

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WAGAMON'S Mill, regardless of its level of significance, retains an important place in the popular history of Milton. It has been associated with the town's founding fathers and with the families that helped build the town to its commercial dominance during the boom years of the nineteenth century.

The present excavation project has permitted examination of the physical remains, and has demonstrated that the mill site does not retain integrity to warrant consideration for the National Register of Historic Places. The State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the bridge is eligible for listing under criterion C. The third identified resource, the miller's house and the site of the earlier miller's house, was found to be outside the project impact area.

The project provided permanent HAER documentation of the structures to be replaced or refurbished in the road construction project. HAER documentation is included in this report as the second appendix.

Significance of the resource

In evaluating a site's significance for purposes of the National Register program, it is necessary to apply the four mandated criteria mentioned in the research design:

Under criterion A, only the association with flour milling comes immediately to mind. Flour milling is an important aspect of Delaware industrial history, but it is represented on the National Register by similar sites that possess much higher integrity than the mill ruins that exist on this site.

The earthen dam could have significance under criterion B, sites associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. Famous people have made their marks on the site. The dam's builder was a governor of Delaware, and another governor proposed to build a transpeninsular canal through it. Major William Peery, a hero of the Revolution, was probably the builder of the first river crossing here. However, nothing exists on the site that is directly connected to, or illustrative of, the careers of these people.

The bridge first attracted attention because of the possibility that it might be a candidate under criterion C, sites that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values. In the Delaware Historic Bridges survey (P.A.C. Spero and Company 1990), the bridge was cited as "an intact example of a combination bridge and water flow control structure, a relatively creative design solution to water management in lower Delaware."

Bridge 808 was among the thirteen Delaware concrete slab bridges Spero evaluated as significant in the bridge survey. Of the thirteen, four were combination gate and bridge structures of this type on mill dams.

Nor is its construction method unusual. By the time this bridge was built in 1917, reinforced concrete slab construction was ordinary and routine; nothing about the structure of this slab reflects engineering refinement or innovation that might betray the hand of a master.

The State Historic Preservation Officer has ruled that the site is potentially eligible for the National Register under criterion C, because of its distinctive decorative treatment, which is found only in the two examples here and on Diamond Pond nearby.

Archæological aspects of a site ordinarily are evaluated under criterion D, sites that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. The present study was directed primarily toward explication of this criterion in relationship to the power system.

Mills, such as the site under study, are a particularly knotty problem when assessing significance in Delaware. While milling was an important commercial activity during several periods in Delaware history, gristmills are heavily over-represented in the National Register, vastly out of proportion to their importance. It is difficult, therefore, to assign a high level of significance to any mill site that does not retain its integrity.

Canneries, for example, are quantitatively more significant in Delaware industrial history than gristmills. So are shipyards. During the later nineteenth century, shipbuilding was Delaware's most important industry, followed by fruit and vegetable canning. Milton possesses significant examples of both property types.

Neither canneries nor shipyards are represented significantly among Delaware's National Register entries, while the relatively less important flour mills and gunpowder mills are exhaustively covered and mentioned prominently in the text of the state plan for historic preservation. In the context of Milton's local industrial history, both canneries and shipyards are more significant than flour mills.

Much more significant, and potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register, would be the site of John D. Smith's granary wharf or landing, which probably lies beneath the parking lot of Norma's Restaurant. Extremely wet conditions can be expected to preserve even wood and cloth parts of this significant eighteenth-century installation. The site is, however, outside the project area.

The ruins of the mill and ancillary buildings should not be considered eligible for archæological reasons because they lack integrity. All three mills were built on the same site, each disturbing the remains of its predecessors. The last mill was destroyed and the site was bulldozed. As a property type, mill ruins exist in much less disturbed settings throughout Sussex County and all of Delaware.

Potential significance of the dam-bridge system

It has been suggested that the dam-bridge structure might be eligible for the National Register as a representative of an unusual type. This assertion of potential eligibility cannot withstand analysis.

First, combination dam-bridge structures were the rule, rather than the exception, in Delaware, because of a state law that required the county to build and maintain bridges over mill spillways crossed by public roads. It was therefore in a miller's interest to build such combination structures. The 1917 Wagamon Pond bridges were but two of the many structures built under this law.

Second, the main waste gate bridge (808) was never intended to be an isolated structure. It is part of a power system that includes the raceway structure and once included the machinery of the mill. All such combination structures were originally intended to be components of a power system. All of the components are integral parts of the "setting" in the sense of the National Register criteria, when considering the power system.

The integrity of this setting was compromised most seriously by the loss of the mill. Since the mill was the *raison d'être* of the combination dam-bridge, it is illogical to consider the one without the other.

Third, there are other Delaware examples of this type of system, with much greater integrity. One, Abbott's Mill, is owned and preserved by the State of Delaware and is open as a

public facility. The Hearn and Rawlins Mill in Seaford and the Wyoming Milling Company in Wyoming are privately-owned examples that retain all the major features of this property type.

A virtually identical dam-bridge structure can be found on Diamond Pond, south of the project area; it probably was also built by the Wagamons at the same time, since it is also part of the water control system of the Wagamon mill and bears the same arched motif.

The following table summarizes the integrity of several of the many mill seats with combination dam-bridge structures in Delaware, in descending order of integrity:

<i>Name of Mill</i>	<i>Integrity of the mill</i>	<i>Integrity of miller house</i>	<i>Archæological potential</i>	<i>Integrity of dam-bridge system</i>
Abbott's	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent, original
Hearn & Rawlins	Excellent	?	Excellent	Excellent, original
Wyoming Milling	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent, original
Chipman's	Ruins exist	?	Excellent	Intact, maintained
Pine Grove Mill & Furnace, Concord	Ruins exist	?	Excellent	Intact, maintained
Diamond Pond	Buried ruins	?	Excellent	Excellent, original
<u>Wagamon</u>	<u>Disturbed ruins</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Excellent, original</u>
Middleford	Destroyed	?	Fair	Intact, maintained
Collins Pond	Destroyed	?	Fair to good	Intact, maintained
Lake Como (Smyrna)	Obliterated	Exists	Fair	Replaced recently
Hunn's, Lebanon	Destroyed	Lost	Poor	Replaced recently

This is by no means an exhaustive survey of this type of structure in Delaware. However, a more complete inventory would certainly produce similar results. In view of the fact that so many other sites of this type possess greater integrity, eligibility of surviving portions of the power system cannot be supported.

However, the State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that Bridge 808 is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion C, solely because of æsthetic considerations related to the the unusual decorative concrete simulated arch treatment that is found in Bridge 808, in the penstock bridge at the opposite end of the dam, and in the Diamond Pond bridge.

The determination of eligibility is included as the third appendix to this report.

Recording is considered an appropriate mitigation treatment. Since the power system's surviving parts have been recorded for the Historic American Engineering Register, no further treatment is recommended.

Disposition of materials

Photographs, archæological field notes, and drawings from this project, including prints of historic photographs loaned for copying, have been deposited at the Island Field Museum. The HAER documentation has been forwarded to the National Park Service.