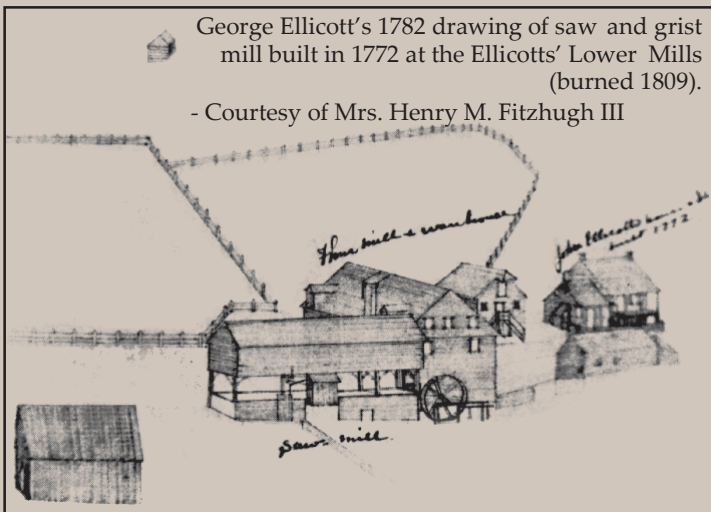


ELLICOTT'S MILLS

1772 - 1844



George Ellicott's 1782 drawing of saw and grist mill built in 1772 at the Ellicotts' Lower Mills (burned 1809).
- Courtesy of Mrs. Henry M. Fitzhugh III

In 1772, Joseph, John and Andrew Ellicott, Quakers from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, floated milling equipment down the Chesapeake Bay and up the Patapsco River to Elkridge Landing. After cutting a six-mile wilderness road up river, the Ellicotts developed a saw mill, a granite quarry, a grist mill, farms and a small village.

Their mills and homes were nestled at the bottom of a steep rocky canyon called "The Hollow." Naturally unspoiled, it was surrounded with thick old growth forests. Below, on the valley floor, the Falls of the Patapsco provided unlimited power to turn mill wheels.

In 1774, Ellicott's Mills, with dam, millrace and village for workers, was ready for grinding wheat and other grains in the heart of tobacco growing country.

For 85 years, tobacco had been the king crop. The Ellicotts encouraged a change to wheat and grains but were considered "dreamers and half-hearted fools" by the planters. The brothers, however, did not force their new farming ideas. They knew that tobacco was depleting the soil. Through their own farms they demonstrated the economic value of growing grains. Eventually the Ellicotts brought about an agricultural revolution as area planters and farmers switched over to wheat and grains.

In 1779, wheat production increased and the Ellicotts began shipping flour to foreign markets. They prospered and started other enterprises, such as the Avalon Iron and Nail Works here on this site. They perfected inventions such as the wagon brake, a harbor dredge and more efficient milling machinery. To get crops to their mills they developed a road system; we now call it the Baltimore National Pike.

In 1844, the Ellicotts sold their mills.



Ellicott's Chesapeake Mill of 1835
Painting by John R. Sword, 1970

The Ellicott brothers and their descendants were more than millers. Through their skills, foresight and perseverance, they demonstrated the potential of the Patapsco River Valley as an industrial center. They brought needed changes to agriculture, developed a system of roads, founded what has become Ellicott City and advanced the Industrial Revolution through new inventions. Their success brought prosperity and notoriety to Maryland and to the Patapsco River Valley.

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Ellicott's Mills, 1859