

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Beck's Mill

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number R.R. 4 Box 117

NA not for publication

city, town Salem

NA vicinity

state Indiana

code IN

county Washington

code 175

zip code 47167

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private public-local public-State public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s) district site structure object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: Grain Mills in Indiana

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

Indiana Department of Public Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Patrick Andrews

12/7/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

foundation STONE: limestone

walls WALLS: Weatherboard

roof METAL: Aluminum shingle

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Beck's Mill stands against a picturesque backdrop of a rocky ravine, a forest of giant sycamores and maples, a huge virgin sycamore close to the west elevation, and the quiet waters of Mill Creek. Built from white poplar trees cut from the surrounding Beck farm, the mill is set into the side of a rugged hill. The simple vernacular millhouse, typical of mills of this period, was built in 1864 and is the third mill to occupy the site chosen by George Beck and his sons when they arrived in Washington County in 1807. The Becks discovered a subterranean spring that they easily harnessed to power the mill. The power source has never been replaced throughout the mill's long history. The millhouse retains its integrity in regard to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, meeting all the standards set forth in the registration requirements for multiple property nominations. The pastoral setting remains virtually unchanged from the time that the Beck's built their last mill in 1864.

The rectangular, two and one half story, front gabled millhouse resembles a barn with windows and measures thirty feet by thirty-eight feet, four inches. The braced-frame construction rests on the original foundation of rough cut, irregularly coursed limestone fit together without mortar. The foundation varies in depth from a few feet where the building meets the hill to approximately fifteen feet near the creek, following the natural grade of the hill. The foundation encloses an unfinished area that slopes gradually with the hill. (See Photo 4.) The lower level contains rods and gears that extend from the wheel to the corn mill and from the turbine to the flour mill.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Indiana Historic Sites and Surveys Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Approximately 1/2 acre

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jane R. Nolan
organization Indiana University, Indianapolis date June, 1990
street & number 425 University Boulevard telephone (317) 274-3811
city or town Indianapolis, state Indiana zip code 46202

7. Continuation sheet: Description of Beck's Mill

Beck's Mill is clad with its original traditional horizontal boards of weathered white poplar clapboard. Vertical wood strips trim the corners. These vertical strips were often utilized by the upland southerners who populated southern Indiana. There is a small square housing for the turbine on the north side of the mill. (See Photo 4.) The moderately pitched roof has wide overhanging eaves at the gabled ends of the building and slightly overhanging eaves over the north and south elevations. The roof is covered with green aluminum thick butt shingles applied by the present owner. The mill is three bays wide on the north, east, and south elevations.

The main elevation has large central door openings in the first and second stories that have modified three-sided segmental arches, the shape of which is dictated by the interior braced-frame construction. The first and second floor have Dutch-type doors that meet in the middle and open inward. The door on the first floor is constructed of rough-sawn boards in a diamond pattern. The second-floor door is rough-sawn in a vertical batten pattern. The slightly smaller opening in the attic story has an arch similar to those on the lower floors. The door is gone; there is a pulley for elevating bags of wheat located above the door opening. There are two six over six double-hung windows with their original simple wood surrounds on either side of the first and second story doors. (See Photo 2.)

The north and south elevations of the millhouse are the same except for the height of the foundation and the small turbine housing on the north side, which is clad with vertical six inch boards and covered by a shed roof. Scaffolding on the north side is part of a recent attempt to restore the mill; it is not a part of the historic fabric of the mill. Both elevations have three six over six double-hung windows with the original simple wood surrounds on the first and second stories.

The west elevation has a small vertical batten door in the south corner. There is a large screened rectangular window in the gable of the attic story, and there are two six over six double-hung windows, one in the center on the second story and one in the north corner of the first story.

The interior, which is divided into two main floors and an attic, has an open plan with timber construction. The arrangement of the interior is largely determined by the function of the mill. There are four large vertical corner posts and eight vertical posts and diagonal beams in the load-bearing walls that contribute to the support of the building. In addition, there are two ten-inch, wood-pegged supporting beams located in the center of the mill. The open frame ceiling is constructed of two by six inch boards. The floor is of broad wood planks. A ten foot long plywood wall of recent construction sets off a small area used for sales. The salesroom runs along the south wall and contains a brick chimney. Two hollow diagonal wooden legs fitted with small metal cups carried the wheat from the first to the second floor after it was weighed on a rolling

7. Continuation sheet: Description of Beck's Mill

scale. A wooden chute connects the flour mill on the first floor to the wheat bin on the second floor.

The two runs of stone at Beck's Mill were both utilized in the earlier mills on the site and are located on the first floor. The larger grindstones for the corn mill were cut from local stone. The rolling scale weighed the farmer's corn and carried it to the corn mill to be processed. The entire corn-grinding process took place on the first floor. The flour mill has smaller imported French buhrs that the Becks hauled with a team of oxen approximately twenty-five miles from the Ohio River. Wheat was first weighed and then elevated to the second floor to begin the two-floor flour grinding process.

In the southwest corner of the first floor, an open stairway with a trap door leads to the wood planked second floor. The second floor is a large open space that contains the original bins and machinery employed in the flour milling process. Wooden legs or chutes extend from the large wheat bin from which the wheat was funneled into the hopper boy on the first floor by means of gravity. The second floor also houses a John Russell smut machine, and a wheat cleaner, as well as bolters and sifters. The Becks installed carding machines in 1822; the carding machines, and looms for weaving were transferred to the present mill and are located on the second floor where they continued operation until 1901. Open stairs in the northeast corner lead to the unfinished half-story attic. It has only been used for storage purposes.

Beck's Mill employed both a waterwheel and a turbine to operate the mill. The sixteen foot iron overshot waterwheel, which replaced an earlier wooden wheel in 1897, turned the stones for the corn grinding process. The small turbine supplied the power for the flour mill. Both waterwheel and turbine are located on the north side of the mill. An iron penstock, a thirty-inch pipe, brings the water to the mill. (See Photo 4.) The Becks constructed a small dam of large rectangular limestone blocks across the mouth of the cave located in the rocky hill to the west of the mill. The dam impounds a head of water from a subterranean spring that flows through the penstock and ends in two pressure-relief drums. An inverted syphon the size of a stovepipe that once led the water to the baffle-plated water wheel and the turbine that rotated under the force of gravity is no longer attached to the penstock. There is enough water power to grind twelve to fifteen bushels of grain per hour. The water drains into the stream and forms the tail race.

Later members of the Beck family operated a small museum on the second floor of the mill. Many of the antique items, which had no relevance to the mill or its history, have been taken by vandals who left the mill in disarray. However, the original mill equipment and machinery remains undamaged, some of it going back to the earlier mills built on the site. So little has changed at Beck's Mill in 126 years, that it is possible to envision it in its height when it was the center of industrial activity for miles around.

8. Continuation sheet: Statement of significance

Over the years, the family built other buildings and structures as business boomed and community needs grew. The success of the mill encouraged the Becks to attach the county's first sawmill to the grain mill in 1809. When Indians became troublesome in 1812, the family built a stone fort just east of the mill for protection in the event of an attack. Archaeological remains of the fort can be observed across the road from the present mill. In the 1820s, the Becks expanded the mill functions to include wool carding machines in a small attached shed and a distillery, which they built across the wagon road. By 1825, the thriving business required a larger mill. The Becks constructed a second mill on the site of the first and imported French buhr stones to grind the flour. Local stones continued to grind the corn. By mid-century, the U.S. Post Office began mail service in the mill, which continued until 1901.

The present folk-style, white poplar millhouse replaced the second mill in 1864. The Becks employed the original penstock to supply the power for the large water wheel and small turbine. They installed the carding mills on the second floor of the new mill and utilized the stone buhrs from the older mill. Beck's Mill was so busy, it often operated twenty-four hours a day during the height of its significance from 1864 to 1890. However, the centralization of the flour milling industry in urban areas gradually took a large part of the business from small mills, and by 1901, Beck's Mill discontinued grinding flour and corn. Wool carding ceased in 1914, although the mill was open to the public for visitation until 1920.

Beck's Mill is still owned by the ninth generation of the original Beck family. The mill is an unusual, if not unique, representative of early grain mills in the state, because it was never built for or converted to a roller mill like most contemporary mills in Indiana. The mill never served distant markets or expanded beyond the neighborhood mill stage. The mill building has the essential physical features that it possessed at the time of its period of significance, from 1864 to 1890. The mill is located on its original site in a setting that has changed very little over the decades. The building has aged but has not been significantly altered since its erection in 1864, and the milling equipment is intact. Because there has been little or no growth in the community of Becks Mill since the late 1800s, the entire area as well as the millhouse provides a link to the era of the local mill and the early industrial development of southern Indiana.

9. Continuation sheet: Major bibliographical references

Primary Sources

Allen, Joyce. Owner, Beck's Mill, Becks Mill, Indiana, Interview by Jane Nolan, 14 November 1989.

Beck, Essie Edith. Personal writings about Beck's Mill, 1940. Privately held.

Newspapers

Indianapolis Star, August 19, 1934, August 25, 1940; November 8, 1964.

Salem Indiana Republican Leader, July 22, 1937, July 18, 1940; July 3, 1941; January 14, 1943; November 28, 1946.

Secondary Sources

Archaeological and Historical Survey of Washington County. Indianapolis: Indiana History Bulletin, Extra Number, August, 1963.

Hill, Herbert. "Old Gristmills," Outdoor Indiana, September 1963, pp. 12-15.

Powell, Richard L. "Springs Powered Early Mills," Outdoor Indiana, November 1970, pp. 29-34.

Stevens, Warder W. The Centennial History of Washington County: Its People, Industries, and Institutions. (Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen and Company), 1916.

10. Continuation sheet: Geographical data

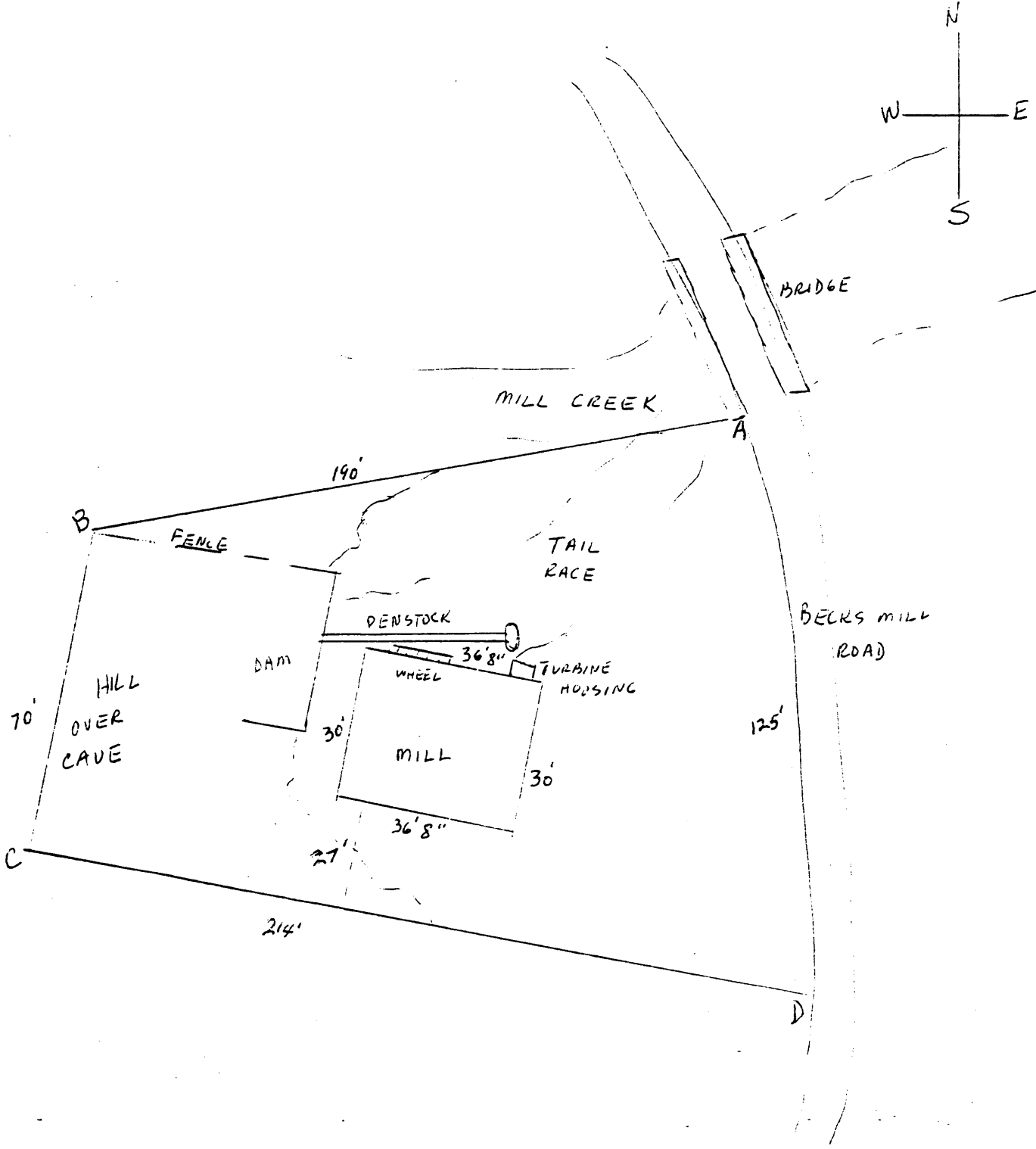
Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of the bridge (point A) on Becks Mill Road that crosses Mill Creek, proceed diagonally west and slightly south 190 feet to a fence that runs parallel to the north side of the mill on the hill over the cave behind Beck's Mill. (point B) At point B, turn south and proceed 70 feet on a line parallel to the west side of the mill to point C. Turning at a right angle to point C, proceed east for 214 feet parallel to and 27 feet out from the south side of the mill to the west side of Becks Mill Road. (point D) Follow the curve in Becks Mill Road 125 feet from point D to starting point A at the bridge.

Boundary Justification

The immediate area of the mill is a part of a larger acreage. Some of the acreage has been excluded from the nomination, because the property does not contribute to the mill's historical significance. The boundary includes the property necessary to demonstrate its historic relationship to milling: the mill, the mill dam, a portion of the hill over the dammed cave that contains the spring that supplied the water power for the mill, the tail race, the penstock, and the area between the mill and Becks Mill Road.

BECK'S MILL



NOT TO SCALE