VLR 9/8/14
NRHP 11/20/14

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 11-90)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to compete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: LAUREL MILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT
Other names/site number: (VDHR File Number 078-0058)

2. Location

Street & Number: Laurel Mills Road, roughly bounded by the Thornton River and Laurel Mills Farm
[N/A] Not for Publication
City or town: Laurel Mills [N/A] Vicinity
State: Virginia Code: VA County: Rappahannock Code: 157 Zip Code: 22716

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 10/14/14

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: — Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

[ ] entered in the National Register.
( ) see continuation sheet
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
( ) see continuation sheet
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, (explain:)

LAUREL MILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT (078-0058) RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VA

Name of Property **County and State**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
[X] Private	[ ] Building(s)	10	6	Buildings
[ ] Public-Local	[X] District	1	0	Sites
[X] Public-State	[ ] Site	0	1	Structures
[ ] Public-Federal	[ ] Structure	1	0	Objects
	[ ] Object	12	7	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
N/A

Number of contributing Resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
DOMESTIC/Hotel
COMMERCIAL/TRADE/Department Store
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/ Manufacturing Facility
TRANSPORTATION/Road-Related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
COMMERCIAL/TRADE/Department Store
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/ Manufacturing Facility
TRANSPORTATION/Road-Related

[ ] See continuation sheet

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)
LATE VICTORIAN/ Gothic
LATE VICTORIAN/ Italianate
LATE VICTORIAN/ Queen Anne
LATE 19th and Early 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/ Commercial Style
MODERN MOVEMENT/ Ranch Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
Foundation: BRICK; STONE; CONCRETE
Walls: ASBESTOS; BRICK; SYNTHETICS: Vinyl
WOOD: Weatherboard; OTHER
Roof: METAL/Copper/Tin; ASPHALT; WOOD/Shingle
Other: WOOD; CONCRETE; METAL

Narrative Description

Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets

[X] See continuation sheet

LAUREL MILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT (078-0058) RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VA

Name of Property **County and State**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark x in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

[X] **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[X] **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark x in all the boxes that apply.)

[ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] **B** removed from its original location.

[ ] **C** a birthplace or grave.

[ ] **D** a cemetery.

[ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] **F** a commemorative property.

[ ] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
INDUSTRY

Period of Significance
Ca. 1840-1927

Significant Dates
1847; 1877
1891; Ca. 1900;
1927

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Hawkins, George W.
Wood, A.N. and Son

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

[X] See continuation sheet

LAUREL MILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT (078-0058) RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VA

Name of Property **County and State**

9. Major Bibliographic References

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
[ ] previously listed in the NR
[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____

Primary location of additional data:
[X] State SHPO office
[ ] Other State agency
[ ] Federal agency
[X] Local government
[X] University
[X] Other
Specify repository:
University of Virginia, Special Collections, Alderman Library
Rappahannock County Historical Society
VDHR Archives, Richmond, VA

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately 56.27 Acres

UTM References Massie's Corner USGS Map

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1)	17	753112	4289195	2)	17	753475	4289231
3)	17	756676	4289268	4)	17	753526	4287104

[X] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Jennifer Hallock and Gardiner Hallock, Architectural Historians/Principals
Organization Arcadia Preservation, LLC Date May 3, 2004
Street & Number P.O. Box 138 Telephone (434) 293-7772
City or Town Keswick State VA Zip code 22947

LAUREL MILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT (078-0058) RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VA

Name of Property **County and State**

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state Virginia zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Located in the southeastern portion of Rappahannock County, the village of Laurel Mills is a cohesive residential, commercial, and industrial community dating from the second quarter of the 19th century. The village, located along the western banks of the Thornton River, is surrounded by rural farms, open pastures, and wooded lots. The Laurel Mills Historic District boundaries extend along Laurel Mills Road from the Thornton River, which forms the eastern boundary, to the western edge of Laurel Mills Farm. Thought to be one of the earliest areas of settlement in the county, the village was probably originally part of Newby's Crossroads, which lies just to the east, until a post office was established in 1847. The land that became Laurel Mills was also known to have an established gristmill and sawmill by 1821.

The wood-frame, log, and masonry buildings that make up the village are oriented along Laurel Mills Road near the west bank of the Thornton River. The early domestic and commercial dwellings are primarily set close to the road and feature grassy yards with mature trees and shrubs. Laurel Mills Farm is set on a grassy bluff overlooking the village to the southeast and features a rolling landscape to the northeast.

Historically a thriving, industrial-focused village, Laurel Mills is marked by a collection of domestic and commercial buildings that primarily developed in response to a growing mill industry. The buildings primarily date from the 1840s to the early 1900s, when the mill was rebuilt after a fire. Many of the buildings display the fashionable architectural styles of the period in which they were constructed. The dominant forms and styles, often vernacular in interpretation, include the Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Italianate, Gothic Revival, and a non-contributing ranch. In addition, a row of three workers' houses dating to the mid-19th century features several vernacular forms, while the mill ruins represent early-20th-century industrial architecture. Finally a, non-contributing bridge, which replaced an historic 1925 metal truss bridge in 1975, spans the Thornton River. A total of twelve contributing and seven non-contributing resources are included

in the district. The period of significance in Laurel Mills extends from circa 1840, when the first workers' houses were constructed to support an early gristmill, to 1927 when the woolen mill ceased operation. Laurel Mills appears today much as it did when the mill closed in 1927.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Laurel Mills Farm

Dating to circa 1847, the original portion of Laurel Mills Farm (078-0058-0001), located at 435 Laurel Mills Road, stands as one of the most elaborate buildings in the district. Significantly altered in the Queen Anne style circa 1880, the dwelling was originally constructed as a Greek Revival-influenced wood-frame I-house. The original two-story, center-hall dwelling featured weatherboard cladding, a central entry, a side-gabled roof, and a stone foundation. Although vernacular in form, several of the original Greek Revival-period influences remain visible. The Greek Revival style, which drew on monumental Classical Greek architecture, was popular in Virginia from about 1840 to 1860. Identifying features of the style generally include a shallow-pitched gabled roof, symmetrical fenestration, a heavy molded cornice, a column-supported porch, and a multi-light transom and sidelights. Laurel Mills Farm retains the original central entry with its characteristic transom from this period, although later expansions of the dwelling made the entrance off center.

A circa 1870 renovation at Laurel Mills Farm illustrates the use of the Italianate style. The style originated in England as part of the picturesque movement, a reaction against purely classical forms. Characteristic of the style, popular between 1850-1885, is the application of eave brackets and the use of decorative lintels, arched openings, and towers. The I-house at Laurel Mills Farm featured the use of an ornate bracketed cornice as part of a 1870s stylistic update, reflecting the growing wealth of the owner, Cornelius Smith, who also owned the mill. The decorative scroll-sawn brackets remain visible in the dwelling's attic.

The Queen Anne style, popular from 1880-1910, was favored throughout the nation for domestic architecture ranging from urban row houses to seaside retreats. Typical examples of this style nationwide were resplendent in patterned shingles, spindlework, brackets, textured wall surfaces, projecting bays, ornamental gables, multi-light windows, turrets, and large wrap-around porches. During the latter part of the 19th century, the Queen Anne style found an exuberant expression in wood, and frequently incorporated columns and decorative motifs borrowed from the nation's colonial architectural heritage. The architectural detailing of the Queen Anne style was also easily manipulated by applying only selected embellishments, making the fashionable style adaptable to many building types. The substantial enlargement of the dwelling at Laurel Mills Farm, circa 1880, further relates to the continuing prosperity of the owner. For the expansion and application of the Queen Anne detailing, Smith employed the Hawkins family, prolific builders in Rappahannock County. The enlargement features a multi-gabled roof, projecting octagonal tower, ornamented gables with vergeboard and spindlework, three-sided bays, a bracketed cornice, patterned shingles, bull's-eye cornerblocks, and a double-porch with a scroll-sawn balustrade. The dwelling also features chamfered posts with decorative brackets displaying a star motif, an identifying feature of the Hawkins family.

Early Workers' Housing

The dwellings comprising the row of workers' housing were constructed circa 1840 to support an earlier milling industry at Laurel Mills, which included a sawmill and a flour mill. The mill, Laurel Mills Farm, and these workers' dwellings are depicted on the 1866 Hotchkiss map of Rappahannock County. The dwellings remain at 468, 466, 464, and 462 Laurel Mills Road, although in circa 1897, the dwelling at 464 Laurel Mills Road, which was originally found on the north side of the road, was moved to the south side of the road. The structure was moved to make room for a new village hall/wool store that was added to the mill site. Each of the wood-frame, possibly log, one-and-a-half-story, single-pile, vernacular dwellings features a stone foundation and a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof. Each structure also has a small, one-story rear addition. None of the vernacular dwellings display any applied stylistic ornamentation.

The dwelling at 468 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0009) measures three bays in width and features a central brick entry, an enclosed gabled portico, aluminum siding, a central-interior brick chimney, overhanging eaves, and replacement one-over-one-sash vinyl windows. A one-story shed addition projects to the south. Historic photographs reveal on open portico and weatherboard cladding. Similarly, the dwelling at 466 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0003) measures three bays in width with one-over-one-sash vinyl windows. The dwelling also features overhanging eaves, vinyl siding, a half-hipped one-story porch, a central entry, and a central interior stone chimney. The third vernacular dwelling, located at 464 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0008) was added to the row of workers' housing across from the street circa 1897. The one-and-a-half-story wood-frame dwelling, clad in asbestos shingles, features a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof, overhanging eaves, and a slightly off-center interior brick chimney. The building, which sits on a solid brick foundation, also features a half-hipped one-story porch with wood posts, and one-over-one-sash vinyl windows. The fourth mid-19th-century dwelling, located at 462 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0007) features weatherboard and vinyl cladding, a double-height partially enclosed inset porch, and an exterior-end stone chimney with missing cap. A vertical-board door set into the raised stone foundation accesses the interior, while the facade is pierced with three-over-three-sash wood and one-over-one-sash vinyl windows.

The circa 1870 dwelling at 448 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0004), built for the mill manager, is representative of the Gothic Revival style, which grew out of the English Picturesque movement and was popular in the United States between 1840 and 1880. The Gothic Revival was the first of the Victorian-era styles to challenge the symmetry and ordered reason of classicism. Brooding and romantic, it was a picturesque mode with vaulted ceilings, carved brackets, battlements, lancet-arched windows and tracery, all suggesting the mysterious architectural vocabulary of the medieval past. The Gothic Revival style was often seen in rural communities, in the form of a country "villa" or small cottage as it was considered particularly compatible with the open landscape. The style was popular for domestic as well as ecclesiastical architecture. Character-defining features of the style included steeply pitched roofs, crossed or center gables, decorative vergeboards, a flush center-gable wall plane, molded window surrounds, and arched openings. The two-story wood-frame manager's house features a stone foundation, weatherboard cladding,

a central interior brick chimney, and a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof. The dwelling is adorned with a Gothic Revival-inspired flush center gable, overhanging eaves, scroll-sawn decorative vergeboard, and a one-story porch with Tuscan wood posts and a bracketed cornice. Historic photographs also reveal that a decorative x-shaped balustrade further detailed the porch.

Commercial/Industrial Resources

The construction of the Laurel Mills Store, like the 1870 Laurel Mills Farm renovation, reflects the use of the fashionable Italianate style in Rappahannock County. In turn, these stylistic improvements represent the growing prosperity in Laurel Mills. The Italianate style emerged in the 1830s along with the Gothic Revival and eventually proved to be even more popular, lasting well into the 1880s. With square towers, asymmetrical plans, broad roofs, and generous verandahs, the rambling Italianate houses that began to appear in both the suburbs and the countryside were free and highly romanticized interpretations of the villas of rural Italy. During the mid-1800s, the Italianate style was enthusiastically adapted for urban rowhouse architecture, characterized by ornate door and window surrounds, bracketed cornices, and decorative cupolas. However, like the Gothic Revival, the style also lent itself well to the rural "picturesque" landscape. Located at 461 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0006), the two-story commercial building has brick walls laid in a five-course Flemish variant on the facade and five-course American bond on the side and rear elevations. Set on a solid stone foundation, the building is capped by a front-gabled standing-seam metal roof. Decorative features, typical of the style, include a molded wood cornice with returns, a flush fascia, and scroll-sawn eave brackets with hanging pendants. The store measures three bays in width and features a central entry, six-over-six- and eight-over-eight-sash wood windows, square-edged lug lintels, a double-leaf paneled door, operable louvered wood shutters, interior-end brick chimneys, and a wrap-around porch with wood post supports that has been partially enclosed. A cornerstone reveals that the store was constructed by A.N. Wood and Son of Madison County, Virginia. Still in operation as a general store, the building has changed little since its 1877 construction.

Rappahannock Woolen Mill

Although a mill existed on the Laurel Mills mill site at least by 1847 when the property was purchased by Cornelius Smith, the present structure is largely the result of a circa 1900 reconstruction after a fire destroyed the earlier building. The present woolen mill functioned until 1927 when economic circumstances forced it to close. After 1927 the mill was allowed to deteriorate into a skeletal ruin. The now ruinous Rappahannock Woolen Mills is sited on a cleared, although slightly overgrown, lot on the west bank of the Thornton River.

Traveling eastward toward the mill, the land gently slopes in the direction of the river. A small ditch was formed on the eastern side of the mill to help channel race water away from the building. While three of the structure's four walls remain standing, the front of the structure, which faces Lucyjack Lane, and the roof are no longer intact. A poured concrete head race leads to the west side of the building and an unlined, earthen tail race exits the building on the east side, leading to the river.

Built of brick and poured concrete, the two-story structure measures eleven by seven bays. While the main entrance façade is no longer standing, the three of the building's four walls remain intact. Very few of the windows remain and only scattered projecting rafters survive from the roof. Constructed in two phases, the older, southern section of the structure rests on a fieldstone foundation, while the more modern, northern section utilizes a poured concrete foundation. Mixed construction periods can also be found in the building's east and west walls. The earlier section incorporates the remains of an early-to-mid-19th-century five-course American-bond brick wall while the later northern section employees a typical circa 1890 "insurance plan" type mill building. The insurance plan, which was initially developed by Zachariah Allen and his insurance mutual, the Manufacturer's Fire Insurance Company, was heavily promoted by fire insurance companies as a way to limit their claim liability. While the design was initially developed in the 1830s, by the late 19th century it had evolved into a matured style. The design arose out of a need for a building design that was both fireproof, and, because access to natural light was a requirement for early industrial structures, allowed for a maximum number of window openings. As a result, the eventual plan promoted by the insurance companies called for a structural system

based on masonry piers around the exterior of the building with windows found between each set of piers. The poured concrete piers with the characteristic number and spacing of the window bays serves as evidence of the adoption of this plan in the existing mill ruins. Other surviving elements of the building that relate to its use as a woolen mill include a larger, loading bay on the first story of the north elevation, and a large opening in the eastern foundation which marks the beginning of the tail race.

The structure is anchored by large, poured concrete piers on the northwestern and northeastern corners and the remains of the structural brick walls from the earlier mill on the southwest and southeast. The thinner, poured concrete piers are found on the eastern, northern and the northern half of the western foundation. Window bays are located in the spaces left between each pier. Each bay has a concrete lintel and sill. Below each of the sills is a panel infilled with brick. The panels on the upper story are approximately half the size of the panels found under the first-floor windows. Based on the surviving examples, the interior of the window openings are broken into four different sections by wooden mullions. Two rectangular, paired openings are found on the bottom of the windows. Originally each of these lower openings held a wooden two-over-two double-hung sash. Above these sashes, separated by a horizontal wooden mullion, rested a pair of four-light, fixed-sash wooden windows.

The building located at 6 Lucyjack Lane (078-0058-0005) was constructed as the payroll and storage facility for the mill in 1897. Originally associated with the woolen mill, the wood-frame building currently functions as a dwelling. Set on a stone foundation, the building features a shallow front-gabled asphalt-shingle roof. The vernacular dwelling, typical of late-19th-century construction, features a molded cornice, flush fascia, interior-end brick chimneys, and six-over-six-sash wood windows. The facade is augmented with a gabled portico with wood post supports sheltering two entries, one of which features a Dutch door. The building is currently clad in vinyl siding.

Construction After 1927

Laurel Mills stands as a cohesive milling community that remains primarily as it appeared circa 1927, when the Rappahannock Woolen Mills closed. The dwelling at 453 Laurel Mills Road (078-0058-0010) is one of only two primary resources, and the only dwelling, that has been constructed since 1927. The one-story brick ranch house, built in 1971, features an off-center front-gabled porch, a side-gabled asphalt-shingle roof, and brick veneer. Set into a hill, the dwelling is located behind the Laurel Mills Store and does not command a conspicuous presence in the district.

The other post-1927 primary resource constructed in the district is the circa 1973 vehicular bridge over the Thornton River. The bridge, constructed of three steel beam spans with a concrete deck, is 208 feet long and has a clear roadway of twenty-six feet. The bridge replaced a five-span metal truss bridge constructed by the Roanoke Iron and Bridge Company in 1925.

INVENTORY OF PROPERTIES

435 Laurel Mills Road, Laurel Mills Farm 078-0058-0001

Primary Resource Information.

Single Dwelling, Stories 2.5, Style: Queen Anne, ca 1847/ca. 1870/ca. 1880

Significantly altered in the Queen Anne style circa 1880, the dwelling was originally constructed as a Greek Revival-influenced wood-frame I-house. The original two-story, center-hall dwelling featured weatherboard cladding, a central entry, a side-gabled roof, and a stone foundation. A circa 1870 renovation at Laurel Mills Farm illustrates the use of the Italianate style. Scroll-sawn brackets are visible in the attic. For the expansion and application of the Queen Anne detailing in an 1880 expansion, the Hawkins family was employed. The enlargement features a multi-gabled roof, projecting octagonal tower, ornamented gables with vergeboard and spindlework, three-sided bays, a bracketed cornice, patterned shingles, bull's eye cornerblocks, and a double-porch with a scroll-sawn balustrade. The dwelling also features chamfered posts with decorative brackets displaying

a star motif, an identifying feature of the Hawkins family.
Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**

10 Lucyjack Lane, Rappahannock Woolen Mill Ruins 078-0058-0002
Primary Resource Information:
Mill Ruin, Stories 2, Style: Industrial, ca. 1821/ca. 1847/ca. 1900
Built of brick and poured concrete, the two-story structure measures eleven by seven bays. While the main entrance façade is no longer standing, three of the building's four walls remain intact. Very few of the windows remain and only scattered projecting rafters survive from the roof. Constructed in two phases, the older, southern section of the structure rests on a fieldstone foundation, while the more modern, northern section utilizes a poured concrete foundation. Mixed construction periods can also be found in the building's east and west walls. The earlier section incorporates the remains of an early-to-mid-19th-century five-course American-bond brick wall while the later northern section employees a typical circa 1890 "insurance plan" type mill building.
Individual Resource Status: **Mill Ruin** **Contributing**

466 Laurel Mills Road, Workers' Housing 078-0058-0003
Primary Resource Information:
Single Dwelling, Stories 1.5, Style: Other/Vernacular, ca. 1840
Set on a solid stone foundation, the wood-frame, possibly log, dwelling features a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof, central stone chimney, and one-story half-hipped porch. Clad in vinyl siding, the three-bay dwelling features a central entry, one-over-one sash vinyl windows, and a shed rear addition.
Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**

448 Laurel Mills Road, Mill Manager/Spilman House 078-0058-0004
Primary Resource Information:
Single Dwelling, Stories 2, Style: Gothic Revival, ca. 1870
The two-story wood-frame manager's house features a stone foundation, weatherboard cladding, a central interior brick chimney, and a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof. The

dwelling is adorned with a Gothic Revival-inspired flush center gable, overhanging eaves, scroll-sawn decorative vergeboard, and a one-story porch with Tuscan wood posts and a bracketed cornice. Historic photographs also reveal that a decorative x-shaped balustrade further detailed the porch.

Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Barn** **Contributing**

6 Lucyjack Lane , Wool Storage/Village Hall 078-0058-0005

Primary Resource Information:

Single Dwelling, Stories 2, Style: Other/Vernacular, ca. 1897

The wood-frame building currently functions as a dwelling. Set on a stone foundation, the building features a shallow front-gabled asphalt-shingle roof. The vernacular dwelling, typical of late-19th-century construction, features a molded cornice, flush fascia, interior-end brick chimneys, and six-over-six-sash wood windows. The facade is augmented with a gabled portico with wood post supports sheltering two entries, one of which features a Dutch door. The building is currently clad in vinyl siding.

Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Corncrib** **Contributing**

461 Laurel Mills Road, Laurel Mills Store 078-0058-0006 *Other VDHR ID #: 078-0055*

Primary Resource Information:

Commercial Building, Stories 2, Style: Italianate, ca. 1877

The two-story commercial building has brick walls laid in a five-course Flemish variant on the facade and five-course American bond on the side and rear elevations. Set on a solid stone foundation, the building is capped by a front-gabled standing-seam metal roof. Decorative features, typical of the style, include a molded wood cornice with returns, a flush fascia, and scroll-sawn eave brackets with hanging pendants. The store measures three bays in width and features a central entry, six-over-six- and eight-over-eight-sash wood windows, square-edged lug lintels, a double-leaf paneled door, operable louvered wood shutters, interior-end brick chimneys, and a partially enclosed wrap-around porch with wood post supports. A cornerstone reveals that the store was constructed by A.N.

Wood and Son of Madison County, Virginia. Still in operation as a general store, the building has changed little since its 1877 construction.
Individual Resource Status: **Commercial Building** **Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Spring/Pump** **Contributing**

462 Laurel Mills Road, Workers' Housing 078-0058-0007
Primary Resource Information:
Single Dwelling, Stories 1.5, Style: Other/Vernacular, ca. 1840
The wood-frame, possibly log, dwelling features weatherboard and vinyl cladding, a double-height partially-enclosed inset porch, and an exterior-end stone chimney with missing cap. A vertical-board door set into the raised stone foundation accesses the interior, while the facade is pierced with three-over-three-sash wood and one-over-one-sash vinyl windows. There are no stairs to the porch.
Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Shed** **Non-Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Shed** **Non-Contributing**
Individual Resource Status: **Well House** **Non-Contributing**

464 Laurel Mills Road, Workers' Housing 078-0058-0008
Primary Resource Information:
Single Dwelling, Stories 1.5, Style: Other/Vernacular, ca. 1840
The vernacular dwelling was added to the row of workers' housing across from the street circa 1897. The one-and-a-half-story wood-frame dwelling, clad in asbestos shingles, features a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof, overhanging eaves, and a slightly off-center interior brick chimney. The building, which sits on a solid brick foundation, also features a half-hipped one-story porch with wood posts, and one-over-one-sash vinyl windows. A one-story addition was added to the rear elevation.
Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**

468 Laurel Mills Road, Workers' Housing 078-0058-0009

Primary Resource Information:

Single Dwelling, Stories 1.5, Style: Other/Vernacular, ca. 1840

The dwelling measures three bays in width and features a central brick entry, an enclosed gabled portico, aluminum siding, a central-interior brick chimney, overhanging eaves, and replacement one-over-one sash vinyl windows. A one-story shed addition projects to the south. Historic photographs reveal an open portico and weatherboard cladding.

Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Contributing**

Individual Resource Status: **Shed/Shop** **Non-Contributing**

453 Laurel Mills Road, Single Dwelling 078-0058-0010

Primary Resource Information:

Single Dwelling, Stories 1 , Style: Modern/Ranch, ca. 1971

The one-story brick ranch house, built in 1971, features an off-center front-gabled porch, a side-gabled asphalt-shingle roof, and brick veneer.

Individual Resource Status: **Single Dwelling** **Non-Contributing**

Individual Resource Status: **Garage** **Non-Contributing**

Laurel Mills Road, Bridge 078-0058-0011

Primary Resource Information:

Bridge, Stories 0, Style: Other, ca. 1973

The bridge is a 1973 vehicular bridge over the Thornton River. The bridge, constructed of three steel beam spans with a concrete deck, is 208 feet long and has a clear roadway of twenty-six feet. The bridge replaced a five-span metal truss bridge constructed by the Roanoke Iron and Bridge Company in 1925.

Individual Resource Status: **Bridge** **Non- Contributing**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Statement

Laurel Mills, located along the Thornton River in southeastern Rappahannock County, Virginia, was officially established as a village in 1847, although a sawmill and a gristmill were known to operate there beginning in the late 18th century. Small, but significant growth, including residential and commercial interests, was constructed to support this thriving milling community, which was located within a largely agrarian county. Laurel Mills is important for its cohesive collection of mid-to-late-19th-century architectural resources associated with the Rappahannock Woolen Mills. The compact village, which developed in response to the growing mill industry, took advantage of local geographical features including the Thornton River, which provided water power to run the mill, and a large bluff on which the mill owner's large dwelling was located overlooking the village below. The district's buildings line a single road, which follows the topography, curving sharply near the western edge of the district at the bluff.

Eligible under Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places, the Laurel Mills Historic District is important for its transformation from a mid-19th-century rural mill site to a thriving woolen mill village with a period of significance extending from circa 1840 to 1927. The historic district is significant for its association with the themes of architecture and industry. Laurel Mills is recognized for its relationship with the milling industry, including a pre-1821 gristmill and a later state-of-the-art early-20th-century woolen mill. Furthermore, Laurel Mills is significant for its architectural resources reflecting the changing fashions and economic stability of Rappahannock County in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting the vernacular as well as the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne styles.

The district, which includes 56.27 acres, consists of eight dwellings, a mill ruin, a store, and a bridge. Additionally, there are eight secondary resources, including a barn, a corncrib, and spring/pump, a garage, a well house, and three sheds. In total, there are twelve contributing and seven non-contributing resources.

Although the circa 1925 metal truss bridge spanning the Thornton River was replaced with a concrete deck bridge in 1975, and one modern ranch house has been added to the community, little else has changed since the mill closed in 1927.

Criterion A: That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

The Laurel Mills Historic District meets Criterion A of the National Register of Historic Places as a community associated with the historic, economic, and cultural contributions of the 19th- and early 20th-century milling industry in Rappahannock County. The village also demonstrates the development of the milling industry from a small, locally-supported gristmill to a woolen mill which produced goods for the larger, regional market. Finally, the district also clearly demonstrates the hierarchy of housing and living conditions associated with different social classes found in a rural industrial community.

Criterion C: That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The rural village of Laurel Mills meets Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places for its intact concentration of domestic, commercial, and industrial architecture constructed to support a small, 19th- and early-20th-century milling community. Sited along a prominent river, the village, which sustained the Rappahannock Woolen Mill Company, includes the mills ruins, a row of workers' housing, the mill store/village hall, a general store, the mill manager's house, and the mill owner's house. Constructed primarily in the vernacular tradition using well-known local architects and builders, the village features representative examples of fashionable architectural trends that were sweeping the county during the late19th and early 20th centuries, including the Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival and Italianate styles. The stylish architectural features are revealed on the more prominent dwellings, as evidenced by the mill and the store,

while more vernacular detailing is seen on the workers' cottages. This dichotomy serves to represent both the economic structure and periods of prosperity for the milling industry in Laurel Mills.

Historical Background

Rappahannock County's Rural Roots

Rappahannock County was formed from Culpeper County by an act of the General Assembly in February 8, 1833, spurred by a petition signed by two hundred citizens. The new county took its name from the Rappahannock River that marked its northeastern boundary. While the newly established county had 13 small towns or villages by 1833 [There were post offices in the villages of Flint Hill (1742/1823), Washington (1796), Woodville (1798), Gaines Crossroads (1803, later Ben Venue), Bromfield (1806), Slate Mills (1809), Amissville (1810), Sandy Hook (1814, later Huntly), Newby's Crossroads (1814, including what became Laurel Mills), Rock Mills (1823 as Browning's Store), Hawsbury (1832), and Melville Mills (1832)] and one large town, Washington, the county seat and mercantile and business nucleus, the county was at its founding, and remains today, a predominantly rural landscape.

Rappahannock County was first listed in the census records apart from Culpeper County in 1840, when a total of 9,257 persons were tallied, of which approximately a quarter were slaves (3,663). However the county was not growing and by 1860 the total population had fallen to 8,850 persons (including slaves). Agriculture was the primary occupation during the county's early years. Of the 3,111 residents employed in 1840, 2,704 (86.9%) were employed in agriculture, while 336 (10.8%) were employed in manufacturing, and only 27 (.8%) made their living through commerce.

While the agricultural products being produced in 1840 were varied, several crops stand out. The farmers in Rappahannock County were the state's fourth largest producer of wheat (179,850

bushels), fifth in rye (32,146 bushels) and also fifth in wool production (26,422 pounds). In addition, a substantial amount of corn (309,950 bushels) was grown, although twenty-one counties were producing more. The predominance of these crops to the economy resulted in the county's small amount of industrial activity which focused on grain milling and distilling (Rappahannock produced 7,725 gallons of bonded distilled sprits in 1840, making it the fifth largest producer in the state). Of the ninety water-powered mills in the county in 1840, there were twenty flouring mills and thirty-eight gristmills. However, even with the significant amount of wool produced, the county had not built a single fulling or woolen mill to process the local fleece.

By 1880 there were 741 farms recorded in Rappahannock County and in 1890 the number had increased to 852. The 1900 census also records that the number of farms had increased again, with the number reaching 977, the historical pinnacle of farms in the county. While these statistics suggest that acreage under cultivation was increasing, the growth in farms was actually due primarily to the gradual subdivision of existing parcels. In 1880 a majority of the farms were between 100 and 500 acres, whereas by 1900 a majority was found to be between twenty and 100 acres. As noted by the 1890 agricultural census, nearly all of these farms were cultivated by the owners, with only thirty-three rented for a fixed amount and 161 rented for shares in the profits. Interestingly, while the amount of corn produced (308,494 bushels) in 1890 remained almost unchanged from 1840, the number of bushels of wheat and rye plummeted (54,375 and 5,869 bushels respectively). Causes of the decreased output could be tied to the growing inefficiency of the smaller farming units.

Another trend in the county's agricultural history, which directly affected the success of the Rappahannock Woolen Mills (founded in 1891), was the county's sheep population. While the actual number of sheep would decline throughout the years, the amount of wool produced by each animal rose, reflecting an improvement in animal husbandry throughout the county. Agricultural census records report that the number of sheep in Rappahannock in 1840 was 13,195, a number significantly larger than the number of horse, cattle, or poultry, and only exceeded by swine. In 1850, 9,130 sheep are reported in the county producing 24,948 pounds of

wool. By 1860, the number of sheep further dropped to 6,679, but production of wool was almost equal at 23,338 pounds. However, even with all of the available wool, no woolen manufacturers are listed during these years. By 1900 the trend continues with a total of 5,825 mature sheep producing 5,883 shorn fleeces and 31,179 pounds of wool. The declining trend in the number of sheep was sustained throughout the early 20th century and by 1920 only 3,577 sheep were located in the county.

Cornelius Smith, who constructed Laurel Mills Farm in 1847, was, with his son William Smith, one of the largest sheep farmers in the county. William Smith sold almost 3,000 pounds of wool in 1891. Another important figure in the county's woolen trade was Joseph Schwartz, an expert dyer who immigrated to Frederick, Maryland from Germany. He relocated to Rappahannock County and established the South Fork Woolen Factory on the Thornton River near Castleton, which appears to be Rappahannock's first woolen mill. Schwartz published "The Family Dyer" a recipe book of traditional wool dyes that he had perfected. The mill was later known as the Schwartz Factory during the company's ownership by his son, John Michael Schwartz. Specializing in heavy woolen goods, the business operated successfully near Sperryville until 1891 when it burned. The insurance claim was handled by the county's oldest company, the Rappahannock Home Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Cornelius Smith, one of the directors of the insurance company, may have seen this event as a significant opportunity to expand his milling business in Laurel Mills.[1]

Establishment and Evolution of Laurel Mills (1847-1927)

Laurel Mills, thought to be part of one of the oldest settlements in Rappahannock County, was not established as a village proper until 1847.[2] Although the *Virginia Gazetteer* of 1835 does not specifically mention Laurel Mills, the area was considered to be part of the nearby hamlet of Newby's Crossroads, located one-half mile to the east of the Thornton River.[3] According to the 1835 *Gazetteer*, Newby's Crossroads, established with a post office by 1814, featured a population of thirty persons and included several dwellings, two stores, as well as several

tanyards and flour mills within a six-mile radius. While a redrawn 1776 map places Robert's Mill near the site of Laurel Mills, a map by John Wood depicts Baker's sawmill there by 1821. Of note is also an existing spring at Laurel Mills that was originally owned by Peter Grigsby. It appears that this was a well-known landmark as it was referred to in the county's circa 1836 district boundaries. In 1847, the Laurel Mills Post Office was established, replacing the post office at Newby's Crossroads and lending the name of Laurel Mills to the area. It is surmised that the name "Laurel Mills" came from the neighboring estate of Major John Roberts, Laurel Hill, prosaically named for the abundance of laurel in the area. In addition, the name "Laurel Mills" also suggests the existence of one or more mills at the time of its founding. Also, the village's prime location along the Thornton River, originally known as the River Firth, reinforces the connection to early milling operations. Finally, a modern map drawn by historian Eugene Scheel that depicts historic properties throughout Rappahannock County places the Rappahannock Woolen Mills on the site of the previously existing "Laurel Mills."

The land that became the village of Laurel Mills was part of a 1,000-acre tract consolidated by Archibald Tutt, Sr. in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1824, Tutt died and his land holdings were put in a trust headed by James Ford. Basil Gordon, one of Virginia's wealthiest landowners, purchased the property at auction in 1836 for $12,500. In January of 1847 the property was purchased by William Roberts, the owner of neighboring Laurel Hill. The following month Roberts subdivided the property, and two of the resulting tracts, containing a total of 295 acres, were conveyed to Cornelius Smith and William Henry Browning. Architectural evidence suggests that Smith and Brown expanded an original mill with a more substantial brick structure soon after they purchased the property.

Cornelius Smith, the patriarch of the family that had the largest impact on the village, was appointed as Laurel Mills' first postmaster in 1847 at the age of thirty-one. Soon after purchasing the land from Roberts, Smith also built a modest Greek Revival I-house for his family and began to raise sheep, a decision that would later directly impact his decision to open the Rappahannock Woolen Mills. The dwelling, which is currently known as Laurel Mills Farm, was updated circa 1870 with Italianate-style detailing and later vastly expanded in the Queen Anne

style by Smith's son, Colonel William Smith. The dwelling's fashionable evolution reflects the growing prosperity of the Smith family and Laurel Mills.

Ten years later, in 1857, Cornelius Smith consolidated his interest in the property by purchasing Browning's interest. Smith had also acquired significant wealth and social standing throughout these years and in 1864 he was elected a county justice.[4] A layout of the village is noted on the 1866 Hotchkiss map, which reveals a mill, Smith's dwelling, and three other mid-19th-century structures that supported the mill as workers' housing. By circa 1870, a mill manager's house had been added to the growing village. All of these buildings remain in the village today. Accounts from 1870 also reveal that Cornelius Smith's son, William, was running a general store in Laurel Mills, although the building's location is not known. Census records of 1870 state that William Smith, age 24, was a "merchant," while Smith's other son, Hugh, age 19, was a "clerk in store." This same census shows that Cornelius Smith was worth $19,000 in real estate while his personal estate was worth $10,000.

Evidence that the village was truly beginning to prosper is visible by 1877 when the existing Laurel Mills Store was constructed for Cornelius Smith and presumably run by his two sons. Constructed of masonry in the fashionable Italianate style, the building further reflects the growing prosperity of the community. Smith also updated his own dwelling in the Italianate style during this period. While the evidence of this renovation is not readily apparent, ornate carved brackets remain ensconced in the attic at Laurel Mills Farm.

While Laurel Mills itself was growing at this time, the land around the village maintained an agricultural focus. Farmers listed as Laurel Mills vicinity residents in the 1880 *Gazetteer* were Cornelius and William Smith, R.A. Whitescarver, William Lillard, Philip Cooksey, A. Wood, P. Hughes, C. Fields, Henry Spicer, H. Anderson, William Miller, T. Kinsey, T. Cannon, James Settle, Richard Browning, Tarelton Carr, James Norman, William Nonnan, J. Scraggins, Lee Estes, T. Wayland, L. Hicks, Thomas Deatherage, Benjamin Duncan, and W. Dudley. Philip Cooksey was also listed as a distiller and John Artz as a carriage maker. Cornelius Smith is also listed as the proprietor of a corn or flour mill. At this time, J.M. Schwartz of Castleton is also the

only woolen mill operator/wool dealer noted in the county and was, in all likelihood, processing wool produced by Cornelius's son, William.[5]

Around 1880, under the supervision of master carpenter George W. Hawkins, one of the county's most significant builders, Colonel William Smith, further expanded Laurel Mills Farm in the exuberant Queen Anne style. In 1877 Smith had purchased the 295-acre Laurel Mills Farm property, which straddled the Thornton River, from his parents for $7,200.[6] William Smith also continued to operate the grist and sawmill, with Harry A. Wood eventually joining him as a partner. The continuing rural character of the area is evidenced by Chataigne's *Gazetteer* of 1884-1885, which lists Cornelius Smith, Thomas Deatherage, Richard H. Browning, Tarleton Carr, David S. Browning, William J. Lillard, William M. Smith, H.A. Wood, P.A. Hughes, Charles D. Fields, Philip Cooksey, Henry Spicer, John R. Browning, H.B. Anderson, Major R.A. Whitescarver, and William Mills all as farmers in Laurel Mills. However, an 1887 account relates that the economy of the village was diversifying and that a hotel (which Smith may have run out of Laurel Mills Farm), a store, a grist and sawmill, a carriage maker, and a distillery were all found in the village.

As the Smith family prospered, it appears William Smith brought Henry W. Spilman, the son of Baldwin Spilman, a local tailor, to the village circa 1880 in order to manage the Laurel Mill store. Because the post office was located in the store, Spilman was also named the village postmaster. Spilman appears to have rented the mill manager's house across from the store from William Smith, where he lived until 1890. Deed records and plats refer to the lot as the "Spilman lot," although Spilman never owned the land. In the 1880 *Gazetteer*, merchants in Laurel Mills included H.W. Spilman and Philip Strother. H.W. Spilman is also listed as operating a saloon, which was housed in the basement of the Laurel Mills Store (physical evidence of this use still exists). Accounting ledgers and other archival documents from Spilman's store reveal that the store was "a dealer in general merchandise and everything found in a first-class country store."[7] However, circa 1890, it appears that Spilman established his own store in Viewtown, where he moved after purchasing the estate of Colonel John Shackelford. The Laurel Mills Store was then run by William R. Spilman who, according to the 1910 census, was a thirty-five-year-old

"merchant" in a "country store." He also served as the postmaster. The same census continues to list Henry Spilman as a "farmer," although his son Moffett, age 24, is listed as a "clerk," probably in the Viewtown Store. Henry Spilman's lot in Laurel Mills was sold to the Rappahannock Woolen Mills by William Smith in 1892. William R. Spilman continued to run the Laurel Mills store into the first quarter of the 20th century, at least until 1917, according to store ledgers.

The Rappahannock Woolen Mills Company

In 1891, Cornelius Smith seized the opportunity to capitalize on the fire at the Schwartz mill, and helped to organize the Rappahannock Woolen Mills Company in the building where his family's flour mill was operating. John Schwartz, the owner of the Schwartz mill, was also persuaded to become superintendent of the new wool company, a capacity that he served in until his death in 1894. The company's initial board of directors included Cornelius Smith, John Schwartz, P. Henry O'Bannon, S. Russell Smith, Henry A. Wood, Frank Dudley, who later served as the mill manager, and Smith's two sons, Hugh M. and William N. Smith. The Woolen Mills Company purchased ten acres from William Smith and Harry A. Wood in 1892 for $3,000. Interestingly, one of the stipulations of the deed was that the woolen mill was not allowed to establish a store on the property without the consent of William Smith, a move obviously conceived to protect Smith's existing store from competition.[8] The newly formed company used local wool to produce high-quality fabric, while other mills in the neighboring counties were typically producing only yarn. An advertisement in the local newspaper, the *Blue Ridge Guide*, dated May 14, 1891 promoted the "new woolen factory." The paper reported that "A number of our enterprising gentlemen have formed a company and will put in machinery for a large woolen factory at Laurel Mills at an early date, the flouring mill to be taken out. This is a good enterprise and our people should give it their hearty support. We need more enterprises. Mr. J.M. Schwartz, a gentleman of large experience, will have charge of the factory."[9]

An "Inventory of the Rappahannock Woolen Mills" by C. Wood dated October 1, 1895 reveals that the mill was divided into at least seven rooms, with the grading room on the fourth floor, the picking room on the third floor, the card room on the second floor, the weave room on the 1st

floor, the fulling room in the basement, as well as the press room, the dye room, and the mill room (no locations given for these rooms). This arrangement reveals that the raw wool would have been initially stored on the fourth floor and then was processed until the finished product was completed in the basement. The inventory also reveals some clues about the early woolen mill's operation. Power to the mill was supplied by a water wheel (probably a remnant from the mill's history as a flouring mill) and two turbines. These turbines were initially invented in France in 1827 and by the mid-19th century had become widespread throughout the milling industry. Turbines were preferred to the mill wheel because they were more efficient and could be used even when the temperatures dropped below freezing.[10] The mill also featured a steam engine and an early, eight-horsepower gasoline engine to provide supplemental power to the equipment. Other machinery listed in the inventory included shafting and pulleys, belts, two bevel-gear wheels, a Coatesville boiler, a water pump, and a folding cloth table.

The inventory also lists other structures that were associated with the mill. Tenant houses, a meat house, a cooper shop, and a work shop were all found on the mill's ten-acre lot. An undated addition to the inventory, which may have been after a large expansion in the early 20th century, includes a spooler, scales, an extractor, a drier, an electric light generator, a work house, a three-story twenty-four by forty-two-foot storage house, an eighteen-by-thirty-foot barn, and an eight-by-sixteen-foot corn house.

The success of the operation was evident by 1897 when the company constructed a freestanding mill store, which served as the mill offices and provided payroll and storage facilities. It has since been converted into a single-family dwelling. The date of construction was confirmed by an April 11, 1897 letter written by the mill manager, Frank Dudley, which states that "the carpenters are here now building a big house for wool and to keep the cloth in. We want to get it ready for this year's clip of wool."[11] A mill document dated October 17, 1899 advertises, "The Offices of The Rappahannock Woolen Mills Co., Manufacturers of Woolen Goods and Yarns, And Dealers in General Merchandise. Laurel Mills, VA."

The mill prospered in Laurel Mills until the early 1900s when the building was devastated by fire. A local citizen, Hugh Miller, remarked "Thank God that old mill burned. I'm tired of wearing

pants that never wear out."[12] This quote affirms the high-quality product that the mill was producing. Fortunately the mill was insured through the Rappahannock Mutual Fire Insurance Company, which was one of Rappahannock's oldest businesses and organized locally by Cornelius Smith, Gideon H. Brown, William F. Anderson, John Browning, Lewis Botts, Robert E. Miller, and Middleton Miller. Although the claim almost caused financial ruin for the insurance company, the mill was soon rebuilt and incorporated expensive new state-of-the-art milling equipment. Architectural evidence reveals that while much of the mill was destroyed by fire, some of the older brickwork was incorporated into the rebuilt facility. It also appears that the mill was expanded at this time, with an addition roughly doubling the size of the old mill. The addition was designed and built in a standard style developed by insurance agencies in the late 19th century.[13] The significant features of these designs, as seen in a plan developed and promoted by the Factory Insurance Association in 1890, included thick masonry piers at the corner of the building with thinner masonry piers evenly spaced throughout the building. Large window banks, located between every pier, and extremely low-pitched roofs were also common factors in the design. Many of these elements remain evident in the circa 1900 section of the mill ruins. Physical evidence also strongly suggests that the mill continued to be operated with turbines (the head race was re-built in poured concrete during the reconstruction and it clearly reflects a turbine type arrangement). Finally, it is also recorded that the mill's equipment was also updated at this time and that new state-of-the-art machinery was installed.[14] In 1917, the mill company also purchased two tracts of land from the estate of T.C. Smith, William Smith's son, including a 46.73-acre plot, as well as the Laurel Mills Store and the Spilman lot. Furthermore, the estate sold Laurel Mills Farm to the Bolen family in 1919.

Mill records dating to the early 20th century also clearly show how the labor for the newly reconstructed mill was organized. Operations at the mill were overseen by a single manager, with Frank Dudley serving in this capacity at least from 1898 to 1927.[15] Under the manager's direction were two separate classes of employees. The higher of the two classes were the salaried employees, including Clifford Moore (1908) and Charley Young (1920), who received a set amount of money on an annual basis. Between 1908 and 1920 the amount they were paid ranged from $145.00 to $225.00. Because it was difficult to attract these skilled workers to the rural

Rappahannock countryside, commodities other than cash were often mentioned in the contracts. A typical contract included a house to live in, a milch cow, a plot of land for growing vegetables, 300 pounds of pork, three barrels of flour, one hog and all of the corn that could be eaten. In addition, the wives of the salaried labors were often given the right to pick up the wind fallen apples in a nearby orchard. The second class of employees was the less-skilled workers who, until 1919, were paid monthly. A representative monthly wage in 1908 was $10, which was paid to Irvin Recton. When the daily wage system was adopted in 1919, the pay ranged from $2.00 (earned by Edward Scott) to $0.50 (earned by Addison See), suggesting a further division of laborers. Interestingly, one of the wives of the daily-wage earners was also employed at the mill in 1919. Allie Whorton, wife of William Whorton, was paid $1.75 per day, which was $0.75 more than her husband earned. Again, because these unsalaried workers were employed in a remote area of the county, boarding was also granted if needed. Finally, as is typical of many mill towns, many of the laborers had accounts at the neighboring Laurel Mills Store. Typical items purchased, as evidenced by the 1907 store ledgers, included shoes, thread, paint, china, cloth, plow points, nails, and tobacco.

The expensive expansion of the milling equipment after the fire proved a financial disaster for the Rappahannock Woolen Mill Company and the mill closed in 1927. The mill trustees sold the two tracts totaling approximately 60 acres holdings to W.G. Wood, R.C. Miller, F.D. Wood, and John A. Keyser the same year the mill closed. In 1944, the 46-acre tract was purchased by M. Lee Blankenbaker. The remainder of the land was sold at public auction in 1950. The lots have since been sold to individual owners. The mill, which appears to have been abandoned after 1927, was left to slowly deteriorate into skeletal ruins.

However, Laurel Mills has changed little since the mill closed in 1927 and remains a cohesive historic community spawned by the growth of the 20th-century milling industry. The village includes the ruins of the burned mill, a general store, a row of workers' housing, the manager's house, the mill storage house/village hall, Laurel Mills Farm, a bridge, and a non-contributing single-family dwelling.

The Hawkins Family of Builders

George W. Hawkins was the patriarch of Rappahannock County's most prolific and influential building family. For almost a century, the Hawkins family, which also included Charlie, Joe, and George, Jr., among others, created a building dynasty spanning three generations, constructing dwellings, churches, mills, stores, schools, and other significant buildings, bringing fashionable architectural trends to the rural Rappahannock community. There are more than two dozen known surviving buildings attributed to one or more of the Hawkins builders. The Hawkins houses are unique among a population of more subdued "folk houses" often associated with rural Virginia counties. Utilizing fashionable architectural trends, state-of-the-art technology, and local building traditions, the Hawkins family created a lasting legacy and a style all their own.

High-style examples of the Hawkins buildings range from rock-faced concrete block attempts to recreate antebellum Greek Revival grandeur (Hampden Hall and the Miller House) to brick or wood-frame I-houses with the finest Italianate detailing (Rose Hill or the Stark House). Similarly, dramatic Queen Anne additions expanded earlier structures, as evidenced at Laurel Mills Farm as well as Oak Forest. After the onset of the Depression, the builders turned to more affordable, although still fashionable, Craftsman/Bungalow-style buildings, as evidenced in Woodville's 1929 tornado aftermath when Charlie Hawkins was employed to construct a church and a handful of bungalows.

While George W. Hawkins catered to affluent Rappahannock County landowners during the prosperous 1880s and 1890s, constructing high-quality fashionable country estates, his son Charlie, a master builder, embraced the technological advancements of the 20th century, including the railroad which allowed mass-produced detailing to be supplied by mail order. In 1912, Charlie and Joe Hawkins purchased Thermopylae, a 265-acre farm, in order to obtain timber. They also erected a sawmill run by a steam engine and drying kiln on the property, which functioned as the business headquarters. The use of their own wood supply and sawmill, coupled with the fact that speculation was never a factor helped the Hawkins family weather the Depression. During this period of economic instability, Charlie Hawkins was responsible for the construction of apple-packing houses and motor-court cabins. Charlie Hawkins worked until his death in 1958.

Endnotes

[1] *On the Morning Side of the Blue Ridge* states that the water-powered mill was founded and run by the Spilman Brothers. However the Spilman's are not listed in the directors list and the 1911 census lists William Smith as the owner. The article also states that the Smith house was constructed for Spilman, although this is unlikely. Eugene Scheel's 1999 map also lists the Smith house as belonging to Spilman. Deed research refutes this information. The Spilman lot was located across from the store.
[2] Daphne Hutchinson and Theresa Reynolds. *On the Morning Side of the Blue Ridge*: A Glimpse of Rappahannock County's Past. Warrenton, VA: The Rappahannock News, 1983, p. 40.
[3] Report on the Agricultural Census, Record Group 287, National Archives at College Park, Department of the Interior, Census Office (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870-1900).
[4] Mary Elizabeth Hite. *My Rappahannock Storybook.* Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1950, p. 49.
[5] Elisabeth and C.E. Johnson, Jr. in *Rappahannock County, VA History: Fact, Foolishness and Fairfax Story.* Salem, WV: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981, p. 263.
[6] Rappahannock County Land Records. Deed Book O, page 471. 4/16/1877.
[7] Spilman Store Ledger's. University of Virginia, Special Collections.
[8] Rappahannock County Land Records. Deed Book U, page 1. 8/15/1892
[9] Advertisement. *Blue Ridge Guide,* May 14, 1891.
[10] Martha and Murray Zimiles. *Early American Mills*, New York: Bramhall House, 1973, p. 22.
[11] Johnson, p. 369.
[12] Johnson, p. 369.
[13] Zimiles, p. 194.
[14] Johnson, p. 369.
[15] Johnson, p. 369 and Rappahannock County Land Records Deed Book 53, Page 594. 6/8/1927

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Geographical Data

UTM References

5) /1/7/ /7/5/3/3/7/4/ /4/2/8/1/5/6/4/ 6) /1/7/ /7/5/3/1/0/4/ /4/2/8/1/7/3/2/

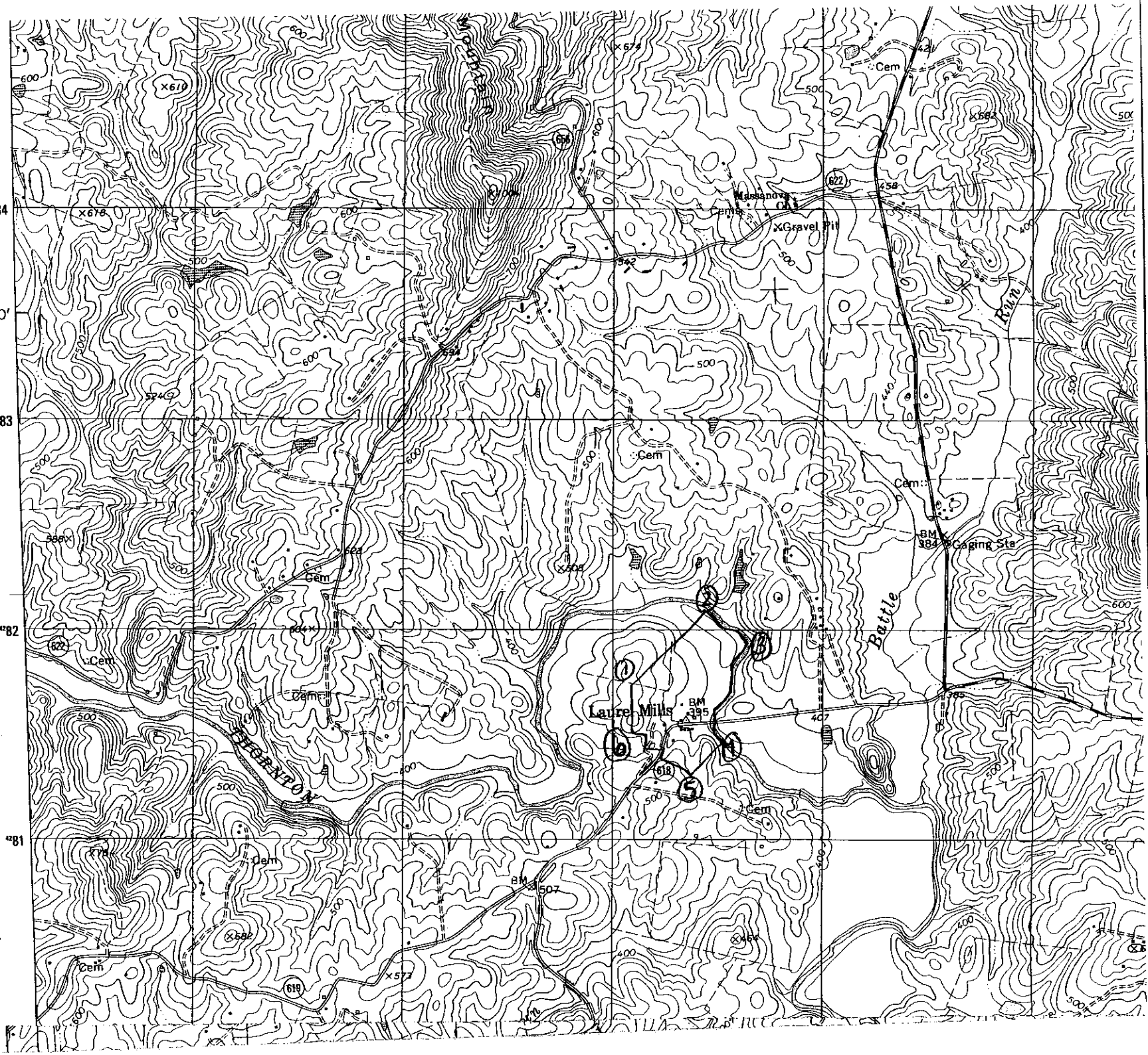
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The Laurel Mills Historic District is located in southeastern Rappahannock County, Virginia. The village, which is transected by Laurel Mills Road (Route 618), is bordered by the Thornton River on the east and the western boundary of Laurel Mills Farm on the west. The northern and southern boundaries coincide with the property lines of the parcels lining Laurel Mills Road and Lucyjack Road. The small, residential community currently occupies approximately 56.27 acres, and contains the eleven individual land parcels.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Laurel Mills Historic District follow the outline established by the eleven parcels that create the district, as noted on the Rappahannock County Land Records tax parcel map 41, including parcels 31E, 33, 31, 34, 33 A, and Map 41A, including A 5, A 4, A 3, A 1 and 2 A. Additionally, the Laurel Mills Bridge is included in the district. The shared development history and association with the Rappahannock Woolen Mills unite these individual land plats. The boundaries of the historic district are created to encompass the core village of Laurel Mills, including properties associated with the milling industry. A non-historic ranch house has been included due to its central location within the district. A non-historic bridge over the Thornton River is included in the district due to its association with the 1925 metal truss bridge that it replaced.


Laurel Mills
Laurel Mills Historic District
(VDHR 078-0058)
Rappahannock county, VA
UTM References:
1) 17/753112/4281951
2) 17/753475/4282311
3) 17/753667/4282168
4) 17/753526/4281704
5) 17/753374/4281564
6) 17/753104/4281732
Massanova
Gravel Pit
Gaging Sta
Battle
Run
THORNTON
Cem
BM 395
BM 384
BM 507
4284
4283
4282
4281
40'

Note: The following information is common to all photographs.

Name: Laurel Mills Historic District (VDHR File Number: 078-0058)
Location: County of Rappahannock, Virginia
Photographer: Arcadia Preservation, LLC: photographers
Date of Photo: March 2004
Location of Negatives: Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, VA

VIEW OF: Village of Laurel Mills, looking East (078-0058)
NEG. NO.: 21418/2
PHOTO: 1 of 12

VIEW OF: Laurel Mills Farm, 435 Laurel Mills Road, looking West (078-0058-0001)
NEG. NO.: 21418/4
PHOTO: 2 of 12

VIEW OF: Rappahannock Woolen Mills Ruins, 10 Lucyjack Lane, Looking SE (078-0058- 0002)
NEG. NO.: 21418/14
PHOTO: 3 of 12

VIEW OF: Workers' Housing, 468 Laurel Mills Road, Looking South (078-0058-0009)
NEG. NO.: 21418/15
PHOTO: 4 of 12

VIEW OF:, Worker's Housing, 466 Laurel Mills Road, Looking South (078-0058-0003)
NEG. NO.: 21418/16
PHOTO: 5 of 12

VIEW OF: Workers' Housing, 464 Laurel Mills Road, Looking South (078-0058-0008)
NEG. NO.: 21418/17
PHOTO: 6 of 12

VIEW OF: Workers' Housing, 462 Laurel Mills Road, Looking South (078-0058-0007)
NEG. NO.: 21418/18
PHOTO: 7 of 12

VIEW OF: Mill Manager's House, 448 Laurel Mills Road, Looking SW
(078-0058-0004)
NEG. NO.: 21418/27
PHOTO: 8 of 12

VIEW OF: Laurel Mills Store and Village, Looking East (078-0058)
NEG. NO.: 21418/28
PHOTO: 9 of 12

VIEW OF: Laurel Mills Store, 461 Laurel Mills Road, Looking NW (078-0058-0006)
NEG. NO.: 21418/31
PHOTO: 10 of 12

VIEW OF: Village Hall/Wool Store, 6 Lucyjack Lane, Looking North (078-0058-0005)
NEG. NO.: 21418/32
PHOTO: 11 of 12

VIEW OF: Laurel Mills Bridge, Laurel Mills Road, Looking West (078-0058-0011)
NEG. NO.: 21418/36
PHOTO: 12 of 12

Laurel Mills Historic District

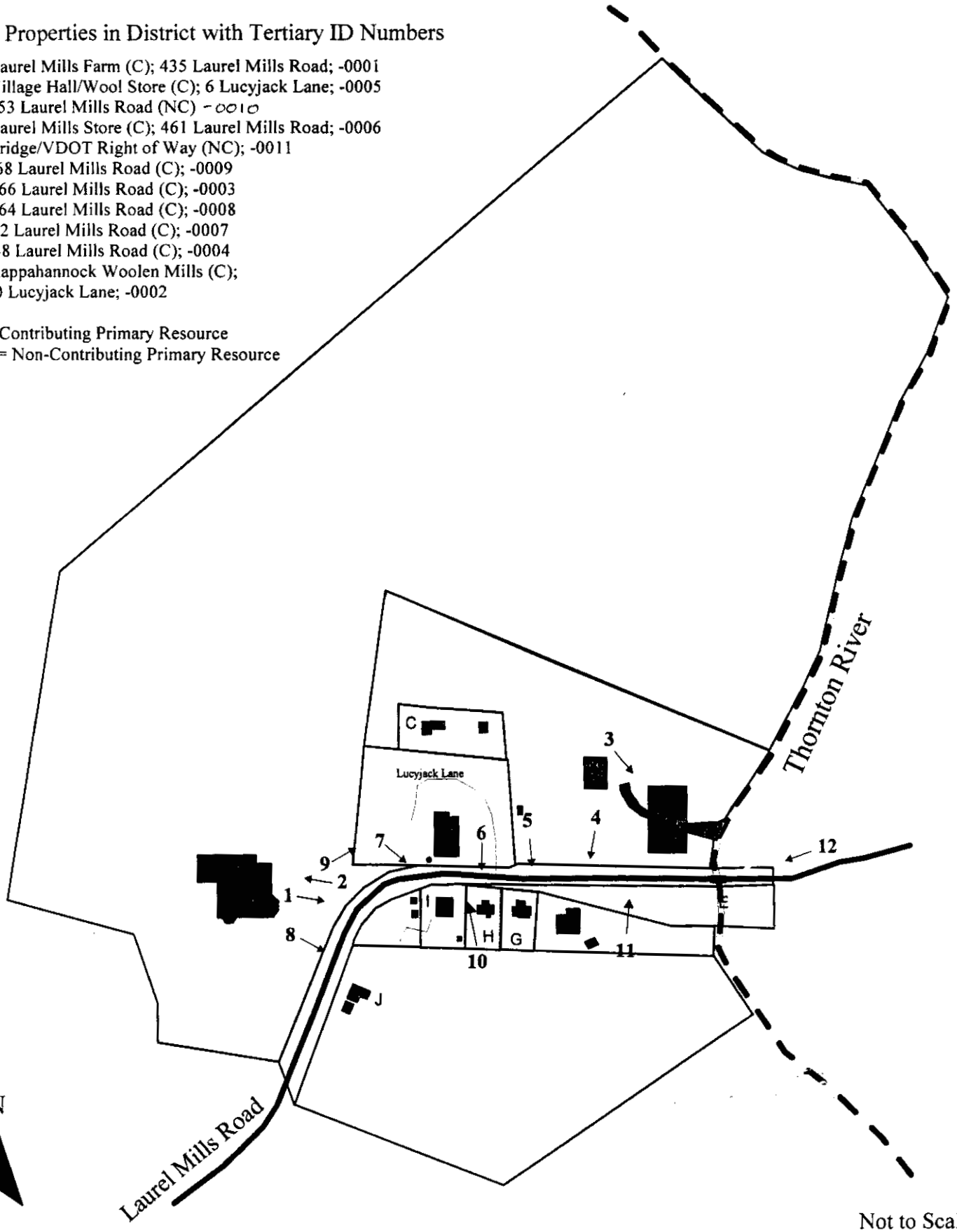
(VDHR ID Number: 078-0058)

Numbers and Arrows are Keyed to the Photo List

Key to Properties in District with Tertiary ID Numbers

A. Laurel Mills Farm (C); 435 Laurel Mills Road; -0001
B. Village Hall/Wool Store (C); 6 Lucyjack Lane; -0005
C. 453 Laurel Mills Road (NC) -0010
D. Laurel Mills Store (C); 461 Laurel Mills Road; -0006
E. Bridge/VDOT Right of Way (NC); -0011
F. 468 Laurel Mills Road (C); -0009
G. 466 Laurel Mills Road (C); -0003
H. 464 Laurel Mills Road (C); -0008
I. 462 Laurel Mills Road (C); -0007
J. 448 Laurel Mills Road (C); -0004
K. Rappahannock Woolen Mills (C);
10 Lucyjack Lane; -0002

C = Contributing Primary Resource
NC = Non-Contributing Primary Resource



Not to Scale