

**Name:** Yates Mill

**Type:** Yates Mill is a historic building -- specifically, an operating water-powered grist mill. It is located in Wake County, North Carolina in southeastern Raleigh.

**Significance:** The mill is on the National Register of Historic Places (1970) and is located within a county park that is also a wildlife preserve, Historic Yates Mill County Park. Records indicate the mill was built in approximately 1756. Because there was no paper or coin money during its early years of existence, it became a place of business, where yeoman farmers could barter for things they could not make themselves. It also became a social center of the unincorporated community. It was one of 40 mills in the area that is now Wake County and is the only remaining operational grist mill in the county.

The mill as it exists today has been restored and added onto over the past 250 plus years and retains approximately 75 percent of the original mill structure. The mill was in continuous operation until 1953. During that span of time, a porch and shed were added to the back of the mill building. The shed was built in approximately 1850 to house the miller's tools for the grist and saw mill, which is on the second floor of the mill. The porch was added after 1850 as a place for farmers to pull their wagons close to the mill and out of the elements while they unloaded their corn and wheat for processing.

There were several owners of the mill throughout the years, including the families of Pearson and Yates. The mill is named for the Yates family because they owned the mill for the longest period of time, although they were not the original builders of the mill.

The mill would have needed 6-8 people to do the grinding until the early 1800s, when new automated milling technology was installed and then it only took 1-2 people. Oliver Evans, holder of the third U.S. patent, was the inventor of the milling technology in use today. This automated technology is significant because Yates Mill is one of only seven restored Evans mills in the U.S.

The mill features an "overshot" water wheel, which means the weight of the water and gravity turn the wheel, not the impact of the water hitting the wheel boards. The mill was a custom mill and ground wheat and corn in addition to housing a saw mill and wool carder. It is now used only for grinding corn which is done during "corn-grinding weekends" once per month. Original mill stones, barrel packer, corn shellers, gears, shafts and spindles remain in the mill and are kept repaired or replaced by the miller.

**Location:** It is located in Wake County, North Carolina, in southeastern Raleigh.

**Description of Strategy for Creating a Preservation Plan:** The mill sat derelict from 1953 until the 1980s, when a group of local citizens began planning for its preservation and restoration. In 1989, a nonprofit group, Yates Mill Associates (YMA), formed and began the process of restoring the mill. The mill and park surrounding it is an amazing example of various groups working together for one goal. The park property and the mill are owned by North Carolina State University, the park is managed by Wake County Parks and Recreation and the mill is maintained by YMA. The mill opened to the public again as a functioning corn mill in 2006, when the Historic Yates Mill County Park opened.

The mill is one of North Carolina's 2,800+ entries in the NRHP. State laws addressing properties in the NRHP fall under the North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 121-12(a), Protection of Properties in the National Register, which dictates that overseers of historic property must consider the impact on historic preservation of that property before using state funding and allow the Historic commission and affiliated state agencies an opportunity to comment.

Some initial research into state preservation plans and county preservation plans for historic properties have revealed that a 2006 North Carolina Historic Preservation plan was written with 22 objectives, while the current preservation plan for the state was written in 2013 and is for [2013-2022](#). After checking the current plan for specific historic building code information and an update on the implementation of the 2006 objectives, it seems that rehabilitation building codes and other policy issues were *not* explored in a formal way due to lack of funding and staff time.

On a local level, the mill is located in Wake county, which is a county Certified Local Government. The only land use management plan I have been able to find so far lists the entire park, including the pond adjacent to the mill, as having a 50-foot buffer. I had hoped to find some more information about resilience to hazardous plans that may be in place since there is a large water source adjacent to the mill. I plan to visit the park visitor's center in person to find out what zoning ordinance applies to the mill and the surrounding pond and park. I am also a volunteer historic interpreter for the park and give monthly tours of the mill, shed and porch, so I have access to the inside workings of the mill. I also know the leadership of Yates Mill Associates and the miller personally so I can get more information from them about whether or not a preservation plan has ever been created. I've asked, but haven't received an answer thus far.

The state preservation plan, per NPS requirement, is updated every five years, but the latest report, issued this year, focuses mostly on tax incentive success stories. However, there is a GIS website administered by the SHPO that illustrates 40 years of architectural survey field work and designated historic properties in N.C. I want to research that site for mill overlay information.

I was encouraged to find that there is a North Carolina Rehabilitation Building Code, so I plan to review Section 1.33 of the Rehab Code for specific guidelines addressing historic buildings. This code is the first building code in North Carolina written specifically for existing buildings.

I feel that I will be challenged with planning for accessibility, since I will need to account for the natural terrain surrounding the mill, largely boulders and hillside. There is currently no accessibility to the inside of the mill, shed or porch for wheelchairs. I am reviewing information for another restored mill in Treman Park per your recommendation, but I haven't found the preservation plan for it yet.

From speaking with the miller, park administrator and YMA leaders, I know that the miller has repaired the wheel by himself when there are minor breaks and normal wear and tear to the wheel. I also know that he monitors the mill and its wheel before, during and after major hurricanes like the one we just experienced. I'd like to learn more about his plan for preserving the mill's structural systems, even if it's unwritten.

I know that YMA is continually raising funds for the wheel replacement, which they estimate to be in the next five years. Financial planning is a major part of preservation, and I plan to inquire about what other parts of the mill are of the most immediate concern.

As I mentioned in my Module 2 response, I like the approach of a medium-term plan, but I recognize with this particular building, that many of the major supporters with historical knowledge are older in age. I reference this only because I think there is an immediate need to document short and long-term goals and plans according to those who know the building and its history best. Some supporters, including the miller, have worked with the mill since the 1980s. With that in mind, the goal of my preservation plan is to formalize long-term goals which can carry over into the next planning period, and elaborate on short- and medium-term focus areas to advance those goals. The plan will give focus areas the highest priority given their transformative potential and include such areas as preservation, finance, development and accessibility. I very much like this structure because these areas can change suddenly depending on politics, major funding changes and technological advancements.