

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Yoder's Mill

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER State Road 1144

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN

Hickory

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

CODE
37

COUNTY

Catawba

CODE
051

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple ownership

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Catawba County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Newton

STATE
North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE U.S. 321: a cultural resource reconnaissance survey. . .

DATE May, 1978

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS N.C. Div. of Archives & History, Dept. of Cultural Resources

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

STATE
North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Context:

The Yoder's Mill Historic District covers 60 acres of farm and woodland on a southwest-facing slope overlooking Mull Creek. According to James Propst, the current owner, most of the land at one time was cleared for agriculture and for the various small industries which prospered on the creek banks. Since 1950, however, the land along Mull Creek has grown up in hardwood timber and honeysuckle. Land surrounding the farmhouse and its out-buildings is still used for planting crops and pasturing cattle. The archeological sites described below are hidden from the farmhouse by dense forest, so a visitor to the century-old farmstead may be aware only of the quiet, rural setting with its view of the wooded valley below without realizing that the same valley in the nineteenth century was an active center of rural industry. A microcosm of the ways in which the rural people of the western Piedmont provided for many of their needs, the banks of Mull Creek once supported a grist mill, a saw mill, a sorghum processing plant, a brick yard, roads to connect these enterprises, and, later on, a small hydroelectric plant.

The archeological sites were recorded in May, 1978, during a cultural resource survey conducted by North Carolina's Division of Archives and History (Archeology Branch) of a proposed corridor for the U.S. 321 highway relocation. On a second visit to map the ruins in April, 1979, the standing farm buildings further up the hill were examined. Subsequent interviews, archival research, and architectural evaluation, reported below, have shown that the farm complex and the industrial ruins are historically and culturally related, so that the farmstead structures and the industrial sites have been included in the same district.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries have been drawn to include the geographic area defined by the ridge top along which State Road 1144 runs on the east and on the west by the western edge of the Mull Creek floodplain. The northern boundary follows the Propst property line from State Road 1144 in the east to a point about thirty feet above the remains of a wooden dam across Mull Creek and thirty feet west of the creek. The southern boundary begins at the southern point of the Propst property on S.R. 1144 and follows the initial angle of the property line to a point thirty feet west of Mull Creek. This area includes all of the known structures and archeological remains which have been identified and related to the farmers, entrepreneurs, and mechanics who occupied the land and exploited the waterpower of the creek.

Architectural Description:¹

The complex of buildings on the Killian-Propst farm, located in a cluster on the gently sloping terrain to the northeast of Mull Creek, consists of eight vernacular buildings showing a use of stone, frame and log construction. Preserved and in use today by their owner, they are an important reminder of how the turn of the century Catawba County farmer chose building materials to suit his purposes and then set about to erect these structures according to the traditions passed from generation to generation. The centerpiece of the group is the two-story frame farm seat erected by J. C. Killian between 1877 and 1883 and expanded by Reuben Propst after he acquired the farm. While the date of its

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Architectural Description (Cont'd)

construction is not known, the log smokehouse standing to the west of the house is probably contemporary with the house. The stone potato house, located several yards to the west of the smokehouse, was built by Mr. Propst in 1895. Built ca. 1910, the bank barn is perhaps the most architecturally significant building in the complex. Built on a hillside to the southwest of the house, the barn rests on a stone-and-wood pier foundation which encloses a stable accessible from its side and rear elevations. The barn has a wide opening on its northeast front elevation into which a wagon or trailer can be pulled for loading and unloading. The only other documented example in the county is located on the former James F. Jarrett farm located about a mile to the west of this site. The fifth building in the complex is a small, one-story frame storage building dating from the first quarter of the 20th century. Of about the same period is a small frame poultry house. In the early 1960s, following on the death of his mother Mrs. Reuben Propst, James Propst erected a one-story dwelling for himself and his wife and abandoned the 19th century farm seat except for use as storage. He also built a small one-car garage to the west of his new house. Today the farm remains a poignant reminder of a small self-sufficient farming unit of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Inventory List

1. Killian-Propst House

Between 1877 and 1883, the dates respectively when he acquired the farm and sold it, J. C. Killian built a house which served as the seat of this farm for over three-quarters of a century. Killian's house, resting on a stone foundation and covered with weatherboards and a gable roof, consisted of a two-story block facing southeast. The stone foundation of the two-story block is drylaid, while the stones forming the foundation of a slightly later one-story ell--occupying the left portion of the rear elevation--are bound by mortar to create a cellar under that portion of the house. The actual date for the construction of the ell is not known, but is thought to be somewhat later than that of the main block, as its fenestration features four-over-four sash while the two-story block has six-over-six sash windows. The front elevation of the house has a three-bay division on the first story and a two-bay division on the second story. The door in the center bay--a replacement for the original--suggest the center hall plan of the interior. It is surrounded by plain unmolded boards as are the window openings. A stone-and-brick chimney, flanked by windows at each level, stands at the center of the northeast gable end of the two-story block; it is now completely overgrown with ivy. The opposite, southwest gable end has a one-bay division on each story. The southwest elevation of the ell, three bays deep, has a door in its center bay with a single window to the right and a pair of windows in a single surround to its left. A stone chimney with a brick stack stands in the center of the ell's rear elevation.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

Inventory List

1. Killian-Propst House (Cont'd)

In the early 20th century Reuben Propst altered the roof of the ell to cover a large frame addition which he made along the northeast side of the ell; this addition occupied the remaining rear elevation of the two-story block. It is probable that the flue stack standing at the northwest, rear elevation of this addition and a second flue stack which rises through the center of the two-story block's roof were added at the same time. Later Propst took down the existing porch at the front of the house and replaced it with the present gable front porch, which shelters the three first-story bays. The four regularly spaced supports feature brick piers with cement caps supporting smaller square wood posts. In the center of the gable front is a rectangular ventilator. The interior of the house follows a center hall plan with very plain woodwork adorning the flush-sheathed walls.

2. The Smokehouse (ca. 1880)

Located to the west of the house, the smokehouse is built of logs joined with an irregular half-dovetail notching. Resting on stone stacks, the smokehouse is covered with a gable roof which projects on the southeast front elevation to shelter the central opening containing a board-and-batten door. The gable ends of the building are weatherboarded.

3. The Potato House (1895)

Built in 1895 by Reuben Propst and located to the southwest of the smokehouse, the potato house is built of mortared fieldstone. The small, nearly square building, covered with a gable roof, has weatherboarded gable ends and entrances on its southeast (front) and northwest (rear) elevations. The doors are made of boards and batten.

4. Storage Building (first quarter of the 20th century)

Located to the west of the potato house is this small, narrow, one-story frame storage building also covered with weatherboards and a gable roof. It has an entrance on its front (southeast) elevation, a two-bay division on the east (side) elevation, with window openings containing four-over-four sash. A shed addition carries along the building's west elevation.

5. Poultry House (first quarter of the 20th century)

Located to the north of the smokehouse, this small rectangular frame building has an entrance and large screened openings on its front (southeast) elevation. It is covered with a shed roof.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

Inventory List

6. The Barn (ca. 1910)

Built by Reuben Propst and probably replacing an earlier barn, this large frame building is located downgrade and to the southwest of the house. It rests on a high stone and wood pier foundation enclosed to provide stables which have openings on all but the east side. Entry to the main floor of the barn is through a wide entrance on the east (front) gable elevation, which is sheltered by a crudely constructed pole shed covered with a gable roof. The interior is fitted with lofts at varying levels.

7. The James Propst House (Early 1960s)

Resting on a high cinder block foundation enclosing a basement, this house is a small rectangular frame structure covered with a gable roof.

8. Propst Garage (Early 1960s)

A one-story, single-car garage covered with a gable roof.

Archeological Description:

9. Wooden Dam

Remains of this grist mill dam, which preceded the masonry dam described below, are still visible above the surface of Mull Creek. The current owner, Mr. James R. Propst has suggested that this early dam was related to the large earthen millrace² (see below) which is still a prominent feature of the Mull Creek terrain.

10. Masonry Dam (1900-1916)

The remains of this grist mill dam, which burst in the flood of July, 1916, measure 47 feet, 8 inches in length. The top of the dam is 3 feet, 8 inches wide, expanding downward to a base width of 7 feet, 9 inches. The average height of the dam is about 8 feet above the streambed. Several of the dam's construction features are visible on the intact masonry faces and in the exposed cross-section in the breach. This dam was built by Reuben Yoder between 1900 and 1916 to replace the wooden dam described above.³

11. Large Millrace

Approximately 150 feet long and varying in depth from 3 feet to 7 feet, this millrace was constructed by digging into the decaying bedrock along the creek bank and piling the stone and earth on the downhill side to form a berm. The southern end of the

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

Archeological Description

11. Large Millrace (Cont'd)

race has either been removed by later industrial activities or has eroded away. The northern and central section seem stable and well-preserved. This race was probably connected with the earlier wooden dam.⁴

12. Stone Piers (1900-1916)

Between the large millrace and the creek are the remains of four rough stone columns, flume piers related to the later milling operations. The remains of these square pillars are 2 to 3 feet on a side and from 1 foot to 18 inches in height. These piers supported an enclosed, wooden millrace 2 feet wide and 6 to 8 inches deep, constructed by Reuben Propst between 1900 and 1916 to carry water impounded by his masonry dam.⁵

13. Grist Mill Site (ca. 1850)

Several stone walls up to 6 feet in height mark the site of the grist mill, abandoned in 1916. In addition to the walls, the ruins include at least two sectioned millstones (one still bound by its iron hoop) and fragments of metal mill machinery.

The mill contained three levels. The ground level is still visible today, defined by the stone foundations. A second, main floor was entered from the mill's uphill side, where the access road is still clearly visible as a forest path when it is not obscured by the heavy summer groundcover of vines. The mill stones operated on another level above the main floor. Milling at the site stopped with the flood of 1916, and the building stood unused for the next 12 years. Between 1928 and 1930, the lumber from the mill was salvaged for, among other things, a hydroelectric generator house⁶ (see below).

14. Molasses Evaporator

This well-preserved stone structure represents another aspect of rural industry, the processing of sorghum into molasses. Although this evaporator was used by Reuben Propst in the 20th century,* it may have been used as early as the 1880s, when Noah Hawn and Reuben Yoder were producing molasses in the area (see the section on Significance, Historical Background, p.). A wooden structure protected the operations until the 1930s.⁷

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

Archeological Description

15. Sawmill (ca. 1879)

Documentary evidence shows that a lumber business was started in the area in 1879 by Noah Hawn.⁸ The main physical evidence for this mill today is the small millrace which was later incorporated into the Propst family hydroelectric plant.⁹

16. Hydroelectric Plant (ca. 1928)

Built around 1928 by Reuben Propst,¹⁰ this complex now consists of a small masonry dam across Mull Creek near the evaporator; a shallow millrace originally used for the 19th century sawmill; a masonry dam sealing off the foot of the earthen race; and a pipe flume for dropping the impounded water to the waterwheel and generator site, now marked by concrete pads.

This section of the district represents an almost forgotten period of North Carolina history. For most of the first half of the 20th century, long after electricity became commonplace in the state's towns and cities, rural areas in North Carolina were unable to buy electricity from central station producers. When Reuben Propst built the small hydroelectric generator on Mull Creek, fewer than one percent of the farms in the state had central station electricity. In Catawba County, only 90 out of 3,08 farms were served by a large central service power plant. As a result, home electrification plants were promoted after World War I by groups such as the Division of Country Home Comforts and Conveniences at the University of North Carolina.¹¹ People in rural areas were given advice on harnessing the energy in small creeks and ponds, particularly where old mill dams and races could be adaptively re-used.¹² The Propst electric plant provided the sole source of electric light for the farm until the 1940s, when central station service finally reached the area.¹³

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Yoder's Mill Historic District offers an unusual opportunity to study a largely unexplored aspect of Piedmont North Carolina's social and economical development of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Around 1850, when millers established the rural settlement which now forms the district, the area now known as Catawba County (formally established in 1842) had already been settled by Europeans for almost a century. Most North Carolinians of this area were farmers, mechanics, or small scale entrepreneurs who left few diaries or letters to describe themselves or their manner of living. Life here had settled into regular, seemingly uninterrupted patterns--followed by generation after generation--almost always taken for granted and thus recorded only in fragments of wills, tax and court records, marriage bonds, and in the forms of their houses, mills, barns and other outbuildings. The analysis of the material culture related to the farm house and its attendant outbuildings and the several rural industries (including a grist mill, a saw mill, brick yard, a sorghum processing plant, and a small hydroelectric plant) found in the district serves admirably to begin filling the gap in our knowledge of nineteenth century, post-frontier, working class Americans.

Criteria Evaluation:

- A. The Yoder's Mill Historic District has important associations with the small-scale agrarian economy characterizing 19th century Catawba County in that the district includes the historical archaeological remains of several milling operations as well as standing structures including the closely-associated Killian-Propst house and its complimenting outbuildings.
- B. Through the various individuals associated with the milling operations for nearly a half century, the district is associated with the pioneer settling families of Catawba County--the Whitener, Hahn (Hawn), Yoder, and Propst families.
- C. While the individual archaeological remains and standing structures are themselves typical of patterns of their period, their undisturbed preservation here represents a significant historical unit.
- D. Collectively, the archaeological and architectural components of the Yoder's Mill Historic District provide a significant unit for study and analysis of both the small-scale agrarian economy and vernacular building traditions of rural Piedmont North Carolina, and are likely to yield important information about the social and economical processes of the 19th century descendants of the settlers of Catawba County.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Historical Background:

The site of Yoder's Mill in Catawba County was an operating mill site for at least sixty years. The first mill (apparently a gristmill) was built between 1850 and 1857 by Henry and Daniel A. Whitener on land that had belonged to their grandfather Heinrich Weidner (Henry Whitener), a Pennsylvania German believed to have been the first settler in present Catawba County.¹⁴ In 1850 Henry H. Whitener and his brother Daniel had received from their father, Aaron S. Whitener, 345 acres on both sides of Mull Creek near Henry's Fork, a tributary of the South Fork of the Catawba River.¹⁵ Seven years later the brothers reached an agreement whereby Henry H. Whitener, in exchange for \$1,700, acquired full ownership of the property including the mill, millpond, and appurtenances. Daniel, however, was to receive one-half the profits of the enterprise.¹⁶

The Whiteners, often called the first family of Catawba County, were of Germanic origin. Heinrich Weidner, the progenitor, was among the first to leave the Pennsylvania Dutch country for life in North Carolina. Others followed and by the 1760s, Pennsylvania German dominated the trans-Catawba River region. They were thrifty and industrious people and counted among their numbers millers, tanners, sawyers, carpenters, blacksmiths, furniture makers, cobblers, and others skilled in some form of trade.¹⁷ Those with industrial pursuits were greatly encouraged by the numerous rapidly moving creeks, streams, and rivers which supplied abundant power for operating machinery. Even the farmers were rudimentary industrialists, since most operated distilleries for converting corn and other grains into whiskey for home use and sale in distant markets.¹⁸ Heinrich Weidner acquired about 10,000 acres on both sides of Henry's Fork and the South Fork of the Catawba River, including land along Mull Creek.¹⁹ Several mills may have existed on such an estate, but the effort to pinpoint any one site would be time consuming and possibly futile. From documentary records available, it cannot be determined whether or not a mill existed at the site of Henry H. Whitener's Mill before 1850.

On December 17, 1861, Whitener sold 125 3/4 acres to Abner Hawn for \$1,131.75.²⁰ This did not contain the mill tract but did include the land on which the house, now called the Propst House, currently stands. The selling price of about nine dollars an acre, however suggests that no structure of significance had been erected. Ten days later Whitener deeded the mill and ten acres to Noah Hawn for \$325.²¹ The price of \$32.50 per acre indicates major improvement at the site. Henry Whitener lived on the Kings Mountain Road a little over a mile south of the mill.²² Whether he operated it or hired a miller is uncertain. If the latter is the case, a small miller's house may have been constructed in the late 1850s which would have added to the value of the site.

Abner Hawn, born October 28, 1821, was the son of Frederick and Elizabeth Hawn. His grandfather was Johannes Hahn [Hawn] who, like Heinrich Weidner, had pioneered settlement of the trans-Catawba Valley. Abner married Catharine Rink in 1857 and settled into the life of a Catawba County farmer.²³ His home was located north or northeast of the land purchased from Henry Whitener.²⁴

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

Historical Background (Cont'd)

By 1870, Abner Hawn apparently was assisting his cousin Noah in the mill operation. The agricultural census of that year strongly indicates that neither of the two was making a living by farming. Yet between them they paid out wages totaling \$1,325, far too much for a total production value of \$800.²⁵ Abner was not a partner in ownership, so he must have contributed his monetary resources and land right-of-way and timber rights to his property which adjoined the mill tract. He seems to have done nothing by way of improving the property before selling it to John C. Killian for approximately the same per acre price (\$9.00) that he had paid in 1861.²⁶

J. C. Killian purchased the tract in 1877 and sometime during the next six years erected the house that now stands on the property.²⁷ About 1873 Killian had married Julia A. Hawn, daughter of Noah Hawn who owned and operated the mill on the tract adjoining Killian's.²⁸ The records do not indicate that Killian had any association with the mill other than being the owner's son-in-law. He was a small farmer whose crops provided little more than subsistence, and while he was well respected by neighbors and friends, J. C. Killian does not appear to have achieved more than local significance. On August 9, 1883 he sold the house and eighty-five acres to Noah A. Whitener.²⁹

Noah Whitener was born in August of 1860 and spent his life as a small farmer. He and his wife Martha had no children³⁰ and, consequently, did not need the fairly large house built by J. C. Killian. Meanwhile, the adjoining tract to the north had been purchased by Reuben Propst who was living in a smaller house. Between 1880 and 1895 Propst and Whitener agreed to exchange homes and farms, according to Reuben's son, James R. Propst.³¹ The 1900 census substantiates the exchange even though there is no indication of the transaction in the deed records.³² Through Reuben Propst the house tract and the mill property were reunited after a separation of nearly twenty years.

Noah Hawn had purchased the old Whitener Mill just as rural Catawba County was entering a "Golden Age of Milling." Between 1850 and 1900 more than eighty grist, flour, and sawmills came into operation.³³ Hawn expanded the facilities and began a milling complex along Mull Creek. Besides the grist mill which he converted to flour and meal production he erected a sawmill on the creek below the older structure about 1879,³⁴ and there is some evidence to suggest that Hawn also produced molasses at the site. The sorgho plant produced well along the banks of Jacob's Fork and Henry's Fork. By 1860 a trend was developing by which many persons in the state were attempting to solve an increasing demand for molasses by processing sorghum syrup. The long, slender sorghum stalks resemble sugar cane when clustered in fields and were often referred to as canebreaks. To produce molasses, the cut stalks were fed into the cane mill, a device consisting of two cogged wheels that squeezed sorghum. Power was supplied by a mule attached to the mill by a long beam. By walking in circles, the mule turned the wheels to crush the sorghum, whose juices fell into a vat under the wheels. The juice was then boiled over a hot fire and constantly stirred until thick enough for molasses.³⁵ The chimney of the

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

Historical Background (Cont'd)

"molasses mill" at the site is the remnant of the fire area used to boil the sorghum syrup into molasses. In 1870 Noah Hawn produced no significant amount of molasses, so the molasses mill may have been built between 1870 and 1882 when he sold the property.³⁶

Noah Hawn was a jack-of-all trades: schoolmaster, mechanic, carpenter, farmer, miller, and sawmill operator.³⁷ Yet he never became wealthy and relied upon the financial resources of Abner Hawn to operate the mills. Abner Hawn apparently died a few years after selling the adjoining property to Killian, and Noah Hawn then sold one-half interest in the mill tract to Luther Seitz.³⁸ Three years later, May 20, 1882, he sold the remaining half interest, including "one-half of the mill and fixtures . . . [and] sawmill and fixtures" to Reuben Yoder. The deed description named fifteen acres which sold for \$800 for the half interest.³⁹ The high selling price suggests considerable improvement during Hawn's ownership.

The records suggest that Yoder, who acquired full title to the mills in 1884, retained Hawn to run the mills. Reuben Yoder's home was two miles south on the Kings Mountain Road, while Noah Hawn's house stood only a short distance northeast of the dam and grist mill.⁴⁰ Yoder was also county coroner and deputy sheriff of Jacobs Fork Township for sixteen years. He had served in the Civil War (Company K, 35th N.C. Regiment) and afterwards as a surveyor for Catawba County.⁴¹ Family histories list the achievements of all members, but Reuben Yoder is never referred to as a miller or mill owner, even though the site was then known, and still is called "Yoder's Mills."⁴² That Hawn was employed as his mill superintendent is implied in an 1885 deed description which states, "Beginning at a Black Gum north of Hawn's Mill"⁴³ The description is unmistakably for a tract adjoining the mill site and was written three years after Hawn transferred title. Also, the 1880 census lists Joseph Bolch, miller, as occupying a residence between the homes of Noah Hawn and J. C. Killian.⁴⁴ Finally, Yoder suffered from rheumatism which often incapacitated him, making it essential that someone be placed in charge of the mill operation.⁴⁵

The association between Noah Hawn and Reuben Yoder is further strengthened in documents relating to the building of the second Zion Lutheran Church in 1883. Noah Hawn was placed in charge of the carpentry, and along with Reuben Yoder and others, he was responsible for providing the bricks for construction.⁴⁶ There is some indication that the bricks may have been made at Yoder's Mills. Lank Rowe, who molded the brick, lived north of the mill in the direction of Hickory, and among those who carried the brick up to Zion Church was Charley Yoder, son of Reuben.⁴⁷ The reference to "up to the church" suggests a hollow such as the one through which Mull Creek flows, and a surface study by archaeologists discovered an old abandoned road bed leading from the mill site towards Zion Church.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the inventory of Yoder's estate lists \$100 received from sale of brick, another indication of a brickmaking operation.⁴⁹

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

Historical Background (Cont'd)

During Reuben Yoder's ownership, the mill continued production of both flour and corn meal.⁵⁰ Yoder also continued the cultivation of honey bees and natural honey along with substantial corn and potato production. The appearance of tubs, barrels, hogsheads of vinegar, and a cane mill in the inventory of his estate suggests that he also continued to operate the molasses mill in the same dual functions as had Noah Hawn. Also listed in the inventory were a saw hammer, whip saw, circular saw, saws, steel square, planes, saw set, log chain, and steel yards, all items used to run the sawmill.⁵¹ It appears, however, that Yoder ceased to operate the sawmill sometime in the 1880s and removed the equipment to his home. The inventory covered only his personal property and not that of his mill business.⁵²

Reuben Yoder died on February 4, 1898, and was buried in the Zion Lutheran Church Cemetery.⁵³ He left no will and for about two years the ownership of the mill was tied up in the estate settlement. During that time the flour and corn mill was rented for \$14.00 a year with the rent going to the estate. The rentee may have been James Teague, but the documentation is insufficient to make any conclusions.⁵⁴ About 1900 the mill property was acquired by Reuben Propst who, some years earlier, had moved into the old Killian House adjoining the mill tract and in 1895 had built the stone potato house now standing.⁵⁵

Propst built a new masonry dam a short distance down the creek from the old dam and continued to operate the flour mill. Other operations at the site were apparently abandoned. In 1916 torrential rains sent the Catawba River and its tributaries on a rampage through the countryside. The masonry dam burst and the mill itself was badly damaged. Propst decided not to rebuild, and the milling business on Mull Creek came to an end.⁵⁶

Reuben Propst, born in 1855, was a blacksmith by trade. He married Julia A. Yoder in 1877, and when he moved into the Killian House, his household consisted of himself, Julia, their daughter Ann, his brother-in-law David L. Yoder (also a blacksmith), his father Daniel R. Propst, and nephew Claude B. Propst.⁵⁷ Although he added some out-buildings to the property, it is not known if any architectural changes were made to the interior of the main house. Propst did add the porches, but whether or not he constructed the rear addition has not been determined.⁵⁸ His first wife died after 1900; and on September 14, 1915, at the age of 60, Reuben Propst married Lodelia Campbell.⁵⁹ Two children were born of the union, one being James Reuben Propst, the current owner of the tract discussed in this report as the Yoder's Mills Historic District.⁶⁰

One rather unusual and interesting effort by Reuben Propst to improve his property must be mentioned. As a blacksmith, he was obviously talented in the operation of machinery. Before the advent of rural electrification in the 1940s, Propst attempted to provide electric current for his home by building a generator at the mill site. A small dam was erected near the old sawmill site to provide power for the generator which, according

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

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 6

Historical Background (Cont'd)

to James Propst, successfully produced enough current for a few hours at a time.⁶¹

Reuben Propst died in 1942 at the age of 87. He willed the house and property, including the old mill site, to his son James providing that James take care of him and Delia for the remainder of their lives.⁶² Reuben died six years after making out his will, and Delia died in 1959.⁶³ The house was abandoned and is now used as a storage facility by James R. Propst.

Summary

When the Whitener brothers started their milling business on Mull Creek, Catawba County had been settled for almost a century. Their ancestor Heinrich Weidner's pioneer life, his travels, and his escapes from the Indians were already passing into local legend. In contrast, the Whitener brothers and the other families which followed them onto the land by Mull Creek were only making a living, farming, milling, lumbering, keeping a household, maintaining the small industries needed to keep a rural community alive. Like most of the people of the time, their way of life was taken for granted and recorded only in fragments of wills, tax records, marriage bonds, and in the forms of their homes and work places. Henry Glassie stated the problem when he wrote:

I would generalize that our greatest lack--within the ambit of European-American historiography--lies in the era spanned by the second to fourth generation of any occupance, and among the people of the working class. The initial settlers sometimes left reports. The later inhabitants are still remembered. Rich people hired clever people to write about themselves and the quaintness of the poorest people. The person we do not know at all is the farmwife on a nonslaveholding Piedmont seat of 1810. If we can accumulate enough portraits of times and places, carefully chosen to stop the largest lacunae in our ignorance, we might be able to offer a compassionate, accurate alternative to the historian's account.⁶⁴

This historic district and its material culture, besides offering a view of several facets of nineteenth century rural life in North Carolina, would allow for research in several areas:

- 1) Studies of the geography of rural settlements and work places in the nineteenth century. These could include analysis of energy use in the harnessing of waterpower and the placement of related industries or study of the arrangement of the farmstead and its outbuildings.
- 2) Studies of the changing technology of rural industry, such as the shift from a wooden dam with an earthen millrace to a masonry dam with a wooden

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

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

Summary (Cont'd)

millrace, to the abandonment of milling, to the conversion of milling features for electrical power.

- 3) Studies of acculturation and ethnic survivals. Beginning in 1750, this area of North Carolina was heavily settled by German-Americans, many coming south after brief stays in Pennsylvania. Part of the process of acculturation toward the English-derived culture of the state has been tentatively traced through the changing languages used on the area's tombstones.⁶⁵ But how far into the nineteenth century did other survivals last, such as architecture or farmstead arrangement? Can some elements in this mid-nineteenth century district be traced to the formerly dominant German models rather than English ones? How does the material culture of the district compare with that of contemporary English- or Scots-Irish-derived culture in this and other areas of the state, or with Pennsylvania Dutch settlements in other areas?

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

FOOTNOTES

1. Davyd Foard Hood, interview with James R. Propst, June 15, 1979, hereinafter cited as Hood-Propst interview.
2. Thomas H. Hargrove, interview with James R. Propst, August 1, 1979, hereinafter cited as Hargrove-Propst interview.
3. Hargrove-Propst interview.
4. Hargrove-Propst interview.
5. Hargrove-Propst interview.
6. Hargrove-Propst interview.
7. Hargrove-Propst interview.
8. Catawba County Deed Book 13, p. 197.
9. Hargrove-Propst interview.
10. Hargrove-Propst interview.
11. Joseph Deutsch, Rural Electrification in N.C. (Chapel Hill, U.N.C., 1944).
12. A. T. Cutler, Rural Electrification (Chapel Hill, U.N.C., 1926).
13. Hargrove-Propst interview.
14. The property was sold to Henry H. Whitener and Daniel A. Whitener for \$475. It was part of a 345-acre tract. No mention was made of a mill, nor is one reflected in the selling price. The mill was specifically mentioned in an agreement between Henry H. and Daniel A. Whitener in 1857. Catawba County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Catawba County Courthouse, Newton, Deed Book 5, pp. 84 and 341, hereinafter cited as Catawba County Deed Book.
15. Catawba County Deed Book 5, p. 84.
16. Catawba County Deed Book 5, p. 341.

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

FOOTNOTES (Cont'd)

17. William L. Saunders (ed.), The Colonial Records of North Carolina (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 10 volumes, 1886-1890), VIII, 750-751; William L. Sherrill, Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina (Charlotte: Observer, 1973), 8; Fred Roy Yoder, History of the Yoder Family in North Carolina (U.S.A., 1970), hereinafter cited as Yoder, Yoder Family; R. Vance Whitner, Tales of Our Catawba County Ancestors (Privately printed, 1916), 23, 35; Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 3rd ed., 1973), 85, 87-88, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina; and Charles J. Preslar (ed.), A History of Catawba County (Salisbury: Rowan, 1954), 44-45, hereinafter cited as Preslar, Catawba County.
18. Preslar, Catawba County, 44.
19. Weidner acquired his first grant in 1750 when Catawba County was a part of Anson. See index to North Carolina Land Grants, Secretary of State's Office, Raleigh; and grantee indexes for Anson County, Mecklenburg County, Tryon County (now extinct), and Lincoln County, all in the State Archives, Raleigh. Catawba was formed from Lincoln in 1842, about fifty years after the death of Heinrich Weidner. See also Rev. J. L. Murphey, "Henry Weidner: His Life and Character. A Memorial Service Held at J. W. Robinson's, May 30, 1894." (Hickory: Hickory Printing Company, 1895), 1-9.
20. Catawba County Deed Book 7, p. 97.
21. Catawba County Deed Book 5, p. 674.
22. R. Yoder, Map of Catawba County, 1886, hereinafter cited as Yoder Map, 1886. See also Yoder, Yoder History, 47.
23. "A Brief and Condensed Historical Sketch of the Old Pioneer, John Hahn, Prepared by G. M. Yoder at the Request of A. Q. Hahn, a Great-Grandson of John Hahn" (n.d.). Copy in Rowan Public Library, Salisbury, hereinafter cited as Historical Sketch of John Hahn.
24. See Yoder Map, 1886; and order of visitation in Ninth Census of United States, 1870: North Carolina-Catawba County, Population Schedule, 526. Census records hereinafter cited by number, year, schedule, and page.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

FOOTNOTES (Cont'd)

25. Ninth Census, 1870, Agricultural Schedule, Abner and Noah Hawn, microfilm in State Archives, Raleigh. Actually, Noah Hawn was Abner's first cousin once removed. See Hahn [Hawn] Family: Genealogical Data, Rowan Public Library, Salisbury.
26. Catawba County Deed Book 18, p. 480.
27. Killian sold part of the tract, including the house, in 1883 for nearly \$18.00 per acre. The doubling in price over such a short period suggests major improvement. Catawba County Deed Book 18, p. 482.
28. The marriage records for Catawba County before 1913 are incomplete, but in the settlement of Noah Hawn's estate, Julia Killian is named as his daughter. Catawba County Records, State Archives, Raleigh, Record of Settlement, 1908-1920, p. 330. For approximate year of marriage see Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule, 395. The oldest child Minnie was born in 1874, suggesting a marriage date of about 1873.
29. Catawba County Deed Book 18, p. 482.
30. Twelfth Census, 1900, Population Schedule, Enumeration District (ED) 40, Sheet 9, Line 72.
31. Davyd Foard Hood, interview with James R. Propst, June 15, 1979, hereinafter cited as Hood-Propst interview.
32. The deed records were not searched for the years after 1920. The recording of such a transaction could have been delayed until Whitener or his heirs decided to sell the exchanged tract. Whitener died in 1936. Death date taken from tombstone in Zion Lutheran Church Cemetery.
33. Levi Branson, Branson's N.C. Business Directories 1850-1900 (incomplete). A check was made of available issues and precaution taken to avoid, so far as possible, duplications of sites.
34. Earlier that year Hawn bought five acres on which he built the mill from J. C. Killian. See Catawba County Deed Book 13, p. 197.
35. For a brief discussion of molasses production, see Cornelius O. Cathey, Agricultural Developments in North Carolina 1783-1860 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1956).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

FOOTNOTES (Cont'd)

36. Hawn sold one-half interest in 1879 and the remainder in 1882. Catawba County Deed Book 11, p. 521; and Deed Book 15, p. 572. See also Ninth Census, 1870, Agricultural Schedule, Noah and Abner Hawn.
37. Seventh Census, 1850, Population Schedule, 800; Ninth Census, 1870, Population Schedule, 526; Branson's N.C. Directory, 1872, Catawba County Mills; Preslar, Catawba County, 99; and Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule, 394.
38. Catawba County Deed Book 11, p. 521.
39. Catawba County Deed Book 15, p. 522.
40. See Yoder Map, 1886. For location of Hawn's house in relationship to the mill, see John A. Jones to Noah Hawn, January 15, 1855, in Catawba County Deed Book 4, p. 391. This property adjoined the eastern boundary of the Whitener-Abner Hawn-Killian tract on which the Killian (now Propst) House was built. For more exact location see deed descriptions referring to Noah Hawn's House in Daniel A. Whitener and Lawson F. Whitener to Henry H. Whitener, March 30, 1857, in Catawba County Deed Book 5, p. 341; Henry H. Whitener to Abner Hawn (house tract), December 17, 1861, Deed Book 7; and Henry W. Robinson to Noah Hawn, May 30, 1874, Deed Book 29, p. 20. Noah Hawn's house was torn down in the early 1960s. Hood-Propst interview.
41. Yoder, Yoder Family, 47; and John W. Moore, Roster of North Carolina Troops in the War Between the States (1882), extended index, State Archives, Raleigh.
42. Yoder, Yoder Family, 47; and Yoder Map, 1886.
43. Reuben Propst to Noah A. Whitener, Catawba County Deed Book 25, p. 202.
44. Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule, 394.
45. Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule, 471.
46. Preslar, Catawba County, 99. Preslar appears to have taken the information from the church minutes.
47. Preslar, Catawba County, 99. See also order of visitation in Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule, 394-395.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

FOOTNOTES (Cont'd)

48. Preslar, Catawba County, 99; and researcher's interview with Mark A. Mathis, archaeologist, June 19, 1979, hereinafter cited as Mathis interview.
49. Catawba County Records, Estates Papers, R. A. Yoder, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Yoder Estate Papers.
50. Branson's N.C. Directory, 1890, 1896, Catawba County Mills.
51. Yoder Estate Papers.
52. No materials relating to the corn and flour mill were listed. Furthermore, the operation of a sawmill was not listed in Branson's N.C. Directory for 1890 or 1896.
53. Yoder, Yoder Family, 47.
54. Yoder Estate Papers.
55. Hood-Propst interview. See also Abernethy and Yoder, commissioners, to Reuben Propst, October 13, 1900, Catawba County Deed Book 63, p. 10.
56. Hood-Propst interview; and J. Weston Clinard, Clinard Looks Back (Hickory, 1962), 87-88.
57. Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedule, 395; and Twelfth Census, 1900, Population Schedule, ED 40, Sheet 9, line 72.
58. Hood-Propst interview.
59. Catawba County Marriage Register 1908-1921, State Archives, Raleigh, unpaginated.
60. See will of Reuben Propst, Catawba County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Catawba County Courthouse, Newton, Will Book 6, p. 240, hereinafter cited as Catawba County Will Book.
61. Mark A. Mathis, interview with James R. Propst, March, 1979; and Mathis interview.
62. Catawba County Will Book 6, p. 240.
63. Catawba County Will Book 6, p. 240; and Hood-Propst interview.

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DATE ENTERED

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

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

FOOTNOTES (Cont'd)

64. Henry Glassie. Archaeology and Folklore: Common Anxieties, Common Hopes.
In Historical Archaeology and the Importance of Material Things, ed. by Leland
Ferguson (Society for Historical Archaeology, 1978).
65. Joseph R. Nixon. The German Settlers in Lincoln County and Western N.C.
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

YODER'S MILLS

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 60
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	4,700,40	3,947,89,0	B	1,7	4,699,30	3,947,7,8,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,7	4,698,8,0	3,947,7,9,0	D	1,7	4,698,4,0	3,947,7,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

E	1,7	469710	3947710	F.	17	469680	3947660
G.	17	469910	3947440	H.	17	470020	3947150
I.	17	470390	3947500				

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

STATE	North Carolina	CODE	37	COUNTY	Catawba	CODE	051
STATE		CODE		COUNTY		CODE	

11 FORM PREPARED BY Archival Res. & hist. desc. by Jerry Cross (Res. Branch)

NAME/TITLE Architectural evaluation by Davyd Foard Hood (Survey Branch)
 Archeological evaluation by Thomas H. Hargrove (Archeology Branch)

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Div. of Archives and History, N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources	August, 1979
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
109 E. Jones Street	(919) 733-7342
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Raleigh	North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

