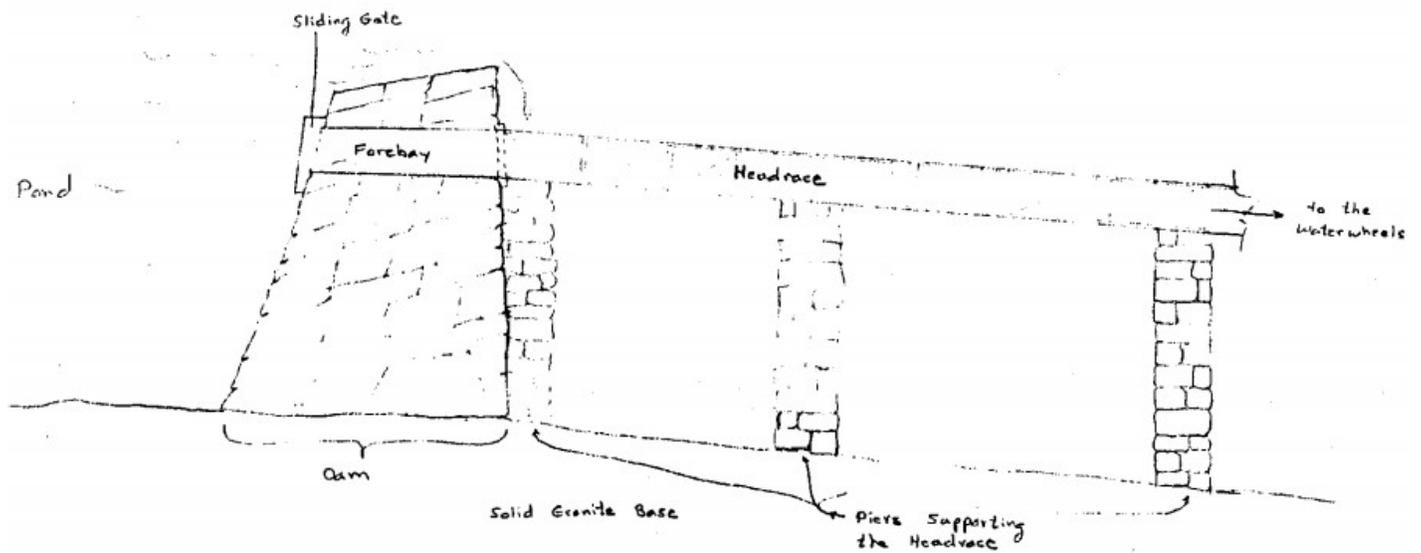


Mitchell Mill State Natural Area: A Cultural History



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2015

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Introduction

Mitchell Mill State Natural Area is located in the Little River Township in Eastern Wake County near the intersection of Mitchell Mill road (S.R. 2224) and Zebulon road (NC 96). The tract is approximately 105 acres in size and is situated on the Little River in the Neuse River Basin and includes the intersection with the Cedar Prong Creek.

The North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation (NCDPR) came into the possession of the bulk of Mitchell Mill State Natural Area through a purchase from the Martin Marietta Corporation in 1976, with several smaller sections added from private landowners in the late 1980's.¹ Today, the land is now home to rare, threatened and endangered flora and fauna, such as Narrow-leaf Blue Curl (*Trichostema setaceum*), Elf Orpine (*Diamorpha smallii*) and the Neuse River Water Dog (*Necturus lewisi*). These species are currently threatened by illegal human activity, including all terrain vehicle (ATV) traffic, camping, illegal fires and vandalism, as well as from invasive and exotic plant species, such as Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), Asiatic dayflower (*Commelina communis*) and Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*).

There are also unique geological features present that separate Mitchell Mill State Natural Area from any other park in the area. It is part of the largest granite dome on the East coast, measuring approximately 30 miles long, 13 miles wide and 40,000-60,000 feet deep. It is believed that this granitic dome formed during the Precambrian Era (about 4.6 billion – 547 million years ago). Today, the rock face is pitted, worn and covered in ephemeral pools. These pools fill with water when it rains and are home to salamanders, frogs, crayfish and other tiny organisms.

While there is literature on the plant and animal species in the area, very little was known about the people or the cultural history of this scenic natural area. This paper attempts to explore this history in order to give visitors and future park managers a glimpse into a life and culture long forgotten.



Cropped image from Fendol Bever's Map of Wake County, 1870

¹ Wake County Register of Deeds Book 2445 Pg. 62, Book 4186 Pg. 756, Book 4132 Pg.439, Book 4361 Pg. 727, Book 4305 Pg. 573

Osborn Jeffreys (1715-1793)

The history of Mitchell Mill, at least as far as land ownership goes, begins with a man named Osborn Jeffreys. Osborn was born around 1715 to Simon Jeffreys and Elizabeth Pottle in Virginia. Osborn's father died when he was only 16 or 17 years of age. The elder Jeffreys had been a farmer and landowner, and when he passed, Osborn followed in his father's footsteps by acquiring acreage through grants from Lord Granville. Land at that time was leased from Lord Granville at the rate of three shillings sterling for each 100 acres, which was collected bi-annually.² At least, that is how it was, until 1776, when leaders from the 13 colonies signed the Declaration of Independence, declaring themselves to be sovereign and independent from England and the rule of King George III.

In 1777, the Provisional Assembly of the colony of North Carolina voted and declared itself the State of North Carolina, sovereign over all the lands between Virginia and South Carolina. The new State continued to recognize claims to land granted by the crown and proprietors before July 4, 1776. The Provisional Assembly also called for the confiscation of all lands and property of persons who supported the British and as a result, all of Lord Granville's lands were confiscated by the State.

With all this land now his, Osborne became the largest landowner and heaviest taxpayer in Bute County, North Carolina³. It is believed that he owned at least 19,000 acres in Bute, Wake, Northampton and other piedmont and eastern NC Counties, with some unconfirmed anecdotal reports suggesting that he owned over 100,000 acres across central and eastern North Carolina.

Osborn Jeffreys was appointed a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas (dealing with civil matters) most of the fifteen years that Bute County existed, and was the presiding justice of the court after 1772. He gave Sheriff's Bond (Royal taxes) to King George III of England on August 12, 1768 and again on the same day of 1769⁴. Osborn was one of two men named to procession all the land south of the Tar River. He also was on the committee for building bridges and he was granted a license to keep a tavern at his home in Lewisberg (present day Louisburg).⁵

⁶⁷⁸⁹ Richard Caswell, the first elected governor of North Carolina named Osborn Jeffreys, a Justice of the State Court in 1777. Osborn then administered the State Oaths to Benjamin Ward, James Ransom, Jr., and Henry Hill, Esquire who in turn administered oaths to Osborn and five other men chosen by the governor. He was a member of the Bute County Committee of Safety, which at a meeting of the Freeholders¹⁰ on June 23, 1775, showed the Freeholders favoring independence from England¹¹.

Having served in the Granville County Militia under General William Eaton, Osborn rose to the rank of Colonel, and was probably active when Bute County was formed from that part of Granville County in 1764.

In 1771, Wake County was formed from portions of Johnston, Orange and Cumberland counties. In 1779, Bute county was dissolved and divided into 2 new counties: Franklin and Warren. When the Franklin/Wake county line was being surveyed (some of Wake County was being incorporated into the new Franklin County), Osborn

Give me Franklin, or I'll give you death

Franklin County was once a part of Bute County, but in 1779 the General Assembly obliterated the name of Bute and divided the area between Franklin and Wake. Surveyors hired to run the southern boundary line of Franklin got along very nicely till they reached Osborne Jeffrey's plantation of several thousand acres. He saw the surveyors at work and inquired their purpose. "Where will it put me?" he asked. "In Wake County," they said. "I'll be damned if it will," he said, went in the house, and returned with his shotgun. "Now, you run that line," he ordered, "so that I'll continue to live in Franklin or I'll blow your brains out."

— *The State*
November 8, 1941

2 <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=116481009> , James Patterson, 2013 HEREAFTER referred to as James Patterson, 2013

3 In 1764, Bute County was formed from Granville County and named for John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1762 to 1763. In 1779 Bute County was divided into present day Franklin and Warren counties.

4 James Patterson, 2013

5 James Patterson, 2013

6 James Patterson, 2013

7 James Patterson, 2013

8 James Patterson, 2013

9 James Patterson, 2013

10 Someone that holds title to real property. A landowner.

allegedly approached the surveyor and inquired as to where his land would fall in relation to the new county line. The surveyor told Mr. Jeffreys that the county line would run through his property. Mr. Jeffreys is said to have responded by pointing a firearm (some report it to be a flintlock pistol, others a shotgun) at the surveyor's head and threatened to "...blow [his] brains out".¹² This threat appeared to have worked, as it resulted in Osborn's lands staying entirely within Franklin County. This border was in constant dispute between Wake and Franklin Counties until it was finally resolved in 1915¹³, where it remains today.

When Osborn Jeffreys died, his lands and slaves were divided up amongst his heirs. His youngest son, Captain William Jeffreys, inherited 4 slaves and the tract of land, bisected by the Little River, where Mitchell Mill would one day be built.¹⁴ Osborn and his wife, Patience, were buried at a church somewhere between Louisburg and Franklinton.

Capt. William Jeffreys (1750-1802)

Unfortunately, not much is known about William Jeffreys. He was born in 1750 and was the youngest son of Osborn Jeffreys and Patience Spear. William rose to the rank of Captain in the North Carolina Militia, however, it is unclear if William ever served during the American Revolution, though he would have been of age to have done so.

William, like his father, was a well known and wealthy land owner. He owned land all over portions of Eastern Wake County and Franklin County. Upon the formation of Wake County, the State of North Carolina was looking for a place for the new seat of state government. A tract of land owned by William, located along the banks of the Neuse River (which was navigable at the time) was one of the sites considered. William argued that this would be a great center for trade in the region. It was eventually decided that the new seat of government would be located further west, on 100 acres offered up by Joel Lane. The city was named Raleigh, after Sir Walter Raleigh.¹⁵

In 1780, William Jeffreys sold the Mitchell Mill tract, located along the Little River, to Andrew Hartsfield. The deed reads, in part:

:

"A certain tract or parcel of land in Wake County containing two hundred & fifty two and a quarter acres it lying and being on the south side of the seeder [sic, Cedar] prong of the little river...it being part of a tract of land granted to the s[ai]d William Jeffreys by the State of North Carolina dated the first day of April one thousand seven hundred and eighty..." to Andrew Hartsfield (1765-1862) "...for the sum of five hundred & a half silver dollars..."¹⁶

William died in Franklin County in 1802.

11 James Patterson, 2013

12 The State Magazine, Unknown author, Unknown page, 14 November 1941

13 "The Senator is Buried in a Rock", T.H. Pierce, The State Magazine, P. 12, March 1, 1971

14 The Last Will and Testament of Osborne Jeffreys, Probated in Franklin County, NC, December 1793

15 1976, "Our Past, History of Greater Rolesville Area" by Eloise Averette Freeman. pg. 5

16 Angley, Wilson. A Supplemental History of the Mitchell's Millpond Natural Area in Wake County, North Carolina, Being Additions and Minor Corrections to Donna S. Fabric's «A Preliminary Investigation Into the Social and Economic History of Mitchell's Mill (1976). July 27, 1983. Survey and Planning Branch File on Hartsfield-Perry Farm, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina., pg. 1 & 2. (HEREAFTER Referred to as A Supplemental History, Angley, 1983)

Senator William Andrew Jeffreys (1817-1845)

William Andrew Jeffreys was born January 23, 1817 and was the oldest son and first born child of William Hudson “Billy” Jeffreys and Elizabeth Hartsfield Jeffreys, daughter of Andrew Hartsfield (who, by this time, was the owner and proprietor of the Hartsfield Mill – present day Mitchell Mill located on the Little River). William Andrew has no direct ownership connection to Mitchell Mill, but he was the great-grandson of Osborn Jeffreys, the first documented owner of the property, and the grandson of Captain William Jeffreys. He lived a short distance away from Mitchell Mill and has a rather unique history that begs to be told.

William married his first cousin, Martha Hart Jeffreys (a fairly common practice in those days) on June 8, 1840. They had 3 children. William studied law and practiced from his Franklin County plantation¹⁷. He was a staunch supporter of the Democratic Party¹⁸ and, in 1844, was elected to the NC Senate and was seated in the “new” State Capitol building (the first having burned to the ground in 1831).

Shortly after he was elected William, along with other delegates from North Carolina, took a trip to the Republic of Texas in the late spring of 1845¹⁹ to deliver correspondence to the legislature there. His friend, Robert Gilliam of Louisburg, wrote in an introduction for him, “Permit me to introduce to your acquaintance, Mr. W. A. Jeffreys. Mr. J is a gentleman of the first standing in this section of Country. [He] has filled a highly honorable political station in the legislature of the State and both in his public and private capacity commands the confidence of all who know him”²⁰.

Here is where William's story gets interesting. Shortly after his return from Texas, William fell ill with fever. He told his father, Billy, that should he die, he wished to be buried in “the rock”, a place where he had played as a child. This rock is about 10-12 feet tall and about 20 feet in diameter and stood out prominently against the surrounding farmland. Billy, believing his son would be fine, agreed to William's death bed wish. Unfortunately, William died of Typhoid fever a few days later.

Family tradition holds that Billy traveled to Raleigh and hired a stone mason named Patrick H. McGowan, who had worked on the construction of the new State House²¹ to prepare the tomb for his late son. Mr. McGowan agreed to excavate the tomb, stating that it would take a long time. McGowan then spent the next year chiseling out the tomb. During this time, William's body was kept in a small brick structure near the rock. The tomb was to be sealed with an inscribed marble slab upon interment of the body, however, when it arrived, the slab was found to be smashed inside the crate, so another was ordered. Nearly another year passed while the second inscribed slab was made. After it arrived, William's body was finally interred.²²

The story of William's burial spread and, over time, became quite embellished. One published



Photo from "The Unique Tomb of William Andrew Jeffreys" by H.G. Jones, Our State Magazine, 1988

17 The William A. Jeffreys House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, located near the intersection NC 98 and US 401 near the Wake/Franklin County

18 John Flowers, III, and Catherine W. Cockshutt (January 1976). “William A. Jeffreys House. *National Register of Historic Places – Nomination and Inventory*. North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. HEREAFTER referred to as William A. Jeffreys House Nomination 1976

19 William A. Jeffreys House Nomination 1976

20 *The Unique Tomb of William Andrew Jeffreys*, by H.G. Jones, Our State magazine, December 1988, pg. 8-9

21 “The Senator is Buried in a Rock”, T.H. Pierce, The State Magazine, P. 11, March 1, 1971

22 *The Unique Tomb of William Andrew Jeffreys*, by H.G. Jones, Our State magazine, December 1988, pg. 9

account holds that William was horrified at the idea of being buried in the ground.²³ Another legend states he was buried with a gold ring and other valuables²⁴, leading to the tomb being ransacked and desecrated over the years. However, the most outrageous legend states that William's body was been kept in a barrel of brandy and lowered beneath the cool waters of the Little River for preservation.²⁵ Once the tomb was completed, there was a huge celebration and after William's body was interred, the brandy was served to those in attendance. There is no evidence that any of this actually occurred.

A personal account, which mentions the rumor involving the body being preserved in brandy, was published March 17, 1940 in the New and Observer in Raleigh, and states:

“...Georgiana [Norwood] vividly recalls as told by her mother the burial of Senator Jeffreys. His body was kept in a vault while a Scotch mason from the North, who had been working on the State Capitol, took 11 months to chisel laboriously a receptacle in this huge rock for the Senator's casket. She recalls when her master Billy Jeffreys, with a red and white plume waving from his hat, paraded forth from the Civil War. Little later and she and her anxious mistress were hiding their valuables in turn from Wheeler's cavalry and Sherman's Yankees. There is a tradition that when Senator Jeffreys died in 1847 at the age of only 28 his body was preserved in brandy until the tomb could be completed. However that is denied. There is no doubt that the tomb was carved in the heart of this great rock, which raised 20 feet or more from a level field, that the casket was lowered into this vault and the top sealed with a marble slab on which are inscribed:

Sacred to the memory of William Andrew Jeffreys of Franklin County. Attorney at law and Senator from Franklin in the General Assembly Session 1844-1845. Born January 23, 1817. Died on the third day of October, 1845. He was a kind husband and parent, an honest man and an able and faithful public servant.

*The fondness of a creature's love, how strong it strikes the sense!
Thither the warm affection move Nor can we call them Thence.*

*'Tis finished, 'tis done, the spirit is fled!
The prisoner is gone, the Christian is dead!
The Christian is living through Jesus' love,
And gladly receiving a kingdom above”*



Photo from *Franklin County - Images of America*, by Diane Taylor Torrent

23 “The Senator is Buried in a Rock”, T.H. Pierce, *The State Magazine*, P. 11, March 1, 1971

24 *The Unique Tomb of William Andrew Jeffreys*, by H.G. Jones, *Our State magazine*, December 1988, pg. 9

25 *Massive Stone Became Tomb for Young Man*, by Mary Ann Sandy, Date published unknown, publication type unknown

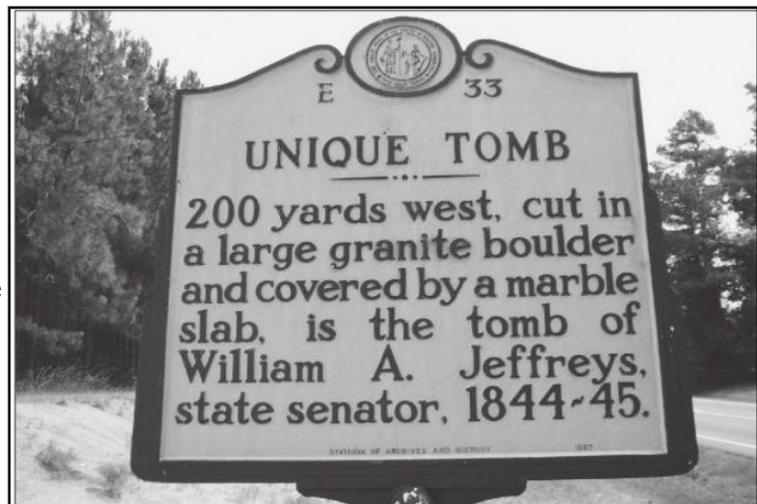


April, 2015 Photo of Senator Jeffreys' tomb.



Marble slab located atop the tomb. Damage by vandals can clearly be seen.

In 1942, The State erected a historical marker along US 401 that indicated the location of the tomb. The marker was removed around 2008 after complaints from the family regarding vandals damaging the cemetery. Vandals smashed and removed the slab covering the tomb. It has since been pieced back together and replaced as best as could be done. The tomb is located on private property near Harris Crossroads off US 401.²⁶



From "*Franklin County*", by Diane Taylor Torrent

Andrew Hartsfield (1765-1862)

The history of the mill itself begins with Andrew Hartsfield. Andrew. Born October 21, 1765, Andrew was the first son (fourth child) of Jacob Hartsfield and Sarah Lynn McElroy. His grandfather, Andrew Hartsfield Sr., was issued land grants on both sides of Crabtree Creek²⁷, where Crabtree Valley Mall now stands, which, it is believed, is where the younger Andrew grew up.

According to the 1790 census, Andrew was living alone, owning one slave. Unfortunately, due to the unfortunate destruction of many of the early deeds of Wake County, it is impossible to establish exactly when Andrew arrived at present day Mitchell's Mill State Natural Area, however a partially mutilated 1798 deed between William Jeffreys and Andrew Hartsfield (text of the deed stated above) suggests that Andrew purchased the property sometime that year.²⁸ This cannot fully corroborate his arrival due to the fact that the deed cannot be found through a search of the Wake County Register of deeds²⁹, however an image of this deed has been found on the Internet and is believed to be in private possession, but the date on this deed is missing.

In 1800, shortly after acquiring the property, Andrew began construction on the area's first dam and grist mill.³⁰ The site was a perfect location for a dam site due to the shallow bedrock, most of which was already exposed. In 1805 and 1808, Andrew added considerably to his property. He purchased land adjacent to his existing holdings from Nathan Barham and Benjamin Barham as well as lands further upstream along what is referred to as "the middle prong creek of Little River".³¹ By 1819, Andrew Hartsfield had amassed nearly 1700 acres of land in Franklin and Wake Counties and owned at least 9 slaves.³² In 1797, William Jeffreys sold a tract of land along the Little River in eastern Wake County to Andrew Hartsfield.

In 1829, Andrew, aside from being a farmer and mill operator, was also a minister in the Methodist Church and played a prominent role in the founding of the Antioch Church. This church was located on the mill site property off present day Pulley Town Road, about half way between present day Mitchell Mill Rd and the bridge crossing the Cedar Prong Creek³³. Around this same time, Andrew also founded the Hartsfield Meeting House near Forestville and preached to both congregations until their merger in 1850 as the Rolesville Methodist Church. Sometime in the 1930's, the church relocated to the neighboring Town of Wake Forest and became the Wake Forest United Methodist Church. This church stands today at the intersection of Highway 98 and S. Main Street in Wake Forest.³⁴

According to a 1838 Wake County deed, we know that Andrew's youngest son, Wesley, had taken over operations of the mill when Andrew purchased 285 acres of land adjoining the mill property.³⁵ The 1860 federal census lists Andrew's occupation as a Clergyman in the Methodist Church. Andrew lived in the house he built, along with his son, Wesley, located just to the west of the Mill property (which is now called the Hartsfield-Perry House). Andrew died in December 1862 at the age of 97.



Photo from "Our Past, History of Greater Rolesville" by Elouise Averette Freeman, 1976

27 Beth Keane, "Hartsfield-Perry Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Retrospective, Wilmington, NC, August 2002

28 A Supplemental History, Angley, 1983, pg. 1

29 A Supplemental History, Angley, 1983, pg. 1 (A deed has since been found, but still does not show the date)

30 A Preliminary Investigation, Fabric, 1976, pg 10

31 Map of Wake County, Fendol Bevers, 1870

32 A Supplemental History, Angley, 1983, pg. 2

33 See Figures 6 & 7

34 A Supplemental History, pg. 4

35 Wake County Deeds book 14, pg. 48



Mill dam, now heavily overgrown.

In his near hundred years of life, Andrew had seen some of the most important events in the history of the United States. He had been born under the rule of King George III of England and died at the outbreak of the Civil War. Andrew not only lived through the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the ratification of the Constitution, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812, but he was also able to witness “the offspring of his fourth generation, and saw his posterity grow to near 100”³⁶.

Dr. Wesley Hartsfield (1810-1880)

Dr. Wesley Hartsfield was born on April 30, 1810 and was the youngest son of Andrew Hartsfield and Siddie Braswell. Wesley grew up on the family farm (now called the Hartsfield-Perry Farm, located 1/2 mile west of Mitchell Mill SNA), studied medicine at the University of Cincinnati and practiced medicine on his farm near Rolesville upon his return. He married Candace Smith, daughter of John Smith and Lucy Barham, on February 21, 1835. They had 9 children together.

In 1835, Dr. Hartsfield built additions onto the house. He raised the roof and built a second story in order to accommodate his growing family. In November 1838, Wesley took over operation of the dam and grist mill from his father.³⁷ In 1839, Andrew Hartsfield officially deeded 1,131 acres of land to Wesley. This land included the family house along with the grist mill on the Little River.³⁸

In 1851, Wesley added a saw mill on the east side of the Little River, and rebuilt the grist mill on the south side of the river the following year³⁹. In 1859 Dr. Hartsfield served as secretary of the Botanico Medical Society, a short-lived organization which sought to reduce the use of "mercurial and other poisons, bleeding, blistering, freezing, starving and the knife" through treatment of diseases with herbs and other plants⁴⁰.

36 Andrew Hartsfield Obituary Notice, The Weekly Standard, Wednesday January 14, 1863, NC State Archives

37 Wesley Hartsfield Mill Book. Commenced Grinding Nov. 13, 1838. Wake Co. (Private possession of R.N. Grimes)

38 Wake County Deed Book 15, pg. 256

39 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, pg 5

40 <http://www.newspapers.com/image/59195522>



Hartsfield-Perry Farm, home of Andrew and Dr. Wesley Hartsfield.

With what he received from his father, in addition to land he purchased from Bryan Green and William Jeffreys, Dr. Wesley Hartsfield accumulated sizable holdings on both sides of the Little River prior to the Civil War. He had nearly 1470 acres of farmland and around 40 slaves.⁴¹ Dr. Hartsfield had 5 sons, all of whom fought during the Civil War⁴². They were:

John Wesley Hartsfield (1837-1862) – Orderly Sgt. in Co. I, 1st N.C. Troops of the Confederate Army. Died during the Battle of Mechanicsville, Va on 26 Jun 1862.

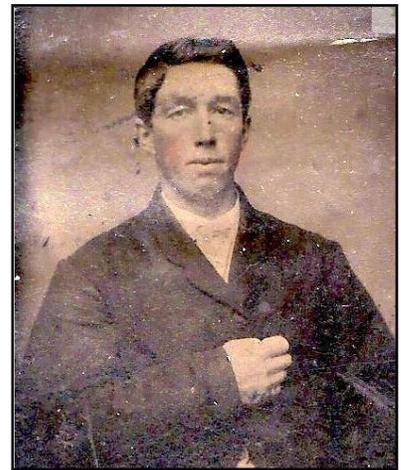


Photo by Melanie Hartsfield Sheldon

Jacob Andrew Hartsfield (1838-1915) – Mustered in as a Private, Co. I, 1st N.C. Troops. Fought at Mechanicsville, Va, 26 Jun 1862. Replaced his brother, John, as Orderly Sgt. After his brother's death at Mechanicsville. Also fought at Gainesville, Malverne Hill, Sharpsburg and Gettysburg, where he was captured and imprisoned until the end of the war, 13 months later.

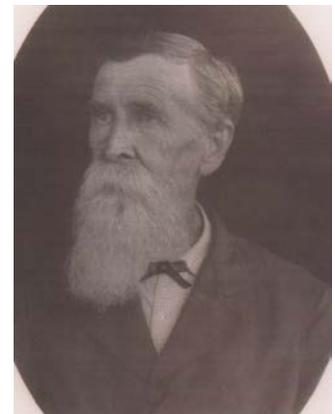


Photo by Melanie Hartsfield Sheldon

41 *A Supplemental History*, pg. 4.

42 Jacob Hartsfield's Narrative on His Participation in the War Between The States. 27 October, 1909

Flavius Josephus Hartsfield (1841-1892) – Listed as having fought in the Civil War by his brother, Jacob.

Alva Curtis Hartsfield (1844-1864) – Private in the Confederate Army. He was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). Fought and wounded at the Battle of New Market 15 May 1864. He later came down with measles in camp. Alva was granted furlough to return home, but after finding the Railroads cut off by union forces, he attempted to walk home, but collapsed shortly after. He died of Measles in Petersburg, Va. on 26 June 1864. His brother, Jacob, recalled his brother's death:

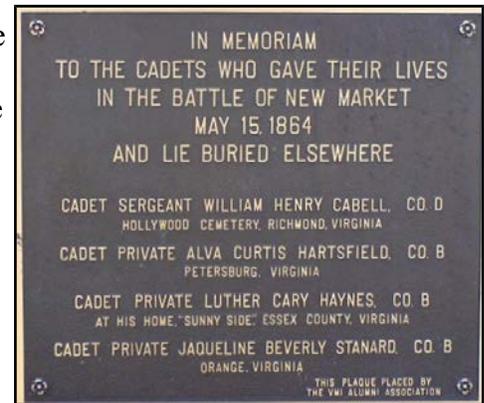


Photo by Melanie Hartsfield Sheldon

“We had a letter from him after the Battle of New Market giving a description of the fight. Spoke of putting the Yankees to flight and of pursuing them. Also spoke of meeting me in a few days. He was taken sick with measles in camp and sent to the hospital at Richmond. After he was convalescent a relative succeeded in getting a furlough for him to come home and as the Yankees had cut the R. R. between Petersburg and Richmond, he attempted to walk the distance. The exertion caused a collapse and he was found unconscious in the streets of Petersburg and sent to hospital there where he died June 26, 1864. I went to Petersburg after the war in order to bring his remains home but failed, as I found the graves so badly mixed I had to give up the attempt.”⁴³

Henry Applewhite Hartsfield (1845-1865) – Youngest brother of Jacob Hartsfield, he was a cadet in the Military Academy in Hillsboro, NC and was Orderly Sergeant in a company of junior reserves. Died of Typhoid Fever at the close of the Civil War in 1865.

Following the Civil War, on May 1, 1865 Wesley stated in testimony regarding his involvement in the War, that Union soldiers under the command of General Logan approached his property and set up camp. They took corn, hogs, several wagons, and other property. Also during this testimony, Wesley stated that prior to the war he was steadfast against Secession. However, once the State left the Union, he supported the cause during the first year. He went on to say that after that first year, he came to believe the rebellion was for the wrong reasons and reverted back to his original stance on the matter. He admitted that he did support and lend aid to Confederate deserters throughout the war.⁴⁴ Shortly after the surrender and formal end of the war, Wesley took the Amnesty Oath⁴⁵ in Rolesville. After taking the

43 The Corps Forward: The Biographical Sketches of the VMI Cadets Who Fought in the Battle of New Market by William Cooper, 2005, pg. 89

44 Testimony of Dr. Wesley Hartsfield 1865-66

45 May 29, 1865 President Andrew Johnson issued a proclamation granting amnesty to anyone in the Southern States. Those that took the Amnesty Oath were pardoned for any crimes committed against the United States Government during the Civil War. The Oath reads: “I, (Full Name), do solemnly swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the States

Oath, he was then appointed by Provisional governor, W. W. Holden, to administer the Oath to two other men.⁴⁶

In 1866, Wesley conveyed to his son, Flavius, 566 acres of land lying east of the Little River and north of the Halifax Road (SR. 2224). Located on this land was Flavius Heartsfield's residence, which still stands on the south side of SR 2303 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Green-Hartsfield House.

Wesley Heartsfield passed away in August of 1880, one year after the sale of his mill to Andrew Jackson Pickney (A.J.P.) Harris (1835-1919), who, in turn, sold the mill to Richard Calvin Mitchell in 1883. Around 1900, a small community sprung up near the "mill seat" known as Hartsville⁴⁷ and later as Mitchell's Mill, named after Richard Calvin Mitchell, who purchased much of the Heartsfield holdings.

Andrew Jackson Pickney Harris (1835-1919)

In 1870 Federal Census, Andrew is listed as being a merchant. According to the 1910 federal census, Andrew Jackson Pickney Harris⁴⁸ lived in the Harris Township of Franklin County and worked as a farmer.

In August 1879, he purchased the 23 acre mill tract from Dr. Wesley Hartsfield. Andrew paid \$2,790 for the tract, which included the mill house, gin house and cotton gin, as well as the saw mill and general store.⁴⁹

Andrew operated the mill until 1883, when he sold it to Richard Calvin Mitchell for the sum of \$4,500.⁵⁰

Richard Calvin Mitchell (1848-1900)

Richard Calvin Mitchell, or "Calvin" as he was known, was born in December of 1848. According to the 1870 census, Calvin's occupation was listed as being a miller. It is not positively known what mill he worked at, but one could speculate that he was working at the same mill he would later purchase. He was known to be working at the Hartsfield Mill prior to 1884, when he purchased the mill from A.J.P. Harris⁵¹. Calvin also purchased a house from the widow of Wesley's son, Flavius Hartsfield⁵². This house is known today as the Green-Hartsfield House located approximately about 3/4 mile east of the mill on Halifax Road⁵³. Also around this time, the area began to be referred to as Mitchell's Mill, though the post office retained the name Hartsville⁵⁴.

In 1887, Calvin Mitchell gave the Beulah Baptist Church a small piece of land located off of Pulleytown Rd,⁵⁵ possibly at or near the same site as the 1829 Antioch Church. Previously, the church had congregated "...under a bush arbor since there was no building for this church" due to its split from

thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves, so help me God."

(www.nytimes.com/1865/05/30/news/president-johnson-s-amnesty-proclamation-restoration-rights-property-except.html)

46 Testimony of Dr. Wesley Hartsfield 1865-66

47 Shaffer's Map of Wake County

48 Mistakenly referred to as A.J.P. Hams in "A Supplemental History", Angley

49 *A Supplemental History*, pg. 5-6

50 *A Supplemental History*, pg. 6

51 *A Supplemental History*, pg. 7

52 Wake County Deed Book 76, pgs. 252 and 544

53 Dr. Surry Roberts, Claudia Brown, Green-Hartsfield Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, October 1989

54 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, pg 6

55 See Figures 6 & 6a

the Rolesville Baptist Church prior to 1887.⁵⁶ This is where the first Beulah Baptist Church building was constructed. Calvin used his saw mill to saw all the donated lumber used in the building's construction. In 1931, with the church building falling apart (and due to inconsiderate people wandering past the church to the river to swim), the congregation decided to relocate to a new building⁵⁷ about 1 mile west down Mitchell Mill Rd, where it stands to this day.

Calvin is listed as a farmer in the 1900 census, the year he died at the age of 51. Upon his death, Calvin left the mill to his daughter, Hattie, and her husband Hilliard Stanley “Stanley” Jones. The mill continued operation by Stanley and Hattie until the early 20th century. In 1913, the mill, cotton gin, and some stables caught fire and burned. Stanley rebuilt a smaller mill, but only operated it for a couple more years until he abandoned it around 1915⁵⁸ and returned to farming.

In 1926, Stanley and Hattie sold the land to Superior Stone Company for use as a granite quarry. Superior Stone did take several test bore samples, but appears to have never gone any further as no quarrying ever took place. Many of the test bores can be seen near the base of and below the dam⁵⁹. There is also what is believed to be a broken drill bit lodged in the granite face⁶⁰ near the central outlet hole⁶¹. Superior Stone Company, which by this time had become a subsidiary of Martin Marrietta Corporation, donated the land to The Nature Conservancy, who then turned it over to the NC Division of Parks and Recreation in 1976⁶². In 1983, The State of North Carolina purchased a tract of property located behind Mitchell's Store on NC Hwy 96 from Raymond and Patricia Nipper⁶³, rounding out the property to its current boundaries.

The Mill

Once known as “Hartsville”⁶⁴, named after the mill Andrew Hartsfield built, and the Hartsfield family that owned most of the land in the area, Mitchell Mill State Natural Area was once a thriving community. The mill dam, measuring approximately 400 feet in length and 15 -20 feet high, was constructed using slave labor, sometime around 1800. Grist mills such as this operated by using water pressure from impounded water. The stones for the dam were most likely quarried from behind the dam location that would later become the millpond. Through a laborious process, drills and wedges were used to split the rock into sections. The rock was then dragged to the dam site by oxen and mortared into place.⁶⁵

As the dam was constructed, two openings were initially placed into the dam wall⁶⁶. One opening, located near the top left of the dam, was called the forebay and was opened and shut using a wooden gate. This gate allowed for the controlled flow of water to the waterwheel, which operated the grist mill. When the gate was opened, water would travel down a wooden sluice to the waterwheel. The weight and pressure of water striking the wheel would cause the wheel to turn. Gears connected to the waterwheel would also turn, operating the grist stones and grinding down the corn, wheat or other material put on the stone.

The other opening, located in the lower center portion of the dam, was also gated and allowed for the complete drainage of the millpond, which was done about every 2-4 years to remove sediment

56 1976, “Our Past, History of Greater Rolesville Area” by Eloise Averette Freeman. pg. 72

57 1976, “Our Past, History of Greater Rolesville Area” by Eloise Averette Freeman. pg. 72

58 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, pg 6

59 See Figure 4

60 See Figure 5

61 See Figure 2

62 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, pg 6

63 Wake County Deeds, Book 4305 pg. 573

64 See Figure 3 – Cropped image from Shaffer's 1887 Map of Wake County

65 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 10

66 See Figure 2

buildup and debris from the millpond.⁶⁷ The draining of the millpond became a community event. The farmers living in the surrounding area would come lend their services to remove the sediment that had collected in the millpond. This was a time for hard work, good food and reconnecting with friends and family.⁶⁸ In 1851, a third opening in the dam was added by Dr. Wesley Hartsfield to power the new saw mill he was building^{69 70}.



Forebay Opening



Outlet hole used for draining millpond for silt removal



Slot where wooden gate would be inserted to regulate water flow through the forebay

67 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 13 Fig. 3

68 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 8-9

69 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 5

70 See Figure 2



Remains of the Forebay added around 1851 for the saw mill on the East side of the Little River.



Top down view of the breach on the Eastern side of the dam.

Another feature of this dam was the construction of the top of the dam, which was slanted back at an angle towards the mill pond⁷¹. One of the problems with the mill dam, as with all mill dams, is that they would occasionally get flooded during heavy rain events. The purpose of the slant was to allow large portions of trees, logs, sticks, etc. to pass over the top of the dam. This decreased the likelihood that the openings would get jammed up with debris or that the dam itself would be compromised by a buildup of large trees.

After the completion of the dam, Andrew Hartsfield constructed the grist mill. The first grist mill was built entirely of wood. Though wooden mills were very sturdy, constant exposure to harsh conditions necessitated frequent repairs. Within 5-10 years, all parts of the waterwheel were most likely replaced. More than likely, these parts that were in constant contact with water were made of cypress, red cedar or pine heartwood due to their natural resistance to rot.⁷²

Mill operators during this time did very well for themselves and typically they would become the center of commerce in a given area. Hartsfield's Mill was no exception, as the area soon became known as Hartsville⁷³, complete with a general store, cotton mill, black smith and even a post office.⁷⁴

Farmers would bring their corn, wheat or other crops to the mill to be ground into cornmeal, grits, or flour. The final product would then be bagged and given back to the farmer, minus 10% - 15%, which the mill operator would keep as payment. The mill operator would then sell that product in a general store located nearby, or keep some to feed his own family. The total cost for construction of the grist mill was \$1939.37.⁷⁵ From 1838-1852 the mill brought in over \$4,000.00.

In 1851, Dr. Wesley Hartsfield, who had taken over mill operations around 1838, built a saw mill on the east shore of the river across from the grist mill. The saw mill cost \$437.41 to construct⁷⁶. A second opening was added to the dam to allow water flow to this new mill. The forebay hole for this mill was destroyed by a washout. This end of the dam was not replaced when the abutment was repaired.⁷⁷

As mentioned above, there were several other buildings in the area as well. The cotton gin was located halfway between the grist mill and the dam, with water being diverted from the grist mill headrace to power it. Although the gin was in operation in 1910, there is no further information on when it was constructed, or what machinery was used. The general store stood facing the Old Stage road⁷⁸ near the south west end of the dam. It is unknown if the store was built by the Hartsfields or Calvin Mitchell. There was also a blacksmith shop located just above the general store, and an ice house was dug into the river bank near the smith.

There were 3 houses that were within the boundaries of the park. None of them are standing today. The first was the High House, which was located just north of where the Mitchell Mill Road bridge spanning the Little River now stands⁷⁹. Originally it was thought this house got its name from the fact that it stood on a high ridge overlooking the mill property, but it seems much more likely that it was named after the High family that resided there⁸⁰. There is a natural spring located nearby where the women would take their laundry to wash, then lay them out on the rocks to dry. The location of this spring has been found, but due to the thick brush an exact location of the High House cannot be made. The Miller's House was located across the street from the mill⁸¹. As with the High House, the exact location of this buildings remains in doubt due to the thick brush that covers the area. This was a plain building that was most likely occupied by the tenants or hired help⁸². The third house was known

71 See Figure 1

72 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 12

73 See Figure 3

74 See Figure 6a, 7

75 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 16 Fig. 6

76 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 19 Fig. 8

77 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 18

78 Present day S.R.2224 - Mitchell Mill Road

79 See Figure 6a

80 *A Supplemental History*, pg. 4

81 See Figure 6a

82 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 8

as the Mitchell House⁸³ and stood until around 1976, when it was demolished (presumably for a new Visitor's Center)⁸⁴. Not much else is known of this structure.



Natural spring, covered in dense brush.

The only remnants of any buildings are partial foundations, which are heavily overgrown and covered up. Sometime in the mid to late 20th century, a large storm (possibly Hurricane Hazel according to some locals) created a breach in the dam wall near the saw mill headrace, through which the Little River now flows.

The Mill Community Today

The people living around the mill have always found it to be an attractive place to visit for many different social and recreational uses. Families would visit and picnic while children played in the cool waters of the river. Others would bring fishing poles to pass the time while their product was being milled. In later years, people would drive down to the river and wash their cars and trucks. Unfortunately, many people would also use the area as a dumping ground for their household or commercial waste⁸⁵.

One of the more organized activities around the turn of the century would be the large gatherings when the pond was drained and the sediment removed. This occurred about every 2-3 years and was a huge community draw. The men would lend their backs and work to remove the silt, and the women would prepare the food. Many would come to reunite with old friends or family members they had not seen in a while.⁸⁶

The general store was also a gathering place for locals to talk about the goings on in the area, politics, or whatever happened to be the topic of the day. There was a post office inside the store, which was also used as a voting precinct.⁸⁷

In the mid 1900's, when motor vehicles became more common, families and friends would congregate along the Little River, even driving their vehicles down onto the flatrocks to the river, to wash their trucks after working the fields.

Today, the Mill is a shadow of its former self. All the buildings are gone and the only things

83 See Figure 6a

84 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 8

85 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 8

86 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 9

87 *A Preliminary Investigation*, Fabric, 1976, Pg. 9

remaining to remind anyone of its past are the mill dam and old trash piles that are buried deep in the brush near where the homes and buildings once stood. Mitchell's Mill State Natural Area is now home to a myriad of rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species, such as the Neuse River Waterdog (*Necturus lewisi*), a species found only in the Neuse River basin, and nowhere else on Earth. It is also home to threatened and endangered plants, such as the Narrow Leaved Blue Curl (*Trichostema setaceum*) and Small's Purselane (*Smalls portulaca*).

These species are not only under constant threat from invasive and exotic plant species, like Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), but also from illegal human activity, such as vehicular traffic into the unit, as well as illegal camping. These campers cut down the trees in the area, and in doing so, are destroying the Eastern Red Cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) which contribute to the ecology, or help the spread of invasive plant species like the Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*). The fires crack the fragile granite rock face and kill off the rare mosses in the area. The litter left behind chokes out the life in the ephemeral pools, and broken glass creates a safety hazard to families and children who visit the area to enjoy the beauty they find here.

In 2013, park staff from Falls Lake State Recreation Area took on these challenges in the hopes of protecting these rare natural resources within the unit. Through strict enforcement of park rules and working with Division biologists and burn bosses and drafting a resource management plan, it is hoped that these species will be saved for future generations to enjoy.

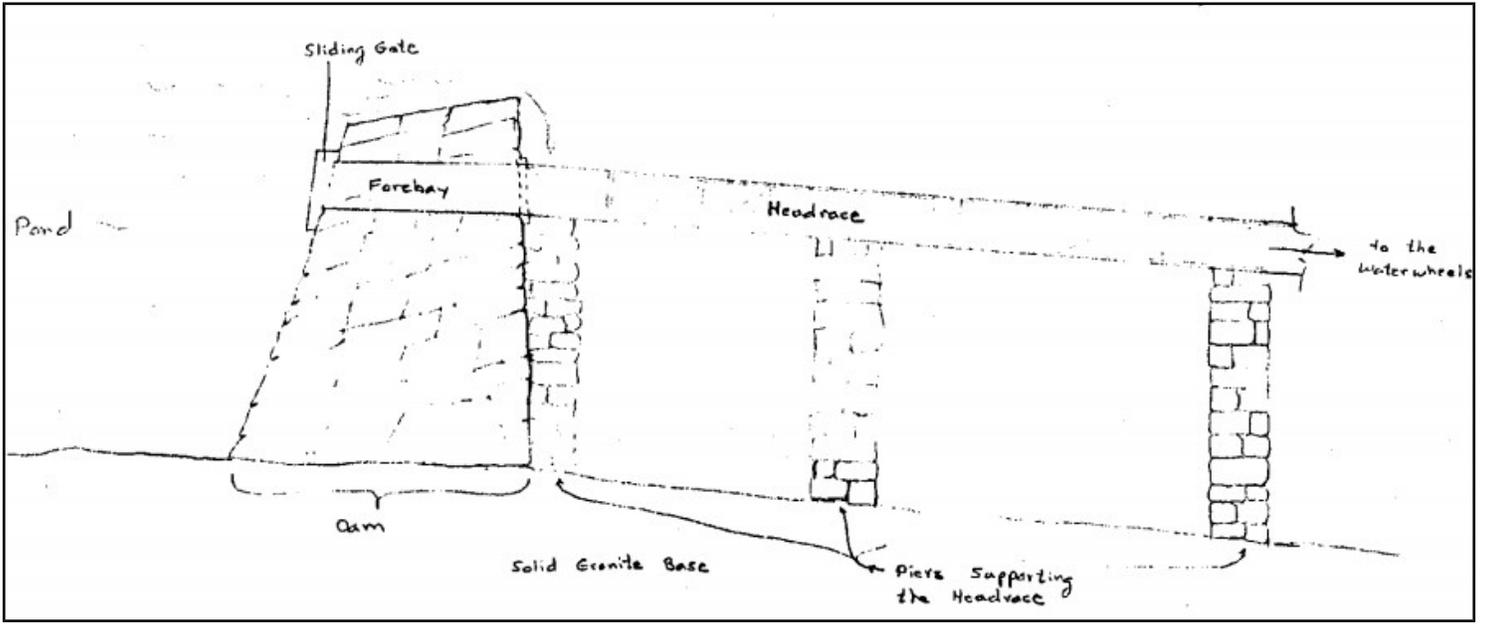


Figure 1 - Side view of mill dam. Drawing by Donna S. Fabric

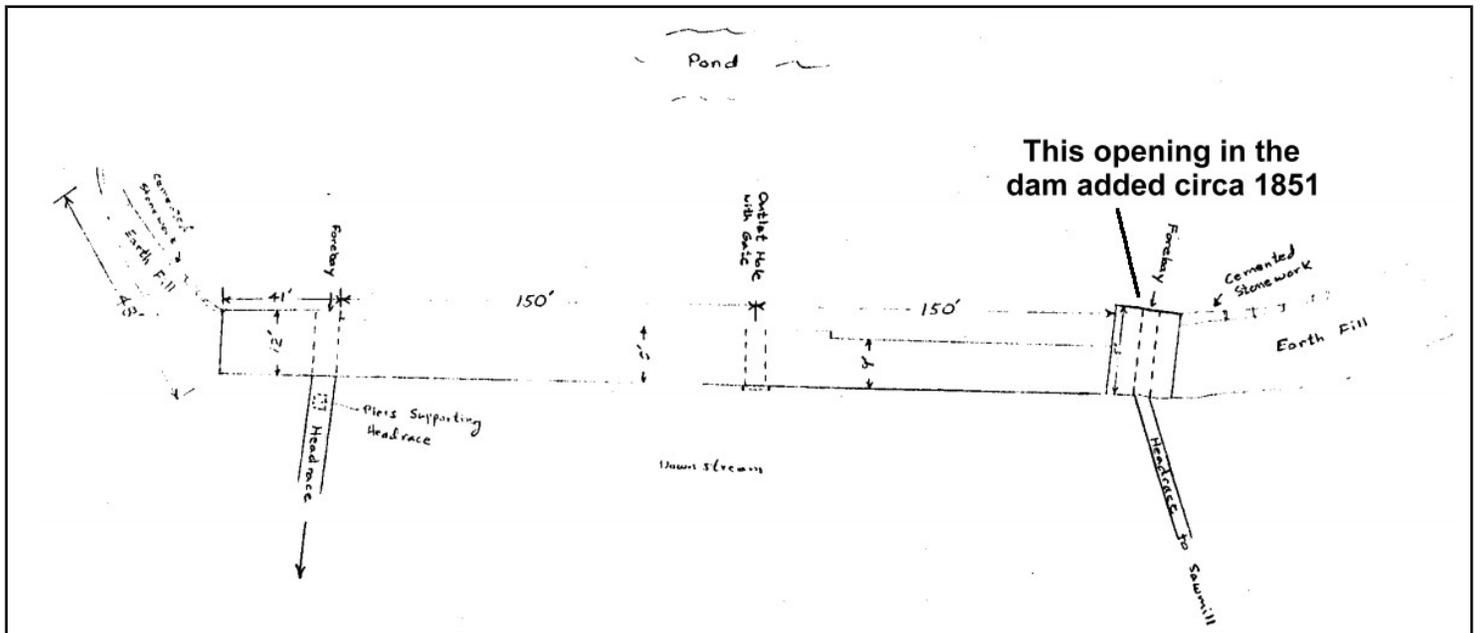


Figure 2 - Top view of mill dam. Drawing by Donna S. Fabric

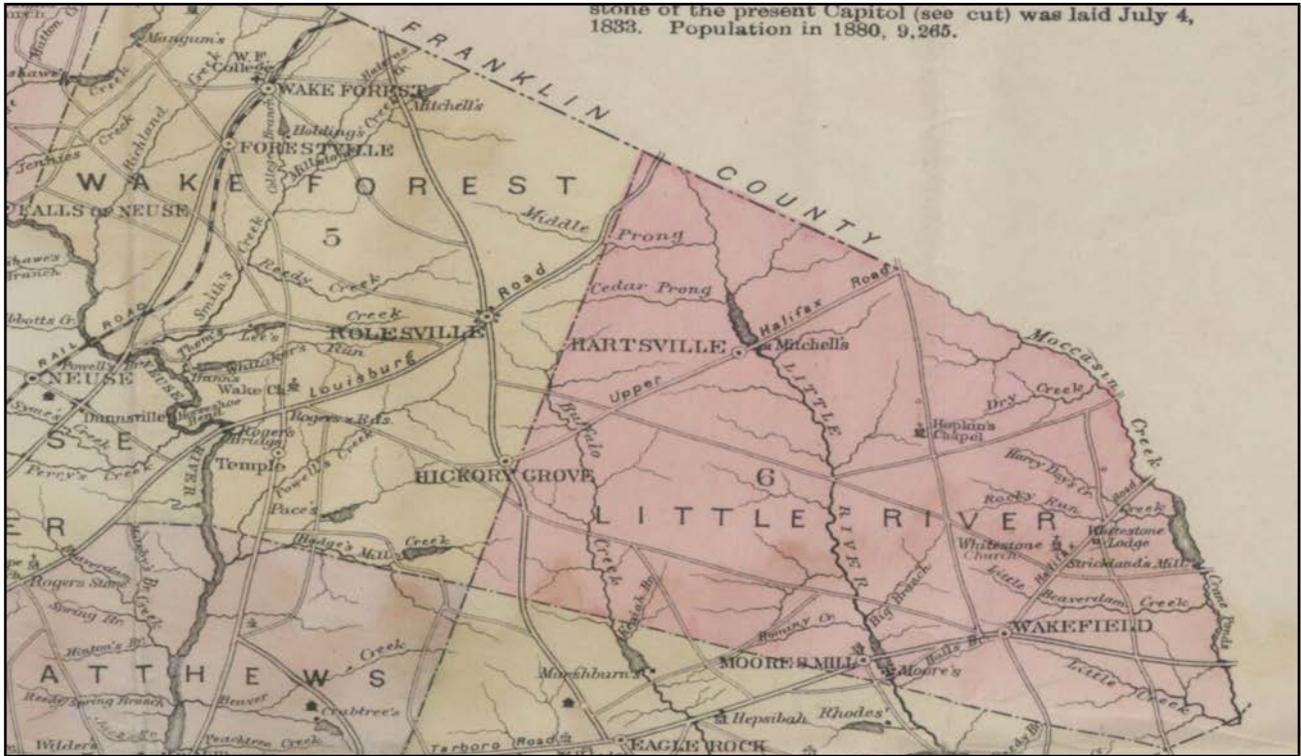


Figure 3 – Cropped image of Shaffer's 1887 Map of Wake County showing the Hartsville Community



Figure 4 – Test bores



Figure 5 – Broken drill bit located at the central base of the dam

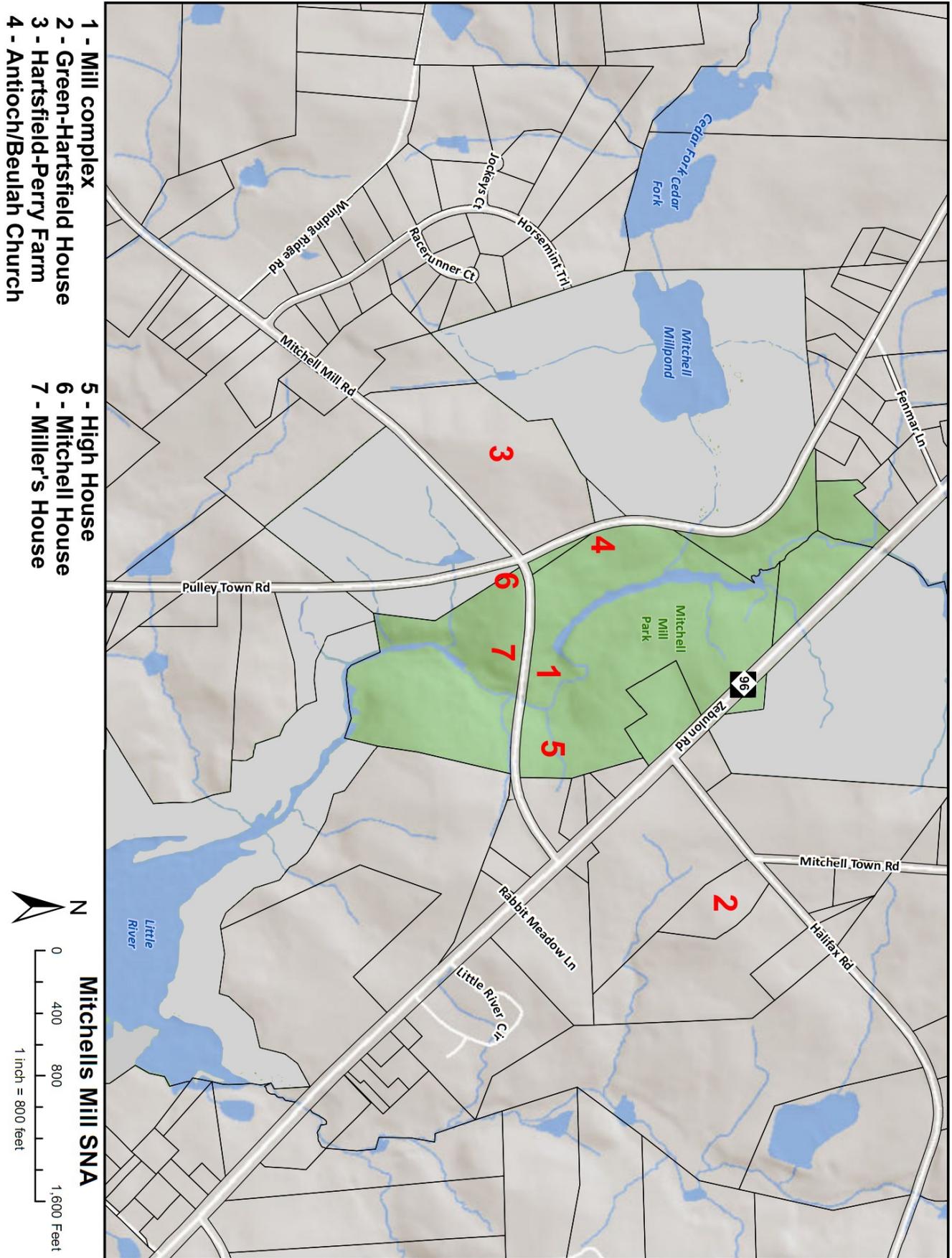


FIGURE 6 - Map of the Mitchell Mill and surrounding area

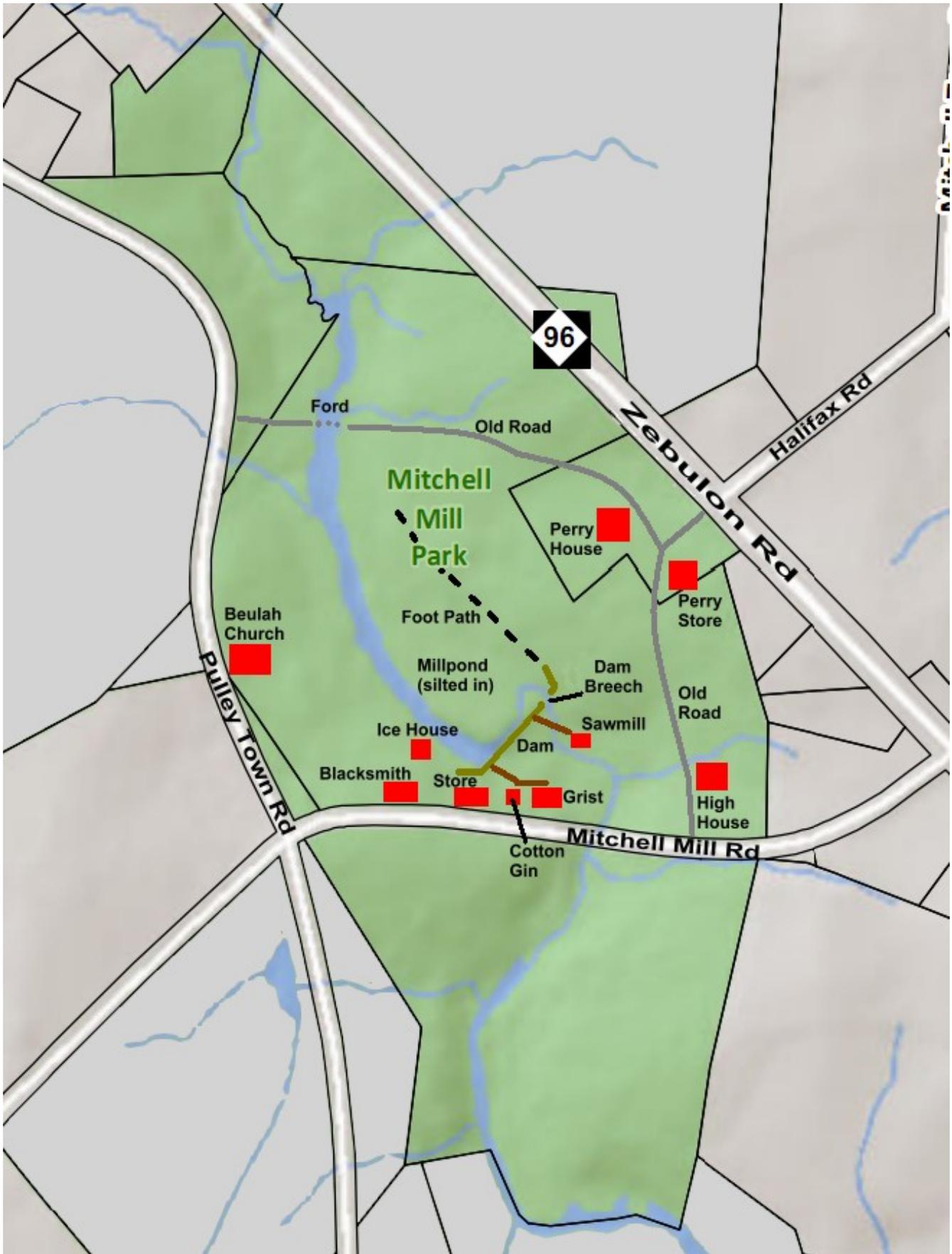


FIGURE 6a – Detailed map of the Mitchell Mill complex using information found in Donna S. Fabric's hand drawn map (Figure 7)

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