

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: COOPER'S MILL
other name: Tom Cooper Mill

775

2. Location

street & number: Off Ellison Ridge Road/CR 27 not for publication: N/A
city/town: Jumping Branch vicinity: X
state: WV county: Summers code: 089 zip code: 25969

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally.

Susan Pierce 6/12/01
Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau Date

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 Date

Cooper's Mill
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4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of Keeper: Edson H. Beall Date of Action: 7-25-01

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): _____

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 the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
	2	sites
		structures
		objects
2	3	TOTAL

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Current Functions

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING: Grist Mill

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Materials

OTHER: Vernacular

Foundation: Stone; Wood

Walls: Wood

Roof: Metal

Narrative Description

(See continuation on sheets.)

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.

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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 a birthplace or grave.

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.

Areas of Significance

Industry

Architecture

Period of Significance

1869-1950

Significant Dates

1930

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lilly, William Calvin, builder (original)

Cooper, Thomas Moody (1930 reconstruction)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 10.24

UTM References:

Quad Map: Pipestem

Zone Easting Northing
17 / 501950 / 4161890

Verbal Boundary Description

(See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(See continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Dr. Jack Wills, owner, and Alan Rowe, WVSHPO

Organization: WV State Historic Preservation Office

Date: February 6, 2001

Street & Number: 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East

Telephone: 304-558-0220

City or Town: Charleston State: WV ZIP: 25305-0300

Property Owner

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

Name: Jack & Gloria Wills, et al.

Street & Number: 59 Jo Harry Drive

Telephone: 304-366-5447

City or Town: Fairmont State: WV Zip: 26554

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Cooper's Mill
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Architectural Description:

General Setting

The terrain surrounding Cooper's Mill is rugged and steep--it is located in the stream-cut highlands that drain into the Bluestone River. The mill stands at the edge of the Little Bluestone River, which in turn flows into the Bluestone. The river is shallow and stony, with a wide, shelf-like waterfall present just a few feet upstream from the mill. Today, a young forest surrounds the mill property, but for most of its history, the mill stood among the cleared bottom land fields and hillside grazing areas of the Cooper farm. In addition to the mill, there is a small gable roofed blacksmith shop located approximately 53 feet from the northwest corner of the mill. Approximately 300 feet to the northeast of the mill and above it on the hillside, are foundation stones of the Cooper house, and roughly 500 feet due east from the house are the two remaining wood walls of the Cooper barn. Located 300 feet to the north of the barn and above it on a steep hill is a small family cemetery with three burials. There is a visible historic road right-of-way that passes between the mill and the blacksmith shop that at one time led to the Bluestone settlements.

Cooper's Mill 1869/1930 Contributing Building

Cooper's Mill is a small, unpretentious gristmill, representative of a vernacular type once common throughout the eastern United States. The footprint of the mill covers a diminutive rectangle 18 feet long by 16 feet wide. The building is supported by a continuous, sandstone foundation with five courses of squared log timbers above the sandstone blocks. The logs are a remainder of the mill's original 1869 construction, which was built entirely of squared logs with V-notched corners. In 1930, the original superstructure was dismantled down to the last five log courses, and a wood frame building was erected over the logs and the original sandstone foundation. At the same time, a steel overshot Fitz waterwheel replaced the original, wooden waterwheel. The Fitz Water Wheel Company of Hanover, Pennsylvania specialized in producing high quality replacement waterwheels for older mills. Above the foundation logs, all sides of the wood frame are sheathed in naturally weathered chestnut board and batten siding. The present standing seam metal roof was most likely installed during the 1930 reconstruction, as well. When the mill was operating, an earthen millrace channeled water to the waterwheel from a small rock dam about a quarter of a mile upstream from the mill. A raised wooden trough carried the water for roughly the last fifty feet of the millrace to the waterwheel. Traces of the dam and mill race are still visible, but the wooden trough decayed and was removed several years ago. The mill building continues to reflect its 1930 appearance, with few substantive changes made since that time.

The only entrance to the mill is through the north elevation, which may be considered the main facade. This is the gable end of the building, which rises to a height of 2½ stories. Within the triangle formed by the gable, there is wide, clapboard siding and one, centered wood-frame

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six-pane window. Directly below this window is the entry door, which is built up from five wide vertical planks held together with two horizontal crosspieces. To the immediate right of the door is a square, six-pane wood-frame window that has been covered by three loosely spaced boards. Below the lower chord of the gable triangle, the wall is sheathed in the aforementioned chestnut board and batten siding. A short wooden ramp spans a small gap between the threshold of the door and the hillside in front of the mill. The gap reveals the upper portion of the foundation, which has been covered by sheets of smooth, galvanized steel.

The east side of the mill reveals the steel Fitz waterwheel centered in the lower half of the elevation. From the side, the mill's location on the steep banks of the Little Bluestone becomes apparent, with the building rising a total of 3½ stories from the basement to the attic. Board and batten siding extends from under the eaves roughly to the top of the waterwheel, then the siding becomes smooth, galvanized steel sheeting, no doubt installed for its resistance to rot. The Fitz waterwheel is fourteen feet in diameter by three feet wide, with perhaps ¾ of its bulk visible from the banks of the river. The rest of the waterwheel is hidden by a trough, or channel, cut into the rock of the hillside for the wheel to rotate within. At the present time, the wheel is unpainted, but when new was probably painted red, a common Fitz color. Directly above the mill wheel is a boarded window opening, which originally held a six-pane, wood-frame window. A flat, wood and tar-paper roof, now partially collapsed, was built over the main part of the waterwheel around 1960.

The rear, south facing elevation is by far the highest, rising approximately twenty-five feet from the edge of the river to the peak of the gable. Four surface treatments are visible on this elevation, beginning with the clapboards in the gable, continuing down to the board and batten siding, metal sheeting, and finally, the random ashlar stonework of the foundation. There is a centered, six-pane wood-frame window in the gable, and a square, twelve-pane wood-frame window centered in the far right half of the board and batten wall section. A second, twelve pane wood-frame window is present in the lower, left half of the board and batten section.

On the west facing elevation, there are no window openings or remarkable features--the board and batten siding extends from beneath the eaves to a point even with the lower edges of the siding on the other elevations, then gives way to smooth, unpainted, steel sheeting down to grade.

Interior divisions are arranged around the building's central purpose: reducing wheat, buckwheat, and corn to flour and corn meal. Mechanically, the basement level is the most important, as this is where the input shaft from the waterwheel enters the building and imparts power to the mill stones. The basement is low and cramped, with a bare dirt floor and walls composed of foundation stones and the log timbers that rest on top of them. A large wood beam divides the basement along its north-south axis, leaving only a crawl space between the two halves of the room. Access to the main floor above is by way of a steep wood staircase in the northwest corner of the room.

On the main floor, there are two levels associated with the beginning and the end of the

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milling process. Gravity is used to draw the ground flour or meal from the mill stones to the collection area below. The upper level is the largest of the two spaces, and marks the beginning of the milling process. It was here that grain sacks were deposited by their owners, and dumped by the miller into the hopper above the mill stones against the south wall. When the miller wanted to start the mill stones, he would open a series of gates in the mill race outside which would supply water to the waterwheel, and thus impart motion to the mill stones. Once ground, the meal passes from the edge of the mill stones and is scraped into a wooden bin below the stones in the lower level. From the lower level, the miller could adjust the gap between the mill stones, creating a final product that ranged from fine to course, depending on the wishes of the customer. The ground meal or flour was then sacked and the process ended. On the upper level, a steep wood staircase in the northeast corner is used to access the attic, which was used for grain storage.

Blacksmith's Shop ca. 1900 Contributing Building

The blacksmith's shop stands approximately 53 feet to the northwest of the mill. It is a simple, one story, rectangular gable-end building with a tar-paper roof. Vertical, naturally weathered sawn chestnut siding covers all sides of the building. Small square window openings are present on the south and east elevations, with boards nailed over them. A heavy wood door built from five wide, vertical planks united by horizontal crosspieces is present offset to the right half of the east elevation. The eaves have minimal overhang on the sides of the building, but on the front and rear elevations they gradually deepen toward the building's center, causing a slight hooded effect at the gable's peak. Inside the shop, the original forge is still present, but vandals removed the iron-smith's tools several years ago.

Cooper House & Root Cellar Ruins ca. 1880 Non-contributing Site

Located on the hillside roughly 300 feet to the northeast of the mill are the ruins of the Cooper house. This was the residence of Thomas Moody Cooper, who rebuilt the mill in 1930, and died in 1945. The house gradually fell into disrepair following Thomas' death, and has been reduced to a few foundation stones and three walls of the root cellar. The importance of this site as the location of the Cooper family residence is important to note, but the site is non-contributing due to its completely ruined state.

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Barn Ruins ca. 1880 Non-contributing Building

The remains of a small barn are located approximately 500 feet to the east of the mill, and are situated adjacent to the historic road grade that passes through the mill property. The barn was originally a small, clapboard sided building built from a combination of log pens and frame construction. All that remains of the barn are two partially collapsed walls, with a collection of tangled logs and wood debris between them. As a part of the original Cooper farm and mill complex, it is important to note the barn's location, but its completely ruined state has rendered it non-contributing.

Cemetery 1944-1995 Non-contributing Site

Approximately 300 feet to the north of the barn ruins, and near the top of a steep hill, is a small cemetery. Thomas Moody Cooper (d. 1945), Oliver B. Cooper (d. 1944), and Owen D. Wills (d. 1995) are interred there. The historical importance of this cemetery is obvious, but due to the recent date of the burials, modern headstones, and the lack of a direct connection to industrial history, the site is considered non-contributing.

Summary:

Cooper's Mill is an well-preserved example of a once common vernacular industrial building: the small neighborhood grist mill. Like Cooper's Mill, neighborhood mills across the eastern United States served a limited number of farm families within a well-defined geographical area. Cooper's Mill owes its survival to the continued need for a local mill well into the twentieth century, due to the rugged nature of the terrain and relative isolation from mass markets. The mill is accompanied by one additional contributing resource: a small blacksmith's shop. The sites of the Cooper family house, barn, and cemetery are located nearby, but are considered non-contributing due to their completely ruined state, and in the case of the cemetery, its recent appearance and incompatibility with industrial history as an area of significance. Important landscape features adjacent to the mill include the shallow depression that marks the path of the millrace, and the still visible right-of-way of the historic road that runs along the creek and passes between the mill and blacksmith's shop.

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Statement of Significance:

Cooper's Mill is eligible under Criterion A for Industry and Criterion C for Architecture. Originally a log building built in 1869, the mill was dismantled down to its foundation and rebuilt with a wood frame in 1930. The period of significance begins with the initial year of construction in 1869 and continues to 1950, when Elisha Cooper, the last miller, ceased grinding grain and corn. The mill gains its significance under Criterion A due to its historic importance as a center of a local, vernacular industrial concern. Water powered grist mills were often the only mechanized production facilities found in isolated rural communities, and Cooper's Mill remained the only mill accessible to local families for over 80 years. Architecturally, the mill is significant under Criterion C due to its high level of physical integrity, retaining its original 1869 foundation and 1930 superstructure. Additionally, the mill retains its steel Fitz Water Wheel Company waterwheel, added in 1930, a full set of grinding stones, and a full compliment of wooden gears, shafts, and sifting machinery.

Between 1869 and 1950, Cooper's Mill served the agricultural communities of the Big and Little Bluestone Rivers and the surrounding area. Since most of the families in Summers County (excepting Hinton, a railroad center) depended on subsistence farming throughout this period, water-powered grist mills were needed to grind the corn, wheat, and buckwheat into the flour and meal required to make bread and for trade as an economic commodity. Cooper's Mill was one of several mills built in the region to serve this purpose.

The Bluestone/Little Bluestone settlement was established in the early 1790s by Robert and Fanny Lilly, from whom the large Lilly family in southern West Virginia and elsewhere is descended, and their daughter and son-in-law, the Revolutionary War veteran Josiah Meador. As the community prospered and expanded, the need for industrial facilities such as sawmills and grist mills grew. A brief history of Cooper's Mill is provided by Glennis R. Walker in "The History of the Walker Family":

In 1869 Robert Calvin 'Miller Bob' Lilly built the grist mill at Falling Rock on the Little Bluestone River in Summers County, in W.Va. In 1883 ownership of the mill was passed to Josiah Cooper and it was known as the Cooper Mill for 12 or 13 years. In 1895, Josiah Cooper passed the mill to his son, Thomas Moody [Cooper], and it became the Tom Cooper Mill. (p. 412)

The Cooper family made their living much as the other families in the Bluestone highlands, planting corn in the bottom lands adjacent to the river and running cattle in the hills above. Thus the mill and blacksmith shop served as a source of added income for the Cooper family, who lived just a few feet away from the mill, and planted their crops and pastured their cattle on the land around it. There was a small barn located in the "barn hollow" downstream from

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the mill, and the mill itself was used by the Cooper family for grain and flour storage on the second floor. Although the mill is all that is left today, it is important to note that it was but one element in the working of a rather typical mountain farm.

In 1930, when there were still many families and small farms in the area, Tom Cooper reconstructed the mill by replacing the logs of the main and upper stories of the original building with wood framing and board and batten siding. Additionally, he replaced the mill's wooden waterwheel (its second since 1869) with a steel Fitz Water Wheel Company waterwheel. A dated set of Fitz Water Wheel Company blueprints confirms Tom Cooper's purchase of the wheel directly from the manufacturer, who no doubt supervised its installation as well. The new wheel was powered by water collected behind a stone dam about a quarter of a mile up the Little Bluestone River, and delivered to the waterwheel through a ditch to a wood trough that carried the water the last fifty feet to an overbay on the east side of the mill. Two wooden gates were used to control water in the wood trough; one served as a bypass that shunted water from the trough into the river below, and the other, located just above the waterwheel, was used to adjust the rate of flow, thus controlling the speed of the wheel.

In addition to the Bluestone settlement, Cooper's Mill served the communities of Jumping Branch, Sand Knob, Ellison Ridge, and others. Since horse-shoeing, harness mending, and the like were done in the blacksmith's shop across the road, and since Tom Cooper was an accomplished fiddler, the mill was a focal point of social as well as commercial activity for most of the first half of the twentieth century. In an isolated area where interpersonal contact was at a premium, the mill served as a convenient gathering place where work and socialization blended in a seamless and comfortable manner. Tom Cooper continued to operate the mill until shortly before his death in 1945, and his son Elisha B. Cooper continued to grind there occasionally until 1950, when the Bluestone Dam project had finally driven most of the families from the valley.

Tom Cooper's grandson, Owen D. Wills, bought the property in 1950, and the mill has remained idle since that time, serving as a sort of private, family museum. By 1950 most families in the Bluestone settlement had moved as a result of the Bluestone Dam, but other factors changed that area as well, with hard-surfaced roads, automobiles, and mechanized farming replacing the traditional ways of life. Protected by Mr. Wills and his family, the mill's integrity is intact and its mill stones, wheels, cogs, and other working parts are well-preserved. As a museum or a restored working grist mill, it could be used to demonstrate a significant facet of industrial and rural commercial activity in the United States between the Civil War and World War II.

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Bibliography

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Sanders, William. Lilly on the Bluestone. Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Press, 1997.

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the County Clerk.

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Marceline, Ohio: Wadsworth Printing Co., 1984.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is all the area shown on the accompanying boundary survey for Phillip M. McCoun, dated January 8, 1996, by Jeffery J. Chambers, P.S. Deed #88108, Deed Book 185, Page 744, Summers County Courthouse, Hinton, West Virginia.

Boundary Justification

The boundary reflects the property historically associated with Cooper's Mill.

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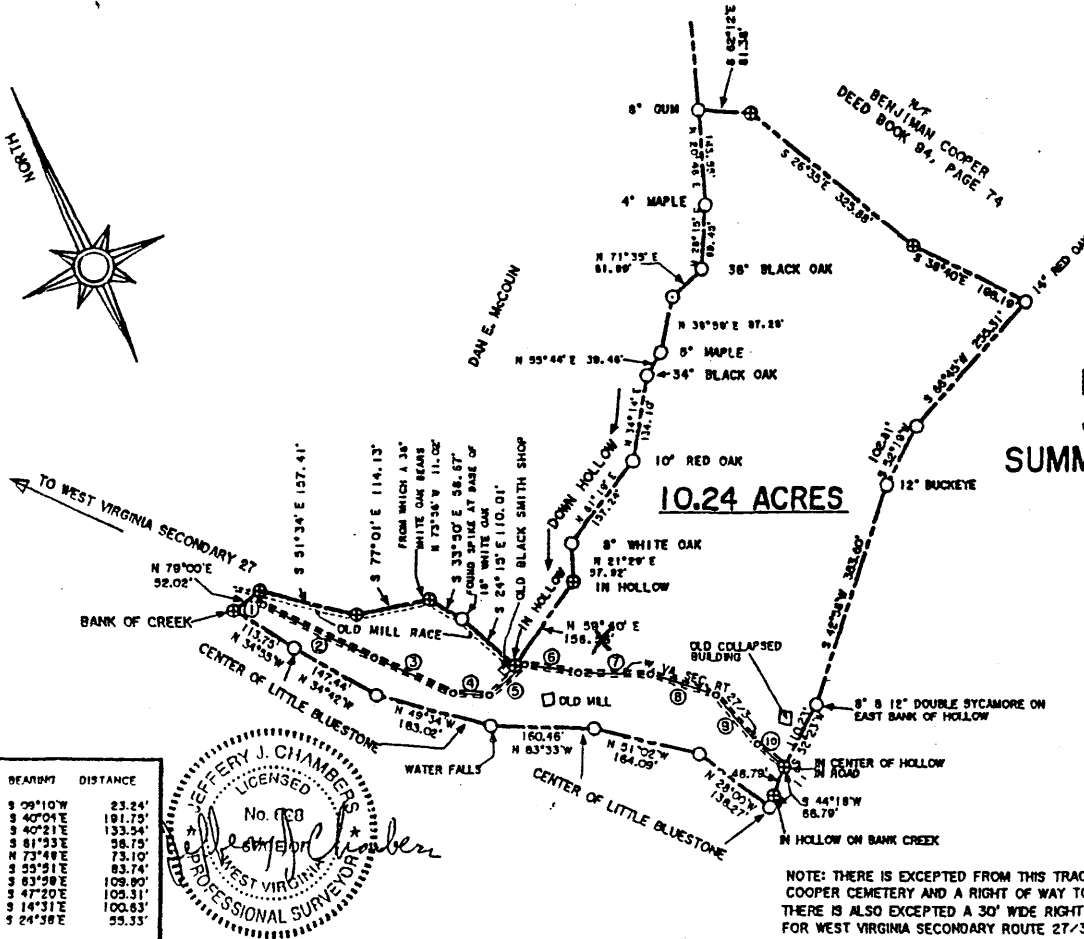
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Boundary Survey Map



Boundary Survey
Part of
PHILLIP M. MCCOUN
DEED BOOK 185, PAGE 744
JUMPING BRANCH DIST.
SUMMERS COUNTY, WEST VA.
TAX MAP 19, PARCEL 22

LEGEND
⊕ SET STEEL REBAR

NOTE
IT IS NOT THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY TO DETERMINE OR LOCATE - EASEMENTS, UTILITIES, OLD TURNPIKES, OLD ROADWAYS, OR RIGHT OF WAYS - EXCEPT AS SHOWN HEREON. IT IS FURTHER NOT THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY TO DETERMINE THE EXISTENCE OR NON-EXISTENCE OF ANY FLOOD HAZARD AREAS, FLOOD PLAIN STATUS OR WET LANDS PERTAINING TO THIS TRACT OF

JEFFERY J. CHAMBERS, LAND P.S.
ROUTE 86, BOX 5A
JUMPING BRANCH, WV 25969
SCALE : 1 INCH = 200 FEET
DATE : 1/8/98 JOB : OLD MILL
JMAN crl ROD MAX jwh

BEARING	DISTANCE
S 09°10'W	23.24'
S 40°01'E	191.75'
S 40°21'E	133.54'
S 81°53'E	58.75'
N 73°48'E	73.10'
S 53°51'E	83.74'
S 83°29'E	109.80'
S 47°20'E	105.31'
S 14°31'E	100.63'
S 24°58'E	55.33'

JEFFERY J. CHAMBERS
LICENSED
No. 108
WEST VIRGINIA
PROFESSIONAL SURVEYOR

NOTE: THERE IS EXCEPTED FROM THIS TRACT THE COOPER CEMETERY AND A RIGHT OF WAY TO IT. THERE IS ALSO EXCEPTED A 30' WIDE RIGHT OF WAY FOR WEST VIRGINIA SECONDARY ROUTE 27/3.

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Section number Photo Page 1

Name of Property: Cooper's Mill
Address: Off Ellison Ridge Road/CR 27
Town: Jumping Branch Vicinity
County: Summers, WV

Photographer: Alan R. Rowe, WVSHPO

Date: October, 2000, March, 2001

Negatives: WV SHPO, Charleston, WV

- Photo 1 of 9: View north across the Little Bluestone River toward the mill.
- Photo 2 of 9: Main facade of the mill, camera facing south.
- Photo 3 of 9: North and east elevations of the mill, with waterwheel showing on the east side. Camera facing southwest.
- Photo 4 of 9: East and south elevations of the mill, showing stone foundation and the steel waterwheel. Camera facing northwest.
- Photo 5 of 9: Interior view of mill, taken on main floor. View shows mill stones and hopper. Camera facing south.
- Photo 6 of 9: View of waterwheel taken from inside basement, showing Fitz Water Wheel plate. Camera facing east.
- Photo 7 of 9: Southern corner of the blacksmith shop. Camera facing north.
- Photo 8 of 9: Southwest side of the blacksmith shop. Camera facing northeast.
- Photo 9 of 9: South wall of the collapsed barn. Camera facing northeast.

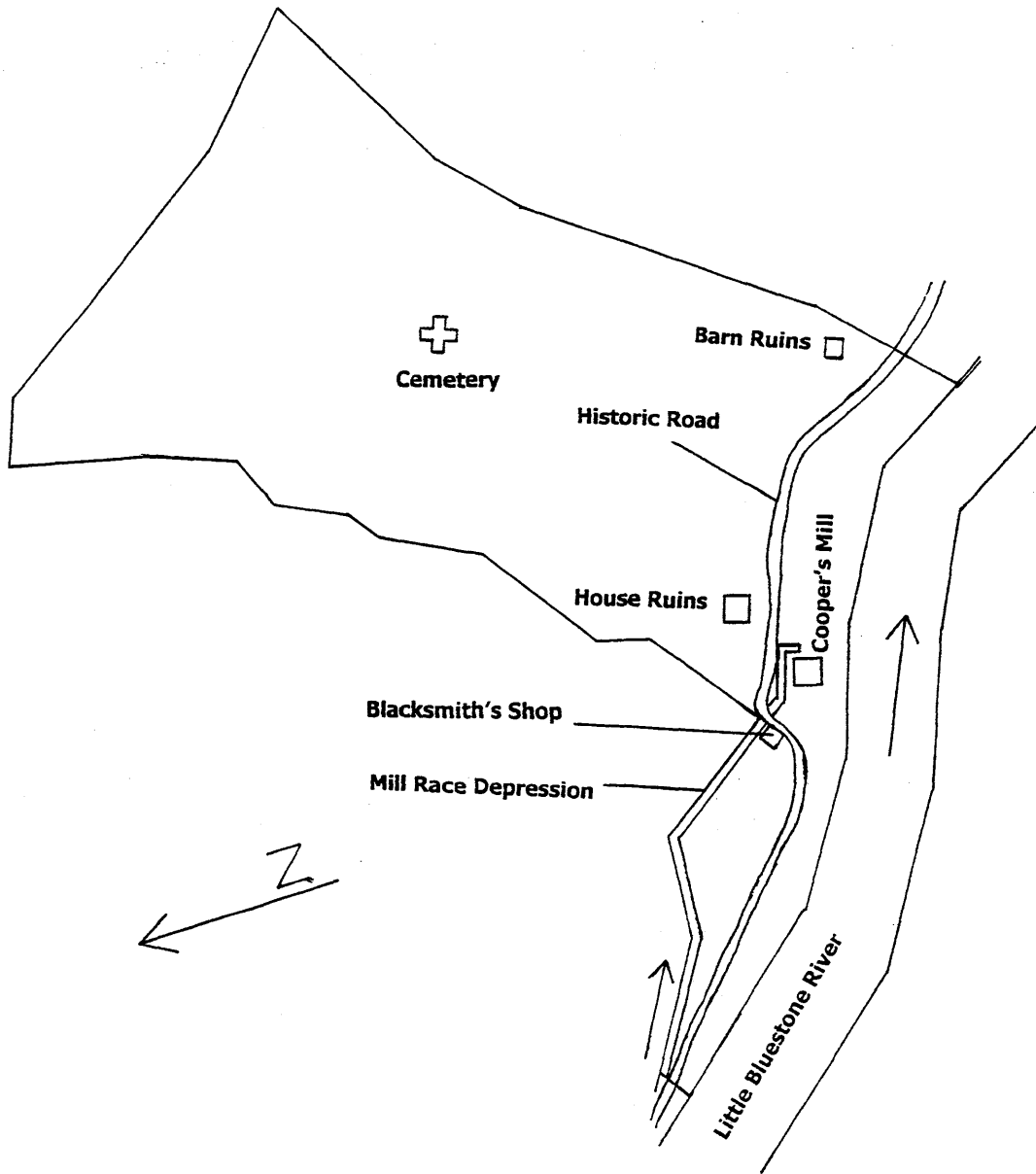
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Site Plan



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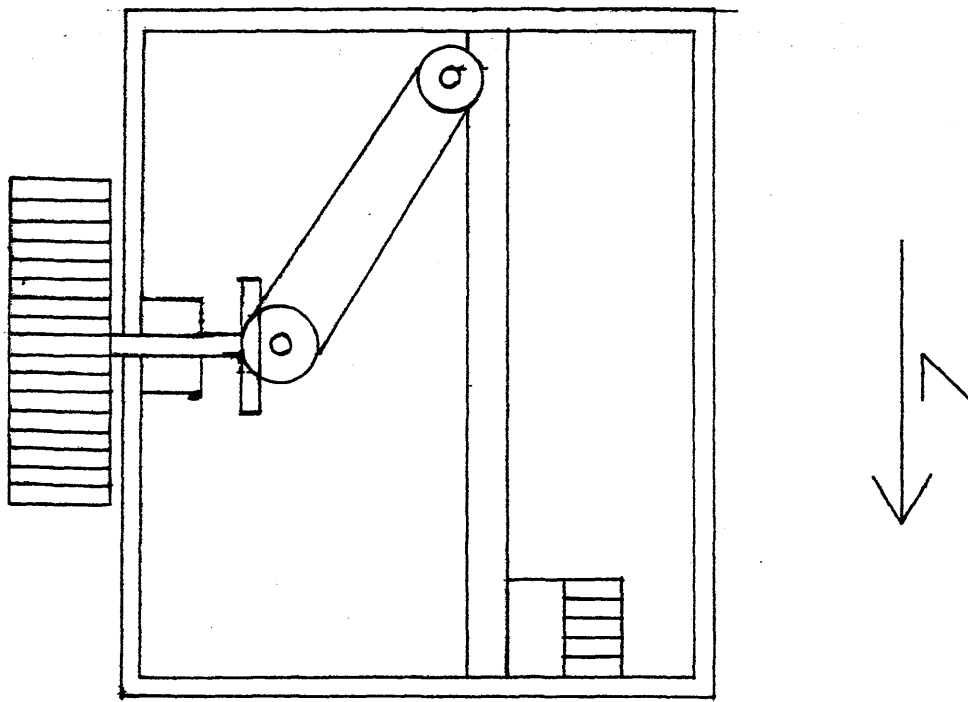
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Mill Floor Plan Page 1

Basement



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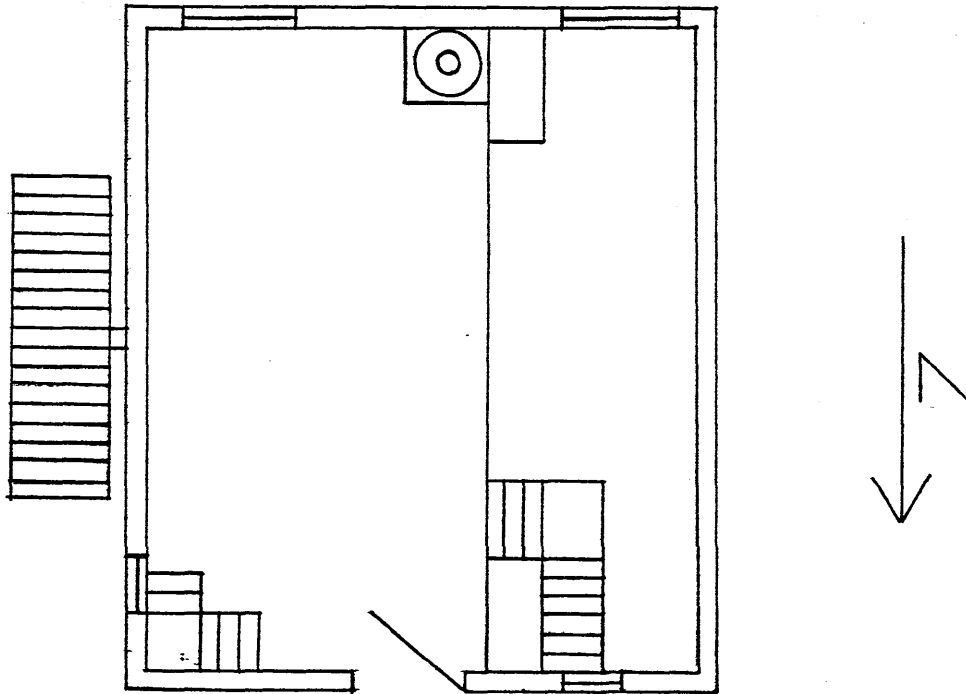
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Mill Floor Plan Page 2

Main Floor



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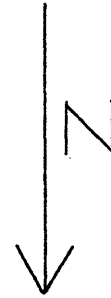
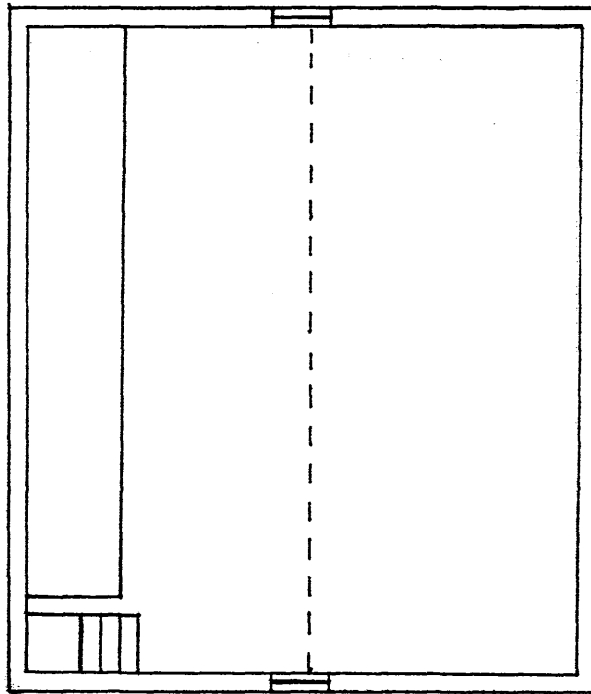
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Mill Floor Plan Page 3

Attic



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Historic Photographs Page 1



COOPER'S MILL ON LITTLE BLUESTONE, SUMMERS COUNTY

—Lee Harper

This photograph, taken in the 1920s, shows Cooper's Mill as it appeared before 1930. Image photocopied from: The West Virginia Encyclopedia, Phil Conley, ed. Charleston, W.Va.: West Virginia Publishing Company, 1929.

(NPS Form 10-900)

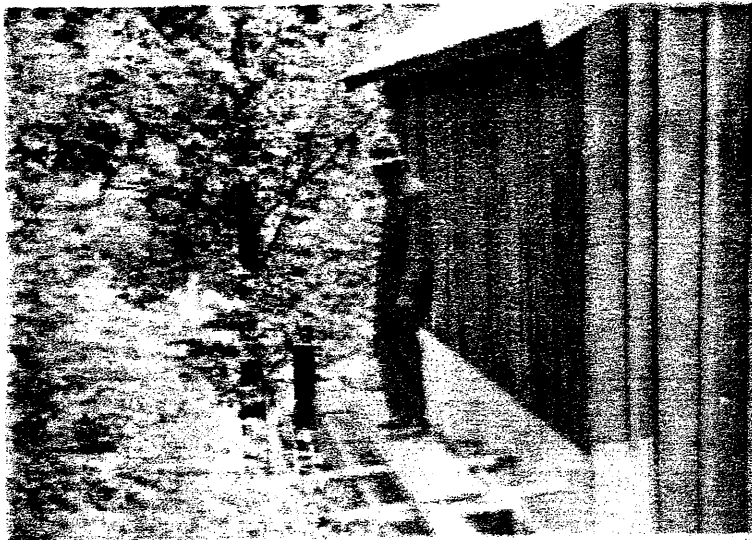
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Historic Photographs Page 2



Thomas Moody Cooper standing on a platform above the waterwheel, circa 1940. Original in possession of Dr. Jack Wills.

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Name of Property

Summers County, WV
County/State

Historic Photographs Page 3



Thomas Moody Cooper residence, circa 1960. Original in possession of Dr. Jack Wills.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Cooper's Mill
Name of Property

Summers County, WV
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Historic Photographs Page 4



Thomas Moody Cooper, circa 1940. Original in possession of Dr. Jack Wills.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Thomas Moody Cooper, with the Cooper house behind him, circa 1940. Original in possession of Dr. Jack Wills.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Cooper's Mill
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Thomas Moody Cooper (l), Roy Ellison (r), and Ellison's daughter Elenita at Cooper's Mill, ca. 1930. Original in possession of Mr. Steve Trail.