

Wakefield Barn: History of the Barn

Now surrounded by recent development, the [barn at Wakefield](#) is the last reminder of a once flourishing dairy operation. Just after the Great Depression, John Sprunt Hill, founder of Durham Bank and Trust (later CCB and SunTrust), bought the Wakefield Plantation property. He also amassed nearly 2,000 acres on the Neuse River, much of it through foreclosure. It was then fashionable for men who had grown rich through banking, tobacco or other means to build a showplace farm and Mr. Hill's intention was to do just that, as well as improving the land, advancing agricultural practices and employing some of those left in dire straights by the Depression. S.O. Rich designed all the buildings at Wakefield with the exception of the manor house (torn down in the 1980's.) The buildings are constructed of timber cut on the farm.

The barn, built around 1934, is an impressive four story structure of 8,000 square feet surmounted by a steeply pitched, bell shaped roof. Two silos, fifty feet tall, are constructed of terra cotta tiles, an anomaly this far south. The first floor of the barn contains stalls. Directly above is a voluminous three-story hayloft, a magnificent clear span constructed of laminated timbers. Also around this time, a bull barn and a maternity barn were constructed. The maternity barn now holds offices and a lounge.

Dairy operations came to an end in the 1960's. Ed Richards, then owner of North Hills, Inc., acquired the farm and in the 1970's converted the dairy barn to horse stabling as well as restoring some of the other buildings. After passing through several owners, the barns and eleven acres of land were purchased by Steve and Mary Schilling. Mary's efforts resulted in the designation of the Wakefield Dairy Complex as a [Wake County Historic Landmark](#) and in a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.