



Appendix F: Archaeology

Appendix - Archaeology Summary

In 1838, Samuel Clark Veirs constructed a mill on Rock Creek along the south side of the one-lane Rockville Turnpike (today's Veirs Mill Road). By 1927, the mill was no longer operational, and a 1937 *State Roads Commission* plat indicated only a "stone foundation of Veirs Mill."

The former mill site was somewhere within the present-day Rock Creek Stream Valley Park. Historic maps place the mill east of the turnpike's intersection with a northerly road, no longer in existence, that traversed the current parkland. Investigation into the location of the mill structure was undertaken as part of the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan, including documentary research and field testing.

Review of background research did not provide a clear indication of the original location of the Veirs Mill or nearby structures. Historic files referenced include: 1865 Martenet and Bond; 1878 Hopkins; 1908, 1923 and 1944 United States Geological Survey quadrangles; and aerials from 1951, 1970, 1979, 1993, 1994, 2008, and 2012; as well as Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) as-built plans from 1953 and 1970.

While the structure is known to have been located somewhere near the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Aspen Hill Road, there is significant discrepancy about the exact location. The alignment and width of both Veirs Mill Road and Aspen Hill Road, as well as the watercourse of Rock Creek, have all been altered over the last century, making comparisons of historic and present-day locations approximate.

As noted in SHA's correspondence with the Maryland Historical Trust in 2002, "...It is not possible to determine with precision what, if any, changes have occurred in the actual alignments of each road though time." In addition, both natural and cultural forces have modified Rock Creek, including the construction of the mill race which appears to have obscured the depiction of the course of Rock Creek on some historic maps.

Due to these discrepancies, historic maps show conflicting locations of Veirs Mill in relation to the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Aspen Hill Road. It is variously shown at the intersection of the two roads, or slightly northwest or slightly southeast of it. A 1934 *State Roads* plat shows one foundation labeled "stone foundation of Veirs Mill" approximately 200 feet northwest of the intersection with Aspen Hill Road, although the exact location is difficult to determine given the modifications to both roadways and the sparse information on the plat.

Review of aerials shows the parkland south of Veirs Mill Road remained largely forested, except for a clearing shown in 1951 just southeast of where Rock Creek passes under Veirs Mill Road and is a potential location for the mill. The 1994 aerial shows construction activity immediately adjacent to Veirs Mill Road along the south side. By 2012, a hiker-biker bridge over Veirs Mill Road was constructed in almost the same area

as the 1994 work. The Facility Plan documents for the bridge, and personal communications with Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission staff associated with the bridge project indicate that the mill location was believed to be known and was considered during the design of the bridge to avoid any impacts. Parks staff indicated the location was on Park land to the west of the road intersection with Aspen Hill Road, closer to where Rock Creek passes under Veirs Mill Road.

The Montgomery Parks archaeologist identified the location as being outside the area impacted by the preferred alternative for the bridge, specifically 100 feet west of Alternative 3 and southeast of where Rock Creek meets Veirs Mill Road.

Montgomery Parks staff conducted a field visit on May 9, 2017 to determine the potential for archaeological resources to be present on Park land outside of the road and bridge construction corridors. Six judgmentally placed Soil Test Pits (STP) were excavated – four were placed south of the bridge, between it and the U-shaped watercourse off Rock Creek, potentially a mill race.

STPs 1-4 showed the soils to be free of modern disturbances related to road or bridge construction and in areas that are currently wooded. Artifacts recovered from these STPs include: a brick fragment, two unidentified metal fragments, and a nail, possibly machine-cut. Significant charcoal fragments were encountered at 1.4 feet below the surface in STP1. Given the intact condition of soils in this area, there is potential for archaeological resources to be present south of the pedestrian bridge, outside the limits of disturbance for bridge construction.

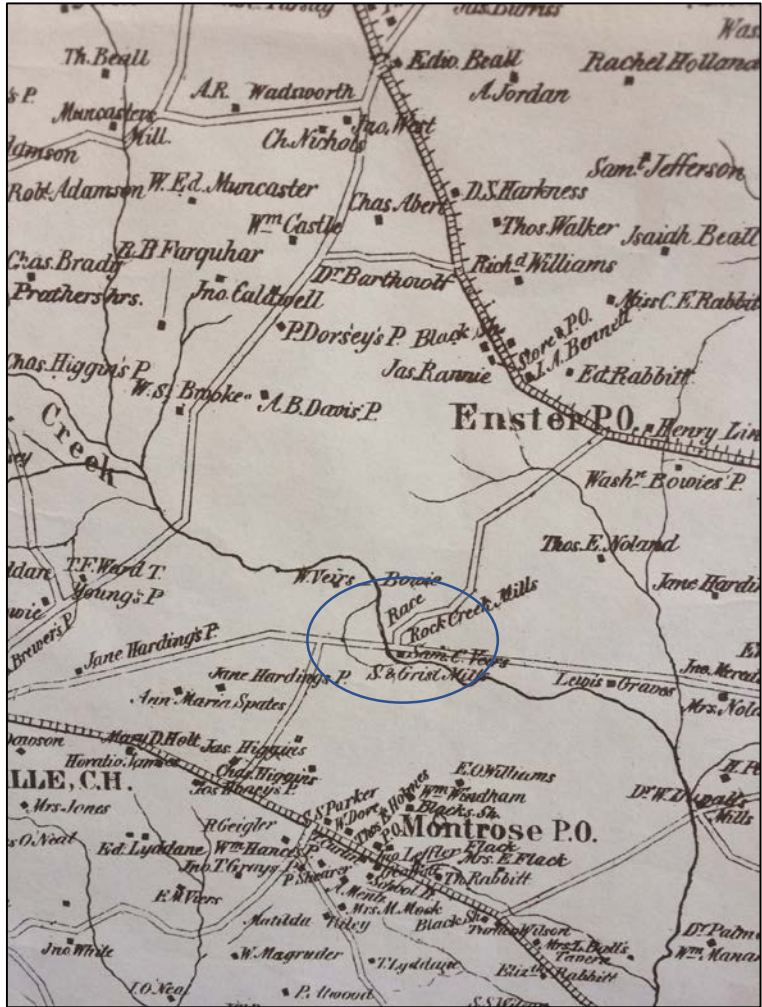
Two additional STPs (5 and 6) were excavated further northwest, on a rise of land closer to the Rock Creek crossing at Veirs Mill Road. The landscape in this area appears to have been modified and could be remnants of a mill race and building locations, as well as 20th century access road construction further west. Concrete rubble, asphalt, and recent trash – bottles, beer cans, plastic tarps – were present on the surface. Both STPs encountered destruction debris and neither were excavated to sterile subsoil due to the amount of rubble. The few artifacts recovered from these two STPs included brick, mortar, corroded nails, and miscellaneous metal fragments that appear to date from the 20th century.

As sterile soil was not encountered, it is possible that deposits from earlier time periods are located below this destruction layer, and one of these could be the location of the 19th century structure shown on historic maps. The mill location mentioned in the Facility Plan is near STPs 5 and 6, and there is potential for archaeological resources to be present in those areas.

Montgomery Parks staff conducted two other site visits on February 16 and 21, 2018 to assess the location of the stone foundation location shown on the State Roads map and verify the locations mentioned in the Facility Plan, both recently discovered.

Staff estimated that the foundation location shown on the plat lies within the area previously disturbed by road improvements and by the bridge construction. If the mill building was at this location, the road improvements and bridge construction would have erased its presence and it is unlikely any archaeological resources remain in this area.

Given the ambiguous results, it is possible the foundation of the Veirs Mill site, an associated building, or archaeological deposits associated with either structure are still present on Park land and outside of the Area of Potential Effects for previous projects. A systematic sub-surface survey is recommended if any ground-disturbing project occurs in these areas.



1865 Martenet and Bond Map of Montgomery County



1878 GM Hopkins Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, including the County of Montgomery, Maryland.



*2004 aerial showing construction activity along south side of Veirs Mill Road (MD 586)
http://gis3.montgomerycountymd.gov/historical_images/*



*Areas tested by soil test pits and potential locations for mill structure
2015 aerial, http://gis3.montgomerycountymd.gov/historical_images/*