

STATE: New Jersey  
 COUNTY: Mercer  
 FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 ENTRY DATE: NOV 19 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Somerset Roller Mills  
 AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: ~~River Rd.~~ <sup>NJ</sup> Route 29  
 CITY OR TOWN: Titusville vicinity CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Thirteenth  
 STATE: New Jersey CODE: 34 COUNTY: Mercer CODE: 021

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>mills are unoccupied-</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Miss Ethel Coover  
 STREET AND NUMBER: River Rd.  
 CITY OR TOWN: Titusville STATE: New Jersey CODE: 34

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Mercer County Courthouse  
 STREET AND NUMBER: 209 So. Broad St.  
 CITY OR TOWN: Trenton STATE: New Jersey CODE: 34

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory 1516.5  
 DATE OF SURVEY: 1960  Federal  State  County  Local  
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Historic Sites Office; Dept. of Environmental Protection  
 STREET AND NUMBER: Box 1420  
 CITY OR TOWN: Trenton STATE: New Jersey CODE: 34

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The random masonry buildings are simple and unpretentious, yet direct in the appeal of their wall fabric and periodic expansion. They stand well preserved. Remains of other stone out buildings such as a carriage house and horse barn dot this verdant property. The initial section of the house was a two room, two story house with an off center cooking fireplace in the eastern end wall. This feature, with the exception of its left jamb, seems original, and bears the intriguing inscription "1739" on the end of the oak beam lintel. A simple open three shelved cupboard with a lower closed section occupies the adjacent space. Evidently, the stairway to the second floor, with its bedroom with small fireplace and beaded panelling, always stood at the western wall. Pegged doors and window frames, some with 18th century sash, punctuate the long walls. The chamfered floor joists and beams measure six by three inches. A brick barrel vault on masonry piers in the cellar supports the fireplace and chimney.

An unusual lean to kitchen abuts the eastern end of the original house. Although its northern wall was laid up of stone very similar to that of the old house, the kitchen's eastern and southern walls were brick filled clapboarded frame construction. Its fireplace joins the earlier chimney flue. Because of noticeable, though not complete, line in the masonry wall of the north wall and the absence of a basement under the lean-to, one can conclude that this was a later addition, perhaps only ten years after the initial phase of the house.

The prosperity of the mill is reflected in the large, three bay, back and front parlor house that was probably built circa 1850. Its ogee arch brackets, wide dog-eared door frames, thick molding cornices and panelled doors and the simple Gothic arched fireplaces dictate a mid-century dating. Jonathan T. Comley's acquisition and development of the property corroborate this also. An impressive scale throughout elevated this new house into the small manor house category and left behind the closer modest 18th century living quarters.

The mill was originally one and a half stories high and two window bays long. Splayed window jambs, heavy timber construction with two foot thick longitudinal beams into which the floor joists are set and a tall tale section of the western masonry wall define the first building. The overshot waterwheel, which in its later years was iron, turned outside the eastern facade. We notice two large, puzzling segmentally arched openings, now filled. Eighteenth century pegged window frames and a continuity of masonry suggests that the mill was increased to two and a half stories within a few decades.

Enlargements of this building are difficult to chart, because of the general character of the wall and interior construction and the lack of stylistic evidence. However, it is reasonable to conclude that Comley doubled the size to the west in 1841, and then decked the two parts with another story in 1847. The western cube sports large

(cont. page 2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This small mill complex near the Delaware River and Canal represents a portion of the tradition of rural 18th and 19th century industry that has long since died. The house and the mill building sit besides Jacob Creek and reveal the origins and the growth of the grist mill business in the Delaware Valley. Of simple masonry construction, both buildings were expanded several times and hence show the effects of increased business and prosperity. Devoid of ornamentation, a simplicity in construction and an efficiency in operation characterize the forms of these vernacular buildings.

Tradition states that Isaac Smith received a land grant of 1000 acres from the English Crown in 1726. Presumably he built the first two room, two story house and one story mill sometime thereafter. He began processing grain and corn and shipped it down the Delaware to Philadelphia. The mill derived its power from a raceway that drew water from Jacob's Creek. It is likely that this mill provided flour for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

The Delaware Canal opened in 1834 and seems to have stimulated business considerably. Jonathan T. Comley bought the complex in 1841, and immediately added two stories to the 18th century mill structure. In 1847, he topped the mill with a fifth floor. Shortly thereafter, he probably enlarged the house with spacious three bay, three story bracketed section.

In the last decade of the 19th century, the present owner's father bought the mill and successfully continued the grist operations, until the first World War. After that, automation in mid-western mill took over the field of flour refining and made this small, manual labor operation obsolete. Mr. Conover persisted, although he supplemented his activity with the production of apple cider. Operations ceased in the early years of the Depression.

(continued page 2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

1. Map of Mercer County, J.J. Otley and Keily, 1849.
2. New Jersey Archives, Vol. XXX, page 20, Vol. XIII, page 80, Vol XXXIII, PAGE 239.
3. Pioneers of Old Hopewell, Ralph Ege, page 110-12.
4. Historical Collections of New Jersey, Barber and Howe, page 285, 1844.
5. Genealogy of Early Settlers in Trenton and Ewing, Eli Cooley, page 160.
6. Title Trace

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

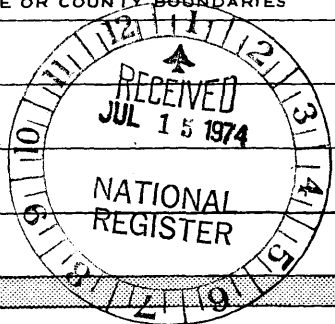
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 . "	0 . "		40° 16 . 45 .	74 ° 51 . 13 "	
NE	0 . "	0 . "				
SE	0 . "	0 . "				
SW	0 . "	0 . "				

18/512440  
4458540  
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: about 5

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Connie Grieff; Annette Carter; with revisions Historic Sites Staff

ORGANIZATION: Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Comm. DATE: March, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Trenton STATE: New Jersey CODE: 34

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**      **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name David J. Bardin  
 Title Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Protection  
 Date July 1, 1974

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

[Signature]  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 11/19/74

ATTEST:

[Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 11/18/74

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STATE	
New Jersey	
COUNTY	
Mercer	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	NOV 19 1974

(Continuation Sheet)

2

(Number all entries)

7. Description (cont.)

Somerset Roller Mills  
Mercer County 021  
New Jersey 34

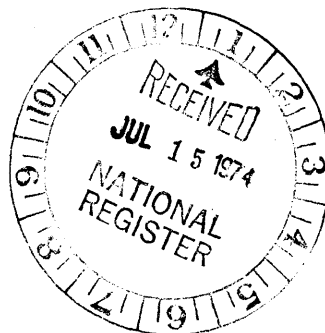
stone blocks at the corners, which were reportedly dragged across the frozen Delaware in the winter. Two tablets, one dated 1841, and the other dated 1847, appear in the top level. The former, relating to the western cube section, may have been transferred into the upper level of the north wall. The interior shows two interior timber frame constructions, reflecting the two distinct building periods.

8. Sign. In conclusion, the Somerset Roller Mills and house is a well preserved, modest industrial group in a rural setting. First, it documents the beginnings, the development and the final demise of a vital manufacturing process in pre-20th century America. Persistence, honesty and a well-chosen location accounted for its success. Automated machinery spelled its doom.

Furthermore, it provides us with excellent examples of simple, vernacular buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries. The rugged construction and various additions tell the story of its development.

Congressional Representation:

Thirteenth District : Joseph Maraziti  
Clifford Case, Senator  
Harrison Williams, Senator



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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

Somerset Roller Mills  
Mercer County (021)  
New Jersey 34



7. Description continued

There are the two buildings on the property along with two foundations of buildings.

There is some equipment left in the mill that has not yet been identified. There are some millstones of French granite composition in the mill.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)*

STATE	New Jersey	
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ENTRY NUMBER	NOV 15 1974	DATE

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**1. NAME**

COMMON: Somerset Roller Mill  
AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: River Rd.

CITY OR TOWN: Titusville

STATE: New Jersey

CODE  
34

COUNTY: Mercer

CODE  
021

**3. MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE: Historic Sites Section Hand drawn sketch map

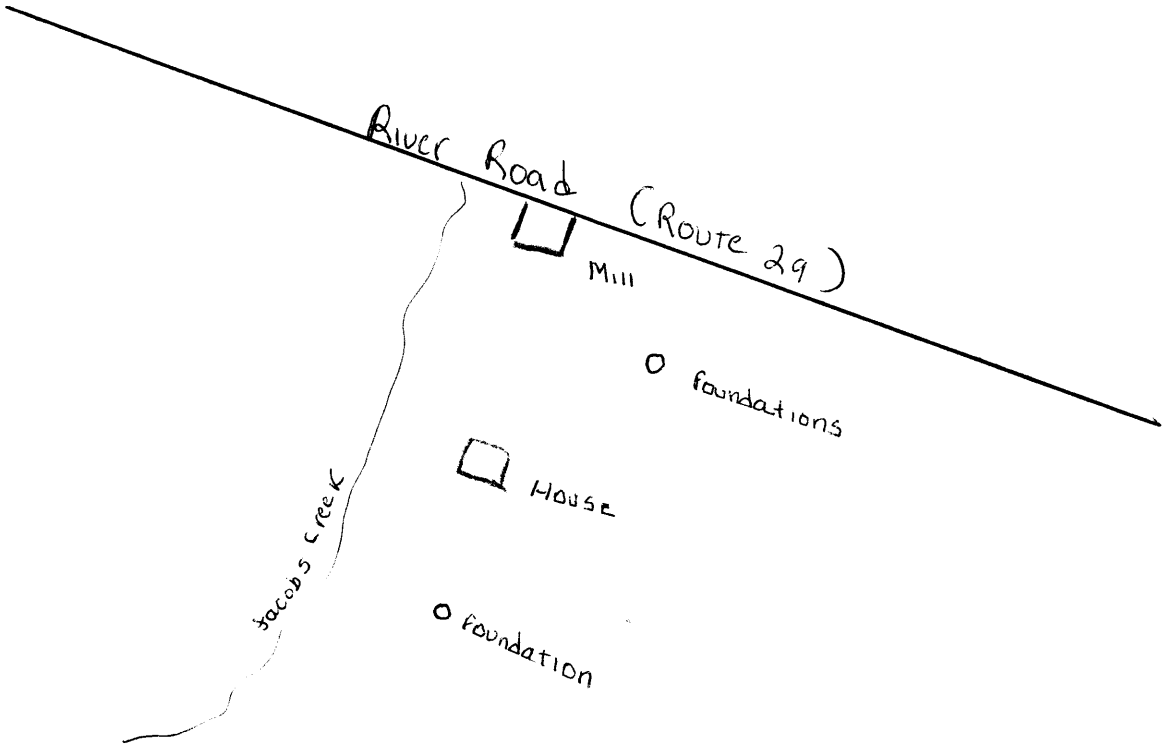
SCALE:

DATE: October, 1974

**4. REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.



Somerset Roller Mill  
Mercer County (021)  
New Jersey 34  
Sketch Map  
1974

