HO 738, Bonnie Branch Mill,
ca. 1860.
Ellicott City vicinity, Ilchester area, public access.
Capsule Summary, page 1.

Description:

Two structures comprise the Bonnie Branch Mill site; these are the concrete foundation remains of the mill building and the intact stone dam crossing Bonnie Branch above the mill ruins. The mill foundation rises from a terrace cut into the hillside above the south bank of Bonnie Branch, now channeled in this location. Four battered concrete piers of varying dimensions form the foundation, and appear to have been configured to accommodate shafting and gears suspended from the now vanished wooden or metal superstructure above. Evidence of erosion also suggests that waste water from the wheels above drained beside the piers and washed over the terrace to the branch. Between the mill and the dam is a depression leading to a pipe which protrudes from the base of the dam. Perhaps here is evidence of a closed system, conveying water under pressure to the mill wheels or turbines, a sophisticated system to generate substantial power on a relatively constricted site. The dam itself is constructed of stepped back courses of rough-faced ashlar blocks.

HO 738, Bonnie Branch Mill,
ca. 1860.
Ellicott City vicinity, Ilchester area, public access.
Capsule Summary, page 2.

Significance:

The Bonnie Branch Mill was constructed on land owned by George Ellicott, Jr., and was evidently intended to augment Ellicott's flour milling operations already underway at the nearby Ilchester Mill. Financial losses resulting in part from the panic of 1837 had driven the Ellicott family out of their industrial operations in Ellicott City, and by establishing his residence and mills down river, in Ilchester, Ellicott apparently hoped to keep alive the family name in the merchant flour milling business, and to promote the growth of Ilchester--as his grandparents' generation had done with Ellicott City. Little documentary evidence survives about his mill on Bonnie Branch. An 1851 deed suggests that milling operations on the branch were at least under consideration, though the evidence of maps indicates that no mill was functioning here until ca. 1860. In addition, the facility did not appear in a detailed 1878 atlas, leaving a rather short-lived existence. Ellicott divested himself of the Ilchester properties in 1866, and the two surviving deeds make no reference to the Bonnie Branch Mill. Was it by then destroyed?

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. HO 738

Magi No.

DOE ___yes ___no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Bonnie Branch Mill

and/or common

2. Location

street & number SW corner, Bonnie Branch Rd. and River Rd., Ilchester Area

not for publication

city, town Ellicott City ___x vicinity of congressional district Sixth

state Maryland county Howard

3. Classification

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

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

name State of Maryland, Department of Forests and Parks

street & number State Office Building telephone no.:

city, town Annapolis state and zip code Maryland 21404

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Howard County 106/275 and 520/50 liber

street & number 8360 Court House Dr. folio

city, town Ellicott City state Maryland

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 738

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	_X_ unaltered	_X_ original site
___ good	_X_ ruins	___ altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

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

Contributing Resource Count: 2

The two structures comprised in this site are the foundation remains of the Bonnie Branch Mill and the intact stone dam crossing Bonnie Branch above the mill site.

A large rectangular terrace, approximately 50 feet by 200 feet, partially built up and partially cut into the hillside above the south bank of Bonnie Branch, supported the mill foundation. The north wall of the terrace, occupying the long side of the rectangle, faces the branch and is formed of poured concrete, as are the four large battered piers above, which supported the mill structure. Marks of plank shuttering remain on the piers only; the terrace wall surface has eroded over time. Each pier rises to a maximum height of eight feet, and the overall dimensions for each one are as follows, from east to west: pier A is 16.5 by 13.5 feet; pier B is 16 by 13.5 feet; pier C is 23 by 39 feet; and pier D, a mirror image of C, is also 23 by 39 feet. Piers C and D have ell-shaped footprints, and comprise complex arrangements of raised and lowered foundation surfaces, evidently so varied to accommodate shafts and gearing. Iron bolts set into the concrete rise from the tops of most of these piers and surfaces, clearly intended to secure the wooden beams or iron girders of the mill's superstructure. Gaps at the level of the terrace between each of the piers suggest that the falling water required to drive the machinery ultimately flowed between the piers, across the terrace to the north, and cascaded over the retaining wall to reach Bonnie Branch. The eroded condition of the terrace wall is consistent with such a configuration. Running northwest from the mill foundation toward the dam is a slight depression in the ground, perhaps suggesting the course of a mill race, though a large iron pipe protrudes from the lower reaches of the dam. This pipe may have connected to a closed system no longer extant, which conveyed water to the factory under gravity pressure--insuring greater motive force than that provided by an open canal. In this case the depression may mark the path of the conduit.

The dam itself, some 200 feet from the western end of the terrace, spans approximately 75 feet over a fall of 25 feet, and is constructed of rough-faced ashlar blocks laid in horizontal courses of two stones in height but for the uppermost, which is of three. Each paired course steps back above its neighbor, giving the dam a profile of six set-back steps.

8. Significance

Survey No. HO 738

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

Specific dates ca. 1860 **Builder/Architect** unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: X A X B ___C X D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

Level of Significance: ___national X state ___local

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

Bonnie Branch Mill

The Bonnie Branch Mill was the third of at least three merchant mills erected in the Ilchester area in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, and represents an attempt to establish Ilchester as a diversified milling community with the potential for rapid growth, much like Ellicott City had been in the eighteenth century. The first nineteenth-century construction in Ilchester was the Thistle Cotton Mill, of 1824, (Inventory Number BA 144, Baltimore County), and the second was the Ilchester Flour Mill, of 1833, (Inventory Number HO 737, Howard County). A precise construction date for the Bonnie Branch Mill is unknown, however the evidence presented on a series of regional maps suggests that the installation became operational between 1857 and 1860. In 1878, the mill was not shown in a detailed atlas of Howard County, indicating a rather short-lived existence. Nevertheless, the mill ruins stand also as an example of the Ellicott Family's continued attempts to maintain a regional presence in the merchant milling of flour, an industry they initiated on the Patapsco in 1771. The family lost the facilities at Ellicotts Mills in 1841, leaving George Ellicott, Jr. (1798-1869), alone, to operate the facilities at the Ilchester Mill, and later, evidently, at the Bonnie Branch Mill.

Little information survives about the extensive ruins and dam of the Bonnie Branch Mill. George Ellicott, Jr. (1798-1869) acquired this and other tracts from the estate of his father, George Ellicott, Sr. (1760-1832), and from others in the Ellicott family in 1834, 1838, and 1839 (Baltimore 235/39, Anne Arundel 22/627, and Howard 1/291). The purchases amounted to some 130 acres, and on the first of these tracts Ellicott began construction of the Ilchester Flour Mill in 1833, before the deed of sale had been officially recorded (see inventory form

[Please see continuation sheet.]

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. HO 738

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property three and one half

1 : 24,000

Quadrangle name Savage

Quadrangle scale 7.5 Series

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries of the site encompass the existing dam and the ruins of the mill. Please see the accompanying resource site map

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

.1. Form Prepared By

name/title Henry K. Sharp

organization none

date 22 October 1998

street & number 100 South Street West

telephone 804/295-0140

city or town Charlottesville

state Virginia 22902

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023

HO 737). In 1851, Ellicott sold the mill pool and dam for the Ilchester Mill to his nephew James Tyson, so that Tyson might make improvements to the dam to increase the water power available to the mill. The provisions agreed upon record Ellicott's attempt to protect the full water fall--or water power--of Bonnie Branch, which would enter the Patapsco above the improved dam Tyson was to construct. Ellicott reserved the right to cut "a channel in the valley of Bonnie Branch across the above described land [sold to Tyson] to Patapsco Falls to discharge the water that [Ellicott] . . . may employ in the driving of any Mill or Mills that the said Ellicott or his heirs and assigns may erect on bonnie branch" (Howard 10/396).

Further public record research may produce a clear chain of title for the property, and may indicate exactly when the Bonnie Branch Mill was constructed; the 1851 deed indicates at least that at that date such a structure had not yet been built. Taylor's Map of the City and County of Baltimore labels the site "Flour Mill" (singular) in 1857. By 1860, Martenet's Map of Howard County shows structures on the north and south side of Bonnie Branch and at the Patapsco which it labels generally "G. Ellicott's Flour Mills" (plural), while Raynolds' Military Map of 1863, shows only structures north of the branch, labeled "G Ellicotts M[ill]s." The Schofield lithograph of the Patapsco Valley, dated to the early 1860s, however, shows Bonnie Branch Road with no structures, and G. M. Hopkins' 1878 Atlas of Howard County similarly shows no structures on the site below the branch. Allowing for artistic license, inaccuracies in maps, and changes in road and river beds (Bonnie Branch today is channeled in this location), it is possible George Ellicott erected an additional mill or mills adjacent the branch, but Martenet's Map is the only one of these sources to show structures on the site south of the road and branch, on the site of the extant foundation. George Ellicott sold land north and south of Bonnie Branch in the summer of 1866, and the deeds make no reference to mill structures; the metes and bounds of the parcel he sold south of the branch are unknown, however, and may not have included the mill site (Howard 25/404, and 26/181).

Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Section 9.1

Deeds as indicated in text.

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

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;
Taylor's Map of the City and County of Baltimore, 1857, G3843 .B3 1857 .T3.

Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, 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 (ruin)

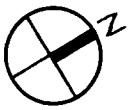
Historic Environment: Rural/Village

Historic Functions and Uses: Flour Mill

Known Design Sources: None

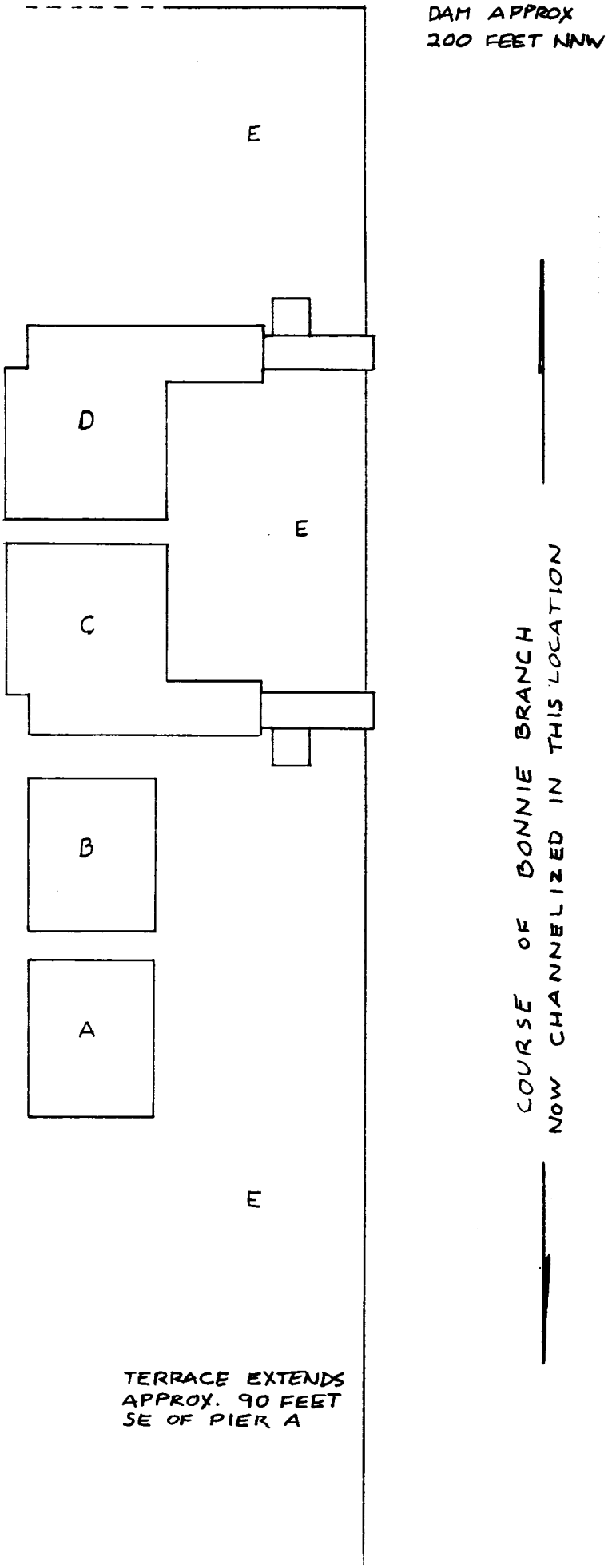
Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.2

Resource Site Plan



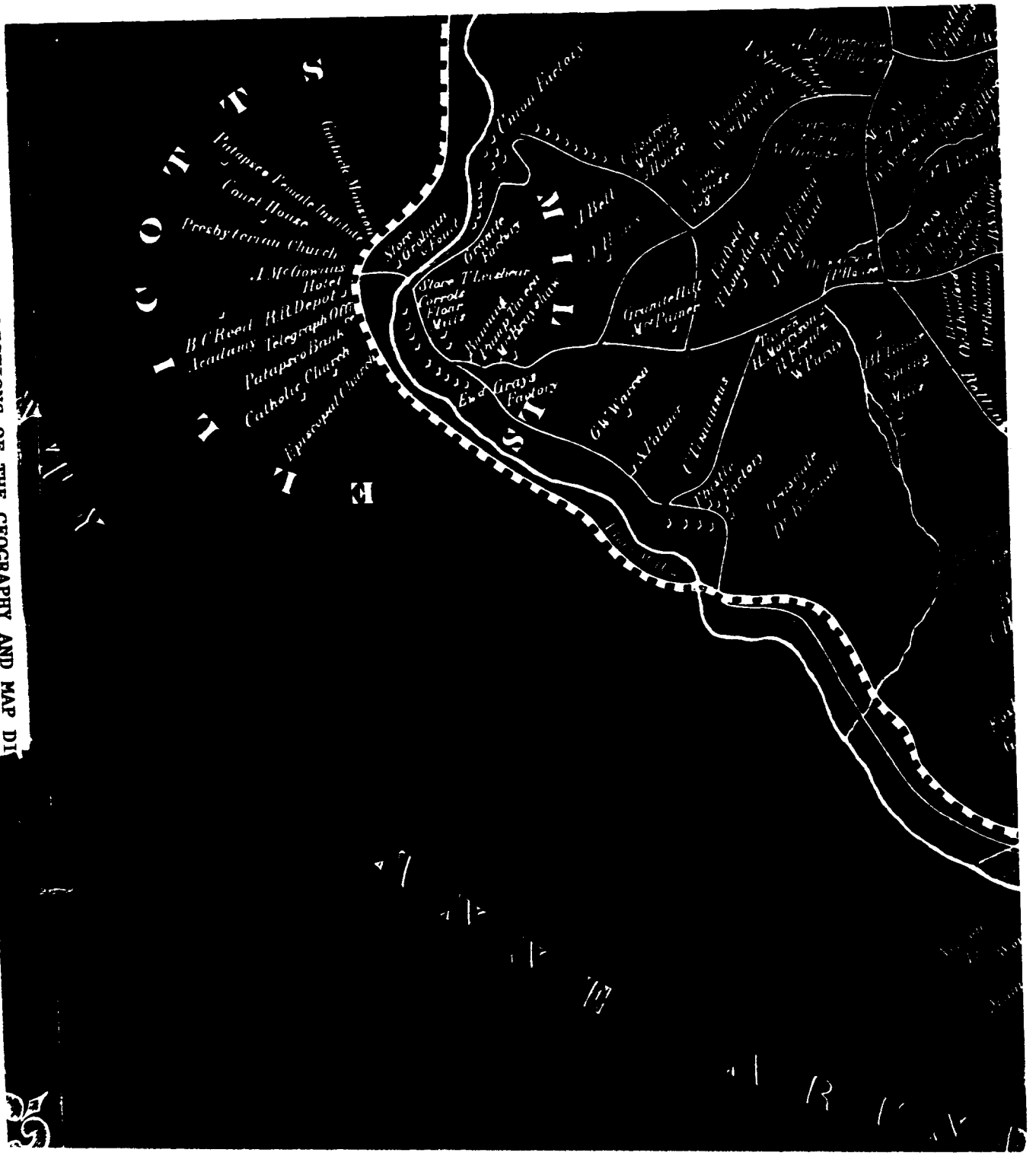
SCALE 1 : 16
1998
H.K. SHARP

A, B, C, D - CONCRETE PIERS
E - TERRACE



Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.3

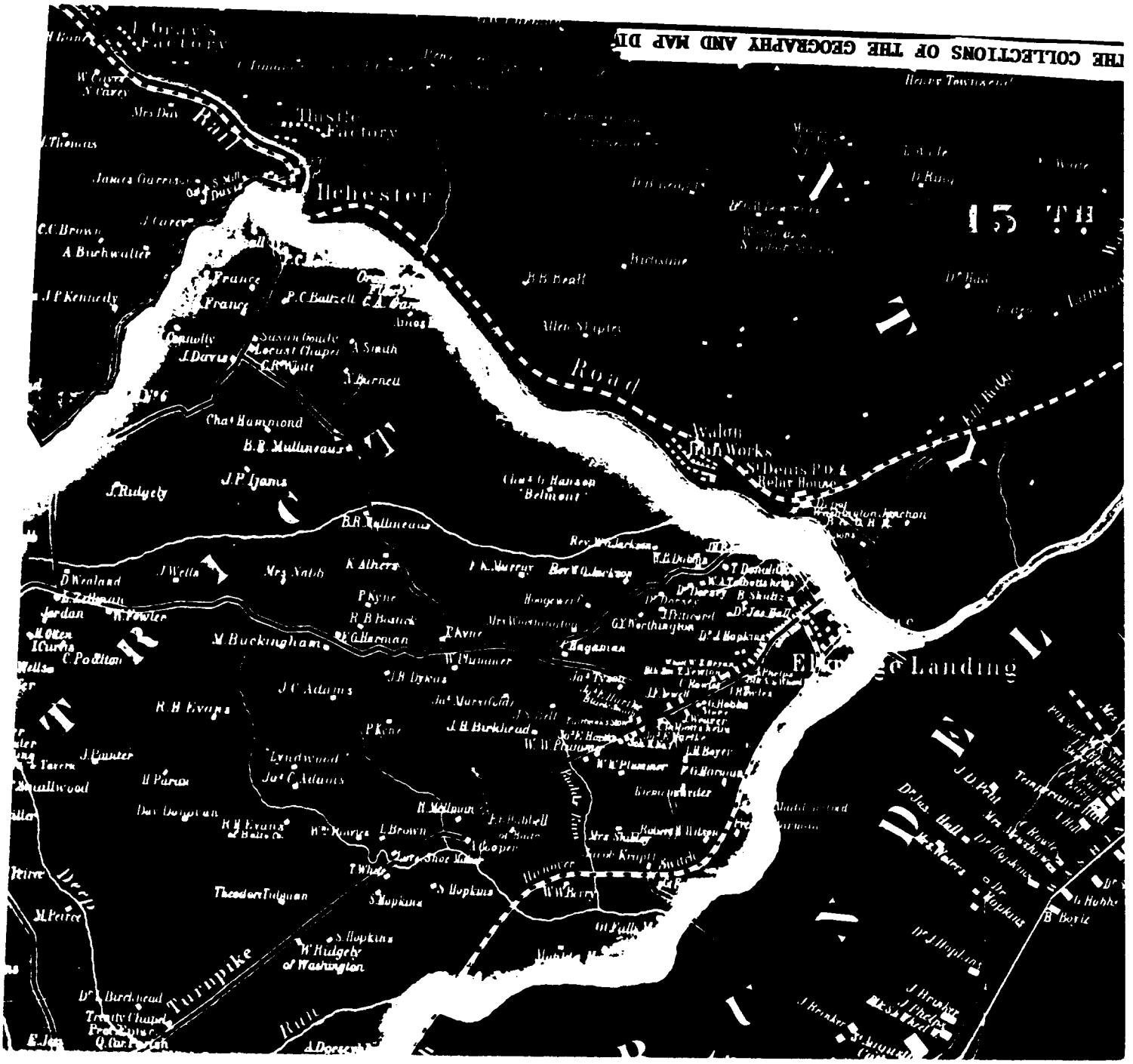
Taylor's Map of the City and County of Baltimore, 1857,
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Geography and Maps Division: G 3843 .B3 1857 .T3.



REPRODUCED FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DI

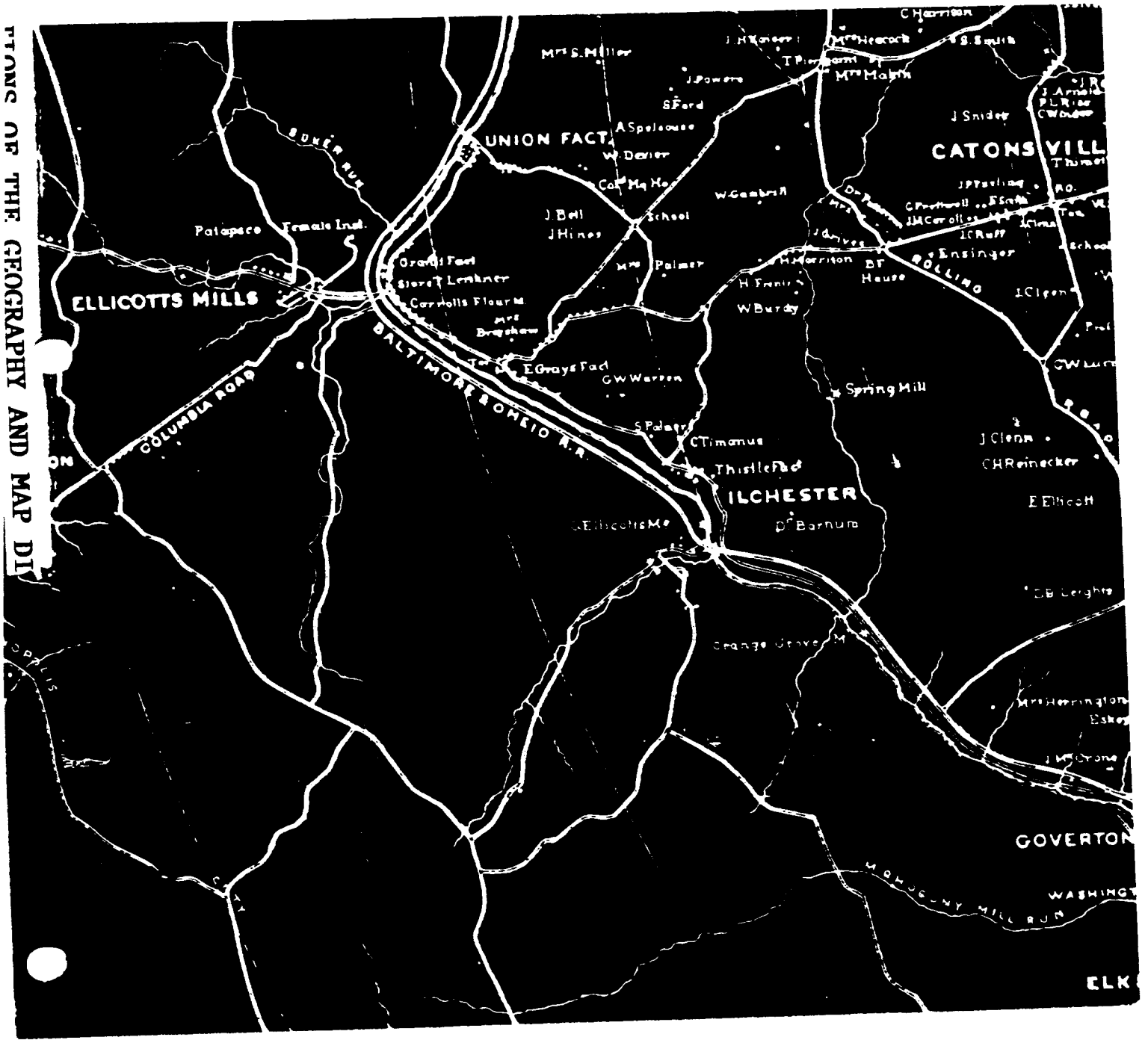
Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.4

Martenet's Map of Howard County, 1860,
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Geography and Maps Division: G 3843 .H6 1860 .M3.



Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.5

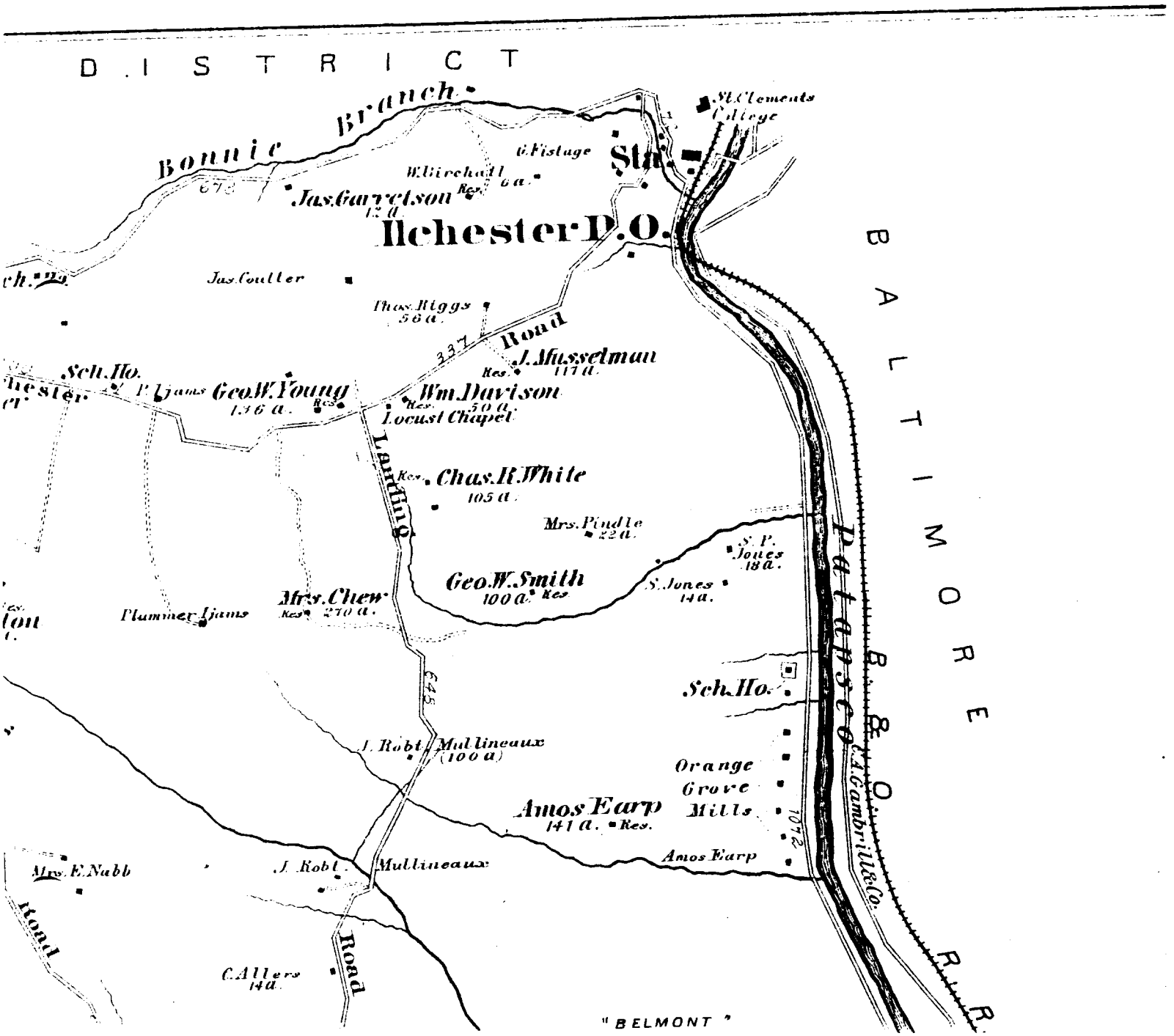
Raynolds' Military Map of Baltimore County, Maryland, 1863,
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Geography and Maps Division: G 3843 .B3 1863 .R3.

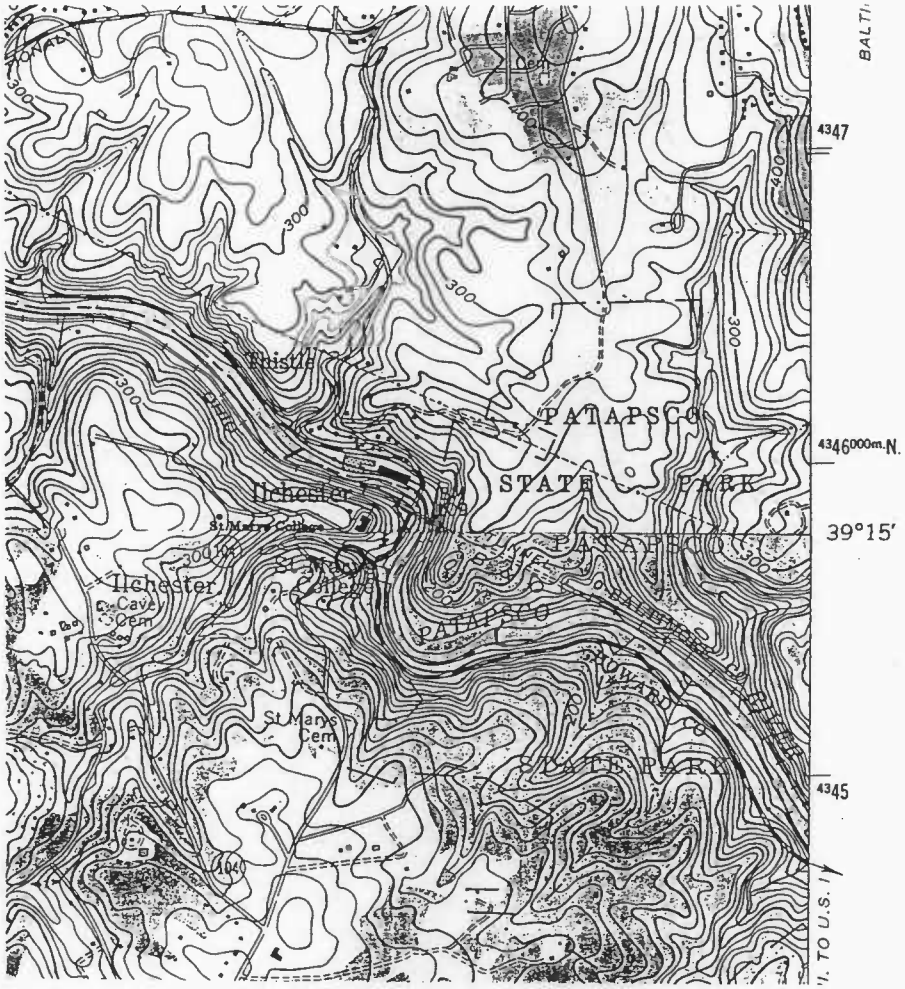


ITIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DI

Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps 6

G. M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Howard County Maryland* (Philadelphia: F. Bourquin's Steam Lithographic Press, 1878), p. 17.



Inventory Number HO 738
Bonnie Branch Mill, Howard County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area
Maps.1

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