

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

290

This form is for use in nominating or requesting 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 any 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 Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3 Cantey Street not for publication _____
city or town Summerton vicinity _____
state South Carolina code 27 county Clarendon zip code 29148

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mary W. Edmunds 2/18/2000
Signature of certifying official Date

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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is _____
 entered in the National Register Edouard A. Beall 3/24/00
_____ 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): _____

for _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

=====
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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	<u>3</u>	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Commerce/Trade</u>	Sub: <u>Speciality Store</u>
<u>Agriculture/Subsistence</u>	<u>Processing</u>
<u>Industry/Processing/Extraction</u>	<u>Manufacturing Facility</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Agriculture/Subsistence</u>	Sub: <u>Processing</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete slab

roof tin

walls weatherboard

other _____

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

See continuation sheets, pp. 7-10.

=====
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.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a 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 (Enter categories from instructions)

commerce

Period of Significance ca. 1903-1949 Significant Dates ca. 1903
_____ ca. 1905
_____ ca. 1921

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder _____

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

See continuation sheets, pp. 11-19.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

See continuation sheets, pp. 20-21.

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: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	560160.80	3718799.48	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

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

See continuation sheet, p. 21.

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

See continuation sheet, p. 21.

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Daniel J. Vivian
organization _____ date 1/25/99
street & number 115 Amulet St., Apt. C telephone (318) 352-6952
city or town Natchitoches state LA zip code 71457
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Additional Documentation
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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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mrs. Eloise Senn
street & number P.O. Box 185
telephone _____
city or town Summerton state SC zip code 29148
=====

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 listings. 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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 7

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

Property Description

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant is a small commercial complex that occupies an irregularly shaped quarter-acre lot at 3 Cantey Street in Summerton, South Carolina. The heart of the complex is comprised by three interconnected early twentieth-century buildings of similar size and construction: a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, and a bottling plant. At the rear of the complex is a group of modern structures related to the commercial operations of the grist mill that do not contribute to the historical significance of the site. The complex is bordered on the south by Summerton's central commercial district and on the north by an open one-acre lot. The property owner, in addition to performing routine maintenance and repairing weather damage as necessary, has made a handful of minor alterations to each of the three significant buildings at the site, but in general the complex retains its historical appearance and character.

The blacksmith shop, the oldest of the three buildings, was built ca. 1903 and stands at the northern end of the complex. This one-story, gable-roofed, frame and weatherboard structure measures approximately twenty by thirty feet. Fenestration on the main facade is limited to a pair of sliding doors flanked by two shuttered, six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The rear (or west) facade of the building is roughly symmetrical. The entryway on this facade is secured with a pair of hinged batten doors.

Several alterations have been made to the blacksmith shop since its construction. In the mid-1940s, the owner's need for additional storage space led him to construct a fully enclosed shed measuring approximately ten by twenty feet against the north side of the building. At the same time, an open shed-roof porch about six feet deep was constructed along the entire length of the rear facade to provide covered exterior storage space. Then, in 1989, the building sustained significant damage during hurricane Hugo. In the aftermath of the storm, the owner installed a new tin roof and also covered the severely decayed clapboard siding on the main facade with tin sheathing, which is presently painted brick red. These measures were necessary for the preservation of the building and did not adversely affect its historical integrity and character.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 8

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

The interior of the building has changed little since the blacksmith shop went out of business in 1939. Virtually all of the original tools and equipment remain in place. A well-worn toolbench stands to the left of the main entrance against the east wall of the building. A brick forge occupies the southwest corner. Immediately adjacent are the hand-operated bellows that were used to bring burning charcoal on the hearth of the forge to the white-hot temperatures necessary for ironworking. Also nearby is the wheelbench used for mounting tires on wooden wagon wheels. Other notable items include a late nineteenth-century hand-powered drill press, the wooden tool tray that John G. Senn used when mounting horseshoes, and the "Senn's Blacksmith Shop" sign that once hung above the main door. Because the building has been used for storage for the past several decades, the interior is currently in a highly disheveled condition.

The central building at the complex was continually used for grist milling operations from its construction ca. 1905 until early 1999. Like each of the adjacent structures, the grist mill is a one-story, wood-frame building with weatherboard siding. Set upon a concrete slab foundation, the building measures roughly eighteen by thirty feet and has a moderately-pitched, tin-covered gable roof. Fenestration on the main facade is limited to a pair of batten doors and a sign hanging above the entryway that reads "Senn's Mill." Two six-over-six double-hung sash windows are arranged symmetrically in the south wall of the building. In the north wall, the frame of a door that once provided access to the blacksmith shop is evident, but this passageway is now covered with a sheet of corrugated tin paneling.

Two minor alterations were made to the grist mill in 1960. First, a room measuring approximately fifteen by twenty feet was added to the rear of the building to accommodate the mill's expanding operations. This addition is covered with a shed roof. The original exterior wall was left standing and now serves as an interior partition that divides the mill into two rooms. Second, the clapboards on the main facade were replaced because much of the original siding had rotted and, at the same time, the main doors were slightly enlarged.

The interior of the mill has changed little since the early

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 9

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

twentieth century. Both the main processing room and the rear utility room (the room created by the 1960 addition) are entirely unfinished, with all ceiling joists and structural framing members exposed. The mill contains several notable pieces of early twentieth-century milling equipment, including two pairs of belt-driven millstones, two gas-powered engines, a grain separating machine, and a set of wooden storage bins. Each of these items has seen at least half a century of almost continuous use and is still fully functional today. Also evident throughout the mill is a coating of fine white powder that constitutes the residue left by several decades of milling operations.

The third building at the complex, the bottling plant, was built ca. 1921 and stands immediately south of the grist mill. This gable-roofed, frame and weatherboard structure measures approximately twenty by thirty-five feet. The main facade features an inset porch and a pair of centered batten doors flanked by two six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The building is painted a pale shade of grey. A three-foot space originally existed between the bottling plant and the mill building, but this space was recently enclosed with weatherboard at each end to prevent vandals from breaking windows on the south side of the mill.

Few modifications have been made to the bottling plant building since its construction. In 1945, the owner removed the deteriorating wooden porch platform and replaced it with one constructed of cinderblocks and poured concrete. Then, in the late 1940s, a small room was constructed in the southeast interior corner of the building for use as an office. In addition, the original tin roof was severely damaged by hurricane Hugo in 1989 and was subsequently replaced.

The interior of the bottling plant is sparsely finished. A wooden partition divides the building lengthwise into two bays, both of which have been used for storage in recent decades. Bags of unmilled corn have generally occupied the south side of the building; the other side was most recently used for storing plumbing supplies. A few pieces of the original bottling line are still present, but most of the bottling equipment was removed from the building long ago.

Situated behind the blacksmith shop, grist mill, and bottling plant are several storage structures erected during the mid-1940s and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 10

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

early 1960s. A small tin shed built in 1945 stands roughly forty feet behind the bottling shop building and is still used for storing unmilled corn. Immediately north of the shed stand two corn storage bins; the first was erected in 1959 and the second was added ca. 1963, as the mill entered its peak period of operation. These structures are no longer in use. Located between the mill building and the corn storage bins is the cargo chamber of what was once a 30' refrigerated dairy van. After purchasing the van in the early 1960s, the owner of the mill removed the cargo chamber from the chassis and set it in the yard behind the mill, where it was used for storing unmilled corn and oats. None of these storage structures contribute to the historical significance of the site.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 11

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

Statement of Significance

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in the commercial development of Summerton, South Carolina, during the early twentieth century. The grist mill, the most significant enterprise at the site, recently closed its doors after nearly a century of continuous operation.¹ It is an outstanding example of the small independent grist mills that were commonplace in rural communities across the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The blacksmith shop and bottling plant are typical of early twentieth-century light industrial buildings. The commercial complex comprised by these three structures has been a central presence in Summerton's business district throughout the twentieth century and today retains its historical appearance and character.

Commercial activity at 3 Cantey Street began about 1903, when John G. Senn opened Senn's Blacksmith Shop for business. Senn, a native of Newberry County, South Carolina, had moved to Summerton with his wife Sallie about a year earlier to care for Sallie's elderly father, a Methodist minister named Jacob L. Shuford. While operating a Newberry County farm during the 1870s and 1880s, Senn had evidently acquired at least a handful of basic blacksmithing skills, and after arriving in Summerton he again practiced ironworking in his spare time at a small forge on the Shuford family farm. Senn's decision to enter into full-time work as a blacksmith seems to have been a natural one.²

Although the blacksmith shop was profitable from the outset,

¹Before closing, the mill was widely reputed to be the oldest continually operating business in Clarendon County.

²Interview with Walter B. Senn, Summerton, S.C., 21 Nov. 1998. Jacob L. Shuford apparently spent much of his career serving as an itinerant minister: he was enumerated with his family in Fairfield County, South Carolina, on the 1870 federal census and in Orangeburg County, South Carolina, on the 1880 census. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, MS Population Schedules for Fairfield County, South Carolina, 1870, p. 159; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, MS Population Schedules for Orangeburg County, South Carolina, 1880, p. 47.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

Senn's increasing family obligations soon led him to seek additional sources of income. When Senn's eldest son, John G. Senn, Jr., and his wife died during a flu epidemic in 1904, Senn became responsible for raising their four children. About 1905, Senn built a second building at 3 Cantey Street in which he began operating a grist mill. This enterprise also proved successful. Patronage of the mill and blacksmith shop increased steadily in the years that followed, and Senn soon grew to be recognized as a leading figure in Summerton's business community.³

Senn's personal financial circumstances were undoubtedly among the central factors that led him to pursue his business ventures so earnestly, but in larger terms, the success of his blacksmith shop and grist mill owed much to the broad changes then sweeping through the local agricultural sector. Throughout Clarendon County, the last decades of the nineteenth century saw increased cultivation of the rich bottomlands along the Santee River and its tributaries. Corn and cotton were the dominant crops in the area. In 1880, Clarendon County farmers produced 8,589 bales of cotton and more than 220,000 bushels of corn; a decade later, total annual production had risen to 15,274 bales of cotton and 340,284 bushels of corn.⁴ The trend continued in the early decades of the twentieth century. The corn crop yielded nearly 641,000 bushels in 1909 and over 850,000 in 1919; cotton production grew to 23,642 bales in 1899, 37,000 in 1909, and 38,809 in 1919.⁵

³Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

⁴Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), pp. 810-811; Bureau of the Census, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), pp. 382, 396.

⁵Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900*, vol. VI, *Agriculture*, pt. II, *Crops and Irrigation* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 433; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1910*, vol. VII, *Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 517; Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 13

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

Population growth accompanied the rapid expansion of Clarendon County's agricultural base, and the combined influence of these two factors established Summerton as a local center of commercial activity. In 1889, the town became an incorporated municipality, and in the fall of the same year the completion of the Wilson and Summerton Railroad, a twenty-five mile branch of the Atlantic Coast Line system, delivered a further boost to the local economy.⁶ The arrival of the railroad proved to be the single most important factor in sustaining Summerton's nascent prosperity. By 1900 the town had a total of 236 residents, and over the next several decades the population continued to increase at a steady rate, rising to 678 by 1910 and 957 by 1920.⁷ The population of Clarendon County, which numbered 19,190 in 1880, grew markedly during the same period to reach 28,184 by 1900 and 34,878 by 1920. Signs of civic growth were also evident in Summerton's commercial district, which by 1916 included two banks, two drug stores, a furniture retailer, several dry goods

Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1920, vol. VI, Agriculture, pt. II, The Southern States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 287. Figures for corn production include all corn grown in a given year whether harvested for grain, cut for fodder, or used for silage.

⁶J. Maynard Davis, *History of Town of Summerton, South Carolina* (Summerton, S.C.: n.p., [ca. 1989]), pp. 6, 16, 19; D.O. Rhame, "Summerton," in G.T. Gresham, comp., *Clarendon County Directory, 1900* (Greenville, S.C.: Keys & Thomas, 1900), p. 9.

⁷Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, vol. I, Population, pt. I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 352; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1910, vol. III, Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 643; Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1920, vol. I, Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 297.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 14

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

merchants, and the Hotel Summerton.⁸

John G. Senn's enterprises derived considerable benefits from Summerton's growth and the increased agricultural productivity of the surrounding area. The success of each business rested upon the essential services it provided to local farmers. The blacksmith shop did steady business selling and repairing agricultural implements and installing horseshoes and wagon tire. The grist mill served farmers by processing corn into grits and feed, grinding oats, and milling flour. Overall, Senn's businesses played a critical role in sustaining day-to-day operations on farms throughout the area.

Signs of Senn's success became especially apparent in the decade after the blacksmith shop and grist mill opened for business. Most notably, he was able to purchase the property at 3 Cantey Street where both businesses were located for the considerable sum of \$2,625 in December 1909.⁹ About the same time, he moved his family into a comfortable residential home only a few blocks away.¹⁰ The acquisition of these properties served as a representative measure of Senn's achievements. Strong demand existed for the goods and services supplied by the blacksmith shop and grist mill, and as owner of both enterprises, Senn received handsome profits.

The scope of commercial activity at 3 Cantey Street underwent further expansion in the early 1920s. Senn allowed his brother-in-law, Frank W. Josey, to build a simple frame and weatherboard building on the south side of the grist mill for use as a bottling plant. About 1921, Josey commenced bottling operations and began distributing the popular Orange Crush brand of soda to retailers in Summerton and nearby towns. This enterprise proved immediately profitable, and Josey soon found it necessary to run the bottling line overtime to

⁸Sanborn Insurance Map, Summerton, S.C., 1916 (New York: Sanborn Map Company), pp. 1-2. See also Rhame, "Summerton," p. 9.

⁹Deed Book F-4, pp. 472-473, Register of Mesne Conveyances, Clarendon County, Clarendon County Courthouse, Manning, S.C. Previously, Senn had rented the property from A.A. Strauss and T.S. Rogan.

¹⁰Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 15

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

fill all of his customers' orders.¹¹

With three different enterprises established at 3 Cantey Street, daily commerce continued without interruption throughout the 1920s and even into the 1930s, despite the onset of the Great Depression, but by the end of the decade a transitional period had begun. In 1939 Senn closed the blacksmith shop, where operations had slowed markedly in recent years.¹² In large measure, the blacksmith shop was a victim of changing times. As mass-produced tools and agricultural implements became widely available, demand declined for many of the goods and services that Senn offered. The automobile and the mechanization of southern agriculture in particular had a huge impact on the shop's operations. Whereas Senn had once spent much of his time mounting wagon tire and horseshoes, such services fast became obsolete in the era of the car and the tractor. As a result, Senn's blacksmith shop met the same fate that befell countless others across the South during the same period.

Another factor that contributed to the closure of the blacksmith shop was Senn's age. Senn turned eighty-eight in 1939. For nearly four decades he had been one of the most respected businessmen in Summerton. Although he continued to handle affairs at the mill with the same degree of authority he had exercised in his younger years, there was no doubt that he was nearing the end of his working career. In fact, by the late 1930s, Senn had entered semi-retirement and Josey had assumed much of the responsibility for running the business from day to day.¹³

Further changes took place in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1942 Senn died at the age of ninety-one. Senn left his property at 3 Cantey Street to his four grandchildren, but his will stipulated that Josey would continue to manage the mill until his heirs decided what to do with the business. Only one, Walter B. Senn, Jr., was willing to take charge of the mill, and in 1946 he paid each of his siblings \$150 for their interest in the property. Josey, however, continued to run the

¹¹Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

¹²Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

¹³Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998. John G. Senn was born in Newberry, S.C., 14 Feb. 1851.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 16

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

mill until his retirement in 1951, and thereafter Senn managed the business until Josey's death in 1959, at which time he became the sole owner and operator. By then, the mill was the only functioning enterprise at the site: roughly a decade earlier, Josey had closed the bottling plant in response to South Carolina's adoption of stricter legislation concerning sanitary conditions in such facilities.¹⁴

Walter B. Senn, Jr., proved to be as able a mill operator and businessmen as his uncle and grandfather had each been. Born October 29, 1917, Senn grew up in Summerton. By his own admission, he was regarded as the black sheep of the family, having quit school in the seventh grade. By contrast, each of his two sisters, Elizabeth and Louise, had studied at Winthrop College, and his brother, John, finished high school. But Senn compensated for what he lacked in formal schooling with a strong work ethic and never found it difficult to obtain employment. He worked at a series of odd jobs before becoming a full-time truck driver in 1933. About 1937, Senn went to work for the New South Express Line, a trucking company based in Sumter, and within two years he became the company's agent in Hartsville, South Carolina. His career with New South Express was halted, however, by the nation's entry into World War II following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Senn was drafted into the army on February 24, 1942. He served in the signal corps and saw action throughout the South Pacific before being discharged in October 1945.¹⁵

Senn returned to Summerton after the war. He kept busy not only by helping his Uncle Josey at the mill but, beginning in 1949, also by working as a civilian maintenance employee and heavy equipment mechanic at Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter. In his work at Shaw, Senn was able to make full use of his mechanical talents. His duties initially included welding and a variety of tasks in the machine shop; later, Senn became responsible for the upkeep of the equipment in the several mess halls at the base. Senn's willingness to work at Shaw

¹⁴Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998; Bill of Sale, Clara S. Josey to Walter B. Senn, 1 July 1959, Walter B. Senn papers, in possession of Eloise Senn, Summerton, S.C. According to Senn, the bottling shop closed in 1947 or 1948.

¹⁵Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 17

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

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while at the same time overseeing operations at the mill in Summerton reflected the demands placed upon him by his new duties as a husband and father. Senn had married in 1942, and soon thereafter he and his wife had their first child, a daughter. Two more children were born in the years that followed. Senn worked earnestly during this period to fulfill his obligations to his family.¹⁶

Despite his daily work in Sumter, Senn made the upkeep of the mill his first priority, and the years after Senn took full charge of operations in 1959 marked its peak period of productivity. Increasing demand for the mill's services led Senn to undertake a major expansion of facilities. First, he installed a corn storage bin behind the mill in 1959. The following year, he built a one-room addition on the west side of the mill building and refurbished its main facade. About 1963, Senn installed a second corn storage bin and also converted a cargo chamber salvaged from a 30' refrigerated dairy van into a storage shed for oats and corn. The addition of these structures greatly expanded storage facilities at the site and in turn increased the efficiency of the mill's operations. Meanwhile, as Senn boosted his storage capacity, he did remarkably little to the machinery that constituted the heart of the mill, even though much of it had been acquired by his grandfather roughly half a century earlier. Senn relied on his considerable mechanical skill to keep even the most antiquated pieces of equipment running smoothly.¹⁷

Senn's careful managerial practices improved the profitability of the mill. Net earnings, averaging about \$9,750 per year, remained steady during the early 1960s while Senn worked to improve the mill's physical plant. But after 1965, annual profits began to rise sharply, sometimes by as much as \$7,000 a year. The mill's net profits totaled \$13,188 in 1966, \$23,577 in 1968, and \$35,199 in 1970.¹⁸ Low overhead costs were among the key factors that made such gains possible. Equipment expenditures remained negligible during the period, and Senn also managed to keep labor costs to a minimum. He employed one full-time worker to handle daily operations at the mill and hired

¹⁶Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

¹⁷Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

¹⁸Senn's Mill General Account Book, Walter B. Senn papers.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 18

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

additional laborers as necessary during peak periods of demand, such as during the annual fall harvest.¹⁹

In June 1974, Senn retired from his work at Shaw Air Force Base and began to devote more of his time to the mill. Earnings had continued to climb during the early 1970s, and in 1974 his net profits exceeded \$50,000 for the first time. Yet in spite of the comfortable income he was receiving from the business, Senn was not content to have idle time on his hands, and in 1976 he began serving residents of Summerton as a plumber, electrician, and handyman. By working in this capacity, Senn boosted his annual income by a considerable margin. Combined profits from the mill and his household repair service totaled \$64,486 in 1976, \$73,623 the following year, and over \$81,000 in 1979.²⁰ The sharp rise in inflation that accompanied the economic recession of the mid-1970s was in part responsible for such figures, but the fact remains that Senn's earnings increased markedly during the period. Strong demand existed for capable handymen in Summerton, and Senn's decision to take on such work paid handsome dividends.

In retrospect, it is remarkable that the mill's revenues increased so dramatically throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Certainly by about 1970 the business had become something of an anachronism. The preceding decades had seen the majority of small town grist mills in the South close their doors as goods produced by large grain processing plants in major cities became widely available. The continued success of Senn's mill was largely due to the fact that patterns of agricultural trade in the area surrounding Summerton remained highly localized. In particular, farmers found it more convenient to have their corn ground into grits and feed at Senn's mill than to purchase such supplies from local retailers. Continuing demand for the services provided by the mill thus allowed it to remain economically viable long after most of its counterparts in other small southern towns had shut down.

In the mid-1980s Senn finally began to curtail operations at the mill. He stopped grinding corn full-time and shifted instead to a three-day-a-week schedule. In 1986 he also discontinued his plumbing, electrical, and household repair service. As he neared the age of

¹⁹Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

²⁰Senn's Mill General Account Book, Walter B. Senn papers.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 19

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

seventy, Senn gradually allowed himself to slip into what can best be described as partial retirement. By the mid-1990s, he had stopped grinding corn for the general public and continued to accept orders only from a few longstanding customers.²¹ In early 1999, at the age of eighty-one and stricken with cancer, Senn was finally forced to close the mill.²² He died a short while later in February 1999.

Today, Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant occupies a central place in Summerton's civic memory. In supplying the local agricultural sector with essential goods and services for nearly a century, each of the three enterprises at the site made significant contributions to the economic and social development of the town. The site thus provides an important reminder of Summerton's commercial heyday during the early twentieth century.

²¹Interview with Walter B. Senn, 21 Nov. 1998.

²²Interview with Walter B. Senn, Summerton, S.C., 22 Jan. 1999.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 20

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9, 10 Page 21

Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary of the nominated property is restricted to the footprint of the four interconnected structures historically known as Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant at 3 Cantey Street in Summerton, S.C. See attached property tax map for detail.

Boundary Justification: The boundary of the nominated property includes the four historically significant buildings commonly referred to as Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photographs Page 22 Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

Additional Documentation

Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs.

Name of Property: Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and
Orange Crush Bottling Plant.
Location of Property: 3 Cantey Street, Summerton, S.C.
Photographer: Daniel J. Vivian.
Location of Negatives: Daniel J. Vivian, Natchitoches, La.
Date of Photographs: November 21, 1998.

1. Main facades of buildings at 3 Cantey Street. Shown left to right are the bottling plant building, the grist mill, and the blacksmith shop.
2. Alternate view of bottling plant, grist mill, and blacksmith shop (partially obscured). Standing to the left of the bottling shop is the current property owner, Walter B. Senn.
3. Alternate view of bottling plant, grist mill, and blacksmith shop.
4. Interior of grist mill. Shown at right is the grain separating machine.
5. Interior of grist mill. Shown are grain storage bins (at left) and other equipment.
6. Interior of grist mill. Detail of belt-driven millstones.
7. Interior of grist mill. Detail of engine used for powering milling equipment.
8. Interior of grist mill. Detail of Walter B. Senn's workspace. Grain separating machine (partially obscured) is at far left; at right are bags of grits ready for sale.
9. Interior of grist mill. Detail of southeast corner.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photographs Page 23 Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

10. Interior of grist mill. Detail of grain storage bins, scales, and other milling equipment.
11. Interior of grist mill, looking toward main entryway. Shown at left is an engine used for supplying power to milling equipment.
12. Interior of grist mill. Detail of photograph of John G. Senn, the original proprietor of the blacksmith shop and grist mill.
13. Main facade of bottling plant building.
14. South facade of bottling plant building.
15. Interior of bottling plant building. Detail of south storage bay.
16. View of complex at 3 Cantey Street from north. At left is the north facade of the blacksmith shop.
17. North facade of blacksmith shop.
18. Interior of blacksmith shop. Detail of northeast corner.
19. Interior of blacksmith shop. Detail of southeast corner.
20. Interior of blacksmith shop. Detail of north side.
21. Interior of blacksmith shop. Detail of southwest corner. Shown immediately to the right of the center of the photograph is the brick masonry forge where ironworking took place while the business was in operation.
22. Rear of (left to right) grist mill and bottling plant building.
23. Rear of blacksmith shop.
24. Shed and grain storage bins at the rear of the complex.
25. Grain storage bins and shed (originally the cargo chamber of a 30' refrigerated dairy van) at the rear of the complex.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

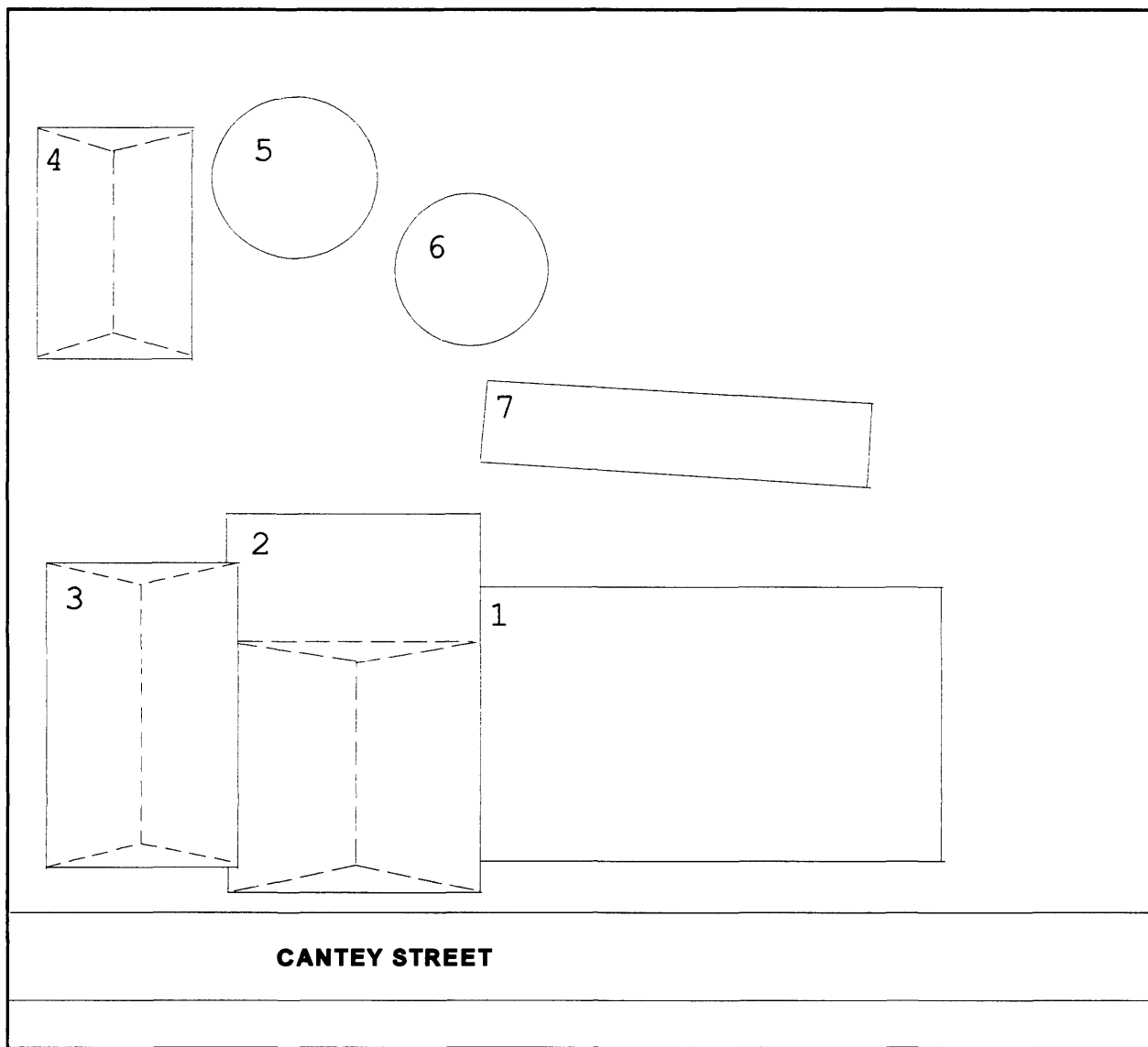
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Maps Page 24 Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop,
and Orange Crush Bottling Plant
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

=====

Maps

1. Copy of Clarendon County, South Carolina, property tax map 78-10 showing location of nominated property.
2. United States Geological Survey map, Summerton Quadrangle, South Carolina, showing location of nominated property.
3. Site plan showing contributing and non-contributing resources at the Senn's Grist Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant complex.



1. Blacksmith Shop (ca. 1903), contributing.
2. Grist Mill (ca. 1905), contributing.
3. Bottling Plant (ca. 1921), contributing.
4. Shed (ca. 1945), contributing.
5. Corn Storage Bin (1959), non-contributing.
6. Corn Storage Bin (ca. 1963), non-contributing.
7. Shed/Dairy Van Cargo Chamber (early 1960s), non-contributing.

Map 3. Site plan of contributing and non-contributing resources at the Senn's Mill, Blacksmith Shop, and Orange Crush Bottling Plant complex. *Not drawn to scale.*