

5. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

PARTS OF A HISTORIC MILLING SYSTEM were identified in the current study. Surviving components of the system include the headrace, the miller's toft, and the mill. At least two periods of major construction on the toft could be identified.

As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, mill seats such as this were "central places" for sparsely-settled rural communities. Today's mill ponds are the focus for local recreation, but industrial centers are elsewhere. In the case of Moore's Lake, the commercial center has survived as well, in unbroken succession.

All the changes can be described as part of a larger pattern of commercial succession. Each period has flowed from the past, building upon infrastructure left by its predecessor. An early milling complex evolved by a series of logical steps until it became a recreational area and a local retail central place.

As the neighborhood changed from agricultural to residential, the land use changed, *within the historical context* of longstanding local service business.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

While the existing 1881 house on the miller's toft has been modernized, the changes have accommodated evolved perceptions of domestic comfort. While the pump still stands over the trough in the wash house, residents enjoy an automatic dishwasher. The rear piazza has been enclosed, tight modern windows installed, and a stucco skin added to the outside.

These changes arguably detract from the pristine architecture of 1881, but they offer valuable evidence that the house evolved historically in a manner consistent with its history and its natural setting.

The pond that powered Henry Moore's mill remains a powerful attraction for people to live on his former property. The system changes, but it continues to perform a central function in the community.

The sub shop and the convenience store have supplanted the feed and flour business of the millers, responding to the suburban population that supplanted the former farm clientele.

Identified historic mill-related properties, considered together, exemplify the evolution of a single resource and its exploitation through time. In the sense that they represent continuity with change, the resources are a single coherent historical whole. Parts of the complex have, from time to time, given way to new elements serving new purposes. This succession itself is a historically significant process that often leaves a trail of evidence in the ground for archaeological interpretation.

SIGNIFICANCE, INTEGRITY AND CHANGE

If change is part of the historical process that begets significance, the concept of integrity must value change equally with survival.

Aside from tombstones, few material objects in the built environment are designed to survive unchanged. Indeed, change is a premier mark of success and significance. If an object or building is a useful and contributing member of the environment, it will inevitably suffer wear, repair, change, and practical preservation, albeit in a changed form.

If, on the other hand, a thing was never touched, repaired, altered, or used, it most likely played no part in the history of its environs. Its preservation may stem from the fact that it was set aside and not used. Preservation, in such cases, is *prima facie* evidence for a lack of significance.

Therefore, alteration and defacement contribute to the significance of any historic property, except, of course, tombstones, which are seldom eligible.

This argument can be carried to an extreme, so that one might argue that the most significant objects are those that have been totally worn out and altered beyond

recognition by repeated repair. Without going to such extremes, it is likely that the former Moore's Mill (Mount Vernon Mills) system probably possesses integrity sufficient to make it eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Eligibility can be justified on the basis of all four standard National Register criteria:

Under criterion A, the impoundment may be eligible. The fish-rearing ponds and the recreational adaptation of the former mill pond represent a significant change in the utilization of mill seats that occurred during the Depression.

CCC conversions of old industrial properties created a major recreational asset on the Delaware landscape. Indeed, America's publicly-owned recreational infrastructure is the fruit of a single decade, during which Moore's Lake became a public facility.

Under criterion B, the site's association with John Vining and Henry Molleston will render it significant at a local level. The association with Cæsar Rodney is peripheral only, and does not contribute.

Individual, scattered elements of the mill seat and toft are collectively eligible under criterion C, since the seat is readily distinguished even today as a coherent whole. As it has for three centuries, the mill dam serves to cement the district together.

Finally, three centuries of human activity have left buried evidence, from the first mill house to the twentieth-century duPont highway yard.

Molleston's house and Vining's mill are certainly archæologically recoverable. Other likely buried resources include the earlier mills, changes to the mill races, auxiliary structures, and former dams.

SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS

Changing styles of highway design can be demonstrated in the evolution of even the simplest and most utilitarian structures (FIGURE 7, PAGE 25) along our roadways. In the short 75-year history of our Delaware state system, Moore's Lake bridges are already 35 years into the life-cycle of their second configuration. As the life-span of

bridges becomes shorter, designs will come and go more rapidly than at any time in the past.

Rapid turnover in modern systems call into question the fifty-year significance threshold for modern systems under the National Register program.

In the field of commercial archæology, which studies changing roadsides, entire generations of artifacts routinely last only a few months. If highway systems turn over in thirty-five years, it follows that the significance threshold might be more recent than a half-century ago.

On this site, the building left over from the feed and chicken operation obtained a measure of historical significance when it served temporarily as a college, less than fifty years ago. Even though the chicken houses are older than the requisite half-century, their period in the spotlight was more recent.

One cannot debate the historical significance of the Delaware community colleges. In spite of its significance, a surviving building from the formative period is all but disqualified on the basis of age.

Temporary facilities, by definition, are subject to loss in less than fifty years. As the tempo of turnover increases in roadside contexts, further losses of important resources may be expected, thanks to an arbitrary cutoff date that does not always accommodate historical realities.

COMMERCIAL ROADSIDE CONTEXT

In connection with another project, the cultural resource group of Louis Berger and Associates has proposed a context for automobile-influenced commercial roadside architecture (LeeDecker et al., 1991).

The authors argue that the development of automobile transportation led to concurrent social and architectural changes in the roadside environment. Such buildings as the sandwich shop and the convenience store, as well as the highway maintenance yard, easily fit into this proposed context.

No further work is recommended in connection with the present project, which will have no effect on identified resources.