

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 7 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC * * * OELLA HISTORIC DISTRICT
 AND/OR COMMON OELLA

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER OELLA AVENUE, GLEN ROAD, HOLLOW ROAD
 CITY, TOWN OELLA VICINITY OF SIXTH
 STATE MARYLAND CODE 24 COUNTY BALTIMORE CODE 005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME MULTIPLE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC OWNERS
 STREET & NUMBER
 CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. BALTIMORE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
 STREET & NUMBER WASHINGTON AVENUE
 CITY, TOWN TOWSON STATE MARYLAND

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS ⁽¹⁾ - Historic American Buildings

TITLE Survey, Baltimore County Historical Society Historic Buildings Survey ⁽²⁾
 (1) Library of Congress, Wash., D.C.
 DATE 1964-1975 (1) FEDERAL (2) STATE COUNTY LOCAL
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Baltimore County Historical Society (2)
 Agricultural Building, County Home Park
 CITY, TOWN Cockeysville STATE Maryland

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Topography and industry have determined the appearance of Oella, situated where the Patapsco River rushes through a steep, densely wooded gorge. The proximity to the Baltimore Harbor coupled with unharnessed water power brought the first industry here in the 18th century (see National Register Nomination for Ellicott Mills (site) Historic District). Factories requiring large floor space have since the 1770's been constructed on the narrow, level ground near the river. All other structures sought space on the remaining level ground or climbed the hill. The orientation of Oella is naturally and historically toward the factory at its heart. The hill acts as a natural barrier defining the district and turning the focus away from Baltimore County. Even today the post office and telephone exchange for Oella is shared with Ellicott City in Howard County, not Baltimore County.

Oella is unified by its industrial heritage as a working community. Its structures are functional, without ornamentation. This stark quality of the built environment placed in a dramatic natural setting still densely wooded gives Oella its special character.

Oella Avenue provides the access from the wilderness feeling of the southern boundary (just north of Granite Hill, Ellicott Mills (site) Historic District). It winds north for a half mile before turning to climb the hill at the Dickey factory at the intersection of Glen Road and Hollow Road. These two streets extend directly east up the hill while Oella Avenue continues north for several hundred yards before turning east. Oella consists of 19th century workers housing^{and} one late 19th century church. The only known 20th century building is the 1919 mill. For a mile and a half north along the east bank of the Patapsco an early 19th century mill race still exists which until the 1970's provided power to the mill. Roughly 50 structures and two sites exist in Oella. A constant domestic scale is maintained by the residences. The Dickey factory may dwarf earlier buildings but could not be considered an intrusion since the focal life of the district has always been the factory.

Adaptive use is not a new term in Oella. The church houses the offices of the W. J. Dickey Company. The factory contains one "adaptive use" and the owner is looking for more people to join him in occupying the ample square footage. Community development planners at the state and local level are looking at Oella as a prime, untouched environment for the plan of their expertise. It is vital for the protection of this cultural resource that preservation is granted equal time.

The workers' housing in Oella consists of multiple units and sizeable family houses constructed of stone, brick and wood. All these buildings retain the same scale and proportions. They are sited close to the road on steeply sloping lots. The President of the Dickey Company owns most of the property. The detached houses located higher up the hill are privately owned.

Dating can be done by building material. The stone houses and the four log buildings (Logtown Road) were constructed in the first quarter of the 19th century when the Union Manufacturing Company began operation. The Maximilian Godefroy drawing (c.1812) shows most of the stone buildings. The brick houses date from the mid-century, while the frame buildings were constructed at the end of the century when the W.J. Dickey Company began operation.

(See Continuation Sheet 1)

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CONTINUATION SHEET OELLA ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The most impressive stone structure is the "Storekeeper's House" at 804-806 Oella Avenue. It is a three-story, four bay building with enclosed brick chimneys at each gable end. The stone arches on the windows and the 12-over-8 sash are two details which help make this building recognizable in the circa 1812 Godefroy drawing. The first floor is covered with a one-story porch.

Stone Row, on Oella Avenue, is multiple unit buildings two and one-half stories high with a gable roof and six-over-six sashes. The stone is well laid in circular courses. Each unit in Stone Row is two bays wide with a dormer in the attic. One porch extends across the facade.

The Johnson House on Hollow Road is one of the few detached stone buildings. It is three bays wide and two stories tall with a gable roof and central entrance. One room has been added to the gable end but this does not alter the integrity of the stone house.

The brick houses, like the stone ones, are plain, solidly constructed, functional dwellings. Long Brick Row (700-744 Oella Avenue) which contains thirty houses in an unbroken terrace along a curved street is the most impressive. Each two-story section is four bays wide divided by a parapet extending along the gable roof to the chimney and contains two units with the doors paired at the center.

Short Brick Row (700 block Oella Avenue) is a two-story terrace located behind a stone retaining wall. Obscured by the hill, trees and a single one-story porch, the brick dwellings are two-stories tall and two bays wide under a gable roof.

Spring Street contains five three-story brick duplexes, each of which is four bays wide with a gable roof. The six-over-six window sashes have flat brick arches. A hip-roofed porch covers the first floor facade.

The more numerous frame buildings offer greater variety than the brick and stone ones. The frame buildings are also larger. The 700 block of Oella Avenue (Pleasant Hill) contains four bay (two bay per unit), two-story duplexes with a bracketed cornice behind which the flat roof slopes downward. The windows contain two-over-two sash. Some of the buildings have a porch across the first floor.

The 500 and 600 blocks of Oella Avenue contain more two-story duplexes with first floor porches and a central chimney in the gable roof of each unit. This row, the frame row in the 700 block, and most of the remaining frame buildings are covered with asbestos shingles.

The frame, single-family houses are constructed with the gable end to the street. They are two and one-half stories tall and two bays wide with a one-story porch.

(See Continuation Sheet 2)

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The commercial building in the district is the County Corner Grocery at the junction of Oella and Westchester Avenues. The one ecclesiastical building is the Oella Methodist Church, a simple frame building with a tower on the northeast corner. It has been converted for offices. (The top of the steeple has been taken down.)

The dominant structure is the 1919 W. S. Dickey Company mill. The brick building varies in height between three and five stories depending on the ground level. It was constructed in the ruins of the Union Manufacturing Company's mills. The exterior is divided into bays by continuous brick pilasters from the ground to the cornice joined by an arch. In between are large, multi-paned windows to maximize the use of natural light. At the junction of two of the wings is a four-story tower with a hip roof.

Extending north from the factory is the Union Manufacturing Company's mill race which continues to Union Dam at U.S. 40. Flood gate controls remain on the race.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Oella Historic District is a major 19th Century industrial center in Maryland whose original character and setting is absolutely intact. One of the earliest and more extensive cotton factories in the United States, the Union Manufacturing Company, located in and chose the name of Oella. This company used water powered looms as early as 1819. The W. J. Dickey Company, the successor to the Union Company, was one of the largest textile firms in the South in the early 20th century. The influx of man-made fibers tolled the death knell of the W. J. Dickey Company, a producer of woven goods.

Industry has dominated the economy of Oella. The constant demand for newer facilities coupled with fires and floods on the Patapsco led to the frequent replacement of factories. The continuing rich history is reflected in the extant residential buildings. Oella, therefore, is a 19th century village of pristine, unpretentious, functional workers houses.

In 1808, the Union Manufacturing Company bought the site from the Ridgely family (later the company acquired land from the Ellicott family).

A group of prominent Baltimoreans (Robert McKim, William Wilson, William Jones, John Trimble, James H. McGullock, Ludwig Hering, August Jacob Schwartz, Nathan Levering and James Beatty) had organized the textile firm the same year. Under a state charter, the Union Company had an authorized capitalization of one million dollars, the largest in the state and one of the largest in the country. The company's first mill, completed on October 6, 1809, was five stories tall, measured 106 by 144 feet, and contained 800 spindles. In 1811 the Union Company had its property resurveyed and patented as Oella "in commemoration of the first woman who applied herself to the spinning of Cotton on the Continent of America." (Patents, liber IB #B, Folio 8; Hall of Records, Annapolis).

An excellent description of the company is found in the 1811-1812 diary of Sir August John Foster, the British minister to the United States. He recorded that an Englishman, Matthew Waddell, directed the mill which spun 200 pounds of cotton per day, chiefly into yarn and jean and royal rib for vest material. The cotton came from New Orleans, cost eleven cents a pound and was very dirty. Three hundred employees, including children, worked from sunrise to sunset with a half-hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. Foster thought this work day was too long.

(See Continuation Sheet 3)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES - John McGrain compiled historical data on Oella. He is the authority on the mills of Maryland. His report on Oella is available at the Maryland Historical Trust in Annapolis or at the Baltimore County Historical Society in Cockeysville. The research was conducted in primary sources including 19th century newspapers; county land, probate and tax records; historic maps and manuscripts. Secondary sources included theses and articles in the Maryland Historical Magazine, the Society for Industrial Archaeology and contemporary newspapers. (See Continuation Sheet 1 for items 9, 10 & 11)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
 ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 130 acres

UTM REFERENCES
 (E) 18 346040 4348230 (F) 18 345²⁸⁰40 4348100
 A | 1,8 | 346120 | 4350870 | B | 1,8 | 3461540 | 4350780 |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 C | 1,8 | 345900 | 4349120 | D | 1,8 | 346620 | 4348720 |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION - The Oella Historic District is bounded on the west by the west bank of the Patapsco River, on the south by a line 600' southeast of the center of the Baltimore Gas & Electric right-of-way and parallel to it southeast to the rear property line of the property of Charles Wagandt II then east and north following the same rear property line to a point 250' southwest of the intersection of the Wagandt property line and Glen Road then southeast in a line paralleling Glen Road (250' southwest of Glen Road) for roughly 800'
 (See Continuation Sheet for items 9, 10 & 11)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE (SEE Continuation Sheet for Items 9, 10 & 11)
 ORGANIZATION DATE
 STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE
 CITY OR TOWN STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *John N. Pearce* DATE *5/28/76*
 TITLE *SHPO*

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DATE *11/9/96*
 ATTEST: *[Signature]* DATE *11/1/76*
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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OELLA

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Contemporaneously Maximilian Godefroy, architect of St. Mary's Seminary Chapel in Baltimore City, executed a remarkable drawing of the Union Manufacturing Company illustrating a mill with a water wheel and a second building, probably another mill, behind the first. Two substantial dwellings, a row of houses and an additional outbuilding (demolished) complete the drawing.

At the time of the War of 1812 the Union Manufacturing Company was the third largest in the United States. Plans to construct a third and fourth mill, announced in Niles Register, November 12, 1813, indicate the directors' ambitions. A fire on December 13, 1815, decimated the factories, but a month later the company was back in business. The two disasters added to the loss of the capital forced the company to scrap expansion plans. Business was continued in the first mill (1812) on its 5000 spindles.

In 1819 the Union Company introduced power looms operated by water-driven shafts, a recent invention. A year later the Patapsco was supplying power for twenty looms. Business improved, justifying the construction of an additional mill (1822) containing 150 power looms and 7000 spindles, making Oella the largest textile concern outside New England.

At that time, the company employed ten men, sixteen boys and 104 girls. One hundred fifty thousand pounds of raw cotton were made into 120,000 pounds of yarn and 240,000 yards of cloth a year. Eighty tenements existed in Oella; other buildings included machine houses, smith shops, a grist mill, a boarding house for the seventy apprentices and a school house.

Production expanded to such an extent that the company miscalculated the market and produced more than could be sold. In 1834 the factory was forced to close.

In the mid-1840's, undaunted by these financial problems, a second textile concern, the Granite Hill Factory, opened a mill with accompanying housing south of the Union Manufacturing Company. (This concern was located on the site of an Ellicott iron works. See Ellicotts' Mills (site) Historic District). By 1850 the company had built a four-story, steam-heated granite mill, 48 by 168 feet, with gas lights. It employed forty men and 110 women. The water-powered looms produced 1.35 million yards of muslin a year.

Financial problems plagued the Granite Hill Factory. These were compounded by an 1868 flood which reduced the mill to rubble and washed the mill dam and several houses down the Patapsco.

In the 1870's the Union Manufacturing Company bought out Granite Hill. The construction of new factory buildings followed the acquisition which, in turn, preceded financial disaster. In 1887 the W. J. Dickey Company bought the entire complex.

(See Continuation Sheet ⁴)

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Dickey, born in Ireland, began a textile work in Baltimore in 1838 with seventy-five dollars. His business so expanded that by the end of the century he had purchased Oella and the Ashland Company at what is now Dickeyville. Dickey saw his concern become the largest woolen textile mill in the South. He constructed a new factory and expanded production into wool. The peak was reached in World War I. In 1918 an electrical fire destroyed mill buildings and threatened the housing of the 600 employees. A rebuilding program saw the construction of the present mill.

Manufacturing continued through the 20th century with a brief interruption during the Depression. The Patapsco continued to provide power to generate electricity until 1972 when hurricane Agnes flooded the power plant. The same year the Dickey Company ceased manufacturing.

The Oella district stands today as the visible remains of a past way of life, that of the company towns which grew up around the factories and mills of 19th century America. Villages such as this which have remained unaltered are some of the most important tools in the study of industrial archaeology.

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9. Charles Wagandt, II, recognized Maryland historian on the Middle Period, has conducted detailed research on Oella in primary and secondary sources. His work on the W. J. Dickey records is ongoing. Mr. Wagandt is doing an extensive history project among the residents of Oella.

Alice (Mrs. Clyde) Martin of the Baltimore County Historical Society and the Baltimore County Committee of the Maryland Historical Trust compiled exhaustive maps on the district - dates of buildings, sites of structures, property lines - as well as a complete list of property owners.

10. to the intersection of the rear property line of the properties on the west side of Westchester Avenue then north following the rear property line to the southern property lines on the south side of Oella Avenue, then east approximately 275' then north following the eastern property line to Oella Avenue then west on Oella Avenue approximately 125' then north following the east property line of 446 Oella Avenue and of the Oella Cemetery then west following the northern property line of the cemetery and Charles Wagandt's property to the 200' elevation line approximately 75' east of the mill race then north following a line marking 200' elevation north to the south side of the U.S. 40 bridge on the Patapsco and northwest to the west bank of the Patapsco.

11.

John McGrain
Vice President, Baltimore
County Historical Society
34 Willow Avenue
Towson, Maryland 21204
Summer 1975
301-823-1844

Alice Martin
Baltimore County Committee,
Maryland Historical Trust
Route 1, Box 98
Phoenix, Maryland 21131
Fall 1975
301-472-2128

Nancy Miller, Historian
Maryland Historical Trust
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Fall 1975
301-267-1438