3

DRAPER, DAVIS, MILES, AND CUBBAGE: THE HISTORY OF THE CUBBAGE MILL PROPERTY, 1700-PRESENT

GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW: HOW THE LAY OF THE LAND SET HISTORY IN MOTION AT CUBBAGE MILL

A geographic overview is more than just a recitation of soil statistics and elevation figures to be glossed over quickly by the historian. Instead, it often provides important reasons for the original location of a town, hamlet, farm, or in this case, a gristmill. As it turns out, geography was a cardinal determinant in the location, historical development, and eventual decline of the Cubbage Mill.

Delaware's Geographic Zones

Delaware, and by extension the entire Delmarva Peninsula, is roughly divided into three zones: the coastal or beach area, the tidewater, and the piedmont (Figure 3.1). In Delaware, these zones have been further subdivided to include a lower and upper peninsula (tidewater) region, and an urban area around Wilmington.[1] Sussex County encompasses portions of both the lower tidewater and coastal geographic zones, and includes the idiosyncratic cypress swamp region around Gumboro that does not fit neatly into any of these three zones.

Sussex County Waterways Have Launched History

As in any tidewater region, Sussex County is watered by a number of rivers and creeks. Scharfs *History of Delaware* (1888) lists 30 rivers, creeks, and bays within the county's borders.[2] Their sheer number figured prominently in descriptions of the region by early European explorers and settlers. The Nanticoke River, which flows west towards the Chesapeake Bay, is the county's largest waterway. East-flowing waterways include Cedar, Mispillion, Herring, Broad, Deep, Gum, and Prime Hook Creeks, as well as Indian River, and Assawoman Bay, among many others.

Figure 3.1
Delaware's Geographic Zones
Source: **Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Investigations in Delaware *(Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, 1993)***

[1] Delaware State Historic Preservation Office
1993 *Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Surveys in Delaware.* p.33. Dover, Delaware.

[2] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *History of Delaware*, p.2000 L.J. Richards & Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

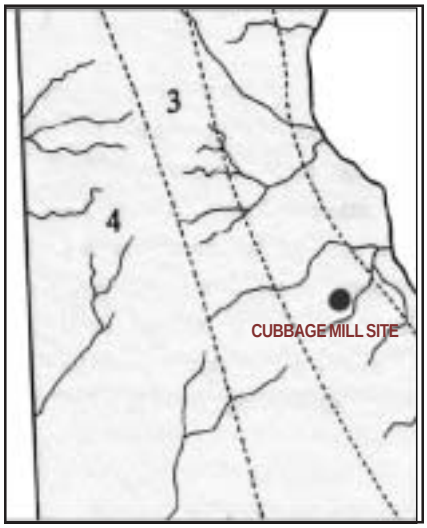
Under the DelSHPO's guidance, archeologists working in Delaware have defined and standardized the geographic zones that influenced the character and direction of historic human activity in the state. The *Management Plan for Delaware's Historical Archeological Resources*[3] ties these zones directly to the nature and intensity of agricultural production in Delaware.

Sussex County lies in both the Coastal and Lower Tidewater Zones. Each of these zones has its own characteristics affecting soil, vegetation, and the nature of agricultural production. Cedar Creek Hundred and the Cubbage Mill site lie within the Lower Peninsula (Tidewater) Zone. Thus, the most fruitful comparisons with Cubbage Mill are with other gristmills or gristmill sites within the same geographic zone.

The multitude of navigable rivers and creeks played a key role in the history of Sussex County and tidewater Delaware (Figure 3.2). Before the advent of railroads in the mid-19th century, these waterways provided the best method of transport and communication. The most desirable land usually bordered on a body of water, and homes and farms, as well as industries such as gristmills and sawmills were historically oriented to the water. Creeks and streams served as convenient boundaries when granting lands or determining property lines.

Figure 3.2
Rivers and Streams in Sussex County

Source: Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Investigations in Delaware *(Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, 1993)*



One of the most important geographic features of this part of Delaware is the Mid-Peninsular Drainage Divide, often called the "backbone" of the Delmarva Peninsula. A portion of this divide runs through Sussex County, west of U.S. Route 113. This geographic feature, a "mini-continental divide" for Delaware, consists of low, rolling topography separating the headwaters of streams and rivers flowing west into the Chesapeake Bay from those flowing east towards the Delaware River and Delaware Bay.

Delaware's mini-continental divide often had historical implications. For example, Seaford, located along the *west-flowing* Nanticoke River, historically traded with the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Milford, located on the *east-flowing* Mispillion Creek, was connected to the Delaware Bay and, by extension, the port cities of Wilmington and Philadelphia. The Cubbage Mill site and the nearby village of Cedar Creek are located five miles southeast of Milford on Cedar Creek, one of several *east-flowing* creeks in Sussex County.

[3] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts
1990 *Management Plan for Delaware's Historic Archeological Resources*. University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology—Center for Archeological Research. Newark, Delaware.

Another important geographic feature is the "fall line," an imaginary line connecting the heads of navigation of important creeks and rivers. It was at the fall line that boats were faced with waterfalls, swamps, or other impediments to up-river travel—a logical place to build docks and wharves to load goods coming from interior regions. Water-powered mills also were most advantageously sited at or below the fall line. The most famous fall line on the East Coast runs from west of Philadelphia southward to include the headwaters at Wilmington, Delaware; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D.C., and Fredericksburg and Richmond, Virginia (roughly the route of present-day I-95).

For most of the colonial period and long thereafter, most towns and villages in Sussex County were established at the headwaters of creeks and rivers: Milford traces its roots to a water-powered sawmill built in 1680 at the head of navigation for Mispillion Creek.[4] Milton was established near a mill on Broadkill Creek dating back to 1733.[5] Seaford was platted in 1799 at the head of navigation of the Nanticoke River.[6]

Cedar Creek and the Cubbage Mill site provide a microcosm of these geographic factors. Cedar Creek begins at the mid-Peninsular Drainage Divide a few miles west of U.S. Route 113 and Lincoln. Cedar Creek eventually empties into Delaware Bay, 12 miles to the northeast. Its head of navigation is near both the Cubbage Mill site and the former village of Cedar Creek, where the creek is crossed by Route 30 (Figure 3.3). At this point, two tributaries known as the North and South Forks of Cedar Creek come together. At one time, four major gristmills and sawmills were operating in close proximity to each other on the North Fork of Cedar Creek near its headwaters.[7]

[4] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1188.*

[5] Heite, N. and C.L. Blume
1998 *Archeological and Historical Investigations at the Hurd Site on the Tract Formerly Known as Bloomsbury, Pumpkin Neck, Duck Creek Hundred, Kent County, Delaware*, p.10. Delaware Department of Transportation, Dover, Delaware.

[6] O'Connor, J., K.W. Cunningham, E.C. Coleman, and T. Brockenborough, Jr.
1985 *Archeological, Historical, and Architectural Evaluation of the Cantrell Warehouse/Enterprise Mill State Site 7S-E-37, Stein Highway, Sussex County, Delaware*, p.14. Delaware Department of Transportation, Dover, Delaware.

[7] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1253.*

Figure 3.3
Location of Cedar Creek and Cubbage Pond Site, Sussex County

A 1998 aerial photograph of the Cubbage Mill vicinity demonstrates how the building of four separate gristmills has manipulated the shape, outline, and flow of Cedar Creek over the centuries (Photo 3.1). Instead of a swiftly flowing body of water, Cedar Creek is, in reality, a series of millponds connected by narrow millraces (Photo 3.2). Milldams at the east ends of each of these ponds control the water flow to these former millraces (Photo 3.3), as well as provide a crossing over these large bodies of water. The effect is one of a series of serene ponds set in the still-rural landscape of northern Sussex County (Photo 3.4).

Photo 3.1
Aerial View of Cubbage Millpond during the 1997-1998 Excavation of the Cubbage Mill Site.

Credit: Delaware Department of Transportation

This photograph and the three that follow illustrate how man has manipulated the flow and outline of the headwaters of Cedar Creek over time. Beginning in the early 18th century, local millers created millponds by damming Cedar Creek at its head of navigation near the former village of Cedar Creek. At one time, four gristmills and/or sawmills were operating under various names in this general vicinity: from west to east they were Hudson's Mill, Clendaniel's Mill, Cubbage Mill, and Cedar Creek Mill. The site of Cubbage Mill (surrounded in this photograph by a cofferdam with metal pilings) is adjacent and to the right of the milldam/bridge that carries Cubbage Pond Road (Route 214) over Cedar Creek. Cubbage millpond is the large body of water shown left of center. Cedar Creek flows east from the Cubbage millpond for a short distance before it enters the Cedar Creek millpond (top right).

Photo 3.2
Cedar Creek, Flowing East from Cubbage Millpond, Looking North.

Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc.

Photo 3.3
Cubbage Millpond Flowing into Cedar Creek, Looking North. This view shows a portion of the new Route 214 Bridge over Cubbage Millpond (right).

Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc.

Photo 3.4
Cedar Creek Millpond, Looking Northwest. The bucolic nature of these millponds is illustrated in this view of Cedar Creek millpond on a quiet winter's afternoon in January, 2001.

Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc.

FLATS, FORESTS, AND FARMLAND

Besides the water system, three other geographic factors influenced the history of European settlement in Sussex County and, specifically, the history of Cubbage Mill: the flat topography, the extensive forest cover, and the general soil type and composition.

Although the flat terrain of the coastal plain was historically ideal for farming, it created difficulties for water-powered gristmills, such as the Cubbage Mill. Few rivers or creeks in Sussex County provided sufficient "head" or elevation to consistently power a water-powered gristmill. As one Delaware archeologist has noted: "Downstate Delaware is rich in strong-flowing streams, but has little relief to provide heads."[8] This had a direct bearing on the type of waterwheel or other power mechanism used; most 18th-century gristmills in this area probably used undershot waterwheels. By the late 19th century, many mills were using gas or steam-powered turbines to run their grinding mechanisms.

The extensive forest cover that once characterized Cedar Creek Hundred and Sussex County fostered profitable lumbering and shipbuilding industries during the 18th and 19th centuries, often exceeding the income derived from farming. Cubbage Mill functioned as a sawmill off and on throughout the 19th century, providing a needed outlet for the lumber trade in this area.

Soil composition has been the most permanent of the area's geographic features. Most of Sussex County's soils belong to the Sassafras series of well-drained sandy loams.[8] This easily worked soil type contributed to making eastern Sussex County and Cedar Creek Hundred a prime agricultural area from the beginning of European settlement.[9]

[8] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia
1993 "Neither a Desert Nor a Paradise:" *Historic Context for the Archeology of Agriculture and Rural Life, Sussex County, Delaware, 1770-1940, pp.17-18.* University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology—Center for Archeological Research, Newark, Delaware.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TIME AND PLACE

Historic context is the method for assessing the historic significance of an archeological site. Using an historic context, historians and archeologists can examine Cubbage Mill in relation to other similar mills, other mills from different time periods, and other mills located elsewhere in Sussex County and lower Delaware. An historic context is a research tool organized according to: 1) defined historic time periods, 2) a defined geographic region, and 3) property types.

In Delaware, the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (DelSHPO) has greatly aided the development of historic contextual studies by defining and standardizing time periods, regions, and property types. The DelSHPO's *Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Surveys in Delaware* (1993)[10] define five historic time periods that roughly correspond with the dates of important historic trends and events in Delaware's history, from the time of earliest European settlement to the present. These time periods define the history of resources found throughout the state, bringing a much-needed consistency to the writing of cultural history.

The history of the Cubbage Mill site that follows is presented according to the time periods defined by the DelSHPO. Given its age and long period of activity, the property's history spans several of these time periods and allows for a comparison of Cubbage Mill to other gristmills operating during one or more time periods in Delaware.

Defining Gristmill Properties—Parts and Parameters

As a result of DelDOT- and DelSHPO-funded architectural and archeological surveys and cultural resource management studies, there is an impressive body of information about several property types in Delaware. Past DelSHPO- and DelDOT-funded studies and surveys have inventoried historic bridges, lighthouses, post offices, and railroad stations in Delaware. DelDOT has also sponsored contextual studies, including a recent survey of 18th-century farmsteads.[11]

CHRONOLOGICAL TIME PERIODS AND THEMES

Exploration and Frontier Settlement (1630-1730)

Intensified and Durable Occupation (1730-1770)

Early Industrialization (1770-1830)

Industrialization and Early Urbanization (1830-1880)

Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880-1940s)

Source: *Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Surveys in Delaware* (Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, 1993).

[9] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia
1993 *Ibid, p.18.*

[10] Delaware State Historic Preservation Office
1993 *Guidelines for Architectural and Archeological Surveys in Delaware.* Dover, Delaware.

[11] Bedell, John
1999 *Historic Context: The Archaeology of Farm and Rural Dwelling Sites in New Castle and Kent Counties, Delaware, 1730-1770 and 1770-1830.* Report submitted by Louis Berger & Associates to Delaware Department of Transportation.

A number of existing gristmills and gristmill sites in Delaware have been recorded and analyzed over the years, many documented by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). Concentrating almost exclusively on the architectural and engineering components of the mill buildings, the HAER recordations include historic background information, historic and current photographs, and measured drawings where applicable. Few of the HAER studies have attempted to define the gristmill property type within a contextual framework, however, so they remain isolated studies of individual sites.

Unfortunately, no comprehensive work has been written to date treating Delaware gristmills as a property type, or manufacturing as a Delaware contextual theme. Traditionally, the gristmill property type has been narrowly defined to include the actual gristmill building, the milldam, and its associated head and tail races. Some recent archeological investigations of Delaware gristmills and gristmill sites have sought to expand the property type beyond "gristmill" to include the "mill seat."[12] The more inclusive and accurate term "mill seat" includes all resources associated with the full range of human activity in and around the gristmill proper: the mill building and head and tail races; the dam and millpond; the miller's house and associated outbuildings; any retail establishments connected with the mill; the miller's farm, if any; and any transportation-related features such as a road or bridge constructed over a milldam or a railspur connecting the mill complex to a rail line.

Expanding the definition of "mill seat" to include the dam/roadway is particularly relevant since DelDOT has embarked on the replacement/repair of many older and inadequate bridges constructed over historic milldams. The Cubbage Mill site was discovered during the construction of a new bridge to replace the existing Route 214 Bridge over the Cubbage millpond. As more of these bridges are replaced, the integrity and significance of the milldam/bridge property type may play an increasingly important role in their final design.

Using the expanded term "mill seat" allows the historian to use existing several historic contexts already written for closely related topics in Delaware. The most important of these is *"Neither a Desert nor a Paradise:" Historic Context for the Archeology of Agriculture and Rural Life, Sussex County, Delaware 1770-1940.*[13] Although by definition a gristmill is an industrial, not agricultural, resource, its purpose was to process agricultural products. Thus a gristmill site is closely related to the same historical trends and geographical determinants that affected the

[12] Heite, E.F.
1992 *Cultural Resources Investigations near Moore's Lake in Connection with the Widening of US Route 113A, Dover and North Murdekill Hundreds, Kent County, Delaware, p.5.* Delaware Department of Transportation, Dover, Delaware.

[13] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia
1993 *Ibid.*

surrounding agricultural environment. Many of the conclusions reached by the authors of this agricultural context for Sussex County have been used in the historic context study for the Cubbage Mill site.

Our historic context for the Cubbage Mill site seeks to weave the many threads of its history into a coherent whole, using the framework of time periods, geographic zones, and property types. Thus, the important dates in the mill's history are not presented as isolated events, but as they relate to the history of the surrounding area and the general development and decline of gristmilling in Cedar Creek Hundred and Sussex County.

EXPLORATION AND FRONTIER SETTLEMENT (1630-1730)

This period was marked by the establishment of military outposts in Delaware by several European powers. In 1682, the three "Lower Counties" of Sussex, Kent, and New Castle came under the administrative control of William Penn and his Pennsylvania government. To encourage settlement, William Penn granted large land patents throughout Delaware in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The Cubbage Mill site was part of a 400–acre tract in Sussex County granted by Penn to William Fisher in 1700. Fisher, like most grantees, was probably a non-resident owner; permanent settlement of most large land grants in Sussex County remained confined to the coastal areas during this period. One important exception was the property immediately adjoining Fisher's to the east, bought by Alexander Draper in 1717. Draper, apparently the first member of this prominent family to settle along Cedar Creek in Sussex County, is known to have built a gristmill and a sawmill on his property before 1727.

OWNERS OF THE CUBBAGE MILL PROPERTY (1630-1730)

William Fisher (1700-1725)
Joseph Cornwell (1725-1770)

Delaware was the focus of unusually intense military competition among several European countries during the early- and mid-17th century. The Swedes, the Dutch, and the English all sought to establish fortified settlements (footholds) in the New World.

> *The Dutch settlement at present-day Lewes was established in 1631 under the aegis of the Dutch West India Company.*[14] *The settlement became the center of an administrative unit known as the* **Horekill** *(among various spellings).*

[14] *Ibid, p.27*

The Swedes established a post at Fort Christina (present-day Wilmington) in 1638. To counter this outpost, the Dutch built Fort Casimir at the site of today's New Castle in 1651.[15] This competition took a military turn between 1654 and 1655, eventually resulting in the Dutch eliminating the Swedish military presence in Delaware.

At the same time, the English laid claim to the entire Delmarva Peninsula and sought to eliminate the Dutch presence there. Lord Baltimore claimed most of the peninsula as part of his Maryland colony to the west, established in 1634 as a haven for Roman Catholics.[16] It was also claimed by the English Duke of York, who authorized military actions against the Dutch settlements in Delaware beginning in 1664.[17]

This brief military background provides one explanation for the absence of a settled society in Delaware when compared to that found in New England or Virginia during this same period. The unstable political and social situation in Delaware during the mid 1600s was a severe impediment to both sustained population settlement and the development of agriculture in the region.

Each European power's hold on surrounding territory was tenuous at best, and the development of agriculture or trade did not soon follow. In 1671, the population of the English-controlled settlement at Lewes was only 47.[18] In contrast, by 1622 the Jamestown colony of Virginia had dispersed into 25 separate plantations with a population of about 1,200 people, most of them working extensive farms.[19]

[15] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts
1990 *Ibid, p.29*

[16] Fox, William L., ed.
1981 *Maryland, A History, p.24.* Maryland State Archives.

[17] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts
1990 *Ibid, p.30*

[18] *Ibid, p.31*

[19] Heite, N. and C.L. Blume
1991 *Phase I and Phase II Cultural Resources Surveys at Wagamon's Pond Dam, Milton, Broadkill Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware*, p9. Delaware Department of Transportation, Dover, DE.

[20] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1202*

[21] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts
1990 *Ibid, p.31*

The end of Dutch claims after 1664 established English hegemony in Delaware. The English authorities quickly granted several large land patents in the 1660s and 1670s to non-resident owners, mostly in the area around the **Horekill**. *Probably the closest such patent to the Cubbage Mill site was the 400-acre tract granted to James Laten in 1674* **"lien** *(lying)* **and bein***(g)* **in Cedar Creek."** [20]

In 1682, William Penn and his representatives gained proprietary rights to the Duke of York's lands in Delaware. This transferred governing authority to Penn's Philadelphia, which also became the economic locus for the region.[21] However, Lord Baltimore, and the landowners in lower Delaware who had received their property from him, remained thorns in Penn's side for many years thereafter. Their competing land claims were finally settled in the 1760s when a Maryland-Delaware boundary line was agreed upon.

The English retained the Dutch political unit of the **Horekill** *with its governmental seat at Lewes. In the early 1680s, Penn's government changed the county name to Sussex and carved Kent County from its northern half. Together with New Castle County, they formed the "Lower Three Counties of Delaware," although administratively still a part of Pennsylvania.*

Each Delaware county was divided into "hundreds" (following the English system based on groups of 100 settlers), indicating that Delaware was entering a new era of anticipated settlement and development. The Cubbage Mill site is in Cedar Creek Hundred, the most northerly hundred in Sussex County. Cedar Creek Hundred is bounded by Mispillion Creek and the Kent-Sussex County line on the north, Delaware Bay on the east, Prime Hook Creek on the south, and Nanticoke and Mispillion Hundreds on the west. Its most prominent feature is Cedar Creek, which nearly separates the northern and southern halves of the hundred.

The "Hundred"

The "hundred" was a well-established English governmental unit imported to the New World, and corresponds to a township or parish in other states. It reputedly was based on the presence of one hundred freeholders within a defined geographic area. Sussex County contains 13 hundreds (Figure 3-4). Deeds from this period often identify the hundred in which the buyer and seller are residents, providing important historical clues about dates of settlement.

SUSSEX COUNTY HUNDREDS

- Cedar Creek
- Baltimore
- Indian River
- Little Creek
- Lewes and Rehoboth
- Broad Creek
- Broadkiln
- Nanticoke
- Dagsboro
- Seaford
- Northwest Fork
- Gumboro
- Georgetown

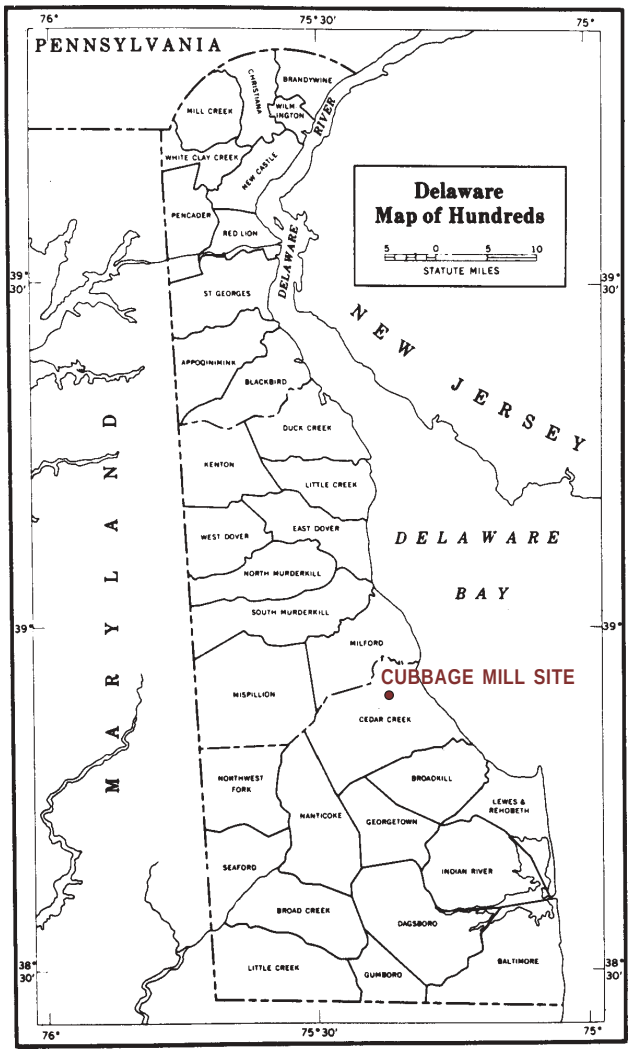


Figure 3.4
Delaware "Map of Hundreds"

Source: Delaware Place Names *(U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Geological Survey Bulletin 1245, 1966)*

The granting of large patents, some as large as 3,000 acres, by the Penn government continued in Sussex County throughout the 1680s and 1690s.[22] Generally, they represented Pennsylvania's attempt to cement a legal claim to this area of Delaware. They also represented a source of income for Penn, who received regular rents from the patentees. With rare exceptions, however, owners rarely resided on their vast properties. This is why the early patent dates for many properties in Sussex County rarely coincide with their first dates of human settlement.

[22] Scharf, J.T. 1888 *Ibid, pp.1202-1203*

Penn eventually issued 96 warrants totaling 30,835 acres (48 square miles) in Sussex County, representing only 5% of the county's present-day surface area. The average warrant size was 320 acres, smaller than was usual in Kent County, but larger on average than issued in New Castle County.[23]

The first land grants in Cedar Creek Hundred date from the early 1680s, after Penn had gained control of eastern Sussex County and the rest of Delaware. Early landowners in Cedar Creek Hundred included William Fisher, William Townsend, Robert Hart, George Cullin, and John Dickerson.[24]

Based on title research conducted for the Cubbage Mill site, it appears that this site was part of a 400-acre tract granted by William Penn to William Fisher on 9 May 1700. This grant is referenced in a 1772 deed for the same property (Sussex County Deed Book 11, page 223). This is the earliest documentary reference to the Cubbage Mill property encountered so far. According to this deed, the land is:

> *Situated, Laying, and being in ye forks of the branches of Cedar Creek which said tract or Parcel of land was surveyed unto William Fisher of the County of Sussex aforesaid by the virtue of a Proprietor's Warrant and Bearing Date at Philadelphia the Ninth Day of the Fifth Month, one thousand seven hundred and null.*

The earliest known deed for the Cubbage Mill site property dates from 9 May 1700, when William Penn granted 400 acres on Cedar Creek to William Fisher.

What little information we have on William Fisher is derived from a reading of his will, dated 10 December 1725 (Sussex County Will Book A, pages 197-198). He and his wife lived on a 1,000-acre plantation in Broadkiln Hundred, located southeast of Cedar Creek Hundred. He willed to his son Elias Fisher a property known only as "Persimmon Island." William Fisher also had two grandsons, William Cornwell and John Cornwell. To John Cornwell, Fisher gave a 100-acre portion of the 400-acre Cedar Creek property. Nothing in his will indicates that this 100-acre parcel had been improved in any way. In fact, John Cornwell's mother, Rebecca, gave him an 800-acre farm located elsewhere in Sussex County "whereon he now lives," in her 1745 will (Sussex County Will Book A, page 386). Thus, the limited documentary evidence suggests that the Cubbage Mill site remained unsettled and undeveloped during the entire Exploration and Frontier Settlement Period (1630-1730).

[23] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts
1990 *Management Plan for Delaware's Historic Archeological Resources, p.40.* University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology-Center for Archeological Research, Newark, Delaware.

[24] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1248*

INTENSIFIED AND DURABLE OCCUPATION (1730-1770)

Generally, this period was marked by the growth and decline of tobacco culture in the region and its replacement by cereal-based agriculture. Gristmills were a natural by-product of this shift in agricultural production and their numbers proliferated throughout Sussex County during the first half of the 18th century. Miller-merchant Alexander Draper built a gristmill before 1727 on Cedar Creek, just 3/4 mile downstream from the Cubbage Mill site. The history of the Cubbage Mill site itself is less well documented; it probably remained undeveloped during this period.

Important changes were soon to come: In 1769, John Draper and Luke Walton petitioned the Sussex County Court to erect a gristmill on Cedar Creek at or near the Cubbage Mill site. In 1770, landowner John Cornwell sold a 300-acre tract, including the future Cubbage Mill site, to miller Peter Parker, who sold it to John Draper five years later.

OWNER OF THE CUBBAGE MILL PROPERTY (1730-1770)
JOHN CORNWELL (1725-1770)

Politically, the three Delaware counties moved towards greater autonomy from Pennsylvania during this period. In 1704 representatives from New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties began to meet in a separate legislature in New Castle.[25] However, Philadelphia remained the principal outlet for agricultural and manufactured goods coming from Delaware, including Sussex County.

During this period, Sussex County moved beyond a frontier society characterized by undeveloped landholdings and an economy based on hunting, trapping, and fishing. As the county's interior was slowly settled, resident landowners began to engage in agriculture, bringing a measure of stability to Sussex County's colonial society.

By the early 1700s, many Sussex County farmers had turned to growing tobacco—the basis of several speculative fortunes in 17th-century tidewater Maryland and Virginia. Tobacco farming had several cumulative effects on Delaware's agricultural economy, most of them harmful. It tended to deplete the soil, requiring regular clearing of new agricultural lands. This led to soil erosion

[25] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1990 *Ibid, p.35*

and the silting up of smaller creeks and streams. The year-long, labor-intensive nature of tobacco cultivation forced many planters to employ slaves or indentured servants. Tobacco plantations were widely dispersed, despite various government efforts to concentrate settlement in towns.[26] Finally, planters became victims of the boom-and-bust tobacco market, whose price was controlled by London merchants and European governments.

Typically, tobacco plantations from this period consisted of intensively worked fields in the immediate vicinity of the dwelling and barns, with large portions of the property left in woodland or marsh for future cultivation.[27] Historical and architectural studies of Tidewater Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia conducted in the 1980s revealed that most of the domestic architecture from the early colonial period was highly impermanent and poorly constructed.[28, 29] Together with ramshackle tobacco barns and other outbuildings, these houses gave the landscape a hardscrabble, poverty-stricken appearance.

By the 1730s, most evidence suggests that farmers throughout tidewater Maryland and Delaware had shifted from tobacco to wheat and corn.[30] Wheat and corn were easier to grow and the farmer could plant larger acreages, with fewer farmhands. These cereal crops could be shipped to local gristmills, freeing planters from the uncertainty of shipment to England. Corn and wheat were fed to cattle and livestock, encouraging the growth of animal husbandry. As a result, many more tidewater domestic and agricultural buildings are known to date

[26] Reps, John
1976 *Tidewater Towns.* Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.

[27] *Ibid, p.30*

[28] Carson, C., N.F. Barka, W.M. Kelso, G.W. Stone, and D. Upton
1981 *Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies.* Winterthur Portfolio 16:135-196.

[29] Kelso, William M.
1984 *Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia.* Academic Press, Orlando, Florida.

[30] Carson et al.
1981 *Ibid, p.136*

[31] Weeks, C.H.C. (ed.)
1984 *Between the Nanticoke and the Choptank—An Architectural History of Dorchester County, Maryland, p.28.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

after 1730, indicating the use of more permanent construction methods and materials.[31]

By 1740, Sussex County had an estimated 1,800 free inhabitants, out of a total of 10,000 for the entire Delaware colony.[32] Nearly 90% of the county's inhabitants were engaged in agriculture. Despite their shift to wheat and corn cultivation, Sussex County farmers were primarily subsistence farmers; that is, they raised crops mostly for their own consumption. This contrasted with the more market-oriented farmers of New Castle County. Because they were more closely linked to Philadelphia, New Castle farmers sold a much higher percentage of their crops on the open market.[33]

Throughout the 18th century in Sussex County, a farm's location on a river or stream was still crucial to its success. Sussex County had the least developed road network in Delaware, according to Benjamin Eastburn's 1837 *Map of the Three Lower Counties*.[34] Roads were few and poorly maintained, and most cereal grains were shipped by boat to local mills or further up the coast to Wilmington and Philadelphia.

Delaware's corn- and wheat-based agriculture encouraged the construction of water-powered gristmills—among the most important enterprises in colonial Delaware and Sussex County. "These milling sites were among the first industrial complexes in the region, and several were located in each geographic region of the colony . . . most often at the heads of tidal navigation or at the fall line." [35, 36, 37] It has been estimated that more than half of Sussex County's farmsteads were within eight miles (or a half-day's journey) of a mill or shipping wharf. Soon, these mill sites formed the nuclei of small hamlets consisting of taverns, stores, dwellings, and blacksmith shops.

During this period, most mills were "custom mills," in which the miller's payment was a toll or percentage of the grain or corn he milled.[38] (The other, less common mill type was the "merchant mill" where the miller sold the ground

[32] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts
1990 *Ibid, p.42*
[33] *Ibid, p.49*
[34] *Ibid, p.45*
[35] *Ibid, p.33*

[36] Pursell, C.W.
1958 *That Never Falling Stream: A History of Milling on Red Clay Creek during the 19th Century.* Masters Thesis, University of Delaware.

[37] Hancock, Harold B.
1976 *The History of Sussex County, Delaware.* Published by the author.

[38] O'Connor et al.
1985 *Ibid, p.49*

flour or meal himself). With technology little changed from the Elizabethan era, watermills were labor-intensive enterprises, demanding the employment of several hands. The miller not only had to maintain the mill buildings, but also had to regularly repair the milldam and races, which could be damaged by flooding.

When was the first gristmill built along Cedar Creek or in Cedar Creek Hundred? Chances are, it was the mill built between 1717 and 1727 by Alexander Draper on the site of the present Cedar Creek Mill, near where Route 30 crosses Cedar Creek, east of the Cubbage Mill site. According to deed research, Alexander Draper was the first of this locally prominent family to settle in the Cedar Creek area.

The mill built by Alexander Draper and owned by his descendants for the rest of the 18th century is referenced throughout this history of the Cubbage Mill site. This may seem confusing and superfluous to the reader, as the two mills had different property histories and were never owned by the same individual at any one time. Yet, the Alexander Draper Mill provides important insights into the history of the Cubbage Mill site. For one thing, it served as a frequent reference point in early deed descriptions of the Cubbage Mill property. Throughout its history, the Alexander Draper Mill was always larger and more productive than the Cubbage Mill, and thus was much better documented. Therefore, it provides a valuable object of comparison with the Cubbage Mill, especially since the two mills were located so close to each other and were owned by different members of the same family for many years.

Alexander Draper was born in Delaware in December 1680, the eldest son of Alexander and Rebecca Draper. He married Ann, the daughter of John Walton of Cedar Creek Hundred. On 4 February 1717, he bought 400 acres on Cedar Creek from Matthew Parker (Sussex County Deed Book A, page 99). He died on 12 March 1734 at his home on Cedar Creek.

In 1727, Draper wrote his will (Sussex County Will Book 1, page 223). In addition to other bequests, he gave to his sons Joseph and Nehemiah Draper his 700-acre plantation *"on which I now reside"* and mills upon it *"lying at the head of Cedar Creek upon the county road in the county of Sussex. The mills lye upon the South Branch of Said Creek."*

The property was to be equally divided between the two sons. This description appears to place it at the crossing of Route 30 (the historic route between Milton and Milford) and Cedar Creek. Draper owned at least one other mill during his lifetime, a sawmill located along Deep Creek, near present-day Seaford (then considered part of Somerset County, Maryland).

THE FIRST IN A LONG LINE OF DRAPERS

Alexander Draper built a gristmill on the site of the present Cedar Creek Mill sometime before 1727. Draper's mill (replaced by a later mill building, still standing) was located ¾ mile downstream (east) of the Cubbage Mill site excavated by GAI Consultants, Inc. in 1997-1998.

Draper's will provided one final insight into current milling practices. In his will, Draper specified that his wife Ann be entitled to have her "bread corn" ground without paying a toll at the mill on Cedar Creek. This explicit reference indicates that the mill operated as a custom mill.

Milling continued to be an important activity in the Draper family after Alexander Draper's death. In 1745, Ann Draper wrote her will (Sussex County Will Book, page 354), in which she devised to son William Draper *"land in Somerset County whereon my husband Alexander Draper built a sawmill."* To her son Nehemiah, owner and operator of the Cedar Creek Mill, she gave *"a good pare* (pair) *of watermill stones and a bolt of cloth."*

Alexander (later Nehemiah) Draper's Mill was the nucleus of the small settlement known as Cedar Creek Village. Unfortunately, no buildings (including Alexander Draper's original mill) from this period still stand in Cedar Creek Village or its vicinity. St. Matthew's Anglican (later Episcopal) Church, built in 1717 and rebuilt in 1770, was formerly located near the lower branch of Cedar Creek, sometimes called Church Branch. The church building was moved to Milford in 1864 and converted to a sawmill; it burned in 1871. The small church cemetery remains, and contains the grave of Nehemiah Draper's wife Sarah, who died in 1775.

TOO MANY DRAPERS?

The number of mills operated by members of the Draper family on Cedar Creek is sometimes confusing. Alexander Draper, Sr. built a mill on Cedar Creek before 1727. Alexander Draper's Mill is located on the parcel adjacent to the John Draper Mill (later Cubbage Mill) site excavated by GAI Consultants in 1997-1998.

The 1767 will of Nehemiah Draper gave the mill and home plantation to his oldest son, Alexander, and his daughter-in-law Esther. Alexander Draper may have rebuilt his father's mill within a few years; in 1770, he petitioned the Sussex County Court to permit him to repair his mill and enlarge his millpond (Sussex County Mill Petition, 1770).

The Draper family milling tradition was also carried on by Alexander Draper's cousin, John Draper (son of Alexander Draper's uncle William Draper, whom we encountered earlier as the owner of the sawmill in Somerset County). According to a petition filed with the Sussex County Court on 18 October 1769, John Draper and Luke Walton *"being owners of a tract of land laying and adjoining on the south side of the Southwest Prong of Cedar Creek Branch…hath or intendeth to build a mill"* (Sussex County Mill Petition, 1769).

Prospective mill owners usually petitioned the county court for permission to erect or modify a watermill, whether a sawmill or a gristmill. This was because the damming of a portion of a waterway for a millpond could affect farmers and mills operating above or below the mill in question. The court usually appointed community freeholders to inspect the site and assess the potential damage, if any. Most landowners appreciated the convenience of a nearby mill, and the court usually granted such petitions.

Contrary to what the mill petition claimed, John Draper and Luke Walton were not yet the owners of the subject property. On 4 September 1770 John Cornwell (who had owned the property since he had inherited it in 1725) sold 300 acres to Peter Parker for 180 pounds (Sussex County Deed Book 11, page 223). A 50-acre portion of this tract was described as being *"on the south side of the widow Draper's* (Nehemiah's widow Esther's*) millpond,"* indicating close proximity to the Alexander Draper mill.

EARLY INDUSTRIALIZATION (1770-1830)

The Early Industrialization Period was marked by the dissolution of the political union between Delaware and Pennsylvania, and American independence. Agricultural wealth in Delaware increased dramatically in the years after the Revolution, but then entered a depression around 1800. Locally, the period of early industry was characterized by intensified milling activity in the Cedar Creek area. In the early 1770s, several plots of land were sold off and developed in the vicinity of Cubbage Mill, including the 1775 sale of the future Cubbage Mill property by Peter Parker to John Draper. Draper, a miller by trade, built the first gristmill on the Cubbage Mill site sometime between 1776 and his death in 1784. The mill apparently was heavily damaged by a flood in 1799, and rebuilt thereafter. During the early 1800s, the mill became the object of intense legal wrangling, as John Draper's heirs squabbled over who was to pay for the mill's repairs. Besides revealing much about the contentious personalities of the mills' owners, the court documents contain valuable information about the mill's operations during this period.

OWNERS OF THE CUBBAGE MILL PROPERTY (1770-1830)

John Cornwell (1725-1770)
Peter Parker (1770-1775)
John Draper (1775-1784)
John Draper heirs, including William Draper (1784-1808)
William Draper heirs (1808-1821)
Samuel Draper (1821-1825)
Lemuel Shockley (1825-1833)

This period began with an unusual degree of real estate activity in the Cedar Creek area, as several larger tracts were divided, resold, and developed. On 27 June 1770, Peter Parker sold to John Draper for 25 pounds a *"certain tract of land . . . Laying and being in the forks of the branches of Cedar Creek, which said tract of land was surveyed unto William Fisher"* (Sussex County Deed Book 11, page 223). On 4 May

[39] *John Draper is identified as a "miller" in a 1775 deed for the Cubbage Mill site property from "miller" Peter Parker.*

1775, Peter Parker, "miller" sold to John Draper "miller"[39] an adjoining 100-acre tract also identified as part of the original William Fisher patent in the forks of the branches of Cedar Creek for 60 pounds (Sussex County Deed Book 12, page 23-24).

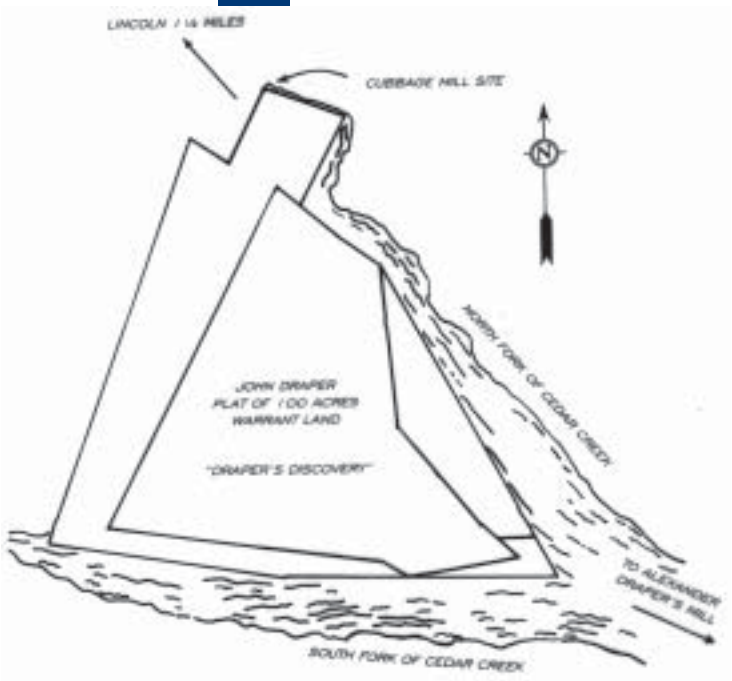


Figure 3.5
Rhoad Shankland's 1776 Survey of "Draper's Discovery" (redrawn from original)
Source: Shankland Survey 1776: page 144.

This is the first cartographic depiction of the Cubbage Mill property and was drawn when the land was resurveyed for John Draper in 1776. The Alexander Draper millpond is to the east and the site of the John Draper mill is at the northwest tip of this property. An accurate map of this kind would most likely have shown John Draper's gristmill if it had been built by this date. The fact that no gristmill is shown suggests that John Draper built his mill on the property after 1776.

That both parties were identified as "millers" in this deed raises some intriguing questions. Had Draper already built his mill on the property, as he had proposed in the 1769 petition to the Sussex County Court? Had John Draper gained experience at either his father's sawmill on Deep Creek or his uncle's gristmill on Cedar Creek? What was Parker's milling experience? The fact that neither deed mentions a mill tends to discount the theory that either Parker or Draper had built a mill on this Cubbage Pond property after Parker acquired it from Cornwell in 1770.

In 1776, John Draper commissioned a resurvey of his property, identified in the legal records as *"Draper's Discovery."*[40] The survey and accompanying plat map are the first cartographic depiction of the property surrounding the Cubbage Mill site (Figure 3.5). The map clearly shows the forks of Cedar Creek and the Cedar Creek millpond to the east. The site of the mill is at the northwestern tip of the property. Again, the fact that there is no mill shown on this survey provides some evidence for John Draper's Mill (later Cubbage Mill) having been constructed *after* 1776.

One can only speculate as to why another (and ostensibly competing) mill at Cedar Creek was built so close to the existing Alexander Draper mill by another Draper family member. Were economic conditions such that two gristmills on Cedar Creek were justified? A more likely explanation may lie with the inherently inefficient use of water power typical of colonial-era gristmills. The depletion of water resources and the decrease in water power that resulted from construction

[40] Shankland Survey 1776 *Draper's Discovery*, p.144

of a gristmill often necessitated the construction of later mills further upstream to take advantage of a more powerful flow of water.

Our lack of an exact construction date or physical description of John Draper's mill is frustrating, although not unusual. Contrast this with the ca. 1727 Alexander Draper (now Cedar Creek) mill described previously, located ¾ mile east of the Cubbage Mill site on Cedar Creek. The Alexander Draper Mill complex was described in a 1776 Orphan's Court record for his daughter, Mary Draper (Sussex County Orphan's Court Book 3, page 355). Alexander Draper died in 1774, the owner of 822 acres, a mill, and other improvements. According to the Orphan's Court records, these improvements included a two-story "mansion house" with an attached wing, a cook house, a smoke house, two corn cribs, a barn, the gristmill, a miller's house, two store houses, a wharf, and 120 bearing apple trees.

Figure 3.6
Cutaway View of Oliver Evans' Mill
Source: The Young Millwright and Miller' Guide *by Oliver Evans.*

According to an inventory and appraisement conducted of Alexander Draper's estate in 1774, Draper also ran a richly stocked mercantile establishment. Goods for sale included expensive cloth, clothing, stocking, shoes, hats, wigs, and glassware, as well as farming and fishing supplies.[43]

The inheritance from her husband made Mary Draper a rich woman, and in 1789 she married Joseph Haslet, also of Cedar Creek Hundred. Haslet, who had been trained as a watchmaker, used her inheritance as a springboard to a political career. In 1810, he was elected governor of Delaware, and elected to a second

OLIVER EVANS' MILL

The late 18th century was a critical period in the history of gristmilling, both in Delaware and in the United States. In 1790, Delaware native Oliver Evans developed a fully automated, water-powered gristmill operated by a system of chutes, gears, and pulleys (Figure 3-6).[41] Evans' invention revolutionized grist milling nationally. By automating production, it reduced the workforce needed, thereby placing many mill hands out of work. Since Evans' machinery could not easily be retrofitted into existing mills, his invention encouraged the construction of new mill buildings:

"A wholesale reconstruction of American merchant mill buildings followed the Evans invention, in tandem with improved dams, races, and water wheels to provide added power to drive the new machinery."[42]

Ironically, the automation of gristmills eventually led to their demise, as new technology led to bigger and bigger mills in the mid- and late 19th-century, particularly in the Midwest, that improved on the automation and efficiency of Evan's mills through the use of electric power and metal rollers. There is no evidence that either of the Draper Mills incorporated Evans' innovations, although later mills at the Cubbage Mill site undoubtedly were Evans mills.

[41] Evans, Oliver
1795 *The Young Millwright and Miller's Guide, p.2*

[42] Hunter Research
2000 *Pike Creek: Industry and Farming Along a Northern Delaware River, p.3.3.*

[43] Sussex County Probate Records for Alexander Draper 1774

[44] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1254*

non-consecutive term in 1822. He was governor during the War of 1812, and organized troops near the Cedar Creek mill before they marched to Lewes to defend the town against the British.[44]

Most of what we know about John Draper's economic position and his mill operations are derived from the inventory of his estate carried out after his death

Figure 3.7
A Portion of the 1784 Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of John Draper.
Source: Sussex County Probate Records 1784

in 1784 (Figure 3.7).[45] Although perhaps not as wealthy as his cousin Alexander Draper, John Draper died owning 13 slaves, which clearly placed him in the upper class of Sussex County landed society.

Draper evidently died a wealthy man in 1784, as his estate included silver, fine furniture, and 13 slaves. The inventory of his estate also contained items directly related to his mill operations, including bags of wheat, corn, and rye. The inventory also hints that Draper's mill also functioned as a sawmill; there are listings for cypress boards and lumber. This was a common practice, particularly during the slack growing season in winter.

Among his personal effects were furniture, silver, glassware, mirrors, books, candlesticks, linens, and a carriage. At his mill were bushels of wheat, buckwheat, rye, and oats, and 224 bushels of corn, as well as lumber and empty barrels. The probate inventory also listed items directly connected with the mill operation, such as a grindstone, a flax brake, a set of weighing scales, bolting cloth, and mill picks.

John Draper died intestate (without a will), and his real and personal estate were divided among his heirs. These included his widow Elizabeth Draper, who received her 1/3 dower right, and his two sons William and John. In 1785, Elizabeth married John Walton, brother of his former business partner Luke Walton. In 1792, William Draper came of age and bought out his brother John's

[45] Sussex County Probate Records for John Draper 1784

share of the mill and real estate. He agreed to pay his mother rent for her 1/3 interest and continued to run the mill along with his stepfather.

Both the former Alexander Draper and John Draper mills were part of the small, thriving village of Cedar Creek in the 18th and 19th centuries. Although located midway between Milford and Milton, the primary significance of the village was its position at the head of navigation on Cedar Creek. Until eclipsed by the town of Lincoln in the 1860s, Cedar Creek was the largest village in Cedar Creek Hundred. In addition to the mills, the village at one time contained about a dozen houses, St. Matthews Episcopal Church, two taverns, a hotel, and a blacksmith shop. It is presumed that Alexander Draper's store was located in Cedar Creek.

Cedar Creek Hundred was one of several hundreds in Sussex County that experienced population growth as population was redistributed throughout the Delmarva peninsula after the Revolutionary War. Considerable migration occurred from the coastal regions of the three states to the interior regions in search of arable farmland. In 1791, residents in the western half of Sussex County succeeded in moving the county seat from the coastal town of Lewes to the more centrally located town of Georgetown, just 10 miles south of Cedar Creek Village.[46]

Overland travel in Cedar Creek Hundred and Sussex County improved somewhat during the late 18th and 19th centuries, although the preferred method for transport of goods was still by water. At the turn of the 19th century, the county authorities approved the building of several roads in the vicinity of Cedar Creek Village.[47] Most of these new roads led from surrounding farms and hamlets to the two mills at Cedar Creek, further cementing commercial ties between the two mills and the surrounding agricultural countryside.

In 1795, two dozen local landowners petitioned the Sussex County Court to authorize a road connecting Nehemiah Cary's sawmill (location unknown) with William Draper's mill (Sussex County Road Papers, Cedar Creek Hundred 1795).

In 1805, William Draper petitioned the Sussex County Court of General Sessions in Georgetown to reroute an existing road leading west from his mill to the Georgetown-Milford Road (present US Route 113) (Sussex County Road Papers 1805). In his petition, Draper describes the road leading west from the county road (present-day Route 30) to Draper's Mill and from there west to the lands of John Truitt's as *"verry much obstructed and in sum places intirely sloped up."* As a result, he proposed a rerouting to run:

MILL ROADS

Between 1795 and 1807, the Sussex County Court was petitioned to build several roads connecting John Draper's Mill (later William Draper's, later Cubbage Mill) with other existing roads:

1795
Residents petitioned for a road to run between Draper's Mill and Nehemiah Cary's sawmill.

1805
William Draper requested an improved road between Cedar Creek Village and the Milford-Georgetown Road, passing by his mill.

1807
William Draper requested a road running north-south between the road requested in 1805 (above) and the present east-west Johnson Road (Route 207) north of his mill. This road, now Route 214, was built over the Draper milldam.

46 *Ibid, p.1239*

47 Sussex County Road Orders, Cedar Creek Hundred 1795-1863

Cubbage Pond

"at or near the valley on the county road leading from Milford to Cedar Creek and by the plantation of John Draper's and turning on such direction as shall be thought most convenient to your petitioner's mill…until it intersects with the state road Leading from Milford to Georgetown."

In 1807, William Draper's mill building and dam were depicted in a landowner petition to run a road south from the lands of William Martin to intersect with the east-west road petitioned for by Draper only two years earlier (Figure 3.8) (Sussex County Road Papers, Cedar Creek Hundred, 1807). With these last two roads in place, Draper cemented his mill's ties with the north-south roads leading from Milford to Milton through Cedar Creek Village, and from Milford to Georgetown.

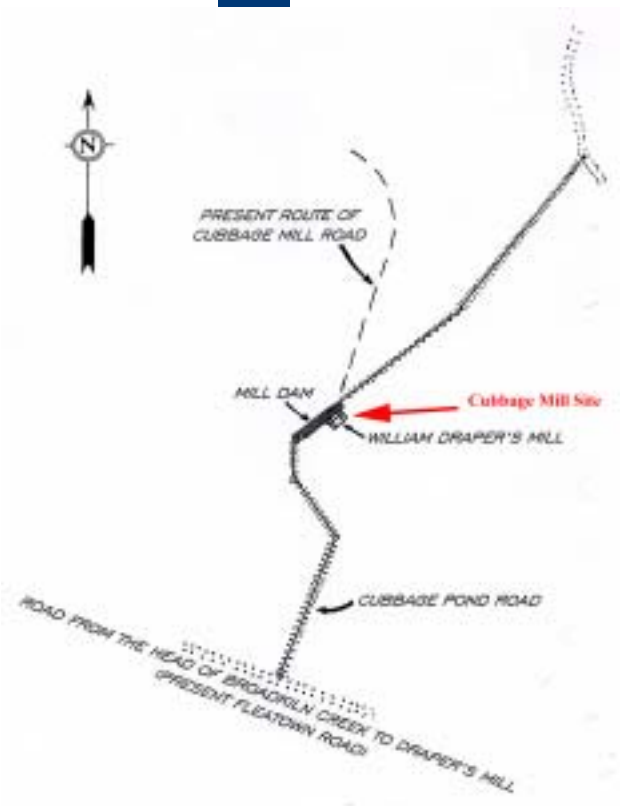


Figure 3.8
1807 Sussex County Road Petition for a Road between William Draper's Mill and the lands of William Martin, deceased.
Source: Sussex County Road Papers, Cedar Creek Hundred, 1807 (redrawn from original).

This drawing is historically valuable for several reasons. It is the first to definitively show John Draper's (later William Draper's) Mill at this location. The mill building's depiction is schematic, however, and nothing about the mill's actual appearance can be inferred. The road leading to the south is present Route 214 (Cubbage Mill Road), which connects at its southern point with Route 224 (Fleatown Road). On this map, this section of Fleatown Road is identified as the **"Road from the head of Broadkiln Creek to said mill."** *The roadbed north of Cubbage Millpond has been changed over the years to run in a northwest direction to connect with the present Johnson Road. This map also illustrates the way in which the milldam was incorporated into the road system, and served as a bridge between the north and south banks of Cedar Creek. Again, this mill should not be confused*

with the Alexander Draper Mill (now Cedar Creek Mill) located east of the John/ William Draper Mill on Cedar Creek.

An argument over the alignment of the road passing near William Draper's mill may have served as the spark that ignited a heated and contentious legal battle over the mill's fate between 1806 and 1807. This battle was fought in Sussex County Chancery Court between William Draper and his stepfather John Robinson, who had married the former Elizabeth Draper Walton in 1797. Besides giving a revealing glimpse into the family lives of these two people, the court testimony also provides valuable information on the construction history of the Draper mill.[48]

John and Elizabeth Robinson brought suit against William Draper in June 1806, claiming that Draper had withheld annual profits from the mill since his mother's remarriage in 1797 (Chancery Court Record No. 6, Summer Term, 1806). According to Robinson, soon after the remarriage, Draper had *"entered and possessed himself of the Mill"* and *"received and took all the rents and profits thereof."* Robinson claimed that the mill in 1806 had a yearly value in rents and profits of $500.

The two parties heatedly disputed the actual amount of these profits. According to Robinson, Draper either *"pretended the said profits and rents are of small and inconsiderable value"* or that *"he claimed that he hath expended and discharged the same by the repairs and expenses upon the said Mill."* Robinson dismissed the latter claim by saying that *"the repairs and expenses, or a great part thereof, were superfluous and unnecessary."*

In a blistering written reply, Draper disputed the *"many errors, untruths, and deficiencies"* in Robinson's complaint. Draper claimed that the mill had deteriorated during the years it had been run by John Walton and *"the said Mill and dam were in bad repair, being so left at the death of John Walton."* To substantiate his version, Draper enlisted the testimony of the local tax assessor, Nehemiah Bennett, who said that the mill was worth *"but a mere trifle . . . she was so old and out of repair."*

Draper took over operation of the mill after Walton's death and paid his mother 15 pounds in yearly rents, despite its poor condition. Beginning in 1797, Draper was forced to *"expend diverse sums of money amounting to a considerable sum on the necessary repairs of said Mill and dam."*

Further calamities were to befall Draper and his mill. Draper claimed that a *"great flood of water broke the dam in several places and demolished or blew up the Mill"* in

THE BATTLING DRAPERS
A hotly contested 1806 court case between William Draper and his stepfather John Robinson provides fascinating details on the building history of the Draper gristmill. The mill and dam were destroyed by a flood in September 1799, and substantially rebuilt by Draper a few years thereafter. It did not resume full operation until 1802.

[48] Sussex County Road Papers, Cedar Creek Hundred, 1807

September 1799. According to the testimony of several witnesses, this flood damaged other mills along Cedar Creek, as well.

Draper approached his stepfather for financial help in repairing the mill and dam. According to Draper, Robinson refused, telling Draper *"he would not have anything to do with it."* Nehemiah Bennett's testimony confirmed Draper's story that Robinson had disavowed ownership, saying that Robinson did not wish to be taxed for the mill property.

Draper hesitated about rebuilding the mill and dam after the flood because he was *"apprehensive that he should never, or for considerable length of time, be reimbursed for his expenses."* According to one witness, Draper also recognized that *"there were so many mills in the neighborhood"* and would face stiff competition. But, *"after advising with several of this neighbors, he resolved to undertake the rebuilding of the mill."*

Draper and others testified that he and some of his servants performed most of the repairs themselves, although he did engage the services of at least one local millwright, John Spencer. Spencer *"worked a little"* on the mill and presented Draper with a bill for *"about four dollars"* although Spencer did not specify the nature of the work performed.

According to Draper, all parties were content with the arrangement whereby he collected the rents and shouldered the cost of repairs. In the winter of 1805, Draper objected to a petition that Robinson had filed to lay out a road *"to run so as to accommodate himself and to turn the same off from the said mill."* Draper's objection *"seemed much to irritate Robinson and he then, to the great astonishment of the defendant (Draper), observed that he thought it was time he should come in for a share of the mill's receipts."*

Other witnesses were called to assess the mill's economic and structural condition. The millwright John Spencer ran Draper's Mill between 1804 and 1806 and kept records of the tolls collected from farmers during those years. In 1804, the mill took in 320 bushels of corn and 45 bushels of wheat; in 1805, it collected 290 bushels of corn and 41 ½ bushels of wheat; and in 1806, the mill took in 286 ½ bushels of corn and 34 ½ bushels of wheat, along with 3 additional bushels of rye. Although he was called as a witness by Robinson, Spencer admitted that the mill's rents and profits had not *"cleared the expenses in repairing said Mill"* and that the Mill was *"not worth more than 150 bushels of corn and 20 bushels of wheat"* in profits.

Ultimately, the court found in favor of Robinson and his wife, ruling that Robinson never legally handed over ownership of the mill to Draper. The court chastised Draper for not pressing for an agreement in writing. This must have

been a bitter lesson for Draper, who had in fact requested *"something in writing"* from Robinson. According to Draper, Robinson's indignant reply was that *"my word is as good as my bond."*

In addition to probably forever souring future Thanksgiving gatherings of the Draper household, we learn several important facts about the mill from the preceding court case. First, John Draper's mill apparently deteriorated from neglect following his death in 1784. This was a common occurrence when property was tied up in probate for many years following a mill owner's death. Second, the mill and dam were substantially rebuilt after being damaged by a flood in late 1799. According to John Spencer, the mill did not return to full operation until 1802, when *"a shaft and bolting cloth was fitted in said Mill."* Lastly, it is apparent that Draper's mill was a custom mill and its day-to-day operation was not performed by its owner, but by a trained millwright.

Although obviously distracted by these legal battles, the road petitions filed by William Draper between 1795 and 1807 indicate that he was busy tying his mill more closely physically with the surrounding farms and even with the trading towns of Milton and Milford. He probably hoped to attract additional farmers to his rebuilt mill and increase his income. But was he successful in this attempt? What was the agricultural economy of the surrounding area like during this period?

Delaware, and particularly Sussex County, entered a period of agricultural depression after 1800 (Table 3.1). Sussex County's population had climbed from 7,654 to 21,747 between 1800 and 1810. In response to population growth and lowered land productivity, farmers began to clear lands of poor or marginal quality.[49] Many farmers persisted in poor farming practices, resulting in eroded or exhausted soil. Many younger sons and tenant farmers simply gave up and either moved to northern industrial centers or headed west for new farmland. This partly accounts for the county's population decline to 18,670 by 1820.

Table 3.1
Sussex County and Cedar Creek Hundred Population (1800-1830)
Source: DeCunzo 1990

YEAR	SUSSEX COUNTY TOTAL	CEDAR CREEK HUNDRED TOTAL
1800	7,654	956
1810	21,747	2,768

[49] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1990 *Ibid, p.53*

1820	18,670	1,648
1830	20,846	2,010

Sussex County farmers still primarily raised corn rather than wheat, and relied on animal husbandry for additional income. Farm productivity and income were lower in Sussex County than elsewhere in the state, despite the larger average farm size.[50] Many farmers timbered their forestland, further increasing erosion of the surrounding landscape. To supplement their income, Sussex County farmers engaged in a variety of home manufactures, including spinning, weaving, and candlemaking.[51]

In contrast to this rather dismal agricultural picture, manufacturing and commerce in Delaware increased significantly between 1800 and 1830. This included both capital-funded manufacturers (concentrated in New Castle County) and home manufacturers (predominantly in Sussex County).

In 1821, Samuel Draper acquired the mill and surrounding property of his late father William Draper on Cedar Creek from his five brothers and sisters. The mill building and dam are shown in an 1821 Orphan's Court record concerning the proposed division of William Draper's land among his children.

New Castle County dominated most types of manufacturing in Delaware, including paper mills, sawmills, gunpowder mills and gristmills. According to one source, just three creeks in this county provided the power source for 47 different mills and manufactories.[52] In Sussex County, virtually the only industries consisted of gristmills and sawmills.

Ultimately it is not known whether William Draper and his mill were immediately affected by the larger agricultural trends occurring in Delaware. Draper died without a will in 1808, leaving the mill to his six children: Samuel Draper, Percy Draper (wife of Warren Nock), Betty Draper (wife of Thomas Timmons), Isaac Draper, Lydia Draper, and Hettie Draper (Sussex County Orphan's Court Record "M", page 151). By this time, William Draper's holdings included the mill and milldam, a granary, his house, and approximately 126 acres between the south and north prongs of Cedar Creek.

With six heirs, it was clearly not feasible to divide this relatively small property into equal portions, without rendering the resultant shares almost worthless. Thus, the usual practice was for the county Orphan's Court to appraise the property and buildings and then arrange the sale of the principal buildings to one

[50] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1990 *Ibid, p.48*

[51] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1990 *Ibid, p.50*

[52] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1990 *Ibid, p.42*

or more of the heirs (usually an eldest son). The remaining heirs then accepted cash equal to their share, in lieu of real estate.

On 7 March 1821, the Sussex County Orphan's Court appointed six freeholders (among them former Governor Haslet) to visit the lands of William Draper in the company of a surveyor and attempt to equitably divide the property[53]. On 18 July 1821, the freeholders divided the land into three parcels (Figure 3.9): 1) 116 acres of land in the forks of Cedar Creek, 2) an 8-acre property with a granary building, and 3) the 2-acre mill property containing the mill, a milldam and pond. Through

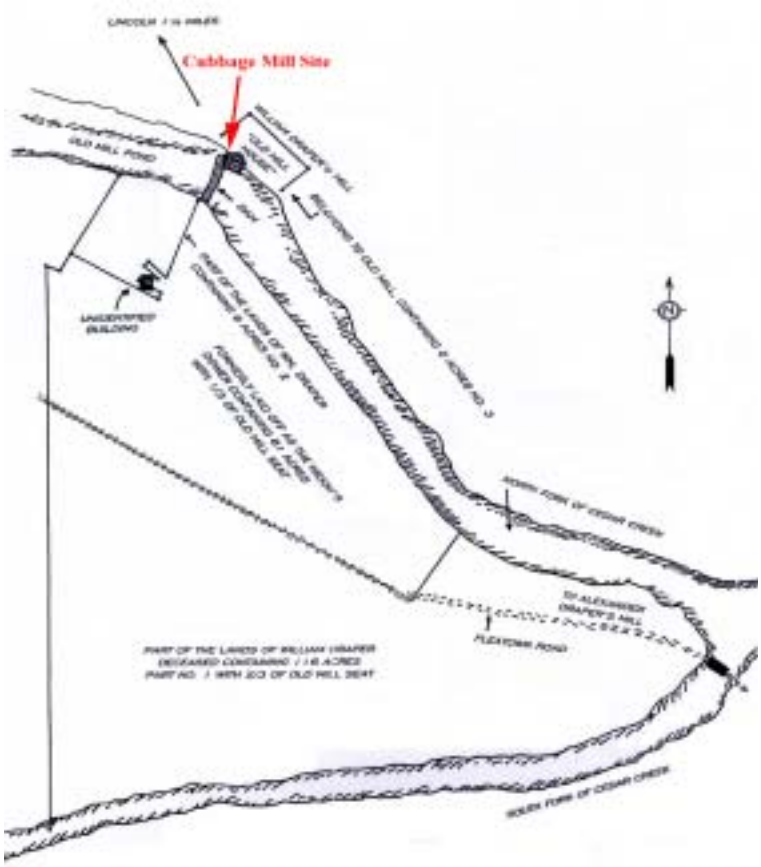


Figure 3.9
Proposed Division of the Land of William Draper
Source: Sussex County Orphan's Court Book "M," pages 151-153 (Redrawn from original).

This important map is contained in the 1821 Orphan's Court records and shows the lands of William Draper, deceased, in Cedar Creek Hundred. The map adds more detail to the information contained in the 1776 and 1807 maps showing the gristmill site. The mill building (by then described as "old") and dam are clearly shown at the north end of the property. A building, perhaps a granary, is located on the 8-acre parcel to the south of the mill. Fleatown Road runs east-west through the center of the remaining land and defines the dower land of John Draper's widow. The bridge on the far right carries this road over Cedar Creek to the Cedar Creek Mill and Route 30.

several transactions among the heirs later that year, Samuel Draper gained control of his father's entire 126-acre property, the 8-acre granary property, and the gristmill.

[53] Sussex County Orphan's Court Record "M", page 152

Only four years later, Samuel Draper sold the mill and the surrounding 126 acres to his neighbor Lemuel B. Shockley. [54] It is a shame that we do not possess a likeness of, or have more detailed biographical information on, Shockley (Born: 27 February 1794. Died: 15 September 1857), as he was evidently one of the more enterprising mill owners in the area. It is not known, for example, whether he was ever trained as a millwright or why he gravitated to milling as a career in the first place.

In his *History of Delaware* (1888), Scharf claims this was the first of three mills Shockley owned on Cedar Creek.[55] Shockley owned the William Draper/Samuel Draper Mill between 1825 and 1833. In 1833, he purchased the former Alexander Draper/Haslet Mill (later Cedar Creek Mill), which he sold in 1838. In 1848, Shockley bought the former Bethuel Watson Mill, located west of these two mills, also on Cedar Creek. This last mill dated from 1780 and passed to Lemuel's son Elias in 1860. For many years thereafter it was known as Clendaniel's Mill.

THE MANY GRISTMILLS OF LEMUEL SHOCKLEY (1794-1857)

Shockley owned the former William/Samuel Draper Mill between 1825 and 1833. It is now the Cubbage Mill site.

Shockley owned the former Alexander Draper/ Haslet Mill between 1833-1838. This is now the Cedar Creek Mill and is still standing.

Shockley owned the former Bethuel Watson Mill between 1848 and 1860. It is now the Clendaniel Mill site.

Lemuel Shockley married 18-year-old Charity Shockley in 1822.[56] They produced three children: George A. Shockley, Lemuel W. Shockley, and Kendle B. Shockley. Lemuel was listed in the 1830 US Census for Cedar Creek Hundred as head of a household of six, although their names were not given. His son George followed Lemuel in the milling trade.[4] In 1845, Lemuel B. Shockley was appointed a Trustee of the Poor, reflecting his social position. He died in 1857, apparently a wealthy man.

Scharf claims that Shockley rebuilt and improved the former Samuel Draper mill in 1819, although this date predates his ownership of the mill property.[57] One method for ascertaining when improvements were made to a building is to consult the county land tax assessments for the property. The earliest county land tax record for this mill dates from 1800, when it was still owned by William Draper. At that time, the mill was assessed for $300 (Sussex County Land Tax Records 1800). Despite the repairs Draper claimed to have done between 1800 and 1802, the mill's tax assessment never climbed above $300 during his ownership.

[54] Sussex County Deed Book 36, page 458

[55] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1253*

[56] Hill, J.B.
1970 *The Bennett Family of Sussex County, Delaware 1680-1860, p.57.* Milford Chronicle Publishing Company, Milford, Delaware.

[57] Hill, J.B.
1970 *Ibid, p.58*

The tax records are so incomplete for this period that the first mention of Lemuel Shockley's ownership is in 1828, when the gristmill was assessed for only $200 (Sussex County Land Tax Records 1828). The conclusion is that perhaps Shockley did not perform any improvements on the mill during his ownership.

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND EARLY URBANIZATION (1830-1880)

This was an eventful era in both Delaware and Sussex County history, and included the advent of the railroad, the end of slavery, and the rise of Wilmington as the state's industrial center. On the local level, the railroad reached Cedar Creek Hundred in 1867, Lincoln eclipsed Cedar Creek Village as the principal town in Cedar Creek Hundred during the 1870s, and agriculture became more diversified by the 1880s, with the peach industry enjoying a brief dominance. This was also an eventful time period in the history of milling operations at the Cubbage Mill property on Cedar Creek. The mill had six different owners during this period—among them, three Northerners and two members of the Davis family. The property was physically transformed during Charles M. Miles' ownership (1866-1879). In 1868, Miles substantially rebuilt the gristmill buildings and erected a new miller's house. For a brief period, the gristmill also operated as a steam-powered sawmill. These were undoubtedly the mill's peak production years, although the mill continued in operation until the 1940s.

OWNERS OF THE CUBBAGE MILL PROPERTY (1830-1880)

Lemuel Shockley (1825-1833)
John C. Davis (1833-1843)
Heirs of John C. Davis (1843-1856)
Mark H. Davis (1856-1863)
Hiram Barber (1863-1866)
Charles M. Miles (1866-1879)
John DuBois (1879-1881)

Unlike the shadowy images we have of the Cubbage Mill site during the 18th and early 19th centuries, the mill and its owners come more sharply into focus after 1830. There is a dramatic increase in information about the mill and its owners in the form of insurance records, probate records, census schedules, maps and atlases, business directories, contemporary biographies, tax assessments, and even photographs. These items help piece together a more complete picture of the Cubbage Mill site and the gristmill, as well as its place in the economic life of rural Cedar Creek Hundred.

[58] Scharf, J.T. 1888 *Ibid, p.1254*

In 1833, Lemuel Shockley sold the gristmill[59] and its associated properties to his brother-in-law, John Campbell Davis of Milford, for $2,400 (Sussex County Deed Book 44, page 195). Davis had married Shockley's sister, Keturah Shockley in 1825. He appeared in the 1840 US Population census schedules for Cedar Creek Hundred as the head of a household of 11 individuals (US Bureau of Census 1840). Evidently a well-respected man, he was elected to the Sussex County Levy Court in 1843.[60]

John C. Davis died on 1 March 1843 without leaving a will, and his widow, Keturah, died 24 February 1856, also without a will. Shortly after her death, the Sussex County Orphan's Court was again involved in appointing inspectors to appraise and divide the mill and farm property among the seven surviving heirs of John C. Davis (Sussex County Orphan's Court Record "Y," pages 245-250). Son Robert Davis petitioned the court for a division of the property. The court appointed another Davis relative, Thomas Davis, to survey the land. Within the month, the inspectors reported that the property could most advantageously be divided into two parts: the mill with its 2¾ acres, and the remaining 134-acre tract located in the forks of Cedar Creek.

As in 1821, an 1856 surveyor's map was attached to the Orphan's Court records (Figure 3.10). Unfortunately, only the portion of the division east of the gristmill was depicted.

John C. Davis' personal property was inventoried and appraised shortly after his death in 1843, providing a picture of his economic station in life. His possessions included a meager collection of old furniture, some cookware, and various old farm implements. They give an impression of a hard-scrabble life, as Davis struggled to support his wife and seven children on the income from his small custom mill and farmland holdings.

Also listed in Davis' possession at the time of his death were quantities of wheat, rye, corn, and several empty barrels held at the mill. These indicate that the Davis Mill still operated as a custom mill, where the miller extracted a portion of the farmer's produce as a toll, rather than selling the finished product of ground flour or meal on the market himself.

ABSTRACT OF PROBATE INVENTORY OF ESTATE OF JOHN C. DAVIS (1843)

4 Beds
Bureau and Bookcase
Rattan Desk
Walnut Desk and Table
Cupboard and Dishes
Lot of Rush Bottom Chairs
Dutch Oven
Frying Pan
Books
17 Bushels of Wheat
Lot of Corn and Rye
Boxes and Casks in Mill
Grind Stone
Scales and Weights
Plows, Harrows, Axes, Shovels, Yokes
Other Miscellaneous Items and Household Goods

Rent from the Mill: 58 Bushels of Corn @ 50 cents/bushel-$29.37
3 Bushels of Rye @ 50 cents/bushel = $1.50
24 Bushels of Wheat @ $1/bushel = $24.00
91 Bushels of Corn from Farm at Milford = $31.11

Total Value of Possessions and Rents = $425.18

[59] *Lemuel Shockley sold the former John Draper Mill to John C. Davis in 1833. Davis died in 1843, and his widow, Keturah, and his sons continued to operate the mill until her death in 1856.*

[60] Hill, J.B. 1970 *Ibid, p.57-58*

Figure 3.10
Proposed Division of Land of John C. Davis, 1856.
Source: Sussex County Orphan's Court Record "Y," pages 244-245.

This map, like the one in Figure 3.9, resulted from a survey and appraisal of the estate of an owner who died without a will; in this case, John C. Davis, who died in 1843. Davis' heirs had operated the mill for nearly 13 years since his death. With the death of his widow Keturah in 1856 and the end of her life interest in the mill property, the seven remaining heirs petitioned for division of the property. The Orphan's Court determined that the property, consisting of 134 acres and the Davis Gristmill on Cedar Creek, could best be divided into two parts. Eldest son Robert Davis received the farmland, and third son Mark H. Davis received the gristmill. The other heirs received monetary compensation.

The bulk of John C. Davis' real estate was divided between two of his four sons: eldest son Robert received the farmland, and third son Mark H. Davis (Born: 17 May 1835, Died: 24 September 1911) received the gristmill. The other heirs received monetary compensation. Thus, Mark H. Davis continued the Davis family ownership of the mill, which lasted (with numerous interruptions) until the early 20th century. In 1858, Davis married Mary Kane (1838-1925) and they had three children, among them Frank W. Davis (1861-1933), a future owner of the mill.[61]

According to a later account, Mark H. Davis grew up in abject rural poverty and lacked any formal education. This account stated: *"at age twenty-one, he was barely able to write his own name."*

In 1856, Mark H. Davis, son of John C. Davis, took over operation of the gristmill. His interest waned however, and he turned to the wholesale fruit trade after 1861. He sold the mill building and 2 ¾ acres to Hiram Barber in 1863.

Interestingly, the assessed value of John C. Davis' real estate holdings had climbed dramatically during the time they were held by his heirs. In 1844, he was assessed for 217 acres and a gristmill valued at $200.[62] In 1852, his estate owned 117 acres, and a gristmill valued at $1,000. In 1860, Mark H. Davis was assessed for 40 acres and a gristmill valued at $2,000 (Sussex County Land Tax Records 1860). There is no known explanation for this rise in value; inflation was not a factor. The rise in valuation could be explained as a long-overdue reevaluation of a property not assessed for several years. Alternatively, it could mean that the mill was repaired, improved, or rebuilt by Davis' heirs, much as it was in 1800-02 by William Draper. Without other corroborating evidence, however, it is difficult to say whether this was the case.

Every 10 years between 1850 and 1880, the U.S. Census Bureau collected information on the state and nature of the nation's manufacturing enterprises. These manufacturing censuses offer valuable information on the revenues and production of individual manufacturers, such as gristmills and sawmills, and also provide valuable comparisons with similar businesses in the locality, county, and state.

The John C. Davis Mill was not listed in the enumeration of gristmills in Cedar Creek Hundred in 1850 (Table 3.2). This may be because it was in the hands of his heirs. Alternatively, the mill may not have produced the requisite volume of flour or meal for listing in the manufacturing census. Generally, production had to reach $500 before it was listed in the US Manufacturing Censuses.

[61] Hill, J.B. 1970 *Ibid, p.1398*

[62] Sussex County Land Tax Records (1844)

Five gristmills, three sawmills, and one bark mill operating in Cedar Creek Hundred were listed in the 1850 U.S. Manufacturing Census (US Bureau of Census 1850). All of the gristmills were water-powered and ground primarily corn meal, indicating that corn was still the primary crop grown by Sussex County farmers. None of the mills was particularly large, and probably all of them were custom mills. The largest was the Cedar Creek Mill (the former Alexander Draper Mill), operated in 1850 by William V. Coulter. In 1850, Coulter's Mill claimed to have processed 10,000 bushels of corn; the nearest competitor was Nathaniel Johnston's gristmill, which processed 6,000 bushels of corn. The gristmill located just west of John C. Davis' Mill on Cedar Creek and owned by Lemuel Shockley processed 4,500 bushels of corn. None of the mills in Cedar Creek Hundred was valued at over $2,000 (US Bureau of the Census 1850).

Table 3.2
Gristmills and Sawmills Operating in Cedar Creek Hundred, Sussex County in 1850
(Source: US Bureau of the Census)

OWNER	TYPE OF MILL	BUSHELS PROCESSED	PRODUCT/VALUE
William Robinson	Gristmill	5000	Meal/$3000
Benjamin Waples	Gristmill	4000	Meal/$2300
William Coulter	Gristmill	10,000	Meal/$5300
Lemuel Shockley	Gristmill	4500	Meal/$2700
Isaac Betts	Sawmill	1500 logs	Lumber/$1500
Nath'l Johnston	Gristmill	2500	Meal/$3500
Clement Hudson	Sawmill	1500 logs	Lumber/$1500
Bethuel Walton	Sawmill	1500 logs	Lumber/$1500

The Census of Manufacturing for 1860 paints a similar picture of the state of milling in Cedar Creek Hundred, although the number of both sawmills and gristmills had increased somewhat during the 10-year interval (Table 3.3). Mark H. Davis' mill is listed for the first time, indicating that some of the improvements suggested by the county land tax assessments may have borne fruit.

Table 3.3
Gristmills and Sawmills Operating in Cedar Creek Hundred, Sussex County in 1860 (Source: US Bureau of the Census 1860)

OWNER	TYPE OF MILL	BUSHELS/LUMBER PROCESSED	PRODUCT/VALUE
Isaac Betts	Sawmill	40,000	Boards/$500
Robert Hudson	Gristmill	2,400	Meal $1680
Elias Shockley	Gristmill	6,400	Flour, meal/$3800
Nat'l Johnston	Gristmill	6,000	Flour, meal/$5200
P.F. Causey	Sawmill	30,000	Flour/$6200
P.F. Causey	Gristmill	3,000	Boards/$1000
C.S. Watson	Sawmill	50,000	Boards/$1000
William Coulter	Gristmill	5,200	Flour, meal/$6200
William Coulter	Sawmill	42,000	Boards/$2000
Mark H. Davis	Gristmill	5,600	Flour, meal/$5780
Lemuel Jones	Sawmill	40,000	Boards/$1250

How do these figures compare with gristmills, sawmills, and general manufacturing elsewhere in the state? Manufacturing enterprises were very unevenly distributed throughout Delaware in the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s. The traveler who noted in 1849 *"the manufactures of Delaware are more extensive than its commerce,"* was most probably speaking of New Castle County. In 1860, New Castle County possessed 42 boot and shoe factories, 36 flourmills, 13 cabinet factories, 35 sawmills, and 11 cotton factories. Kent and Sussex Counties possessed only sawmills and gristmills during this period, with a few very small factories producing for local needs.[63] As late as 1880, Kent and Sussex counties still produced only 1/10 of the total goods manufactured in industrialized New Castle County. There is every indication that Cedar Creek Hundred's (and by extension Sussex County's) gristmills and sawmills operated on a vastly lower level than those found in New Castle County and thus contributed far less to the state's economy.

USING HISTORIC MAPS AND ATLASES TO RESEARCH DELAWARE'S HISTORY

The 19th century is remarkable for the many high-quality maps and atlases of states and counties in the United States. These atlases were usually produced by major map publishing companies and sold by subscription to county residents and businesses. Most atlases for rural counties showed the location of all improvements, including residences, churches, schools, grist- and sawmills, and other industries. Each building was usually identified by the owner's name, and sometimes the property's acreage was given as well. Atlases often included advertisements for local businesses and occasionally even drawings of the homes of notable landowners.

Historic atlases serve several purposes in the research of historic properties, such as the Cubbage Mill site. They usually confirm the ownership information contained in deed and will records. Because they show improvements on the property, they help to date extant and former structures on the property. They also locate the names of surrounding property owners, helpful when reading property descriptions in deeds and other legal records.

The 1850 Price and Rea Map (Figure 3.11) is the first Delaware map to show Sussex County in detail. Several of the Cedar Creek mills listed in the 1850 US Manufacturing Census are shown on this map, including the Davis Grist Mill, the Coulter Grist and Sawmill (now the Cedar Creek Mill), the Shockley Gristmill, and Hudson's Mill, the latter two located west of Davis' Mill. The Betts Sawmill is located west of Federalsburg, and Watson's Sawmill is located on Herring Branch, south of Milford.

This map was produced in 1850 and depicted the entire state of Delaware. It showed schools, churches, and manufacturing enterprises, although individual residences were not noted. According to this atlas, the village of Cedar Creek consisted of several residences, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, and the Grist and Sawmill of William Coulter. To the west of this mill are: The Davis Grist Mill, (owned by the heirs of John C. Davis), the Elias Shockley Gristmill, and the Hudson Sawmill. The map confirms the existence of several other grist and sawmills listed in the 1850 US Census of Manufacturing, including the Betts Sawmill near Federalsburg and Watson's Sawmill south of Milford.

[63] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1990 *Ibid, p.73-74*

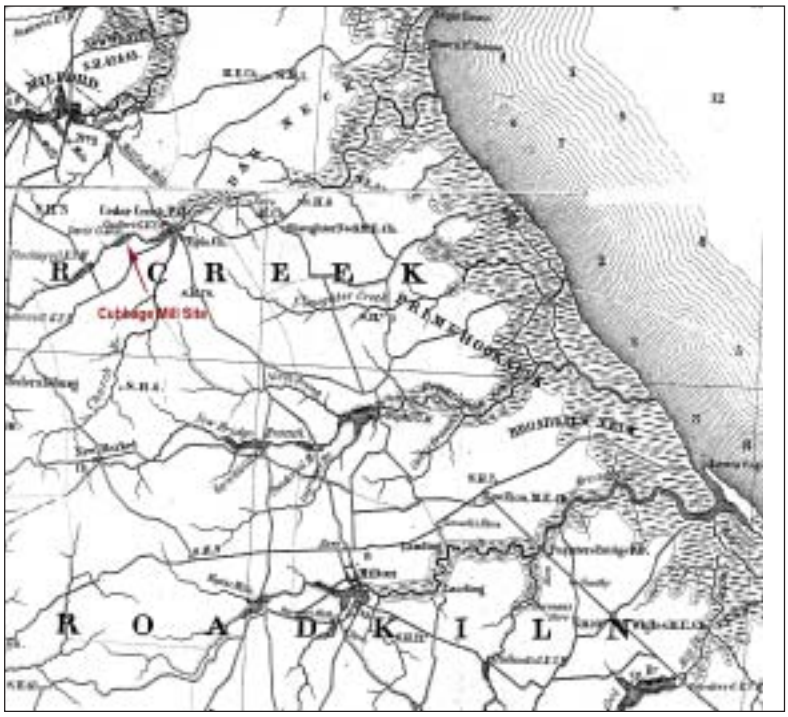


Figure 3.11
A Portion of a Map of the State of Delaware from Original Surveys by Jacob R. Price and Samuel M. Rea (1850).

Two particularly valuable atlases for researchers of Delaware history include: *A Map of the State of Delaware From Original Surveys* by Jacob R. Price and Samuel M. Rea, published in 1850 by Robert P. Smith of Philadelphia; and the *Atlas of the State of Delaware From Actual Surveys*, published by Beers & Pomeroy in 1868.

Mark H. Davis was listed in the 1860 US Population Census schedule as both a miller and a farmer, with real estate valued at $4,000 (US Census Bureau 1860). Soon, however, Davis apparently lost interest in operating his father's gristmill. According to one account, he moved to Philadelphia in 1861 to receive a business education. [64] In 1862-1863, he purchased the Fooks & Bros. grocery store in Laurel, and embarked on a career buying and selling fruit and other produce. There is no evidence that Davis actually moved to Laurel, however, and he may have operated this business as an absentee owner.

Probably in need of capital, Davis and his wife Mary Elizabeth sold the gristmill and 36 additional acres on 2 January 1863 to Hiram Barber of Milford for $2,500.[65] The Davis family thereafter moved to Milford. The 1870 US Population Census listed Davis as owning $9,000 worth of real estate and residing in Milford with his wife and three children. We will return to Davis later in this narrative.

[64] Runk, N.R. 1899 *Biographical Encyclopedia of the State of Delaware*, p.1398. Wilmington, Delaware.

[65] Sussex County Deed Book 69, page 314

Barber is probably the first owner of this mill for whom considerable and accurate biographical information is available. Born on 17 March 1817 in Ulster County, New York, he gained experience in the lumber business in Maine and Pennsylvania.[66] In December 1862, Barber moved to Milford, Delaware. He bought the Mark H. Davis Mill one month later.

An account of Barber in an 1899 biographical encyclopedia claims that he *"repaired and for some time successfully ran Davis' Mill near Lincoln."* [67] Given his previous work experience, it is likely that these "repairs" may have included the addition of a sawmill. Ultimately, however, the former Davis mill probably served Barber as a way-station on his successful career operating a sawmill and lumber yard in Milton. According to one account, Barber purchased the former St. Matthew's Episcopal church building in Cedar Creek Village in 1864 and moved it to Milford, where he converted it into a sawmill.[68] Barber is known to have operated a sawmill on Maple Avenue near the Milford railroad depot, as well as a foundry and machine shop.

The former Mark H. Davis Mill was sold to Hiram Barber in 1863. Barber resold the mill in 1866 to Charles M. Miles, who owned it until 1879. Both Barber and Miles had a lasting impact on the mill property. During their ownership, the mill was substantially rebuilt and enlarged; it even briefly operated as a sawmill. Miles was probably responsible for the frame miller's house that still stands nearby.

Barber remained in Milford during his entire career in Delaware. The 1870 Population Census listed him as a millwright, with real estate valued at $5,000 and living in Milford in the vicinity of Mark H. Davis' residence on Walnut Street (US Census Bureau 1870). In 1880, Barber formed the partnership of Barber & Minor. Barber died in 1898 and is buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Milford.[69]

Barber's role in the rebuilding and rejuvenation of the former Davis Mill as presented in the 1899 account may have been overstated and may even be inaccurate in some respects, according to several other documentary sources. These sources suggest that the subsequent owner, Charles M. Miles, should be given most of the credit for improvements made to the former Mark H. Davis mill.

On 3 March 1866, Hiram Barber and his wife Anna, both of Milford, sold the gristmill and 36 acres to Charles M. Miles of Cedar Creek Hundred for $4,200 (Sussex County Deed Book 74, page 423). Charles M. Miles is listed as the owner of this property in the land tax records for 1866, 1868, and between 1876 and 1880 (Sussex County Land Tax Records 1866-1880). According to county land tax records, the mill's assessed evaluation jumped from $2,000 in 1866 to $3,500 in

[67] Runk, N.R. 1899 *Ibid.*

[68] Scharf, J.T. 1888 *Ibid, p.1251*

[69] Scharf, J.T. 1888 *Ibid, p.1198*

[66] Runk, N.R. 1899 *Ibid, p.941*

1868. In the latter year, the improvements were described as a *"saw and gristmill."* This 1868 notation is noteworthy, as it is the only time this mill is ever referred to as a sawmill in the Sussex County Tax records, although it undoubtedly served as a sawmill during other periods in its history.

Although it may seem unsanitary to modern sensibilities, water-powered mills often operated as both sawmills and flour mills during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reasons were mostly economic: few millers could afford to leave their mills idle during the slack growing seasons of late fall and winter. In fact, the local gristmill was usually the only power-driven machine or factory in the community and served a variety of purposes. Sawing and turning operations were usually carried out in an ell or wing attached to the main mill building.

Miles' gristmill is shown at this Cedar Creek location in the *Atlas of the State of Delaware From Actual Surveys*, published by Beers & Pomeroy in 1868 (Figure 3.12). A residence identified as *"C.M. Miles"* is shown a short distance north of the mill, in the present location of the former miller's house. It is believed that Miles built this residence sometime after 1866. Whether Miles actually resided at this location or merely rented the house to a mill operator is not known.

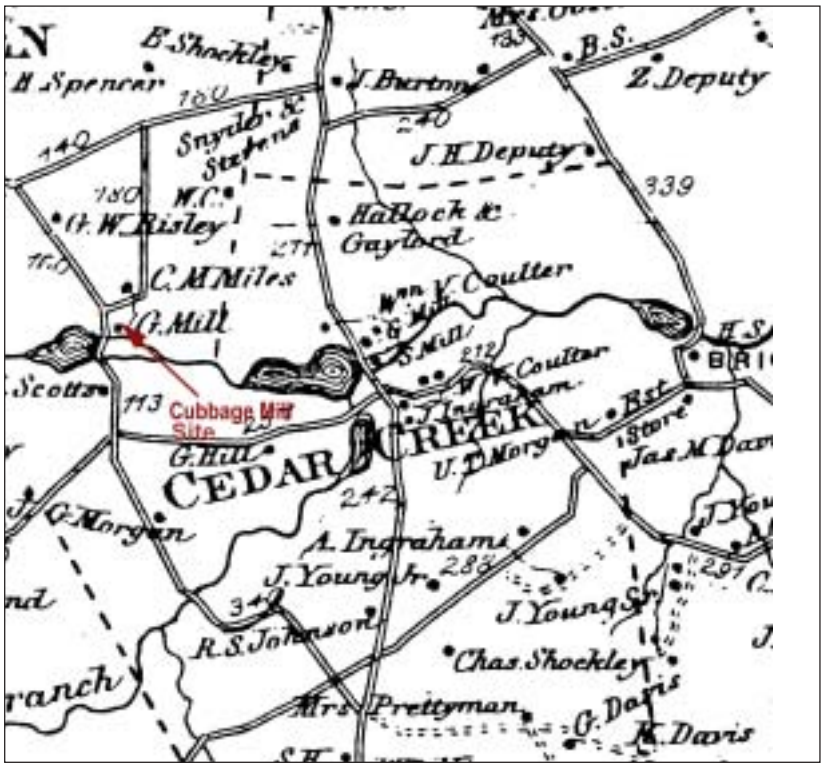


Figure 3.12
A Portion of the Atlas of the State of Delaware by Beers and Pomeroy (1868).

This portion of the Beers and Pomeroy's Atlas of 1868 shows map shows the Cedar Creek vicinity. The gristmill of C.M. Miles and the residence belonging to Miles are shown at the site on Cedar Creek. Miles took out an insurance policy for both the gristmill and millers' house in that year, indicating the buildings were of recent construction, certainly no later than 1868. Most of the other gristmills and sawmills listed in the 1860 Manufacturing Census can be found on this map. The other important feature shown on the map is the new town of Lincoln, platted just a few years earlier along the Junction & Breakwater Railroad line. Lincoln, which benefited from its direct links with other Delaware cities and towns, soon eclipsed Cedar Creek Village as the principal town in Cedar Creek Hundred.

Probably the most importance piece of evidence substantiating Miles' critical role in the mill's rebuilding is an insurance policy with the Kent County Mutual Insurance Company. The policy covered three buildings owned by Miles—a mill, a house, and a barn—and dates from 13 November 1868. Although the dates of construction for the three buildings are not mentioned in the descriptions that follow, such insurance policies were usually taken out for new or recent buildings, and then renewed annually. The buildings were described as:

> *"A two-story frame mill, 211 feet by 110 feet with an addition 16 feet by 20 feet situated on Cedar Creek and on the road leading from Lincoln to Milton valued at 800 dollars and to be insured for 500 dollars. Owned by the applicant in fee simple and occupied by Stuart and Gates as a flouring grist and saw mill, warmed by a wood stove in the second story, pipes properly secured, ashes thrown clear of the premises, distance to nearest house at least 15 rods. The mill is propelled by water. Contents especially hazardous.*
>
> *The machinery necessary to power two sets of stones and turning lathes, two circular saws and appurtenances valued at 2500 dollars.*
>
> *A two-story frame house, sixteen feet by thirty feet with two additions one ten feet by 14 feet, the other 10 feet by 12 feet situate about fifteen rods from the mill. Now owned by the applicant and occupied by Stuart and Gates as a dwelling. Warmed by stoves and the pipes run directly into the chimney and ashes thrown clear of the premises. Valued at 1500 dollars.*
>
> *A barn 20 feet by 50 feet, situated about fifty feet from the house owned by the applicant and valued at 500 dollars."*

In 1868, Charles M. Miles took out an insurance policy with the Kent County Mutual Insurance Company for three buildings: a two-story mill with valuable mill machinery and circular saws, a two-story miller's house, and a barn. This is the most detailed description yet of the mill buildings at the Cubbage Mill site excavated by GAI Consultants in 1997-1998.

The period between 1863 and 1879 was obviously critical in the history of the Cubbage Mill site. What motivated Barber and Miles to move to sleepy southern Delaware in the 1860s and to buy and operate a mill? What was the agricultural economy in Sussex County like during this corresponding period? What economic factors influenced Miles to invest capital to rebuild this mill in 1868? How did these physical changes to the mill building affect its production capacity, and how did the mill compare with other mills in the area from this period?

Both Barber and Miles were typical of the Northern speculators and capitalists who migrated to Delaware during and after the Civil War. Unlike previous owners of the mill, neither Barber nor Miles were natives of the area. As recounted earlier, Barber was from New York and had worked in Maine and Pennsylvania.

[70] Runk, N.R. 1899 *Ibid, p.933*

[71] Sussex County Deed Book 92, page 279

Charles M. Miles was born in 1822 in Castleton, Vermont. One biographical account claimed that Miles, a millwright, *"traveled from place to place, working at his trade."* [70] In February 1879, Miles and his wife Sarah sold the mill to John DuBois for $2,000, and relocated to Minnesota.[71] The deed of sale notes that DuBois was a resident of Fremont Township in Winona County, Minnesota.

Why was the sale price so low--only half of its purchase price in 1866? The circumstances of Miles' departure are not known. Was he in a hurry to sell the mill? He may also have bartered or exchanged similar property with DuBois, or he may have had to take out a mortgage in the interim. It is not known whether the major improvements undertaken by Miles ever paid off financially for him.

Photo 3.5
Cubbage Mill Miller's House, South View. Photo Dates From ca. 1910-1915.
Credit: Mrs. Mitch (Lottie) Jones, Lincoln, Delaware

From left to right (Photo 3.5) are the miller's house, a summer kitchen/wash house, a corn crib, and a barn. Note that Cubbage Pond Road (Road 214) formerly passed in front of the house; today it passes to the left-hand side.

The basic appearance of the miller's house is unchanged from the early 20th century photograph above. Owner Henry Cofer renovated the house in the 1950s, adding the front and rear porches, the east wing, and altering some windows. He also tore down the outbuildings on the property. As of 1998, the house was still occupied by his widow, Betty Cofer.

Photo 3.6
Cubbage Mill Miller's House, Southwest View.
Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc. January 2001.

The two-story, gable-roofed frame house that stands on a slight rise just north of the Cubbage Mill site was not directly affected by the rebuilding of the Route 214 (Cubbage Pond Road) Bridge. Thus, its building history did not receive the same intensive archeological investigation that the mill site did. It is not known whether a house has always stood on this site or if earlier millers lived elsewhere on the property.

Based on the 1868 insurance policy taken out by Charles M. Miles, it is assumed that Miles built the present miller's house between 1866 and 1868. According to the policy, however, he did not live there; two individuals known only as Stuart and Gates lived in the house and operated the mill. The identity or occupation of these individuals is not known, although they are assumed to be Miles' employees. This early 20th-century photograph shows various associated outbuildings near the house, including a barn and smokehouse, among others. None of these outbuildings are still standing. Thus, the miller's house is the last extant structure associated with mill operations at this historic site.

The house is still in good condition and has been occupied continuously since first built. Mr. Henry Cofer renovated and enlarged the house shortly after he bought it in 1954.

Several economic and social changes occurred in Sussex County and Delaware before, during, and after the Civil War. Agriculture was on the upswing in Sussex County in the late 1840s and 1850s. Farmers *"reorganized and rebuilt the agricultural landscape, reclaiming waste and forest lands, and ditching and draining low swamp lands."* [72] *"Successful farmers enjoyed substantial prosperity, reinvesting their profits in improvements to the farm."* [73]

Although Sussex County's population was overwhelmingly pro-Southern in its sympathies, Delaware remained in the Union, and prospered economically as a result. The woolen mills of New Castle County and the flour and saw mills of Kent and Sussex counties all operated at increased capacity during the Civil War. The end of slavery after the war created some economic dislocations in Sussex County agriculture, making the county ripe for capital investment by Northerners like Barber and Miles.

The extension of railroad lines into Sussex County before and after the war greatly increased the potential profitability of farming in the region. The Delaware Railroad reached Seaford in 1856; the Delaware, Maryland & Virginia Railroad connected Harrington, Milford and Georgetown by 1869, and the Junction & Breakwater Railroad reached Rehoboth in 1878. The railroads *"opened a vast agricultural hinterland with direct access to urban markets,"* [74] such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.

One immediate result of the coming of the railroad was an increase in building activity along the railroad routes themselves. Such Sussex County towns as Lincoln, Ellendale, and Greenwood were established in the 1860s and 1870s as depot towns, with post offices, stores, and factories enjoying direct connections to urban markets.

In 1865, landowner A.S. Small commissioned A.T. Johnson to survey and lay out a town along the proposed route of the Junction & Breakwater Railroad in Sussex County, south of Milford. This town, located about 1½ miles northwest of the Cubbage Mill site, was laid out into 774 building lots.[75] Named Lincoln (presumably after the recently assassinated U.S. president) the town gained a

[72] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia
1993 *Ibid, p.27*

[73] Herman, B.L. and R.J. Siders
1986 *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Contexts.* University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, Newark, Delaware.

[74] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia
1993 *Ibid, p.24*

[75] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid, p.1255*

post office in 1865, and was reached by the railroad in 1867. Lincoln is shown on the 1868 Beers and Pomeroy Atlas (see Figure 3.10).

By 1888, Lincoln had grown to 500 people and contained two churches, three stores, a school, and such industries as canning houses, sawmills, and basket factories. Lincoln's growth during the 1860s and 1870s came at the expense of the much older Cedar Creek Village. Because travel by road or water became less common, the village's lack of rail access became a distinct disadvantage.

The railroad introduced Sussex County farmers to a market economy. Farmers were no longer faced with the vagaries of water and overland travel when shipping their produce. Many farmers successfully experimented with growing fruits and berries—perishable crops that required fast and dependable transportation. For a while, Sussex and Kent counties were among the most important centers of peach cultivation on the East Coast.[76]

Corn remained the staple crop for Sussex County farmers both before and after the Civil War. Production peaked at almost 1.4 million bushels in 1860.[77] Although corn and corn products were less likely than wheat or oats to be shipped by rail, Sussex County corn farmers still benefited from improvements in transportation.

Manufacturing, including milling, also became less parochial. Rail transportation made it easier for millers to transport and sell their product to urban markets, allowing them to convert from custom milling to merchant milling. It is probable that one or more mills in Cedar Creek Hundred converted to merchant milling operations during the 1860s and 1870s. The newly rebuilt and expanded C.M. Miles Mill may have been a merchant mill.

Several factors may have influenced Barber and Miles' decision to expand and improve their gristmill and sawmill. The influx of capital after the Civil War made financing of building improvements more accessible. The advent of rail transportation stimulated the region's agricultural economy (although not located directly on the rail line, Miles' mill was not far from nearby rail stop at Lincoln). Finally, the trend toward merchant milling encouraged Miles to invest in what promised to be a profitable manufacturing enterprise.

[76] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia 1993 *Ibid, pp. 71-72*

[77] DeCunzo, L. and A.M. Garcia 1993 *Ibid, p.83*

URBANIZATION AND EARLY SUBURBANIZATION (1880-1940s)

OWNERS OF THE CUBBAGE MILL PROPERTY (1880-PRESENT)

John Dubois (1879-1881)
Stephen Shockley (1881)
Mark H. Davis and Bevins Cain (1881-1886)
Mark H. Davis (1886-1892)
Frank W. Davis (1892-1908)
Samuel Cubbage (1908-1916)
Ida Cubbage (1916-1921)
William Waples (1921-1928)
Ted Jones (1928-1930)
Joseph Brittingham (1930-1941)
Nancy Brittingham Benson (1941-1951)
Orville Wilson (1951-1954)
Henry and Mary Cofer (1954-Present)

LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING
Delaware business directories listing individual businesses, including gristmills and sawmills, were published with some regularity between the late 1850s and the mid 1950s. Their listings provide important clues to this particular mill's operations under its numerous owners.

The *Delaware State Directory* (1872-1873) was one of the first published after the 1865 founding of Lincoln and, thereafter, the Cubbage Mill property was listed under Lincoln, rather than Cedar Creek. In 1872, it was listed under the ownership of Charles M. Miles (Jenkins and Atkinson 1872: 323-324).

Both the Coulter Gristmill and the Shockley Mill were listed as well, as was a planing mill in Lincoln. Business Directories for 1874-1875 and 1876-1877 list the same information.

This period witnessed both the high point and the eventual demise of the Cubbage Mill. Agriculture in Delaware continued to expand from 1880 to 1920, and corn continued to be the preferred crop grown by Sussex County farmers. The mill, likewise, enjoyed a period of stability under the Davis family ownership between 1881 and 1908. Miller Samuel C. Cubbage bought the mill in 1908, and it was briefly known as the Oakland Roller Mills. The adjoining millpond is still called Cubbage millpond, although the mill passed through several different owners after Cubbage's widow, Ida sold it in 1916. Mill operations suffered during the agricultural depression of the 1930s, and from the national trend away from stone-ground flour. The mill finally ceased operations in the late 1940s, when it was known as Brittingham's Mill. Henry Cofer bought the vacant and deteriorated gristmill, along with the surrounding property, in 1954. Cofer demolished the mill shortly thereafter, ending milling operations at a site continuously occupied since the late 18th century.

The last year in which the US Census conducted a census of individual manufacturers was 1880. John DuBois' *sawmill* was listed, but a DuBois *gristmill* was not (US Census Bureau 1880). In fact, no flourmills in Cedar Creek Hundred were listed in that year's census, possibly because they were too small. Information on the DuBois sawmill indicated that its value was $3,000; it employed two hands working 10-hour days, and produced 100,000 feet of lumber. Wages ranged from 75 cents a day for a laborer, to $1.30/day for a skilled worker. Total wages paid out during the prior year were $150.00. No other sawmills are listed in Cedar Creek Hundred, so it is not known how this compares with other sawmills operating in the area in 1880.

A review of the census also indicates that there were only four feet of fall, or head, at the mill—only enough to drive a breast or undershot wheel. It is possible that the mill had a waterwheel and turbine by this period, or perhaps two turbines. A steam-powered engine was also present at this time, as an alternative power source. In this way, the mill could continue to function during the winter and in times of low water.

The Cubbage Mill property passed through numerous owners during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sorting out these owners and their relationships is often confusing. Equally confusing is determining when and for how long the mill operated as both a gristmill and a sawmill. The mill's power system also changed during this period. Another important research question concerns for how long the mill ground wheat as well as corn.

Three flour mills—those of Joshua Clendaniel, Thomas Coulter, and Elias Stockley (sic)—were listed in the *Peninsula Directory* of 1879-1880. John DuBois is listed as a general merchant, with no further explanation. Did this mean he was a merchant miller? Did he operate a store at the mill? No sawmill under DuBois' name is listed in Lincoln in the directory for that year.

The mill had three different owners in 1881: John DuBois, Stephen Shockley, and Bevins Cain/ Mark H. Davis.

Davis (son of mill-owner John C. Davis [1833-1843] had owned the mill previously between 1856 and 1863, when he sold it to Hiram Barber.

Sometimes, the absence of a listing in business directories can reflect an unsettled period in a business' ownership. The 1881-1882 *Peninsula Directory* offered a detailed description of Lincoln, calling it an *"important station on the Junction & Breakwater railroad"* and claiming it had *"considerable commerce with the surrounding country, which is a rich agricultural district."*[78] Only two mills are listed: Jehu Clendaniel's' and Thomas J. Coulters', both on Cedar Creek; and the Abel Small sawmill in Lincoln proper. In 1881, DuBois sold his mill to Stephen Shockley, who sold it later that year to former owner Mark H. Davis and his business partner Bevins Cain.[79] These two transfers of ownership in 1881 might explain the mill's omission from the business directory that year.

Little biographical information is available on Bevins Cain (Born: 15 June 1851-Died: 28 September 1914). Scharf mentions that he was superintendent of the Lincoln Methodist Church Sunday School in 1888.[80] The 1910 Population Census lists Cain, his wife May (born 1874), and a son Arthur (born 1880) living near Lincoln. In 1886, he sold the mill property to his partner, Mark H. Davis. Bevins Cain is buried in the Lincoln Public Cemetery (Photo 3.7).

[78] N.A.
1882 *Penninsula Directory*, p.183, Wilmington, Delaware

[79] Sussex County Deed Book 95, page 335; and Deed Book 95, page 571.

[80] Scharf, J.T.
1888 *Ibid*, p.1255

Photo 3.7
Gravestone of Bevins Cain (1851-1914), Lincoln Public Cemetery, Lincoln, DE. *Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc.*

Cain owned the Cubbage Mill property in partnership with Mark H. Davis between 1881 and 1886.

The reason for Mark H. Davis' return to the mill he had abandoned in 1863 is not known, but perhaps he purchased it out of a sense of nostalgia for a mill that both he and his father had owned decades earlier. In 1868, he bought a 300-acre farm in Prime Hook Hundred, where he raised peaches. In 1870, he moved to Milford. He purchased additional farms in 1875 and 1876, and eventually owned 11,000 fruit trees.[81]

Davis and his son Frank W. Davis operated fruit evaporating plants in both Lincoln and Milford, and these businesses probably remained the elder Davis' primary business focus. According to an 1882 account: *"Davis is the only Delawarean who evaporates all his own fruit."* By 1888, Davis and his business partner George Draper purchased an 1885-acre farm in Slaughter Neck, where they built their own cannery. According to an 1893 account, *"the former Robert H. Davis evaporating factory near Milford Depot has been leased by Mssrs. Frank and Mark H. Davis and, after having been thoroughly repaired, is now processing peaches."* [82]

Mark H. Davis sold the mill to his son Frank W. Davis in 1892, becoming the third generation of this family to be connected with the mill property.

All of these operations probably kept Davis from having a hand in the day-to-day operations of his mill near Lincoln. Like many Sussex County landowners during this period, he had moved to town, renting out his farmland and hiring laborers to work in his canneries, factories, and mills. Davis and his family lived in an imposing Greek Revival-style house at 117 Walnut Street in Milford.

After 1890, Mark H. Davis brought his son Frank W. Davis (1861-1933) into the flour milling business. On 20 September 1892, he sold the gristmill property on Cedar Creek to his son for $6,000 (Sussex County Deed Book 117, page 82). The Davis Flour Mill in Lincoln is listed in business directories in 1891, 1892, and 1894. At the same time, the M.H. Davis & Son Flour Mill is listed in Milford for those same years, indicating that the elder Davis probably retained his interest in his Milford mill.

By this time, it is most likely that Davis' mill on Cedar Creek no longer functioned as a sawmill, and had reverted completely to gristmill operations. In addition to

[81] Runk, N.R. 1899 *Ibid*, p.1398

[82] Hancock, H.B. 1976 *Ibid*, p.132

producing flour, several oral informants claimed it operated in the late 1890s and early 1900s as a feed mill, grinding local corn for use as cattle and chicken feed.[83]

Most evidence suggests that the Davis mill remained profitable for most of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, small-scale mills nationally were facing enormous technological challenges during this period that eventually spelled their demise by World War II. Nationally, the flour milling industry as a whole was undergoing rapid changes during this period. These changes extended even to relatively remote areas such as rural Sussex County, forcing the closure of the Cubbage Mill by the late 1940s.

What were some of these important changes? The introduction of electrical power in the late 19th century allowed mills to be built away from the traditional sources of water power and closer to transportation centers. Water-powered gristmills, even those whose power was supplemented by electricity or fuel became obsolete. Rail, and then road networks, encouraged building modern, easily accessible mills, instead of retrofitting older, less accessible mills.

Metal roller grinders were introduced in mills in the 1870s and 1880s in modern mills constructed in urban centers, such as Buffalo, New York and in the Midwest. These large-scale mills were by their very nature more efficient, allowing the production of flour in volume and reducing its price. Bigger mills were able to diversify their product line, offering several grades and varieties of flour. Metal rollers produced a finely ground flour preferred by bakers and consumers to the coarser stone-ground flour traditionally produced by gristmills. These mills aggressively marketed the resulting white, bleached flour, thereby creating new popular tastes for this and other 'specialty flours.'' Automation, cheap railroad freight rates, and aggressive marketing conspired to make Midwestern flour cheaper than flour produced just down the road at the local mill.

Some millers tried to catch up, installing roller mills and either gasoline- or electrical-powered turbines. Sometime after 1900, Davis's Mill on Cedar Creek is known to have operated as a roller mill and it is certain that the mill also operated with a turbine. Some rural mills became exclusively feed mills (as was the case at Cubbage Mill), custom grinding poultry feed from local corn for the booming broiler industry in Sussex County.[84] In the long run, however, small mills could not compete against national milling operations. By the early 1900s, the economic need for small-scale mills ended and those that remained simply operated out of force of habit. Gristmilling was no longer a profitable enterprise

[83] Personal Communications
1998 Ernest Fitzgerald, Lincoln Delaware
Albert Ladd, Cedar Creek, Delaware
Harry Wilkins, Lincoln Vicinity

for young, enterprising businessmen. *"Owners of obsolete mills died, and the next generation was unwilling to carry on."*[85] Not all mills were hit by these trends at the same time, and some even appeared to prosper into the first few decades of the 1900s. But the handwriting was on the wall. Today, the Hearns & Rawlins Mill in Seaford is the only flour mill still operating in Delaware.

Agriculture, in general, entered a slow decline throughout Delaware during this time period, although its decline was both less noticeable and more extended in Sussex County. Both the number of farms and the total farm acreage declined in Sussex County beginning in 1910. Farm values also declined during this period, decreasing by 20% between 1920 and 1930.[86] Agriculture continued to become more diversified, and included fruit, vegetables, and even dairy products. The broiler industry, developed in Sussex County in the 1920s, provided much-needed income for farmers, while sustaining demand for mill-ground poultry feed.

It was against this background, that Frank W. Davis sold the mill and property to miller Samuel Cubbage in 1908 (Sussex County Deed Book 165, page 268). Cubbage apparently had previously tried his hand at farming. In the 1908-1909 *Polk Directory* for Milford, he was listed as *"S.C. Cubbage & Son: Samuel C. and Walter F., Farmers, Fruit Growers, and Poultry Keepers, Lincoln Road, 2 Miles to Milford."*

Although Cubbage (Born: 14 June 1859-Died: 14 February 1917) and later, his widow Ida (Born: 13 December 1868-Died: 21 October 1930) only owned the mill between 1908 and 1921, his name is still associated with both the adjoining millpond and Cubbage Mill Road. Cubbage was listed as the proprietor of the Oakland Roller Mills in the 1913 *Delaware Farmer's Directory*. Cubbage and his wife are buried in the Lincoln Public Cemetery (Photo 3.8).

Photo 3.8
Gravestones of Samuel Cubbage and Wife Ida Cubbage, Lincoln Public Cemetery, Lincoln, DE.
Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc., 2001

[84] Hunter Research 2000 *Pike Creek Industry and Farmer along a Northern Delaware River*, p.4.10

[85] Hunter Research 2000 *Ibid*, p.3.5

[86] DeCunzo, L. and W.P. Catts 1993 *Ibid*, pp.120, 130

During Cubbage's ownership, the mill was known as Oakland Roller Mills. A remarkable photograph taken of the mill during this period shows the mill building painted with the letters *"S.C. Cubbage, Oakland Roller Mills"* on two sides (Photo 3.9).

Photo 3.9
Oakland Roller Mills of Samuel Cubbage, Looking Southeast. Photo ca. 1910-1915.
Credit: Mrs. Mitch (Lottie) Jones, Lincoln, DE.

This invaluable photograph is the clearest and most detailed known of the Cubbage Mill. Although the mill is called Cubbage Mill throughout this text, Samuel Cubbage (and later his widow Ida) only owned it between 1908 and 1921. Thus, this photograph most probably dates from ca. 1910-1915, judging by the style of the three people's clothing. The woman in the photograph is presumably Ida Cubbage; the man standing next to her may be Sam Cubbage. The Cubbage Mill appears to be in excellent condition and well maintained. It probably had not been changed on the exterior since the ca. 1868 rebuilding undertaken by Charles M. Miles. Photographs of the interior from this period do not survive, but it was probably similar to some other mills in the area still standing (e.g., Abbott's Mills northwest of Milford), although Cubbage Mill probably contained a turbine and rollers. This photograph is the property of Lottie Jones, widow of one of the last operators of the mill, Mitch Jones.

Photo 3.10
Cedar Creek Mill, Cedar Creek, DE. Looking Northeast
Credit: GAI Consultants, Inc., January 2001.

Like Cubbage Mill, Cedar Creek Mill has had several names: Draper's Mill, Haslet's Mill, Shockley's Mill, Coulter's Mill, and finally Cedar Creek Mill. A comparison with the preceding photograph of Cubbage Mill clearly illustrates their similarities. Because the Cedar Creek Mill property historically adjoined that of Cubbage Mill, their land histories have been closely intertwined over the years. For example, Lemuel Shockley owned both Cubbage Mill (1825-1833) and Cedar Creek Mill (1833-1838). Although no longer active, the Cedar Creek Mill is the only surviving mill building of the four mills that once stood along Cedar Creek. It also is the only standing historic building in the now-vanished community of Cedar Creek Village. The one-story shed addition (right of building) houses the mill's turbine.

W. Edgar Waples owned and operated the gristmill between 1921 and 1928. He also ran a blacksmith shop and a small general store on the property.

In 1921, W. Edgar Waples (born 1867), a blacksmith from Georgetown, bought the Cubbage Mill property for $4,500.[87] Two of Waples' granddaughters, Jane Waples. Serio and Mary Waples Carroll, still reside in Delaware and retain vivid recollections of their grandfather and his mill.

Jane Waples Serio was born in 1921, only a few months after her grandfather had purchased the Cubbage Mill. Her father, George Richard Waples, died in 1923 and his widow, Mary, moved with her three daughters to a house across from the miller's house. They later resided in Lincoln. Mrs. Serio still lives across the road from the miller's house, although in a different dwelling.

Mrs. Serio remembers the mill only operating as a gristmill (not as a sawmill), and that it ground both locally grown wheat and corn. According to her, the mill ran year-round, although spring and summer were the busiest seasons. She claims that the mill was always water-powered (the surrounding farms did not acquire electricity until 1946 or 1947), and that it had one of the few undershot water wheels in the county. This is an interesting statement since, by that time, the mill almost certainly would have been powered by a turbine. We also know from the 1880 Manufacturing Census that the mill was, at times, also powered by steam, and later, likely by a gas engine.

[87] Sussex County Deed Book 225, page 423

Photo 3.11
View of Cubbage Mill, circa 1930s
Credit: Tom Brewer

This undated and rather enigmatic photograph shows the Cubbage Mill building in a clearly deteriorated state, compared with the photograph taken during Samuel Cubbage's ownership. For example, the shed-roofed ell on the right (which houses the mill's water power system) appears to have been damaged. The boats in the foreground are a reminder that owners Edgar Waples and Joseph Brittingham supplemented their incomes by renting out small cottages on Cubbage Pond to summer visitors from Wilmington and Philadelphia. Lottie Jones remembers that she and sister-in-law Nancy Jones Brittingham would cook hot meals for the renters, while their husbands would organize boat rides for the renters' children.

According to another grandaughter, Mary Waples Carroll of Dover, relations among the three mill owners along Cedar Creek were cordial. If one miller had to raise or lower the water level of his pond, he always notified the other owners. She said there was little competition among the owners, as there was enough business to keep everyone busy.

In addition to operating the gristmill, Edgar Waples ran a general store connected with the mill. This store was located a few feet to the northwest of the mill; only the concrete platform remains of this little one-story frame building (Photo 3.12). According to Jane, her grandfather sold cornmeal and flour, as well as staples, canned goods, bread, a few farm supplies, and fresh vegetables from his garden. Mary indicated that the store also sold fishing supplies. The only other general stores in the area operated in Lincoln and near the Cedar Creek Mill. According to both women, the store was never profitable, due to its isolated site.

Photo 3.12
General Store at Cubbage Mill, near Lincoln, DE (Photograph ca. 1950).
Credit: Mrs. Henry (Betty) Cofer, Lincoln, DE.

This small frame building dated from the early 1920s and served as a general store for the immediate community around Cubbage Mill. Mary Waples Carroll, granddaughter of owner Edgar Waples, remembers the store sold a few staples like bread and milk, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables in the summer time. According to her, the store was never profitable and closed in the 1930s. Later, the building's interior was fitted with bunk beds and occupied by summer renters at Cubbage millpond. The building was torn down in the 1950s. Only a portion of the cement platform (seen in this photograph as the front porch) is visible today.

Edgar Waples also operated a blacksmith shop in a one-story frame building located along a former road to the southeast of the house. The building has since been moved to the east of the miller's house and is now used as a garage.

Jane and Mary Waples and their friends often played around the mill and swam in the millpond. According to them, the construction of a new bridge over the milldam in the late 1920s and again in the 1930s adversely affected the pond's water quality, and the pond became much dirtier as a result.

The land on the west side of Route 214, adjacent to the mill pond, was once a fruit orchard, and Waples harvested and sold his fruit at the Waples Mill General Store in the late summer and early fall. In the early 1930s, he tore out the fruit trees and built small summer cottages and boathouses along the Cubbage Pond shoreline. As mentioned above, these were rented to vacationers from Wilmington and Philadelphia during the summer. He also rented boats to these visitors for a dollar a day.

Photo 3.13
The Brittinghams and Joneses, Mid 1940s.
Credit: Mrs. Mitch (Lottie) Jones, Lincoln, DE.

From right to left, Mitch Jones, his sister Nancy Jones Brittingham, and his son Burke Jones. Mitch Jones took over operation of the mill in 1930 from his brother Ted. He continued to operate the mill until the mid 1940s, while it was owned by his sister Nancy and her husband, Joseph Brittingham.

In September 1928, Edgar Waples sold the mill property for $2,000 to Theodore Jones, who had married his daughter Mary Waples in 1926.[88] Jones reputedly ran into financial difficulties soon afterward, and deserted his family and his milling business. Operation of the mill was taken over by Theodore Jones' brother (George W.) Mitch Jones (1911-1971).

On 10 April 1930, Joseph and Nancy Brittingham bought the former Cubbage Mill property at a sheriff's sale for $2,800.[89] Nancy Brittingham was Mitch Jones' sister and they hired Jones to operate the mill (Photo 3.13).

Mitch Jones' widow Lottie Jones (born 1919) still resides in Lincoln. She remembers that Ted Jones built a bridge over the milldam at his own expense in 1929 to replace the previous wooden bridge. Her husband operated the mill throughout the 1930s and 1940s for the Brittinghams. Both she and Nancy Brittingham continued the practice of cooking meals for the summer visitors who stayed in the cottages on Cubbage Millpond.

[88] Sussex County Deed Book 271, page 173

[89] Sussex County Deed Book 280, page 135

Photos 3.14 and 3.15
Interior Views of the Cubbage (Brittingham) Mill. Photographs ca. 1951.
Credit: Delaware State Archives: Hall of Records, Dover, DE.

These photographs date from ca. 1951, when the mill was known as Joseph Brittingham's Mill. Photo 3.14 shows the water turbine and flume for the gristmill.

Photo 3.15 shows the hopper and wooden case containing the millstones. Because the Cubbage Mill is thought to have been a roller mill during this part of its history, it is uncertain whether the grinding stones were still functioning at this date.

Photo 3.14
Water Turbine and Flume

Photo 3.15.
Millstone Case and Hopper

On 31 March 1951, Marshall and Nancy Brittingham Benson sold the mill property to Orville Wilson of Milford. Local residents interviewed for this project claim that the mill had ceased operation and that the Wilsons allowed the mill to deteriorate further.

The last owners of the mill, Henry and Betty Cofer of Delaware City, bought the mill property from the Wilsons on 15 July 1954 (Sussex County Deed Book 435, page 462). By then, the abandoned mill had become a fire and safety hazard and Cofer demolished it shortly after the sale. He also demolished the deteriorated 19th-century outbuildings surrounding the miller's house, as well as Waples'

general store building. He remodeled the miller's house, adding porches and a wing on the east, as well as a garage building. The house is the sole remaining building associated with milling operations at this site and is still occupied by his widow Betty Cofer.

Photo 3.16 (left) and Photo 3.17 (below)
The Waning Years of the Cubbage Mill. Photographs Dated Late 1940s or Early 1950s.
Credit: Photo 3.16-Tom Brewer; Photo 3.17-Mrs. Henry (Betty) Cofer, Lincoln, DE.

The effects of the Great Depression, a string of owners, and a decline in the general agricultural economy are clearly seen in these two views of the mill, both taken sometime around 1950. The empty mill building is in imminent danger of collapse.

CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can be drawn from this long progression of names and dates, production figures, census schedules, and court cases? As one historian observed: *"The real meaning of numbers rides on the individual lives they describe."*[90] In the end, these numbers can only hint at the mill owners' lives, as they struggled (sometimes successfully, sometimes not) to provide a necessary service to their neighbors and a living for themselves and their family.

The Chain-of-Title provided with this history gives a thumbnail chronology of the Cubbage Mill site's ownership for the last 300 years. Here are some of the highlights:

18TH CENTURY

The recorded history of this site began in 1700, when William Penn patented 400 acres to William Fisher. Later owner John Draper built a gristmill/sawmill at the Cubbage Mill site between 1776 and his death in 1784.

Eighteenth-century millers typically earned a steady income from their mills. There could be bad years, however, and John Draper's son William endured financial hardship following a catastrophic flood that destroyed the mill and dam in 1799. We learn much about his repairs to the mill carried out in 1800-1802 from contemporary court records. From them we also gain an unintended window into the bitterly divided and mutually distrustful Draper family.

19TH CENTURY

Owner Lemuel Shockley was an enterprising businessman who bought several area mills during the first quarter of the new century. He kept the former Draper mill in his own family by selling it to son-in-law John C. Davis in 1833, whose heirs held it until 1863. In that year it was bought by Hiram Barber, a Northern capitalist with a background in saw milling. Fellow Northerner Charles Miles bought the mill in 1866. Miles revolutionized milling operations at the site, and built or rebuilt the gristmill and sawmill, as well as the miller's house.

By the time Miles sold it in 1879, small local gristmills were beginning to lose out to the modern roller mills of the Midwest and North. Local businessman Mark H.

[90] Herman, Bernard L. 1987 *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware 1700-1900*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, TN.

Davis acquired the mill in 1886, and sold it to his son Frank W. Davis, the last of this family to own the mill, in 1892.

20TH CENTURY

By the early 20th century, the handwriting was on the wall for small-time millers such as Samuel C. Cubbage, who bought the mill in 1908. He inaugurated a string of short-term-owners of the property. The picturesque Cubbage gristmill slowly deteriorated after the 1920s, joining other rural Delaware gristmills that expired before and after World War II. Although demolished in 1954, the cycles of building and rebuilding at this site have created a rich archeological layer, documenting the varied history of human settlement at Cubbage Pond.

Photo 3.18
Millstone, Cubbage Mill

Credit: Mrs. Henry (Betty) Cofer, Lincoln, DE

This millstone is one of the few remaining artifacts left from the Cubbage Mill. According to Betty Cofer, widow of the last owner (Henry Cofer), the stone was retrieved by Cofer from the Cubbage Millpond around 1953. The millstone is still on the grounds of the miller's house, and is an example of a "four-quarter" dress millstone (divided into 10 sections called "harps."