

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 determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Blue Mills

other names/site number NPS Master Plan #14

2. Location

street & number 3101 Lentz Road [N/A] not for publication

city or town Independence [X] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64050

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Claire F. Blackwell 14 Feb. 1994
Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell, Deputy SHPO Date

Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

Blue Mills
Name of Property

Jackson Co., MO
County/State

Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail, 1821-1880
Multiple Property Submission

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 count previously listed resources.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

0 0 buildings

2 0 sites

0 0 structures

0 0 objects

2 0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

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

Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/

manufacturing facility

COMMERCE/trade

TRANSPORTATION/road-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Narrative Description

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

Blue Mills
Name of Property

Jackson Co., MO
County/State

Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail, 1821-1880
Multiple Property Submission

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Transportation

Archeology/historic--non-aboriginal

Periods of Significance

1834 - 1865

Significant Dates

1834

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Euro-American

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☒ Federal Agency

☐ Local Government

☐ University

☐ Other:

Name of repository: NPS - Southwest Regional Office, Santa Fe, New Mexico

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A. Zone 15 Easting 386850 Northing 4334880

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] 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 See Continuation Sheet, section 11

organization The URBANA Group date May 1993

street & number 202 South Broadway, Suite 206, P.O. Box 1028 telephone (217) 344-7526

city or town Urbana state IL zip code 61801-9028

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 _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

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

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Narrative Description

The site of Blue Mills is located at the north end of Lentz Road in the Atherton area of Jackson County along the Little Blue River. The street address is 3101 Lentz Road. This historical archaeology site is significant for the period of 1834 to 1865 in conjunction with travelers, traders and settlers along the Santa Fe Trail. Among the physical features of the site are two contributing resources: the foundations of a large grist mill and the remnants of a once active stream channel used to power the mill. The site retains fairly good visibility and good focus due to the existing elements that allow for interpretation of the site.

Environmental factors of relevance to the site during its period of significance were proximity to the Little Blue River and the location along the Santa Fe Trail. The physical setting remains the same today as the site is located immediately to the west of a north-south trending bluff line associated with the Little Blue River which lies to the west of the site. The site area features an abandoned stream channel approximately seven meters northwest of the mill ruins and large deciduous trees which encroach the ruins on the northeast.

The gristmill was constructed in 1834, and the sawmill was added the next year.¹ The mills continued in operation through the early 1860s.² The mills were owned by a prominent group of Santa Fe Trail merchants and traders: Michael Rice, Samuel C. Owens, and James and Robert Aull.³

The site type is a milling complex with primary features being the foundation ruins of a gristmill and the visible stream channel which powered the mill. The ruins of the gristmill make up the most important component of the site. The visible remains consist of a smooth cut limestone foundation approximately 1.5 meters in height (although this does vary somewhat), which extends into the east bank of the stream channel. The foundation stretches sixteen meters northeast-southwest. The extent of the foundation to the southeast is unknown, however, it is visible at the surface for a distance of three meters. An intact corner of the now defunct structure is visible at the northeast end of the foundation wall. It continues southeast into the bank cut twelve meters where there is a noticeable jog (corner) in the wall (approximately one meter deep). The wall continues an additional four meters to the southeast where it again makes a corner. Sub-surface deposits are represented minimally by the visible foundation which clearly continues beneath the modern grade to the southeast, and by the once active stream channel.

Since only foundation ruins remain in place at the site, it is difficult to determine the appearance of the property during its period of significance. It is known from the historical record that the mills were described as "extensive".⁴ The best source of information on physical appearance obtained for this site is a photograph from the Jackson County Historical Society Archives

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which was reproduced in a Kansas City Star newspaper article in 1990.⁵ The photograph shows the mill structure intact, bordered by the river, and surrounded by trees and other vegetation. The building itself is a tall two story, wood sided structure with a medium pitched gable roof composed of shake shingles. The elevation toward the river is the focus of the photograph, showing a fully exposed stone basement level with no fenestration. Openings higher on this facade are minimal, consisting of three narrow rectangular openings: one near the center of the facade just above the foundation, one just below the gable and placed off-center to the right, and one located off to the left in the gable itself. Other information provided by the photograph indicates the presence of a slightly recessed wing to the south (most likely the one meter deep corner noted above).

Since the period of significance for this property, some changes have occurred on the site. The river channel has been modified so that it does not directly border the site. The bend which originally provided water for the mill is still visible, and the abandoned stream channel still contains water. The nearest residents have cut through the foundation ruins at the surface in one place in order to create a drainage ditch flowing into the creek below. As the cut is only a few feet deep, there is no evidence to suggest that the foundation below has been harmed. On the northeast, vegetation has overgrown the foundation ruins.

Limited residential development has occurred in the general area outside of the site boundaries, specifically one house to the east and several some distance away to the south. There is a gravel cul-de-sac driveway, which at its closest point is approximately eight meters southeast from the site ruins, and approximately thirty meters east of the site ruins are two sheds and a residence, all of which are outside the site boundaries.

The archaeological integrity of the site is assessed as having fairly good visibility and good focus. Although the stream channel is separated from the river, it does exist on site and the route of the water to the mill is discernable. The foundations of the mill are visible above the surface, and the relationship between the siting of the mill and the power source (stream) is apparent due to proximity, allowing ease of interpretation involving early industry and commerce. The environmental context of the site is excellent, as the mill site contains a high degree of integrity for location, setting, feeling, and association.

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Endnotes

1. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Management and Use Plan (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 91.

2. Kelly Garbus, "Trails Center Gets 'Significant' Gift," Kansas City Star, 27 December 1990, n.p.

3. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe National Historic Trail, p. 91.

4. Dean Earl Wood, The Old Santa Fe Trail From the Missouri River (Kansas City: E.L. Mendenhall, Inc., 1955), p. 50.

5. Garbus, n.p.

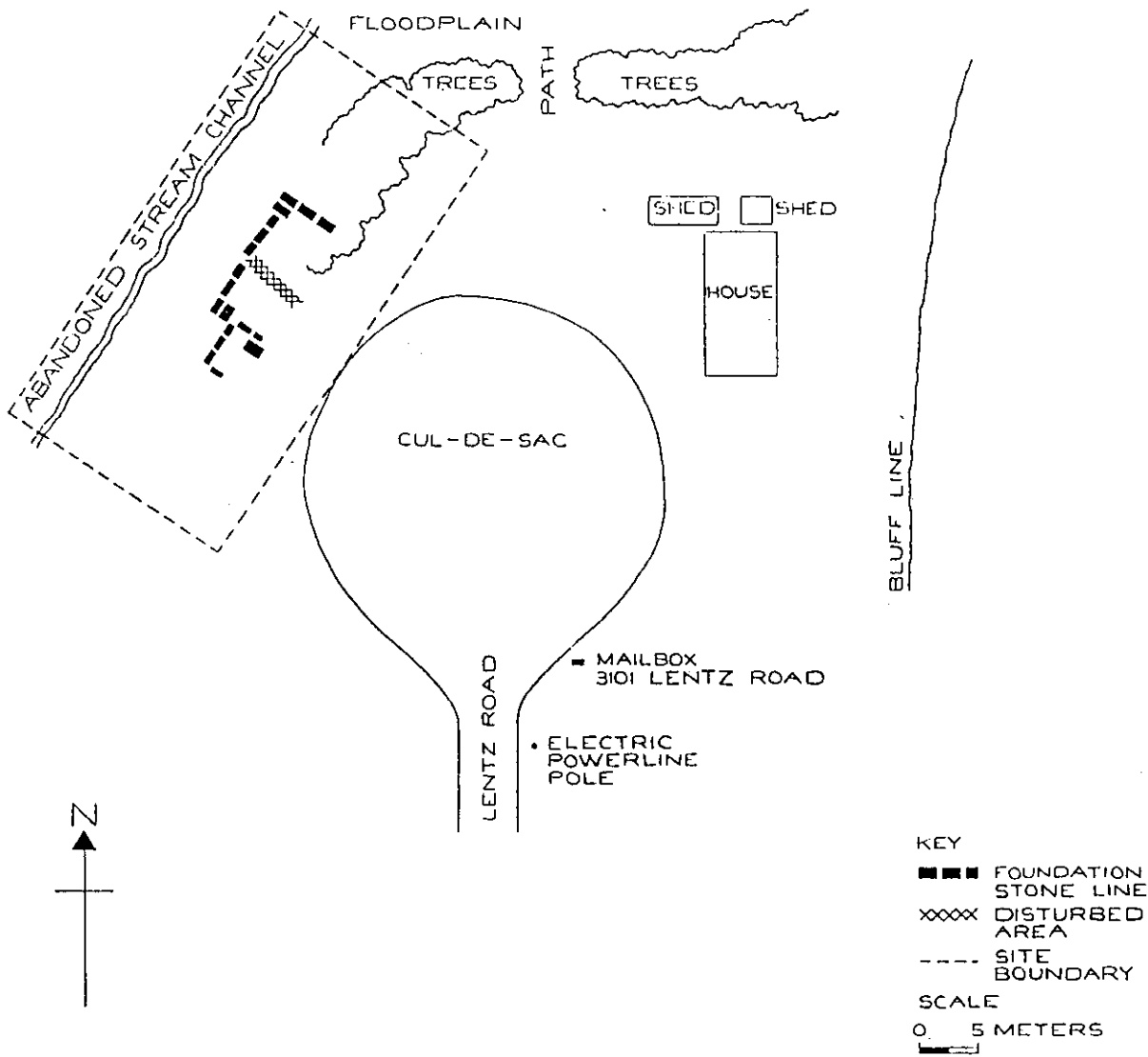
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Sketch Map



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Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Blue Mills is eligible to the National Register under Criterion A as a reflection of historically significant traffic along the Santa Fe Trail in the areas of significance for commerce and transportation. Blue Mills is also eligible to the National Register under Criterion D as a site with potential to yield information under the area of archeology/historic--non-aboriginal. The property fulfills the registration requirements of the Ancillary Historic Properties (sub-type: Historic Archaeology Site) property type detailed within section F of the Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail, 1821-1880 Multiple Property Documentation Form. The site is significant for its association with Santa Fe Trail traffic from the construction of the mill complex begun in 1834 to the declining use of the mills in 1865. The site features materially reflect important historic events outlined in the historic contexts: International Trade on the Mexican Road, 1821-1846; The Mexican War and the Santa Fe Trail, 1846-48; and Expanding National Trade on the Santa Fe Trail, 1848-1865.

Mill operations along the Santa Fe Trail played an important role in providing provisions near both the eastern and western termini of the Trail and along its course. These mills often served as a locus for settlement and provided valuable goods and services to Trail travelers and area residents. Blue Mills represents a tangible reminder of Santa Fe Trail traffic from 1834 to 1865. Positioned approximately halfway between Fort Osage and Independence, Blue Mills was an important center for provisioning traders and settlers as well as being a component part of several business enterprises run by a consortium of prominent Trail businessmen.

History: Commerce and Transportation

The history of Blue Mills is integrally related to the histories of these Trail businessmen. The Blue Mills complex was owned by Michael Rice, Samuel C. Owens, and James and Robert Aull.¹ John Aull, the older brother of James and Robert, came to Missouri from Delaware around 1819, settling in Chariton and opening a store which he operated until 1822. At this time, he moved farther west to the town of Lexington, where he ran a general store until his death in 1842. James and Robert came west in 1825, and James started his own store in Lexington. By 1830 the store had branch operations in Independence and Richmond. Robert had a store in Liberty, and in 1831 the brothers became partners operating all four stores until 1836, with the help of Samuel Owens who ran the store at Independence and later would become a partner of Robert Owens in the same store.² Samuel Owens was a trader in his own right and apparently owned a Missouri River landing several miles upstream from Fort Osage by about 1829.³ This landing quickly benefitted from the concurrent beginnings of steamship service to this part of Missouri. The Independence store was the first in the new town and, as Independence developed into a prominent provisioning point for Trail merchants and travelers, the store and its owners prospered. Until other stores were built, the Aull general store

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absorbed most of the trade coming from the Franklin area as it was "the last store this side of New Mexico going west, and the first store they met with coming back, on the Trail."⁴

Besides their very successful stores, the Aull brothers and partners extended their significant involvement with Santa Fe Trail trade through their ownership of three steamboats, through the construction of a rope walk to process locally grown hemp into rope that was destined for the coasts, and through the construction and operation of a milling complex with both a gristmill and a sawmill.⁵ The mills provided an obvious advantage to the businessmen by reducing the need to purchase flour from eastern merchants that was later resold in their stores. With the mill complex, flour was at hand as was lumber with which to build their stores and warehouses, and of course to sell. There is some evidence to suggest that the mill complex also functioned as a livestock center where cattle and hogs were marketed, most likely to the owners who then resold the meat in their stores.⁶ According to Atherton, "... they [the Aulls] bartered goods for locally produced items, such as beef, wheat, pork, beeswax, honey, furs, and a multitude of other things."⁷

The mills were constructed in 1834-1835 along the Little Blue River at the location of a Santa Fe Trail river crossing. This wagon ford was a part of the Trail from its earliest days, with Archibald Gamble, secretary for the Sibley Survey in 1825, mentioning this crossing when describing the nature of the Trail as a local road as far as the wagon ford of the Little Blue River.⁸ The crossing was bridged in 1834, the same year the mills were begun, and the Santa Fe Trail ran between the two mills.⁹ Atherton states that "in 1835, Robert Aull left Liberty and assumed charge of the [flour] mill and shortly afterwards James made application for a post office to be established at the new location with Robert as postmaster."¹⁰ A thriving town quickly grew up around the mills, and "settlers could subscribe for a newspaper produced at the mill for \$1 per year."¹¹ A total of seventeen men worked at the gristmill "normally living at a boarding house that rented rooms for \$1.25 to \$1.50 a week. Meals cost 25 cents each."¹² The sawmill produced planks and shingles made from walnut, oak and sugar maple trees.¹³

The commercial and transportation networks of Blue Mills went far beyond their locality. Flour from the gristmill was shipped to Independence, St. Joseph, and Fort Leavenworth (the owners had government contracts to furnish goods to U. S. troops stationed in the West¹⁴), and also to St. Louis, New Orleans and Europe.¹⁵ In fact, the original impetus for building the complex was provided by the Fort Leavenworth contracts. In 1834, the Aull firm was defeated in its bid to provide the fort with staples. In an attempt to ensure that next year's bid was the lowest, James set about constructing the gristmill at the Little Blue River, which would enable him to grind his own flour and thereby undercut his competitors. His bid was the lowest and he secured the \$6,500 contract.¹⁶

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The Missouri River landing previously mentioned gave the owners a substantial base for the transportation of their goods. By 1836, Owens Landing had become known as Blue Mills Landing and was connected to the Trail by a short road (approximately two miles).¹⁷ The Aulls and partners used the landing to export their products by river, and to land goods for their area enterprises. Blue Mills Landing is significant, however, beyond its ownership and use by these prominent Trail merchants. As steamboat use moved the eastern terminus of the Trail farther westward to the new town of Independence, Blue Mills Landing took on a lead role as the transition point between water transport and land transport. By 1832, Independence was pre-eminent as the eastern outfitting point on the Trail, and "Independence maintained its position as the headquarters of the Santa Fe trade until after the Mexican War, with Owens (Blue Mills) Landing without rival for the traders."¹⁸ Before the rise of Kansas City, Blue Mills Landing was also the transfer point for emigrants heading westward. A description of the scene at Blue Mills Landing was provided by a steamboat passenger in 1846 and details seeing a group of Spaniards who were attached to a Santa Fe company, along with their wagons, a group of Mexican Indians, a few French hunters in buckskins, and a group of Oregon-bound settlers.¹⁹ Blue Mills Landing continued to reign supreme until it was supplanted in 1853 by the City of Kansas levee as the main Trail landing point.²⁰ Blue Mills Landing was used from about 1829 (starting as Owens Landing) into the 1860s, and "countless tons of trade goods bound for Santa Fe went up to Independence from this landing. Today, the Santa Fe Railroad tracks cover the site, and no traces remain of the original landing or ferry."²¹

Although business at Blue Mills began to decline in the 1850s as landings farther up the river became more popular, the mills were operated continuously through the early 1860s. By the early 1920s, the mills were in ruins.²² "In 1923, Mark Siegfried found workmen clearing away ruins of the old mill and getting ready to roll the millstone into the river."²³ It is not known if other artifacts from the site met a watery fate.

As flour and lumber were frontier necessities, the Blue Mills proved to have importance far beyond their local community. Their role in the business networks of the Aulls and their partners is significant at the national level for Criterion A under the areas of commerce and transportation.

As one of only five mill sites listed in the Santa Fe National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Management and Use Plan (NPS), and one of only two outside of New Mexico, Blue Mills has the potential to yield valuable information on the material culture, trade patterns, and transportation activities related to its location along the Santa Fe Trail. Determining the specific significance of the Blue Mills site under Criterion D is difficult in the absence of a systematic archaeological survey and preliminary testing. The site did function as a component part of a wide, dynamic commercial, communication, and transportation system. Due to the lack of many other documented mill sites associated with the Trail, this site, directly associated with a

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pattern of historic events, becomes very important to the historical archaeologist as a means of obtaining comparative data. As this site contains intact deposits, artifacts datable to the period of significance, and reliable information identifying the site as a known Trail property, it meets the registration requirements for its property type.

The Blue Mills site has the potential of yielding data sets involving mill building construction and operational techniques (such as level of sophistication of machinery), a more detailed picture of the building now in ruins (limits of foundations), the location of ancillary structures, the site of the sawmill and its spatial relationship to the gristmill, the location of other community buildings (such as the boarding house mentioned above), and details of commercial and material life not documented in the historical record.

The Blue Mills site has the potential to address several important research questions. Site excavation and analysis of surface remains would provide an opportunity to refine our knowledge of frontier industry, vernacular industrial architecture of the pioneer period, patterns of settlement formation and evolution in the region, and patterns of commodity exchange and transportation, both eastward and westward, between this complex, metropolitan regions, and along the length of the Santa Fe Trail. Through the presence of relatively undisturbed data sets available at only one other site in the state, and capable of yielding information relevant to answering important research questions, the Blue Mills site fulfills the requirements for eligibility under Criterion D in the area of archeology/historic--non-aboriginal.

Endnotes

1. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Management and Use Plan (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 91.

2. Lewis E. Atherton, "The Santa Fe Trader as Mercantile Capitalist," Missouri Historical Review, Vol. 77, No. 1, 1982, p. 3.

3. Dean Earl Wood, The Old Santa Fe Trail From the Missouri River (Kansas City: E. L. Mendenhall, Inc., 1955), p. 56.

4. Ibid., p. 49.

5. Atherton, "Santa Fe Trader," p. 5.

6. Charles Burke, "Trails Center to Display Millstone," The Examiner, n.p., n.d., n.p.

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7. Atherton, "Santa Fe Trader," p. 4.
8. Wood, p. 6.
9. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe National Historic Trail, p. 91.
10. Lewis E. Atherton, "James and Robert Aull - A Frontier Missouri Mercantile Firm," Missouri Historical Review, Vol. 30, 1935-36, p. 20.
11. Burke, n.p.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Atherton, "Santa Fe Trader," p. 5.
15. Kelly Garbus, "Trails Center Gets 'Significant' Gift," Kansas City Star, 27 December 1990, n.p.
16. Atherton, "James and Robert Aull", pp. 13-14.
17. Wood, p. 50.
18. Ibid., p. 84
19. Ibid., p. 147.
20. Ibid., p. 183.
21. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe National Historic Trail, p. 91.
22. Garbus, n.p.
23. Burke, n.p.

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Bibliography

Atherton, Lewis E. "James and Robert Aull - A Frontier Missouri Mercantile Firm." Missouri Historical Review, Vol. 30, 1935-36, pp. 3-27.

_____. "The Santa Fe Trader as Mercantile Capitalist." Missouri Historical Review, Vol. 77, No. 1, 1982, pp. 1-12.

Burke, Charles. "Trails Center to Display Millstone." The Examiner, n.p., n.d., n.p.

Garbus, Kelly. "Trails Center Gets 'Significant' Gift." Kansas City Star, 27 December 1990.

Wood, Dean Earl. The Old Santa Fe Trail From the Missouri River. Kansas City: E.L. Mendenhall, Inc., 1955.

United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service. Santa Fe National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Management and Use Plan. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point fifteen meters due north of the northwest corner of the foundation remains and past the west bank of the abandoned stream channel, proceed southeast for twenty meters in a line parallel to the foundation remains. Turn southwest and continue the boundary for forty-two meters in a line parallel to the abandoned stream channel. Then proceed northwesterly for twenty meters, in a line perpendicular to the stream channel to a point aligned with the point of origin. Then proceed northeasterly for forty-two meters to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the property are established by the extant remains, the related abandoned stream channel, and the setting that contributes to the significance of the property. The northwestern boundary of the site is established to include the stream channel which directly relates to the mill and which may retain artifacts from the mill. The boundaries on the other sides extend to include the extant visible remains of the gristmill and the mill's setting. No remains of the sawmill are evident, nor are any ruts evident.

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Form Prepared By

For The URBANA Group:

Susan Enscoe/Historical Geographer
Writer

Archaeological Survey, University of Missouri-St. Louis
Colleen Hamilton and Brad Mueller/Historic Archaeologists
Field Work

#14 - BLUE MILLS, 3101 LENTZ RD.
INDEPENDENCE, MO
15-386850-4334880

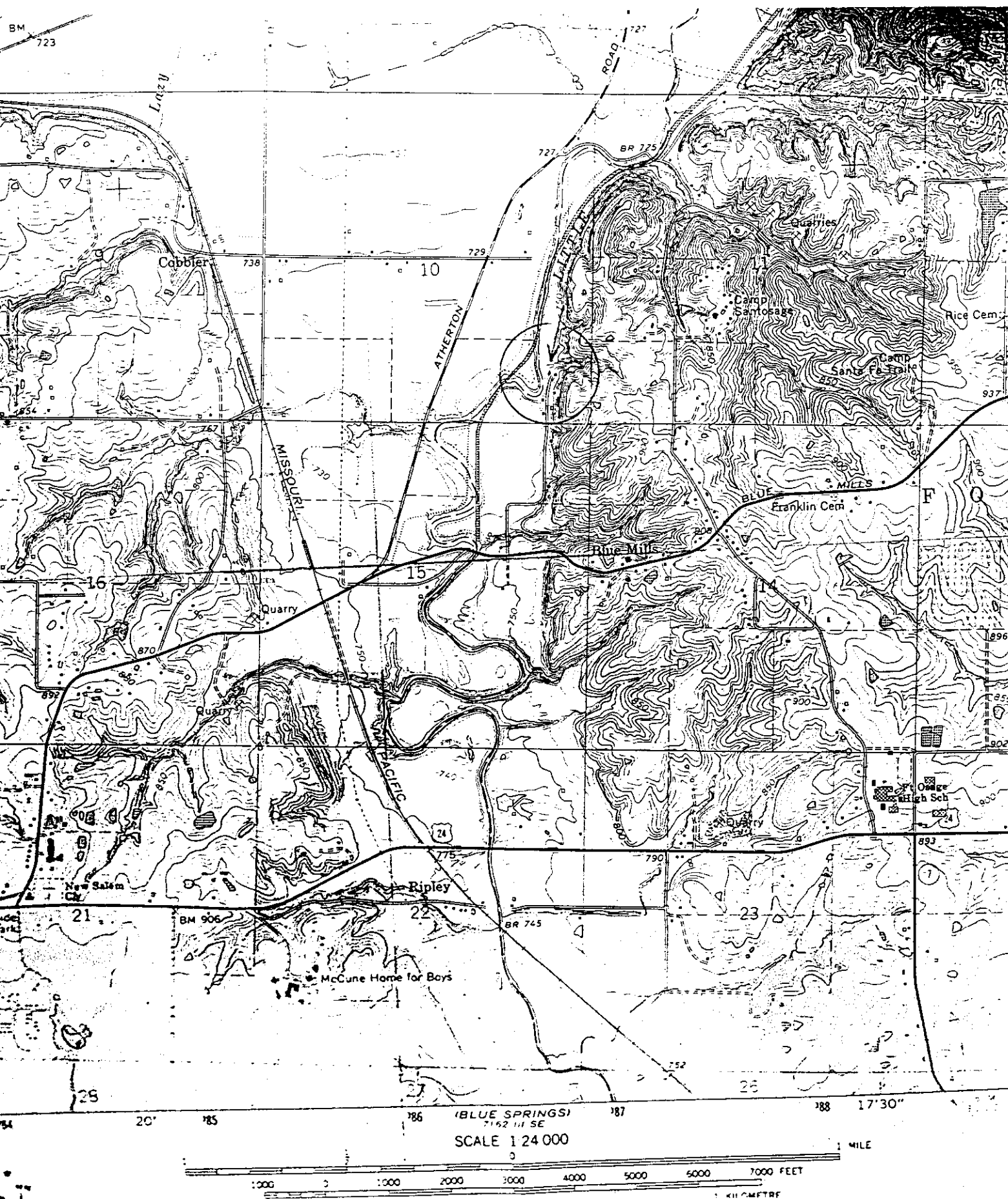


Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Blue Mills**

City or Vicinity: **Independence**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Sally Schwenk**

Date

Photographed: **Apr. 1993**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 3. Looking W, view from on top of foundation looking down to stream channel.
- 2 of 3. Looking SE at foundation ruins.
- 3 of 3. Looking NE at foundation ruins.





