

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 and 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 complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name George, R. W., Mill

other names/site number Bob George's Mill; Spencer Mills

2. Location

street & number S side NC 89, 0.6 mi NE of jct w/NC 66 not for publication

city or town Francisco vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Stokes code 169 zip code 27053

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey P. Crow SHPD 8/19/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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 the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

George, R. W., Mill
Name of Property

Stokes Co., NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a 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)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility
INDUSTRY/waterworks

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls WEATHERBOARD
WOOD
roof STEEL
other STONE

Narrative Description

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

George, R. W., Mill
Name of Property

Stokes Co., NC
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.)

- 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.
- 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.)

Property is:

- 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)

Industry

Period of Significance

1881-1935

Significant Dates

1881

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- 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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Survey & Planning Branch, N.C. Division
of Archives & History, Raleigh

George, R. W., Mill
Name of Property

Stokes Co., NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.22 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1.7	51 5.4 4.2 0	4.0 3.8 5.5 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date April 30, 1997

street & number 637 N. Spring Street telephone 910/727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Minglewood Development Corp. (Reynolds B. Lassiter, President)

street & number 2900 Country Club Road telephone 910/631-6527

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

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 Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

DESCRIPTION:

Summary --

Located on the north side of Big Creek in rural northwestern Stokes County, the R. W. George Mill is a plain, two-story frame corn mill built in 1881 with three frame additions dating from the mid-1940s. The weatherboard siding, gable roof, and fieldstone foundation are typical of rural mills built in the late nineteenth century. The mill stands picturesquely on a sharply sloping hillside beneath NC 89, giving it a full basement on the rear (south) elevation and a fieldstone foundation only on the front (north) elevation. Located just downstream (east) from the mill pond and concrete dam, the mill overlooks Big Creek where its waters fall over the dam and rush across the inclined rocky stream bed to a quieter flow downstream. On the west side of the mill, a driveway leads downward from NC 89, and on the east side, the drive continues as the ghost of the old Danville and Mount Airy Road, eventually curving back uphill to rejoin NC 89. The mill is located about three miles south of the community of Francisco.

Integrity --

During World War II, the R. W. George Mill was converted from a corn mill to a small textile mill, known as Spencer Mills, that produced parachute fabric for the federal government. To accommodate new industrial tasks, the large water wheel on the south side of the mill was removed and a three-story frame shed was built in its place to house a turbine engine and machinery connected to it. On the east side of the mill, a frame shed was added for the quiller machine that filled spools with yarn, but it was recently removed. Across the north end of the mill, and stretching beyond it on either side, a one-story frame shed was added for the storage of yarn for the weaving process. Attached to it on the west side of the mill, a narrow two-story shed addition provided entrances for the workers to the main floor of the mill and for the Spencer family to their living quarters on the second floor. During this time, the corn milling machinery was removed from the interior of the mill and replaced by looms and other textile machinery, most of which was subsequently removed. During the recent stabilization of the mill in preparation for restoration, all the windows were boarded up temporarily for security reasons, but with ventilators in each window. Despite the changes made during the 1940s, the mill's original form remains clearly visible. With its dam and

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

pastoral creekside setting, the R. W. George Mill retains integrity of location, setting, overall design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, so that it continues to convey the visual sense of a nineteenth-century rural corn mill, a rare survivor in Stokes County.

Architecture: Mill --

Consistent with small-scale industrial buildings erected in North Carolina during the nineteenth century, the R. W. George Mill is a strictly utilitarian structure with no concern for style. The original mill building is a rectangular, two-story frame structure sheathed with weatherboard siding. It has a corrugated-metal gable roof and a dry-laid fieldstone foundation that houses a basement level congruent with the sharp southward slope of the site toward the creek. The original mill is three bays wide and four bays deep, marked by six-over-six sash windows (now boarded up) and batten loading doors on the north, road side, facade.

The interior of the mill reveals the building's structural system. Large timbers form the sills, plates, cornerposts, and intermediate studs--three per side, two on the north end flanking the door and one on the south end. Chamfered posts down the center of the main floor support the principal joists. The basement has a concrete floor, while those on the first and second-story levels are composed of tongue-and-groove boards. The ceilings of the basement and second story retain the originally exposed joists, while the first-story ceiling was sheetrocked later. The walls of all three floors are treated with narrow flush-sheathed boarding on the lower third-to-half with later sheetrock above. The north end of the basement is silted in with rocks and rubble. A board retaining wall separates this area from the rest of the basement.

Three early 1940s frame additions expand the original mill on the south, north, and west sides. The south addition is a three-story structure (with the first story being at the basement level of the original mill) with German siding, a shed roof, and sash windows on each elevation. A batten door on the west side leads to the first story. The south addition stands in the place of the original water wheel and rests on a battered concrete foundation through which the sluice runs. The north addition is a one-story, German-sided storage shed with a shed roof. Large doors are located at each end, and two windows on the north side provide light. A two-story, weatherboarded addition with a shed roof stands at the north end of the west side of the mill. The first story has a five-panel door on the west side that served as an entrance to the mill for the World War II textile workers. The second story has one window on the north side, two on the west side, and a paneled door on the west side that

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

provided entrance from a no-longer-standing exterior stair to the second floor that served as living quarters during the mid-1940s. A small 1940s addition stood until recently on the east side of the mill. Metal roof sheathing temporarily covers the section of the east mill wall where the addition was removed until replacement wood siding can be installed.

Mill Dam and Creek Setting --

The mill dam is a large concrete structure--thought to have replaced an earlier cribbed-log or wood one in the 1920s--that stretches across Big Creek upstream (west) of the mill. It ties into stone and concrete abutments on the south side and into the concrete sluice walls on the north side. The sluice runs on a diagonal from the dam to the mill. West of the dam is the small mill pond, which appears at this point to be not much more than a widening of the creek. Below the dam, the water rushes over the sloping, rocky creek bed until it levels off east of the mill and resumes its lazy course. The south bank of the creek is lined with trees and underbrush; the north bank slopes upward to the old road bed and then runs sharply uphill to NC 89, which passes above the mill.

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Summary --

In 1881, prominent Stokes County industrialist, land owner, and Presbyterian minister Robert W. George (1847-1935), built a two-story frame corn mill on Big Creek in northern Stokes County. It served the people of the Francisco area for more than half a century, grinding corn for corn meal, flour, and cattle feed. After the corn mill closed around 1940, the building was used for one or two years during World War II to produce parachute fabric under a government contract. At that time it was known as Spencer Mills. For an even briefer time thereafter, it was used to manufacture socks. Since then it has stood idle, but the preservation-minded current owner, Minglewood Development Corporation, is in the process of restoring the mill for adaptive re-use.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, corn mills played an important role in the lives of rural North Carolinians, serving both as the most important small-scale industry in an agrarian economy, and as a social center where farmers could catch up on the latest news while waiting to have their corn ground. In Stokes County, corn mills proliferated during the period. Shortly after the Civil War, Branson's *North Carolina Business Directory* reported nine grist mills in the county; by 1884 the number had increased to thirty-one, including George's mill. Although rural corn mills were relatively commonplace in Stokes County during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only four are known to survive. Of these, the R. W. George Mill is the oldest. Among the others is the 1910 Stokes County Union Milling Company, listed in the National Register in 1980.

A rare surviving example of Stokes County's once-flourishing corn milling industry, the R. W. George Mill fulfills Criterion A for listing in the National Register because of its local significance in the area of industry. Its period of significance extends from its construction in 1881 to 1935, the year in which its prominent, long-time owner died and the grain milling function of the property began to wind down.

Industry Context --

As a predominantly rural county in North Carolina's northwestern Piedmont, Stokes County historically has maintained an agrarian economy, with supporting industry and commerce. Until recent years, the county's industry has been small in scale, located primarily

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

in rural areas, and rooted to the land and its resources. Industries found in Stokes County during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include corn milling, mining, tobacco manufacturing, lumber and woodworking, brick manufacturing, and small-scale cottage industries (Phillips, 22-27).

Corn mills--first water-powered grist mills and later steam or electric-powered roller mills--comprised a mainstay, albeit small-scale, industry in Stokes County that was closely tied to the needs of a rural farming population (Phillips, 24). Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, corn remained a leading crop in the county, and corn mills converted much of the crop to corn meal, flour, and feed. Immediately after the Civil War, farmers lacked both the capital and credit necessary to expand their farming operations. The 1870 census recorded a significant drop in production levels--especially for the major crops of corn and tobacco--over those reported in 1860, but by 1880, production had regained or surpassed its pre-war level (Phillips, 7). An increase in the number of corn mills paralleled the county's production of corn.

During the late 1860s and 1870s, business directories listed fewer than ten corn mills in Stokes County. As post-war recovery and expansion took hold in the 1880s, however, corn mills proliferated. Branson's *North Carolina Business Directory* for 1884 lists thirty-one corn mills, one of which was a mill in Francisco owned by R. W. George. By 1890 the number of mills had increased to thirty-seven, but thereafter the number gradually declined, with twenty-two listed in 1910 (Branson, 1867-1868, 1872, 1877-78, 1884, 1890, 1897; *North Carolina Year Book*, 1905, 1910).

Of the numerous rural corn mills operating in Stokes County during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only four are known to survive. The R. W. George Mill on Big Creek is the oldest, having been built in 1881. Although several frame additions were built in the 1940s, the form of the original mill is still clearly discernable, and together with the dam and picturesque setting, the mill continues to evoke an image of nineteenth-century agrarian-based industry in Stokes County. The other three surviving mills in the county include Sheppard's Mill, an early-twentieth-century roller mill on Snow Creek built to replace a ca. 1890 grist mill on nearby Ugly Branch; the Stokes County Union Milling Company (Jessup's Mill), a roller mill built in 1910 on the Dan River and now listed in the National Register; and a 1920s roller mill on the Dan River owned by R. W. George (Phillips, 24-25).

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

Historical Background --

As Stokes County's rich farmlands yielded larger and larger crops during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its waterways provided entrepreneurs with numerous locations suitable for erecting water-powered mills. Robert W. George, who came from a family of rural mill owners, took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the area's streams and built several mills in Stokes County as well as one in Stuart, Virginia. In particular, on November 14, 1881, he purchased a parcel of land located on both sides of Big Creek from William A. and Susan E. Jessup. An agreement that was part of the deed claimed that, "R. W. George has built a mill on the lands mentioned in the foregoing deed and his mill dam is to stand at the hith [sic] it is now and is not to be raised any hire [sic]...." (Deed Book 25, 359-361). George's mill was a two-story, rectangular frame structure with a gable roof, weatherboard siding, a fieldstone foundation, and a large waterwheel. The original dam may have been constructed of cribbed logs or wood, as many were in the nineteenth century; the present concrete dam had replaced it by at least the early 1920s.

R. W. "Bob" George (1847-1935) was a prominent Stokes County resident during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to owning several mills in northern Stokes County and southern Virginia, he owned extensive farmlands and was reputed to be the county's wealthiest man and largest taxpayer. Many people also considered him to be the county's greatest benefactor (Covington, 49; *Heritage*, 267; *Danbury Reporter*, February 21, 1935). Older residents still tell tales of how he served as a "community bank" of sorts, personally lending money to many people who wanted to purchase homes or farms. Stokes County deed books, in fact, record many transactions in which Bob George held land as security for loans he made to individuals.

After a religious revival in 1891, R. W. George joined the Presbyterian church and soon was ordained a minister. For years thereafter he served as pastor of the Asbury and Dan River Presbyterian churches, and largely through his generosity, churches were built not only at those places but also at Danbury, Pine Ridge, Pine Hall, Sandy Ridge, and Collinstown (*Danbury Reporter*, February 21, 1935; *Dan River-Francis Presbyterian Churches*, 22; *Heritage*, 267; Covington, 49).

In 1920, R. W. George and his wife Margaret sold fifteen acres of the mill tract (not including the mill itself or the dam) to C. E. Francis. At this point, the old Danville and Mount Airy road still ran immediately in front of the mill (Deed Book 68, 8). By the mid-1920s, however, the road had been realigned to pass along the hill above the mill (Ola

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George Interview).

Around 1924 Jim Moss became the miller at R. W. George's mill, continuing in that capacity until around 1940, about five years past George's death. When Moss began work at the mill, the present concrete dam had already been built, but when it replaced an earlier log or frame dam is not known. Moss and his family lived in a four-room house across the creek from the mill. During Moss's tenure as the miller, the mill still functioned as a corn mill, grinding corn meal, flour, chop (a mixture of grains used as cattle feed), and rye for bread and feed. Jim Moss died in 1941, though he had stopped operating the mill somewhat earlier due to a disability. He was the last miller; after he shut down the mill, it never ground corn again (Beasley and Chandler Interview).

In 1935 Bob George died without leaving a will. In order to divide up his estate in the fairest manner, George's numerous heirs petitioned the court to name a commissioner to sell the property at a private sale and distribute the proceeds appropriately among them (Special Proceeding No. 1244). Through this means, Charlie E. Francis and his wife Ida purchased the remaining twenty acres of the mill tract (including the mill and dam) on January 5, 1939 (Deed Book 96, 189).

In 1944 Charlie and Ida Francis sold the mill to Aletha H. Spencer (Deed Book 103, 312). Under the name of Spencer Mills, it produced parachute fabric for the federal government during World War II. During this time the Spencer family lived on the second floor of the mill and made a variety of additions and alterations to better outfit it for its new use. Changes included the removal of the big water wheel and its replacement with a creek-side addition that housed a more efficient turbine and machinery associated with it. A one-story shed was built across the north end of the mill to store the yarns needed for the fabric production. At this time a small addition (now removed) was built to the east side of the mill to house the quiller machine that filled the spools with yarn. A small two-story addition on the west side provided a new entrance to the mill on the first floor for the dozen workers and a second-story entrance to the living quarters for the family. The corn milling machinery was replaced with approximately twelve looms on the first floor, a warp machine on the lower level, and other equipment necessary for the production of fabric (Mildred Francis Interview).

After the war, the mill was used for a brief period (approximately a year) for the small-scale production of socks. Since then, it has stood idle (Mildred Francis Interview). In 1961 Porter G. Wall, Jr. purchased the building from the Spencer Mills partnership and retained ownership until 1989, when he sold it to Minglewood Development Corporation, the present owner (Deed Book 150, 135; Deed Book 336, 1572-1573). Minglewood is in the

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process of restoring the old mill for an adaptive re-use.

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R. W. George Mill
Stokes County, North Carolina

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Beasley, Pokey and Ruby Chandler (daughter and granddaughter of Jim Moss). Interview by Laura A. W. Phillips, April 27, 1997.
- Branson, Levi, ed. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1890*. Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1889.
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- Branson, Rev. L., ed. *The North Carolina Business Directory 1877 and 1878*. Raleigh: L. Branson, 1878.
- Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1867-8*. Raleigh: Branson & Jones, Publishers, 1867.
- Covington, T. J. *Walnut Cove and Stokes County*. n.p., 1914 (?). Reprinted by Stokes County Farm Bureau, 1970.
- Danbury Reporter*, February 21, 1935.
- Dan River-Francis Presbyterian Churches 1893-1993*. Booklet printed for centennial celebration, October 10, 1993.
- Francis, Mildred (area resident, operated looms at Spencer Mills). Interview by Laura A. W. Phillips, April 18, 1997.
- George, Ola (area resident, b. 1904). Interview by Laura A. W. Phillips, April 18, 1997.

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Section Number 9 & 10 Page 10 R. W. George Mill
 Stokes County, North Carolina

Hobbs, Grimsley T. *Exploring the Old Mills of North Carolina*. Chapel Hill, NC: The Provincial Press, 1985.

Phillips, Laura A. W. "Stokes County Historic Inventory: Final Report." Prepared for the Stokes County Historical Society, 1989.

Stokes County Records, Office of the Register of Deeds and Office of the Clerk of Court, Stokes County Courthouse, Danbury, N.C.

The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory, 1905 and 1910.

Woodward, John R., ed. *The Heritage of Stokes County North Carolina*. Germanton, NC: The Stokes County Historical Society, 1981.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Verbal Boundary Description --

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying survey map entitled "Survey of Tax Map 12: Parcels 14A & 15: R. W. George Mill Tract."

Boundary Justification --

The boundary of the nominated property includes the current mill tract, containing the R. W. George Mill, the dam on Big Creek, and 4.22 acres along the creek. The nominated property provides an appropriate setting that evokes the building's late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century industrial significance.

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Section Number Photographs Page 11

R. W. George Mill
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PHOTOGRAPHS:

The following information for #1-5 applies to all nomination photographs:

- 1) R. W. George Mill
- 2) Stokes County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) 2/97
- 5) State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 6-7) A: Overall, view to NW
B: Context, view to NE
C: West elevation, view to E
D: North elevation, view to S
E: East elevation, view to W
F: Interior, first floor, view to SE

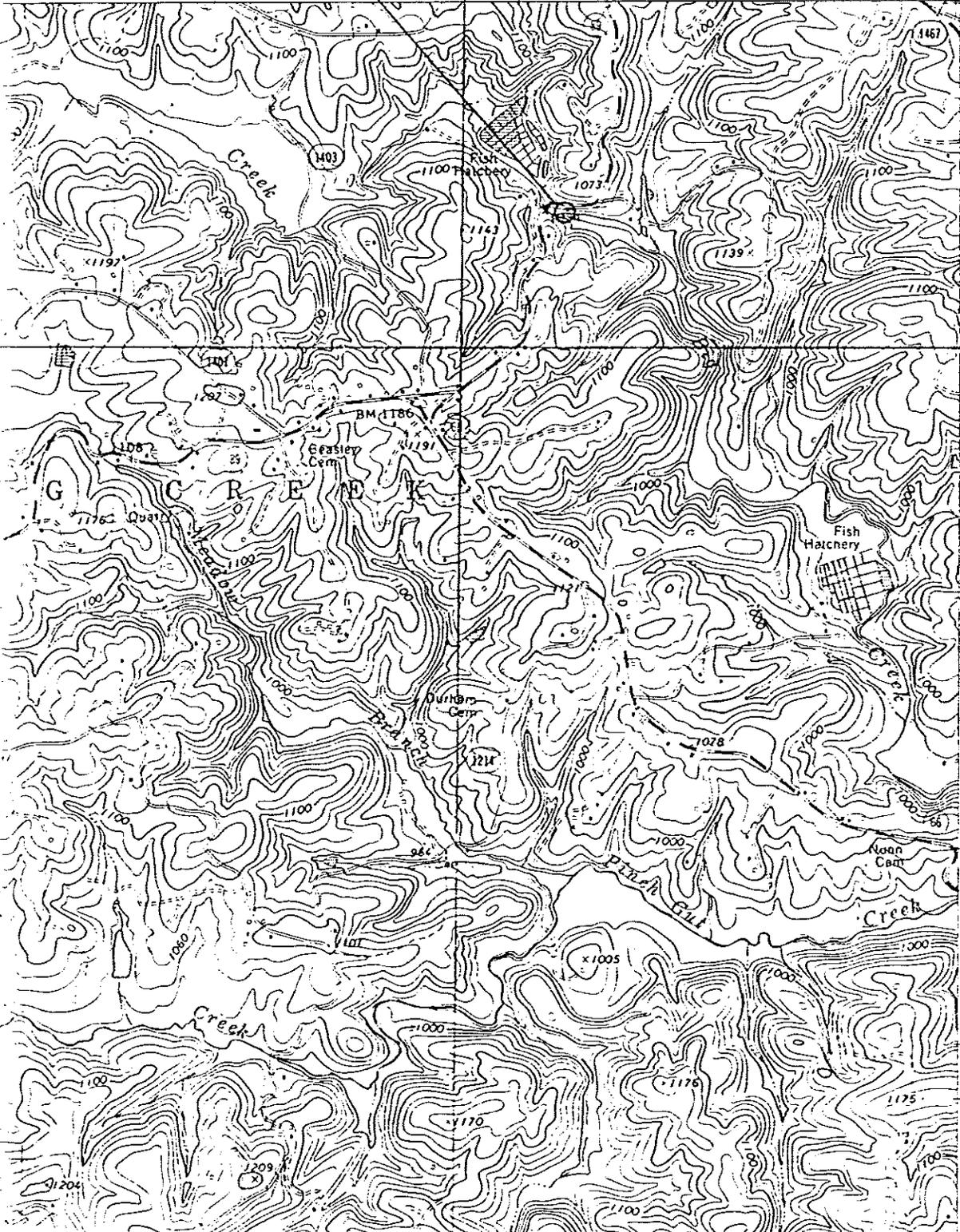
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R. W. GEORGE MILL
STOKES Co., NC
UTM REFERENCE -
17/554420/4038550

PILOT MOUNTAIN QUADRANGLE
NORTH CAROLINA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

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(STUART SE)

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1:24,000 USGS
171

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