

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Cockerham Mill

Crumpler vicinity, Ashe County, AH0056, Listed 12/10/2014

Nomination by Sherry Wyatt

Photographs by Becca Johnson, September 2013



Dog Creek façade and dam view



View from road

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Cockerham Mill

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1580 Dog Creek Road Extension

City or town: Crumpler State: NC County: Ashe

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: X

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p> | <p>_____ Date</p> |
|--|-------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>In my opinion, the property <u>X</u> meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> | |
| <p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p> | <p>_____ Date</p> |
| <p>_____ Title :</p> | <p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p> |

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4. 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:) _____

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

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Other: I-house

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, Stone, Concrete, Steel, Metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Ashe County is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwest North Carolina. The county seat of Jefferson is in the central section of the county. The Cockerham Mill is located in the small Nathans Creek community about three miles east of Jefferson and about seven miles south of the rural post office at Crumpler. The mill property has a Crumpler mailing address. The mill is situated at the mouth of Dog Creek where it flows into the south fork of the New River. The majority of the three-acre property associated with the mill lies between Joe Little Road (S.R. 1589), Dog Creek Road Extension (S.R. 1589), and the north bank of the south fork of the New River. The site is relatively open, being used as yard, garden, and pasture; it is bisected by Dog Creek. The land rises rapidly to the northeast and northwest of the property and is heavily wooded.

There are five buildings on the property and all are accessed by the two intersecting public roadways that bound the property to the east, north, and west. Facing Joe Little Rd. on the west side of the property are the mill, the original miller's house (later used as a foundry and chicken house), and a molasses shed. The mill was constructed sometime between 1884 and 1899 by Marcus Lafayette ("Fate") Cockerham. It is a two-story, side-gable, grist mill of post and beam construction. A twelve-inch thick concrete pad located just south of the mill was the support for the lumber planning mill that once stood there.

The house belonged to the miller and is a one-story side-gable single-pile building dating from c. 1899. Located north of the Fate Cockerham house, there is an altered c.1920 molasses

cooking shed with two molasses brick furnaces still in place. On the east side of the property, facing Dog Creek Extension, is a c. 1912 gambrel-roof banked barn and the Josh Cockerham house. The loft of the c. 1912 two-story barn served as a “sometimes” church for miller, Josh Cockerham, who was the son of Fate Cockerham. The Josh Cockerham house is an I-house, which was built in 1912. Heavily altered on the interior during the late 1970s, this house was rehabilitated by the current owner, Mitch Wooten in 1981-1983. Wooten worked from 1984 to 2006 repairing the dam and mill and putting a solid foundation under the mill.

Narrative Description

A. Cockerham Mill, c.1884 - 1899, Contributing building

The two-story side-gabled post and beam mill building measures 24 by 30 feet with a 14 by 30-foot enclosed porch added after the original construction. The building is constructed of chestnut and oak. The mill is located on the west bank of the mouth of Dog Creek; the New River flows near the mill's south end. All the foundation timbers, the flooring, and the roof timbers are original. The building has diagonal board exterior sheathing made of one-inch oak and chestnut sawn boards. The gable roof is sheathed in standing seam five v-crimp metal roofing.

The mill rests primarily on a dry-stacked stone foundation. The original stone pier that carries the southeast corner of the building has been left in place but encased in steel reinforced concrete to keep it intact. Part of the foundation on the Joe Little Road side (west) of the building rests on a sandstone outcropping and a concrete foundation. Interestingly, an old mill stone is part of that foundation. The mill also rests on the west end of the stone dam across Dog Creek. The original foundation timbers are twelve by twelve inch chestnut hand-hewn logs and supported on the west on a sandstone ledge, on the southwest on an old millstone set in the sand stone ledge, the northeast corner rests on the west end of the dam, and on the southeast corner on a dry-stacked stone pier (encased in steel-reinforced concrete). Underneath the original log sleepers, steel I-beams, steel posts and concrete footers were put in place in 2004 to stabilize the foundation.

The east wall of the mill contains a 33 by 62-inch window opening over the millstone (all windows have been removed following vandalism) and a door (30 by 77 inches) directly over the dam's forebay.¹ The north wall features a door (38 by 78 inches) that would have exited to the shed-roofed sawmill/shop that was destroyed by a 1977 flood. There are two upper story window openings in the east wall, and one upper story window opening in the north and south walls. The porch has two window openings in the south wall, one window in the north wall, four windows and one door (37 by 70 inches) at road level (west wall) with a five v-crimp tin roof. The west wall is supported on 4 by 5 inch wood risers placed on an 8-inch concrete abutment standing separate from the mill on a sandstone ledge and parallel with it, running 14 feet west.

Though damaged, the water wheel and mechanics to turn the mill stones are relatively intact. The two millstones remaining in the mill are those operating prior to the 1977 flood, which ended the mill's operation. The mill retains its 12-foot diameter metal Fitz overshot water wheel dating to the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century. The wheel's shaft is 13 feet long and 5 inches in diameter. Adjacent to the wheel is an 8-foot diameter steel flywheel carried by a 13-foot long, 3-inch diameter steel shaft. The flywheel, which helped regulate speeds and

¹A forebay was the large wooden box or sluice that brought the water above the Fitz wheel and turbine such that its fall generated the power for the wheel and turbine to operate.

increase torque, is 17 inches wide and has handmade wooden rim and spokes. Additionally, there are various cast iron fittings and bushings and a blacksmith forge fan. Of particular note, is the cast iron turbine or tub mill. It is 24 inches in diameter, 30 inches high and has 12 water intake fins (6 by 2 by 30 inches long) and a 1 ½ inch diameter side shaft with gear, which powered the grist mill stones from an offset position below the mill stones in the bed of Dog Creek. The steel hooks that were used to raise the top stone to sharpen the mill stone grooves are still on site.

The first floor of the mill has ten-foot ceilings and an open 24 by 30-foot floor plan. Four corner posts (6 by 8 inches) are braced with two diagonals each from the log sill. Two center posts (6 by 8 inches) are flanked by two posts (4 by 6 inches) located four feet to the east. In the southeast corner is a board-sheathed millstone housing (9 feet, 8 inches by 6 feet, 9 inches, by 27 inches high). The two round millstones are 44 inches in diameter and 15 inches thick. The top stone, once turned by a central steel shaft from a turbine offset below, tapers from a 15-inch center to a 12-inch edge. The bottom stone is stationary and rests on 8 by 8-inch wood beams. Walls are of sawn diagonal chestnut boards on 2 by 5-inch studs. The wooden staircase (9 feet by 28 inches wide) rises from the millstone housing, which is also located on the east wall. The east and west walls have two upright stud beams (5 by 7 inches) centered 9 feet apart, and located 9 feet 2 inches from the north and south walls. These extend from the foundation to the roof. A door (42 by 88 inches) opens at ground level on the west side, underneath the porch floor, thirty-eight inches north of the southwest corner.

The second floor was used to take in grains and to store milled grains for sale. All milling took place on the first floor, but the grains were emptied down (poured) to the first floor to be processed. The second floor has a 9-foot-5-inch ceiling and one-inch thick oak flooring.

The attic loft was for storage and supplies and is approximately three-quarters floored. It is 20 feet wide with four posts (4 by 6 inches) supporting the mill gable north to south. A corner stairway (thirty-two inches wide) rises from the northwest corner of the first floor of the mill to the loft.

From 1981 until 2006, the current owner worked to put the mill itself on a stable foundation of steel posts, I-beams and concrete and repair the interior and roof.

B. Marcus Lafayette (“Fate”) Cockerham House / Original Miller’s House [later used as Foundry and Chicken House], c. 1899, Contributing building

The original miller’s house is located on the west bank of Dog Creek and is thought to have been constructed around the time Fate Cockerham acquired the property. The one-story, one-room, side-gable, single-pile house is sheathed in German siding on the east elevation and board and batten siding on the west and south elevations. There are three window openings on the east and west walls and a door opening in the south elevation. The interior has been largely gutted although the concrete foundation (about 42 by 48 by 4 inches) that once carried the foundry remains in the southwest corner of the interior. A shed-roof addition was built on the north end in the 1920s. It housed a concrete in-ground furnace to fire a boiler used to soften lumber for the manufacture of wooden tobacco baskets and wooden chicken coops. The addition is sheathed in horizontal plank siding and has three window openings in the east wall. This building was damaged circa 2000 when a car crashed into it, and tore a large hole in the west wall; now covered with OSB. The Cockerham family converted the dwelling into a foundry in the 1920s. The building was later used as a chicken house and barn. It is currently a place for storage of building materials.

C. Dam, c. 1884 - 1899, 1983-1985, Contributing structure

A dry laid stone dam that is 12 feet high, 14 feet thick, and 78 feet long is extant. Parts of the original dam date from at least the c. 1884-1899 time period with the rebuilding of the mill and dam, but could be even earlier. Flooding in the 1970s caused heavy damage, particularly the western section nearest the mill. The structural base of the dam was largely rebuilt between 1983-1985 by the current owner using concrete and additional stone. However, the visible dry laid stone wall reflects the historic appearance of the dam. The original dam was constructed of wooden timbers as evidenced by three original timbers exposed during the repair work. They remain at the foot of the existing dam.

D. Molasses Cooking Shed, c.1920, Contributing building

The molasses cooking shed sits on the west bank of Dog Creek and shelters two brick furnaces about 7 feet long and 30 inches wide. The furnaces were simple structures built to hold the fires over which were placed rectangular metal pans used to cook down the “raw juice” into molasses. There is also a concrete molasses mill foundation. The mill used to grind cane for this is still on the property, stored in the barn. The molasses shed has a dirt floor and corrugated metal siding (covering the remains of the original wood siding) on three sides, but is open on the east side. Building materials are stored in this building.

E. Barn, c. 1912, Contributing building

The barn on the property dates from about the same time as the new miller’s house, c. 1912. The two-story frame gambrel-roof barn is sheathed with flush chestnut boards. It sits next to Dog Creek Road Extension and is banked such that the loft opens to the road. There is a one-story shed-roof addition sheathed in flush wood siding across the rear of the building.

The lower level is poured concrete and exposed oak and chestnut studs and beams with a dirt floor. There are horse stalls and stairs in the southeast corner, a storage room, and a large in-ground silo. Stored in this building are many of the mill parts, and timbers from the sawmill shelter. The current owner has made repairs to the building and uses it as a barn for his horses. The open second floor also has exposed studs and a wood floor.

F. Josh Cockerham House, c.1912, Contributing building

This I-house has a shorter second story such that the steeply-sloped shed roof of the partial-width front porch fits immediately below the main roof of the house. The house is situated across Dog Creek from the mill, facing Dog Creek Road Extension. It is a single-pile, side-gable, three-bay house sheathed with chestnut weatherboards. It has one-over-one windows (some hidden by full shutters), an off-center single entry, and a central interior chimney. The one-story rear kitchen has a hip roof and extends the width of the rear of the house, and a modern deck extends across the rear of the house.

The house was gutted during the ten years it was owned by the Appalachian Power Company. The windows and doors, plumbing, and electrical wiring were removed and the building used as a tobacco and hay barn. The two room interior has maple and oak flooring and original plank sheathing in the east front room. The fireplaces (one in each of the front rooms of the house) feature soapstone lintels and a soapstone hearth in the east room. Other materials, including the black walnut and chestnut mantels and chestnut paneling, date from the 1981-1984 rehabilitation. Mr. Wooten restored the house to residential use by adding new interior finishes

and rebuilding the collapsed kitchen roof and floor. Interestingly, newspapers adhered to the kitchen walls dated to the 1910s.

General Statement Regarding Archaeological Potential:

Lawrence Abbott, North Carolina Assistant State Archaeologist, provided the following statement:

“The structures are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains such as trash pits, privies, wells, and other structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the contributing structure. Information concerning land-use patterns, commercial and agricultural practices, social standing and social mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time, no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.”²

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Lawrence Abbott, email to Ann Swallow, 3 April 2014.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry

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Period of Significance

c.1884 - 1955

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Cockerman, Marcus Lafayette, attributed builder

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph:

Ashe County, formed in 1799 from Wilkes County, is located in the northwest corner of North Carolina. The community of Nathans Creek is in the central part of the county about three miles east of the county seat of Jefferson. The Cockerham Mill is situated on the west bank of Dog Creek at its confluence with the South Fork of the New River. The land rises sharply north of the mill and the rushing creek provided an excellent site for water power

The Cockerham Mill complex is a well-preserved small rural mill complex from the late-nineteenth-to-early twentieth century period and is one of the two most intact surviving grist mills in the county. The mill complex includes a dwelling and three outbuildings, a rare feature among the remaining Ashe County mills. Grist mills were once the most common industrial resources in the county and were critical to the agricultural process, providing both a source of

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food (for man and beast) as well as a market for grain crops. The Cockerham Mill was one of these important local mills from the late nineteenth century through the mid-1950s. The property meets National Register Criterion A for industry.

The local context and areas of significance are established in the multiple property documentation form (MPDF) entitled “Historic and Architectural Resources of Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799-1955” (NR, 2009). In particular, the contexts entitled “Slavery, the Civil War, and the Age of the Yeoman Farmer: 1860 – 1915” (Section E, pages 16-34), “Change Comes With a Full Head of Steam: 1915-1929” (Section E, pages 35-46), “National Crisis, Local Impact: 1930 – 1955” (Section E, pages 46-57), and “Ashe County After 1955” (Section E, pages 57-58) document the important events and trends that influenced the development of industry in the county during the property’s period of significance. Grist mills are a property type discussed in MPDF (Section F, page 101). In addition to age and integrity, the registration requirements for Ashe County industrial buildings, which is presented in Section F, page 103, note that “rural industrial buildings are so rare that alterations made to keep the structure technologically viable or changes caused by neglect and decay should not prevent an industrial building from being listed as long as its original overall form and a majority of original materials is present.” The Cockerham Mill has very good integrity and meets these registration requirements.

The period of significance begins with c. 1884-1899, the time period in which the mill is known to have been constructed, reputedly by Marcus Lafayette (“Fate”) Cockerham. The historic time period presented in the MPDF ends in 1955, and although the mill continued to operate until 1977, little information about its use after the mid-twentieth century is documented. Therefore the period of significance ends in 1955 to coincide with the general history presented for county’s industrial development noted above in the context information.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Mills and the Ashe County Agricultural Economy

Grist mills were closely tied to Ashe County's agricultural economy and were the most wide-spread industry in the county throughout the historic period. The 1840 census shows that there were fifty-seven gristmills and twenty sawmills in the county. These likely included many very small operations and included mills that were located in present-day Alleghany County (which was formed in 1859).³ The late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century was a prosperous period for Ashe County's minimal-cash farmers and this prosperity is reflected in the number of mills. In 1883, there were seven corn mills and eighteen wheat flour/corn mills scattered along Ashe County's many fast-running creeks. This number grew to fourteen corn mills and twenty flour/corn mills by 1890.⁴ Yet, only four mills survived at the time of the 2005 architectural survey of the county. Three of these were constructed during the 1880–1920 period:

3 Sherry Wyatt and Lori Tolliver-Jones. “Historic and Architectural Resources of Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799-1957” (NR, 2009).

4 *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1883 and 1890.

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the Cockerham Mill; the Clark-Miller Roller Mill built c. 1915 near Lansing; and the Perkins Flour Mill built in 1885 on Helton Creek.⁵

Mills operating in the southeastern part of Ashe County at this time were recorded by A. D. Goodman, who grew up in the area during the first two decades of the twentieth century. He notes the following mills: two on North Beaver Creek, five on South Beaver Creek, one at Idlewild, two on Old Field Creek near Fleetwood, two on Obids Creek, two on Nathans Creek, and two on Dog Creek. Another known mill, the Colvard Mill, was located on Little Naked Creek.⁶ This makes a total of sixteen known mill sites in the southeastern section of the county.

The mills in Ashe County were constructed in various forms, but were usually two-story, side-gable or shed-roof utilitarian buildings with vertical board siding, often resting on a stone foundation. All of the county's mills are thought to have utilized water power. Of the four surviving mills, the Cockerham Mill and the Clark-Miller Roller Mill are the best-preserved examples, but represent two separate types of milling. Unlike the Cockerham Mill with its traditional buhr stones, the Clark-Miller Roller Mill retains its early twentieth-century mechanical roller mill, a sack packer, portions of the belt drive system, and other equipment.

The agricultural economy in Ashe County is important to an understanding of its mills. With relatively poor roads, general stores and mills were scattered across the county to provide service within walking distance of most farms. This necessity is better understood in the context of self-sufficient food production practices typical of the county's farm families during the historic period. The mills in Ashe County were established to grind wheat, corn, and buckwheat into flour and meal used by the farm family. Rather than paying cash for this service, the miller took a certain portion of the product, called a toll, as his payment. The flour and meal kept as toll was often sold to grocers and wholesalers locally or regionally.

Corn was the dominant crop in Ashe County throughout the historic period since it was used both for the farm family's cornmeal and for livestock feed. Climbing from 277,027 bushels in 1880 to 397,716 bushels in 1910, the level of corn production conveys the agricultural prosperity during this period. Corn production reached a historic peak in production in 1930 then fell sharply during the remainder of the twentieth century.⁷ Although wheat production had remained relatively steady from 1880 through the 1890s, production fell significantly between 1900 and 1910 only to rebound in 1920 to a historic peak of 71,217 bushels. By 1930, wheat production had entered a permanent decline.⁸ The decline in corn and wheat production was probably due to the increased reliance on purchased food stuffs for the farm family and coincides with the decline in the number of grist mills operating in the county.

The engineering required to produce water power for efficient mill operation was often complex. In practice historically, the overshot wheel was common because it is relatively efficient, capable of harnessing eighty-five percent of the potential energy of the falling water. It is, however, relatively difficult to build and is not suited to all locations. Alternative methods of

5 Sherry Wyatt and Lori Tolliver-Jones. "Historic and Architectural Resources of Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799-1957" (NR, 2009).

6 Ruth Weaver Shepherd, ed. *The Heritage of Ashe County North Carolina*, Vol. I., (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company: 1984), 18.

7 *U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870 – 1930* in Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Clark-Miller Mill National Register Nomination – Draft."

8 *U.S. Agricultural Census, 1880 and 1920* in Sherry Joines Wyatt, "Clark-Miller Mill National Register Nomination – Draft."

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water wheel power included the vertically-mounted undershot, breast, and flutter wheels as well as turbines and horizontally-mounted tub wheels.⁹

The power at the Cockerham Mill was produced by a Fitz overshot water wheel. This steel water wheel was manufactured by the Fitz Water Wheel Company of Hanover, Pennsylvania. The company began in 1840 and was producing a full line of wheels by the late nineteenth century. The steel wheel provided better efficiency (perhaps as high as ninety percent) and easier maintenance in comparison with wooden wheels. The power of the water wheel depended upon the width of the wheel and its diameter.¹⁰ Water from the concrete and stone dam was held in the mill pond and flowed through a chute to turn the wheel. The overshot wheel was assisted by the large flywheel, which helped increase and maintain momentum and torque. The many ancillary activities at the Cockerham Mill (planing mill, sawmill, roller mill, hammer mill, and drill presses) were powered directly by the Fitz wheel. The turbine was situated adjacent to the Fitz wheel and operated the grist stones.¹¹

Cockerham Mill and its Community

The Nathans Creek community was one of the first areas of Ashe County to be settled. The post office established here in 1850 was one of the earliest in the county following only those at Jefferson in 1831, at Elk Cross Roads (now Todd) in 1837, and at Helton in 1849. All of these communities were located in pockets of prime farmland along important waterways. By the late nineteenth century, small agricultural communities were flourishing throughout the county where a store, post office, and sometimes a mill were clustered together to serve the surrounding farmers. In 1879, a post office was established at Idols Mill, which was located about two miles south of Nathans Creek. The community took its name from a mill located at the forks of Dog Creek, less than a mile north of the Cockerham Mill.

John Koons (d. 1807) was an early landholder in Ashe County, then part of Wilkes County. He is first documented there in 1785. Koons served as road foreman, constable, and justice of the peace. In 1805, he was elected as Ashe County's representative to the state House of Commons. Koons owned land in the Naked Creek, Nathans Creek, and Dog Creek areas. Family genealogists believe that his holdings included three mill sites. Two of these sites were on Dog Creek and were later known as the Idol Mill (not standing) and the Cockerham Mill.¹²

A 1792 deed recording the sale of fifty acres to John Koons references an adjacent "mill tract." It is plausible that the document refers to a mill on Dog Creek and possibly the site of the Cockerham Mill, however, there is no definitive proof that the "mill tract" includes the current location of the Cockerham Mill. Another clue about the site's early history is a stone carved with initials, possibly "IB," and a date, "1787," located on the bank of New River, near the Cockerham Mill. This stone has traditionally been thought to be associated with the original land grant of the mill property.¹³

9 Sherry Joines Wyatt, Clark-Miller Mill National Register Nomination, 2014, (Asheville: Western State Historic Preservation Office.)

10 Robert Vitale, "History of the Fitz Water Wheel Company,"
<<http://www.fitzwaterwheel.com/Fitz%20History.html>>.

11 Oral history given to Mitch Wooten by neighbor Paul H. Bare and Margaret Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's wife).

12 Clarice Weaver, ed., *Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. II (Charlotte: Delmar Printing Co., 1994), 193.

13 *Ibid.*, 194 and Wilkes County Deed Book Y, page 54..

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John Koons' son, George Koons (1778-1856) married Susannah Black and settled on land he inherited in 1807 from his father on the north bank of the South Fork of the New River near the mouth of Dog Creek.

Genealogical research documents that George and Susannah Koons gave their homeplace to their son, George Washington Koons (1826-1870). George W. Koons and his wife Malinda had no children. The younger George Koons' will, dated 1861, bequeathed the mill property to his brother-in-law, Hugh Bare.¹⁴

Hugh Bare (1807 – ?) was married to Polly (Mary) Koons (1808-1829). The 1850 Census lists Bare as a farmer owning \$1500 of real property. His household included his wife and seven children. The couple's youngest son was Jessie Bare (1844-1929).¹⁵ An 1884 deed from the Hugh Bare's heirs transferred the mill tract to Jessie Bare.¹⁶

Jessie Bare married Jennie Bowers and is listed in the 1870 census, along with his wife and children, in the household of his mother. The census taker noted that Jessie Bare “works on farm.” This suggests that he was probably not operating the mill at this time, or not operating it as his primary source of income.¹⁷

Sometime between 1884 when Bare acquired the property and 1899 when he transferred it, Bare contracted with Marcus Lafayette Cockerham for the latter to become the miller and mill wright. Cockerham, who was known as “Fate,” is thought to have built everything at the mill except the water wheel and the turbine, and millstones, which were hauled from the Mt. Airy, North Carolina area. In 1899, Bare deeded the mill to Cockerham, for lifetime rights of milling services for the Bare family.¹⁸

Marcus Lafayette Cockerham (1862-1950) was born in the Edwards Township of Wilkes County near present-day Elkin, N.C. In 1870 and 1880, he was living in the Chestnut Hill Township of Ashe County.¹⁹ The 1900 census lists Cockerham in Jefferson Township as a farmer who rents his land; he was likely living at the mill site by this time. His household included his wife and eleven children (the couple would eventually have fifteen children). The 1910 Census again lists Cockerham in Jefferson Township. This time he is described as a “manufacturer of household furniture and chicken coops.”²⁰

The 1910 listing hints at the plethora of industrial activity at the Cockerham Mill. Fate, and later his son, Josh Cockerham, operated a grist mill to grind wheat, corn, and buckwheat into flour and meal used by the farm family. These products were produced by the buhr stones and later aided by a mechanical, self-contained roller mill. Cockerham made efficient use of the available water power to also operate a hammer mill (for producing livestock feed); a sorghum

14 Ibid., 194.

15 U. S. Census data and genealogy data accessed at <www.familysearch.org> and <<http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/m/i/l/Marla-Miller/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0384.html>>

16 Ashe County Deed Book CC page 25.

17 Ruth Weaver Shepherd, ed. *The Heritage of Ashe County North Carolina*, Vol. I., (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company: 1984), 133.

18 Ashe County Deed Book PP page 17. Information given to Mitch Wooten by Ashe County natives Bower and Bill Walters, who recalled their uncle saying he had used his oxen to haul and place the mill stones.

19 U. S. Census and genealogy data accessed at <<http://erickerby.com/family/tree/individual.php?pid=I28610&ged=Our%20Family%20Tree>>, 2013.

20 U. S. Census, 1900 and 1910, N. C. State Archives.

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cane mill with two furnaces for boiling down the liquid into molasses; a sawmill, a wood planing mill, a multi-drill press and lathe; a tongue and groove mill; and a forge on the property.²¹

While some building products (lumber) may have been sold on site, most of this work was likely on contract for customers who paid to process their own logs for their own use. Similarly, most of the corn, wheat, and buckwheat ground at the mill was for local farm families. Fate and Josh Cockerham were known to be fair, but savvy businessmen, who developed a market for the excess product produced in the mill. Livestock feed, flour, cornmeal, buckwheat flour, lumber, and molasses could all be purchased at the mill. Some jobs were created at the mill and later in the planing mill and sawmill. This was a very large and profitable enterprise for a small mountain community in that era.²²

By 1920, Marcus Cockerham had moved to Greenbrier County, West Virginia.²³ His son, Troy Joshua (Josh) Cockerham (1886-1979) had taken over the mill and in the 1920 Census is listed as a miller. Josh Cockerham and his wife Margaret were enumerated with their two daughters.²⁴ Josh Cockerham built a new house for his family at the mill about 1912. He and his wife raised their family there. Cockerham was also a Primitive Baptist minister and is known to have sometimes used his barn loft as a worship space. He is said to have had even more skill than his father as a miller. Attesting to his ingenuity is the foundation located on the property where Josh Cockerham set up an early electrical power system in the valley. There was a twelve-volt generator used to generate electricity, powered by water coming directly from the mill pond through a large pipe. It pre-dated rural electrical service and made this site one of the first electrified rural homes in Ashe County. One switch on the back porch, when thrown, sent power to the whole house and the mill. Cockerham also included a running water outhouse on the same foundation. Though the mill's heyday waned after mid-century, Josh Cockerham, continued to operate the mill until it was severely damaged by a 1977 flood.²⁵

The oral history passed down about the Cockerham Mill property tells a rich story. The mill is an extremely well-preserved and rare example of a grist mill and miller's residence complex from the early twentieth century in Ashe County. The efforts of the present owner to rehabilitate and maintain the property since 1984 have been tireless and have preserved this important property.

21 Information given to Mitch Wooten by Paul Bare, who lived north of the Cockerham Mill property.

22 Oral history given to Mitch Wooten by neighbors, Ashe County natives and Cockerham family members at various times since Mr. Wooten purchased the mill in 1981. These include Paul H. Bare, Bill and Bower Walters, James McMillan, Truitt Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's son), Margaret Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's wife); and Clara Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's daughter, married name unknown, of Sparta, N.C.)

23 U. S. Census and genealogy data accessed at <<http://erickerby.com/family/tree/individual.php?pid=I28610&ged=Our%20Family%20Tree>>, 2013.

24 U. S. Census, 1900 and 1910, N. C. State Archives.

25 Oral history given to Mitch Wooten by Margaret Cockerham (Mrs. Josh Cockerham) and Clara Cockerham.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Branson, Levi. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, 1883*, electronic version,
<www.newrivernotes.com/nc/ashe.htm>, 2013.

_____. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, 1890*, electronic version,
<www.newrivernotes.com/nc/ashe.htm>, 2013.

_____. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, 1896*. Electronic version,
<<http://www.archive.org/stream/bransonsnorthcar1896bran#page/90/mode/2up/search/ashe>> 2013.

Oral history given to Mitch Wooten by neighbors, Ashe County natives, and Cockerham family members at various times since Mr. Wooten purchased the mill in 1981. These include Paul H. Bare, Bill and Bower Walters, James McMillan, Truitt Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's son), Margaret Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's wife); and Clara Cockerham (Josh Cockerham's daughter, married name unknown, of Sparta, N.C.)

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Wyatt, Sherry Joines. Clark-Miller Roller Mill National Register Nomination, 2014. Asheville: Western State Historic Preservation Office.

Wyatt, Sherry Joines and Lori Tolliver-Jones. Survey Files. Ashe County Comprehensive Architectural Survey, 2004-2006. Asheville: Western State Historic Preservation Office.

_____. "Historic and Architectural Resources of Ashe County, North Carolina, c. 1799 – 1955," Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Register of Historic Places, 2006. Asheville: Western State Historic Preservation Office.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): AH0056

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 3.0

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. | |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 5. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

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- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: 464540 | Northing: 4030880 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the Cockerham Mill is shown as a bold solid line on the accompanying map labeled "Cockerham Mill National Register Nomination, Ashe County, North Carolina" at a scale of one inch equals two hundred feet.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the Cockerham Mill encompasses the mill and associated buildings within an appropriate historic setting and is a portion of the acreage historically associated with the mill. The boundary lines follow current parcel lines.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Sherry Joines Wyatt
organization: _____
street & number: 102 Junkin Street
city or town: Christiansburg state: VA zip code: 24073
e-mail sherryjwyatt@gmail.com
telephone: (540) 392-8268
date: July, 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

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- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Cockerham Mill
City or Vicinity: Crumpler vicinity
County: Ashe County
State: North Carolina
Photographer: Brian Jones
Date Photographed: September 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera

1. East view of mill and mouth of Dog Creek
2. East side (under) mill showing Fitz Overshot Wheel
3. Interior of mill showing grist stone
4. Josh Cockerham House
5. "Fate" Cockerham House (original miller's house); east side
6. West sides of Mill, "Fate" Cockerham House (original miller's house), and Molasses Cooking Shed
7. East sides of Molasses Cooking Shed, "Fate" Cockerham House and addition, and north end of mill
8. Barn; south end and east side
9. Dam and mouth of Dog Creek; south side

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.