site number

**2. Location**

street & number 4/5 of a mile south of the intersection of Elder Mill Road and Georgia Highway 15  
city, town Watkinsville (X) vicinity of  
county Oconee code GA 219  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30677

( ) not for publication

**3. Classification**

**Ownership of Property:**

- (X) private
- (X) public-local
- ( ) public-state
- ( ) public-federal

**Category of Property**

- ( ) building(s)
- (X) district
- ( ) site
- ( ) structure
- ( ) object

**Number of Resources within Property:**

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	1	0
sites	0	0
structures	1	0
objects	0	0
total	2	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Signature of certifying official

3/24/94  
Date

Elizabeth A. Lyon  
State Historic Preservation Officer,  
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property ( ) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

M. J. M. Way

5/5/94

( ) determined eligible for the National Register

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register

( ) removed from the National Register

( ) other, explain:

( ) see continuation sheet

for Signature, Keeper of the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/manufacturing facility  
TRANSPORTATION/road-related

### Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
TRANSPORTATION/road related

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Functional

### Materials:

foundation	stone
walls	wood
roof	metal
other	n/a

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Elder's Mill covered bridge and Elder Mill includes the 1897 wooden covered bridge which is 16 1/2 feet wide and 99 feet long and a c. 1900, three-story, wood-framed mill (Photos #1 and #2). They are located in Oconee County, Georgia, five miles southeast of Watkinsville (the county seat) on the gravel Elder Mill Road, 4/5 of a mile south off of Georgia Highway 15.

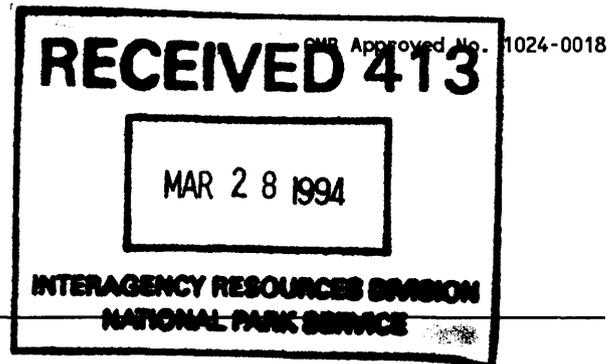
The bridge was built in 1897 by Nathaniel Richardson using the Town Lattice design and rests on two concrete piers (Photo #3). The design consists of a web of light planks crisscrossed at a 45 to 60 degree angle, forming the lattice and fastened together with wooden pins at each intersection (Photo #4). The sides of the bridge are covered with wooden boards (Photo #5). It was originally located on the Watkinsville-Athens Road spanning Call Creek in Clarke County, and was moved in 1924 to its present location spanning Rose Creek. The bridge is in its original condition with the exception of the 1920's concrete piers and the gabled wood shingled roof of the bridge which was replaced with metal when it was moved.

The covered bridge extends 99 feet in one span with an uncovered approach 11 feet in length made of wood timbers. The diagonals are 3 x 10 inches in size and made of heart pine. There are two pins at each intersection. The trusses are 14 1/2 feet high and the overall height of this bridge is 17 1/2 feet to the ridge line. The bridge is 16 1/2 feet wide, overall. There are two lower chords and one upper chord, each made of 3 x 10 inch heart pine timbers and doubled. The bridge rests on two concrete piers which are located 10 feet on center from the ends of the trusses. These abutments were constructed by

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Hugh and Durham in 1924 (Photo #6).

The floor is made of 3 x 10 inch timbers and longitudinal runners of the same size timbers are in place to provide a smooth surface for traffic and to minimize wear on the floor of the bridge. The floor sills are 6 x 10 inch timbers and the joists are 3 x 8 inches in size (Photo #4).

The metal roof replaces an original roof of wooden shingles. The sides are pine boards and battens. The bridge is in excellent condition. There was some restoration work done during August 1974 which repaired minor damage.

The grist mill is located approximately 100 yards east of the bridge on a steep incline sloping down to the creek (Photo #7). It is a turbine-operated mill that used to grind both wheat and corn. At one time it housed three flour mills and one grist mill. The mill ceased operation in 1941. Originally the road passed in front of the mill until 1924 when the covered bridge was installed and the road was moved to its present location. The abutments of the pre-1924 bridge still stand just east of the covered bridge marking the location of the old road (Photo #8). A flood in 1951 washed away the wooden dam and water pipes connected with the mill. There are furrows from the mill to the water where the old flume used to be (Photo #9). The mill is a three-story, gable front, wood frame building with weatherboard siding, corrugated metal roof, full-length shed porch with posts and a stone pier foundation with infill (Photo #10). It has a central, front wood panel door, southwest side wood panel door, and double-hung, 6/6 replacement windows--some window openings do not have glass.

The interior has pine floors, exposed beams and rafters, and a substantial amount of the original milling machinery including the main cog, millstone, sieve, grain implements, sifters, purifiers, strainers, baggers, tying machine, and wood chutes. The first floor has been converted to living space (Photo #11). The second floor or main floor and the third floor are remarkably intact and stable (Photos #12 and #13).

The property is located in a heavily wooded, rural setting on a gravel road (Photo #14).

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally     statewide     locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A     B     C     D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**     N/A

A     B     C     D     E     F     G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

Architecture  
Engineering  
Industry  
Transportation

**Period of Significance:**

1897-1941

**Significant Dates:**

1897, 1900, and 1924

**Significant Person(s):**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:**

n/a

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Nathaniel Richardson - Covered Bridge (1897)  
Hunt and Durham - Bridge Abutments (1924)

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**Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:**

**Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill are significant as a representative early 20th-century rural industrial complex in Georgia. Typical of such complexes, the Elder Mill Road site consists of a water powered mill and nearby bridge. Once commonplace, the existence of an intact mill or covered bridge is unusual and the combination exceptional. The only other intact mill/covered bridge complex in Georgia is Ruff's Mill and Concord Covered Bridge in Cobb County.

The Elder's Mill Covered Bridge is significant in architecture and engineering because the bridge was built using the patented Town Lattice design, one of only a few covered bridge forms used in the United States, and illustrates the bridge construction techniques of builder Nathaniel Richardson, who also built several structures in the area, including the Ashford Methodist Church. The bridge had to fulfill various structural considerations in order to support horse-drawn and later motorized traffic.

The Town Lattice truss was designed and patented in 1820 by Ithiel Town, an architect of New Haven, Connecticut. Town realized the need for a covered bridge truss which could be quickly built by a carpenter and could sustain a substantial amount of weight. Town's design became the first truly American design for a covered bridge. The design consists of a web of light planks crisscrossed at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees, like a lattice, and fastened together with wooden pins at each intersection. The Town Lattice design "could be built by the mile and cut off by the yard." The design became the most popular design for covered bridges.

In Georgia many bridges were built using the Town Lattice design. The Elder's Mill Covered Bridge is one of fourteen covered bridges remaining in Georgia and one of ten which are of Town Lattice construction. The ten remaining Town Lattice bridges were built from 1840s to 1906, have lengths ranging from 60 feet to 236 feet, and have one to three spans. Two of the ten bridges have been shortened and moved and one rebuilt.

The c. 1900 mill is significant as an intact representative example of an early 20th-century milling structure. The three-story, wood building is typical of the mills built in the 1800s and early 1900s with its vertical massing, lack of decoration, and its location on an incline. The building is also significant for its architecture as an example of functional architecture--meaning it was built for utilitarian purposes and not for beauty. The simplicity of the

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exterior design belies its strength to withstand the constant motion of the mill and the weight of the machinery--much of which is still intact. Inside the mill, the large heart-of-pine timbers, as big as 12" X 14", supporting the floors, ceilings, and machinery are evidence of the building's durability.

The mill is significant in industry because it represents an important aspect of Georgia's early industrial development. Elder Mill is a good example of a mill which processed flour, wheat, and corn for the farmers in the area during the 1800s and early 1900s. This type of rural industry became obsolete as large-scale agricultural producing and processing replaced individual operations. Elder Mill has added significance in industry for the considerable amount of original milling equipment within the mill. The intact main cog, millstone, sieve, grain implements, sifters, purifiers, strainers, baggers, tying machine, and wood chutes illustrate the early milling industry and the milling process.

The property is significant in transportation as an example of a surviving element of Georgia's early system of roads and bridges; the covered bridge is one of only fourteen surviving covered bridges in the state. This rare artifact reflects the early development of Georgia's road systems. This bridge was built during a time when road traffic was dominated by the horse. By the time the bridge was moved from Clarke County in 1924, the automobile had become the primary means of transportation. The move itself was precipitated by the growth of Clarke County and the need for road expansion which made the bridge obsolete in its original location. When the bridge was moved, Elder Mill Road's path changed so that it no longer passed directly in front of the mill. The abutments of the pre-1924 bridge still stand just east of the covered bridge marking the location of the old road.

The survival of the bridge is outstanding when considering it was built for horse travel, moved to a second location, and is still in use after almost a century of mostly automobile use. The combination of the bridge and the surviving mill, although once common, is one of only a few historic combinations of mills and bridge surviving today.

Elder's Mill Covered Bridge is listed as No. 10-108-01 in the World Guide to Covered Bridges published by the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges, Inc., 1972 edition.

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**National Register Criteria**

The bridge is eligible under Criterion A as a surviving element of early Georgia roads that has historical significance in Georgia's transportation development and the mill for its associations with industrial development in rural Georgia. The complex is also eligible under Criterion C for the architecture and engineering of the Town Lattice design of the bridge and the functional architecture of the Mill.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

n/a

**Period of significance (justification)**

1897 is the date for the construction of the covered bridge and 1941 is the year when the mill closed.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

The covered bridge and mill retain integrity and were built within the period of significance. There are no noncontributing resources.

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**Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)**

The Elder's Mill Covered Bridge was originally located on the Watkinsville-Athens Road spanning Call Creek now known as Butler Creek in Clarke County. The bridge was built in 1897 by Nathaniel Richardson who built several structures in the area including the Ashford Methodist Church.

In 1924, the bridge was moved to its present location spanning Rose Creek in Oconee County. The move was made under the supervision of John Chandler who numbered the web pieces, disassembled the bridge, and hauled it to the new site by wagon. The bridge was kept the exact same except for the wood shingle roof which was replaced by a metal roof at the time of the move. The bridge then became known as the Elder's Mill Covered Bridge because of the adjacent mill.

The abutments for the bridge were placed by Hunt and Durham. They positioned the bridge so that it would be high above the swift Rose Creek waters and about 100 yards upstream from the shoals that powered Elder Mill.

About 100 yards downstream from this bridge stands the Elder Mill for which the bridge and the road are named. Originally, the road passed in front of the Elder Mill; however, when the covered bridge was put in place, the road then bypassed the mill. The abutments of the pre-1924 bridge still stand just east of the covered bridge marking the location of the old road.

The Elder family moved into this area in the early 1800s and four generations of the family have operated a mill at the same location. It is believed that the earlier mill was built by Captain Phillip Tigner in the late 1700s after the Revolutionary War. The present turbine mill was built c. 1900 by Shannon Elder and replaced the earlier mill that was powered by an overshot wheel.

When in operation, the Elder Mill had a capacity of ten bushels an hour and the drop from the dam to the turbine gave a 42 foot head of water. The turbine is 15 inches in diameter and the water entered through an opening 6 x 10 inches in size. With a 42 foot head of water, there was plenty of pressure to operate the turbine and the mill.

During normal weather, the flow of Rose Creek and the capacity of the mill pond provided enough water to run the mill for about eight hours after which the flume would have to be closed to allow the mill pond to fill again. There would be ample water during a rainy period and the last operator, J. Lamar Elder, once ran the mill straight for three days and nights in order to catch up with a backlog of grain to

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be ground. Mr. Elder operated on the toll system taking one eighth of the ground grain for his efforts.

The mill could grind both wheat and corn. At one time there were three flour mills and one grist mill. Long time resident of the area, Col. J.W. Phillips, said that it took about half a day to grind twenty bushels of wheat and that there was a store inside the mill so customers could snack on cheese, crackers and sardines while waiting.

In 1951, the wooden dam and flume washed out during a flood. The present mill, which ceased operation in 1941 during World War II, is stable and sturdy. Although, it does need some repairs and the machinery has suffered from non-use and vandalism.

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## **9. Major Bibliographic References**

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Cassady, Jane. "Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill," Historic Preservation Information Form, August 1992. On file at the Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia, with supplemental information.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): ( ) N/A

- ( ) 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 #
- (X) recorded by Historic American Engineering Record - Inventory card only, 1974.

Primary location of additional data:

- (X) State historic preservation office
- ( ) Other State Agency
- ( ) Federal agency
- ( ) Local government
- ( ) University
- ( ) Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

### Bridge

Oc 155 (1974 survey)  
OC 44 (1976 survey)

### Mill

Oc 156 (1974 survey)  
Oc 47 (1976 survey)

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** Approximately 6 acres

**UTM References**

A) Zone 17 Easting 281240 Northing 3742630

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property boundary follows the property lines of the mill with a portion of Rose Creek where the dam used to be to the covered bridge and the land adjacent to the bridge including a portion of Elder Mill Road. See enclosed map.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the known historic features associated with the covered bridge, the adjacent mill, the site of the wooden dam, and a small section of Rose Creek.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Leslie N. Sharp  
**organization** Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 205 Butler Street, S.E., Suite 1462  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** March 14, 1994

(OHP form version 12-08-93)

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National Park Service

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**Photographs**

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**Name of Property:** Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill  
**City or Vicinity:** Watkinsville  
**County:** Oconee  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** December 1992

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 14: Northeast entrance to the Elder's Mill Covered Bridge; photographer facing southwest.
- 2 of 14: North and east facade of Elder Mill; photographer facing southwest.
- 3 of 14: Southwest entrance to the bridge; photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 14: Interior of bridge; photographer facing southwest.
- 5 of 14: West exterior of bridge and Rose Creek; photographer facing east.
- 6 of 14: East exterior of bridge and Rose Creek; photographer facing west.
- 7 of 14: North and West Facade of mill; photographer facing southeast.
- 8 of 14: Abutment of the pre-1924 bridge and Rose Creek; photographer facing east.
- 9 of 14: Old flume path; photographer facing northeast.
- 10 of 14: Rear facade of mill; photographer facing north.
- 11 of 14: First floor interior of mill; photographer facing northeast.
- 12 of 14: Second floor or main floor interior of mill with millstone; photographer facing northwest.
- 13 of 14: Third floor interior of mill; photographer facing south.

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**Photographs**

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14 of 14:      Rear facade of mill and Rose Creek; photographer facing  
                 northeast.

Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and  
Elder Mill

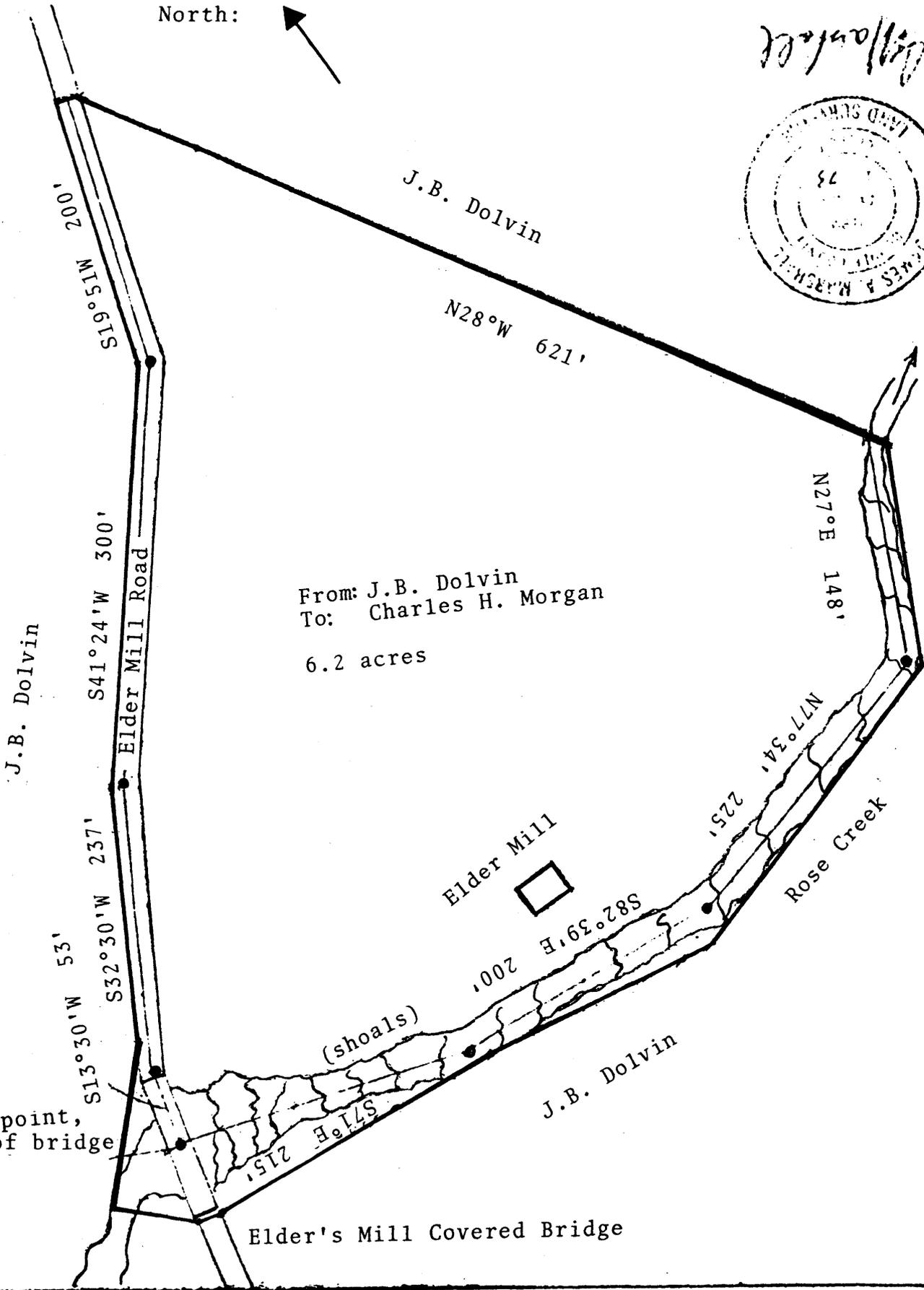
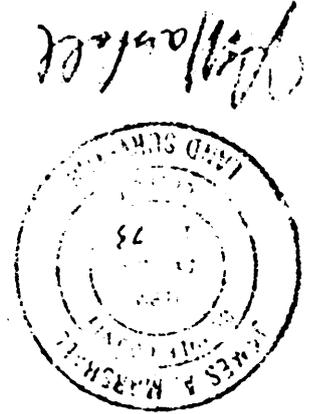
Oconee County, Georgia

Plat Map (April 1969)

National Register Boundary: ———

Scale: 1" = 100'

North: 



From: J.B. Dolvin  
To: Charles H. Morgan  
6.2 acres

This point,  
center of bridge

Elder's Mill Covered Bridge