

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The area just north of Betts Pond at the location of Bridges 526 and 527 along Route 326 near Millsboro has been long associated with the milling history of the Millsboro vicinity. Benjamin Burton Sr. constructed the first known mill at this location in 1773. During the course of the next 100 years the ownership of the mill seat was divided among the Burton family. An 1840 survey map indicates that there were two mills (a gristmill and a sawmill) located on the property, one near where Bridge 526 is located today and the other near the location of Bridge 527. Depreciation of the land value during the late nineteenth century suggests that these mills may have been removed by that time and that the land was probably idle. However, in 1896, the ownership of the property was consolidated by one individual, Joseph E. Betts. During the next 10 years, there was a notable increase in the land value, suggesting the erection of a new mill on the property. William Warren purchased the property during the early 1920s, and he later constructed yet another gristmill at the site in 1929, replacing Betts's mill, which had been destroyed by fire in 1924. Warren made various other improvements to the property in connection with his milling operations. He built Bridges 526 and 527 during the 1930s; both were designed with wooden gates to regulate the flow of water from Betts Pond, which powered the mill and regulated the pond's water level. He also converted an old granary into a residence for his family.

Development at the intersection of Routes 26 and 17 was consistent with the general agricultural development of Sussex County during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to the Beers 1868 map, only Route 26 was established by this time as a public road and no development had occurred within the project area. By 1918, Route 17 had been established, intersecting with Route 26 at its present location east of Clarksville. The vicinity of the intersection at this time was agrarian with a thinly dispersed population, consistent with much of Sussex County which remained primarily rural well into the twentieth century.

The property surrounding Bridges 526 and 527 contains the site of the Warren Mill, built in 1929 and the last of the Betts Pond mills, and the Warren House, an old granary converted into a dwelling by the Warren family. The Warren Mill was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, being significant primarily because it is the only gambrel-roofed mill known to exist in lower Delaware. However, the mill seat itself is also significant under Criterion A. It represents the early twentieth-century development of milling operations along Betts Pond, a land use which had been in practice on the property since at least the 1770s. Apart from its turbine system, the Warren Mill is very similar to its predecessors, in that it is a simple wood-frame building with an industrial process powered by water. Because it is representative in both appearance and practice to its predecessors, the Warren Mill is significant in that it illustrates the continued twentieth-century development of gristmilling operations within the Millsboro vicinity, which as its name suggests was an instrumental part of the local economy as early as the late eighteenth century. Because mill seats involve more than the mills themselves and include other property types such as races, dams, and granaries, resources associated with the development of the Warren Mill are also significant.

Therefore, the Warren Mill, Bridges 526 and 527, and the Warren House together constitute a larger district which meets Criterion A.

The existence of archaeological remains associated with the past mill located within the district also remains a distinct possibility. The 1840 survey map of the property and later less-detailed maps show a wood-frame mill at or near the present location of the Warren Mill. It is likely that the present mill was constructed on the foundations or footprints of previous mills since these foundations were already intact and were probably quite usable. Therefore, archaeological deposits from earlier mills may be buried beneath the Warren Mill. Nineteenth-century maps also show a second mill on the property located further to the west along a race which corresponds to the stream on which Bridge 527 is located. The possibility that this stream was the raceway for a second nineteenth-century mill is further supported by the testimony of property owner Ralph Warren, who has found heavy timbers and metal fastenings on the banks of the stream. However, it is not known whether these items are remains of a previous mill; or even if remains of a mill exist at this location. To obtain further information on the Betts Pond area would require archaeological investigation, which is beyond the scope of this architectural resource study. However, existing information as presented in this report points to the archaeological sensitivity of the Betts Pond area.

The second project area, located at the intersection of Routes 26 and 17, includes two properties containing buildings 50 years or older within the project's area of potential effect: the C.J. Raubacher House (S-2478), a four-square-style house constructed circa 1918; and two outbuildings which at one time may have been part of a larger farm property. The Shore Deal Auto Property (S-9148) is an auto dealership which contains a simple vernacular one-story, wood-frame, front-gable building; the building was constructed circa 1930 and has had many other commercial uses, as a gas station, restaurant and bar, and liquor store. Neither property possesses significant historical associations or architectural values, and neither meets National Register criteria.

The research and field survey program undertaken for this study have been sufficient to accomplish the stated objective of identifying historic properties within the area of potential effect of proposed improvements to Bridges 526 and 527 and at the intersection of Routes 26 and 17.