

BA-144, Thistle Manufacturing Company,
1824.
Ellicott City vicinity, Ilchester area, private access.
Capsule Summary, page 1.

This document updates the existing Inventory form; a new
statement of significance is offered.

Significance:

The Thistle factory is one of only two mills still operating in the Patapsco valley, and is the only one in which portions of the original building survive. Alexander Fridge and William Morris, two Baltimore businessmen, bought the site for the Thistle factory from the Ellicott family in 1823. The Ellicotts had been compelled to sell some of their vast holdings along the Patapsco to settle debts, though they retained enough control to stipulate that Fridge and Morris not build a flour mill on the site. The two investors concurred, and began construction of a cotton textile mill the next year. This was the third such facility in the Patapsco Valley, and it began operations in 1825. Fridge withdrew from the partnership while the Thistle mill was under construction, and sold his half share to George Morris of Philadelphia. The Thistle Manufacturing Company was incorporated by the General Assembly in 1834, though the name is documented in a road survey to the factory a decade

— BA-144, Thistle Manufacturing Company,
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Capsule Summary, page 2.

earlier. The Thistle Factory possessed a greater capacity for fabric production than the two other nearby textile mills, a circumstance which suggests that it may have been intended to supply the Baltimore shipyards with cotton duck, then just proving to be an important domestic alternative to imported sail cloth. Further research here may be enlightening.

— With the later industrial operations at Ilchester and along Bonnie Branch, the Thistle Mill was part of a thriving factory community in the mid-nineteenth century. Of three large mills, however, the Thistle alone survived into the twentieth century, and at that only after falling into receivership in the early 1890s. The Thistle changed production to weave automobile tire bands in the early 1920s, though consolidations in that growing industry probably put the mill out of business; it was sold to a Baltimore pasteboard box manufacturer, the Bartgis Brothers, in 1928. Bartgis operated through the Depression, and sold the facility in 1957 to another cardboard manufacturer. It is now the site of Simpkins Industries, — producing materials from recycled paper.

Inventory Number BA-144

Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County

Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan

Statewide Historic Contexts

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological Development/Periods:

10) Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870

11) Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930

Historic Period Themes:

2) Community Planning

3) Economic

8) Transportation

Resource Type:

Category: Site (Buildings and Ruins)

Historic Environment: Village

Historic Functions and Uses: Cotton Mill, Residences, ancillary structures.

Known Design Sources: None

Inventory Number BA-144

Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Statement of Significance, Updated.

8.1

The Thistle factory is one of only two mills still operating in the Patapsco valley, and is the only one in which portions of the original building survive. Originally a cotton textile factory, established in 1824, the Thistle mill was the third such operation to open in the Patapsco valley in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, after the Union and Patapsco Manufacturing Companies. The origins of the Thistle mill lie in the conjunction of two significant factors. First is the forced break-up of the Ellicott family domination of property interests in the valley, and second is the ready availability of alternative investment capital for industrial development. Enjoined from flour production, Alexander Fridge and William Morris sought to enter another profitable industry developing in early-nineteenth century America, cotton textile production. Of particular importance is the growth of Baltimore as a center for ship building, and the growing use at this same time of domestic cotton duck cloth for sails over imported materials, usually woven from hemp. The regional development largely undertaken by the Ellicotts, and further promoted by population growth in the valley, also made additional local investments in industry attractive, as did public support for connecting roads to the turnpike system. That Alexander Fridge was later to serve on the first Board of Directors for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which was to pass by the Thistle factory on the opposite side of the river, is not a coincidence; an existing county road bridge easily linked the factory complex with the new railroad (Dilts, p. 406). The prosperity, indeed survival, of Baltimore and its regional industries required a reliable and efficient transportation network. Investors like Fridge made this possible.

The long-lived, though substantially altered, Thistle facility also demonstrates the advances and reversals of industry: the substitution of steam for water power, and the subsequent substitution of electric power for steam and water. Similarly the transformation of factory production from cotton fabrics to automobile tire bands represents an attempt to abandon an enterprise no longer competitive in the contemporary market (demand for sailcloth, for example, collapsed with refinements in steam power), and to tap into a new and extraordinarily fast-growing industry in the 1920s, automobiles. The transfer to paper products was probably the result of the consolidation of facilities for tire production, as well as the natural limitations of space imposed by the site. Pasteboard operations with potentially harmful environmental consequences could more easily take place in a region less densely populated than Baltimore

Inventory Number BA-144

Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Statement of Significance, Updated.

8.2

City, where the paper manufacturer had originally been located, though increasingly environmental concerns followed the Bartgis Company and its successors to the site (McGrain, *Molinography*, and Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Room, Vertical File, Patapsco River). Recycled paperboard is now the product of the mill.

The Thistle mill occupies land which members of the Ellicott family acquired in various tracts at the end of the eighteenth century. These parcels the second generation of Ellicotts--Jonathan (1756-1826), Elias (1759-1827), George (1760-1832), and John (1769-1820)--had resurveyed in the spring of 1802 and patented in February 1805 as Ilchester (Ann Arundel Patented Certificate 779). At John Ellicott's death in 1820, court orders to dispose of his property to satisfy creditors met with limited success, except in the case of two tracts on the east side of the Patapsco River, just below Edward Gray's Patapsco Cotton Factory (Dorsey v. Ellicott, Baltimore City Circuit Court Equity Papers). For the benefit of the estate, Thomas Ellicott (1777-1859) sold on 27 February 1822 a 29.5-acre parcel next to an undeveloped mill seat--that is, a site for a mill--to Alexander Fridge and William Morris, two wealthy Baltimore businessmen (Baltimore WG 165/235). The estate's trustees then sold the adjacent 68-acre parcel containing the mill seat to Fridge and Morris on 10 September, 1823 (Baltimore 169/29).

The Ellicott family controlled substantial sections of the Patapsco valley's water power, and this property sale marked the beginning of a significant loosening of their grip on water resources and land in the valley. Nevertheless, the conveyance did not take place without restriction, and the legal instruments associated with the sale provide a clear picture of the physical environment at the time and the reciprocal obligations of the Ellicotts and the new owners. The deed for the 68-acre portion of the mill seat, recording a sale price of 9000 dollars, clearly indicates that development was planned; it included all land that "may or shall be covered with water in consequence of a dam being erected across the falls." Indeed construction was already underway, as a road for common use to be laid out across the property, was to run up the Patapsco river "keeping near the water but to be so located as not to interfere with the Mill race or canal already made by [Fridge and Morris] on the aforesaid land nor with any situations requisite for a principal building." Furthermore, the road could be

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Statement of Significance, Updated.

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continued upriver to Edward Gray's Patapsco Cotton Factory, and an additional route east was "to be made up Dyers Whim Branch to the Baltimore and Frederick Town Turnpike Road, to intersect at some convenient point near the eight milestone." The Ellicotts agreed to pay for half of the road construction and maintenance provided that "the part to be leveled and prepared for use shall be only sixteen feet wide and constituted of earth in the manner of our ordinary County roads." Fridge and Morris petitioned the Levy Court of Baltimore County the following summer for a public road to run from the turnpike to their factory, designated the Thistle mill. A note with the returned plat dated 7 August 1824, assured the court that "it is a well executed Road, and in better Condition for traveling than any common County Road with which we are acquainted" (Fridge/Morris petition, Baltimore County Court, Land Commission Papers). The route to their factory opened the following spring, in 1825 (*Baltimore American*, 30 November 1824).

The Ellicotts also sought to ensure their own regional dominance in the flour trade, and carefully specified in the deed of sale that the mill Fridge and Morris were to open could "not be applied to or for the purposes of grinding wheat, rye or indian corn, unless the grain so to be ground shall be purchased in the City of Baltimore, but may be applied to any other uses or purposes whatsoever. . . ." The Ellicott family also stipulated that if it sought to develop the next lower mill seat in Ann Arundel County, the site of the old Dismal Mill, that the same restrictions would be in force. Fridge and Morris likewise sought assurances from the Ellicotts that should another adjacent parcel in Baltimore County be developed, only a factory "for the manufacture of gunpowder and the necessary" workers' housing would be constructed. In addition, "no house, store, or shop for the retailing of spiritous Liquors shall at any time be erected on said last mentioned parcel of land." No powder factory is known to have been built on the site.

Alexander Fridge sold his half share in the site and improvements in the late summer of 1824 to his Baltimore business partner William Morris and to George Morris of Philadelphia for 25,000 dollars (Baltimore 172/144). The Morrises dedicated their factory to the production of cotton textiles, and according to Jared Sparks, writing in the *North American Review* in January 1825, the operations were "in rapid improvement." A single factory house contained 1000 operating spindles, 100 power looms, and 100 employees (Sparks, 128). The

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Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Statement of Significance, Updated.

8.4

General Assembly of Maryland incorporated the Thistle Manufacturing Company during the December session of 1834, and the Morrises conveyed ownership to the corporation the following year (Baltimore 260/22).

Beyond these initial deeds, no documents yet uncovered detail the construction of the Thistle Mill village. However, two stone double dwellings for laborers, each with two stories under a low-pitched gable roof, gable end chimneys, and entries on the long axis survive. An aerial photograph of the complex, published in 1952, shows at least five other dwellings of apparently identical materials and configurations, in addition to a larger gable-roofed structure built into the hillside across from the entry to the former main factory building ("Bartgis"). This last was identified in 1929 as the company's general store and lunch room ("Old Thistle," p. 40). The apparent consanguinity of these structures with the main factory building--also constructed of stone--suggests contemporary construction dates. Indeed, as the first development at Ilchester in the nineteenth century, the Thistle operations would likely also have required additional facilities to house and support laborers. Construction in stone also suggests the further influence of the Ellicott family on the project--unwritten, this time; the Ellicotts owned a granite stone quarry at Cooper's Branch, on the Frederick Road, less than two miles west of the Thistle site.

The Thistle company operated throughout the nineteenth century, buying the Ilchester Flour mill site in 1882, but went into receivership a decade later (Howard 44/650; and 58/203). Thistle Mills of Baltimore continued to operate the factory, and in 1925, switched from water and steam power to electric motors (*Power Pictorial* [of the Consolidated Gas, Electric Light, and Power Company of Baltimore] 1 (1925) 5: 22). In a bid to remain competitive in a new market, the Thistle mill switched product lines to the weaving of automobile tire bands in the early 1920s (Bond, p. 81). Nevertheless, a year before the stock market crash, the Thistle Cotton Mills divested the entirety of its operations, including the dam, store, mill, houses, tenements, water rights, and trademarks, to the Bartgis Brothers firm of Baltimore (Howard 134/515). Bartgis moved from the city, undertaking a thorough renovation of the facility from October 1928 to August 1929, and reopened the factory to produce pasteboard box material and finished boxes ("Old Thistle," p. 40). The New Haven Board and Carton Company purchased the mill in 1957, and it is now the site of Simpkins Industries, producing materials from recycled paper.

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Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Bibliographic References, Updated.

9.1

Deeds as indicated in the text.

Baltimore County Patented Certificate 245, 14 July 1796 [warrant for resurvey issued in 1794], "Addition to the Quarry," granted to Benjamin Ellicott (1761-1838), Maryland State Archives.

"Bartgis Brothers Co., The " *Baltimore Magazine*, (March 1952). [Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, Vertical File, Bartgis]

Bond, Allen K. *Guide to Baltimore and Environs* (Baltimore: The Norman Remington Company) 1926, p. 81.

Dilts, James D. *The Great Road: the Building of the Baltimore and Ohio, the Nation's First Railroad, 1828-1853*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Dorsey v. Ellicott, Baltimore City Circuit Court Equity Papers, Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, MSA C186-3, MdHR 40,191-2-1/10, loc 3/3/14/21.

Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Room, Vertical File, Patapsco River.

"Mr. Fridge, Mr. Morris . . . Petition to lay out a road from Thistle Factory to Baltimore and Frederick town turnpike," 5 August 1823; Baltimore County Court, Land Commission Papers, Plat; Maryland State Archives, MSA C 349-11; MdHR 1-112-1/2; loc. 2/16/7/25.

McGrain, John W. *Molinography in Maryland Series*, Baltimore County notebook. Maryland State Archives, Special Collections, MSA SC 4300, loc 02/04/14.

"Old Thistle Mills Awake With a New Line." *Baltimore Magazine*, (September 1929): 40. [Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Department, Vertical File, Bartgis]

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Bibliographic References, Updated.

9.2

Power Pictorial [of the Consolidated Gas, Electric Light, and Power Company of
Baltimore] 1 (1925) 5: 22

Sparks, Jared. *North American Review* 20 (Jan 1825): 128.

Varle, Charles. *A Complete View of Baltimore*, (Baltimore: Samuel Young) 1833,
pp. 100, 112.

Weems, John C., advertisement, *Baltimore American*, 30 November 1824, col. 15.

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Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Preparation of updated Significance, Bibliography, and Images.
11.1

By:

Henry K. Sharp

(no organizational affiliation)

100 South Street West

Charlottesville, VA

22902

804/295-0140

30 October 1998

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Thistle Manufacturing Company, Baltimore County
Ellicott City Vicinity, Ilchester area

Updated Archive Images .1

"Bartgis Brothers Co., The " *Baltimore Magazine*, (March 1952). [Enoch Pratt Free
Library, Maryland Department, Vertical File, Bartgis]

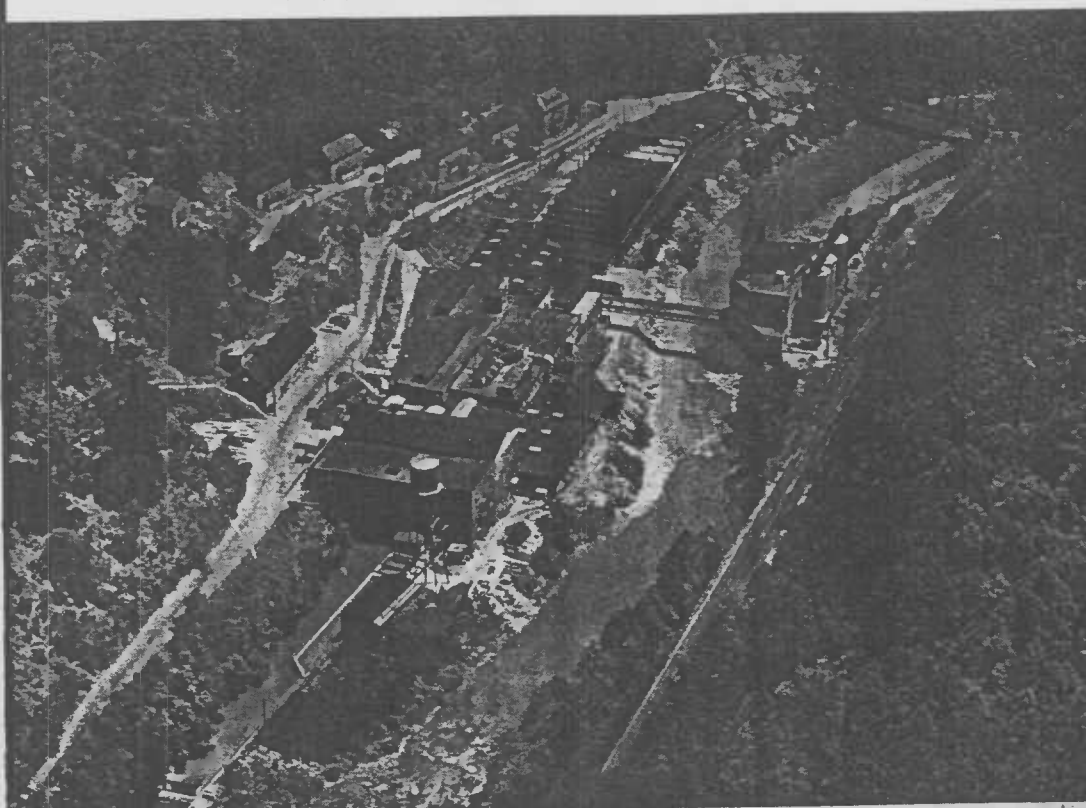
The Bartgis Brothers

BALTIMORE MARCH 1952

Co.

three-quarters of a
y ago, in 1878, two
Frederick, Maryland,
P. Bartgis, started a
shop in Baltimore City,
stined to grow and de-
Bartgis Brothers Com-
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anufacturing enterprise
some day serve many of
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rnish the livelihood for
amilies.
ne "big fire" destroyed
of Baltimore's business
ling the Bartgis Broth-
s soon as possible, the
Bartgis & Brother re-

SITE — This aerial photograph shows the picturesque setting of the Bartgis Brothers
Company plant on the banks of Patapsco River near Ilchester.



more into a large building formerly
used by the E. J. Eichman Man-
ufacturing Company. Here 80-horse-
power electric motors replaced the
gas engine which had driven the com-
plicated system of shafting and belts
at their old location.

Business grew rapidly in the new
plant, and it soon became evident that
the company could better serve its

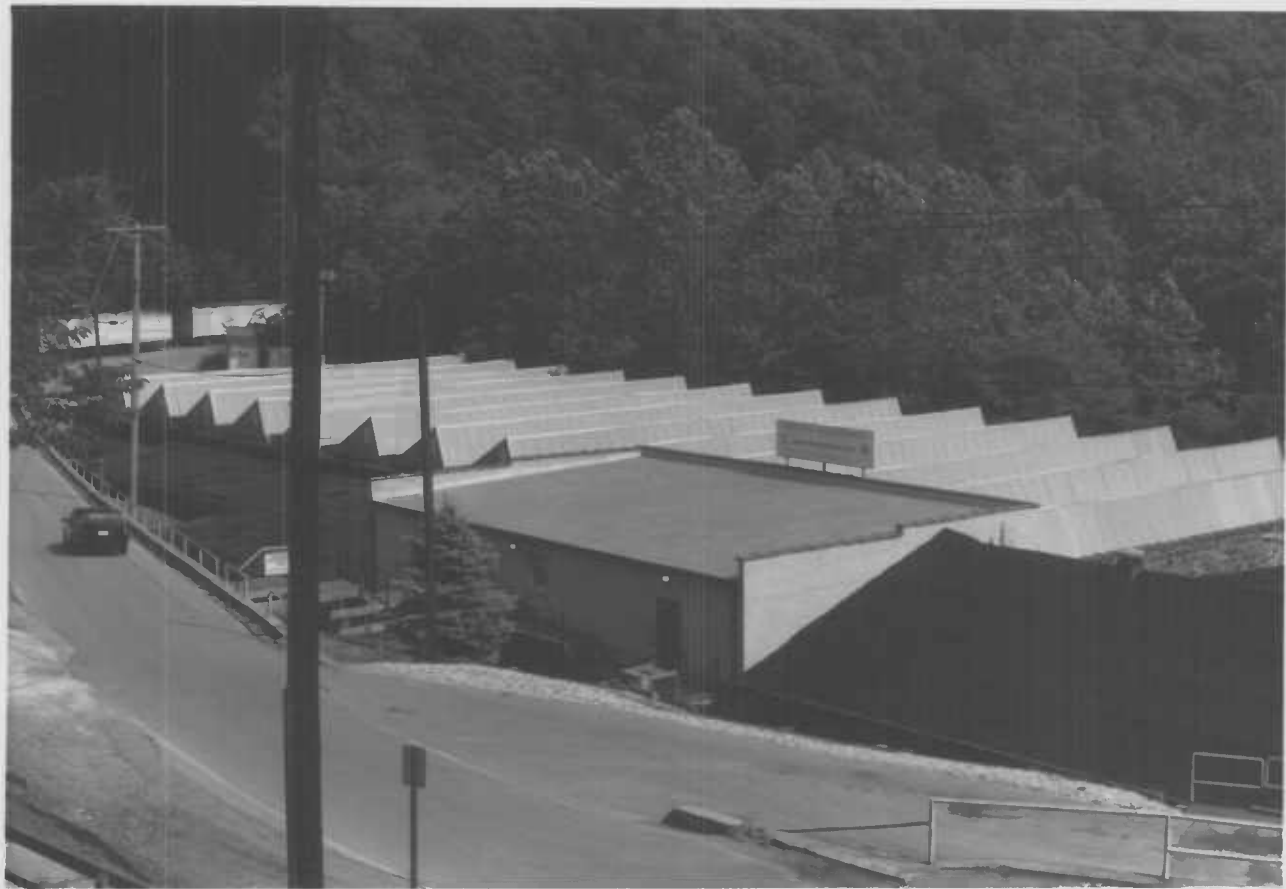
approximately ten miles west of Balti-
more City. The site comprised 106
acres along the Patapsco River in
both Baltimore and Howard count-
ies.

The stone wing of the Mill build-
ings, standing on the north bank on
the river, had been erected in 1837
by two Philadelphians, natives of
Scotland, George and William Mor-

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BA 144

THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

JUNE 1999

MARYLAND SHPS

VIEW SOUTHEAST

1/5



BA 144

THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K SHARP

JUNE 1999

MARYLAND SHPO

VIEW SOUTH

2/5



BA 144

THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

JUNE 1999

MARYLAND SHPO

VIEW WEST

3/5



SA 144

THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K SWAPP

JUNE 1989

MARYLAND SUPS

VIEW WEST

4/5



32 114

THISTLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K SHARP

JUNE 1949

MARYLAND SWPC

DETAIL, ORIGINAL MILL BUILDING, VIEW WEST

5/5

N. R. FIELD SHEET

MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
BOX 1704
ANNAPOLIS, MD. 21404NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maryland	
COUNTY: Balto. Co.	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME			
COMMON: Thistle Factory			
AND/OR HISTORIC: Ilchester Mills			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Thistle Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Ilchester			
STATE Md.	CODE	COUNTY: Baltimore Co.	CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION		CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS		ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC	
District	☐	Building	☒	Public	☐	Public Acquisition:	☐	Occupied	☐
Site	☐	Structure	☐	Private	☒	In Process	☐	Unoccupied	☐
Object	☐			Both	☐	Being Considered	☐	Preservation work in progress	☐
								Yes: ☒	
								Restricted ☐	
								Unrestricted ☐	
								No: ☒	
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)									
Agricultural	☐	Government	☐	Park	☐	Transportation	☐	Comments	☐
Commercial	☐	Industrial	☒	Private Residence	☐	Other (Specify)	☐		
Educational	☐	Military	☐	Religious	☐				
Entertainment	☐	Museum	☐	Scientific	☐				

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNERS NAME: New Haven Board and Carton Co. Inc (Simpkins Industries)			
STREET AND NUMBER: River Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Catonsville		STATE: Md.	CODE: 21228

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: B.C. Land Records, Liber 3269, f. 379; Parcel _____, Map 100. Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER: Washington Avenue			
CITY OR TOWN: Towson, Md. 21204		STATE: Md.	CODE: 21204
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:			

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY:			
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local ☐			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent ☐	Good ☐	Fair ☒	Deteriorated ☐	Ruins ☐	Unexposed ☐
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered ☒ Unaltered ☐			Moved ☐ Original Site ☒		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This 20th Century papermaking complex includes a number of 19th Century outbuildings, plus a street of workers' houses described as resembling a Welsh village. The stone pump house is a two-story stone building of 19th Century origin with its windows blocked up, but otherwise sturdy

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian ☐16th Century ☐18th Century ☐20th Century ☐15th Century ☐17th Century ☐19th Century ☒

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal ☐Education ☐Political ☐Urban Planning ☐Prehistoric ☐Engineering ☐

Religion/Phi-

Other (Specify) ☐Historic ☐Industry ☒Philosophy ☐Agriculture ☐Invention ☐Science ☐Art ☐Landscape ☐Sculpture ☐Commerce ☐Architecture ☐

Social/Human-

Communications ☐Literature ☐Historian ☐Conservation ☐Military ☐Theater ☐Music ☐Transportation ☐

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

Thistle forms a picturesque company town with solid dwellings and odd stone buildings that have survived modernization of the main plant. It is set in a narrow gorge in the river near bridges and railroad tunnels.

The Thistle Factory began as the cotton print mill established by two brothers from Scotland, George and William Morris, in 1837, on a 106-acre tract in the Patapsco valley. Silk and cotton were produced plus silk yarn and cotton thread. In 1919 the works was taken over by Edward and A.A. Blakeney and Co. to make cotton duck but was soon sold to a New York firm for making tire fabric. In 1922, Bartgis Brothers, a Baltimore printing and box making company, acquired the plant and continued making paperboard in the former textile plant; Bartgis Brothers was acquired by E.H. Lupton. In 1957, the works was acquired by New Haven Board and Carton Company which had output of 40,000 tons/annum. The village post office was 8 x 10 feet and was claimed to be the State's smallest. A dam just above the plant traps water for the mill which passes through the antique pump house.

In 1970 the plant under title of Simpkins Industries was enjoined to stop pollution of the river with Titanium Dioxide and connect with the sewer system, Sun, June 8, 1971.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"The Bartgis Brothers Co.," Baltimore, March 1952.

"Progress Versus Prosperity, A Howard County Beginning," Robert G. Breen,
Sun, March 25, 1953

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE			
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
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LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

John McGraw

ORGANIZATION

Baltimore County Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:

9811 Van Buren Lane

CITY OR TOWN:

Cockeysville

DATE

Sept. 5, 1971

STATE

Md. 21030

CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

Maryland
Baltimore County
District I
on the Patapsco River

BA-144
Ilchester Mills

0348-15316

1837

Two brothers, George and William Morris, natives of Scotland, set up a cotton print mill, known as "Thistle Factory." Substantial granite stone buildings and Welsh type stone mill houses for the workers.

Situated on 106 acres of land, 10 miles west of Baltimore.

(First HABS Report)
E. Frances Offutt
HABS COMMITTEE OF BALTIMORE
COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July 29, 1965