

K-302

18th century? and

Site of Swantown Mill

19th century

Near Galena

Private

Located northeast of the intersection of Swantown Creek and the Galena-Sassafras road (now Route 290), the Swantown Mill was one of the numerous mills located throughout the county on creeks feeding into the Sassafras and Chester rivers. In the earliest years mills were encouraged by the colonial legislature as a necessity for both subsistence and an agricultural economy. It is not certain how early a mill was located at Swantown Creek (also called Craig's Creek and Gregg's Creek, as well as possibly other names). However, by the middle of the nineteenth century the mill that was there seemed engaged in, primarily if not solely, the preparation of material for making cloth and in the manufacture of various types of cloth itself. The site is thus one of the county's early industrial locations. The upper Swantown Creek area also may have been an area of early settlement and considerable importance. A group of eighteenth-century Quakers is known to have built a meeting house there by 1739; it was last used in 1800.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Site of Swantown Mill

2. Location

Southeast side Rt. 290, north of Swantown Creek,
street & number 1 mile east of Gregg Neck Rd., east of Galena not for publication

city, town Galena vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Kent

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

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

name Udo Buschmann, c/o Elroy G. Boyer

(Mr. Boyer)

street & number P.O. Box 480

telephone no.: 778-1630

city, town Chestertown

state and zip code Maryland 21620

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Courthouse liber EHP 124

street & number Cross Street folio 69

city, town Chestertown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Unknown

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. K-302

Site- not applicable

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved date of move _____

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

The site of the Swantown Mill is said to be at the intersection of Route 290 and Swantown Creek, east of Galena. Within the northeast sector formed by the intersection there are said to be vestigial remains of an old foundation. However, the site is low and densely wooded and was not entered because of the growth. A mill does not seem to have operated there within memory of any living person. During the middle nineteenth century, at least, it seems to have been a mill associated with the production of cloth rather than a mill for grinding grain.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates _____ **Builder/Architect** _____

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.

Numerous mills for grinding grain were once located in Kent County along the many creeks flowing into the Chester and Sassafras rivers. In the earliest years they were encouraged by the colonial legislature as a necessity for both an agricultural subsistence and market economy. It is not certain how early a mill was located at Swantown Creek, but by the middle of the nineteenth century the mill that was there seemed engaged in, primarily if not solely, the preparation of material for making cloth and in the manufacture of various types of cloth itself. Most likely the materials (wool especially) were brought by local householders to be made into products for their own use. Whether the mill produced goods for sale elsewhere is not known. The site is thus one of the county's early industrial locations. The area may once have been an area of considerable settlement, as a group of eighteenth-century Quakers built a meeting house somewhere along the upper reaches of the creek, though the location is not now precisely known.

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Information about the Swantown Creek mill site is only fragmentary. The Sassafras River area with its tributary creeks was one of the earliest Kent County areas settled. Many of these creeks were found suitable for milling operations, and it would not be surprising to find that most of them at one time or another were dammed and had a milling operation established alongside. The early eighteenth-century colonial legislature passed special legislation to encourage the establishment of mills. Numerous mills on the Sassafras creeks are indeed recorded but are difficult to trace because of the frequent changes of ownership and the shifting names of the creeks themselves. (Martenet's 1860 map of Kent County, in fact, calls Swantown Creek by the name of Craig Creek, which by the time of the 1877 atlas maps of the county became Gregg's Creek; the name Gregg is still applied to the neck to the west bordering the creek.)

It is also questionable how many mills for grinding grain could be successful within a given area. Less than two miles away, on the next creek to the west, called Mill Creek on modern maps but earlier called Quidley's Creek (among other names), there was a mill dating to at least the eighteenth century, most commonly known as Anthony's Mill (K-293). Less than three miles to the east at Head of Sassafras (now just Sassafras) at least one mill operated in the eighteenth century, with more in the nineteenth, though some of these specialized in sawmill operations.

The origin of the name Swantown is not known (it is sometimes written as two words). It may have been the name for an early or hoped-for settlement, or it may simply have been a tongue-in-cheek reference to a particularly large number of swan that congregated there. In 1738, however, the Quakers of the area chose land "on the head of Swan Creek" as the site for a meeting house, and a meeting house was built by 1739. (See K-648) The site was sold later to Robert Moody in 1804, indicating its probable location in the vicinity of K-154. One problem is ascertaining what was meant by the "head of Swan Creek." The creek has two branches, the eastern one now short and the western one (which is actually almost north-south) long, with its apparent head more than two miles south of the present Route 290, the Galena-Sassafras road. What may be more likely is a location near the confluence of the two branches. This is indicated by the fact that the Galena-Sassafras road does not in its entirety seem to have followed the present route. Both K-154, the "Cosden Murder House," or Moody Farm, and K-156, the Brice-Johnson Farm, are early buildings that seem to have been built with their approach sides facing south, where presumably there was a public road. By the middle nineteenth century, this was no longer the case. The road was to the north of both of these farmhouses, and they were somewhat re-oriented toward it. At least the western alteration in the route would seem to have taken place between the entry road serving Gregg Neck (with one access route therefrom to Anthony's Mill to the west) and K-154. The road may well have swung southward in that area and, after passing a Swantown mill, possibly also to the south of its later location, swinging northeast to pass K-156 to its south before finally continuing to Head of Sassafras.

(continued)

Martenet's 1860 map of Kent County does not show such a southerly swing. The road passes to the north of both K-154 and K-156, though where it crosses the creek itself it may be slightly farther to the south than at present. The present-day modern road also seems to have been somewhat straightened in this area. The 1860 map shows a mill at the location, with possibly the name Moffett attached to it. Interestingly, the 1877 atlas map of the First District shows no mill at the site; other county grist and sawmills do seem to be mapped and named, however. Perhaps this is an indication that milling operations had ceased at this location.

Notes taken by Eleanora Lynn from the Kent County News for her forthcoming history of Kent County indicate that at least from 1848 to 1865 the mill at Swantown Creek may have been (perhaps exclusively) a mill for the production of cloth and products used to make cloth. On August 10, 1848, May and Savin advertised wool carding and manufacturing there, with the name of the operation "Swan Town Mills." On May 27, 1854 E. M. Fowler published a notice that he still carried on the operations of the mill there--carding, fulling, spinning, and weaving. He stated that wool left there will be made into blankets, kersey, tweeds, flannel and lindsey. By June, 1865, an undivided half interest in the mill was for sale because of the death of its owner, Thomas Woodward, noted as "late of Philadelphia." That the mill had declined prior to 1865 is indicated by the wording of the advertisement: "The location is good, while the stream is fully equal to the best in that section of the county. But a fw years since this Mill had a fine run of custom which by neglect has been diverted from it. It could by proper attention soon be re-established." The paper of July 1, 1865, reported that the executor for the estate of Woodward had sold the half interest, to Bronaugh Deringer for \$1,200. Bronaugh Deringer at that time seems to have owned and perhaps lived in the first farmhouse to the west of the creek, at the intersection with the road to Gregg Neck, K-152, now called the R. Clayton Mitchell farm and possibly earlier designated as Partners' Addition.

Ebenezer Welch, from 1834 to circa 1858 (his will is dated January 29, 1858, and he states himself to be "weak in body) the owner of K-632, Federal Hill Farm to the northeast along the Galena-Sassafras Road, provided for the disposal of his half interest in the Swantown Mill. He left his part of the mill property and other property and real estate at Swan Town, including fixtures and machinery, to his sister Ann Trenchard and Sarah Elizabeth Moffett, the daughter of William Moffett, which may explain why the 1860 map appears to call this the Moffett Mill. (Kent Co. Wills JF 1/121)

