

VLR- 2/10/88 NRHP- 9/11/89

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Warm Springs Mill
other names/site number Miller Mill, Inn at Gristmill Square; 08-22

2. Location

street & number East side of Route 645
city, town Warm Springs
state Virginia code VA county Bath code 017 zip code 24484

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public and building/site/structure/object, and counts for contributing/noncontributing resources.

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: July 18, 1988
Director, VA Division of Historic Landmarks
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[] 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:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Industry -- manufacturing facility

commerce -- restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other; heavy timber construction

foundation stone

walls wood - weatherboard

roof metal - tin

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Warm Springs Mill (or Miller Mill) is located on the east side of Route 645 and is adjacent to Warm Springs Run in Warm Springs, Bath County. Built circa 1901 by its owner-operator W. H. Miller, the gristmill is a three-story, gable-roofed frame building with an iron overshot Fitz water wheel located on its north side. The wheel is still operational and the original mill race is in good condition.

Although now used as a restaurant, the mill's interior has retained nearly all of its original appearance. The mill works, including belts, chutes, grain elevators, a wooden face wheel and gears are visible in the cellar. The first floor interior, now a dining room, is also little changed and features vertical board panelling, exposed heavy timber beams, an elaborate system of chutes, hoppers, and the millstone in its wooden vat, all in excellent condition. The former miller's office, now a pub, is located at the southeast corner. Alterations to the building include the addition of a small kitchen wing and the conversion of the third floor to apartments. A pulley and chute system is still visible in the attic.

On the property are three non-contributing buildings, two predating the construction of the mill, which have been converted into guest rooms and a store. These buildings are not connected to the mill, but together with the mill form three sides of a small courtyard.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Industry

Period of Significance 1938
1901 - 1971

Significant Dates
NA

Cultural Affiliation
NA

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
W. H. Miller

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Warm Springs Mill is significant as the only extant mill building in Bath County and as an important reminder of the once thriving industrial life of Warm Springs in the early 20th century. It was a successful and important business in Bath County and stayed in operation under a succession of owners until it closed in 1971, outlasting the more than twenty mills which were operating in the county when it was first built by W.H. Miller in 1901. The mill has retained most of its interior and exterior features intact and is a virtual museum of milling machinery, all in excellent condition. The mill is therefore a valuable relic of the once thriving milling industry in Virginia.

The Warm Springs Mill is a very late and significant example of a water-powered gristmill producing stone ground flour, built at a time when many other millers in Virginia and the nation were building roller mills and experimenting with the "New Process" of milling. The design of the Warm Springs Mill is based on traditional millwrighting practice and technology perfected more than a century earlier by the millwright and inventor Oliver Evans. It serves, therefore as an intact and largely

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Architectural Description --

The Warm Springs Mill (or Miller Mill), along with the adjacent complex of buildings known as Gristmill Square, are located on the east side of Route 645 in the Germantown section of Warm Springs, county seat of Bath County. The mill stands on the south bank of Warm Springs Run in a deep valley between two ridges of the Warm Spring Mountain. The thermal waters of Warm Spring Run also pass through the Warm Springs resort to the north and have served as the principal attraction of Warm Springs since colonial times. The Germantown section of Warm Springs is made up primarily of early and mid- 19th century log and frame residences.

Built circa 1901 by its owner-operator W. H. Miller, the gristmill consists of a three-story, gable-roofed main block, three bays wide and four deep with a north-south axis, and a smaller, one-story, shed-roofed kitchen wing on the east side. Both buildings are in excellent condition. The heavy timber framed mill, built on a foundation of coursed rubble, is sheathed with horizontal weatherboard and covered with a standing seam metal roof. There is an enclosed vestibule and entrance on the south facade and a door on the west facade, the latter no longer used. Two additional exterior "Dutch" doors are located on each story of the south facade above the entrance, along with a louvered door on the attic story. None were apparently used for any purpose other than obtaining light and ventilation and installing equipment. An attached two-story wooden hoist

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stands to the left of the south entrance. A simple boxed cornice with cornice returns runs along the wide eaves. Plain mouldings are used around window and door openings. Six-over-six, double-hung sash windows are used throughout. A bay window has been added on the east facade to the rear of the shed-roofed wing.

The Warm Springs Run supplies the water power to the mill; there is no separate mill race. Its banks are reinforced with large hewn field-stone for approximately seventy five feet upstream and are in good condition. The stream is crossed by three bridges; a small wooden footbridge northeast of the mill, a wooden footbridge to the north west and a concrete bridge which carries vehicular traffic on Route 645.

The nearly twenty-foot wide iron overshot Fitz water wheel is located on the north side of the mill building. The shaft of the nine-spoke wheel rests on a massive wooden block which in turn rests on an eight-foot high stone pier. A smaller cog wheel is sandwiched between the water wheel and the mill building. The wheel pit is enclosed by a low stone wall and is connected to the stream by a short five-foot wide tail race. A submerged draft pipe which enabled the water wheel to take full advantage of the head of water runs from the east and rises to a trestle built over the wheel where it forms a wide spout.

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Although the gristmill now serves as a restaurant and lodging, the interior has been preserved much as it appeared when it was an operating mill. The timber beams, framed with mortise and tenon, are visible throughout, and the walls are covered with their original whitewashed random width vertical panelling.

The partially excavated cellar, reached by a stairway located by the east wall, contains much of the original millworks. A ten-foot wide vertical face wheel with wooden teeth is engaged to the horizontal lantern pinion wheel. The latter transferred the direction of the drive from horizontal to vertical and increased the speed of the millstone spindle compared to the slower motion of the water wheel shaft. The leather belts and wooden chutes of the grain elevator system are also still extant and are in good condition.

The first floor, now a dining room, is divided into two areas by a marked change in floor level. On the upper level is found the mill-stone in its wooden vat, which in turn rests on a large square granite slab bolted to the floor. The slab is notched with a meal spout connecting the vat with the lower level. A metal label on the south side of the vat identifies its maker: B.F. Starr, Baltimore, Md. , Mill Builders and Furnishings, Reground and Recorrugated Rolls. A wooden "horse" or frame supports the wide wooden hopper with damsel, which regulated

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the flow of grain coming from the two wooden chutes connected to the grain bins on the second floor. To the left of the mill stone is the large stone crane with screw jack used to lift and place the mill stones. A series of seven wooden grain elevator chutes, each with its own leather belt, scoops and glass windows, forms a wall dividing the millstone vat from the east side of the upper level. The elevator system was an important component in the automatic operation of the mill. Run by the action of the waterwheel, it elevated the grain mechanically to the top of the mill, cleaned it during gravity transmission to the hoppers, conveyed it to the top of the mill again and then cooled, bolted and barrelled it during its second descent without the intervention of any manual operation.

The former miller's office, now a small pub, is located at the southeast corner of the lower level. Although somewhat altered, it still contains its narrow width vertical panelling and shelves.

An open stairway at the northeast corner connects the first and second stories, the latter containing bathrooms and a large room which formerly held the open grain bins. The floors, vertical board panelling and exposed timber framing all remain in their original state.

The third floor, reached by a stair located at the northwest corner, is now divided into three apartments, but was probably originally open to the attic ceiling. The elevator system, with its pulleys, hoists,

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belts and wheels is still visible in the attic.

The shed-roofed east wing is now a kitchen for the restaurant and contains little that is of historic or architectural value.

The three other buildings which constitute the complex now known as Gristmill Square include two which antedate the mill, joined by an addition built in the 1970's. The blacksmith shop, now a store, is a two-story gable-roofed frame building which faces west. A former hardware store, also two stories and considerably altered by the addition of an arcaded facade, faces north. A two story stuccoed silo with a conical shingled roof was built in the 1970s and connects these two buildings. Although historically important for their association with milling operations at this site, they have been substantially altered both on the exterior and interior. The buildings are physically and visually separated from the mill by a small gravel courtyard and are non-contributing structures.

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unrestored example of a mill designed according to pattern book specifications once used throughout the milling industry in the 19th century.

History and Support:

The Miller Mill is the last extant mill building in Bath County and is a reminder of the once active industrial life of Warm Springs. It has long been an important local landmark and has played an important role in the manufacturing and commercial life of the town.

The early history of Warm Springs was closely linked to the therapeutic reputation of its waters, which had been discovered by the Indians and were a great favorite of such 18th century visitors as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.¹ In the 19th century, economic and social life in the county centered on the elegant Warm Springs Hotel, but by the Civil War the larger and more fashionable resort at Hot Springs to the south had eclipsed Warm Springs and the town slowly declined. Nevertheless, Warm Springs remained a commercial and political center for the surrounding agricultural area and supported a number of small businesses. A description of the town published as early as 1835 states that Warm Springs "contains, besides the ordinary county buildings, about fourteen dwelling houses, two mercantile stores, one saddler, one gristmill, two tailors and three blacksmiths."²

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Both water-powered gristmills and sawmills had existed in Bath County since its settlement in colonial days. Mention of gristmills and millers was made in the journals of visitors to Warm Springs in the 1780s and 1790s and the predecessor to the present Warm Springs Mill was described by the pioneer explorer Simon Kenton in 1771.³ The rapid expansion of the farm economy in the early 1800s, coupled with the effects of the agricultural revolution in the nearby Shenandoah Valley led to an increase in the number of gristmills in the county. Business gazeteers of the 1880s and 1890's list between twenty and twenty-four mills operating in Bath County, at a time when the number of mills was probably already on the decline.⁴ Among the best known were the Pleasant Brook Mill in Valley Center, the Curry Mill at Sunrise, Cleeks Mill, Lowmans Mill and the Thompson Mill. The Pleasant Brook Mill was one of the largest and was greatly expanded in 1913 by the addition of a mill pond and secondary power sources. It was the last operating mill outside of Warm Springs and closed in 1967.⁵

Warm Springs was a natural site for a milling operation, as the waters of Warm Springs Run were often recorded as running at the rate of 6000 gallons a minute.⁶ The first mention in the land records of a mill on the site of the present Warm Springs Mill occurs in 1854 when the property was sold to George Bodkin for \$ 1,500.⁷ The mill erected by Bodkin on the site of the older mill (possibly the one mentioned by Kenton in 1771) was known as Bodkin's Tilt Hammer Mill for the rest of the century,

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even though Bodkin was forced to sell it in 1858. As revealed in the legal descriptions, the mill was the center of a small complex of blacksmith shop, saddler and hardware/general store. ⁸ In 1901, the hammer mill and property were bought by W.H. Miller who erected the present mill building shortly thereafter, along with the nearby two-story frame miller's residence. The mill went through two other owners before it ceased operation in 1971, the last in Bath County to close its door .

Shortly after the mill closed, it and the surrounding buildings were bought by the present owners. The mill building was converted to use as a restaurant with nearly all of the original interior and exterior fabric left intact. A small kitchen wing was added to the east end of the mill. The former blacksmith shop and hardware store were extensively altered and remodelled into a retail/lodging complex. The two buildings were connected by a two-story stuccoed silo with a conical roof and the north facade of the hardware store was extended by the addition of an arcade. The design of this complex was under the direction of Thomas Craven, an architect from Charlottesville, Virginia.

As an example of mill architecture, the Warm Springs Mill represents almost a throwback to an earlier era of millwrighting technology. Built during a period of profound change in the industry, both in Virginia and the U. S. , the Warm Springs Mill incorporates almost unchanged elements of mill design first developed in the late 18th century.

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At that time, the height of modernity was represented by the writings and designs of Oliver Evans (1755-1819) whose The Young Millwright and Miller's Guide, first published in 1795, revolutionized mill technology. Before then, operating a typical gristmill was both labor intensive and cumbersome, requiring either many employees or the frequent stopping of the machinery to perform manually the tasks of lifting, bolting, sifting and transporting the grain within the building. Evans devised a complicated system of Archimedean screw conveyors (powered by the water wheel) with belts, meal elevators, chutes, and hoists that made it possible for one man to start the grinding process and let the mill perform every successive operation on its own. The publication by Evans of detailed specifications led to the proliferation of mills incorporating the standard Evans design, of which the Warm Springs Mill is a late example.

During the 19th century, the custom millers of the colonial days gave way to the more efficient merchant mills. The former ground only the grain of farmers in the surrounding area and then extracted a portion of the flour as payment; merchant millers bought the grain from the farmer and then marketed the flour themselves. The growth of railroads and the increased agricultural yields in the 19th century encouraged the concentration of large merchant mills in the cities, particularly

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Buffalo, Baltimore and Richmond. These concentrated milling establishments often controlled large markets previously served by several small-town gristmills.

By the 1870s, the centers of the milling industry had shifted to the Great Lakes cities and Minnesota where the "New Process" of milling was introduced by Austro-Hungarian immigrants. "New Process" milling involved the gradual reduction of wheat through a succession of grindings, resulting in a whiter, purer flour. Combined with the use of steam power and all-metal corrugated rollers (also introduced in the 1870s) the "New Process" produced wheat of significantly better quality than obtained from the old-fashioned, water-driven millstones. After 1880, in fact, virtually no all-millstone mill of any importance was built and rollers were substituted for burrs at many mills.

By the 1890s the giant mills, aided by low railroad freight rates, were producing flour which was sold at a cheaper price than the flour produced at a gristmill only a few miles away. Few local mills were able to withstand the competition and the number of small mills nationally was sharply reduced after the turn of the century.

Milling declined in Virginia slightly earlier than it did nationally, with the number of mills reduced by nearly a third after 1900. The building of a new gristmill at Warm Springs was therefore rather unusual and was a result of highly localized economic conditions. Ironically,

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although the number of flour mills declined precipitously in Virginia after 1900, flour production continued to increase, indicating the efficiency of the roller mills.

The Warm Springs Mill is significant, therefore, as a very late example of an Oliver Evans style mill built at a time of rapid change and transformation in the milling industry. The mill building has suffered almost no alteration since its construction; neither has it been restored back to an earlier period.

References --

- 1 Cohen, Historical Springs ; pps. 54-58.
- 2 Martin, Gazetteer of Virginia; p. 38.
- 3 McCallister J. T. , Historical Sketches of Virginia Hot Springs; pps.12-
- 4 Chataigne and Gillis, Virginia Business Directory... 1877-1878;
- 5 Geier, et. al. , A Preliminary Statement , p.263.
- 6 Martin, p. 12.
- 7 Bath County Land Records, Liber 10, Folio 417.
- 8 Bath County Land Records, Liber 12, Folio 179.

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