NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

VLR - 10/21/92 NRHP - 12/17/92

OMB No. 10024-00

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 an 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 Woodson's Mill

other names/site number Piney River Mill (VDHR 62-93)

2. Location

street & number County Route 778 N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Lowesville ☒ vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Nelson code 125 zip code 22951

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 11/9/92

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 certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
☐ entered in the National Register. ☐ 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:)		

Woodson's Mill
Name of Property

Nelson County, VA
County and State

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	
5		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
5		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)

Industry/processing/extraction: manufacturing facility
Health care: medical business/office
Social: civic

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry/processing/extraction: manufacturing facility
Commerce/trade: specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick, stone: sandstone, concrete
walls wood: weatherboard
roof metal: tin
other

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

Woodson's Mill
Name of Property

Nelson County, VA
County and State

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.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or 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)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
ca. 1825– 1929

Significant Dates
ca. 1825
1845
ca. 1900

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
not known

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): N/A

- ☐ 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: N/A

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

Name of repository: _____

Woodson's Mill
Name of Property

Nelson County, VA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 38 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	670500	4176330
2	17	670420	4176570
3	17	670680	4176770
4	17	670940	4175980

☐ 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 Marc C. Wagner and Susan E. Smead, Architectural Historians

organization Preservation Associates of Virginia date 11 May 1992

street & number 406 Harris Road telephone 804-977-4714/979-1910

city or town Charlottesville state VA zip code 22903

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr.

street & number Woodson's Mill, Route 778 telephone 804-277-5604/8146

city or town Lowesville state VA zip code 22951

Summary Description

Woodson's Mill is one of the best examples of a nineteenth-century water-powered mill, that is structurally intact, and still in operation, in Virginia. This vernacular four-story, post-and-beam building is located in the hamlet of Lowesville on County route 778 in Nelson County, Virginia. Some of the present foundation may date to a mill believed to have been built for Guiliford Campbell in 1794. The present building has undergone three periods of structural and mechanical improvements, most of which date to the nineteenth century.[1] Originally, wheat and corn were ground by stones, later in the nineteenth century the Oliver Evans belt-driven mechanical conveying systems were added to reduce labor; and after 1900, Dr. Julian B. Woodson added a sophisticated roller mill system for the production of fine white flour.[2] The mill's community importance grew beyond its original purpose after Dr. Woodson bought the property in 1900. He served as both a doctor and dentist, and he built his office into the west end of the mill, as well as adding two more water wheels to generate power for a small ice plant, saw mill, cider press and provide his nearby residence with electricity. Today the mill continues to function with two water wheels: a small Fitz-type wheel constructed by Dr. Woodson provides the mill's electricity and the large 12 1/2- foot steel Fitz wheel drives the two runs of millstones. The present building also houses an operating cider press.

Architectural Analysis

Introduction

When J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., purchased Woodson's Mill in 1983, the mill had ceased its long period of milling in 1963, and had become a large storage barn.[3] With the aid of Steve Roberts, the present Head Miller, and only the second miller at Woodson's Mill in this century, Mr. Brockenbrough began to restore the mill for wheat and corn flour production. Thought to have been built for Guiliford Campbell in 1794, the building has been enlarged as agricultural and commercial activity increased over the years in the region. The beauty of this vernacular building is derived from the craftsmanship inherent in its practical design and construction in wood, brick and field stone. While some of the foundation may date to the late eighteenth century, the earliest section of the mill, the east end, dates to the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The east section

is almost square in plan, measuring approximately 32 ft. (square measurements are within only a foot and a half difference), and suggesting the smaller milling needs of a early nineteenth-century rural community. The original building may have had only one run of millstones on the first floor, with the upper floors used for grain storage and cleaning. During this early period wheat and corn would have been hoisted to storage areas through doors that still exist on the front facade of the present mill. The mill was modified and enlarged in 1845 by the Fulcher family.[4] At this time the original square plan was extended 14 ft. on the west end, throughout all four stories, to provide greater grain storage capacity. The two-story ell on the west end was probably added at or close to this period as living, office or storage space for the miller. This small ell wing was extended to the rear (north), sometime before 1900.[5] Dr. Woodson added a shed addition to the rear in 1904 to house a cider press. During Dr. Woodson's long tenure as owner of the mill, from 1900 until his death in 1963, the building served a variety of uses. Along with its milling function, the mill included a miller's/doctor's office, a private medical examination room, a room where the doctor's children received tutoring, and a shop area with belt-driven lathes. And, as the mill became a central meeting area, it was only logical to make it a local polling registration point.[6]

Before 1900 the mill was known as "Piney River Mill,"[7] but this name was forgotten in the shadow of Dr. Woodson. He upgraded the mill's operation from local subsistence to regional commercial status. The building, larger than other local mills and at one time ran with three wheels, was bound to become the symbol of a robust community lead by an ambitious doctor and politician. Both mill and man were centerpieces of the Nelson and Amherst Counties. Woodson's Mill is today an important reminder of this boom period, and of the preceding 100 years of the region's history.

Foundation and Framing

Adding to the idiosyncracies of Woodson's Mill are the variety of materials from different periods of construction included in the foundation. The oldest part of the mill features a brick foundation visible on the south entrance facade. This partial section of brickwork is laid in an American bond: starting at the base, it consists of one course of stretchers, one of headers, five of stretchers, one of headers, three of stretchers and one

of headers just below the hewn pine sill. This early foundation continues out of sight underneath the present flooring and defines the original west wall of the first mill building.[8] A roughly-finished grade of field stone comprises most of east facade foundation, where an unfinished inscription, reading "JULY," is legible near the southeast corner. This may have been an attempt at a corner stone, possibly from the 1845 rebuilding or earlier.

The foundation underneath the later nineteenth-century western addition is of mostly large field and river stone. The continuity of this foundation supports the theory that the two-story ell was added when the extra four-story storage rooms were built. Dr. Woodson's rear shed addition is solidly founded on concrete which shows plank patterns from simple wood form construction. Two sets of steps at the front of the mill were formed in concrete after 1900, for an entrance into the milling area on the east and office area at west.

The post-and-beam, mortise-and-tenon construction system is used throughout the pre-1900 sections of the building, with later balloon frame construction for the rear shed addition. The upright posts in the east end are hewn, as are the sills, plates, angled braces and summer beam. The summer beam in this area is supported by a post and shoulder block (the block may have been added later to correct sag and shrinkage). All posts in this older section are approximately 9 in. x 9 in. in section, whereas posts in the later west side addition are closer to 1 ft.x 1 ft. to increase support under the grain storage rooms. At the junction between the older section and the nineteenth-century addition the posts were doubled and secured with iron ties. The mid nineteenth-century section of the building shows a variety of hewn and milled wood, which probably indicates some structural repair done during Dr. Woodson's period with members that were milled at his saw mill across the road. A small addition made at the rear of the two story ell was constructed from hewn members from another building or possibly recut members from another section of the mill. Most of the hewn members are pine while the larger milled pieces are white oak.[9]

The floor joists in all sections of the building are milled, and in general most measure 11 in. x 3 in. in section and include cross braces in many areas. Floor boards vary in length and width throughout the building: some modern boards are as narrow

horizontally split design and still retains a polling list dating back to the 1950s-60s. A basement area situated in the west end features double doors which open out near the generator wheel's tail race. The most elaborate exterior door is to the miller's office, with its horizontal recessed panels.

Since the construction of the building followed pragmatic lines, windows were placed where light was needed and omitted where grain and storage areas needed continuous walls and protection from light. The asymmetrical exterior pattern fits the needs of interior use. For instance, a small single-pane opening was placed at the east end to bring in light where one of the millstone cranes lifts the runner stone for cleaning. A variety of window sizes are found in the building: from unglazed portals with swing-open-vertical-plank shutters on the fourth floor to a twelve-over-twelve light sashes on the rear shed addition. Most of the windows have six-over-six light sash. Virtually all of the older windows were replaced due to dry rot during the 1980's restoration work, and one new window was added in the second floor of the ell addition above the mill office door.

The shed roofs on the front of the building are original to Dr. Woodson's period of ownership.[10] A small shed roof extends from the miller's bay window, over the office entry; while the large, partially suspended, shed roof extends over most of the first floor area, leaving enough room for light to come in the end portal for the husk area. This generous porch-like structure probably encouraged customers and visitors to gather in front of the building, and affords good protection from the elements.

The Milling Machinery

In the late eighteenth century a "state-of-the-art" mill would not have been very different from one of the fifteenth century. The original Woodson's Mill would have consisted of a wooden overshot wheel attached to a wooden or wrought-iron axle, which would have turned the original millstone or stones through a system of wooden gear exchanges. Beyond this basic machinery, the miller would have had simple sieves or screens to clean the grain before milling and to separate the shorts, middlings and bran.[11] Today, Woodson's Mill serves as testimony to the revolution in the milling industry that took place during the nineteenth century, starting with the American inventor Oliver Evans's (1755-1819) book, The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide, first published in 1795.

The oldest part of this building was typical of late eighteenth-century mill design in that it was built tall, to take advantage of gravity feeding grain down to the stones, and it was compact, so that the wheel-powered machinery could be placed as close as possible to the energy source.[12] This tall and narrow design was ideal for the bucket elevator as well.

There are two systems for the production of flour in the present Woodson's Mill. The older system includes the husk frame and millstones, the only method used at the mill until 1900. Dr. Woodson bought the roller mill machinery to produce white flour after the turn of the century. It is unusual to find a roller mill system that is completely intact as at Woodson's Mill. When the Brockenbrough restoration began, all of the Woodson period machinery was still in the building. Presently only the millstones are used in production, but the roller mill system could be brought back into working order.[13]

There are two runs of millstones on the husk frame in the east end of the building. The current transfer of power from wheel to stones is through a gear-to-belt system. This configuration was probably installed by Dr. Woodson. The present system and older iron or wooden gear systems use a clutch control for selectively disengaging the stones.[14] The most intriguing part of the present millstone system is the pit wheel, the first gear to transfer the water wheels's power inside of the building. This wheel's gear teeth are wooden wedges, individually fitted and adjustable.

The millstones are four feet in diameter and each one weighs about one ton. These stones are thought to be native Virginia stones, possibly from Montgomery County, but may have been made in the Northeast.[15] The present stones are most likely only the second set used since the mill's construction.[16] The husk frame members include milled and hewn members that measure from 10 in. x 12 in. to 12 in.x 14 in. in section. A second husk frame extends across the back wall of the east end and supports the three roller mills.

Sometime during the nineteenth century the Oliver Evans bucket elevators were installed into the center of the east end work area. This innovation, along with wooden conveyor screws (to encourage horizontal movement), provided quick and easy

distribution of the grain and flour throughout the mill. This system was referred to as the automatic mill. The whole elevator mechanism was driven from a system of belts powered by a water wheel. This reduced time and manpower factors in the milling process. The central bucket elevator consists of six square wooden shafts that extend from underneath the first floor to just under the ridge of the roof, a distance of approximately sixty feet.

Under Dr. Woodson's ownership the mill became a regional commercial operation. Apparently some of the machinery in the mill, including a Fitz water wheel, was bought from the prominent Nelson County industrialist Thomas Fortune Ryan of Oak Ridge.[17] The product of the roller mill was a much finer white flour than that produced by stone milling. The roller mill set-up included a sophisticated system of elevators which connected various machines on the first three floors to separate and refine the milled grain several times before arriving at the final packing area.

Three Case Company roller mills, each a different grade of roller, stand on the rear platform. These are connected to sixteen elevator shafts. A "Cranson Scouring Machine for Polishing and Separating" sits to the right of the roller mills. All of the original manufacturer's names still appear on the machines (and in some cases paper labels with operation instructions are still legible). To the left of the roller mills, on the floor, is an elaborate machine for barrel packing, which is similar to the invention by Evan Evans, Oliver's brother.[18] The packer was at the terminus of this efficient process.

The second floor of the mill where most of the present day packing occurs, features a "Eureka New Improved Dustless Receiving Separator" which stands as a centerpiece of this space. At the west end of the floor, in the former grain storage area, is a walk-in refrigerator removed from the S.S. United States, and installed by Mr. Brockenbrough for grain storage to meet Agricultural Department codes.

Machines designed with materials and details that make them appear furniture-like are found on the third floor's central space. Four "Case Company Inter Elevator Flour Dressers" and one "Case Scalping Chest" are the upper end terminus for the sixteen roller mill elevators. These machines were used to separate the

shorts, middlings and bran. Next to these machines is the present-day grain hopper for the millstones two floors below. In the third floor west end is a "Monarch Batch Mixer" (1908) which is not original to the building, but is certainly appropriate, and at the corner of this space are some of the original wood screws (about fifteen feet long) that would have fit into hexagonal casings for horizontal distribution of grain or flour. All of these machines were powered by the water-driven belt system. Evidence of former belt and elevator paths survives in the form of holes cut through the floor. The fourth floor was originally used as storage space. It is now empty except for the elevator heads.

The machines mentioned are only a partial catalog of what is still in the building. Several other large bolting, scalping and cleaning pieces stand in the mill, long ago disconnected from the main spine of elevators. It is also worth mentioning the 1920s cider press that Mr. Brockenbrough operates in the rear shed addition area, as well as the c. 1914 Toledo platform scale next to an older beam and platform scale "The Standard" on the first floor. In addition to the milling machinery, the doctor's office and school room above are outfitted with nineteenth-century wood stoves, and some of the doctor's medical instruments are still in the office area, as well as his black leather doctor's satchel.

Water Source and Fitz Wheels

The water used to run the mill wheels from Woodson's Mill's earliest days flowed from the Piney River. The present concrete dam was built by Mr. Brockenbrough in the 1980s. It replaced a Woodson-period dam that had washed out (sections of this older structure still lay in the river bed). The millrace runs through some bottom lands and fills a millpond that was constructed by Woodson in the 1920s.[19] An earthen wall forms the southeast side of the millpond. When Brockenbrough began to reconstruct the head race section it was filled with refuse, and the Woodson-period stone and concrete lining was insufficient. The present section of the race has a new sturdy concrete bed. The sluices are of heavy steel construction and have hand crank sluice gates. Pre-1963 photographs of the mill show that the original sluices were of wood-frame box design and may have been lined with tin.

At the mill's peak of production there were three wheels: one small wheel on the west end to generate electricity and run shop machines, one 12 1/2 ft. wheel to run the mill machinery and a matching 12 1/2 ft. wheel to run an ice plant and lumber mill further east of the mill. A unique "Y" sluice with two gates was designed to run both wheels independently.

The large steel and iron overshot design wheels were constructed by the Fitz Water Wheel Company of Hanover, Pennsylvania. These durable instruments replaced the wooden wheels of most mills after 1852, when it was first introduced. When Dr. Woodson found that he would have to pay the full large wheel price to have his narrower west side wheel built, he decided to build a small wheel himself.[20] This is the wheel that is still in use today. Gone are the ice plant, lumber mill and the second large Fitz wheel. Woodson also tried using a small wheel in the creek next to his house for electricity, but the creek's flow was not strong enough. The concrete foundation for this wheel still exists.

Architectural Setting

During the early twentieth century the Lowesville vicinity brimmed with economic vitality. Dr. Woodson operated the mill, an ice plant, a lumber mill, and a cider press which originally was separate from the mill. His fine Arts and Crafts house, designed by Jack Kirk (a building contractor who worked for the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway) replaced an older residence of which no record exists, other than the knowledge that the house was traditionally associated with the mill.[21] A small outbuilding that stands next to the Woodson house was probably a kitchen or smokehouse for this earlier residence. Behind the Woodson house is a long garage constructed from round river stone to match the residence. A late-nineteenth century or early-twentieth century barn stands north of the mill in a fenced pasture. Just east of the mill are the concrete foundations for the ice plant, and on a shallow hillside about fifty yards northeast of the mill is the site of a modest house where Edd Willis and possibly other head millers lived.[22]

Enhancing the high architectural and historical quality of Woodson's Mill are the buildings in nearby Lowesville as well as the dramatic natural surroundings. Lowesville, across the Piney

River, in Amherst county, is less than a quarter mile from the mill. Originally the site of Woodson and Company, a store run by Dr. Woodson's father, Lowesville is a small cross-roads community with several attractive mid-nineteenth, brick buildings, including the local landmark, Hite's Store. Woodson's Mill and Lowesville are set into a dramatic natural area: next to the Piney River with the backdrop of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Woodson's Mill sits at the edge of the Piney River flood plain in front of a wooded hill.[23] Of the sixteen mills still standing in Nelson county, Woodson's Mill is not only unusual because of its high state of architectural integrity, it is also one of a very small number of mills in the United States that still produces stone-ground flour by water power.

MCW

Notes

1. While the builder has not been traced through deeds or other paper records, it has been popular knowledge in the Lowesville community that Guiliford Campbell had a mill built at this site in 1794. A post card found at the mill, from the 1940s lists these facts which at that time would most likely have come from Dr. Woodson. It is known that the mill was still owned by a George Campbell before the Civil War. Since the mill has undergone many renovations, it is doubtful that a great deal of the present
building dates before the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

2. J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., and Steve Roberts interviews 2 and 9 May, 1992.

3. Brockenbrough, interview, 6 February.

4. The Fulchers bought the mill for $1,500.50 in 1834 and sold it thirty years later, during the Civil War for $15,000. It is likely that the mill underwent a substantial amount of improvement over this time period. The residence on the 57 1/2 acre tract may have been built or improved during this period.

5. The west end additions span from 1845 through 1900. The two-and-a-half-story cell that extends from the main working area was expanded at the rear. The framing in this intermediate area was salvaged from an older building where mortise and tenon was the principle method of construction. Dr. Woodson may have salvaged this wood from one of the older buildings on the property, perhaps the original farmhouse.

6. Brockenbrough, interview, 6 February, 1992.

7. Chistina Moon, Architecture in Virginia: Woodson's Mill, Lowesville, Virginia (unpublished research paper, University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Charlottesville, Va., 1988) 20. The mill was also referred to as the "Big Piney Mills" at the end of the nineteenth century.

8. The brick foundation work at the older east end and a nineteenth-century brick flue are the most elaborate masonry features in the mill.

9. Steve Roberts, interview, 9 May 1992.

10. Roberts, interview, 9 April.

11. B.W. Dedrick, Practical Milling (Chicago, Ill., National Miller, 1924) 13-34.

12. Brockenbrough, interview 9 May 1992.

13. Brockenbrough, interviews.

14. Anne Carpenter Reed, Grinding to a Halt: The Lives of Two Grist Mills in Madison County, Virginia (Unpublished research paper, University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Charlottesville, Va., 1987) 8.

15. Mr. Brockenbrough was advised by Derrick Ogden a professional Millwright during the 1980s restoration. Mr. Ogden believed the stones were definitely not French and possibly from quarries in Montgomery County, Virginia. He conceded that it would be difficult to prove Virginia origin and the stones were more likely cut from Northeastern quarries.

16. Brockenbrough and Roberts, interviews.

17. Brockenbrough and Roberts, interviews.

18. Harry B. Weiss and Robert J. Sim, The Early Grist and Flouring Mills of New Jersey (Trenton: New Jersey Agricultural Society, 1956) 81.

19. Moon, 13.

20. Brockenbrough, interviews.

21. Brockenbrough, interviews.

22. Brockenbrough, interviews.

23. Nelson County has lost most of its once numerous mills due to flood damage, especially that which ravaged the County in the wake of hurricane Camille in 1969. Fortunately the high position of the Woodson's Mill building has and will continue to spare it from severe flood damage.

Statement of Significance

Woodson's Mill, located on County Route 778 in Nelson County, Virginia, about one-eighth mile east of Lowesville, is a remarkably intact example of a nineteenth-century wood-frame grist mill. Woodson's Mill is significant in the state of Virginia for its representation of developments in grain milling stretching from at least the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. In its construction, it is representative of grist mills found throughout the eastern United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that was regionally important: within ten miles of Woodson's Mill, two other examples of the same type survive, though in dilapidated condition (these are the Tyro Mill, dating from 1820, and Massie's Mill, built in 1866).[1] Local mills, used to grind grain from nearby farms for local consumption, remained an important feature of the countryside in the southeast into the twentieth century. Woodson's Mill has served such a function for most of its history, only reaching beyond the local market after 1900. Architecturally, Woodson's Mill is barn-like in form, built expressly for the purpose of housing milling equipment and processing grain into meal and flour. The equipment that the mill contains ranges from its two overshot waterwheels to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century refining machines, which demonstrate advances in the milling industry. As was typical for the small grist mill of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and often into the twentieth century, Woodson's Mill served as the industrial focus of a small agricultural community. The mill was a component of a complex of buildings from at least the late 1800s, and remains as such. Woodson's Mill was built on slightly elevated ground above the flood plain of the Piney River, before a hill that rises to the north; on the hill behind the mill building stand four contributing structures. Pasture land lies to the northeast, and several mature trees, including ash trees over fifty years of age, dot the yard. To the west of the mill lies the mill pond, from which the mill race extends in an easterly direction to power the mill's water wheels. The mill building's site retains its original integrity, and the property overall remains little altered from the early twentieth century.

Historic Context

Part of the foundation of the eastern section of Woodson's Mill is believed to date from a mill built on the site in 1794 by Guiliford Campbell, according to one research source; however,

this early date is not substantiated in the mill's property records.[2] The Campbell family had been prominent among early settlers to the Lowesville area, then part of Amherst County.[3] Initially the mill building was about one-half its present size, consisting of the eastern section of the existing structure and standing two and one-half stories tall above the foundations. The mill probably employed only one overshot wheel, powered by water directed from a dammed part of the Piney River to the northwest, and turning one run of stones. If the 1794 date is correct, the mill's construction occurred about ten years after the invention of labor-saving milling devices introduced around 1785 by Oliver Evans (1755-1819), author of The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide.[4] It is unlikely that these inventions had an impact on Guiliford Campbell's mill, but they came into use in the mill in the nineteenth century, possibly beginning in 1845, when the mill was rebuilt.[5]

Woodson's Mill, which acquired its present name from its early twentieth-century owner, changed hands at least six times in the nineteenth century. On 10 January 1854, a 52 1/8-acre parcel on which Woodson's Mill now stands was sold to Joseph Fulcher by George W. and Polly Campbell. The Campbells had obtained the land as part of a larger tract inherited from John Campbell.[6] In January 1854 the valuation of the property was $1,500.50.[7] Fulcher sold the tract with additional land, totalling 57 1/2 acres, to Nathan C. Taliaferro on 18 August 1863 for $15,000.[8] Nathan Taliaferro and his wife Mary E. sold the parcel with the same amount of acreage on 1 August 1875 to Edward and Lucy Pettit for $8,000.[9] The sizeable increase in price between 1854 and 1863 could be an error in the records; or, it and the decrease between 1863 and 1875 could reflect Civil War-era inflation and post-war economic instability, along with changes to the condition of the property and the structures on it.[10] On 9 January 1885 the 57 1/2 acre parcel, "with all buildings and mills," was taken in trust for payment of debts due from Edward Pettit. At this time the mill was known as Piney River Mill.[11] E. H. and Lucy Pettit recovered title to the property, and transferred ownership of the Piney River Mill and 57 1/2 acres to Samuel Griggs, from Bedford County, Virginia, on 24 May 1886, who exchanged 516 2/3 acres in Bedford County for the mill and $1,000 paid by the Pettits.[12] Samuel Griggs in turn sold the mill to Walter C. Miller, who sold it, still with 57 1/2 acres, to Dr. Julian B. Woodson on 22 March 1900 for $2,100.[13] The first

record of a mill standing on the property in the Nelson County and Amherst County deed books is in the 1885 deed; however, in 1862, the Nelson County Land Tax Records show a value of $500 for unspecified buildings standing on the tract.[14]

Dr. Woodson greatly changed the appearance and operation of the mill. He finished the interior of the addition to the west, setting up his medical office and examining room on the first floor. In the 1920s he added a one-story, shed-roofed wing to the rear to contain a cider press, which also produced whiskey during the Depression and Prohibition.[15] Dr. Woodson built the existing three-acre mill pond in the 1920s as well, and used concrete to reconstruct the raceway, which was originally lined with stone. In 1929 he had a stone Arts and Crafts bungalow, designed by Jack Kirk, built for himself on the site of a nineteenth-century house on the hill behind the mill building (the stone garage behind the house almost certainly dates from the same time).[16] The mill's name was changed to reflect its new ownership, and it was outfitted with new milling equipment to bring its operation up to date. This measure was in keeping with advancements in milling made in the early twentieth century in the southeastern United States: many new mills were built during the period, on the form of nineteenth-century mills but incorporating new machinery, while many old mills like Woodson's Mill had new equipment installed in them. Bucket elevators, developed by Oliver Evans, had probably been added to the mill in the mid- or late nineteenth century, and remained in use under Woodson's ownership. The doctor added two metal overshot wheels, a large one and a smaller one; he used two large wheels to turn the stones and run the machinery, and a small wheel to supply his house with electricity and running water. The wheels added by Woodson, a 12 1/2 foot Fitz wheel and a smaller copy of a Fitz wheel made on the site, are still in use at the mill.[17]

On the interior of the mill, the machinery added by Dr. Woodson allowed the processing of grain into white flour, which was much finer than stone ground flour. Essential to this process were roller mills. Dr. Woodson had these set up on the main floor of the mill in the early 1900s, on a husting or husk (the milling platform) along the mill's rear wall; to the east, the mill stones remained in operation. This configuration of old and new milling processes was not uncommon in old mills in the southeast that had been brought up to date buy the addition of new

equipment.[18] On the first floor, Woodson added a scourer, a mechanized packing machine (invented by Evan Evans, brother of Oliver Evans), a Toledo scale, and a beam scale. On the second floor a separator was installed; scalping and bolting machines were added to the third floor. The scalpers, bolters, and separators all functioned as part of the roller mill system.[19]

During the first half of the twentieth century, Woodson's Mill served as a community center, as did most rural grist mills of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries.[20] Woodson, who also "owned a 3,000-tree apple orchard, a 650-acre farm, and a machine shop," with a stable, a foundry, and a sawmill across the road, operated an ice plant as well as the cider press, and a medical office (where he practiced dentistry and veterinary medicine along with general medicine), on the mill property. The mill also served as the community polling place from the 1920s into the 1950s.[21] There were several buildings on the 57 1/2-acre Woodson's Mill tract, including the residence of Woodson's miller, which stood in present-day pasture land to the northeast of the mill building. The miller was Edd Willis, an African American who was hired by Woodson (in order to repay a debt Willis owed to Woodson), shortly after the purchase of the mill in 1900. Willis stayed on, and operated Woodson's Mill until his death in the 1960s.[22] As often was the case in small agricultural communities, Woodson, partly as owner and operator of a regionally important grist mill, was a leading local figure. He had been born in the area on 2 January 1872, and his father, David Stapleton Woodson, ran a store in Lowesville, called Woodson and Company.[23] Julian Woodson served as a Virginia state senator from 1920 to 1940.

The Piney River Valley and the nearby Tye River Valley experienced prosperous economic conditions just after 1900 and through the 1920s, due to lumbering operations. Railroad lines were built through the area to service the lumber mills, and for a time Woodson utilized this transportation link to market his milled products in a wider region.[24] This set Woodson's Mill apart from other mills in the region, which apparently served only the locality immediately around them. Massie's Mill, built in 1866 in Massie's Mill, Virginia, about eight miles from Woodson's Mill, is similar in form to the original part of Woodson's Mill, with a large metal Fitz wheel at one end. However, it never grew to the dimensions, nor was it outfitted

with machinery having the technological complexity and versatility of the equipment in Woodson's Mill. Nearby Tyro Mill, dating from 1820, also remained a single-wheel milling operation serving the immediate vicinity.

The proliferation of trades and activities that grew up around Woodson's Mill was characteristic of the rural grist mill. The use of the grist mill into the twentieth century in some areas of the United States helped to preserve the rural agricultural way of life, and to foster the survival of attendant small agricultural communities, but it also acted against the adoption of more modern industrial development.[25] The history of Woodson's Mill illustrates this duality.

Woodson's Mill discontinued operation in the 1960s, following the deaths of Dr. Woodson and Ed Willis. The mill fell into disrepair in the ensuing years. In 1983, restoration of the building and its machinery was undertaken by the present owner, J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., and Woodson's Mill's head miller, Steve Roberts. The restoration has brought the mill back to use as a water-powered grist mill, functioning much as it did from the mid- or late-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Important features of the mill remain intact: the mill is still powered by water directed from a dammed portion of the Piney River, which is collected in the mill pond and fed to the wheels by the mill race; the structure of the mill building retains nineteenth-century materials, construction, and overall appearance; and the milling machinery survives from the early twentieth century. The Woodson's Mill property also contains four additional contributing structures: the Arts and Crafts stone bungalow, built in 1929, and the five-bay stone garage that stands behind the house and is probably contemporaneous with it; a small, frame, one and one-half story gable-roofed building that probably dates from the mid- or late nineteenth century, and most likely served as a kitchen for the nineteenth-century house that stood on the site of the present residence; and a frame, gable-roofed barn dating from the late nineteenth century or the early twentieth century, to the northeast of the house. The mill building's site retains its late-eighteenth-century integrity, while the rest of the property, with its important contributing buildings and landscape elements, remains much as it existed just after the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Today grain products ground at the mill are sold from the mill itself, and are distributed nationally. The mill also operates as an tourist attraction. It is open for tours by appointment, and to the general public on Saturdays, when the mill is usually in operation.

SES

Notes

1. WPA files, Virginia State Library.

2. Christina R. Moon, Architecture in Virginia: Woodson's Mill, Lowesville, Virginia (unpublished research paper, University of Virginia School of Architecture, Charlottesville, VA, 1988) n.p., 14, 19.

3. Moon, 19.

4. Charles Byron Kuhlmann, The Development of the Flour-Milling Industry in the United States (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1929) 96-101; Moon, 10.

5. Moon, 14.

6. The line of ownership of the Woodson's Mill property cannot be traced beyond this deed in the Nelson County and Amherst County records (Nelson County was formed from part of Amherst County in 1807).

7. Nelson County Deed Book 14, p. 44, Nelson County Courthouse, Lovingston, VA.

8. Nelson County Deed Book 16, p. 240.

9. Nelson County Deed Book 21, p. 22.

10. According to the Land Tax Records, Nelson County, Virginia, 1862, p. 14 (Virginia State Library Archives), the value of the land and buildings in 1862 was $1155.00.

11. Nelson County Deed Book 22, p. 520-21.

12. Nelson County Deed Book 23, p. 218.

13. Nelson County Deed Book 28, p. 496.

14. Nelson County Land Tax Records, 1862, p. 14.

15. Moon, 21.

16. Moon, 13, 21; J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., Woodson's Mill, Lowesville, VA, interviews by Marc C. Wagner, 9 May and 6 June 1992. According to Mr. Brockenbrough, Jack Kirk was a contractor employed by a railroad company that built a line into the Lowesville area in the early twentieth century, and he is responsible for the construction of a few other buildings in the region.

17. Moon, 14.

18. Moon, 21; Larry Hasse, "Watermills in the South: Rural Institutions Working Against Modernization," Agricultural History, vol. 58 (July 1984) 281-95, 290-91.

19. J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr. and Steve Roberts, Head Miller, Woodson's Mill, interviews by Marc C. Wagner, 9 May and 6 June 1992.

20. Hasse, 289.

21. J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., and Steve Roberts, interviews, 9 May and 6 June 1992; Moon, 14, 20, 21.

22. Moon, 20-21; Boyce Loving, "Dr. Julian B. Woodson of Nelson Has Had Varied, Colorful Career," Charlottesville, VA Daily Progress, 10 Oct. 1957.

23. Loving; J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., interviews.

24. J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr., interviews.

25. Hasse, 281.

Bibliography

Abernathey, R. James. Practical Hints on Mill Building. Moline, Ill.: R. James Abernathey, 1880.

Amherst County Deed Books. Amherst County Court House, Amherst, Virginia.

Amherst County Land Tax Records. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

Amherst County Photograph Archives. Amherst County Historical Society, Amherst, Virginia.

Amherst County Will Books. Amherst County Court House, Amherst, Virginia.

Bennett, Richard and John Elton. History of Corn Milling. New York: Burt Franklin, 1896. Volumes I through IV.

Blanton, Jackson Lee. Muddy Creek Mills. University of Virginia, Architecture School: Class Research Paper for Architecture II, Professor S. Krause, 19 May 1961.

Brockenbrough, J. Gill, Jr., (current Woodson's Mill owner). Interviews, Woodson's Mill tour, and Lowesville tour. Lowesville, Virginia, 6 February, 9 April, 2 May, and 9 May, 1992.

Cabe, Carl. Flour Milling, Kansas Industry Series No. 2. Lawrence, Ks.: University of Kansas, School of Business - Bureau of Business Research, June, 1958.

Coincon, J.B. Colonial History of Nelson Country 1734-1807. Amherst, Va.: Amherst Publishing Co., 1950.

Davis, Bruce B. and Chip Logan. Hatton Grange Mill. University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Class Research Paper for Studies in Vernacular Architecture, Professor K. Edward Lay, 1976.

Dedrick, B.W. Practical Milling. Chicago, Ill.: National Miller, 1924.

Edgar, William C. The Story of a Grain of Wheat. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925.

Evans, Oliver. The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850.

Hasse, Larry. "Watermills in the South: Rural Institutions Working Against Modernization." Agricultural History, Vol. 58, No. 3 (July 1984): 280-295.

Hessens, Mrs. Julian, Nelson County Historical Society. Telephone interview by Marc C. Wagner, 16 May, 1992.

Hibbert, Meg. "River Towns Nestled in Mountains." Amherst New Era Progress (11 July 1985): 16-17.

Hibbert, Meg. "Sitting Low on the Border." Nelson County Times, Discover Amherst County (Special Section) (19 July 1990): 23, 31+.

Hopkins, R. Thurston. Old English Mills and Inns. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1927.

Howell, Charles and Allen Keller. The Mill at Philipsburg Manor Upper Mills and a Brief History of Milling. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1977.

Hughes, William Carter. American Miller and Millwright's Assistant. Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1859.

Hughes, William Carter. American Miller and Millwright's Assistant. Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird & Co., 1884.

Kuhlmann, Charles Byron. The Development of the Flour-Milling Industry in the United States. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929.

Lathrop, Carl M. Sentimental Journey, being a history of the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway, the Bee Tree Lumber Company and the Leftwich Timber Company. Lancaster, Pa.: Brookshire Printing, 1979.

Loving, Boyce. "Dr. Julian B. Woodson of Nelson Has Had Varied, Colorful Career." Daily Progress newspaper, Charlottesville, Va., 10 October 1957.

Madison, Judy. "County History Spans from Monacan Indians to Modern Industry." Nelson County Times (12 February 1986): 4-5, 30, 31.

Melton, Herman. Pittsylvania's Eighteenth Century Grist Mills. Chatham, Va.: Pittsylvania Historical Society, 1989.

Moffett, Lee. Water Powered Mills of Faquier County, Virginia. 1984.

Moon, Chistina R. Woodson's Mill, Lowesville, Virginia. University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Class Research Paper for Architecture in Virginia, Professor K. Edward Lay, 1988.

Mutual Assurance Records for Amherst and Nelson Counties. Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

Nelson County Deed Books. Nelson County Court House, Lovingston, Virginia.

Nelson County Land Tax Records. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

Nelson County History Files. Nelson County Historical Society, Nelson County Library, Lovingston, Virginia.

"Nelson County, Virginia" (General Information Pamphlet). Nelson County Chamber of Commerce, Lovingston, Virginia.

Netherton, Ross D. Colvin Run Mill. Fairfax, Va.: Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning, February, 1976.

O'Neill, Sheila Mary. A Custom in the Country: The Custom Grist Mill in Albemarle 1870 to 1910. University of Virginia, Department of Anthropology, Master of Arts Thesis, May 1991.

"Pierce Mill, Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C." Pamphlet printed by National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

Reed, Ann Carpenter. Grinding to a Halt: The Lives of Two Grist Mills in Madison County, Virginia. University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Class Research Paper for Architecture in Virginia, Professor K. Edward Lay, 1987.

Reynolds, John. Windmills & Watermills. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

Roberts, Steve (current Head Miller at Woodson's Mill). Interviews and Woodson's Mill Tour. Lowesville, Virginia, 9 April, 2 May, and 9 May 1992.

Rose, J. and T. Taylor. The Old A. J. Long Mill, Greene County, Virginia. University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Class Research Paper for Architecture of Virginia, Professor K. Edward Lay, May 1973.

Southard, Lee, Nelson County Historian. Telephone interview by Marc C. Wagner, 24 May 1992.

Steen, Herman. Flour Milling in America. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1973.

Storck, John and Walter Dorwin Teague. A History of Milling: Flour for Man's Bread. Minneapolis, Mn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1952.

Tyrwhitt, Janice. The Mill. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976.

Virginia Census Records, Amherst and Nelson Counties, Virginia, 1810. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia. Virginia Historic Photograph Collections. Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

West, Bob. "The Life and Times of Huron T. Campbell." Nelson County Magazine, (November-December 1978): 38-9.

Wimberley, C. W. Stone Milling and Whole Grain Cooking. Austin, Texas: Von Boeckmann-Jones Press, 1965.

Woodson's Mill Photographs. A collection of six photographs which show the exterior of the Mill and former Head Miller, Ed Willis. These photos were given to Messrs. Brockenbrough and Roberts by George Woodson, son of Dr. Woodson. They are pre-1963, most likely late 1950s, and were not reproducible for this report because of their frames.

Works Progress Administration of Virginia Historical Inventory, NE-102, Massies Mill. Research by Massie D. Thacker, Arrington Virginia, 9 June 1936.

Works Progress Administration of Virginia Historical Inventory, NE-37, The Tyro Mill. Research by Massie D. Thacker, Arrington Virginia, 29 June 1936.

Works Progress Administration of Virginia Historic Sites Map, Nelson County, Southwest Section. Virginia State Library Photo Archives.

Zimiles, Martha & Murray. Early American Mills. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1973.

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is best described using its legal parcel number: Section 63, parcel 32, on the Nelson County Tax Parcel Map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the residence and other buildings historically associated with Woodson's Mill, and the portion of the Piney River, the mill race, and the mill pond also historically associated with the property.

Additional Items

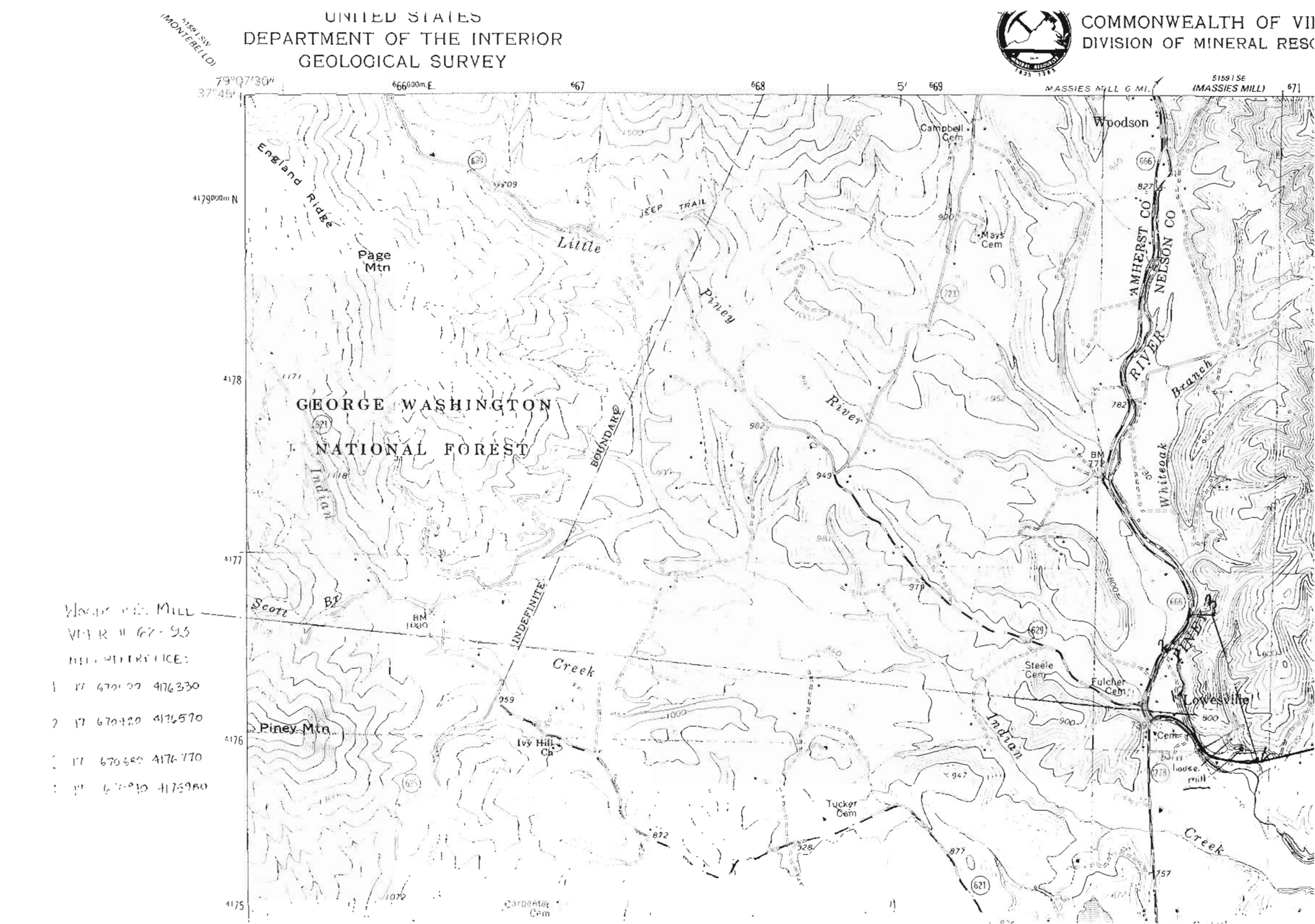
Supplemental Photographic Material

1. Edd Willis, Woodson's Mill miller, from 1920s. Edd Willis was hired by Dr. Woodson shortly after 1900 and worked as head miller until 1963. The photograph is property of Mr. J. Gill Brockenbrough, Jr. and is kept with other photographs and belongings of Dr. Woodson at the mill office.

2. A photograph of Woodson's Mill from before the Brockenbrough restoration which began after 1983. The poplar siding was in deteriorated condition, virtually all windows were boarded close and the fitz wheels were inactive. This photograph probably dates to the late 1970s and is part of the Amherst Historical Society holdings at the Amherst Museum, Amherst, VA.

3. Detail photograph from the late 1970s. This was taken before the restoration and shows the west end of the building which features the Fitz wheel that Dr. Woodson constructed on the property. This wheel is still used to generate electricity for the mill. This photograph is in the archives of the Nelson County Historical Society at the Nelson County Library, Lovingston, VA.

Note: A collection of excellent black and white photographs were given to Mr. Brockenbrough from George Woodson, son of Dr. Julian B. Woodson. This series shows the mill in operation sometime after the mid 1950s. These photographs were carefully framed and are not reproducible by copy machine. The photographs are kept at the mill and can be viewed through arrangements with Mr. Brockenbrough and head miller Steve Roberts.


UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
COMMONWEALTH OF VI
DIVISION OF MINERAL RESO
5159 I SW
(MONTEBELLO)
5159 I SE
(MASSIES MILL)
MASSIES MILL 6 MI.
79°07'30"
37°45'
666000m E.
667
668
669
671
4179000m N
4178
4177
4176
4175
England Ridge
Page Mtn
Little
Piney
River
JEEP TRAIL
GEORGE WASHINGTON
NATIONAL FOREST
BOUNDARY
INDEFINITE
Indian
Scott
Creek
Piney Mtn
Ivy Hill Ch
Campbell Cem
Mays Cem
Woodson
AMHERST CO
NELSON CO
RIVER
Branch
Whiteoak
BM 778
Steele Cem
Fulcher Cem
Lowesville
Cem
barn
house
mill
Tucker Cem
Carpenter Cem
Creek
621
629
666
778
757