

EXP 12-31-84

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**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Old Mill of Guilford

and/or common Bailes' Old Mill

**2. Location**

East side NC 68, opposite junction  
street & number with SR 2132

not for publication

city, town Oak Ridge       vicinity of      congressional district Sixth

state North Carolina      code 037      county Guilford      code 081

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
X building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. Charles Parnell

c/o Old Mill of Guilford

street & number Highway 68

city, town Oak Ridge       vicinity of      state North Carolina 27310

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Guilford County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Greensboro      state North Carolina 27402

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Architectural Resources: An Inventory of High Point, Jamestown, Gibsonville,  
title Guilford County by McKelden Smith      has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1979       federal       state  county  local

depository for survey records Survey & Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives & History

city, town Raleigh      state North Carolina 27611

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old Mill of Guilford, also known as Bailes' Old Mill, is sited on the edge of a shallow, swift running creek surrounded by wooded hills and gullies. The mill faces south. The plain building rises three stories above its full fieldstone basement; the deep gabled roof with plain box cornice encloses the third story. An almost flat, full facade, shed roof shades the entry and creates a porch across the first story. Off center, to the right of the ridge pole are the large, barn-like openings for the doors of the second and third floors. A small gabled hood covers the pulleys which are suspended above the openings and is the only ornament on the plain facade except for the porch.

Attached to the right side of the building, and set back from its face is a one-story shed roofed addition. Built of random field stones like the foundation of the mill itself, it is the sales office for the mill. Its newness is obvious without being blatant, and it does not detract from the mill.

The grist mill is powered by an overshot wheel set parallel to the west wall. It is approximately 500 yards downstream from the dam and holding pond that provides its power. Due to the construction of N.C. 68, a conduit has replaced the open race/slue which once carried water to the wheel but has not changed the force of flow which is still sufficient to turn the 12 spoked wood and iron-rimmed wheel. An overflow channel perpendicular to the sluice above the wheel provides a constant splash which meshes with the regular plot-plop as water spills from each of the great fins into the catch. These sounds, the hum of gears and the slow rumble of the stones must be much the same as those which filled the air when the mill opened.

The mill is of heavy timber frame construction resting on a continuous, random field stone, dry mortar foundation. Although covered in pale grey asbestos shingles, the integrity of the mill's site and construction is little altered. Entering by the front door which is slightly off center, one is confronted by a row of heavy, chamfered posts which runs down the long central axis of the space. To the left a glass partition separates the basement stairs, with their access to the stones, from the public but allows one to view the wheel as it turns and activates the gears which power the stones and other devices. To the right are the blending bins, troughs, and conduits which carry the grain down and back from the storage hoppers and cleaners on the second and third floors. At the rear of the main room a stair rises along the wall to the floors above. A stringer with panel beneath carries the risers which are rabbeted into the stringers. The stair is characteristic of the whole: plain, solid, functional. The exposed timber construction of each floor is exquisitely plain and direct.

From the basement floor rise great posts which carry large (8' x 10" and 10' x 12") beams which support the floor above. These and the corner posts have diagonal bracing supporting the plates of the floors. Other posts are placed at regular intervals between the corners for additional support. These members are repeated above, diminution in size acknowledging the lightened load. All members are rough hewn and joined with a mortise and tenon and pegs. The rafters of the roof are about 12' on center with closely placed laths, which once carried a wood shingle roof (now standing seam tin). The floors are wide, thick planks of oak and pine. On the interior one can also see the original weatherboarding.

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## Continuation sheet

## Description

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The most fascinating aspect of the mill are the wooden hoppers, hullers, sifters and troughs for moving the materials. The large hoppers are constructed of narrow, tightly butted members over their funnel shaped forms. The grain is fed down into narrowing channels to the hullers and stones and then blown back for blending, bagging, and storage. All these devices are constructed of smooth finished, now much worn pine, cherry, and oak. Like the wooden windlass hung in the rafters of the third floor there is a simple functional elegance about these devices that is impressive.

Some electrification has been installed in the mill for lights and for the last phases of the milling process but the grinding stones are still water powered. The other buildings on the site are two early twentieth century wooden outbuildings previously used in the milling process but now for storage, and a 1920s bungalow at the top of the rise southeast of the mill where the miller now lives.

## **8. Significance**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)				

**Specific dates** 1822

**Builder/Architect** Unknown

### **Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Old Mill of Guilford, also known as Bailes' Old Mill, was built in 1822 by Joel Sanders to replace an earlier (ca. 1745) mill and to serve as the first "merchant mill" in Guilford County. In addition to grinding the farmers' wheat and corn, the mill also sold its own products and served as a community gathering place. Although the mill has undergone some changes as a result of the construction of N.C. 68 and changing health codes, the rolling site, heavy-timbered building, and water-powered machinery have retained a sense of time and place which have all but disappeared in Piedmont North Carolina. Until it was closed for a brief period in the 1970s, the mill was one of the oldest mills in continuous operation in the United States.

### **Criteria Assessment:**

- A. The Old Mill of Guilford is associated with the broad patterns of economic development and life in nineteenth century Piedmont North Carolina when a good mill was a necessity for any agricultural community and when the mill site served as a community center.
- B. The mill was associated with Joel Sanders and his descendants in the nineteenth century, with M.L. Hendrix in the early twentieth century, and C.E. Bailes, a prominent area business man who owned the mill from the 1950s to the 1970s.
- C. The mill and its site embody the distinctive characteristics of a type--high stone dam and holding pond, heavy timber frame construction, and finely made wooden equipment and water powered machinery of a nineteenth century grist mill.
- D. Although cut in half by N.C. 68, the relatively undisturbed site is still likely to yield information concerning nineteenth century life associated with a rural milling operation.

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The Old Mill of Guilford County was built in 1822 by Joel Sanders. Located near the northwestern Guilford County community of Oak Ridge, the Old Mill replaced an earlier mill located on the same site. Through the years the mill has gone by a number of names, including the Sanders Mill, the Hendricks Mill, and Bailes' Old Mill.

The first mill on the site was built around 1745 by Nathan Dillon. It is believed to have been the second mill in Guilford County. It was raided by British soldiers in 1781 and a resisting miller was shot in the foot.<sup>1</sup> Sanders purchased the mill and property from the Dillon family in 1803. By the early 1820s he was convinced that the area could support a larger, more commercial mill. Sanders decided on "a merchant flour mill grinding both wheat and corn." The new mill was to be the first merchant mill in Guilford County.<sup>1</sup>

Sanders built a new and higher dam at a better location about two hundred yards downstream. "He also constructed a larger mill house for a combined grist mill and merchant flour milling operation, using many of the foundation stones from the original mill. He installed an overshot water wheel, the water for which was brought down a canal from the new dam."<sup>2</sup> The new mill opened in the spring of 1822. "It was a great curiosity to see it start so the people from the surrounding county came. It was told by Wyatt Brittain that there were a thousand there to see it start."<sup>3</sup>

A good mill was a necessity for any nineteenth century agricultural community. A mill took the corn and wheat from local farmers and ground it into useable form, usually keeping ten percent as a fee. A merchant mill, such as that run by the Sanders family, produced flour and meal that were sold commercially. The mill was also a social center. In the days before rural mail delivery many mills were post offices. The mill was the gathering place of the community. As farmers waited for their grain to be ground they exchanged the latest news and gossip with the neighbors.<sup>4</sup>

The Sanders family owned the mill until after the Civil War, passing it from Joel Sanders to Jess Sanders to Dr. John Sanders to J. J. Sanders. James N. Nelson was in charge of the business operations of the mill for many years. On a number of occasions in the difficult years following the Civil War the generosity of Nelson and the mill was responsible for relieving "the poverty stricken people" of the community.<sup>5</sup> The 1870 census gives some idea of the scope of the mill. During that year it produced 3,500 bushels of corn meal, valued at \$3,200; 400 barrels of flour, valued at \$3,200; 240 bushels of rye, valued at \$300; and 350 bushels of oat meal, valued at \$360.<sup>6</sup>

The mill changed hands a number of times in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1866 J. J. Sanders deeded a half-interest to Robert A. Blaylock. John Brittain purchased Sanders's half interest for \$2,500 in 1872 and Blaylock's half interest for \$2,350 in 1875.<sup>7</sup> Brittain owned the mill in 1880 when the census showed that it produced 600 barrels of wheat flour, 150,000 pounds of corn meal, and 60,000 pounds of feed.<sup>8</sup> In 1888 Brittain sold the mill to R. M. Stafford for \$3,000. Stafford sold it to W. T. Baynes and J. A. Lowrey in 1897. In the early twentieth century owners included E. S. Cude, B. R. Beeson, and M. L. Hendrix. In 1913 Hendrix took full possession of the mill.<sup>9</sup>

The Hendrix family owned the mill until the 1950s. It continued to produce a variety of products which were sold both at the mill and in area retail stores. In 1954 the mill was purchased by C. E. Bailes, a prominent area businessman, best known as the president

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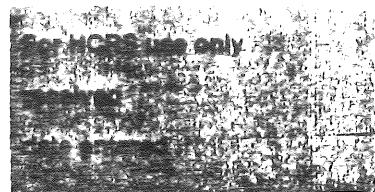
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of the McLeod Leather and Belting Company of Greensboro. Bailes innovated the mill and replaced its underground water turbine with a waterwheel. He established Lloyd Lucas as the miller and the mill continued to turn out cornmill, grits, buckwheat, and rye flours.<sup>10</sup> Bailes operated the mill largely as a hobby, and "as compensation for grinding a customer's wheat or corn [he charged] only what he needed to meet mill expenses."<sup>11</sup> The mill was closed for the first time in 1975 when Lucas died.<sup>12</sup> In 1977 it was purchased by Richard Harris and Charles Parnell. Parnell bought out Harris and created Bailes Old Mill, Limited, of which he is the president. The firm is the legal owner of the mill. Mr. Parnell, a retired British engineer, is the miller. The company continues to turn out flour and other mill products that are commercially available in the area.

Until the mill stopped operating for several years in the 1970s it was regarded as one of the oldest continually operating mills in the United States. Although it no longer has this distinction it remains a valuable community asset and one of Guilford County's most important historical sites.

The mill represents a means of livelihood and a way of life which has all but disappeared in the Piedmont of North Carolina where its rolling hills made such establishments possible. In its form and milling techniques it provides an example of the kind of planning and construction which required the services of a highly skilled millwright, a craft which persisted for many decades but which, like the water powered mill itself has virtually disappeared.

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



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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John T. Brittain, "Old Mill of Guilford," unpublished history of mill, copy in file, hereinafter cited as Brittain, "Old Mill"; Walter C. Straughan, "The Old Mill of Guilford," Pioneer America, IV, No. 2, July, 1972, 44-45, hereinafter cited as Straughan, "Old Mill"; Donald W. Martin, "Bailes Old Mill," Old Mill News, Vol. II, No. 4, October, 1974, p. 3, hereinafter cited as Martin, "Bailes Old Mill."

<sup>2</sup> Straughan, "Old Mill," 44.

<sup>3</sup> Brittain, "Old Mill," 2.

<sup>4</sup> Straughan, "Old Mill," 48; Brittain, "Old Mill," 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Brittain, "Old Mill," 2-4.

<sup>6</sup> Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Guilford County, North Carolina, Industrial Schedule.

<sup>7</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 44, p. 328; Book 48, p. 438.

<sup>8</sup> Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Guilford County, North Carolina, Industrial Schedule.

<sup>9</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 101, p. 14; Book 109, p. 651; Book 254, p. 457; Book 254, p. 486.

<sup>10</sup> News and Observer (Raleigh), February 28, 1965; Winston-Salem Journal, August 7, 1960; Straughan, "Old Mill," 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> "Bailes Old Mill-Oak Ridge, North Carolina," advertising brochure, copy in file.

<sup>12</sup> Greensboro Daily News, July 1, 1975.

<sup>13</sup> Telephone interview with Mr. Charles Parnell, June 10, 1981, notes in file; Conrad Paysour, "The British Are Back," The State, Vol. 45, No. 3, August 1977, p. 13.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6.88 acres

Quadrangle name Summerfield

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Attached Guilford County tax map, parcels 29, 30, 32, 33. Page #1-54-B-1100.  
Property is outlined in red.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

Charlotte V. Brown, Architectural Historian

name/title Jim Sumner, Researcher

Survey & Planning Branch

organization Archeology & Historic Preservation Section date September, 1981

N.C. Division of Archives & History

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone (919) 733-6545

city or town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date June 14, 1982

HCPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

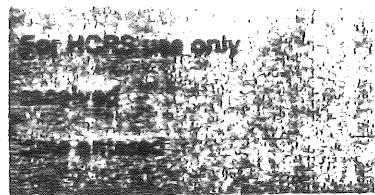
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Attest:

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

Page 1

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