

HO 739, Davis Mills,
before 1850, ca. 1870.
Ellicott City vicinity, Ilchester area, private access.
Capsule Summary, page 1.

Description:

Six distinct architectural features survive of the Davis Mills complex, here designated A through F. Feature A is a dry-laid granite revetment wall set at the south bank of Bonnie Branch. Above this stood the foundation remains of the southernmost of the two original Davis Mills, destroyed in 1998. Feature B is a rough-cut granite dam abutment standing on the north bank of Bonnie Branch; it probably once secured a wooden dam (before 1850). Building C is a two-story dwelling with rough-cut granite walls and ashlar coins and lintels. Three bays of fenestration face Bonnie Branch road, and a large frame addition extends to the north. This structure, recently rebuilt as a residence, was originally a second mill building, and likely dates to the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Building D is also a dwelling, and was, at least in part, contemporaneous with Building C. It is a frame house covered in asbestos shingles, and is set on a high English basement of rough-cut granite with ashlar coins. Structure E is a dam, ca. 1870, built of ashlar blocks, repaired with rough-cut granite and a cap of poured

HO 739, Davis Mills,
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Capsule Summary, page 2.

concrete. Feature F is an extensive head race cut into the hillside
above Buildings C and D.

Significance:

The Davis Mills in a sense mark a contrary trend in the Patapsco Valley. This enterprise was always a small-scale installation, providing lumber, flour, and meal for the local market. Services such as these were initially offered by the merchant mills at Ellicott City, but over the second half of the nineteenth century, these large facilities dropped small-scale--or country--services in favor of consolidated operations. George Ellicott, Jr., of Ilchester sold Davis the site for these small-scale facilities, and they would have provided needed products for the Ilchester community that Ellicott was fostering. The earliest documented appearance of the Joshua Davis Mills is the 1850 Manufacturers' Census. Between 1860 and 1878, Davis expanded the complex by added a second dam upstream of the first, and for this constructed the head race still visible. It is likely that at this time the dwelling? (Building D) and

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Capsule Summary, page 3.

a new stone mill (Building C) were constructed. The closure of nearby factories and the suburbanization of the surrounding community, with the concomitant growth of ready made products, made the services offered at Davis no longer necessary.

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. HO 739

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Davis Mills

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Bonnie Branch Road, Ilchester Area not for publication

city, town Ellicott City vicinity of congressional district Sixth

state Maryland county Howard

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Please see continuation sheet.

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Please see continuation sheet. liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. HO 739

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resource Count: 6

Six distinct architectural features survive of the Davis Mills complex (designated here A through F); a seventh was recently destroyed in new construction (1998).

Feature A is a rough-cut, dry-laid granite revetment wall set at the south bank of Bonnie Branch. The surviving portion stands approximately four feet high by fifteen feet long. On a terrace above the slope descending to this wall stood the rough-cut granite foundation, now destroyed, of the southernmost of the two original Davis Mills.

Feature B is a rough-cut granite dam abutment standing on the north bank of Bonnie Branch. Portland cement has been employed to re-point the mortar joints--indicating a later renewal of the structure. Though its fragmentary character makes a definitive determination of the material of the dam itself problematic, like many other dams on the Patapsco--the Dismal Mill, the Patapsco Cotton Factory, the Ellicott Iron Rolling and Slitting Mill, and the Orange Grove Mill--this original dam was also probably built of wood braced against stone abutments.

Building C is the substantially altered mill building north of Bonnie Branch Road which probably dates to the renovations done to the mill complex between the mid-1860s and 1878. The principal portion of the building consists of two-story rough-cut granite walls with ashlar coins and lintels. Three bays of fenestration face Bonnie Branch Road, to the south, and two bays open on the first floor of the east. Outlining an addition to the north elevation extends a rough-cut granite wall approximately 3.5 feet high. To these stone elements a wooden roof with gables to the east and west has been added, incorporating the depth of both the principal structure and the addition to the north. The pitch is sufficient to accommodate three bays of dormer windows to the south and a large gable window to the east. A frame extension to the north expands the floor space of the upper level; it is open underneath, including a series of decks added to the east and north. In 1993, James Peirce, a volunteer ranger with the Patapsco

[Please see continuation sheet.]

8. Significance

Survey No. HO 739

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates before 1850, ca. 1870 Builder/Architect unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Davis Mills

In contrast to the large-scale merchant milling operations established in the Patapsco Valley in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Joshua B. Davis set up a small milling enterprise for the local market alone. Built toward the end of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Davis Grist and Saw mills served the needs of nearby residents for the local consumption of meal, flour, and lumber. As the nineteenth century wore on, the larger flour milling enterprises ceased providing these "country" services, and moved ultimately toward a consolidation of facilities in more convenient locations. In this respect, the Davis mills outlasted many of the larger merchant flour mills in the area (see, for example, the Bonnie Branch Mill, inventory number, HO 738, and the Ilchester Mill, inventory number HO 737, Howard County, and the Orange Grove Mill, inventory number BA 2808, Baltimore County). Increasing suburbanization of the region and improved distribution of pre-packaged products eliminated the demand for the Davis mill services in the early twentieth century.

George Ellicott, Jr. (1798-1869) sold this parcel to Joshua B. Davis from larger tracts of land Ellicott had acquired in the 1830s (Baltimore 235/39, Anne Arundel 22/627, and Howard 1/291). The parcel lay mostly to the north side of Bonnie Branch, bisected by Bonnie Branch road. Some time before 1850, when the "Joshua Davis water mill" was listed in the United States Census (McGrain, *Molinography*), Davis here built a grist mill and a saw mill on the north and south sides of Bonnie Branch, separated by Bonnie Branch road, and just west of the intersection of a now-abandoned road to the south. The 1860 Martenet Map of Howard County shows "J. Davis Gst. & S. Mill" in operation adjacent each other on the north and south sides of Bonnie Branch, west of the intersection. The mills

[Please see continuation sheet.]

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Section 4.1

Howard County Tax Map 31, Parcel 166, north of Bonnie Branch Road:
Craig R. Phillips
4450 Bonnie Branch Road
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Howard County Tax Map 31, Parcels 162 and 803, south of Bonnie Branch Road:
Michael G. Mullendore and Susan E. Mullendore
6154 Hanover Road
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Section 5.1

Howard County Circuit Court
8360 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Howard County Tax Map 31, Parcel 166, north of Bonnie Branch Road, property of
Craig R. Phillips:
Liber 4109 Folio 349.

Howard County Tax Map 31, Parcels 162 and 803, south of Bonnie Branch Road,
property of Michael G. Mullendore and Susan E. Mullendore:
Liber 3592 Folio 228, and,
Liber 4176 Folio 132.

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Section 7.1

State Park, reported that this structure consisted only of foundations and standing walls; its transformation into a residence has occurred since that time (Peirce, p. 52).

Building D--or some portion of it--is also evidently a product of the mid-1860s or 1870s expansion of the complex. An English basement of rough-cut granite with ashlar courses supports a frame dwelling, now sheathed in painted asbestos shingles. The facade addresses the stone mill building to the east, and contains three bays of fenestration on the main level with two bays of shed-roofed dormers in the gable above. This descends on the west to a shed extension which meets the ground level at the rear, where the hillside was excavated to create building space. Similarities in the character of the stonework, best seen in building D on the south and east cellar elevations, and that of the mill (building C) suggest a contemporary construction date for both structures.

Structure E is the masonry dam constructed as part of the mid-1860s or 1870s expansion of the complex. Raised of ashlar granite blocks, the dam has evidently been repaired with rough-cut granite and a cap of poured concrete, which replaced the upper courses of stone.

Feature F is the extensive head race cut into the hillside to the west and north above buildings C and D. Though its original junction with the upper mill pool has been destroyed in the successive repairs and widenings made to Bonnie Branch Road, the headrace opens at the same elevation as the pool, and conveyed water apparently in an open channel to the mill.

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Section 8.1

appear again in this configuration on the Reynolds' Military map of 1863, though the proprietor and type of mill are unidentified. Similarly, the Schofield lithograph of the Patapsco Valley, dated to the early 1860s, shows two adjacent but unidentified structures up the valley of Bonnie Branch; these may be representations of the Davis Mills. James Peirce recognized a foundation on this site in March of 1993, and noted that sixty feet upstream were two ten-by-ten foot dam abutments (Peirce, p. 52). Although he attributes these ruins to an earlier mill, it is almost certain that what he observed were the ruins of the initial configuration of the Davis Mills--a frame structure on a stone foundation, and a frame dam secured by stone abutments. The paired mill on the north side of Bonnie Branch Road was probably replaced in a later and more costly renovation to the mill complex.

Substantial changes to this mill site occurred over the next decade and a half (from the early 1860s), and these are depicted in the Hopkins Atlas of Howard County. By the 1878 publishing date of the atlas, a large mill pool had been filled farther upstream of the former dam, and a head race excavated across Bonnie Branch Road to a new mill building. The site was again marked "S.M. [and] G.M.," for saw mill and grist mill, though it is not clear whether the new structure incorporated both functions; the old building south of the branch remains on the map. Incidentally, the new dam was built far enough upstream to clear the pool of the smaller original dam, so the earlier mill could have remained in operation as originally configured, with the new facility operating concurrently from the water fall of the new dam.

The remains of these expanded installations evidence a substantially larger investment: the new dam was masonry rather than wood, and it still stands. In addition, the new mill building itself was also of masonry construction, and was served by extensive head and tail races, cut into the hillside to the north. It is now incorporated into a private residence. A frame dwelling on a stone foundation stands on the same lot, to the west of the new mill. These three structures--the old mill, new mill, and dwelling--appear on the Road System of Baltimore County Map, executed in the second quarter of the twentieth century, while the road south from the mills was still in use.

The growth and prosperity of the Davis grist and saw mill is in a sense a contrary trend in the Patapsco Valley. This was a small-scale operation, dedicated to what the Ellicott family called "country work"-- grain grinding operations for local farmers and local consumption. The merchant flour mills in the valley operated on a large scale, producing vast quantities for national and

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Section 8.2

international sale. As these mills grew and professionalized, they ceased providing country services, which the Ellicott mills had done as an additional service during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Consequently, a market for these local grain grinding and saw-milling operations existed throughout the nineteenth century until a number of economic and social developments made them obsolete. The shift of populations from agricultural to urban and suburban economies, and the development of integrated transportation systems--first of the railroad, and then of highway based transport--lead to the mass production and marketing of commercial products. Among these were lumber and foodstuffs, often produced far from the location of consumption, and at the end of the nineteenth century, produced in factories which need not rely either on water power or the remote and difficult locations water power required. Twentieth-century farmers and suburban villa residents had less use for local mills of this type as finished products became increasingly available and inexpensive on local store shelves.

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Section 9.1

Hopkins, G. M. *Atlas of Howard County Maryland*. Philadelphia: F. Bourquin's
Steam Lithographic Press, 1878.

McGrain, John W. *Molinography in Maryland Series*, Howard County notebook.
Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, MSA SC 4300, loc 02/04/14.

Peirce, James. *Patapsco Valley Mill Sites*. Research Notes, Howard County
Historical Society Library, 1993.

Howard County Historical Society Library:

John Schofield, *Panoramic View of the Scenery on the Patapsco, Ellicotts Mills,
Md.* [key]

Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division:

Martenet's Map of Howard County, 1860, G3843 .H6 1860 .M3;

Raynolds' Military Map, Baltimore County, Maryland, 1863, G3843 .B3 1863 .R3.

Road System of Baltimore County, [ca. 1925-50]; G 3843 .B3P2 19-- .M3.

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan
Statewide Historic Contexts

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological Development/Periods:

- 10) Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
- 11) Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930

Historic Period Themes:

- 1) Agriculture
- 3) Economic

Resource Type:

Category: Site (ruins and buildings)

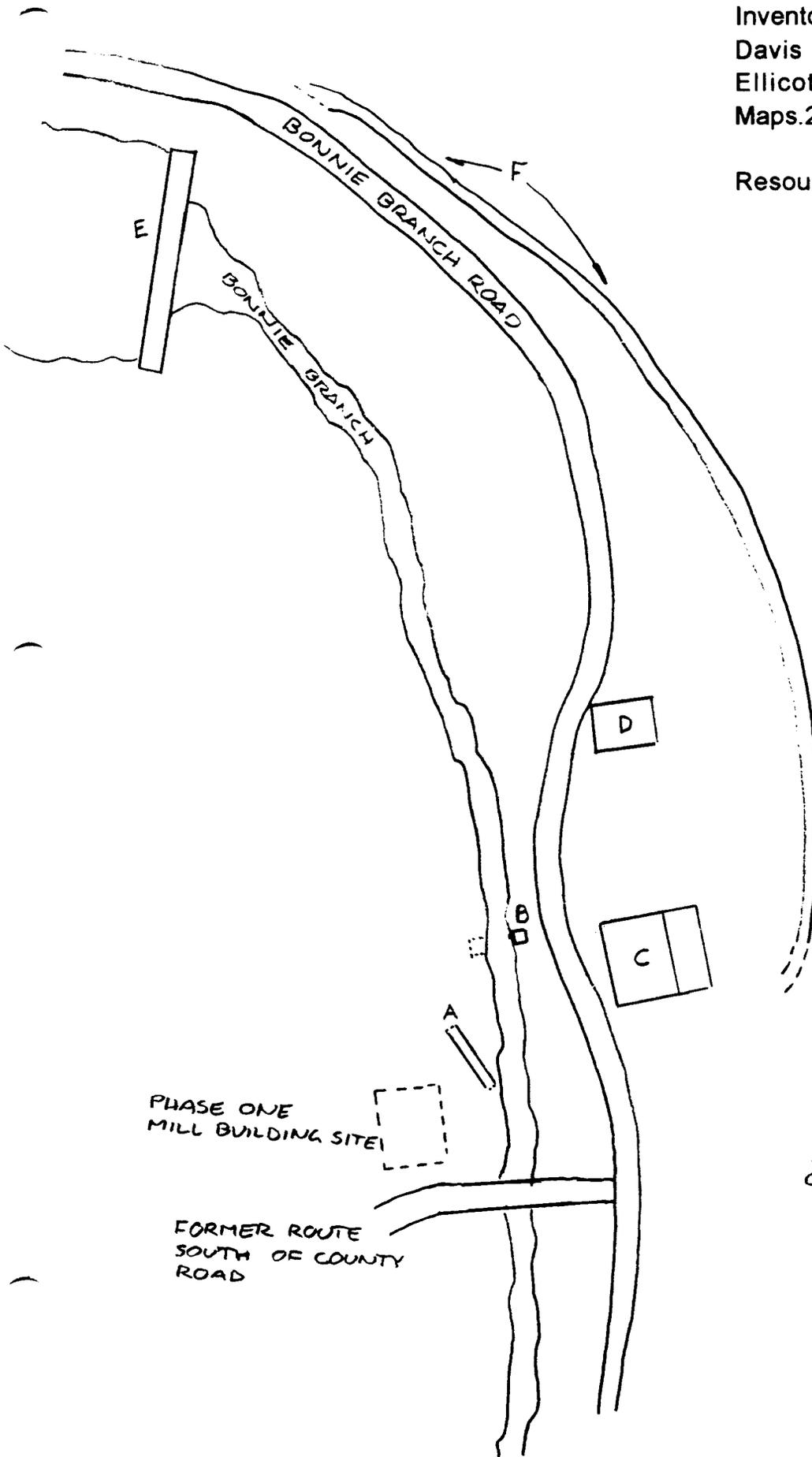
Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Functions and Uses: Grist Mill and Saw Mill.

Known Design Sources: None

Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.2

Resource Site Plan



NOT TO SCALE
1998
H, K, SHARP

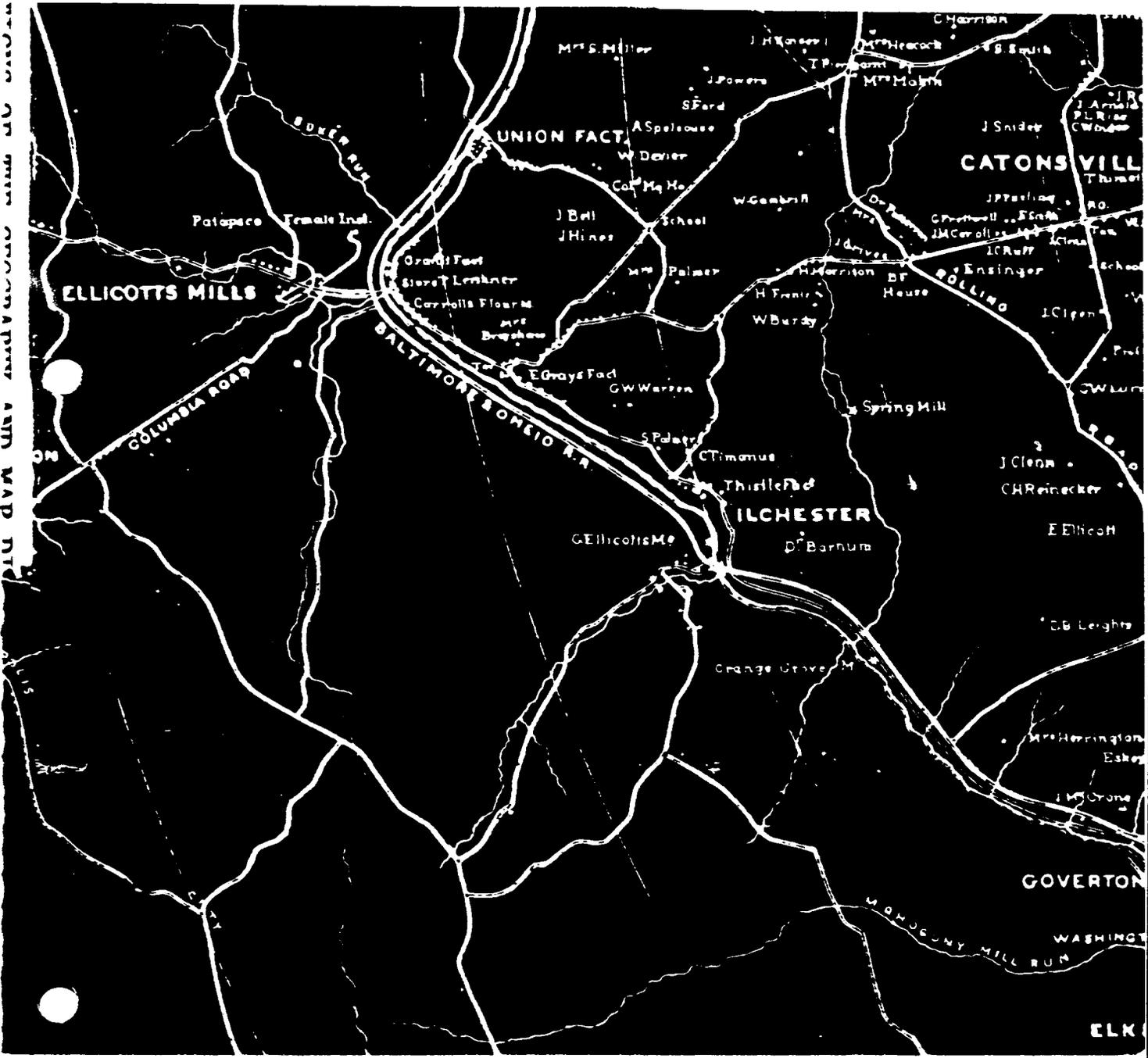
PHASE ONE
MILL BUILDING SITE

FORMER ROUTE
SOUTH OF COUNTY
ROAD

- A: REVETMENT FOR PHASE ONE MILL BUILDING
- B: PHASE ONE DAM ABUTMENT
- C: PHASE TWO(?) MILL BUILDING
- D: PHASE TWO(?) DWELLING
- E: PHASE TWO DAM
- F: PHASE TWO HEADRACE

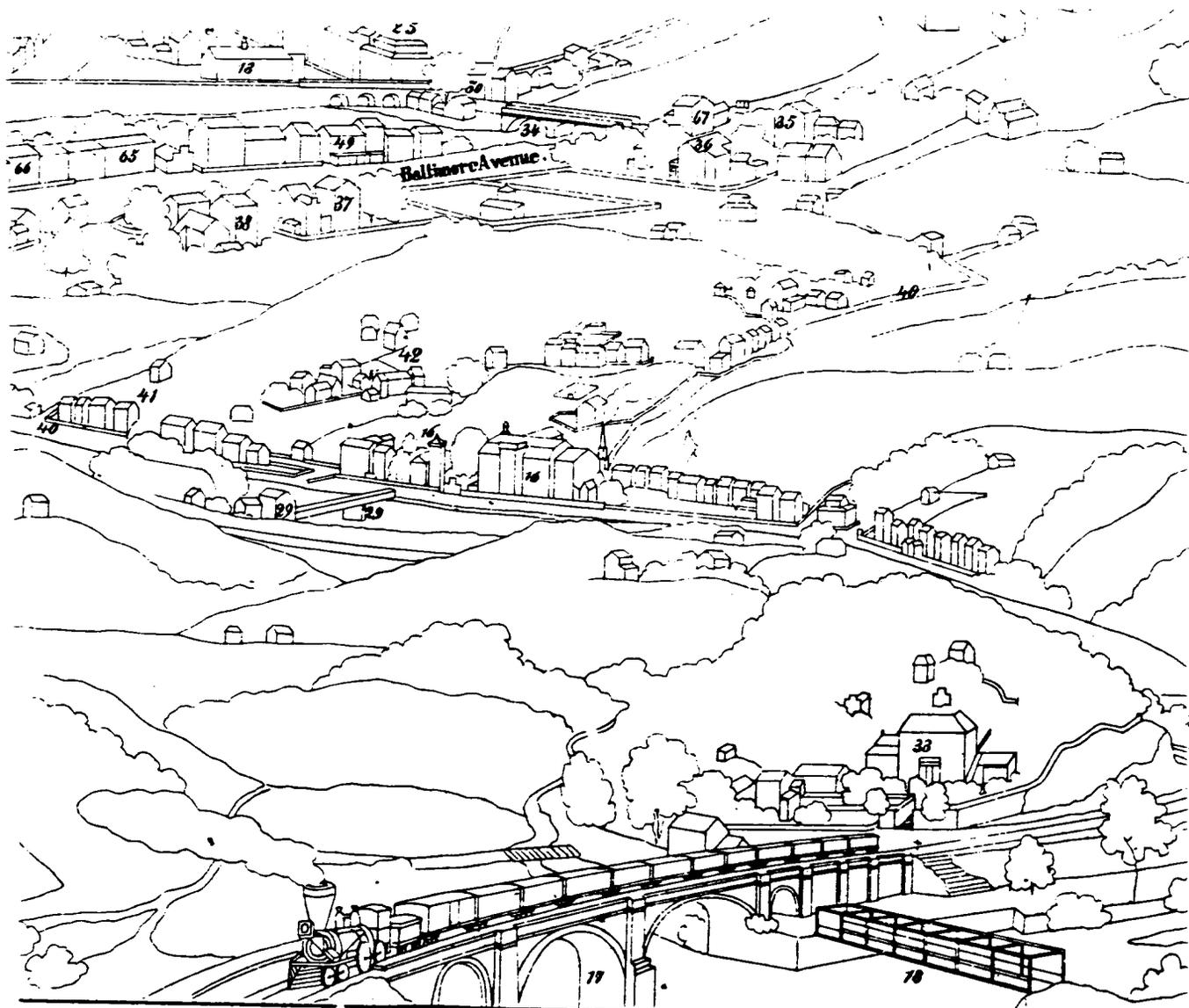
Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.4

Raynolds' Military Map of Baltimore County, Maryland, 1863,
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Geography and Maps Division: G 3843 .B3
1863 .R3.



Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.5

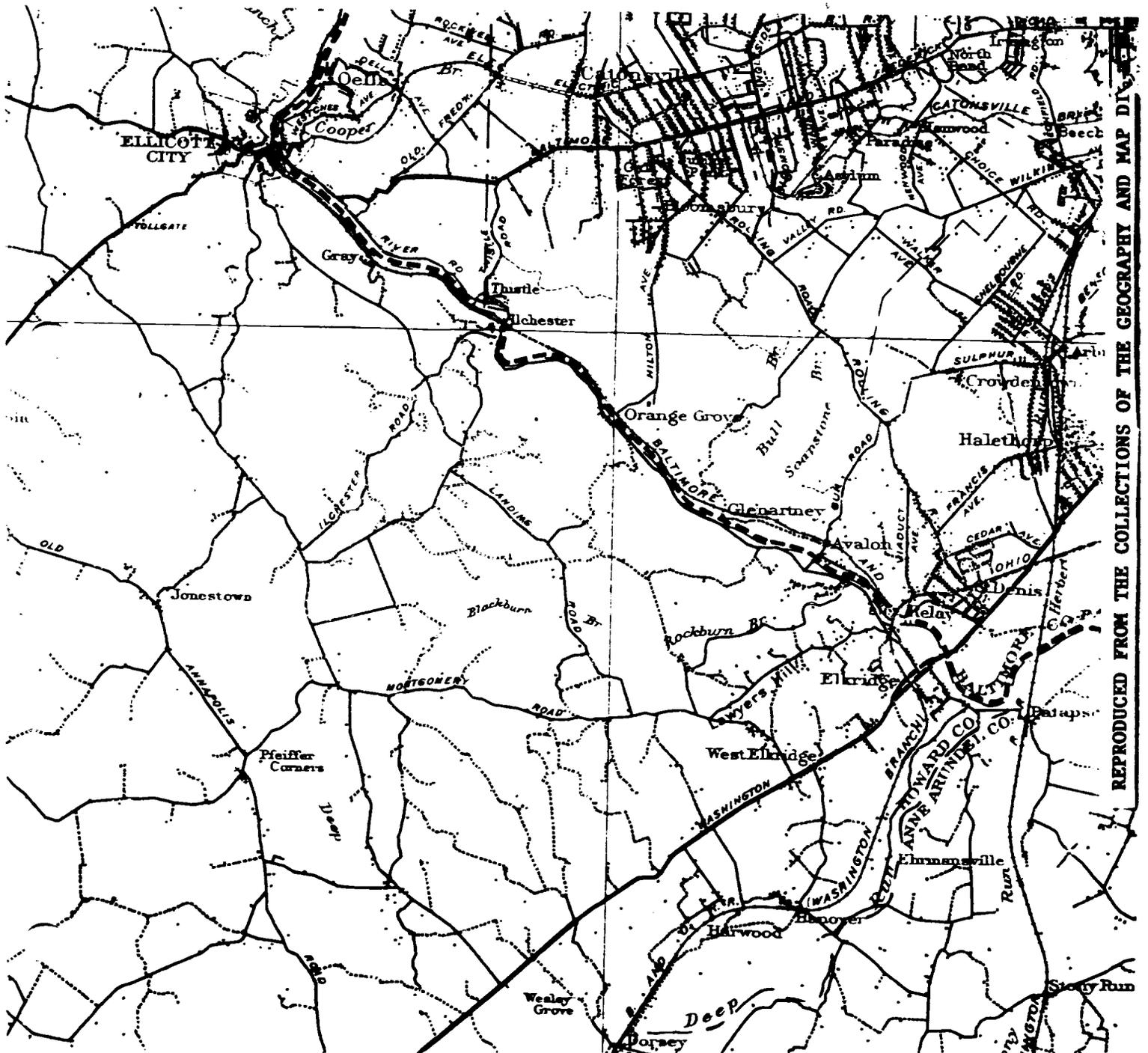
John Schofield, *Panoramic View of the Scenery on the Patapsco, Ellicotts Mills, Md.* [key],
Howard County Historical Society Library, Ellicott City, Maryland.



The two unidentified adjacent structures appearing in the valley of Bonnie Branch may represent the Davis Mill complex.

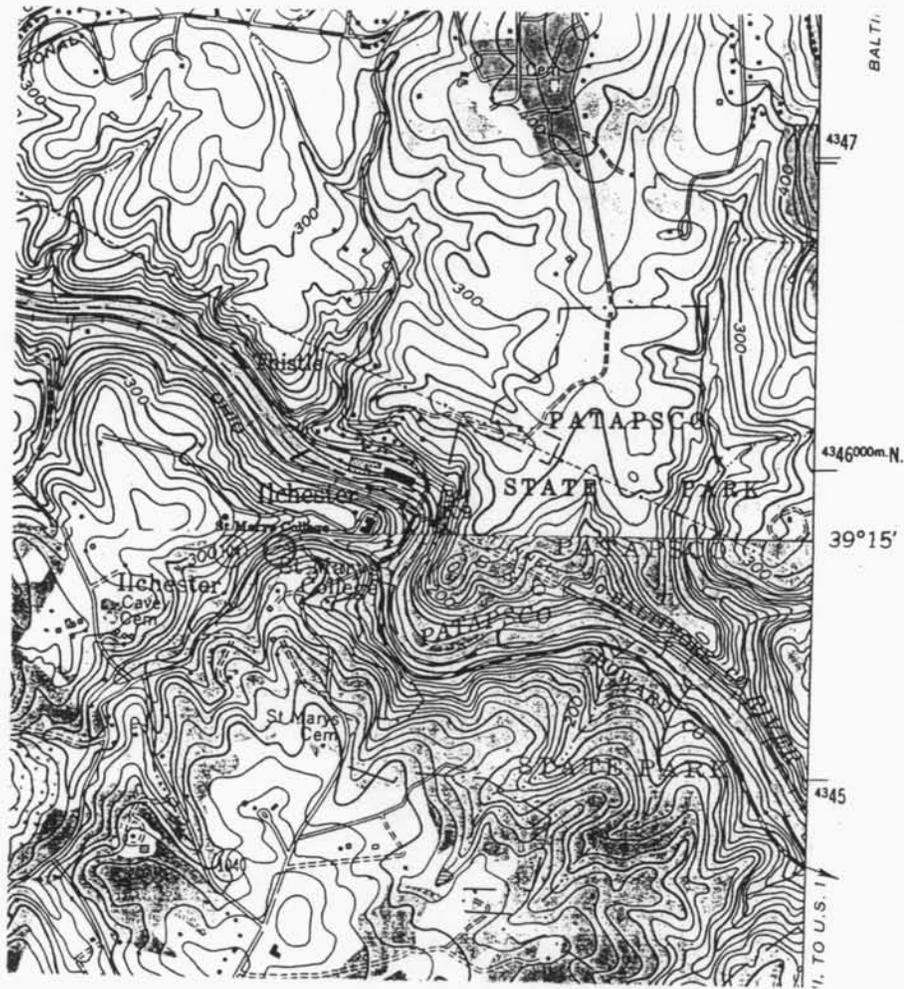
Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.7

Road System of Baltimore County, [ca. 1925-50], Library of Congress,
Washington, D.C., Geography and Maps Division: G 3843 .B3P2 19- M3.



Inventory Number HO 739
Davis Mills, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.1

U.S. Geological Survey
Ellicott City 7.5 Quadrangle
Savage 7.5 Quadrangle





HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

FEATURE A, VIEW SOUTHEAST

1/7



HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

PHASE ONE MILL BUILDING SITE, VIEW SOUTHWEST
(NOW DESTROYED)

2/7



HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

FEATURE B, VIEW SOUTHEAST

3/7



HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

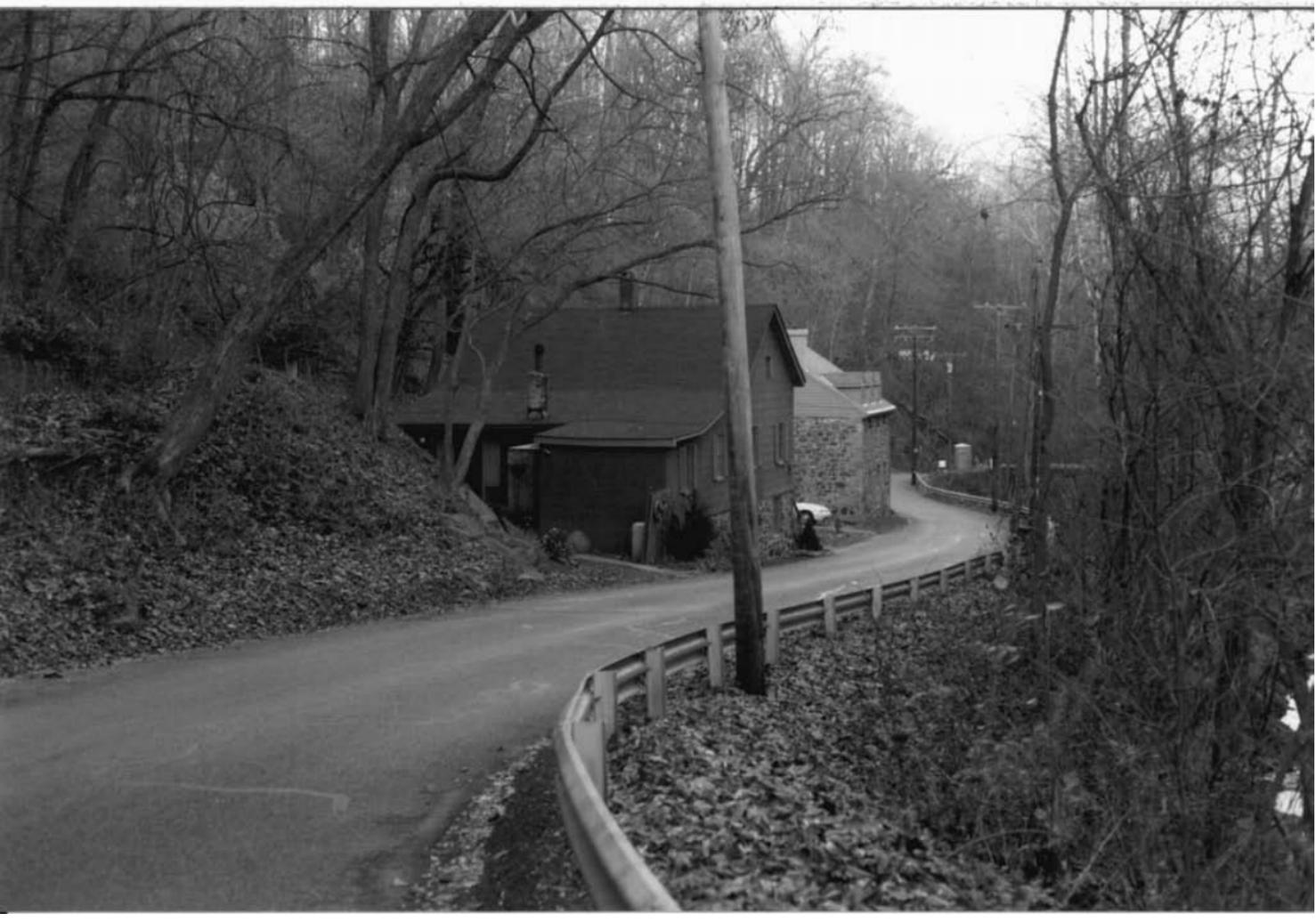
HENRY K. SHARP

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

BUILDING C, FOREGROUND; BUILDING D BACKGROUND
VIEW NORTHWEST

4/7



HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

BUILDING D, FOREGROUND, BUILDING C BACKGROUND

VIEW EAST

5/7



HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

STRUCTURE E, VIEW SOUTH

6/7



HO 739

DAVIS MILLS

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

JUNE 1999

MARYLAND SHPO (FILED WITH HO 737)

FEATURE F, AT REAR STONE WALL, VIEW NORTH-
WEST

7/7