

VLR - 9-14-98
NRHP - 10-30-98

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for 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 **Forbes Mill**
other names/site number **Big Otter Mill (preferred); DHR file no. 009-0152**

2. Location

street & number **Big Island Highway (VA 122)** N/A not for publication
city or town **Bedford** vicinity
state **Virginia** code **VA** county **Bedford** code **019** zip code **24523**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



9/26/98
Date

Signature of certifying official/Title
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
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/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet.	_____ Signature of the Keeper	_____ Date of Action
___ determined eligible for the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet.	_____ Signature of the Keeper	_____ Date of Action
___ determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____ Signature of the Keeper	_____ Date of Action
___ removed from the National Register.	_____ Signature of the Keeper	_____ Date of Action
___ other (explain):	_____ Signature of the 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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Category*
- INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION**
- INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION**
- COMMERCE/TRADE**

- Subcategory*
- mill**
- mill race**
- store**

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Category*
- WORK IN PROGRESS**

Subcategory

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: **grist mill**

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation **concrete**
- walls **wood**
- roof **metal**
- other **wood**
- stone**
- metal**

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
INDUSTRY

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Forbes, Reed (millwright)

Forbes, John (millwright)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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 fifty years.

Period of Significance

ca. 1900-1948

Significant Dates

ca. 1920; 1936

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **1.7 acres****UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	632440	4139070	3		
2				4		

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Leslie A. Giles, Architectural Historian	date	July 10, 1998
organization	Landmark Preservation Associates	telephone	(540) 464-5315
street & number	6 Houston Street	zip code	24450
city or town	Lexington state VA		

Additional Documentation

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	David F. and Ruth B. Cole	telephone	(540) 297-7266
street & number	1332 Appaloosa Trail	state	VA zip code 24121
city or town	Moneta		

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.

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

DESCRIPTION

Summary

Located in Bedford County, Virginia, about two-and-a-half miles north of the city limits of Bedford, Big Otter Mill (formerly known as Forbes Mill) stands on the east side of Big Island Highway (VA 122), with direct access to a fork of the Big Otter River, one of the county's principal waterways. The large mortise-and-tenon-framed mill building, topped by an unusual and picturesque mansard roof, was apparently designed and built by miller/millwright Reed Forbes with assistance from his son John Forbes. The mill retains a nearly complete set of early-twentieth-century-machinery, which was used until the late 1940s to process corn, wheat, and other locally produced grains. The foundation of a small store remains on the merchant mill property; as does a portion of the early-twentieth-century mill race, which consists of a large metal pipe and the stone and concrete piers that support it.

Inventory

1. Big Otter Mill (ca. 1920). Contributing building.
2. Mill race (ca. 1920). Contributing structure.
3. Store foundation (ca. 1900). Contributing site.

Mill: Exterior

The mill has two sections: the mill proper and a small office appendage. The main section of the mill building rises two-and-a-half stories above a forty- by twenty-eight-foot raised foundation of poured concrete. Two narrow ventilation openings are located on the south side of the foundation. Diagonal sheathing boards, which help brace the timber frame, are covered with sawn weatherboards. Traces of early red paint or stain remain in places on the exterior; recent repairs to the siding have been painted to match the historic color. The mill's principal roof is a standing seam metal-clad mansard, with an unusual lower kick or flare that creates deep overhanging eaves. Small windows on all elevations have six-over-six double-hung wood sash, painted a white or cream color and set into simple frames painted dark red. Six pedimented dormer windows incorporate additional double-hung sash. Two lightning rods with glass insulator globes ornament the roof's uppermost ridge.

The waterwheel, located on the east (river) side of the mill building, is a steel overshot wheel thirteen feet in diameter by eight feet in width. The wheel is not presently attached to the horizontal drive shaft. An identification plate indicates that the wheel -- numbered 15814 -- was manufactured by Fitz Waterwheel Co., Hydraulic Engineers, of Hanover, Pennsylvania. The waterwheel's external

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

Description (continued)

gearing, at one time sheltered beneath a shed roof (now partially collapsed), includes a gear with wooden teeth set into a cast steel hub five feet in diameter. A grade-level doorway with a braced-board door is located just north of the waterwheel, and provides access from the exterior directly into the basement. Historically, the shed roof over the external gearing extended over this service entrance and continued north a short distance to shelter a portable saw mill located off of the mill's northeast corner. Another doorway on the east elevation is situated on the first story. A braced board door in the opening originally provided access to an elevated walkway (now missing), from which the miller could control the amount of power generated by modifying water flow onto the wheel. The mill's main entrance is also located on the first story, on the building's north side. Due to the raised basement (typically eight or nine feet tall), this doorway, which has a sliding door constructed of diagonal boards, is not directly accessible from grade. Traces of a large sign painted directly on the wall above the doorway are faint, but the sign once read as follows:

<p>BIG OTTER MILL MFRS. OF GOLDEN EAGLE FLOUR PIONEER CORN MEAL COMMERCIAL GRINDING</p>

A loading dock, with steps from ground level to the first story, was attached to the north side of the mill until a major flood in 1985. The loading dock may have extended around the northwest corner of the mill to provide exterior access to the office, since a first-story doorway also exists on the north wall of the office wing. Alternatively, the office entry may have had a separate stair. At present, ladders provide the only exterior access to the first story entrances.

The one-story office wing, resting on tall, poured-concrete piers, projects from the front or west elevation of the mill. The office wing, built at the same time as the mill, has a standing seam metal gable roof with a shallow pent roof on the gable end, suggestive of a pediment and visually similar to the pedimented gables used on the dormer windows. A small brick flue extends above the roof plane. As mentioned above, a doorway on the north wall of the wing has a braced-board door. Weatherboards cover the wing's exterior walls; six-over-six double-hung sash fill two window openings. The wing's structure is of light wood framing and does not incorporate a layer of diagonal sheathing boards, since typically the office would not be subjected to the vibrations caused by the mill's machinery.

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

Description (continued)

Mill: Interior

Throughout most of the mill's interior, the building's structural framework is exposed rather than hidden behind finished surfaces. In the dimly lit, dirt-floored raised basement, the poured-concrete perimeter foundation and intermediate structural piers are accompanied by the waterwheel-driven shafts and gears that power the mill's complex machinery. In the northeast corner of the basement, near the grade-level doorway, wooden chutes located directly beneath the millstones receive and distribute stone-ground grains. The spindle that turns the stones hangs into the basement directly beneath the millstones, and features a step-bearing attachment that allows for minute adjustments to the stones to change the coarseness of the grind. A hammer mill, fed from a chute near the loading dock, is the only milling equipment located on this level. Other processing functions in the basement level include the cleanouts for the fourteen grain elevators, and the manually operated clutch that engages the waterwheel to run the internal equipment. Various jack shafts driven from the clutch incorporate pulleys with wide flat belts. A stair in the southwest corner of the basement leads up to the first floor.

The post-and-beam construction of the upper stories features heavy timbers and mortise-and-tenon joinery. Wide chamfers ease the corners of the large intermediate support posts that run down the center of the building; rough bracket capitals help distribute the load from beam to post. The timber frame perimeter walls are supplemented by studs to which the diagonal sheathing boards are nailed from the exterior. Following standard period practice for grist mills, most hoppers, chutes, grain elevators, and tools such as shovels and scoops -- items that came into direct contact with the grains during processing -- were built of wood to reduce the chance of fire, which was typically sparked by metal objects. The wooden floors feature boards joined by splines that fit into grooves cut the floorboards; this construction technique reduced or eliminated the sifting of fine grains between floor levels. On each of the three upper floors, a ten- by eleven-foot wood-partitioned storage bin occupies the northwest corner of the space. The mill produced its own electricity for lighting purposes, using a belt-driven direct-current generator, knob-and-tube wiring, and pendant sockets for light bulbs. To protect the mill and its contents from fire, the generator was encased within an air-purged metal enclosure.

A complex, multi-level transfer system of wooden chutes, grain elevators, and gates -- based upon industry-standard designs for mill improvements developed by inventor Oliver Evans in the late eighteenth century -- occupies the center of the first-floor's space, leaving a wide circulation corridor around the room's perimeter that features several different work areas. Near the main entrance to the mill, stations for bagging and weighing the processed flours and meals retain most of their equipment. In the northeast corner, the 48" horizontal stone mill is positioned next to a window,

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

Description (continued)

which affords some natural lighting at the work station. The millstones, located within a cylindrical vat, were obtained from the Brush Mountain quarry (in Montgomery County, Virginia), a well-known regional producer of stones for grist mills. The running (top) stone consists of several segments mortared to each other and held together by a steel band. Directly adjacent to the vat is a pivoting timber-framed crane with chamfered corners and a metal screw-hoist, used to maneuver the stones out of the vat for re-cutting and sharpening. A door in the east wall provides access to the exterior water control gate, which the miller used to modify the waterwheel's speed. Four rolling mills line the south side of the space and have wooden chutes and elevators that deliver flour to and from equipment on the second floor. Wooden stairs in the southwest corner provide access between all four levels of the building. Along the west wall, a doorway leads into the small office/workshop, which is characterized by its lack of finished wall and ceiling surfaces. Utilitarian features of the space include plain wooden boards hung as shelving on the walls, and a pair of wooden braces that support a parged brick flue. A crude stove stands beneath the flue.

The second floor and attic level contain more of the mill's original equipment, including screening and sifting equipment and the upper sections of the fourteen grain elevators. On all levels, the wood chutes and elevator shafts contain numerous inspection windows where the miller could observe product flow. A "Monitor Dustless Receiving Separator," made by Huntley Manufacturing Co. of Silver Creek, N.Y. occupies the north wall of the second floor; this piece of equipment was apparently used to dry-clean the grain of chaff and other debris prior to entering the hoppers. Four "Level Bolters," sifters with cloth screens of varying openness, are also located on the second floor and are linked by chutes and elevators to the rolling mills just below.

Landscape Features

Located between VA 122 (Big Island Highway) and the Big Otter River, several miles north of the city of Bedford, Big Otter Mill's rural setting takes in views of open fields, pastures, wood lots, and isolated farmhouses. The Peaks of Otter rise above the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance to the northwest. The mill's proximity to Big Otter River has subjected the site to numerous floods over the years. Most of the property is undeveloped fields, kept mowed, although several trees near the river have attained maturity. The dominant landscape feature associated with the mill is the mill race. The race, which extends some 1,700 feet from a point on the river upstream of the mill, is mostly situated on land adjoining the nominated property. The relatively long distance between the dammed millpond and the mill was necessary to avoid obstructing the mouths of two creeks that were located just upstream of the mill site. A topographic map for the area (Peaks of Otter U.S.G.S. 7.5' quadrangle) still shows the trench of the mill race west of Big Island Highway. The mill race

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

Description (continued)

passes through a culvert beneath Big Island Highway before entering the waterway's final hundred-foot-long section. Located on the nominated parcel and leading directly to the waterwheel, this section of the race is actually a large-diameter riveted metal pipe conduit that rests on piers of stone and poured concrete. The stone foundation of a store building is located on the property just south of the mill building, adjacent to the Big Island Highway. Within view of the mill, the former miller's house is located across Big Otter River to the northeast of the property. At one time a suspension bridge, which spanned the nearly forty-foot width of the river, provided easy access between the two buildings.

Integrity Statement

The integrity of the historic resources at Big Otter Mill is very good. The mill building, which has lost certain appendages such as the north-side loading dock and the saw-mill shelter, retains nearly all of its original exterior materials, features, and finishes. Where repairs have been made, for example to replace missing or deteriorated siding, windows, and trim, the new work has carefully matched the old in materials, design, detailing, and craftsmanship. Although not presently attached to the drive shaft, the steel waterwheel also has been fairly well-preserved; damage is limited to the bucket-paddles, which have rusted over time. Perhaps one of the most unusual aspects of the property is the high degree of interior preservation of not only the building but also of the mechanical features, milling equipment, and electrical system.

The mill race pipe conduit does not presently carry water to the waterwheel. The pipe does retain a high degree of integrity and could be reconnected for use if an appropriate water source could be accessed. The stone store foundation, which has not been excavated or removed, retains sufficient integrity to be considered an intact site.

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary and Justification of Criteria

Big Otter Mill, originally known as Forbes Mill, is a remarkably intact early-twentieth-century roller mill and grist mill built by millers Reed and John Forbes on the banks of Bedford County's Big Otter River about 1920. The second (or perhaps third) mill to occupy the site since the late eighteenth century, Big Otter Mill is a prominent landmark along the old road (VA 122/Big Island Highway) that runs north from Bedford city to Big Island, a community on the James River. During the early twentieth century, the mill's operations were supplemented by smaller-scale commercial activities, including a steam-powered sawmill and a country store. Big Otter Mill is eligible for the register under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its importance within the local farming community as a grain processing center during the first half of the twentieth century. The mill is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as one of Bedford County's best preserved and most architecturally distinguished rural grist mills. The mill is eligible at the local level of significance. The property's period of significance begins ca. 1900 and extends through 1948, so as to include the period when the Hardy store operated on the property (beginning ca. 1900) in addition to the historic period of Big Otter Mill's milling operations (ca. 1920-1948).

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their assistance with research or for reviewing the nomination report: property owner David F. Cole; Dan Pezzoni of Landmark Preservation Associates; Anne S. Beckett, John R. Kern, and Marc C. Wagner of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; area residents Mr. and Mrs. A. Chrisman Hardy, Jr.; staff of the Special Collections at Leyburn Library, Washington & Lee University; staff of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Bedford County; and staff of the Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library.

Historic Background

In 1880, the census of Bedford County manufactures enumerated thirty-two grist or flour mills. By 1897, a statewide business directory documented seventy-seven flour and grist mills and fifty-nine saw and planing mills in the county. The widespread development of mills reflects the county's large-scale agricultural production of cereal crops (corn, wheat, oats, rye, buckwheat, etc.). In 1900, a total of more than 4,000 farms encompassed 249,956 improved acres and 182,523 unimproved acres. That year, nearly a third of the improved acreage in the county was devoted to the production of corn, wheat, and oats. Cereal crops, valued at \$695,264, were the county's most lucrative crops in 1909, surpassing even tobacco. In addition to the appropriate agricultural conditions, the geography of the county -- especially its numerous watercourses -- encouraged the development and proliferation of water-powered mills. By the late nineteenth century, good shipping facilities linked the area's industries to two nearby cities, Roanoke and Lynchburg, whose expanding populations

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

Statement of Significance (continued)

provided ready markets for the products of the county's numerous merchant mills.

Many of the state's flour mills installed roller mills (or "rolls") and other mechanical improvements beginning in the late nineteenth century, leading to a dramatic increase in the fineness of the flours they produced. In 1890, millstones accounted for more than seventy-five per cent of Virginia's milling operations; fewer than twenty-five percent used roller mills. By 1900, the number of roller mills used in the state nearly quadrupled, while millstone runs increased only marginally.

In Virginia, merchant mills producing flour and other grain products comprised one of the state's largest industries (in terms of product value) by the turn-of-the-twentieth century. In 1899, the census recorded 359 flour and grist mills in Virginia. The number of flour and grist mills in the state increased through the first couple decades of the century, counting 365 mills in 1904, 458 in 1909, 533 in 1914, and 537 in 1919, before dropping back down to 346 mills in 1921. In 1914, flour and grist milling was the fourth largest industry in the state; by 1919, milling had become the second largest, following only the tobacco industry. While most of the early-twentieth-century's highest-production states achieved their status with a relatively small number of very high volume milling operations, Virginia (often ranked in the top twenty producers) typically relied upon a large number of smaller mills. Most roller mills in Virginia were operated mainly by their proprietors, had between one and five employees (usually men), and produced fewer than 5,000 bushels of wheat flour annually. In functional terms, Big Otter Mill was a typical early-twentieth-century example of the rural merchant mills once so widespread in Virginia.

Big Otter Mill is located on the site of an earlier milling operation known as Hardy's Mill or Greenville Mills, which was begun in the late eighteenth century by Joseph Hardy Sr. and continued through the 1880s under the direction of his son William A. Hardy. Joseph Hardy (1761-1830), a veteran of the Revolutionary War, settled in Bedford County in the late eighteenth century. In 1785 he applied to the Board of Supervisors for a permit to build a dam on the Big Otter, and built a mill race and mill on his property shortly thereafter. That mill building, with at least one set of buhr stones for grinding, was washed away by a flood in the nineteenth century and replaced with another mill building, which was apparently erected by William A. Hardy. Following William Hardy's death in the late nineteenth century, the Hardy mill property passed through the hands of several different, short-term owners.

By the turn of the twentieth century, a country store was being operated by members of the Hardy family in a small frame building on the mill tract. In 1901, miller Reed Forbes purchased and began occupying a tract of land that encompassed the miller's house adjoining Hardy Mill; he apparently

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

Statement of Significance (continued)

placed the mill back into regular operation at that time. Forbes, a Franklin County native, had come to Bedford County in the late nineteenth century to operate Kelso Mill, located several miles to the west on a tributary of Sheep Creek. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Forbes probably leased the old Hardy Mill from its owner(s); by 1910 he was able to secure full title to the mill tract and mill from W.I. and P.J. Lankford. According to descendent Paul Forbes, John Forbes (one of Reed Forbes's sons) left Forbes Mill in the 1910s to run Davis Mill with Wilbur Nance. Local tradition holds that a fire destroyed the second Hardy Mill, which had been renamed Forbes Mill, in 1916.

By 1920 Reed Forbes had rebuilt the mill building using a modern poured concrete foundation while relying on the standard heavy timber construction for the main walls and center supports. Forbes distinguished the design of his mill by adding a tall mansard roof with six pedimented dormers, features that effectively provided the usable floor space of a full third story without the need for a heavy timber frame. Though innovative, the mansard roof was an unusual choice, since mill buildings typically were gabled and only rarely had dormers. The mansard design gives the building a distinctive presence in the rural landscape, which may have helped Forbes compete for local business. Within the mill building, Forbes installed four modern roller mills for producing bleached flour, in addition to the conventional millstones needed for more coarsely ground products. In 1920, another of Reed's sons, twenty-nine-year-old Robert K. Forbes, was documented as a miller who lived in his father's household. Reed Forbes operated the mill until his death in 1928, at which time Robert Forbes took over as miller.

Like many rural mills, Forbes Mill also served as a community center of sorts. In addition to the flour and grist mills, a sawmill and store on the property brought neighbors together to work, socialize, and shop. The store, run by members of the Hardy family in the twentieth century, also served a political function, as the polling place for the local voting precinct. The *Bedford Bulletin-Democrat*, in an article entitled "Grist mills linger on in memories," quotes Reed Forbes's grandson Paul Forbes, who remembered that during the busy season the mills would run "sometimes 24 hours a day." In the same article, Mrs. Frank Hubbard, whose grandfather William F. Graves once owned Joppa Mill, recalled the role of small mills in community life: "It was kind of a central place for people who gathered from all around. The mill pond was a central place for Sunday afternoon boat rides."

In 1936 Robert Forbes sold the mill and the adjoining miller's house to C.H. [David] Atkinson, who renamed the property "Big Otter Mill." Atkinson hired a miller by the name of Siler to operate the mill. They ground and sold Golden Eagle Flour and Pioneer Corn Meal at the mill, and also

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**Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.**

Statement of Significance (continued)

undertook custom commercial grinding. Atkinson's signage is still faintly visible on the north wall of the mill building.

In 1946, Atkinson sold the property to Julius O. Kirby, who continued to run the grist mill, though somewhat irregularly. According to Kirby's son, the mill has not been operated commercially since about 1950. The current owners, David and Ruth Cole, purchased the mill with 1.7 acres from Kirby's children in 1996. David Cole, a semi-retired contractor and avocational preservationist, has taken steps to stabilize, repair and restore the mill building and bring its equipment back into working condition. At the present time, the restoration is a work in progress.

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.

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**Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.**

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**Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.**

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (continued)

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel includes the entire 1.7-acre tract, known as tax parcel 93-A-67A, which is depicted on the enclosed sketch map of the property. The sketch map is derived from Bedford County tax map 93.

Boundary Justification

The area nominated for listing encompasses the legal boundaries of the 1.7-acre tract associated with Big Otter Mill and the two other contributing resources on the mill property -- the mill race pipe and the foundation of the Hardy store. Other resources associated with the historic milling operations -- including the former miller's house, the mill-dam and the mill-race on adjoining lands -- have not been included with the nominated property at this time, since their owners have not consented to the inclusion.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs are of: Big Otter Mill, Big Island Highway, Bedford County, Virginia.

DHR File No. 009-0152

Credit for all photos: Leslie A. Giles

Date of all photos: April 1998

DHR Negative no. 16590

All negatives filed at the Library of Virginia, Richmond.

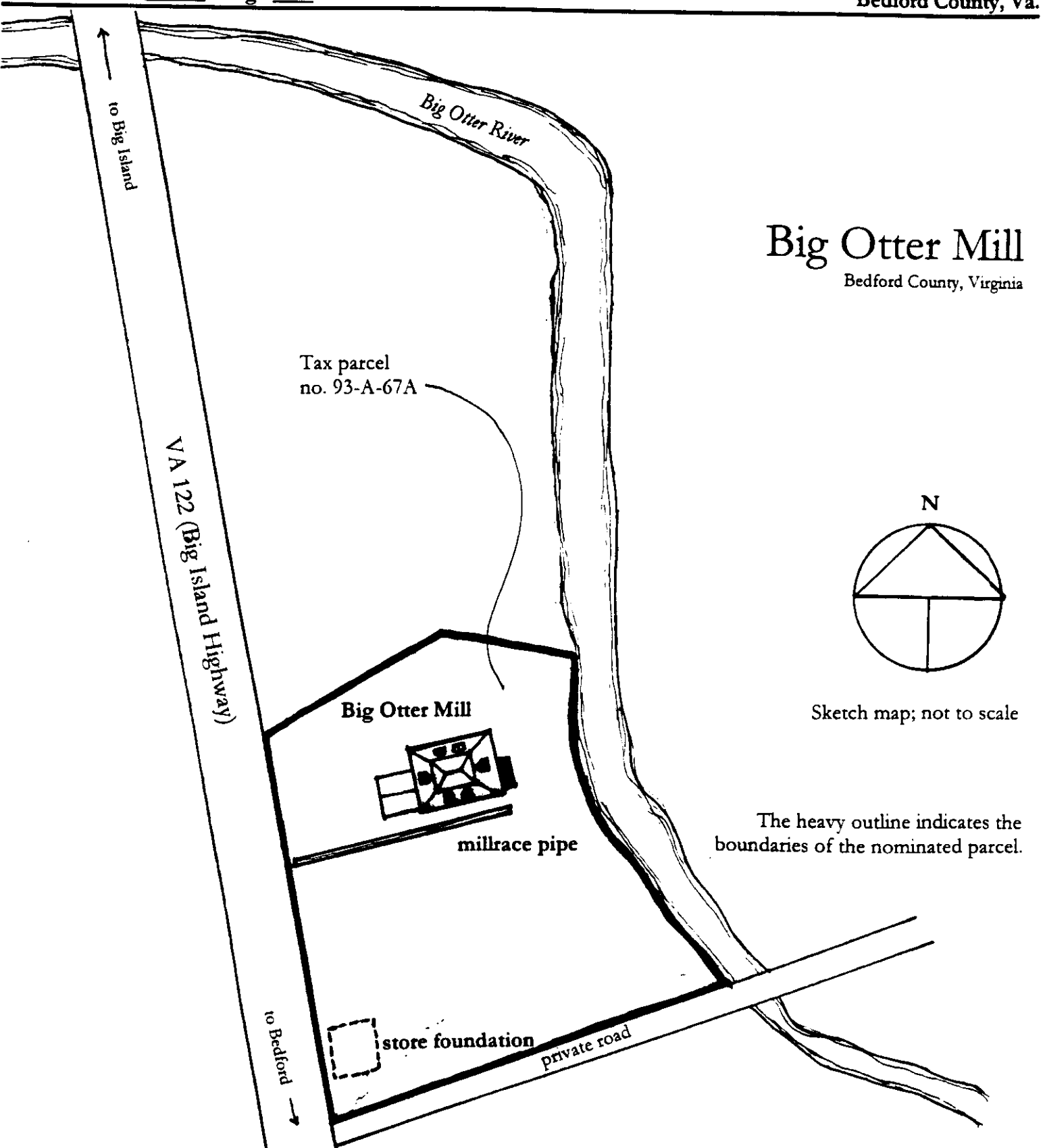
1. VIEW OF: mill exterior, view facing southeast.
PHOTO 1 of 8
2. VIEW OF: mill exterior, view facing northwest.
PHOTO 2 of 8
3. VIEW OF: mill exterior, view of waterwheel
PHOTO 3 of 8
4. VIEW OF: mill interior, view of basement level machinery
PHOTO 4 of 8
5. VIEW OF: mill interior, view of first-floor gristmill
PHOTO 5 of 8
6. VIEW OF: mill interior, view of first-floor roller mills
PHOTO 6 of 8
7. VIEW OF: mill interior, view of first-floor weighing and bagging station
PHOTO 7 of 8
8. VIEW OF: mill interior, view of third-floor grain elevators and machinery
PHOTO 8 of 8

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Big Otter Mill
Bedford County, Va.



Big Otter Mill

Bedford County, Virginia

Tax parcel
no. 93-A-67A

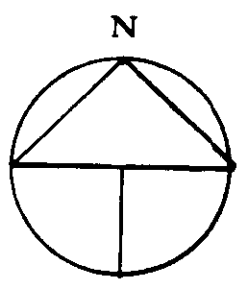
VA 122 (Big Island Highway)

Big Otter Mill

millrace pipe

store foundation

private road



Sketch map; not to scale

The heavy outline indicates the boundaries of the nominated parcel.



BIG OTTER MILL
 Bedford Co., VA
 UTM Coordinates
 Zone - Easting Northing
 17 632440 4139070
 4139000m.N.

2'30" 630 631 INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA-1988 37° 22' 30" 79° 30'

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, all weather, hard surface
- Secondary highway, all weather
- Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface

1:60,000
 5:158 N SW