

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

December 22, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley *Renee Gledhill-Earley*
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT: Replace Bridge 12 on SR1122 (Dobbins Mill Road) over Snow Creek, PA 17-06-0004,
Surry County, ER 17-2874

Thank you for your November 21, 2017, letter transmitting the Historic Structures Survey Report for the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the report and offer the following comments.

We concur that Dobbins Mill (SR0542) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the small-scale milling that was integral to Surry County's economic life during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The proposed boundary appears appropriate.

We also concur that the following properties are not eligible for listing in the National Register for the reasons outlined in the report.

- Dobbins Mill Historic District (SR0904)
- Charlie Dobbins House (SR0543)
- Cleveland Dobbins House (SR0544)

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT, mfurr@ncdot.gov



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III
SECRETARY

Renee Gledhill-Earley
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4617

November 21, 2017

ER 17-2874

H gear 12/18
ERle Hesa
12/21

Due 12/20/17

Dear Gledhill-Earley:

RE: Historic Structure Survey Report, PA# 17-06-0004, Replace Bridge No 12 on SR 1122 (Dobbins Mill Rd) over Snow Creek in Surry County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes Replace Bridge No 12 on SR 1122 (Dobbins Mill Rd) over Snow Creek in Surry County. Calyx prepared the attached Eligibility Report and recommends the Dobbins Mill (SR0542) eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The report and survey materials are enclosed for your review and comment per 36CFR.800. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding this project. I can be reached at (919) 707-6088 or by email at slreap@ncdot.gov.

Sincerely,

Shelby Reap
Historic Architecture Section

Attachment

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HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

Replace Bridge 12 on SR 1122 (Dobbins Mill Road) over Snow Creek
Surry County
WBS# 17BP.11.R.144

Prepared for:
Environmental Analysis Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27699

Prepared by:
 CALYX
CALYX Engineers and Consultants
6750 Tryon Road
Cary, North Carolina, 27518

NOVEMBER 2017

HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

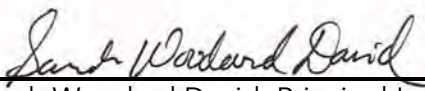
Replace Bridge 12 on SR 1122 (Dobbins Mill Road) over Snow Creek
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North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27699

Prepared by:

CALYX Engineers and Consultants
6750 Tryon Road
Cary, North Carolina, 27518

NOVEMBER 2017


Sarah Woodard David, Principal Investigator

November 20, 2017

Date

Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor
Historic Architecture Group
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

Management Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes replacing Bridge 12 on Secondary Road (SR) 1122 (Dobbins Mill Road) over Snow Creek in Surry County (see Figure 1, Bridge 12 Vicinity Map). The project's Area of Potential Effects (APE), as defined by NCDOT, is a 100-foot-wide corridor centered on the existing roadway and extending 200-feet in each direction from the ends of the bridge. Figure 2 illustrates the APE. NCDOT architectural historians reviewed the properties within the APE and determined that three individual properties greater than 50 years of age and one potential historic district warranted further evaluation for potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. Initially, Bridge 12 itself was included for further evaluation because it had been recorded in the State Historic Preservation Office's architectural survey files for Surry County. However, the documented bridge was replaced by the existing bridge in 1964, and NCDOT historians determined that the existing bridge did not warrant further evaluation and is not eligible for the NRHP.

This project is subject to review under the *Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects* (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA, 2007, revised and updated in 2015). NCDOT architectural historians established an APE for the project and, following preliminary background research and field investigation, ultimately identified three individual resources and one potential historic district for further evaluation. No other properties within the APE that are greater than 50 years of age appear to be eligible for the National Register, and no properties within the APE that are less than 50 years of age appear to meet Criteria Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years.

Surry County was comprehensively surveyed in 1981. The Charlie Dobbins House (SR 543), the Dobbins Mill (SR 542), and the Cleveland Dobbins House (SR 544) were all documented at that time.

In September 2017, NCDOT requested that CALYX Engineers and Consultants (CALYX) complete research, an intensive-level historic resources field survey, and NRHP evaluations for these three properties and a potential Dobbins Mill Historic District (SR 904).

Based on the field survey, background research, and the evaluations documented in this report, the recommendations for the NRHP are as follows:

Property Name	NCHPO Survey Site Number	Eligibility Determination	Criteria
Dobbins Mill Historic District	SR 904	Not Eligible	
Dobbins Mill	SR 542	Eligible	A
Charlie Dobbins House	SR 543	Not Eligible	
Cleveland Dobbins House	SR 544	Not Eligible	

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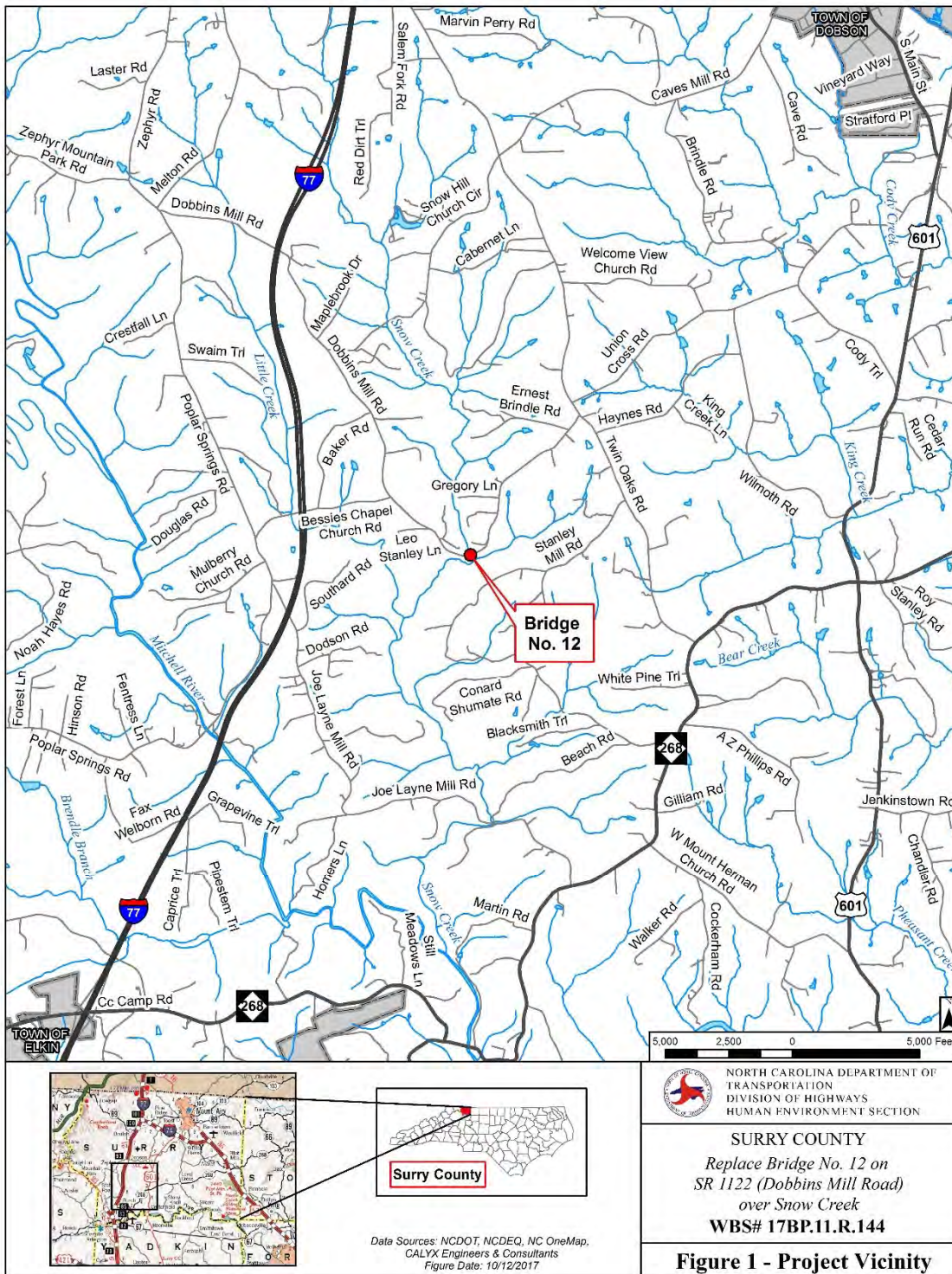


Figure 1: Bridge 12 Vicinity Map

Replace Bridge 12 - Surry County - Dobbins Mill Road

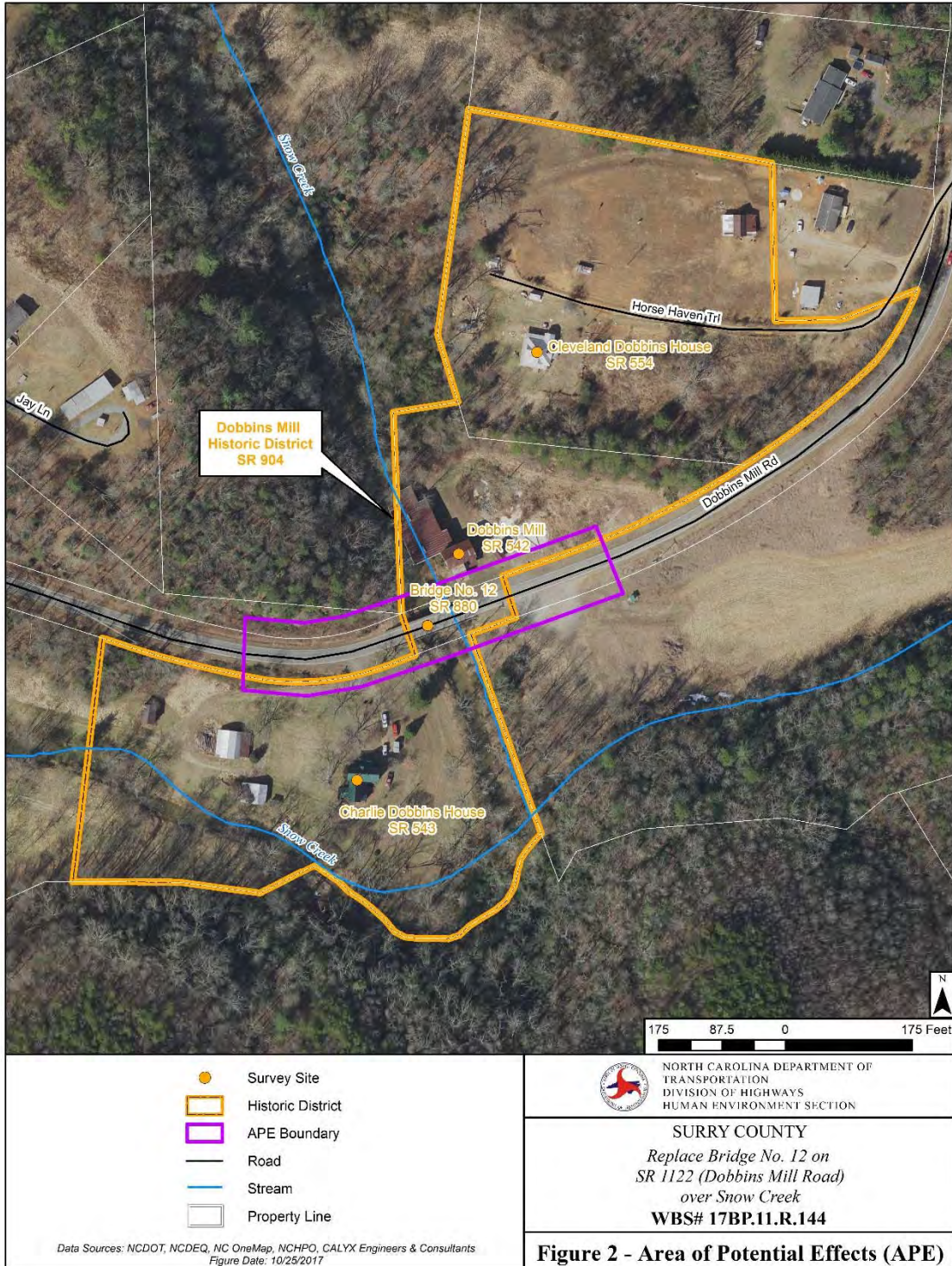


Figure 2: Bridge 12 APE and Evaluated Properties

Methodology

On October 8 and 9, 2017, CALYX Architectural Historian Sarah Woodard David visited Surry County and completed photo documentation of all four resources. The investigator undertook research at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, the Surry County Register of Deeds, the North Carolina State Library, and the North Carolina State Archives. The investigator also used online research tools and resources, including Surry County GIS Mapping, the website findagrave.com, and the web-based subscription services ancestry.com and newspapers.com. The investigator drove throughout Surry County on October 8 and 9 in search of comparable building types and districts.

CALYX conducted all fieldwork, research, and evaluations to meet the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800, as well as NCDOT's *Guidelines for the Survey Reports for Historic Architectural Resources*.

Evaluation: Dobbins Mill Historic District

Resource Name	Dobbins Mill Historic District
HPO Survey Site Number	SR 904
Street Address	Either side of Dobbins Mill Road at Snow Creek
PIN	Multiple
Construction Dates	Ca. 1885, Ca. 1907
NRHP Recommendation	Not Eligible



Description

The Dobbins Mill Historic District comprises three sites with connected histories: the Charlie Dobbins House, the Dobbins Mill, and the Cleveland Dobbins House. Each of these resources is also individually evaluated in this report.

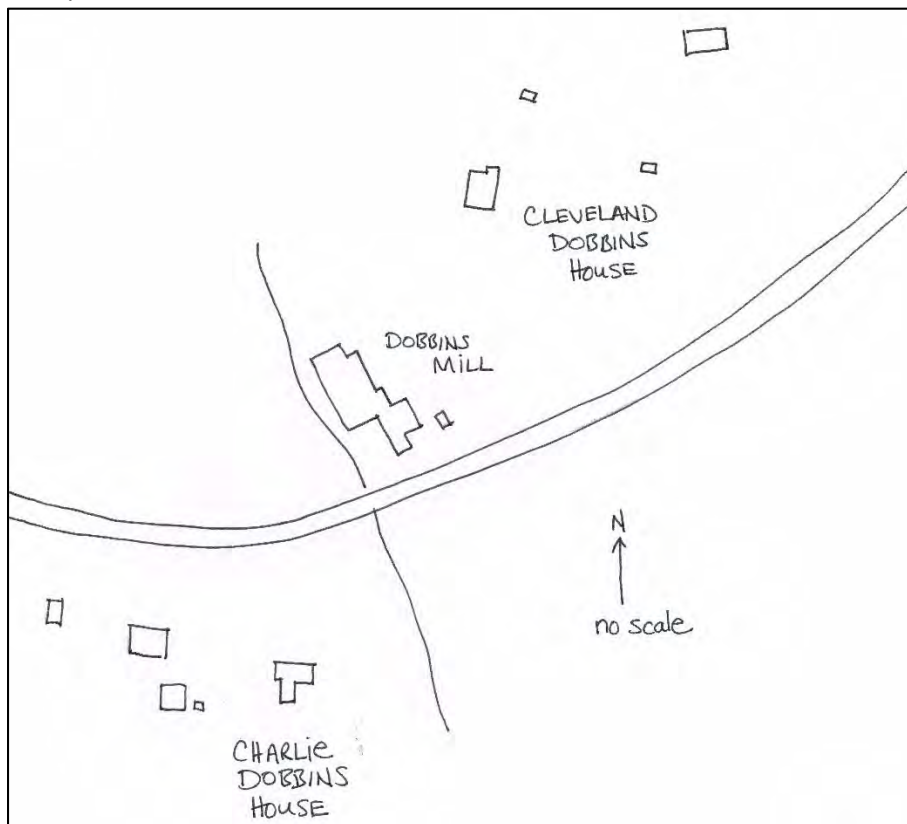


Figure 3: Dobbins Mill Historic District site plan

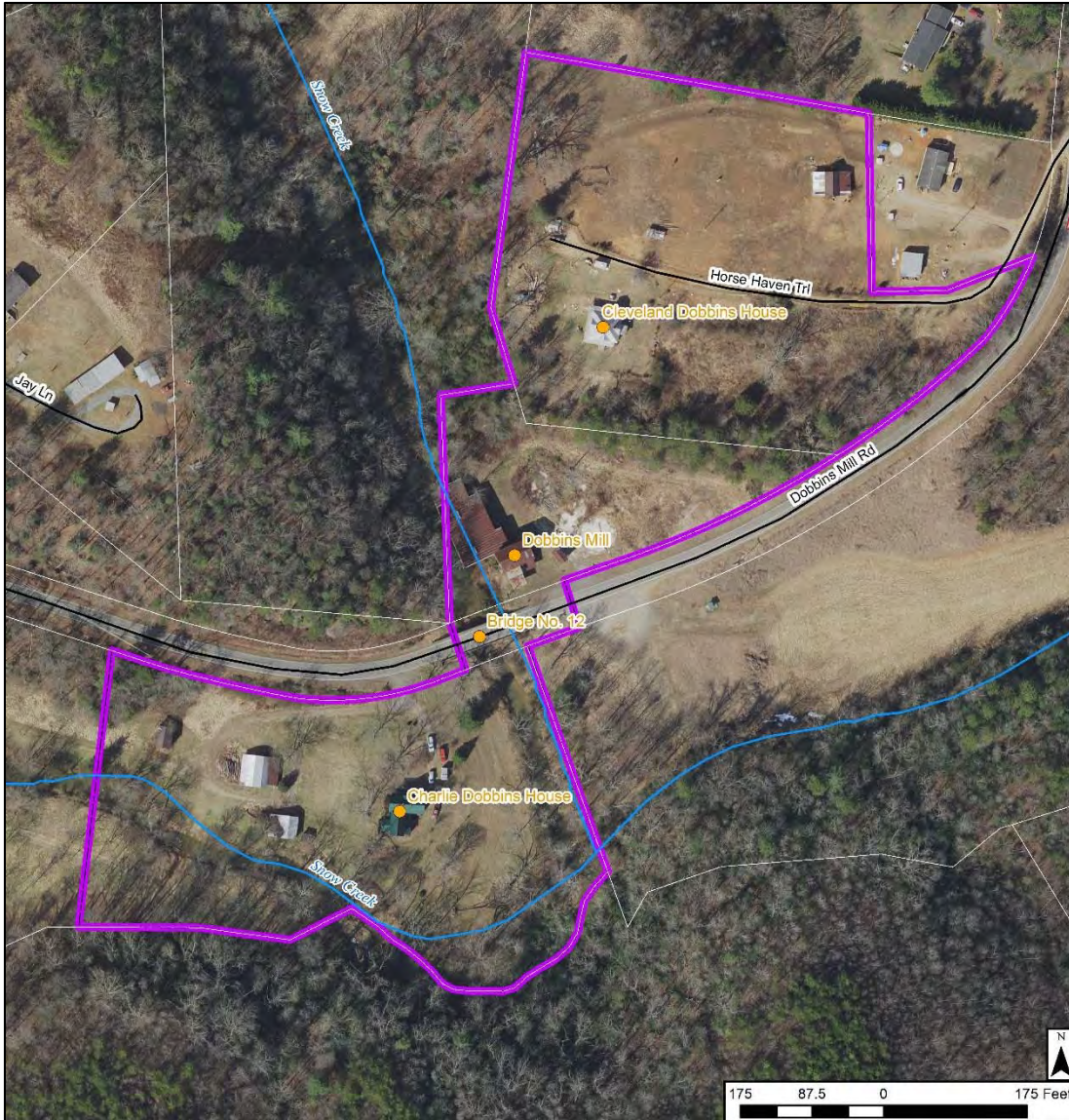


Figure 4: Dobbins Mill Historic District Boundary

Surry County is located in North Carolina’s western Piedmont. The county’s geography is one of rolling hills crossed with creeks and rivers that drain south across the county toward the Yadkin River. The Blue Ridge Mountains rise in the west while Pilot Mountain stands on the county’s eastern edge. Most of the county is rural, with a farming population spread out between Elkin in the west and Mount Airy in the east.

The quintessential Surry County mill site includes a two-to-four-story-tall, frame mill building dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, a creek, a late-nineteenth-century house (usually an I-house built by the mill’s owner), a younger house built closer to the turn-of-the-twentieth-century or in the early twentieth-century by a next-generation mill owner or a sibling of the owner, a bridge, a dam, and, in the cases of larger operations, a small miller’s house and/or a store. The typical extant mill

usually stands on the site of earlier mills dating to the earlier nineteenth century or even into the eighteenth century. The site is usually approached from at least one direction by a road that descends steeply, following a curving route along a hillside toward the creek.

At the Dobbins Mill Historic District, the approach to the site, the mill (figure 5), the two houses (figures 6 and 7), and the location of the bridge (figure 8) are all characteristic of the county's archetypal mill sites. From both the east and the west, Dobbins Mill Road drops through several curves toward Snow Creek, the bridge, and the mill. To the south of the mill is the Charlie Dobbins House, which is a traditional two-story I-house built by the brother and uncle of the Dobbins family members that constructed the existing mill building. This house is situated immediately downstream from the mill and is also downhill from the mill. To the northeast of the mill is an early twentieth-century house built by Cleveland Dobbins. This house is on a hillside, well above the mill, and was originally approached from the mill via a slope that was cut to create a steep embankment between the house and the mill. Bridge No. 12 crosses Snow Creek in front of the mill.

Though no longer standing, a third house, also believed to have been built by the Dobbins family, once stood on the north side of Dobbins Mill Road, very close to the mill. Deed references to the extant Charlie Dobbins House and oral history suggest that a store was on the east side of Snow Creek and on the south side of Dobbins Mill Road. Deeds also refer to a brick kiln in the vicinity, and a steel truss bridge crossed the creek until its removal in 1964. Also no longer extant is the mill's dam, which was demolished sometime before 1965.



Figure 5: Dobbins Mill, southeast corner



Figure 6: Charlie Dobbins House, north elevation



Figure 7: Cleveland Dobbins House, southwest corner



Figure 8: Bridge 12, south elevation

History and Architectural Context

Thomas and Charles Dobbins were brothers from Yadkin County where their father operated a mill as early as 1880.¹ In 1884, they purchased several tracts of land on Snow Creek from W.E. and Andrew Axon.²

It is not known if the Axon family operated a mill at this location, but it seems likely that they did given their occupations. W.E. Axon had moved to Surry County from Salem where, according to his obituary, he had worked for many years as a mechanist with F.H. Fries and Company, a major manufacturing concern in Salem. Andrew Axon was W.E.'s father and he lived in Surry County during the mid-1800s. Both father and son had worked as blacksmiths and mechanists, making it likely they owned land in this area for its industrial potential as opposed to its farming potential.³

Soon after buying this land, Charles Dobbins built a fine I-house on the south side of the road. Another house, on the north side of the road, belonged to Thomas and may have predated the brothers' ownership, but this house was demolished in the twentieth century.⁴ During the summer of 1888, advertisements in the *Western Sentential* mentioned "T.A. Dobbins and Stanley" located in Venable in

¹ U.S. Census Records, Population Schedule, Yadkin County, 1850 and 1880; U.S. Population Records Population Schedule, Surry County, 1860 and 1870, accessed via ancestry.com.

² Axson is spelled variously as Axom, Axum, Oxsam, and Axon, but Axson was the form used in Surry County land records. Andrew Axson to T.A. and C.S. Dobbins, January 29, 1884, Surry County Deed Book 21, page 3; W.E. Axson to T.A. and C.S. Dobbins, April 28, 1884, Surry County Deed Book 22, page 320; Andrew Axson to T.A. and C.S. Dobbins, April 1, 1884, Surry County Deed Book 23, page 436. The April 1 deed mentions a store house.

³ U.S. Census Records, Population Schedule, Surry County, 1840 and 1850 and Forsyth County 1860 and 1880.

⁴ Felix Tharpe, telephone interview with the author, October 12, 2017.

Surry County.⁵ The exact location of Venable is not known, but a 1910 map of rural mail delivery routes shows Venable as a general place name in the vicinity of the Dobbins Mill area.⁶

In 1890, Charles sold his house to Thomas and appears to have moved farther south, closer to the Yadkin River, and was no longer involved in milling at this location.⁷

By August 1906, Thomas was operating the mill, probably with his son, Nathan, when Snow Creek flooded, washing away their mill and several others.⁸ The father and son hired a local, well-known millwright, Jonathan Jehue “Gee” Wallace to construct a new facility.⁹ Wallace owned his own mill to the south, but he built several mills in Surry County, including Kapp’s Mill, and at least one, Jessup’s Mill, in neighboring Stokes County.¹⁰

From 1906 until the late twentieth century, the Dobbins Mill produced flour, cornmeal, and animal feed. Although a store stood on the south side of the road, the Dobbins complex did not develop into a larger commercial center.

In 1907, another son of Thomas, Cleveland, married Sallie Dodson and they probably constructed their house on the hill above the mill around this time.¹¹ Also around this time, in the early 1900s, a steel truss bridge was installed over Snow Creek.¹²

The 1910 census recorded Nathan living with his parents and working as a miller. Cleveland was enumerated next to them, and he was a farmer living with his wife and a young son. By 1920, Thomas, Nathan, and Cleveland were all in separate households, but living close by one another. Nathan was now described as a farmer and Cleveland was a miller. Thomas died in 1927, and, in 1930, Cleveland was still in the area milling while Nathan had moved away. Cleveland died in 1934 followed by Sallie in 1944, but Thomas’ wife, Della, lived until 1955.¹³

Changes came to the complex starting with the replacement of the truss bridge with the existing bridge in 1964. Then, in the early 1970s, Felix Tharpe made significant changes to the mill. Alterations included a large addition to the rear of the historic mill building, adding modern grain storage bins and a loading dock and elevator, and altering the landscape by cutting away the hillside between the Cleveland Dobbins House and the mill. At some point in the twentieth century, the third house and the store

⁵ Winston-Salem *Western Sentinel*, April 26, 1888, page 4.

⁶ Rural Delivery Maps, Surry County, N.C., map published by the U.S. Post Office, ca. 1910, accessed October 25, 2017 via <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/1077/rec/11>.

⁷ C.S. and M.M. Dobbins to T.A. Dobbins, October 9, 1890, Surry County Deed Book 28, page 43, and U.S. Census Records, Population Schedule, Surry County, 1900, accessed via ancestry.com.

⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, August 30, 1906, page 1.

⁹ Notes in Dobbins Mill Survey File, SR 542, N.C. State Historic Preservation Office, and Tharpe interview.

¹⁰ Tharpe interview, and Laura A. W. Phillips, *Simple Treasures: The Architectural Legacy of Surry County* (Dobson, N.C.: Surry County Historical Society, 1987, 27.

¹¹ U.S. Census Records, Population Schedule, Surry County, 1910, accessed via ancestry.com.

¹² Bridge No. 12 Survey File, SR 880, N.C. State Historic Preservation Office.

¹³ Dobbins family death dates accessed via findagrave.com.

building were demolished. Tharpe, who lives on Dobbins Mill Road, about one-half-mile west of the mill, closed the mill in the early 2000s.¹⁴

Comparable Examples

The NCHPO Web GIS Service documents about 10 rural, water-powered mills or mill sites in Surry County, comparable to the number recorded in Stokes and Wilkes counties to the east and west, respectively. In Surry County, several of these have been lost since the 1981 architectural survey. One particularly outstanding example remains: Kapp's Mill (figure 9, SR 523, listed on the state's study list, located on Mitchell River at Kapp's Mill Road and River Road) comprising nearly all components of a mill-based historic district: the mill, a nineteenth-century I-house (figure 10), a dam (figure 11) an altered store (figure 11), an early twentieth-century bungalow, and a small miller's house.



Figure 9: Kapp's Mill

¹⁴ Bridge No. 12 Survey File, SR 880, and Tharpe interview.



Figure 10: Kapp House at Kapp's Mill



Figure 11: Dam at Kapp's Mill. The house in the image is a heavily remodeled store. This view is facing north toward the mill dam. Kapp's Mill is located to the east, just out of the frame. The bungalow is located to the west, and the miller's house to the south.

Other mills are still standing, but they generally retain only their setting and location, along a creek at the bottom of a hill. No other comparable existing or potential districts were seen in the county.

National Register Evaluation

Integrity

The Dobbins Mill Historic District retains integrity of location, setting, and feeling as a mill-oriented settlement, although the deep cut into the hillside beside the mill has negatively affected the site's integrity of setting. It also retains integrity of association with rural industry, although retention of the historic store building and dam would have bolstered its association with rural industry and commerce. Overall, the district retains elements of integrity of workmanship and design, but many components, such as original siding, original decorative elements, and the dam and store have been lost. The two houses have lost significant material integrity with the application of vinyl siding and the installation of new windows at both houses, and new porch materials at the Charlie Dobbins House.

Criteria Evaluations

The Dobbins Mill Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for an association with an event or broad pattern of history. The changes to the mill and the losses of the store building and mill dam have lessened the site's association with industrial history. The mill itself is eligible for the National Register and is evaluated separately, but collectively, while the district retains elements of the typical mill complex in Surry County, Kapp's Mill is significantly more complete (with two houses, a mill, dam, and miller's house) and better conveys its historic association with the county's small-scale manufacturing.

The Dobbins Mill Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B. None of the Dobbins family members nor later owners of the mill or houses are known to have been significant historically.

The Dobbins Mill Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The district's loss of material integrity and design integrity is significant. While the mill retains aspects of architectural integrity, the district's components are so altered that collectively, they cannot represent a significant and distinguishable entity. The introduction of vinyl siding and new windows to the houses, as well as the addition at the mill have a negative impact on the district's architectural integrity. Furthermore, the Kapp Mill complex retains notably better architectural integrity and is an outstanding example of a mill historic district.

The Dobbins Mill Historic District is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D because it has not yielded nor is it likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

Evaluation: Dobbins Mill

Resource Name	Dobbins Mill
HPO Survey Site Number	SR 542
Street Address	802 Dobbins Mill Road
PIN	4974-00-83-8979
Construction Dates	Ca. 1906, ca. 1972
NRHP Recommendation	Eligible, Criterion A



Description

The Dobbins Mill is situated along Snow Creek in western Surry County. The mill is approached from the east and the west via Dobbins Mill Road, which curves downhill toward the creek.

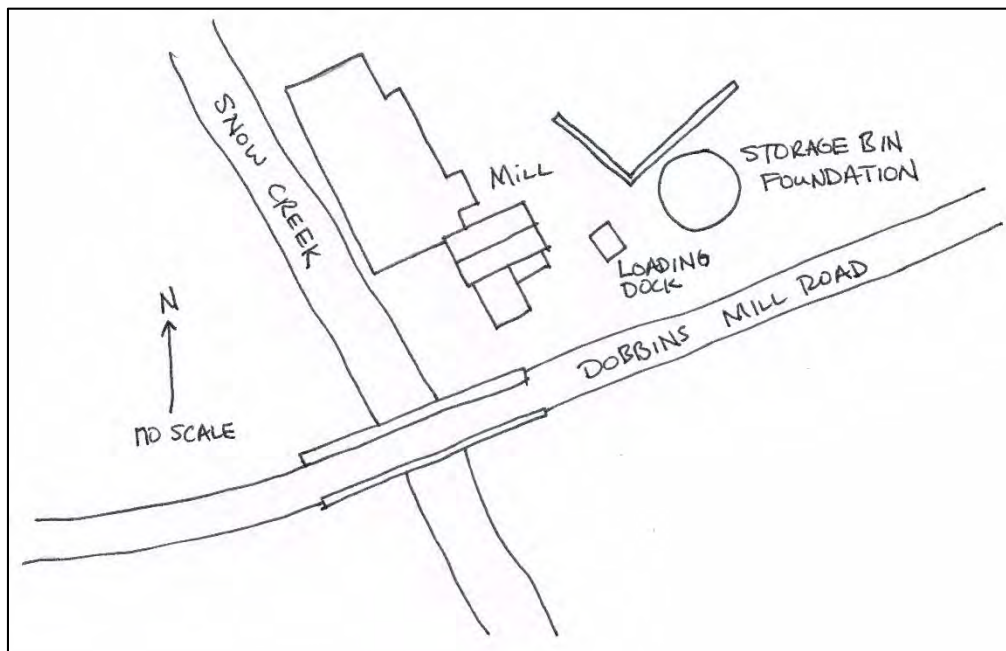


Figure 12: Dobbins Mill site plan

The mill is a three-story, traditional creek-side grist mill once common across North Carolina's Piedmont and mountains (figure 13). Unpainted weatherboards cover the exterior. A two-story, shed-roof, metal-clad addition obscures part of the front (south) elevation. The front elevation also includes a shed roof porch that extends from the metal addition to the southeast. The porch features exposed rafter tails,

square posts, a wooden floor, and wooden steps. The porch shelters a wide front door constructed from diagonally-laid boards. The second floor of the south elevation contains one six-over-six sash window while the metal, shed-roof addition conceals the other window. The third floor retains two six-over-six sash windows. A side-gable roof with five-v crimp metal roofing and deep eaves shelters the building.



Figure 13: Dobbins Mill, south elevation

On the east elevation (figure 14), a narrower board-and-batten door with diagonal boards occupies the first floor and is centered on the elevation. Above the door, six-over-six sash windows pierce the elevation at each level. A four-over-four window lights the attic. .



Figure 14: Dobbins Mill, east elevation

The north or rear elevation (figures 15 and 16) repeats the façade: a two-bay elevation retains six-over-six sash windows with the first floor east window boarded over and the first floor west window obscured by a large addition.



Figure 15: Dobbins Mill, northeast corner



Figure 16: Dobbins Mill, north elevation and addition

On the west elevation (figure 17), the gable end features a single six-over-six sash window centered on the elevation. At the first floor level, an off-center six-over-six sash window has been added to the composition.



Figure 17: Dobbins Mill, southwest corner

A truncated pyramidal foundation pier of dry-laid stone supports the building’s southwest corner (figure 18). Another matching pier is probably located at the northwest corner, but existing, dense vegetation prevents confirmation. The rest of the building’s foundation is nearly invisible because the building’s weatherboards extend nearly to the ground. Where the foundation can be seen on the south, east, and north elevations, it appears to be a continuous foundation created from stone, concrete block, and some brick.



Figure 18: Dobbins Mill, stone foundation pier

On the building's north elevation, a long, one-story, steel-framed, metal-clad addition extends along the edge of the creek (figures 19 and 20). On the creek side, the building features a tall cast concrete foundation. On the east side, it has small sliding windows and garage bays sheltered by a shed roof overhang.



Figure 19: Dobbins Mill, east elevation of rear addition



Figure 20: Snow Creek, looking north with mill addition on the east side of the creek

The investigator did not gain access to the interior, but the owner reports that it has not been disturbed in years and that “old equipment” remains. The 1981 survey noted that original and early milling equipment was present.

To the east of the main mill building is a small, metal-clad, gable-roof building on tall stilts (figure 21). This was part of a loading system for transferring ground products (flour, corn meal, and feed) to trucks. A ninety-five-foot-tall elevator was also part of this structure originally. An in-ground scale for weighing trucks is located adjacent to this structure.



Figure 21: Dobbins Mill, loading dock and in-ground scales

To the east of the loading structure is a round concrete foundation where a 73,000-bushel storage bin once stood (figures 22-24).



Figure 22: Dobbins Mill, grain bin foundation with retaining wall in background



Figure 23: Google Streetview image from 2008 showing grain elevator and storage bins



Figure 24: Google Streetview image from 2008 showing grain storage

Immediately east of the storage bin foundation is a concrete block and stone retaining wall, on top of which is a level plateau where smaller storage bins stood (figure 25).



Figure 25: Dobbins Mill, facing southeast toward loading dock and retaining wall

History and Architectural Context

With rugged terrain making transportation difficult and many creeks and rivers making waterpower accessible, small-scale, local milling thrived in Surry County from the earliest European settlements in the late 1700s into the early twentieth century.

Grist mills served local farmers but also became social centers with other businesses, such as stores, the post office, blacksmiths, and sawmillers gravitating to the mill.

Mills were usually frame structures ranging in height from two to four stories, perched on the edge of a creek. A dam in the creek was used to control the creek's water flow, thereby controlling the speeds with which the mill's gears turned. Usually the miller directed water from behind the dam through a race, chute, or ditch to the mill building. At the mill building, the water was used to turn a wheel or gears by going over the top of a waterwheel (overshot), under a waterwheel (undershot), or under the mill building itself to turn a turbine. Once the water was turning the initial gear or wheel, other gears and belts inside the building operated the grinding machinery. Mills varied widely in their configurations, although their exterior appearance and proximity to a water source were remarkably consistent.

In 1884, brothers Thomas and Charles Dobbins made several land purchases along Snow Creek from members of the Axon family. None of the deeds mention a mill, but one deed documents the presence of a store building and a brick kiln in the vicinity. It is likely that the Axons had built a mill here earlier: Andrew Axon, W.E.'s father, had lived in Surry County, periodically working as a blacksmith, and W.E. distinguished himself in Salem as a mechanist for F.H. Fries and Company, a significant manufacturing company.

The existing mill, however, dates to about 1907 or 1908. In August 1906, a flood washed away at least three mills on Snow Creek, including the Dobbins operation, which Thomas and his son, Nathan, ran by this point. Father and son decided to rebuild, and they hired Jonathan Jehue “Gee” Wallace, a well-known millwright credited with the construction of several mills in Surry County and at least one in neighboring Stokes County (Jessup’s Mill). It is believed that the new mill was completed in late 1906 or 1907. A 1908 newspaper report noted that, “There has just been installed at the Dobbins mill a Forty Barrel Rolling Mill and Messrs. Dobbins boast of being able to serve the public as well as any first class mill. The mill is now running at full blast.” The writer goes on to encourage folks that “a trial load will convince you that they are your friends.”¹⁵

At the new Dobbins Mill, a dam was located immediately upstream from the mill building and a race directed water under the building where it turned a submerged turbine; the building never had a waterwheel. This arrangement is seen in Surry County at Kapp’s Mill, and at Bryant Mill (SR 152, no longer standing) and in Stokes County at Jessup’s Mill in Stokes County (SK 6). Kapp’s and Jessup’s mill are associated with Wallace, and Bryant Mill may have been his work as well.¹⁶

By 1920, Nathan had moved away and Cleveland Dobbins, another son of Thomas, was the miller. Cleveland continued running the mill until his death in 1934. After 1934, it is not clear who ran the mill, but Della Dobbins (Thomas’ wife and Cleveland’s mother) owned it until 1946 when she sold it to Clifton and Dorothy Childress. The Childresses sold it to the present owner, Felix Tharpe, in 1965, who ran it under the name Snow Creek Milling into the late twentieth century.¹⁷

The Dobbins Mill operated as both a grist mill and roller mill. Grist mills worked by feeding grain through a hopper and into the space between two millstones, a fixed stone on bottom and a stone that turns on top. The space between the stones can be adjusted to produce finer or courser flour or cornmeal. Roller mills operate in a similar fashion with rollers taking the place of millstones.

Mr. Tharpe expanded the mill in the early 1970s, and his construction of the metal addition to the north of the earlier building uncovered the dam location, which was not obvious by the time he purchased the property in 1965. Tharpe also blasted and excavated the lower hillside to the mill’s northwest, leaving the Cleveland Dobbins house at the top of a cliff rather than on a hillside. It was at this point that Tharpe added storage bins that could hold 110,000 bushels of grain, a loading dock that included a ninety-five-foot-tall elevator, and in-ground scales. By the time of the 1981 architectural survey, Tharpe’s operation was the last operating historic mill in the county, and Tharpe produced flour, cornmeal, and feed using both rollers and stones. He closed the mill in the early 2000s.

¹⁵ *Mount Airy News*, March 12, 1908, page 3.

¹⁶ Phillips, 27, 65, 83, and 122.

¹⁷ Clifton and Dorothy Childress to Felix and Betty Tharpe, Surry County Deed Book 256, page 207, June 21, 1965, and Tharpe interview.

Comparable Examples

About ten frame, water-powered mills or mill sites were recorded during the 1981 architectural survey. Several of those have been lost, but several remain. The best-preserved example is Kapp's Mill (figures 26 and 27, SR 523) located on Mitchell River at Kapp's Mill Road and River Road. Kapp's Mill is listed on the state's study list.



Figure 26: Kapp's Mill



Figure 27: Kapp's Mill

The Isaac Mill (SR 518) is extant and the investigator confirmed in the field that it is still standing, but trees and overgrowth made it impossible to photograph. Isaac Mill is a two-story, frame building with a

wooden waterwheel. It appears to be unaltered, but has suffered significant deterioration. It is located on Red Hill Creek on the west side of Fisher Valley Road.

The Joe Layne Mill (figure 28, SR 549) dates from the late 1800s, and Joe Layne also operated a sawmill and blacksmith shop here. It ceased operations in the mid-1900s after a flood destroyed the dam. The mill stands on Snow Creek near the intersection of Beach Road and Joe Layne Mill Road.



Figure 28: Joe Layne Mill

Level Cross Milling Company (figure 29) is an unsurveyed roller mill located at 3941 Siloam Road.



Figure 29: Level Cross Milling Company

National Register Evaluation

Integrity

The Dobbins Mill retains integrity of location, setting, and feeling as it is situated along a creek and a road. It retains association with rural milling, but additions and the subsequent removal of the 1970s additions that could have created a context of evolution, have diminished its association. The historic building, however, retains integrity of workmanship, materials, and design as an early-twentieth-century mill.

Criteria Evaluations

The Dobbins Mill is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the small-scale milling that was integral to Surry County's economic life during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Kapp's Mill is the county's best example, but it was a much larger operation, and possibly the largest such mill in the county. Dobbins Mill represents the more typical size and scale of the mills that once dotted Surry County. Despite having been a very common fixture on the county's landscape, only a small number of examples remain. Kapp's Mill, Isaac Mill, and the Joe Layne Mill are less altered, but aside from Kapp's Mill, they are significantly deteriorated.

The Dobbins Mill is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B. Neither the Dobbins family nor subsequent owners of the mill are known to be significant figures in history. "Gee" Wallace, the millwright credited with building the mill, is locally significant, but Kapp's Mill and Jessup's Mill in Stokes County are better and more intact examples of his work.

The Dobbins Mill is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The additions to the mill have detracted from the building's architectural integrity significantly. The additions made to the site in the 1970s could have been interpreted as an evolution or continuation of the building's operations, but the loss of some of those modern features, including at least 4 storage bins and a grain elevator, make the mill's evolution uninterpretable. The building is left as neither a good example of original mill architecture nor a good example of how a historic building could change over time to remain viable. Kapp's Mill is a better and more intact example of the frame, grist mill type.

The Dobbins Mill is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D because it has not yielded nor is it likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

Boundary Description and Justification

The proposed Dobbins Mill National Register Boundary follows the Surry County parcel lot line associated with the tract identified by PIN 497400838979 except along the lot line's western edge where the boundary jogs into the adjacent lot to capture the full footprint of the mill building. This boundary encompasses the land historically associated with the mill and sufficiently conveys the building's historical association with milling and rural industry.



Figure 30: Dobbins Mill Proposed National Register Boundary

Evaluation: Charlie Dobbins House

Resource Name	Charlie Dobbins House
HPO Survey Site Number	SR 543
Street Address	817 Dobbins Mill Road
PIN	4974-00-63-3381
Construction Dates	Ca. 1885
NRHP Recommendation	Not Eligible



Description

The Charlie Dobbins House is nestled among mature trees along Snow Creek. The house's immediate lawn is level, but slopes steeply toward Snow Creek along the yard's east and south edges. To the west, the land drops more gently following Snow Creek.

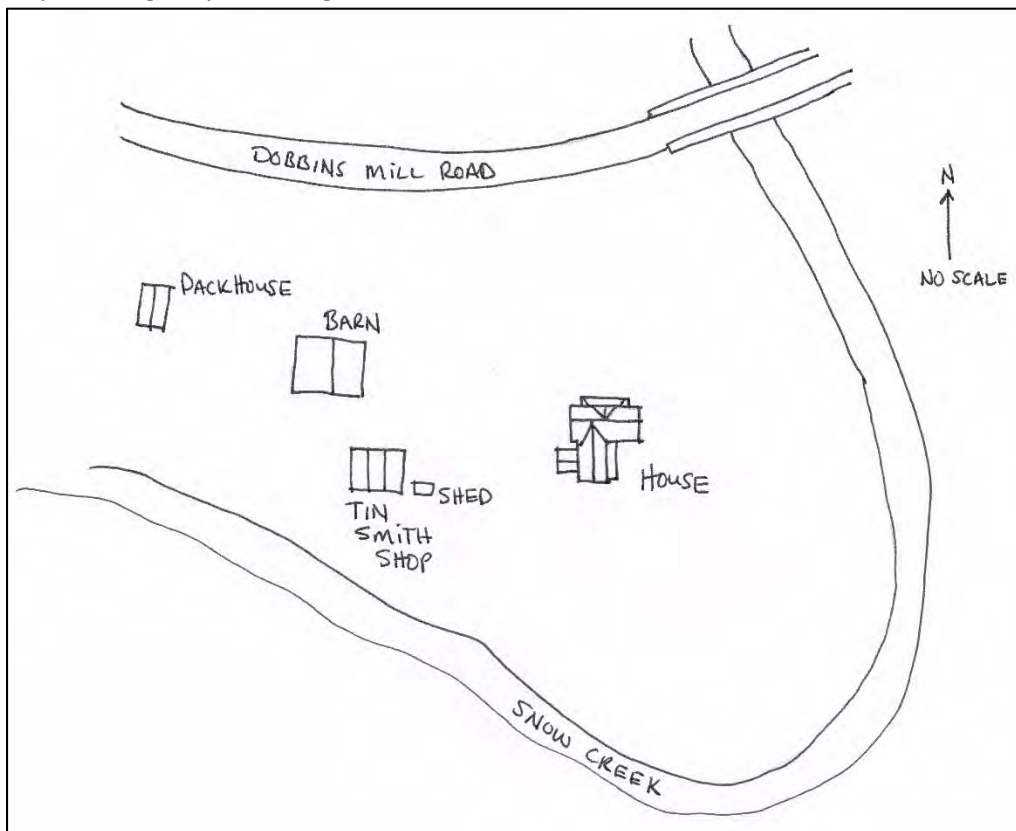


Figure 31: Charlie Dobbins House, site plan

The house is a two-story, traditional I-house with vernacular Italianate ornamentation (figures 32-35). The house has been covered in vinyl siding and the original windows, which appear to be two-over-two sash, based on photos in the SHPO survey site file, have been replaced. A single leaf door with two arched, glazed panels above vertical panels and three-light sidelights above molded panels compose the front entrance. A full-width, hip-roof porch retains paired, scalloped brackets along the eaves, but the porch posts, which were turned and featured rich sawnwork brackets, have been replaced with plain, square posts.



Figure 32: Charlie Dobbins House, north elevation



Figure 33: Charlie Dobbins House, porch eave detail



Figure 34: Charlie Dobbins House, front door



Figure 35: Charlie Dobbins House, roof gable and eave

The center window upstairs is slightly raised, but the current porch configuration is the same as the porch pictured in 1981, which appears to be original. Also on the front elevation, a roof gable is centered on the front roof slope. This element retains sawtooth shingles, eave brackets, and a pair of narrow, one-over-one sash windows. The front eaves and the rakes on the gable ends are enriched with paired brackets.

On the main block's gable ends, a single window is centered on each floor (figures 36 and 37).



Figure 36: Charlie Dobbins House, east elevation



Figure 37: Charlie Dobbins House, northwest corner

A two-story ell extends to the rear (figure 38). A one-story gabled addition is attached to the ell's west elevation; this addition was built before the 1981 architectural survey. A shed-roofed, enclosed porch extends along the ell's east elevation.



Figure 38: Charlie Dobbins House, west elevation

The house stands on a continuous brick foundation and modern, five-v crimp metal covers the roofs. Interior chimneys rise through the main block's roof ridge and feature corbelled caps and cross-shaped panels executed in blonde brick.

Visible through the front door and sidelights, the interior appears to be unchanged since 1981. The front hall's unusual barrel vaulted ceiling, clad in beaded board remains. The hall also retains the original staircase and beaded board wainscoting. An original mantel was visible in the west front room. The investigator returned to the house five times over two days, and although the house appears to be occupied, no one answered the door. Additionally, the investigator called the owner multiple times but did not establish contact.

The site includes four outbuildings. To the west of the house, and slightly downhill is a small metal-clad shed with a single door and exposed rafter tails (figure 39). Next to this is a larger, gable-front, metal-clad building with double-doors in the gable end and a shed addition along the west elevation (figure 39). A metal flu extends out of the building through one leaf of the double door. According to the owner of the mill building across the road, this building serves as a workshop for the owner, who is a tinsmith.



Figure 39: Charlie Dobbins House, shed and tinsmithing shop

Farther west is a gambrel-roof barn with a shed wing on the east elevation (figures 40-42). The barn is full-height on its south elevation with a wide doorway centered on the elevation. On the north elevation, it is approached by a bank and less than half its height extends above the grade. Weatherboards cover the barn.



Figure 40: Charlie Dobbins House, barn, southeast corner



Figure 41: Charlie Dobbins House, barn, northeast corner



Figure 42: Charlie Dobbins House, barn, north elevation

To the west of the barn is a tobacco pack house with a concrete foundation and weatherboard siding (figure 43). One four-over-four sash window is located in the foundation on the south elevation.



Figure 43: Charlie Dobbins House, tobacco packhouse, southeast corner

History and Architectural Context

In the 1880s, the railroad arrived in Surry County when lines were extended from Greensboro to Mount Airy and from Winston across the county to Elkin. The railroads brought booming prosperity in Surry County's towns and, to a lesser degree, to its rural areas. Improving transportation gave residents more access to national architectural fashion trends and growing mechanization yielded access to less expensive mass-produced architectural elements. Collectively, these changes resulted in a building boom of both high-style Queen Anne forms and traditional house forms embellished with fashionable Queen Anne ornamentation including sawnwork, spindlework, decorative shingles, and turned porch posts. This adornment varied widely in complexity and style, but specifically during the 1880s, this ornamentation tended to strongly reference the Italianate style.¹⁸

The Charlie Dobbins House is typical of the county's more richly decorated Italianate I-houses. Oral tradition holds that Charlie Dobbins built it in the 1880s, possibly around the time he and his brother, Thomas, purchased several pieces of land along Snow Creek in 1884. It appears that Charles and his wife, Mary, sold the house to Thomas and his wife Della, in 1890. It is not clear who lived in the house after 1890, and census records suggest Charles moved away, but a 1924 deed includes a life estate for "the old lady, Jane Childress," who was a daughter of Andrew Axon, who had sold this property to Thomas and Charles Dobbins in the 1880s.¹⁹

The Dobbins family operated the mill on the north side of the road, and although Charles was consistently listed in the census as a farmer, his 1916 obituary in the *Western Sentinal* noted that he

¹⁸ Phillips, 18-20.

¹⁹ M.C. and May Childress et al to B.W. and Emma White, December 10, 1924, Surry County Deed Book 86, page 293.

was a farmer and had operated a roller mill.²⁰ This obituary also stated that he died at his home at Burch Station, which is located directly south of Dobbins Mill, near the mouth of Mitchell River, where it empties into the Yadkin.

During the 1940s, the property changed hands several times before J.M. and Ida Stanley purchased it in 1951.²¹ An 1890 deed mentions the “Dobbins and Stanley Mill,” but how that Stanley is related to the Stanleys who bought this house in 1951 is unknown. However, it does not appear that any subsequent owners of this house were associated with the mill after the property left the Dobbins family.

Each of the twentieth-century owners were listed in the census in 1920, 1930, and 1940 as farmers. No associated tobacco barns remain, but the extant packhouse suggests that owners cultivated tobacco. Thus, it is likely that the home’s owners were small-scale tobacco farmers, as were so many families in Surry County in the early and mid-twentieth century.

Peter Blum is the current owner. Blum is a tinsmith and the third generation in his family to work as the tinsmith at Old Salem, Inc., in Winston-Salem. He maintains one outbuilding as his own tinsmithing shop.²²

Prior to 1981, the exterior was covered in rolled asphalt siding, and, since 1981, the porch posts have been replaced and the house has been covered in vinyl siding.

Comparable Examples

I-houses are common in rural Surry County, and those enlivened with Italianate brackets consistently date from the 1880s. One of the more robust examples is the Christopher Wren Bunker House, also known as Haystacks Farm (figure 44, SR 17). This house was built in 1885 and listed on the National Register in 1982. It is far less altered than the Charlie Dobbins House and retains its Italianate porch.

²⁰ Winston-Salem *Western Sentinel*, August 22, 1916, page 1.

²¹ D.A. and Clyde Brooks to J.M. and Ida Stanley, December 31, 1951, Surry County Deed Book 181, page 547.

²² Tharpe interview.



Figure 44: Haystacks

The Kapp House (figure 45), associated with Kapp's Mill, is an older, mid-nineteenth-century house that was extensively remodeled in the late 1800s.



Figure 45: Kapp House

The Hauser House (figure 46, SR 125, NR-listed in 2002) at Horne Creek Farm State Historic Site was not photographed because the site was closed during the period of fieldwork, but it, too, is also good example of an I-house, and is listed in the National Register.



Figure 46: Hauser House, photograph from Trip Advisor, accessed October 2017 via https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g49441-d3582428-i86040506-Horne_Creek_Living_Historical_Farm-Pinnacle_North_Carolina.html

The Abraham Phillips House (figure 47, SR 244) is covered with vinyl siding, but retains original windows and porch materials.



Figure 47: Abraham Phillips House, SR 244, at 8802 N.C. Highway 268

Deteriorated I-houses, such as the Perry Scott House (figure 48, SR 116), are also common. Although the porch is collapsing, the house retains original windows, siding, and gable-end chimneys. It is a good example of a very plainly finished I-house.



Figure 48: Perry Scott House, SR 116, Shoals Road

At the Robert Trulove House (figure 49, SR 123) classical columns are probably a later addition, but the house retains a sawnwork balustrade and turned posts on the upper porch. This house is an excellent example of its type.



Figure 49: Robert Trulove House (SR 123) at the corner of Shoals and Hauser roads

Vinyl siding and replacement windows are common, but many owners still retained porch posts and brackets. An unsurveyed example at 1416 Hauser Road features heavily corbeled chimneys (figure 50).



Figure 50: Unsurveyed House at 1416 Hauser Road

The George Washington Bowman House (figure 51, SR 253, Siloam Road) has undergone extensive alterations, including vinyl siding, replacement windows, and modern porch materials.



Figure 51: George Washington Bowman House

National Register Evaluation

Integrity

The Charlie Dobbins House retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association as a rural farm house associated with a milling operation. However, the introduction of vinyl siding, the replacement of original windows, and the replacement of the porch posts and loss of porch brackets detracts significantly from the house's integrity of workmanship, materials, and design. Particularly, removing the porch post brackets has eliminated the delicate framing around the openings between the porch posts that contributed significantly to the house's original romantic, Italianate feel.

Criteria Evaluations

The Charlie Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for an association with an event or broad pattern of history. The house retains its visual association with the mill, and its outbuildings communicate its association with agriculture. However, the house does not retain fields or the open land associated with farming, and its original owner Charles Dobbins, appears to have been associated with the mill only until about 1890. The Kapp House, adjacent to Kapp's Mill, communicates a stronger association with that mill because its ownership ties were longer and stronger, and the Kapp House retains considerably more architectural integrity.

The Charlie Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B. No one associated with the house was a significant figure in history.

The Charlie Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The Charlie Dobbins House has lost significant components, including original siding, original windows, and porch materials. The loss of the porch post brackets eliminated the romantic profile between the porch posts, greatly detracting from the original design. While it retains features of an Italianate I-house, it is no longer a good or intact example of the type or style. Several other examples in the county are substantially more intact and thus better examples, including the Kapp House, the Bunker House at Haystacks Farm, and the Hauser House at Horne Creek State Historic Site.

The Charlie Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D because it has not yielded nor is it likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

Evaluation: Cleveland Dobbins House

Resource Name	Cleveland Dobbins House
HPO Survey Site Number	SR 544
Street Address	167 Horse Haven Lane
PIN	4974-00-84-4371
Construction Dates	Ca. 1907
NRHP Recommendation	Not Eligible



Description

The Cleveland Dobbins House is situated on a hillside overlooking the Dobbins Mill. The yard immediately around the house is relatively level with a hillside rising to the northeast, behind the house. In front of the house, to the southwest, the house and mill are separated by mature trees and brush and a steep, cliff-like bank. Originally, the hillside sloped more gently down from the Cleveland Dobbins House to the mill, but the mill's owner blasted and excavated a cut into the hill to create a more level area for expanding the mill's operations.

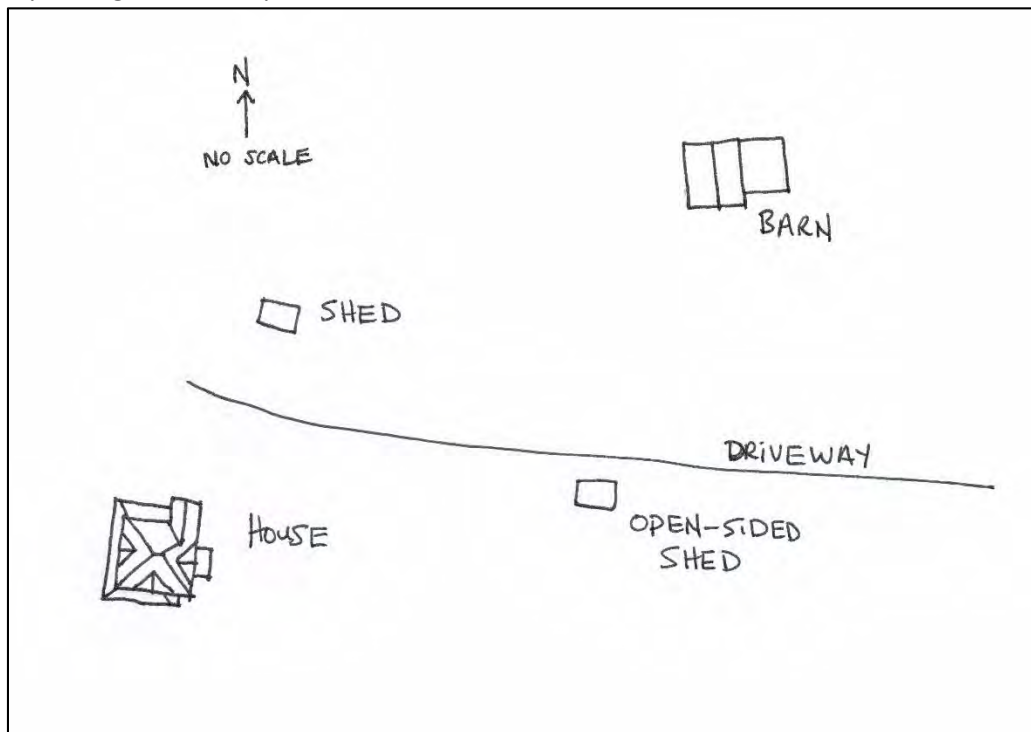


Figure 52: Cleveland Dobbins House, site plan

The house is a one-story, pyramidal-roof cottage with roof gables on the front and side roof slopes and a small gabled-ell extending from the rear elevation (figure 53). Vinyl siding covers the exterior, and the windows are one-over-one and simulated-light, six-over-six vinyl replacement units.



Figure 53: Cleveland Dobbins House, south elevation

A porch wraps around the north, west, and south elevations and retains turned posts. The balustrade is solid and is covered in vinyl siding, but based on the 1981 survey photographs, it was originally solid sheathing of either flush boards or beaded board.

The front (south) elevation is three-bays wide with a single-leaf front door occupying the middle bay. This door is original and has two arched, glazed panels above molded panels (figure 54). The porch steps feature stone cheek walls.



Figure 54: Cleveland Dobbins House, south elevation detail

The west elevation has two symmetrical bays (figure 55). The east elevation includes a shed-roof bathroom addition (figure 56). The north elevation is occupied by the rear ell, and a back door that opens onto the wrap-around porch (figure 57).



Figure 55: Cleveland Dobbins House, west elevation



Figure 56: Cleveland Dobbins House, east elevation



Figure 57: Dobbins House, north elevation

The porch stands on an open pier foundation of modern concrete block. Where the foundation of the main block is visible, it is a combination of concrete block and brick piers. Corbeled brick chimneys punctuate the side roof slopes. Original pressed metal shingles cover the roof.

Inside, the house retains a single original mantelpiece (figure 58), which is a simple but well-executed and finely finished post-and-lintel configuration. The other mantelpieces have been removed, and two of the four fireplaces have been walled-over. A wall between the kitchen and the rest of the house has been removed, as has a portion of the wall in the center hall toward the rear of the house. The front half of the hallway has been altered by the enclosure of the staircase with a wall and door. Interior walls have been covered with sheetrock.



Figure 58: Cleveland Dobbins House, mantelpiece

Uphill, north of and behind the house, is a small, plywood shed (figure 59). Farther west is a gable-roof barn with vertical wood siding and shed wings (figure 60). Another small, open-sided shed is located to the west of the house along the drive way (figure 61).



Figure 59: Cleveland Dobbins House, plywood shed



Figure 60: Cleveland Dobbins House, barn



Figure 61: Cleveland Dobbins, open-sided shed

History and Architectural Context

As the twentieth-century dawned in Surry County, builders and owners began employing a different house form: the one-story, center-hall, double-pile house. These cottages are not nearly as common as the two-story I-house in Surry County, but they were popular. Like an I-house, this one-story dwelling had four rooms, but in this arrangement, all four rooms are on the first floor, with two on each side of a center hall. The more modest-in-appearance cottage could be decorated with either Queen Anne sawnwork and spindlework or with more classically inspired columns. The roof for this house was almost always a pyramidal high hip or a truncated hip.

While the I-house maximized the height and width visible to passersby, thus presenting the biggest, boldest, most imposing façade possible, the one-story, four-room house presented a considerably smaller façade to the road. This may reflect a growing confidence among the county's farmers during the first two decades of the twentieth century: as they became more financially secure, perhaps they became less inclined to use the broad façade of the I-house to announce their wealth and social standing to the world.

These houses were built during a period in which the county's tobacco economy was booming. According to Felix Tharpe, whose family moved to Surry County from Wilkes County because farmers could make significantly more money farming tobacco in Surry County than in Wilkes, tobacco in the 1910s and 1920s in Surry was exceptionally lucrative. This is borne out in the large number of log tobacco barns that still remain in Surry County, and is especially noticeable when comparing the number of extant farm buildings and farm houses between Wilkes and Surry counties: Surry obviously enjoyed tobacco prosperity.

Although the Cleveland Dobbins House was built by a milling family, rather than a tobacco family, the county's early twentieth century prosperity and tastes were not limited to tobacco farmers.

This land appears to have been part of the land Thomas and Charles Dobbins bought in the early 1880s. Oral tradition suggests this house belonged to Cleveland Dobbins. In 1900, Cleveland lived at home with his parents, Thomas and Della Dobbins, and his six siblings, including a brother named Nathan.

In 1910, Cleveland and his wife of three years, Sallie, were living very close to Cleveland's father, Thomas. Cleveland is enumerated as a farmer. Thomas' household still included Nathan, then working as a miller. Presumably, Cleveland and Sallie built this house around the time of their 1907 marriage, and it is likely that they farmed tobacco although no historic farm buildings remain on the property.

By 1920, Thomas, Nathan, and Cleveland were also still living close together, but in separate households. Cleveland and Nathan had changed roles, and Cleveland was now a miller while Nathan was a farmer. Again, it is likely that Nathan was now raising tobacco. The 1930 census suggests that Nathan had moved away and Cleveland was now the sole miller.

Cleveland Dobbins died in 1934, and Sallie Dobson Dobbins died in 1944. During the mid-twentieth century, the house was used as rental property, and eventually fell into disrepair. In 1979, John and Darlene Cockerham purchased it, and they repaired and updated it significantly.²³

Unlike the Charlie Dobbins House across the road, the Cleveland Dobbins House remained in the Dobbins family for many years and thus, remained associated with the mill until at least the time of Cleveland's death in 1934.

Comparable Examples

Examples of this house type are not as abundant as I-houses, but several were found across Surry County (figures 62-64). All have been altered in ways similar to the Cleveland Dobbins House with vinyl siding and replacement windows.

²³ Charles and Doris Wilmoth to John and Darlene Cockerham, March 23, 1979, Surry County Deed Book 337, page 261.



Figure 62: Unsurveyed house at 241 Judsville School Road, with vinyl siding, replacement windows, new porch and roof materials, missing chimneys



Figure 63: Unsurveyed House at approximately 182 Miller Gap Road, close to Music Lane, with vinyl siding, original windows, and original shingles



Figure 64: Riley Faulk House (SR 179) at 1218 Quaker Church Road, with vinyl siding, added balcony, and replacement windows

National Register Evaluation

Integrity

The Cleveland Dobbins House retains integrity of location, setting, and feeling as a rural house. Because a steep cut was made in the hillside between the house and the mill, and because that cut has become densely wooded, the Cleveland Dobbins House has lost its integrity of association with the Dobbins Mill, and its integrity of setting and feeling as it relates to the historic mill association has been impacted negatively. The house has also lost integrity of design, materials, and workmanship because it has been covered in vinyl siding, vinyl replacement windows have been installed, the interior floorplan has been significantly altered, and interior woodwork, including three of four mantelpieces, have been lost.

Criteria Evaluations

The Cleveland Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for an association with an event or broad pattern of history. The house's primary historical association with the mill building has been lost through the cut in the hill below the house and the wooded area now standing between the house and the mill. The two buildings are effectively physically separated, unlike the historic condition, and their former visual connection severed. Furthermore, design and material changes both to the house and mill further obscure each building's historic appearance and thus the historic association between the two buildings.

The Cleveland Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B. No owners of the Cleveland Dobbins House are known to be of historical significance.

The Cleveland Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. Changes to the house, including vinyl siding, replacement windows, and significant interior alterations, have made the house ineligible for the National Register as a good example of an early-twentieth-century house.

The Cleveland Dobbins House is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D because it has not yielded nor is it likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

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