



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

October 29, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kate Husband
Office of Human Environment
NCDOT Division of Highways

FROM: Ramona M. Bartos *RMB for Ramona M. Bartos*

SUBJECT: Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report, Replace Bridge 11 on NC 143B over Long Creek, WBS No. 45360.1.23, Graham County, ER 13-1818

Thank you for your submittal of August 23, 2013, transmitting the above survey report. We apologize for the delay in our response.

For the purpose of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we concur with the report's recommendation that the following properties are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under the cited criteria and that the proposed National Register boundaries appear appropriate:

- **Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant** (GH 0031): Criterion A for industry and Criterion C for architecture; and,
- **Wilson House** (GH 0126): Criterion C for architecture.

We also concur that at this time, barring additional information to the contrary, the **Milltown Road Housing** (GH 0016) is *not* eligible for listing in the National Register due to the lack of historic integrity. **Bridge No. 11**, rebuilt in 1981 with a new superstructure, was determined *not* eligible in the 2005 NCDOT Historic Bridge Inventory.

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 renee.gledhill-earley@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT, mfurr@ncdot.gov
Clay Griffith, Acme Preservation Services, cgriffith.acme@gmail.com

**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT
Intensive Survey and Evaluation**

**Replace Bridge No. 11 on NC 143B over Long Creek
Graham County
North Carolina Department of Transportation
WBS No. 45360.1.23**

**Prepared for:
Human Environment Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1583**

**Prepared by:
Acme Preservation Services, LLC
825C Merrimon Avenue, #345
Asheville, NC 28804
828-281-3852**

June 2013

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Clay Griffith, Principal Investigator
Acme Preservation Services, LLC

Date

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

Date

Replace Bridge No. 11 on NC 143B over Long Creek, Graham County
North Carolina Department of Transportation
WBS No. 45360.1.23

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to replace Bridge No. 11 on NC 143B/SR 1127 (Snowbird Road) over Long Creek in Graham County. The project area is located southwest of the county seat of Robbinsville. The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed project is delineated as 300 feet from either end of the bridge and 75 feet to either side from the center line.

NCDOT staff architectural historians identified two previously recorded properties located in the general project area in the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's (HPO) survey files and recommended that an intensive historic resources survey and evaluation be conducted for the project. NCDOT contracted with Acme Preservation Services, LLC (APS) in October 2012 to complete an intensive historic architectural resources survey and evaluation within the APE for the subject project. Architectural historian Clay Griffith conducted the field survey on April 18, 2013, photographing and mapping resources within the APE, and authored the report. Primary source investigation included research at the Graham County Courthouse, Pack Memorial Library in Asheville, and the Western Office of Archives and History in Asheville.

The survey identified five developed properties within the APE including the previously recorded Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant (GH 31). Three of the remaining four properties did not meet the minimum criteria for National Register significance, but the fourth, the Wilson House (GH 126), was documented in the report and evaluated for National Register eligibility. One additional previously recorded property—Milltown Road Housing (GH 16), which lies just outside the APE—was recorded and evaluated due to its historical associations with Bemis Plant.

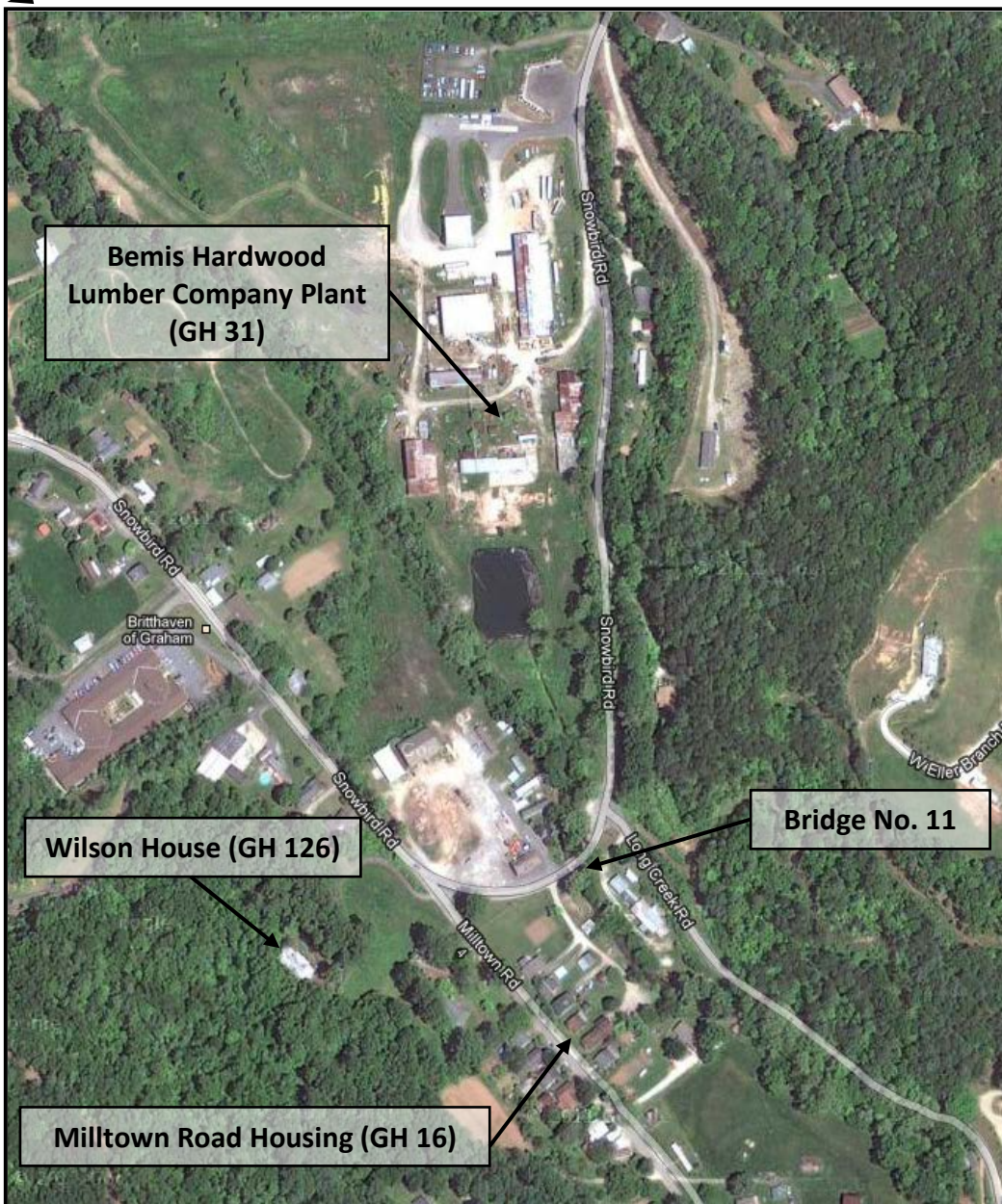
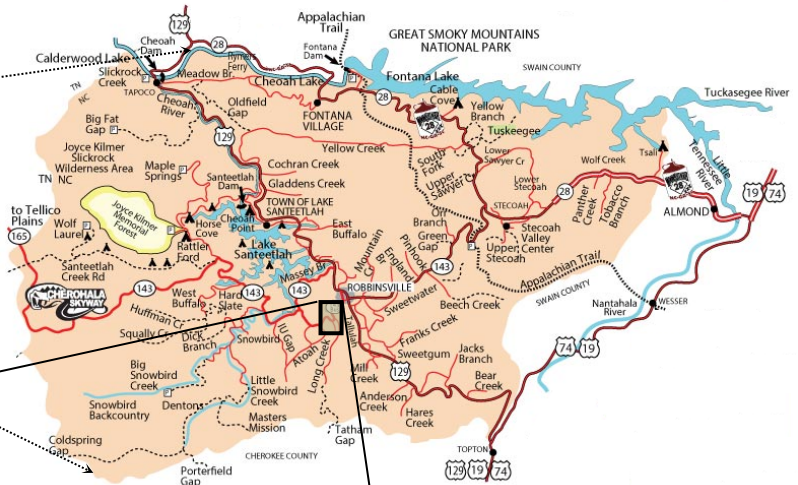
Two of the evaluated resources are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The office of the Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company was found to be eligible under Criteria A and C as a locally significant example of Craftsman-influenced architecture and the only intact surviving structure on the site of the important Bemis Lumber Company, which was one of the most significant industries in Graham County from 1926 through the 1960s. The ca. 1948 Wilson House at 4 Milltown Road was determined to be eligible under Criterion C as a locally significant example of Colonial Revival style residential design.

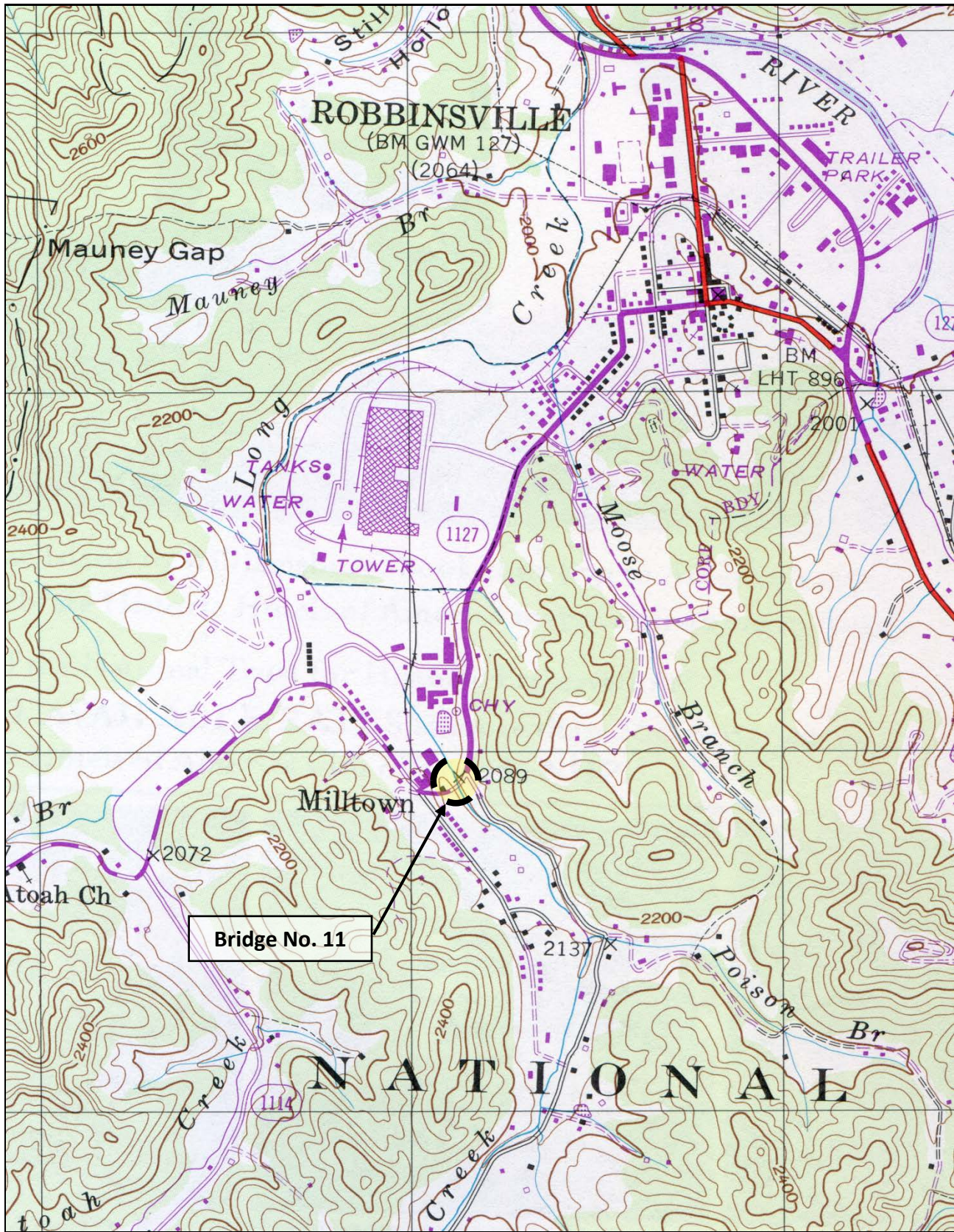
APS conducted the survey and prepared this report in accordance with the provisions of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 60; 36 CFR Part 800; and the NCDOT document entitled *Historic Architectural Resources: Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines* (2003). This property evaluation meets the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service.

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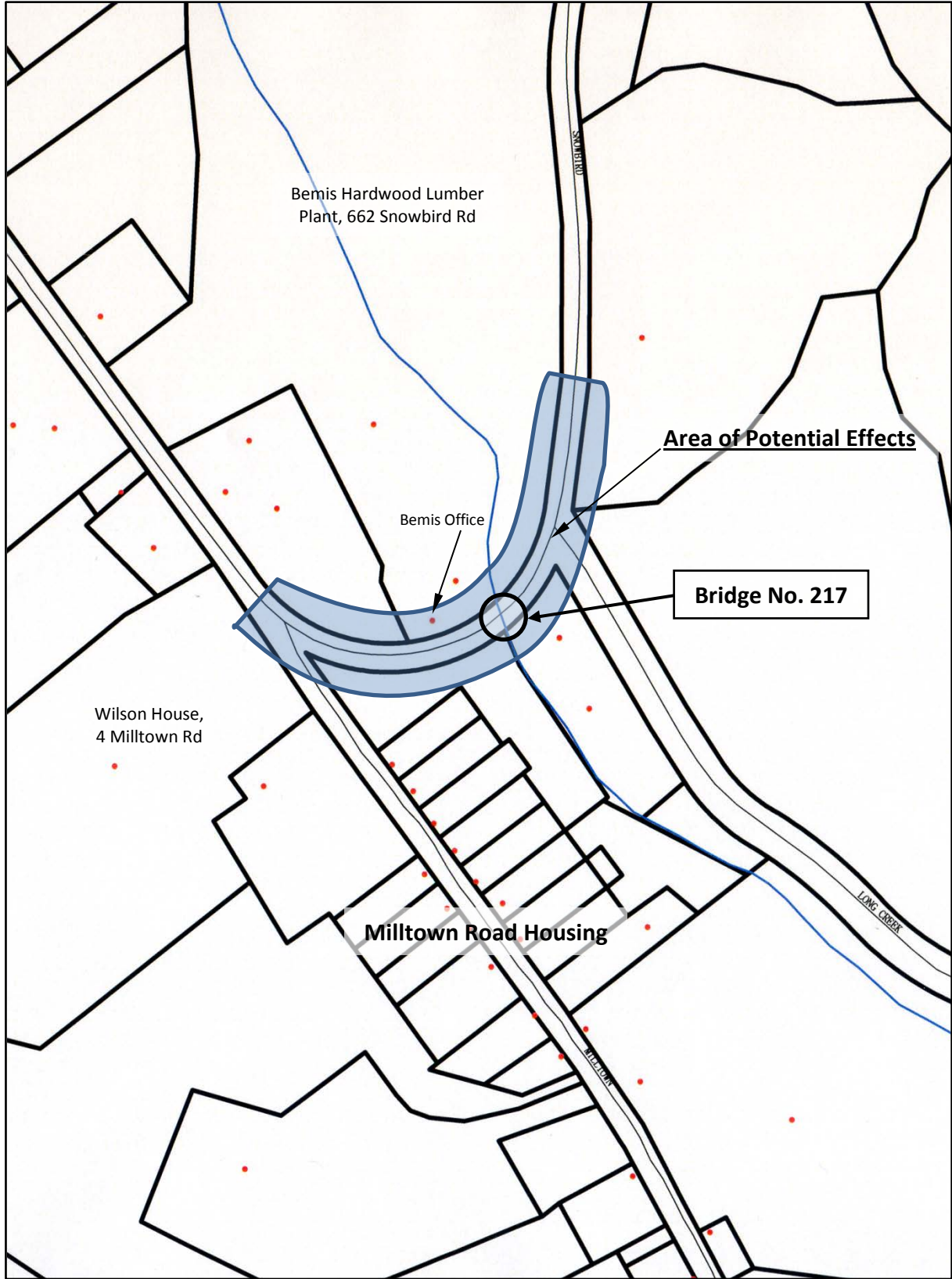
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I. Project Location Maps





Location Map – Robbinsville, NC USGS topographic quadrangle map (2000)



Area of Potential Effects (APE) Map [Base map: Graham County GIS]

II. Introduction

The project area is located in the central part of Graham County just southwest of Robbinsville, the county seat. Bridge No. 11 is situated in a wide U-shaped curve on Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127). The bridge, which spans Long Creek, is located approximately 120 feet southwest of Long Creek Road (SR 1110) and approximately 275 feet northeast of Milltown Road (SR 1133).

The Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed bridge replacement project is delineated at 300 feet from either end of the bridge and 75 feet to either side of the center line of the road. The APE encompasses one undeveloped and five developed tax parcels, four of which contain primary resources over fifty years of age. The majority of resources within the APE are historically associated with Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant, which stands to the northeast of the bridge.

The general project area is characterized as a former industrial area lying to the southwest of Robbinsville. The area was dominated by the Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company, whose property, plant, worker housing, and recreational facilities occupied this section of town. A portion of the plant site has been converted for the county's waste management facility and several of the plant's buildings are in the process of being demolished. The company's worker housing was constructed on Snowbird Road and Milltown Road to the south and west of the plant.



**Bridge No. 11 on NC 143B/SR 1127 (Snowbird Road) over Long Creek, view to southwest
[Bemis Lumber Company Office at right]**



**View northeast from Bridge No. 11 along Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127);
Long Creek Road (SR 1110) at right**



View northwest from Bridge No. 11 along Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127)



**Milltown Road Housing (GH 16), view southeast along Milltown Road (SR 1133)
from Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127)**



View northeast to Bridge No. 11 from Milltown Road (SR 1133)

III. Methodology

The field survey was conducted on April 18, 2013, and all properties within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) were photographed and recorded. Basic research on the project area was conducted by consulting the Graham County tax records, Register of Deeds office, and at Pack Memorial Library in Asheville. Robbinsville was never covered by Sanborn maps, but USGS topographic quadrangle maps dating back to 1935 were reviewed. Graham County has a thorough GIS system, but it is not publicly available through online sources. J. R. Rodgers, Director of Mapping for Graham County Emergency Services, provided copies of GIS-based tax maps and aerials for the report. An index of property records available through website of the Graham County Tax Assessor was also searched.

A search of the State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) records revealed two previously recorded properties. The two properties were documented by Michael Ann Williams during a reconnaissance-level survey of Graham and Swain Counties in 1997-1998. The Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant (GH 31) is located on the northwest side of Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127) and on both sides of Long Creek within the APE. The Milltown Road Housing (GH 16) is a small collection of worker housing constructed by the Bemis company on both sides of Milltown Road (SR 1133) to the southwest of Bridge No. 11. The Milltown Road House lies just outside the APE for the project. In addition to the two previously recorded properties, four additional properties within the APE were identified and recorded during the field survey. Three of these properties did not meet the minimum criteria for National Register significance, but the fourth, the Wilson House (GH 126), is evaluated in this report.

IV. Historical Background

Since its creation Graham County has struggled with its remote location in the far western end of the state and the lack of improved transportation routes. Organization of the county had little effect on economic conditions, which was highly restricted by geographic factors. The sparsely populated county has less farm land than all but Dare County in North Carolina, and approximately 85 percent of the county is forested. In the late nineteenth century there were few merchants, but a number of small mills, most of which doubled as grain and saw mills, were scattered around the county. With its lack of outside trade, the heavily forested county supported small subsistence farms that produced a wide variety of crops.¹

Due to its remote location, lack of developed transportation routes, and abundance of hardwood forest, logging became the county's chief industry beginning in the nineteenth century. Lumber

¹ Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina*, Vol. III (Raleigh, NC: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1961), 1323-1332. Graham County Heritage Book Committee, *Graham County Heritage, North Carolina* (Robbinsville, NC: Graham County Historical Society, Bill and Wilma Milsaps, and Don Mills, Inc., 1992), iv (hereinafter cited as *Graham County Heritage*).

companies first cut only the best white pine, yellow poplar, chestnut, cherry, and basswood, and the trees had to be within easy distance of a navigable stream. River drives began in the 1880s and continued through the 1890s, when rail transportation became more reliable and efficient. One of the first saw mills in the county was operated by John Barker on Long Creek.²

Robbinsville grew slowly following incorporation in the late nineteenth century. The arrival of the first outside lumber companies—Belding, Whiting, and others—necessitated the construction of several hotels. The population was only 200 in 1915, but began to grow in the late 1920s. The Bemis Lumber Company purchased the Graham County Railway in 1926 and operated a connecting line to the Southern Railway at Topton in Cherokee County. The company constructed a large plant and many houses for its workers. Around the same time the town installed a water system and the county's first hard-surfaced road was opened between Robbinsville and Topton. By 1928, the Bemis Lumber Company powered the town's electric light system from its plant. Robbinsville's population climbed to 500 by the end of the decade.³

Little diversification of the county's economy has occurred in the late twentieth century, and Graham County remains relatively isolated from the rest of the region. The remote location and sparse population, however, attract a good number of tourists and outdoor recreation enthusiasts drawn to Graham County's natural and scenic attractions. With a significant amount of the county given over to national forests and conservation areas, Graham County continues to be defined largely by its landscape.

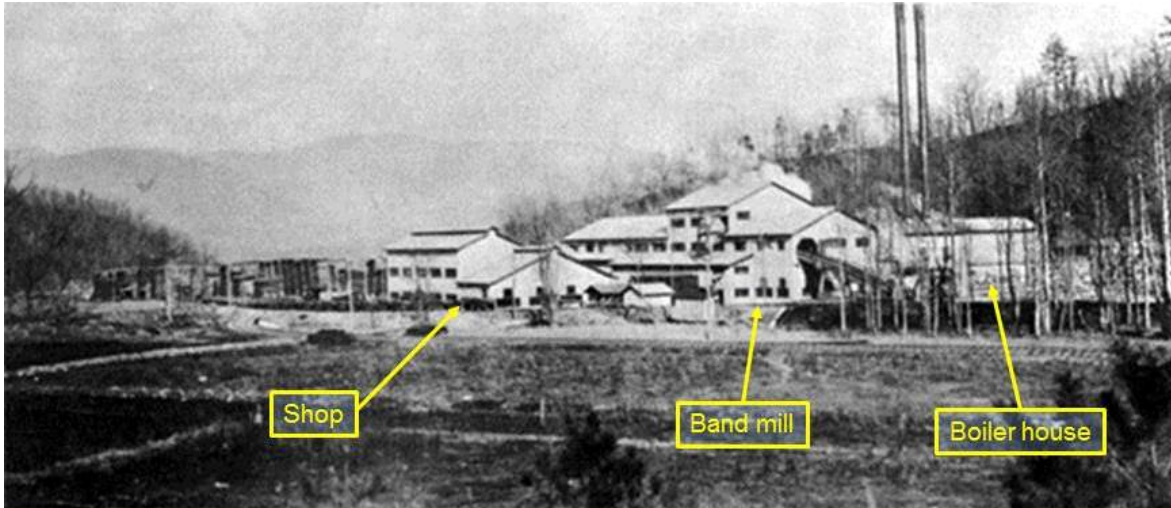
² *Graham County Heritage*, iv, 7-8. *Graham County Centennial, 1872-1972* (Robbinsville, NC: Graham County Centennial 1972, Inc., 1972), 91 (hereinafter referred to as *Graham County Centennial*).

³ *Graham County Centennial*, 36-38.

V. Property Descriptions and Evaluations

Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant (GH 31)

662 Snowbird Road, Robbinsville vic. [Parcel #5660-11-12-0040]



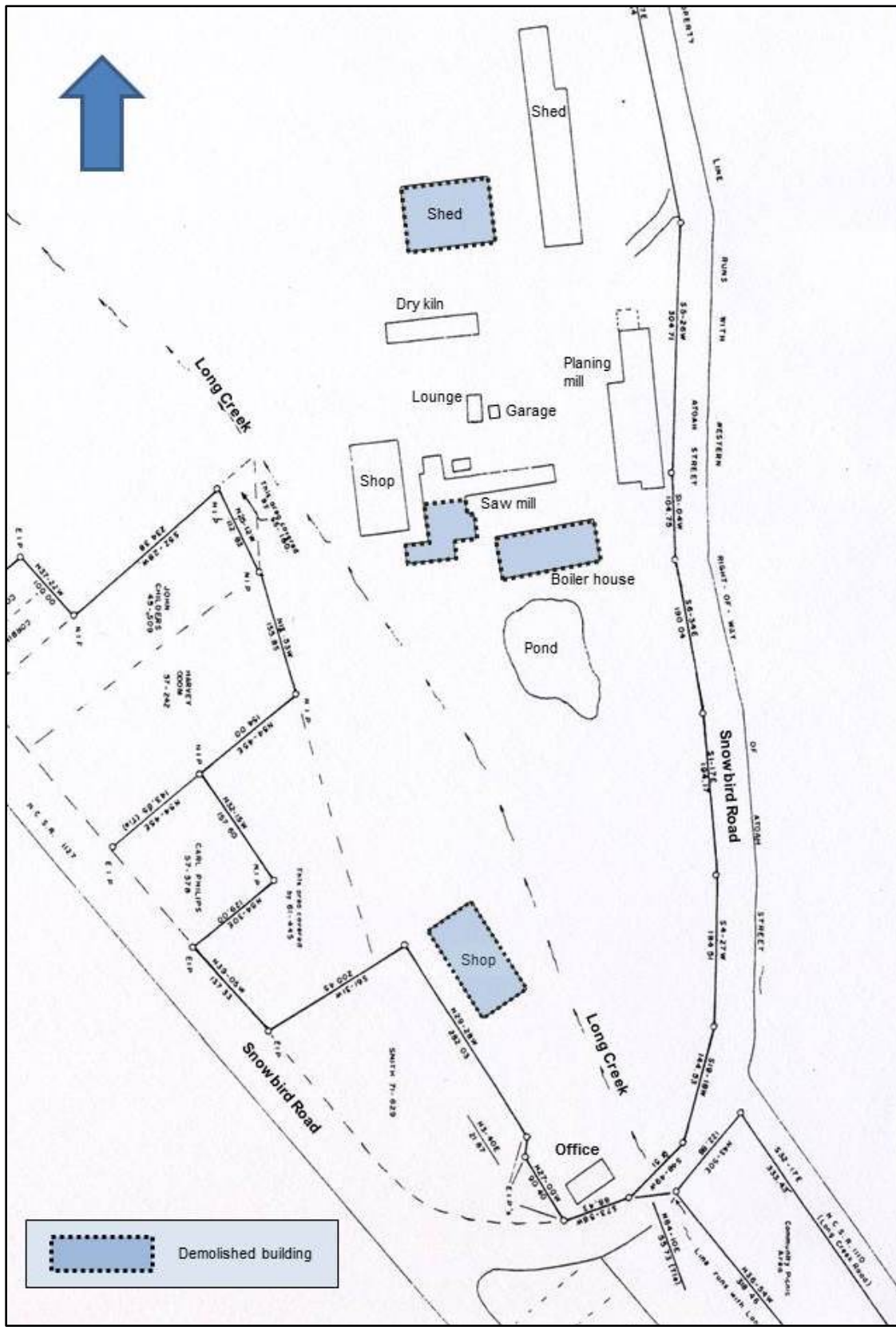
Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant, 1927, overall view to northeast across Long Creek

(Source: John B. Veach, "Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company" in *Graham County Centennial*, p. 99)

The Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant occupies a relatively flat 36-acre tract lying on both sides of Long Creek and on the west side of Snowbird Road. The north end of the property, beyond the 36-acre tract, was sold or leased to Graham County around 2000 for use as a waste management facility. Bemis established its plant here in 1926 and the complex expanded through the twentieth century. In 1967 a fire destroyed the band mill at the center of plant, and it was immediately replaced with a modern band mill. In recent years the replacement building and the original boiler house, with its distinctive twin chimneys, have been cleared from the site.



Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant, 2013, view to northwest



Site Plan – Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant (GH 31), 662 Snowbird Road

Among the surviving buildings on the Bemis plant site, one of the more intact structures is the tall two-story shop, which was erected in the earliest years of the plant. The frame building is covered with corrugated metal siding and has a standing-seam metal roof. The main gable roof and gable-roof south wing are surmounted by narrow clerestories. The building is accessed through sliding doors of corrugated metal and illuminated by multi-light fixed sash windows. Due to a lack of use, the shop is in only fair condition with boarded-over windows, patched siding, and deterioration at the sills.



Shop (1927), overall view to northwest

There appear to be six other buildings more than fifty years of age that are part of the plant property, along with several additional buildings less than fifty years of age. The largest of the early structures include the tall one-story, center-passage shed and the planing mill. Both structures have their long elevations running parallel to Snowbird Road. Vertical wood siding partially encloses the shed, which features a clerestory surmounting the standing-seam metal gable roof. The clerestory is covered with corrugated metal siding and the window openings are boarded over. The shed is supported on square wood posts with diagonal brackets. The planing mill to the south consists of a one-story, flat-roof, brick section connected to a taller front-gable frame section with an open frame shed at the north end. The frame sections are covered with corrugated metal siding and capped by standing-seam metal roofs. The brick block has a concrete slab roof. Due to a lack of use, the planing mill is somewhat deteriorated, particularly the brick section.



Shop (1927) (center), north elevation, view to southwest



Shed, overall view to northwest



Shed, west elevation, view to southwest



Planing mill, oblique rear view to northwest



Planing mill, north end, oblique rear view to southwest

Other plant-related buildings include several smaller structures scattered throughout the site. A one-story section of the saw mill remains in place at the center of the site, although the main part of the structure has been removed. The remaining portion is constructed with a steel frame partially covered with corrugated metal siding. A tall one-story bay is located at the west end. A freestanding one-story gable-roof structure stands directly adjacent to the tall end bay on its north side. A two-bay, front-gable frame garage is located near the center of the plant. The garage has corrugated metal siding, a standing-seam metal roof, and single-leaf wood doors on the garage bays. Directly behind the garage is a one-story side-gable building described as the “lounge” on property surveys. Built in the 1970s, the concrete block lounge building exhibits a standing-seam metal roof, single-leaf doors, and two-over-two sash with horizontal muntins. To the north stands the dry kiln, added to the site in the 1940s. The tall, one-story, three-bay building is constructed of concrete block and features a standing-seam metal roof with a low clerestory, vinyl siding in the gable ends, a single gabled dormer, two 1-story shed additions on the south elevation, and three open bays on the north elevation. Two sliding metal screens remain in place to cover one of the bay openings. A small frame storage building is located on the east side of the kiln. The front-gable storage shed displays board-and-batten siding, standing-seam metal roof, exposed rafter tails, and a single-leaf door on the north elevation.

Another large metal-frame shed on the property appears to have been built since 2000, possibly replacing an earlier structure. The building has a low-pitched gable roof, metal siding, an overhanging eave on the east side, and central garage bays accessed through metal overhead doors.



Remaining section of the saw mill, overall view to northwest



Remaining section of the saw mill, view to west



Garage (front) and Lounge (rear), overall view to northwest



Dry Kiln, view to southwest; storage building in front of kiln

The company office stands apart from the complex of buildings that make up the portion of the property where the saw mill operated and manufacturing functions took place. Located on the west side of Long Creek near Snowbird Road at the southern end of the property, the one-and-a-half-story brick office is one of the most intact buildings on the plant site. Another shop building, also located on the west side of the creek, has been demolished.



Bemis Company Office, 662 Snowbird Road, façade, view to northwest

The Bemis Company office is a one-and-a-half-story brick structure with a clipped-gable hip roof accented by flared eaves and a large hip-roof dormer. Built in 1927, the office is domestic in appearance and scale and blends elements of the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles. It rests on a poured concrete foundation. The symmetrical three-bay façade is dominated by the central dormer and recessed entrance bay, which is sheltered by a front-gable porch. The entry is composed of a single-leaf door flanked by attenuated sidelights. The door exhibits a large center light framed by narrow border lights and square corner lights. The original screened door with turned vertical members remains in place. The entry porch features an arched spandrel, diagonal tongue-and-groove sheathing in the gable end, and carved rafter tails. It is supported by square wood posts on brick cheek walls with cast-concrete caps. The entrance bay is flanked by single four-light fixed-sash windows, although the window on the east side appears to be a replacement. The dormer contains a replacement three-part casement window. The end bays of the façade hold paired four-over-one double-hung sash, and the window openings are framed with rowlock-course brick sills. The side and rear elevations display single and paired four-over-one windows, and the gable ends and dormer are covered with hexagonal asphalt shingles. Carved rafter tails and decorative purlin brackets are visible around the eaves the house. The interior was not available for inspection.



Bemis Company Office, oblique front view to north



Bemis Company Office, east elevation, view to southwest



Bemis Company Office, entrance detail



Bemis Company Office, west elevation, view to east along Snowbird Road

The owner of the property has allowed five mobile home trailers to be placed on the property near the office. The trailers are situated between Long Creek and a paved driveway that passes on the east side of the office building. A small pre-fabricated metal shed is located to the rear of the office. The area in front of the office is paved, with a row of wooden bollards providing a barrier between the edge of the roadway and the narrow space in front of the building.



Mobile homes to east of Bemis Company Office, view north along driveway



Mobile homes to east of Bemis Company Office, view to northeast

The Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company established a presence in Graham County beginning in 1924, when Harry C. Bemis purchased lands owned by the Buffalo Realty Company, Carolina Railway and Lumber Company, and George R. Cottrelle. Originally from Pennsylvania, Bemis went into the lumber business in 1903, and began operating a saw mill at Bemis, West Virginia in 1905. Bemis acquired additional land from the Whiting Manufacturing Company in 1924. From Whiting's extensive holdings in Graham County, Bemis purchased the Big Snowbird area, the Gennett Lumber Company claimed the Santeetlah watershed, and Champion Paper took the West Buffalo watershed. Bemis and the Champion company later agreed to a swap whereby Bemis owned all of the hardwoods and Champion owned all the hemlocks in the Big Snowbird and West Buffalo watersheds.⁴

Mr. Bemis purchased the outstanding stock of the Graham County Railroad Company, renewed its charter, and completed the line between Robbinsville and Topton. The first locomotive arrived in Robbinsville in 1925, and the company continued to carry freight until the 1970s, when service was discontinued. The Bemis Lumber Company officially incorporated in the State of Delaware in April 1926. It was succeeded by the Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company, which incorporated in North Carolina on January 1, 1937.⁵

The Bemis Company began construction of its plant on Long Creek in 1926, and the first lumber was sawn at the band mill in August 1927. Most of the machinery and equipment for the plant were shipped to Robbinsville from Bemis' saw mill in West Virginia. The plant was steam powered, with a centrally-located brick boiler house supplying the power. The company prided itself on the quality of its hardwoods, which were among the finest in the country and in demand from North Carolina's furniture manufacturers. The fully modern plant wasted no part of the logs brought to the mill: sawing lumber, chipping the slabs and edges for shipment to the Champion paper mill in Canton, and burning the bark and sawdust in the boiler house and dry kilns.⁶

The Bemis Lumber Company's first officers were H. C. Bemis, president; L. C. Bemis, vice president and general manager; L. A. Dindinger, secretary and treasurer; and L. W. Wilson, assistant secretary and treasurer. E. R. Frederick acted as the mill superintendent. R. H. Montony was the woods superintendent, and R. J. Humes was the yard superintendent. Alfred V. Anderson served as superintendent of railroad construction. Following the death of both H. C. Bemis and his son L. C. Bemis in 1935, the company was left without its senior management and facing significant financial challenges. John Bemis Veach (1899-1995), nephew of H. C. Bemis, subsequently president of the company, and L. W. Wilson was promoted to vice president and general manager.⁷

⁴ *Graham County Centennial*, 99-100.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 97 and 99.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 100. Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 393-394.

⁷ *Graham County Centennial*, 100. Forest History Society website (http://www.foresthistory.org/ead/Veach_John_and_Veach_Jr_John.html#d0e129, accessed April 2013).

Prior to World War II, the Bemis Lumber Company accounted for almost all of the industry in Graham County. The company supplied electric power to the town of Robbinsville, provided housing for its employees, operated a commissary, and offered a community picnic ground. During its 64 years of operation, it is estimated that Bemis produced 550 million board feet of hardwood lumber.⁸

After years of stability and prosperity, changes began occurring the 1960s that signaled shifts in the economy, manufacturing industry, and ultimately the fortunes of the company. Beginning in the 1960s, the company sold off its employee housing. L. W. Wilson succeeded Veach as president for a few years prior to Mr. Wilson's death in 1965. In March 1967, a fire destroyed the band mill at the plant, which was quickly replaced by a modern, electric band mill. The plant largely abandoned its steam power production. The timber holdings in Graham County that supported the mill were sold at auction in 1971, making the plant dependent on timber from the US Forest Service. New ownership acquired the mill operation in 1972, when the facility was purchased by Whitewater, Inc. The plant transferred between new owners several times during the 1980s before it was closed and sold in 1990.⁹

Evaluation

The physical remnants of the Bemis plant present an incomplete picture of the company's importance in Graham County's industrial history. Along with the hydroelectric plants at Cheoah, Santeetlah, and Fontana, the Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant is one of only a few surviving industrial sites from the first half of the twentieth century in Graham County. Several other manufacturing plants are located in the county, including the nearby Stanley Furniture plant, but these resources date from the second half of the century and offer little in the way of comparison to the Bemis plant.

The Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant was one of the most important industrial sites in Graham County for much of the twentieth century. From the beginning of construction in 1926 to the closing and sale of the plant in 1990, the Bemis Lumber Company had a tremendous impact on the local economy and offered employment to a significant number of people in the county. Due to its prominent role in the county's development through the twentieth century, the plant appears to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its significant contributions leading the local lumber industry. However, due to substantial changes at the plant site in the past two decades, only the Bemis Company Office, located at 662 Snowbird Road immediately west of Bridge No. 11 over Long Creek, retains sufficient integrity to be eligible for the National Register.

The integrity of the site has been significantly compromised by the loss of the original saw mill, which was destroyed by fire in 1967. The brick boiler room and fuel house survived until recent

⁸ *Graham County Heritage*, 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

years, when the large stepped-gable buildings and recognizable twin chimneys were demolished. The band mill built to replace the original after the 1967 fire has also been demolished. The large shop building and long, center-passage shed are among the few relatively intact structures located within the core of the plant site that retain a good degree of integrity. Their ancillary role in the manufacturing process diminishes their significance. The office building, however, retains the highest degree of integrity and possesses the most direct association with the operation of the company.

Similarly, the Bemis Company Office is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C for architecture as a good, intact example of 1920s brick structure blending elements of the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles. Built on a domestic scale, the office is a one-and-a-half-story clipped gable hip-roof building with a symmetrical façade, flared eaves, carved rafter tails and decorative purlin brackets, recessed single-leaf entry with sidelights, and four-over-one double-hung sash. It retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Representing the organization and administration of the company, the office is able to successfully convey the period of significance of the Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company.

The Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant is not recommended as eligible under any other National Register criteria. None of the officers or employees of the company are known to have attained the level of prominence and significance required for National Register listing under Criterion B while fulfilling their responsibilities within the company. The property is unlikely to yield information about our past not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records, making it ineligible for the National Register under Criterion D.

Boundary Description and Justification

The proposed boundary of the Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant (GH 31) includes only the office building, which is located on the north side of Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127) just west of Bridge No. 11 over Long Creek. The office building is located at the southernmost point of the 36-acre tract [PIN 5660-11-12-0040] associated with the Bemis plant. The boundary is delineated along the edge of pavement of Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127) in front (south) of the office and approximately 10 feet beyond the edge of the building on its north, east, and west sides.

Due to the loss of other significant buildings associated with the company, the topography of the site, and the erection of the mobile homes near the office, the boundary is drawn to include only the office building as the most intact structure representative of the Bemis Lumber Company. The integrity of the plant has been severely compromised by the demolition of the saw mill and boiler house structures where much of the company's work took place. While the office building was built at a distance from the plant's operations, the placement of mobile home trailers to the east of the office on the banks of Long Creek further removes the building from the core of the plant site. The boundary, therefore, is limited to the area immediately surrounding the office, which is the only area of the site to retain sufficient historic integrity to be eligible for the National Register.



Bemis Hardwood Lumber Company Plant (GH 31)– Boundary Map for eligible office building
(Source: Graham County GIS)

Wilson House (GH 126)

4 Milltown Road, Robbinsville vic. [Parcel #5660-18-42-500]



Wilson House, 4 Milltown Road, oblique front view to southwest

The ca. 1948 Wilson House occupies a 9.5-acre wooded parcel on the southwest side of Snowbird Road at the west end of the APE. Set well back from the road on a sloping site, the house is reached by a winding, paved driveway. The house rests on an exposed basement that includes two single garage bays located under the south end of the house. The driveway, which loops in front of the house, terminates in a small parking area just outside the garages.

The one-story hip-roof dwelling is constructed with a brick veneer exterior and displays Colonial Revival-style decorative elements. The central block of the house is flanked by setback side wings, with a screened porch projecting from the north end of the north wing. A projecting bay on the south wing features a corner constructed of structural glass block. Two interior brick chimneys have corbelled caps. A decorative front gable marks the location of the central entrance, which is reached from an uncovered stoop that carries across the façade. Steps descend from the south side of the stoop and connect to the driveway near the garage. A wrought-iron balustrade on the stoop features a radial design at the center. The single-leaf entry door is framed by a classically-inspired and heavily-molded surround. A four-light transom tops the paneled wood door. The surround features chamfered pilasters, paneled entablature, and a stylized swan-necked open pediment. The entrance bay is flanked by large picture windows on the façade, but the remaining

windows on the main level are typically eight-over-eight and six-over-six double-hung sash. Four-light windows appear in groups to illuminate the basement.

According to tax records, the house appears to have been built around 1948 for Lionel and Bertha Wilson. Mr. Wilson, a long-time officer of the Bemis Lumber Company, purchased lots in Milltown from the Bemis company in 1935 and 1936 (Deeds 40/301 and 41/443). Wilson (1902-1965) worked for the company from 1927 until his death in 1965. He first served as assistant secretary and treasurer of the company before rising to vice president and general manager in 1935. He served in that capacity for nearly thirty years, but during the last few years of his tenure with the company, Wilson became president of the Bemis Lumber Company. He was active in business and civic affairs around Robbinsville including being a founding member and first president of the Robbinsville Lions Club, serving two terms from 1937 to 1939. Mr. Wilson died in 1965 and the house passed to his heirs.¹⁰



L. W. Wilson, President, Bemis Lumber Co.

The Wilson House is a relatively late example of the Colonial Revival style, which was one of the most popular architectural styles for residential construction in the first half of the twentieth century, and one that seems to predict the growing popularity of more modern residential forms. Although the decorative elements of the Wilson House suggest Colonial Revival style embellishments, the one-story hip-roof form points to the growing popularity of more modern materials and open floor plans. In a county dominated by the persistence of traditional building practices into the twentieth century, the Wilson House is a somewhat unique example of a Colonial Revival-style residence. As Michael Ann Williams noted in her architectural survey, Graham County had relatively few historic structures compared to others in the state. She attributed the relatively scarcity to its small size, lack of good agricultural land, low density of population, and high proportion of land owned by the federal government.¹¹

¹⁰ Graham County Register of Deeds Office. Census records and death certificate accessed through Ancestry.com (accessed May 2013). Robbinsville Lions Club website (<http://www.main.nc.us/graham/lions>; accessed May 2013).

¹¹ Michael Ann Williams, "Graham and Swain County Reconnaissance: Graham County" (Report, Western Office of the Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Asheville, NC, September 1998), 19-20.



Wilson House, façade, view to southwest



Wilson House, front entrance detail



Wilson House, oblique view to west

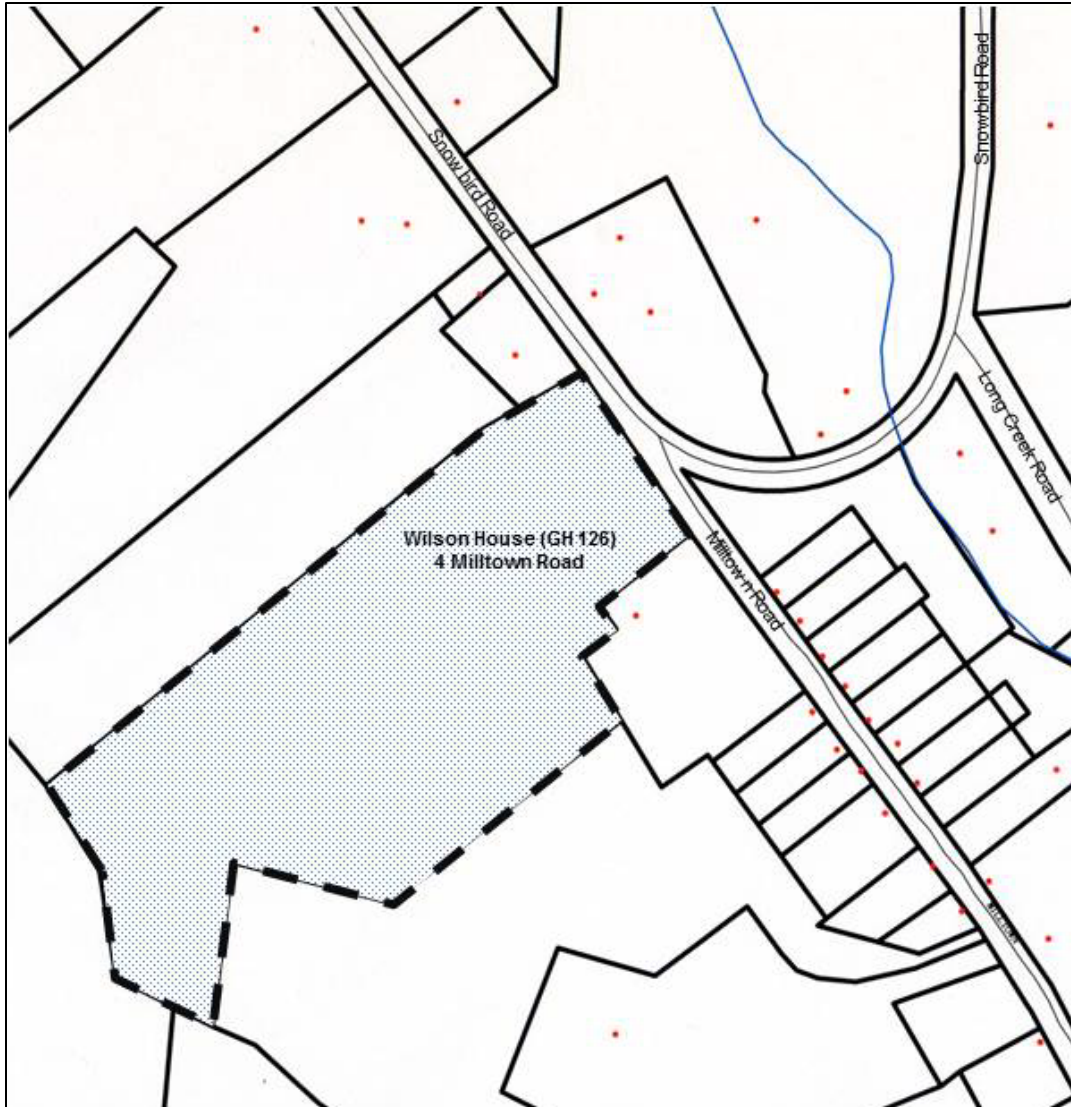


Wilson House, overall view to southwest

The Wilson House stands out among other residential properties in Graham County for its Colonial Revival style decorative elements. Among the other previously recorded resources in the county, only two other structures display similar features and stylistic references. The Graham County Courthouse (NR, 2007) is a one-story Neoclassical Revival style structure designed by the firm of Barber and McMurry from Knoxville, Tennessee. The courthouse, erected 1941-1942, is a T-plan building constructed of cut stone and includes a full lower story containing offices and the jail. The functional building is accented by a pedimented portico and native stone exterior walls. Tapoco Lodge, centerpiece of the Tapoco Lodge Historic District (NR, 2004), is a Colonial Revival-style brick building erected in 1930 by Alcoa, the Aluminum Company of America. The lodge, which consists of a hotel and separate dining hall, was designed to host employees and guests of Alcoa that were visiting the area or working nearby at the Alcoa-owned and –operated Cheoah Hydroelectric Plant. Beneath its ivy-covered walls, the two-and-a-half-story hotel is seven bays wide with five hip-roof dormers and features an aluminum-shingled side-gable roof, cornice returns, arched entrance, and eight-over-eight double-hung sash. The dining room building exhibits similar materials and finishes as the hotel although it is smaller in size.

The Wilson House appears to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as a rare and intact example of a Colonial Revival style residence in Graham County. The home of prominent local businessman, Lionel W. Wilson, general manager of the Bemis Lumber Company for thirty years, the house presents an uncommon application of the style on a residence in Graham County, which is dominated by vernacular log and frame houses and Craftsman-inspired dwellings. While the Colonial Revival style was one of the most popular residential styles across much of North Carolina, it appears sparingly in Graham County. The historical antecedents of Colonial Revival architecture likely held little sway with the county population, which would have been more attuned to the ideas of simplicity and natural materials associated with Craftsman houses or the economy of size and decoration emerging in Minimal Traditional and Ranch houses in the mid-twentieth century. The Wilson House blends a modest one-story hip-roof form with subtle Colonial Revival-style elements including setback side wings, decorative front gable, and a heavily molded entrance surround with an open pediment. The Wilson House is one of the most distinctive mid-twentieth century residences in Robbinsville.

The Wilson House is not recommended as eligible under any other National Register criteria. The property is not sufficiently associated with significant trends in Graham County to claim eligibility under Criterion A. As the home of Lionel W. Wilson, officer of the Bemis Lumber Company, it may be possible that the house is eligible under Criterion B for association with Mr. Wilson. There are, however, other surviving resources of the Bemis Lumber Company that also share association with Wilson's productive life, so it seems unlikely the house, where he spent the later years of his life, would be eligible as such. The property is unlikely to yield information about our past not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records, making it ineligible for the National Register under Criterion D.

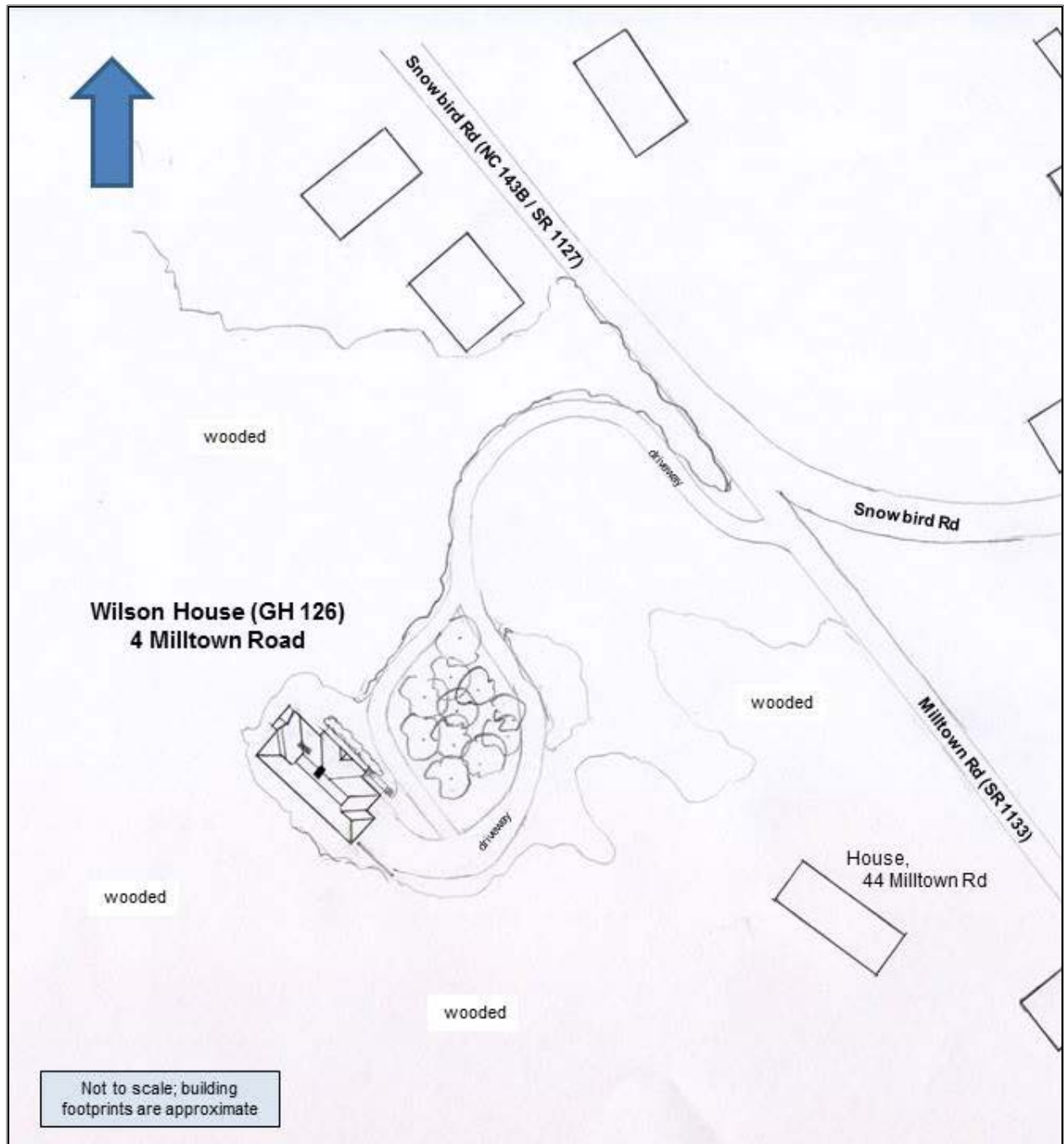


Wilson House, 4 Milltown Road – Boundary Map [PIN 5660-18-42-500]

(Source: Graham County GIS)

Boundary Description and Justification

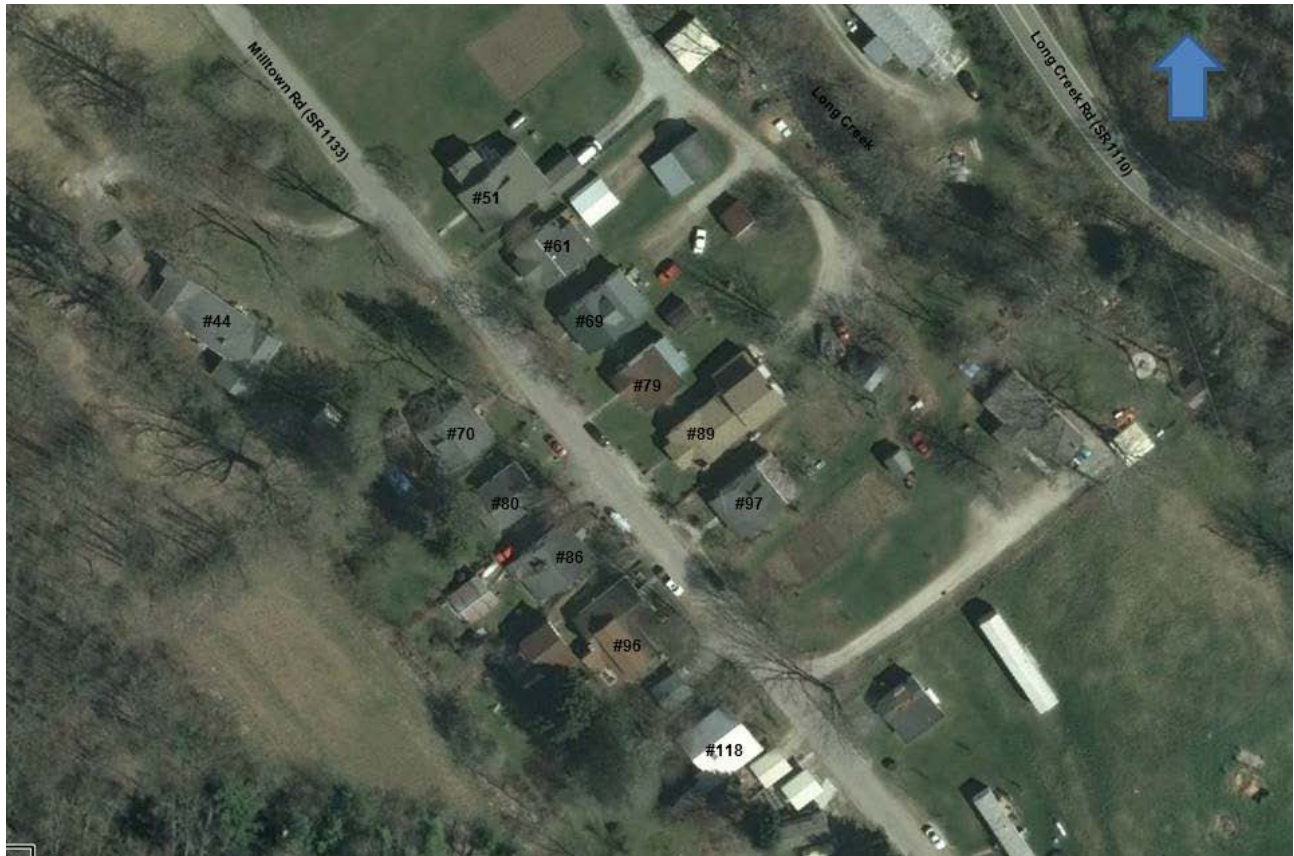
The proposed boundary of the Wilson House includes residual 9.5-acre tract [PIN 5660-18-42-500] associated with the house. The property lies on the southwest side of Snowbird Road (NC 143B/SR 1127) and contains the house, driveway, and landscape features that define its setting. The house is the only structure on the property. The boundary follows the edge of pavement on Snowbird and Milltown Roads along the northeast portion of the property and then continues along the legal property lines on the southeast, southwest, and northwest sides of the tax parcel.



Wilson House, 4 Milltown Road – Site Plan

Milltown Road Housing (GH 16)

Milltown Road, Robbinsville vic.

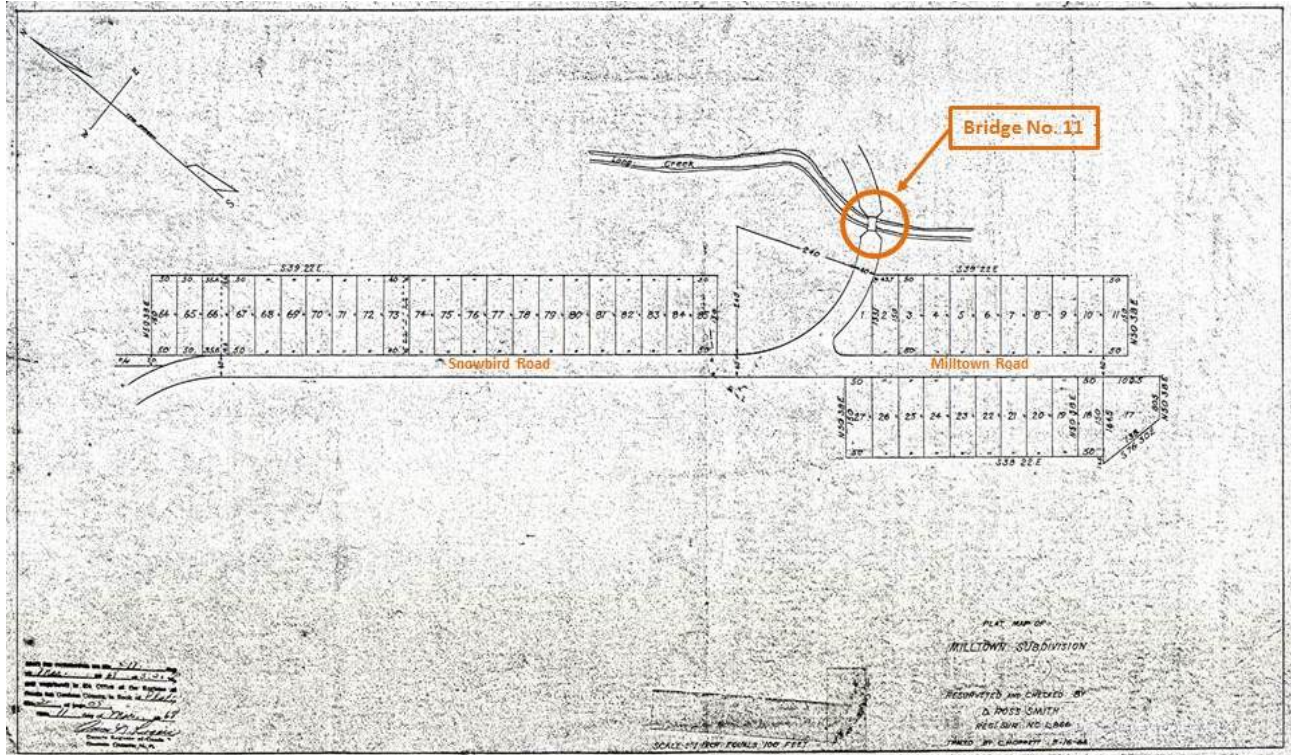


Bemis Lumber Company worker housing (#51-#118) on Milltown Road (SR 1133)

The Milltown Road Housing is a small collection of eleven houses constructed by the Bemis Lumber Company for its employees. Erected in the late 1920s on both sides of Milltown Road, this group of houses was part of the Milltown subdivision built by the company. Another group of houses, known as “Lower Milltown,” was located on the northeast side of Snowbird Road to the northwest of its intersection with Milltown Road, but even fewer houses remain standing in the Lower Milltown section. The Milldale subdivision of worker houses appears to have been located further southeast along Atoah Avenue, Walters Avenue, and Long Creek Road, although it is unclear how much of this development was built. The Bemis Company began selling the houses to its employees in the 1960s.

Michael Ann Williams recorded the Milltown Road Housing in July 1997, but did not include any specific description of the houses. The houses photographed by Ms. Williams are located 0.3-mile southeast of the intersection of Milltown and Snowbird Roads. These houses are almost uniformly one-story side-gable frame dwellings with attached shed-roof entry porches and three-over-one double-hung sash. It is possible that these nine houses recorded by Ms. Williams were part of the Milldale subdivision, and that Atoah Avenue, shown on the plat map of Milldale, was an extension

of present-day Milltown Road. The previously recorded resources differ in character from the group of eleven surviving Craftsman-influenced houses located nearer to the Snowbird Road intersection, which are confirmed to be part of the Milltown subdivision by a plat map and a long-time resident and property owner.¹²



“Plat Map of Milltown Subdivision” (Graham County Plat Book 2, page 38)

The cluster of houses on Milltown Road associated with the Bemis Lumber Company consist of eleven one- and one-and-a-half-story frame dwellings located between 51 Milltown Road and 118 Milltown Road. A twelfth house, located adjacent to #51 and standing nearest to the APE, was demolished around 2000. In addition, the house at 79 Snowbird Road was demolished and replaced with a new structure in 2011. Built on the footprint of the earlier residence, the new house rests on a concrete foundation and is covered with vinyl siding. Of the ten surviving resources over 50 years of age, most have been altered with synthetic siding, replacement windows, and additions. The houses are typically front- and side-gable structures with engaged or inset porches and they rest on brick or concrete block foundations.

The most intact Milltown residence appears to be located at 97 Milltown Road. This one-and-a-half-story side-gable house is covered with weatherboards and rests on a brick foundation. The asphalt-shingle side-gable roof engages a full-width porch supported on replacement metal posts with a metal balustrade. The original windows are four-over-one double-hung sash. It has a

¹² The Milldale Subdivision is shown on Plat 1/7 and Milltown is depicted on Plat 2/38 (Graham County Register of Deeds Office, Graham County Courthouse, Robbinsville, NC). Jane Grant, personal communication (April 3, 2013).

replacement single-leaf entry door, replacement windows on the south elevation, and a shed-roof addition at the rear that is partially covered with plywood sheathing.



House, 97 Milltown Road, oblique view to southeast

Most of the other houses in this group have been covered with aluminum or vinyl siding, although the houses at 96 and 118 are clad with asbestos shingles. Based on the field survey, few original exterior materials remain intact on the remaining houses, which are primarily identifiable by their overall form and massing. Two houses—#89 and #96—have been substantially enlarged with rear additions that nearly double the size of the original dwellings.

The Bemis Company houses in the Milltown subdivision represent a relatively rare collection of company-owned worker housing associated with an industrial facility in Graham County. The small cluster of houses between 51 and 118 Milltown Road, however, suffers from substantial integrity issues, both individually and as a group. Of the ten surviving houses in this section, only one retains any significant portion of its original exterior materials. Two others have been substantially enlarged with late-twentieth century additions. One of the houses, located in the middle of the group, is a modern replacement structure built on the footprint of an original worker's dwelling, which was demolished. The small group of houses comprising the Milltown Road Housing appears to lack sufficient historic integrity to be eligible for the National Register. The extensive amount of alteration and remodeling negatively impacts their ability to represent the historic period of significance associated with the Bemis Lumber Company.



House, 51 Milltown Road, oblique front view to north



House, 61 Milltown Road, view to northeast



House, 69 Milltown Road, oblique front view to east



House (at right), 79 Milltown Road, oblique front view to north



House, 89 Milltown Road, view to northeast



House, 97 Milltown Road, oblique view to northeast



House, 97 Milltown Road, facade



House and garage, 70 Milltown Road, view to south



House, 80 Milltown Road, view to southwest



House and garage, 86 Milltown Road, oblique front view to south



House, 96 Milltown Road, view to west



House, 118 Milltown Road, view to southwest



Northeast side of Milltown Road, view to east



Southwest side of Milltown Road, view to south

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Appendix A

Professional Qualifications

CLAY GRIFFITH

President/Architectural Historian

ACME PRESERVATION SERVICES, LLC

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Asheville, NC 28804

Tel 828 281 3852

cgriffith.acme@gmail.com

EDUCATION

- Master of Architectural History (1993)
University of Virginia
- Bachelor of Science, Architecture (1990)
Georgia Institute of Technology
- Introduction to Federal Projects and Historic Preservation Law (1994)

EXPERIENCE

- **Acme Preservation Services, LLC, Asheville, NC**
November 2007 – present

Formed independent firm to provide historic preservation consulting services. Services provided include preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations, local landmark designation reports, rehabilitation tax credit applications, municipal historic architectural resources surveys, Section 106 compliance reports, and historical research.

- **Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc., Asheville, NC**
January 2002 – October 2007

Served as Senior Architectural Historian in Asheville office of private consulting firm. Responsibilities included preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations, local landmark designation reports, rehabilitation tax credit applications, municipal historic architectural resources surveys, Section 106 compliance reports, and historical research.

- **North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Western Office, Asheville, NC**
July 1998 – January 2002

Preservation Specialist serving the 25-county western region of North Carolina. Administered State Historic Preservation Office programs including statewide inventory of historic properties, survey and planning grant supervision, National Register of Historic Places nominations, environmental review, technical assistance, and public education.

- **North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh, NC**
June 1993 – June 1998

Preservation Specialist with Historic Architectural Resources Section. Responsible for conducting and preparing documentation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and other state and federal environmental laws and regulations. Duties included conducting field work, identifying and documenting historic resources, evaluating National Register eligibility, and assessing effects to minimize impacts of NCDOT undertakings.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

- *Murrell House Intensive Evaluation Report, Replace Bridge No. 23 on SR 1152 over Burlingame Creek, (for NCDOT), Transylvania County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Resources Inventory Presentation and Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report, Intensive Evaluation, for Widening NC 294 from SR 1130 to SR 1312-A, TIP No. R-3622B (for NCDOT), Cherokee County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Reconnaissance Survey for Replace Bridge No. 112 on SR 1124 over Indian Creek (for NCDOT), Yancey County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report , Intensive Evaluation, for Replace Bridge No. 217 on SR 1358 over Guilders Creek (for NCDOT), Yancey County, North Carolina*
- *Francis Grist Mill National Register Nomination (co-author), Waymesville vic., Haywood County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Resources Inventory Presentation and Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report, Intensive Evaluation, for Improve Intersection NC 225/SR 1164/SR 1779, TIP No. U-5105 (for NCDOT), Henderson County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Reconnaissance Survey for Replace Bridge No. 244 on SR 1137 over Clarks Creek (for NCDOT), Watauga County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Reconnaissance Surveys for Division 14 Bridge Replacement Projects (for NCDOT), Cherokee, Clay, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, and Polk Counties, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Reconnaissance Surveys for Division 13 Bridge Replacement Projects (for NCDOT), McDowell, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties, North Carolina*
- *Tryon Country Club National Register Nomination, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina*
- *Dr. Samuel Stringfield House and Dr. Thomas Stringfield House Local Landmark Designation Reports, Waynesville, Haywood County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Resources Inventory Presentation for SR 1419 (Old Fanning Bridge Road) Improvements and new access road, TIP No. 5524 (for NCDOT), Buncombe and Henderson Counties, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Resources Inventory Presentation and Chapman House Intensive Evaluation Report, US 64 Improvements, TIP No. R-2409D (for NCDOT), Transylvania County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report, Intensive Evaluation, for Replace Bridge No. 115 on SR 1908 over Dan River (for NCDOT), Stokes County, North Carolina*
- *Johnson House and Store Intensive Evaluation Report (for NCDOT), Wilkes County, North Carolina*
- *Downtown Newton Historic District National Register Nomination, Newton, Catawba County, North Carolina*

- *Adams-Millis Corporation Plant No. 8 National Register Nomination and Part 1 Tax Credit Application, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Reconnaissance Surveys for Division 11 Bridge Replacement Projects (for NCDOT), Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Watauga and Wilkes Counties, North Carolina*
- *Historic Architectural Reconnaissance Surveys for Division 14 Bridge Replacement Projects (for NCDOT), Graham, Henderson, Swain and Transylvania Counties, North Carolina*
- *Downtown Asheville Historic District Boundary Increase III, Boundary Decrease and Additional Documentation, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Sunnydale National Register Nomination and Tax Credit Application Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina*
- *Asheville Supply & Foundry Company Part 1 Tax Credit Application, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Asheville Survey Update, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Spread Out Historic District National Register Nomination, Waynesville, Haywood County, North Carolina*
- *Dougherty Heights Historic District National Register Nomination, Black Mountain, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Wayah Bald Lookout Tower Documentation (for USDA Forest Service), Nantahala National Forest, Macon County, North Carolina*
- *Lyncote National Register Nomination, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina*
- *South Montreat Road Historic District National Register Nomination, Black Mountain, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Pink Beds Picnic Shelters and Wayah Bald Lookout Tower Documentation and National Register of Historic Places Evaluation (for USDA Forest Service), Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina*
- *Biltmore High School National Register Nomination, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Claremont High School Historic District Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation National Register Nomination, Hickory, Catawba County, North Carolina*
- *East Main Street Historic District National Register Nomination, Brevard, Transylvania County, North Carolina*
- *Mill Farm Inn National Register Nomination, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina*
- *Richard Sharp Smith House Local Designation Report and National Register Nomination, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina*
- *Broyhill Conover Plant Redevelopment Determination of Eligibility and Recordation (for City of Conover), Conover, Catawba County, North Carolina*
- *Tryon Downtown Survey and Trade Street Commercial Historic District Study List Application, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina*

- *Monte Vista Hotel National Register Nomination and Local Landmark Designation Report*, Black Mountain, Buncombe County, North Carolina
- *Bank of Tryon National Register Nomination*, Tryon, Polk County, North Carolina
- *Wilson Lick Ranger Station Documentation and National Register of Historic Places Evaluation (for USDA Forest Service)*, Nantahala National Forest, Macon County, North Carolina (co-authored with Lynn Marie Pietak, Ph.D., Archaeologist)
- *Graham County Courthouse National Register Nomination*, Robbinsville, Graham County, North Carolina
- *Historic Workcenters Documentation and National Register of Historic Places Evaluation (for USDA Forest Service)*, Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina
- *Charles E. Orr House National Register Nomination*, Brevard, Transylvania County, North Carolina
- *Franklin-Penland House National Register Nomination*, Linville Falls, Burke County, North Carolina
- *West Asheville End of Car Line Historic District National Register Nomination*, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina
- *West Asheville-Aycock School Historic District National Register Nomination*, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina
- *Lookout Towers Documentation and National Register of Historic Places Evaluation (for USDA Forest Service)*, Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests, North Carolina
- *The Charlton Leland (Saluda Inn) National Register Nomination*, Saluda, Polk County, North Carolina
- *South Carolina Department of Transportation Cultural Resources Survey Report, US 21 Bridge over Catawba River (for Ralph Whitehead Associates)*, York County, South Carolina
- *Biltmore Hospital National Register Nomination*, Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina
- *South Carolina Department of Transportation Cultural Resources Survey Report, S-75 (Cherokee Road) over US 29 Bridge Replacement Project (for Kennedy Engineering and Associates)*, Anderson County, South Carolina

PUBLICATIONS

- Contributing author, "North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary" (Website: <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu>)
- "Henry Bacon," "Douglas Ellington" and "Grove Arcade" in *The Encyclopedia of Appalachia*. University of Tennessee Press, 2006.
- "An Inventory of Douglas Ellington's Architectural Work in Western North Carolina," in *May We All Remember Well, Vol. 2*. Robert S. Brunk Auction Services, Inc., 2001