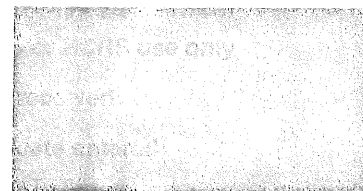


United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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 Elkin Creek Mill

and/or common

2. Location

street & number End of SR 2045 on Elkin River not for publication

city, town West Elkin ☒ vicinity of congressional district Fifth

state North Carolina code 37 county Wilkes code 193

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☐ occupied	☐ agriculture ☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial ☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☐ educational ☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment ☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government ☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial ☐ transportation
		☐ no	☒ other: Being developed for restaurant

4. Owner of Property

name Stefan and Nancy Scheiber

street & number 639 Elk Spur Street

city, town Elkin vicinity of state N. C. 28821

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wilkes County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Wilkesboro, state North Carolina 28697

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☒ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved date _____
☒ fair	☐ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Elkin Creek Mill stands on the west bank of "Big Elkin Creek" (now generally called the Elkin River) at the end of a country lane in a wooded section of east Wilkes County. The simple frame structure is typical of many small industrial buildings of the late nineteenth century. But its extensive interior milling equipment remains in place in a remarkable state of completeness and in relatively good condition--much as it was left when the mill shut down for the last time in the mid-1970s. The site is among the best in western North Carolina for the study of a full-scale water-powered milling operation critical to the state's agricultural economy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The main body and the oldest (ca. 1896) section of the mill is a two-story-with-attic frame structure of rectangular plan, resting on fieldstone piers and covered with weathered clapboards. Its gable roof of standing seam tin is oriented on an east-west axis. A one-story gable roof wing, probably a somewhat later addition, extends from the southeast corner of the main block, and a shed porch supported by simple square-in-section posts occupies the resulting elbow formed by the two sections. A one-story shed addition attaches to the north side of the main block. Four-over-four sash windows pierce the walls at regular intervals, and batten doors of both single and double width give access to the first floor levels of both sections in various places under the porch. An additional double-width door opens off the second level of the east gable end, providing access to the second floor for grain and equipment removed from or loaded into wagons or trucks waiting below.

The steep drop of the creek bank gives the west elevation a full three-story height. A shed room is attached to the west gable end of the main block, continuing part-way along the west wall of the smaller addition; this shed is set lower than the first floor level of the main block, and covers the "pen stock" or the water trap in which the turbines are immersed. Now reduced to rubble, the pen stock walls were constructed of 2x6 boards laid horizontally and tightly pinned together with nails; no mortar or other adhesive was needed, as the boards would swell and seal the joints when they became wet. A mill race of similar construction and about 60 feet in length connected the penstock and the dam. The dam, a 1938 rebuilding of the original, is of wood construction, and rests on the shallow rocky creek bed. Boards laid across a heavy frame form a sloping wall that formerly held back the mill pond; within the last decade the central section of the dam has broken away.

Most of the interior equipment dates from the first two or three decades of the mill's operation. Three separate milling systems are housed in the structure, each powered by its own turbine located in the pen stock. These include a roller mill system for flour production, a stone-grinding system for cornmeal, and a hammer mill system for feed production. The hammer mill is located under the south wing and operates independently of the other two. Machinery and equipment for flour and cornmeal production share space on four levels of the main block, including the attic and sub-first-floor levels. The array of power shafts and drive belts, the multiple elevator shafts running through the center of the building from the ground level to attic, and the diversity of machines for cleaning, scouring, grinding, sifting, and mixing give the operation a bewildering complexity. Much of the equipment was manufactured by the Sprout-Waldren Company of Muncey, Pennsylvania; one of the roller mills bears the patent date June 6, 1893.

A small frame, gable roof, four stall stable contemporary with the main block of the mill stands to the south of the structure.

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Process and Equipment

A. Flour production. Farmers bringing wheat to the mill would unload it under the porch, where it was weighed on a floor scale. Wheat was then dumped into a "sink," or a hole in the first floor of the mill covered with a grate, into a bin below the floor. It was then elevated to the third (attic) level to a "separator" machine where the chaff was removed. From there it dropped to the second level and was run through a cockle machine which removed the cockles--a small wild black grain that often grows with wheat--and then moved to the "scourer" on the same level, which cleaned and polished the grain. From the scourer the wheat was moved to a grinding bin, from whence it dropped into one of the three roller mills on the first floor where it was ground into flour. Each of the roller mills contains two pairs of cylinders of high grade steel with specially textured surfaces that tear the grain into flour. After grinding, the flour was elevated to the sifter on the second floor. This interesting piece of equipment is suspended from the ceiling on hickory rods, which provide the necessary strength and flexibility to withstand the vibrations of the machine. From the sifter the finished flour was elevated to the third level and processed through a "bleacher," which whitened the flour and removed unwanted odors by an electrical process. The flour then dropped into a weighing scale on the first floor, and from there was transferred to the mixer. At the mixer, salt and sodium phosphate could be added to prepare self-rising flour; it was then sacked for delivery to area stores. The by-products of flour production included bran and the "shorts," which is made up of the germ, fine bran, and some flour; these were also collected during the process and sacked.

B. Cornmeal production. Shelled corn was dropped into a sink on the first floor and elevated to a cleaner on the second level, where it was polished and foreign particles were removed. The corn then dropped into a hopper above the millstone on the first floor. After grinding on the stone, the meal was elevated to a sifter on the second floor and then dropped back into a mixer on the first floor. As in flour production, additives could be introduced to make self-rising meal. The meal was then sacked for shipment.

C. Feed production. Feed could be made from any type of grain crop--wheat, oats, soybean, corn, and others--and compared to flour and cornmeal production, it was a simple process. The hammer mill, which is located under the floor of the south wing of the building, contains sixteen hinged metal bars or hammers that pulverize the whole grain into small particles for food for livestock. Grain was dumped into a sink in the floor of the south wing directly into the hammer mill. After pounding, the feed was blown by a fan into a collector on the floor above the hammer mill, and was ready for sacking.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1896 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located in a wooded section of east Wilkes County, the Elkin Creek Mill survives intact as one of the best examples of a full-scale, water-powered milling operation in western North Carolina. The simple frame structure houses all of the equipment used in the production of flour, cornmeal, and feed, most of it dating from the early years of the mill's operation. Powered by three water-turbine power sources, the systems include three roller mills, a traditional millstone, a hammer mill, and a complex array of cleaners, sifters, mixers, and elevators used in the various processes. The mill was established in 1896 by L. T. Stimpson and John A. Butler, prominent industrialists of neighboring Iredell County, and operated continuously until 1970. Its last thirty-two years of activity were under the stewardship of Alexander County native Edward Jolly, who in retirement remains an authority on traditional milling processes. After several years of neglect, the mill may have a better future adapted as a restaurant now planned by its present owners.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with North Carolina's traditional agricultural economy of independent farmers complemented by small, private, water-powered milling operations.
- B. Associated with the lives and work of two prominent "New South" industrialists of the state's western Piedmont, L. T. Stimpson and John A. Butler of Statesville, who were instrumental in the industrial development of Iredell and neighboring counties.
- C. Embodies in complete form the systems, equipment, and processes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century used in the water-powered production of flour, cornmeal, and feed.

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In 1896 L. T. Stimpson and John A. Butler of Iredell County purchased a tract of land on "Big Elkin Creek" (Elkin River) in Wilkes County. Here they built a water-powered gristmill which until recently continued to serve the farmers of the area.

Apparently the place where Stimpson and Butler constructed the plant was near the site of an earlier mill. One of the deeds for a portion of the twenty-two acres conveyed to the owners "the right to raise and keep a dam five feet high. . . just below the old dam. . . ." Still another deed referred to the site as "the Carter Mill tract." Despite these references to a possible earlier mill, there is no evidence that any structures were standing when Butler and Stimpson purchased the property. Although they bought twenty-two acres, their mill operation probably took up only two acres.²

While owning the mill Stimpson and Butler lived in Iredell County where they had other investments. Both men were indicative of the new industrial-minded men of the post Civil War "New South." Stimpson was the son-in-law of Wilfred Turner, an Iredell County industrialist. Turner had established a textile factory on Rocky Creek in Iredell County before the Civil War. It was the first textile plant in the county, and it led to the development of Turnersburg, an industrial community named for its founder. The factory survived the ravages of the Civil War when Union general George H. Stoneman came through the area on an infamous mission of destruction. After the war Turner turned the mill over to his sons-in-law M. E. Steele and L. T. Stimpson, who ran the operation. He also relinquished to them other interests in Iredell and Catawba counties. (Turner's son Wilfred Dent Turner later became lieutenant governor of North Carolina, 1901-1905.) These combined interests became the industrial firm of Steele and Stimpson.

Before entering into the Wilkes County venture, John A. Butler had been involved in the mill industry in Iredell County. Later in 1900 he became the partner of Milton Ellis whose father had purchased a flour mill from Wilfred Turner. They were soon operating two flour mills in the vicinity of Hunting Creek. "People in that part of the county," writes Homer Keever, Iredell County historian, "still remember the two flour mills, the Butler mill on Long Branch and the Ellis mill on the main Hunting Creek."³

After Stimpson and Butler built the gristmill in Wilkes County they hired John Gaither of Iredell County as miller. Local farmers brought their corn and wheat to him to be ground into flour by the machinery driven by the two water-powered turbines. In payment the owners received a "toll," a portion of the milled grain (probably twenty per cent) which they sold to merchants. The mill was one of many in the nineteenth century which sprang up in Wilkes and surrounding counties because their owners could take advantage of the fast moving waters flowing through the hills and mountains of piedmont and western North Carolina.⁴

In 1901 John A. Butler sold his share of the Elkin Creek Mill to his partner L. T. Stimpson who continued to run the mill. Butler died in 1904. After Stimpson's death in 1916 the mill passed to his son Clarence Stimpson who made some renovations.⁵ Like his father, the younger Stimpson had industrial interests in Iredell County. Along with R. O. Deitz he

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rented the Statesville Milling Company in 1898 and ran it as Railroad Flour Mills until 1916. In 1915 he joined Dalton Kennedy and purchased the North State Veneer Company in Statesville and operated the plant as the Statesville Veneer and Panel Company until it burned in 1928. He then built the Stimpson Hosiery Mill on the site in 1932. During the Great Depression, writes Homer Keever, it was "one of the more stable knitting mills." It is still in operation.⁶

Around the same time that he was establishing his hosiery mill in Statesville, Clarence Stimpson sold the Elkin Creek Mill to J. F. Hoots and M. M. Pinnix of Yadkin County. In the 1930s they made renovations in the building and added an auxiliary engine for use when dry weather reduced Elkin Creek. By this time there were three water turbines which powered a roller mill for flour, millstone for corn, and a hammer mill for feed.⁷ In 1938 Hoots and Pinnix sold the property to Edward Jolly and Ray N. Icenhour, and the following year Icenhour transferred this interest to Jolly.⁸

Edward Jolly continued to operate the mill until 1970. He was born in north Alexander County about 1905 and early became fascinated by gristmills. "When I was a boy growing up in Alexander County," he recalls, "every stream with enough water power had a mill. I loved them. I used to say I would love to have a mill someday." He learned the miller's trade in the 1920s and worked at mills in Taylorsville and Hiddenite before buying the Elkin Creek Mill.⁹ When he was running the plant at full capacity, Jolly could turn out 4,000 pounds of flour or 3,000 pounds of cornmeal per day. It took 720,000 cubic feet of water to operate the mill at capacity for a ten hour workday. Although Jolly added a new auxiliary engine in the 1950s he seldom used it. In 1967 The Elkin Tribune reported that the Elkin Creek Mill was "the only fully water-powered mill still in operation in this area." At that time Jolly had about 150 customers and after the harvest each year, "the millhouse is a beehive of activity as wheels turn and farmers bring in their corn for grinding and spin a few yarns while waiting." He continued to run the mill on a "toll" basis and sold his share of the grain to twenty-nine stores in the area.¹⁰ In 1970 Jolly sold the property to Richard Adams of Virginia. Adams operated the mill for a few years on a part-time basis, but by the mid-1970s the business closed down for good. At that time the machinery was in good running condition, but in recent years vandals have attacked the building and equipment.

In 1979 Stefan and Nancy Scheiber of Elkin purchased the property from the widow of Richard Adams. The Scheibers are experienced restaurant owners and operators, and plan to refurbish the mill as a restaurant. They intend to leave all the milling equipment in place and follow the Secretary of the Interior's standards for preservation projects. Work commenced on the mill in the summer of 1980.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Wilkes County Deed Books (microfilm). Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, Deed Book 25, p. 160; 21, p. 464; 27, p. 533; 33, p. 56; hereinafter cited as Wilkes Deed Books.

²Wilkes Deed Book 25, p. 160; 21, p. 464.

³Homer M. Kever, Iredell: Piedmont County (Statesville: Iredell County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 154, 264-265.

⁴The Elkin Tribune, August 28, 1967; Herman Steen, Flour Milling in America (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), passim.

⁵Wilkes Deed Book 142, p. 86; Iredell County Estates Records, John A. Butler, 1906, John Butler 1905, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina; Iredell County Will Books (microfilm), Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, Will Book 8, p. 63.

⁶Kever, Iredell, 355, 358.

⁷Wilkes County Deed Book 163, p. 111; Telephone interview of Joe A. Mobley, researcher with Edward Jolly, August 28, 1980, hereinafter cited as Jolly interview.

⁸Wilkes Deed Book 186, p. 627.

⁹Jolly interview.

¹⁰The Elkin Tribune, August 28, 1967.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Iredell County Records. Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. Subgroups: Estates, Wills.

The Elkin Tribune, August 28, 1967.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.5

Quadrangle name Elkin North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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5	1	1	2	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes 2.5 acres of land as described by the accompanying plat map, containing the mill, the stable, the dam, and surrounding woods.

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Property Description by Michael Southern, Survey Specialist, Asheville, N. C.
Statement of Significance by Joe Mobley, Researcher, Raleigh

organization Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section date
N. C. Division of Archives and History

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone Raleigh: 919-733-4763
Asheville: 704-298-5024

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

title	date
For NCRS use only.	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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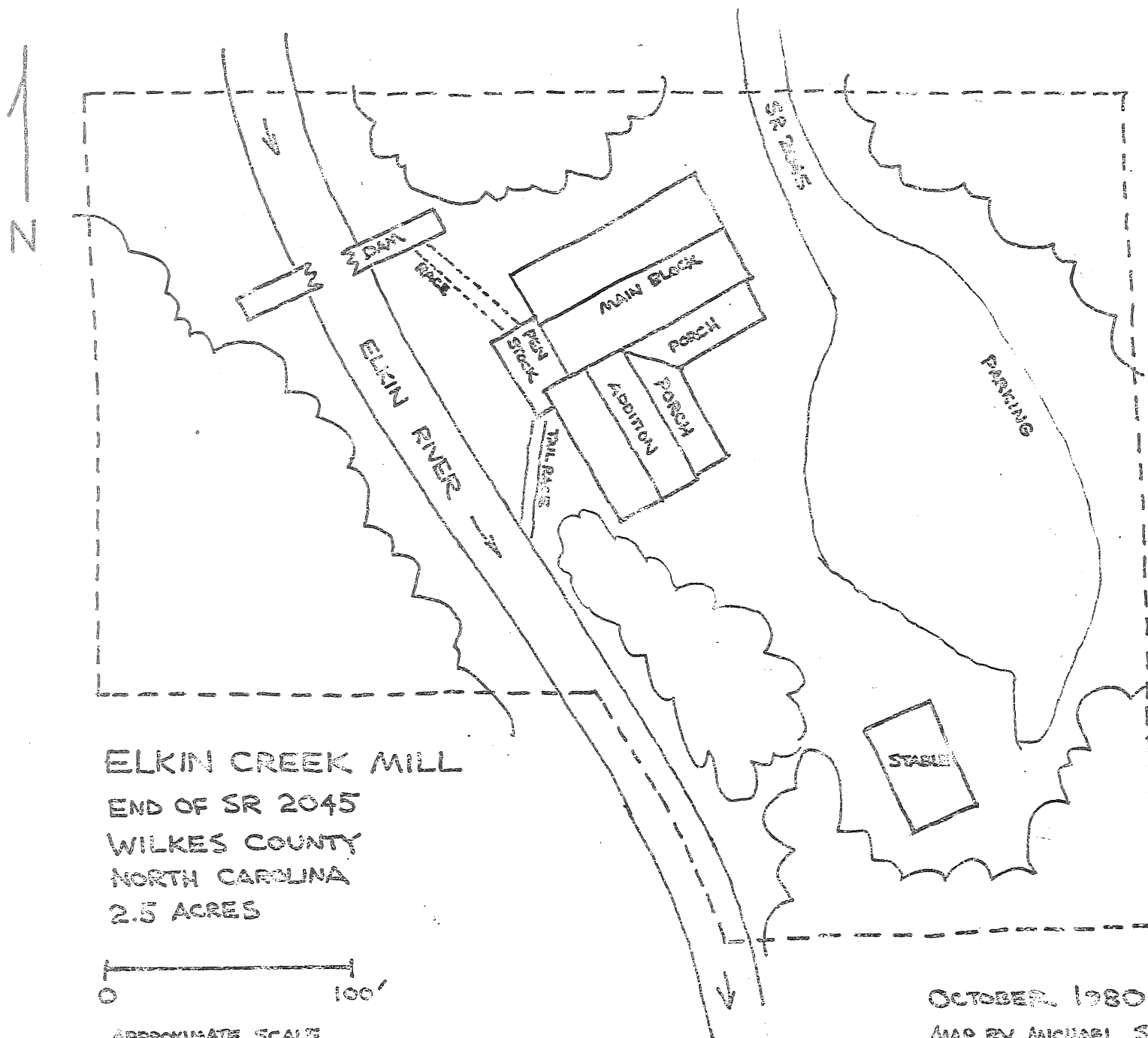
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Keever, Homer M. Iredell: Piedmont County. Statesville: Iredell County Bicentennial, 1976.

Steen, Herman. Flour Milling in America. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973.

Telephone interview of Joe A. Mobley, researcher, with Edward Jolly, August 28, 1980.

Wilkes County Records. Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.



Draw from plat from deed
of 2nd and 3rd tracts of
property of Stephen Scheiber
by Melvin Sullivan, Registered
Land Surveyor, July 22, 1960

ELKIN CREEK MILL
END OF SR 2045
WILKES COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA
2.5 ACRES

0 100'

APPROXIMATE SCALE

OCTOBER 1980

MAP BY MICHAEL SOUTHEAN

Elkin Creek Mill
Wilkes County, N. C.
2.5 acres
Elkin North, N. C. Quadrangle
Scale 1:24000
Zone 17 Northing 4014570
 Easting 511260

920 000
FEET

