

## **Boyd Mill Place Listed in the National Register**

**ATLANTA (October 15, 2009)** – The Boyd Mill Place, also called Davenport’s Mill and Hearon’s Mill, a two-story, wood-frame gristmill in rural Webster County 13 miles southwest of Plains, Georgia, was listed in the National Register on September 24, 2009. The property owners sponsored the nomination and prepared the nomination materials.

John Boyd built the mill circa 1870. It was first described in a deed in 1872 as the “Boyd Mill Place.” Numerous owners and operators of the gristmill since that time included J. F. Wright, who owned the property from 1872 until 1905. The next owner, Morgan J. Leverett, built the miller’s house just north of the mill in 1910. William V. Davenport, who owned the mill place from 1932 to 1943, added a generator and a small addition in which to mill lumber. (Neither the generator nor the sawmill survive.) In the 1930s, Davenport built the shed, chicken house, and barn with lumber he milled on site. Henry Stanley Hearon, Jr., who purchased the property in 1946, was the last owner to run the gristmill, operating it until 1963.

The Boyd Mill Place is significant in the area of architecture because the mill is an excellent example of a rural gristmill. Gristmills, which ground corn into meal, were often tall buildings in which grains were moved from floor to floor by conveyor belts and chutes. These utilitarian buildings were flexible enough to allow the addition of a sawmill.

The Boyd mill is significant in the area of engineering because the mill pond, dam, and turbine that provided power to the mill and the machinery inside the mill represent the technology associated with processing corn in Georgia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The mill is significant in the area of agriculture because it represents the last step in the process in which area farmers grew corn, which was then driven to the mill to be processed into cornmeal.

The Boyd Mill Place is significant in the areas of commerce and industry because the mill was a site for processing corn and a place of commercial activity in Webster County. The Boyd mill is the last surviving gristmill in Webster County and among the few gristmills in Georgia that retains its processing machinery and was therefore listed at the state level of significance.

The mill sits at the edge of a pond that was created by a 400-foot-long earthen dam. The reservoir provided the mill with a steady supply of hydropower. The mill is constructed of heavy timber held together with mortise-and-tenon joints and clad in weatherboard. Sash windows provide light to the first and second floors. The open interior includes a sifting box in the center of the floor. Corn that was brought to the mill was poured into this box and carried up to the second floor by a canvas

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conveyor belt. A series of progressively finer sifting hoppers cleaned trash from the corn before dropping it back down to the 48-inch grinding stone on the first floor. The grinding stone and the second-floor sifters were geared to a shaft that was driven by a steel turbine located beneath the mill. Opening a sluice gate and sending water through a penstock beneath the dam to the water house activated the turbine. The Boyd Mill Place includes a miller's house built circa 1910 and altered in 1993; a barn (1930s); a shed (1930s); and a chicken house (1930s), all located north of the mill.

The National Register of Historic Places is our country's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. The National Register provides formal recognition of a property's architectural, historical or archaeological significance. It also identifies historic properties for planning purposes and insures that these properties will be considered in the planning of state or federally assisted projects. National Register listing encourages preservation of historic properties through public awareness, federal and state tax incentives, and grants. Listing in the National Register does not place obligations or restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property.

*The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance.*

*The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.*

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