

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAR 5 1984
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Robinson Mill

and/or common Pond Creek Milling Company

2. Location

street & number ~~Old State Highway~~ ⁷² 72 N/A not for publication

city, town Loudon vic. X vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Loudon code 105

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John Joel "Joe" Randle, Jr.

street & number Route 2, Box 41

city, town Loudon X vicinity of state Tennessee 37774

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Loudon County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Loudon state Tennessee 37774

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Pond Creek Mill, formerly called the Robinson Mill, has two stories and a basement all of which rest on a solid foundation of native limestone. The wood frame exterior was originally sided with weather boards; however, almost all of the weatherboarding was subsequently covered with channeled aluminum siding in 1956 for easier maintenance. Portions of the original weatherboarding are still exposed on the eastern elevation. The gabled, tin roof now covers a 90' x 32' building. The original mill structure measured 60' x 32' (a 30' long addition to the south was added for storage in 1941). The mill is in excellent overall physical condition, having operated continuously since it was constructed in 1849. No elaborate architectural designs are exhibited. The simple architectural style underlies the functionalism typical of 19th century water powered grist mills of this region.

The mill is located 1½ miles southeast of Loudon, Tennessee, on Clear Branch along the north side of Poplar Springs Road. Both mill and storage building are situated about 1800 feet from the left bank of Watts Bar Lake, about 40 feet above the normal summer pool elevation.

The mill has always been used in milling related activities. It has never been altered for alternative uses, although it has undergone a series of progressive improvements over the past 100 years to keep it a viable, competitive, commercial business. Before the turn of the 20th century there was a small distillery at the mill. The remains of the distillery furnace that cooked the mash to make applejack were removed by the present owner's father in 1939.

Before 1911, the mill was powered by a wooden overshot water wheel. The wooden waterwheel, must have been considerably smaller than the 32 foot diameter wheel that replaced it, since a wooden wheel of that size would soon collapse under its own weight. It seems likely, therefore, that the old wooden wheel was 20 feet in diameter, or less, and that it was replaced with the larger wheel to increase the power that was needed for a growing business. Nothing remains of this wheel today.

In 1911, a new Fitz steel overshot (or overshoot, as Mr. Fitz called them) wheel manufactured in Hanover, Pennsylvania, was installed. This large, steel wheel measured 28 inches across the face and was 32 feet in diameter. In 1953, the old steel wheel was removed, and the mill was converted to electric power because Clear Branch could no longer be counted on to supply the power needs of the mill. The old steel wheel was sold to the Martha White Flour Company in Hialeah, Florida.

Unusual in mills of this state, is an elevator in the mill which was simply used to transport one man, or perhaps bags of grain or other materials, from one floor to another. The elevator was electric powered. Although operable, the elevator is no longer used.

There were two runs of stone buhrs in the mill before the present steel rollers were installed. One set of buhrs went to the Old Mill at Pigeon Forge, Tennessee (1830, NR 6/10/75), and the other set went to the Pillsbury Company offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where they are displayed along with sets of buhrs from all the other states. Presently, three New Richmond brand rollers are used to make flour, while one Allis Chalmers "3 stand roller" is used to make cornmeal. These roll stands were all reconditioned by the W.J. Savage Company formerly of Knoxville, Tennessee, and installed by Joe Randle, Sr. in 1938 and 1956, respectively.

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Currently, three major products are produced at the mill: Cornmeal, flour, and feed. Machinery used in the mill was manufactured by various companies well known in the milling industry since before the turn of the 20th century. Examples are the Barnard and Leas sifter used to grade the flour stock as it comes from the rolls; the W.J. Savage Co., who manufactured the separator (used to clean the stock before it is milled); an Endolater corn scourer (a secondary cleaning machine); a Howes wheat scourer; a Nordyke and Marmon double corn roll; and a Sprout Waldron sifter used to grade cornmeal. The elevator heads, boots and legs were all custom made at the mill over 50 years ago. With the exception of the W.J. Savage Company, these old and respected milling machinery companies are still in business. (The W.J. Savage Company has turned towards other lines of business).

A unique feature found in the mill is a water wheel speed indicator used to gauge the speed of the old steel overshot wheel. The indicator was fashioned from parts of a Case steam engine and was used to determine how much water was put on the wheel so that the line shafts would turn at just the right speed.

The massive supporting timbers of the mill, joined with wooden pegs, speak of its age. The large timbers were needed to support the weight of the grain that was originally stored on the second floor, as well as the heavy milling machinery. Vibrations from the operation would tax supporting beams of lesser dimensions. The original oak sills are still in place and measure 24" X 28" X 40 feet long.

Outside and adjacent to the mill are three metal Butler grain storage bins of 15 tons capacity each, and five similar bins of 30 tons capacity each. These eight bins were erected between 1958 and 1972. There are no dependencies included in this application.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates	1849	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Robinson Mill is being nominated under National Register criteria B and C for its historical significance as an early milling operation associated with John Holston, early settler of the region and its architectural significance as one of the few extant examples of an early grist mill in Loudon County, Tennessee.

In 1820 a large body of land called the Hiwassee Purchase was purchased by the federal government from the Cherokee Indians by the Treaties of Tellico of 1817 and 1819. This land subsequently was sold to early settlers by auction at nearby Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1820 after being surveyed into Sections, Ranges, and Townships. This was a most unusual manner of surveying, rarely practiced in the mountainous regions of East Tennessee, but it is possible today to research the Land Entries and Grants and trace from the beginning in 1820 those who have occupied the land. So it was in 1820 that the land on which the grist mill sits can be traced to its original owner, John Holston. The location on Clear Branch with a large force of water from springs made it not only an excellent prospect for a grist mill, but the clearness of the water made it practical for a distillery. By locating it on higher ground and some little distance from the mouth of Clear Branch, Holston was able to avoid the frequent floods of the Tennessee River.

John Holston entered his bid for land in Sections 19 and 29 in fractional Township 2, Range 3 East of the Meridian for 480 acres in 1824 and 1825. Holston was granted the land because he lived thereon and had made improvements and built various structures. Within the next twenty years he expanded his holdings to 1600 acres of land on which he had a grist mill, a sawmill, a carding machine mill, a cotton gin, a tannery, and a distillery. All of John Holston's land was in Monroe County and it formed the boundary line between Monroe and Roane County. When Loudon County was formed in 1870 from parts of Blount, Monroe, and Roane Counties, John Holston's land then became located in almost the center of Loudon County.

John Holston was a most remarkable man having been born in 1801 in present Grainger County, Tennessee, the son of Henry Holston and the grandson of Stephen Holston, both of whom were Revolutionary soldiers. It was Stephen Holston for whom the Holston River was named and who was credited with its discovery.

John Holston's father, Henry, died 1825 in Grainger County according to the wills of that county and John came to the Loudon area shortly thereafter, being about twenty-two or twenty-three years old. Moving with him were his brothers Henry (a miller), William, whose estate he later settled, and two sisters: Rebecca (the wife of Isham Thompson) and Mary (wife of John Robinson).

The mill was constructed in 1849 but John Holston's small frontier empire ended early when his wife Mary died in 1851 at 42 years of age and his son, William H., age 23, died the same year. John himself died two years later at age 52. They left the following orphan children: Mary Jane Holston, who married in 1853 Washington L. Price, and eventually moved to the Pacific Northwest; Ann E. Holston, who married in 1854 James Harrison and remained in Loudon caring for the minor children; Judy Ann Holston, who married Wiley Patton in 1867;

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.46 acres

Quadrangle name Loudon, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	7	4	2	1	9	0	3	9	5	6	3	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rhea Alexander, N/A
Michael LaForest, Editor & Publisher of Old Mill News
organization Society for the Preservation of Old Mills date August 23, 1983
street & number Fowlers Mill Rd., Route 4 telephone 615-485-2282
604 Ensley Drive, Route 29 telephone 615-577-7757
city or town Loudon state Tennessee 37774
Knoxville state Tennessee 37920

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 3/1/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

for Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

date 4/5/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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John Holston, Jr., born February 20, 1845 and died 1870 and Thomas J. Holston.

Because of debts against the John Holston estate, suits were filed both in Circuit and Chancery Courts of Monroe County. Thomas Robinson was appointed Administrator and William C. Julian served jointly as Guardian and Administrator for the minor heirs.

One slave, Sylvia, was sold from the John Holston estate and most of the 1600 acres was sold at auction through Circuit Court but James Harrison in the right of his wife Ann, obtained title to the mill and 430 acres. However, Harrison was unable to pay off the indebtedness and he sold most of the land in 1861 to Phineas Thurston who also could not pay off the indebtedness. During this time it is possible that Thomas Robinson operated the mill without title to the land until his death in 1866 or until the minor heirs had reached their majority. There is a gap in the Monroe County records during many of these Civil War years as General Sherman invaded Monroe County and burned the Courthouse on his way to Atlanta.

A milling company had been formed by John W. Robinson, who was the son of Thomas Robinson. Others in the company were Alonzo R. Robinson, Thomas King Robinson and also in joint ownership of the mill and 360 acres was Joseph W. Robinson. He married Mary Alice Robinson, a daughter of John W. Robinson, and sister to Alonzo R. and Thomas King Robinson. This Joseph was living well into the Twentieth Century and is remembered by many Loudon citizens today by his nickname of "Miller Joe" Robinson.

Locally it has always gone by the name of Robinson Mill. When Mr. Joe Randle, Sr., purchased the mill in 1937 he simply renamed it Pond Creek as he already operated a business under this name.

The present owner of the mill is Mr. Joe Randle, Jr., who with his son, James J. Randle, operate a flour mill along with other products. This is a third generation milling family who have preserved the old building with care and pride.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHY REFERENCES

Goodspeed, History of Tennessee, 1887, p. 1086.

Loudon County Deed Books:

Book 3, p. 207

Book 4, p. 82

Book 11, p. 575

Book 36, p. 206

Book 42, p. 36

Monroe County Chancery Court Records

Monroe County Warranty Deed Book R (1861), p. 28.

Randle, John Joel, interview, June 29, 1983

United States Manufactures Census: Loudon County, 1880.

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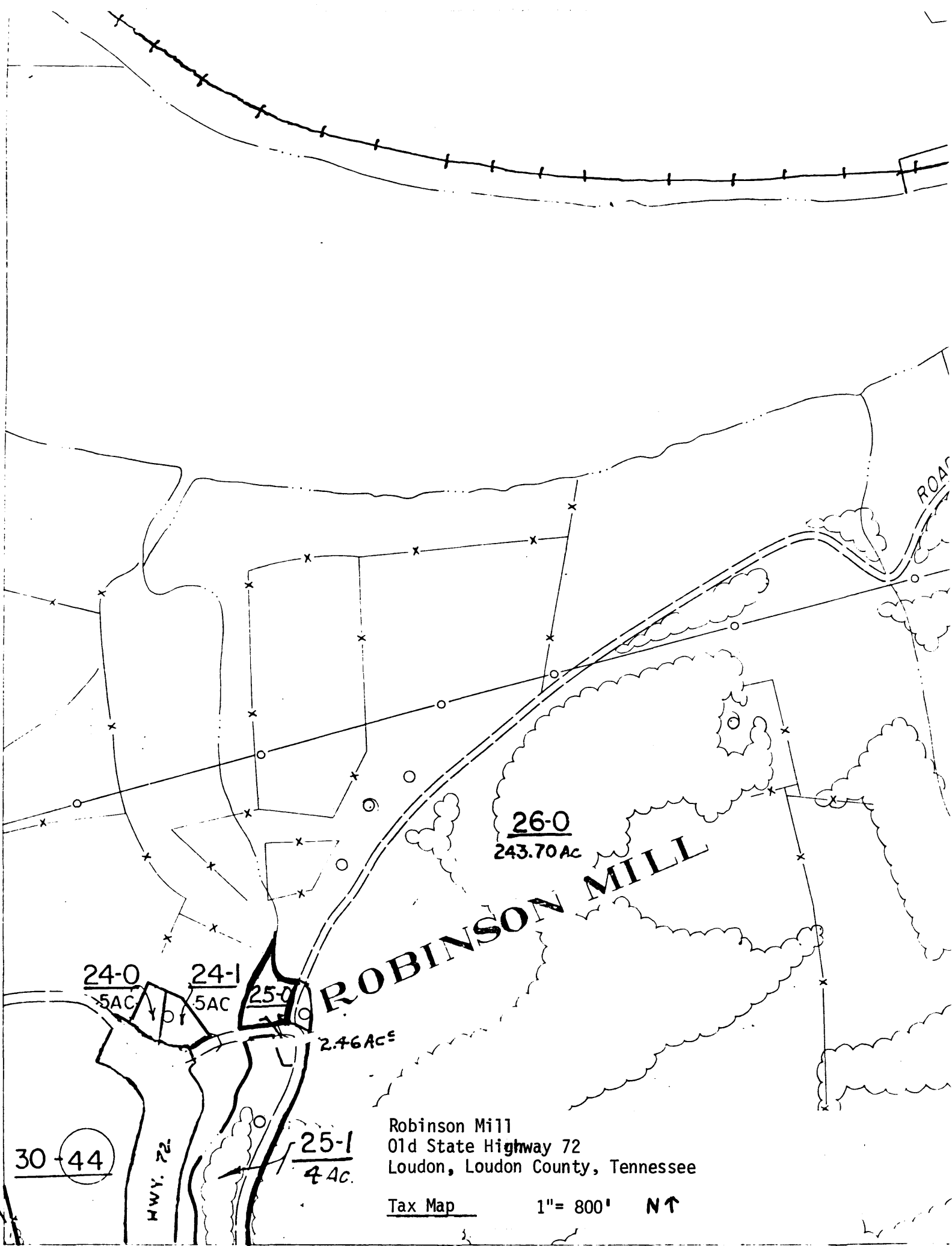
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The property nominated is a single 2.46 acre tract of land bounded on the south by Poplar Springs Road, on the west and north by adjacent property lines and on the east by Vonore Road. The tract includes the mill proper, and the still visible remains of the old mill race which began at a small dam (now obliterated), and passed underneath Poplar Springs Road through a tile, where it was directed to the old over-shot waterwheel.



30-44

HWY. 72

ROBINSON MILL

Robinson Mill
Old State Highway 72
Loudon, Loudon County, Tennessee

Tax Map 1" = 800' N ↑