



Rowan County Planning Department

402 North Main Street • Salisbury, NC 28144-4341

Telephone 704-638-3101

FAX 704-638-3130

TO: Chairman Chamberlain and Rowan County Board of Commissioners
FROM: D.C. Linn, Historic Landmarks Commission
DATE: February 20, 2006
RE: **HLC 01-06** Kerr Mill
TP 303-019 (portion)

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION ACTION

- Receive report on Kerr Mill
- Comments from petitioners
- Conduct public hearing
- Close hearing and discuss case
- Recommend Approval, Denial, or Table request for **HLC 01-06**

HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

BACKGROUND

Built by Joseph Kerr in the early 1820s, Kerr Mill was built on his 1500 acre plantation located between Sills and Cathey's Creeks. Joseph Kerr and his son Samuel operated the mill for several decades after it was constructed. In 1872, James Samuel McCubbins purchases 593 acres, the Kerr Mansion, and the mill for \$8,140. Under his ownership, McCubbins and John Harrison would retool Kerr Mill into a roller mill powered by a steam engine. Ownership of the mill changed hands several times in the following decades and would remain in operation until 1940. Currently, it is located on property owned by Rowan County and is one of the best preserved grist mills in the state.

REQUEST

The Historic Landmarks Commission is requesting approval of designating Kerr Mill and a portion of the site as a historic landmark as being a significant landmark in the history of Rowan County.

February 7, 2005 Historic Landmarks Commission Meeting

The Historic Landmarks Commission held a courtesy public hearing and voted unanimously (9-0) to send a favorable recommendation for the request to the Board of Commissioners.

Equal Opportunity Employer



recycled paper



Rowan County Planning
Department
402 North Main Street
Salisbury, NC 28144
Phone (704) 216-8601
Fax (704) 638-3130
Web <http://www.co.rowan.nc.us>

Case # HLC 01-06
Date Filed 1-5-06
Received By JH
Amount Paid —
Office Use Only

Historic Landmark Designation Application

1. Name of property Kerr Mill
2. Owner's name and address
Rowan County
130 West Innes St.
Salisbury, NC 28146
3. Property location
550 Sloan Road
Mt. Ulla, NC 28125
4. Amount of land to be designated
Kerr Mill structure
5. Interior to be designated Yes No
6. Tax map 203 Parcel 019

Please complete the following information on separate sheets:

7. When was the structure erected? For Whom? (If you don't know the exact date, please give a general time frame.) Have there been additions or modifications? If so, describe and give dates. **1823 by Joseph Kerr**
8. Do you know the names of any of the craftsmen who worked on the structure (i.e., architects, carpenters, contractors, landscape designers, etc.)? Do any architect's plans or building accounts exist? Where?
9. Do you have any old photographs of the structure? If so, do you know the dates of the photographs? **Yes, these are located at Kerr Mill site**
10. How has the building been passed down through the years, from whom to whom (i.e., a quick chain of title)? **Sloan family donated to Rowan County by Mr. And Mrs. James A. Sloan in January 1978.**

11. What was the structure's original use, if different from today? Has the building ever been moved? List the sources of your information. **Grist mill/roller mill**
12. What is the significance of this property? (Please be specific and to the point) Include a list of sources for your information. **Preservation of building for history**
13. Describe the architecture and present condition of the structure, also including any outbuildings or other appurtenant features to be included in the designation. If the property has been restored, what were the dates of restoration? Was the restoration done under the supervision of any historic preservation organization? If the property has not been restored, is any restoration planned for the property? **VHS tape available for review – complete history**
14. Is the property listed in any existing architectural or historical survey (i.e. the National Register of Historic Places)? If so, please give the title and date of the listing.
Yes, National Register of Historic Places, Historic Preservation Award 1984

In addition to the written application, the following materials must be submitted simultaneously:

- * Digital color images showing all sides of the main structure and any outbuildings (may include architectural details, interior and exterior, which add to the property's significance). **See brochures**
- * A tax map showing the location of the property, including any buildings and appurtenant features. **Attached with application**

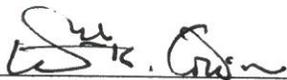
(Please label the above materials with the name of the property owner)

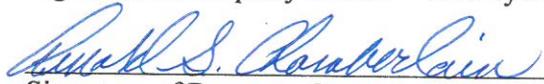
APPLICATION FEE - \$50.00 (Check payable to Rowan County)

The information contained herein this application is true and to the best of my knowledge.

1-24-2006
Date

1-23-2006
Date


Signature of Property Owner – County Manager


Signature of Property Owner – Chairman

Mailing Address:

Rowan County
130 West Innes St.
Salisbury, NC 28146

Telephone:
704.216.8100



North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office

Peter B. Sandbeck, Administrator

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Lisbeth C. Evans, Secretary
Jeffrey J. Crow, Deputy Secretary

Office of Archives and History
Division of Historical Resources
David L. S. Brook, Director

June 7, 2005

Shane Stewart, Planner II
Rowan County Historic Landmarks Commission
402 North Main Street
Salisbury NC 28144

Re: **Landmark designation report for Kerr Mill, 550 Sloan Rd., Mt. Ulla,
Rowan County**

Dear Mr. Stewart:

Thank you for the landmark designation report for Kerr Mill. We apologize for the delay in our response. We have reviewed the information in the report and offer the following comments in accordance with North Carolina General Statute 160A-400.6.

As documented in the 1976 National Register nomination, Kerr Mill is one of the few nineteenth century brick grist mills in North Carolina and one of the best preserved mills of its period in the state. It was built in the early 1820s by Joseph Kerr, a leading Rowan County planter, and operated for several decades by his son Samuel. The mill remained in operation until 1940, and was restored in the late twentieth century as part of a county park. Kerr Mill is significant as a particularly well preserved and maintained example of the mills that were essential to the agrarian culture of Rowan County and the state for many generations. The National Register nomination, supplemented by your recent photographs and the tax map showing the 3.76 acre parcel, provides the Rowan County Historic Preservation Commission and the County Board of Commissioners adequate information to deem that Kerr Mill has the requisite special significance and integrity for landmark designation.

Landmark designation means the community recognizes this property as an important historic resource worthy of preservation. Any substantial exterior design changes to a designated landmark are subject to the design review procedures of the preservation commission. For publicly owned landmarks, the preservation commission also has the authority to review significant interior features specified in the designation ordinance.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the report. Our comments are advisory only. Once the necessary public hearing or hearings have been held, the Council may proceed with the designation decision.

When the Board of Commissioners has concluded its action on the designation ordinance, please complete and return the confirmation form enclosed with this letter.

www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us

	Location	Mailing Address	Telephone/Fax
ADMINISTRATION	507 N. Blount St., Raleigh NC	4617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-4617	(919) 733-4763 • 733-8653
RESTORATION	515 N. Blount St., Raleigh NC	4617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-4617	(919) 733-6547 • 715-4801
SURVEY & PLANNING	515 N. Blount St., Raleigh NC	4617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-4617	(919) 733-6545 • 715-4801

Shane Stewart

June 7, 2005

Page 2

Should you have any questions about our comments, please feel free to contact me at 919-733-6545.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael T. Southern". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Michael T. Southern, Supervisor
Survey and Planning Branch
State Historic Preservation Office

MTS/dc

Enclosures

cc: Mr. D.C. Linn, Chairman, Rowan County Historic Landmarks Commission

The Rowan County Historic Landmarks Commission
County Environmental Services Building Room
402 North Main Street
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-638-3101

Subject: Kerr Mill - 1823 Grist Mill
Rowan County, NC

Date: February 25, 2005

In 1976 the Kerr Mill was entered on The National Register of Historic Places.

After the date of the listing two changes have been made to the property.

1. Two walled rooms to serve as the museum office and a storage area were built on the first floor.
2. At the time of the listing the mill did not have a waterwheel. The original waterwheel was an undershot type and no longer in existence. In 1989 a overshot waterwheel was installed. A closed loop water source plays on the wheel to simulate natural wheel activity.

KERR MILL, West of Salisbury

The history of Kerr Mill near Salisbury is the history of the plantation. It was built by Kerr family slaves in the 1820s as a vital part of the plantation economy from 1820 to 1870 on the family property. The stones for the massive mill were quarried across the creek just east of the mill. The bricks were made and kilned on the site.

The mill building is a substantial and particularly beautiful red brick building, and is located in the valley of Sloans Creek in western Rowan County. The mill is unique among all North Carolina grist mills were almost universal in the 1800s. The mill and several surrounding acres were donated to Rowan County in 1973 by the Sloan family on the condition that it be restored and be used as a park.

The plantation of Joseph Kerr was one of the largest and wealthiest in Rowan County. It included approximately 1,500 acres and was worked by some 45 slaves. It seems surprising that industrial records for 1850 and 1860 show that Kerr Mill produced only a small quantity of corn meal for the public market. This evidence indicates that the mill was built chiefly to serve the immediate needs of the plantation and only incidentally to meet the needs of the community at large. There are also other evidence that this was the original intention. Sloans Creek has a small volume of water and would not be able to meet the day-in-day-out demands of a regular commercial mill. A part of the building must originally have been used for the storage of Kerr grain during the off seasons.

Historical tradition maintains that the mill was originally powered by an overshot waterwheel. The dam which operated the mill is now broken, but one can see part of it on the opposite side of the mill. The flat field just south of the mill have been covered with water impounded by this dam. There are also local stories that later on the mill was powered by an undershot wheel fed by a long millrace. Evidence such as a headrace have been found, crossing fields by the former millpond. These facts confirm that the waterworks were modified, but gives no support to the use of an undershot wheel. If an undershot

wheel had been installed, it would have been operated directly by the flow of the creek and no costly headraces would have been required. All evidences indicate that the so-called undershot wheel must have been a "breast" wheel (sometimes called a "pitchback" wheel). A second dam would have been built higher up the creek. The breast wheel would have considerably more power than an undershot.

The mill rests on a massive stone foundation. Thick, well-finished brick walls rise from the stone bases and are capped by exquisitely moulded brick cornices. Be sure to look up!

The inside of Kerrs Mill also holds interest. It contains heavy hewn interior sills as well as early sawed joists, which form an attractive pattern on the ceiling. Interior partition walls have been added to facilitate the use of the building as a museum. On the main floor is a fireplace, a highly unusual feature in a mill, due to the combustibility of flour dust.

Dr. Samuel Kerr bought the mill from the estate of his father in 1844 and increased the cultivation of grain on the plantation and doubled the size of the milling staff.

After the death of Dr. Kerr, the plantation was divided and sold in 1872. J. S. McCubbins bought the mill tract and advertised in 1875 that he was prepared to grind wheat, corn and to cut lumber "in the best manner and at short notice." In 1886 he converted the mill to roller operation, only to find that he could not produce enough power from his waterwheel, so the mill was converted to steam power.

In 1927 James A. Sloan bought the mill from his uncle and operated it under diesel power until 1933. Upon its termination in this Depression year, he dismantled and sold the machinery, ending 110 years of continuous milling operation.

In 1973 James A. and Carrie C. Sloan gave Kerr Mill and several acres to Rowan County, provided that funds could be raised for its restoration. The project was begun by the Rowan County Historic Properties Commission with the help of a \$25,000 grant from the North Carolina Legislature. The plan is to restore the mill and to house a museum displaying exhibits of the history of gristmilling in Rowan County.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

 NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Kerr Mill

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Sloan Road, on south side of S.R. 1768, at junction of S.R. 1770

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Millbridge

VICINITY OF

8th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Rowan

159

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. James A. Sloan

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1, Box 20

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Mt. Ulla

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Rowan County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Salisbury

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input 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/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kerr Mill in Rowan County is an unusually handsome and substantial brick grist mill, one of the few brick antebellum grist mills in the state. Evidently constructed for Joseph Kerr in the early 1820s, it was run by his son, Dr. Samuel Kerr, during much of the nineteenth century, producing 360 barrels of flour and 3,000 bushels of corn meal in 1850 and 1,500 barrels of flour in 1860. The mill, which was operated until the 1940s, is ~~under consideration~~ as a local preservation project (to be rehabilitated)

Located on Kerr Creek near the community of Millbridge in Rowan County, the grist mill that bears the name of Doctor Samuel Kerr was in existence in 1824. In that year reference to "Kerr's Mill" on "kerr Creek" appears in county road overseer orders. Local tradition also claims that Samuel Kerr built the mill in the 1820s, but since Samuel Kerr was not listed as owning taxable property before 1830, it is more likely that his father, Joseph Kerr, built the mill probably sometime between 1820 and 1824.

Kerr Creek on which the Kerr Mill is located was known in the 1790s as "Cathey's Mill Creek" or "Cathey's Creek" named for James Cathey, head of a large landholding family in Rowan County at that time. Joseph Kerr received land on Cathey's Creek in three different deeds, the first in 1791 and the second two on February 3, 1796. Because the land granted in these deeds was divided according to landmarks that are now obscure, it is not absolutely certain which document referred to the mill site. In all probability, however, the mill location was included in a deed of February 3, 1796, granted to Joseph Kerr by his brother Samuel Kerr (Dr. Kerr's uncle). Although this land transaction does not specify the number of acres awarded to Joseph Kerr, it does list the tract of land as being "next to James Cathey" whose land bordered on the site of Kerr's Mill.

Joseph Kerr died in 1829, and in his will probated in that year he divided his property in Rowan County among his sons, Richard and Samuel, and his daughter Mary. His estate in that county consisted of "1,500 acres of land valued at \$7,000, two town lots in Salisbury, mills, and twenty slaves." Samuel's share of the land evidently included the mill property on Cathey's Creek. Two other sons, Andrew and John, as well as a daughter, Elizabeth Wilson, received land in Tennessee near the Mississippi River.

Samuel Kerr was born in Rowan County in 1799. He was the son of Joseph Kerr and the former Mary Allison who were married on October 31, 1785. In 1822 Kerr received an A.B. degree from the University of North Carolina, but alumni records for the school show no further medical education. Upon graduation he returned to Millbridge to live with his parents. After his father's death he and his mother lived in a house built by his father near the site of the Kerr Mill. His mother died in 1839. Unmarried, Dr. Kerr practiced medicine, farmed, and served in the state senate, 1846-1847. He continued to run the mill on Kerr Creek until his death in 1865.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE one

- Brawley, James S. The Rowan Story: A Narrative History of Rowan County, North Carolina. Salisbury: Rowan Printing Company, 1953.
- Cheney, John L., Jr., ed. North Carolina Government, 1585-1974: A Narrative and Statistical History. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975.
- Grant, David Lindsey, ed. Alumni History of the University of North Carolina. Durham: Christian and King Printing Company, 1924.
- McCubbins Collection. North Carolina State Library, Raleigh.
- Rowan County Records, Rowan County Courthouse, Salisbury, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Tax Lists, Marriage Bonds, Miscellaneous Papers).
- Rowan County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Tax Lists, Marriage Bonds, Miscellaneous Papers).
- Salisbury Evening Post, 1973.
- U. S. Census Office, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Rowan County, North Carolina. Population Schedule; Schedule 5, Industry.
- U. S. Census Office, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Rowan County, North Carolina. Population Schedule; Schedule 2, Slave inhabitants; Schedule 5, Industry.
- Works Progress Administration, Cemetery Index. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.



**State of North Carolina
Department of Cultural Resources
Division of Archives and History**

This is to certify that

KERR MILL

has been entered on

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

by the

United States Department of the Interior
upon nomination by the State Historic Preservation Officer under
provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-665).

The National Register is a list of properties "significant in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture — a comprehensive index of the significant physical evidences of our national patrimony." Properties listed thereon deserve to be preserved by their owners as a part of the cultural heritage of our nation.

*Director, Division of Archives and History
and
State Historic Preservation Officer*

May 11, 1976
Date
