Jerusalem

A PRESERVED MILL VILLAGE

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Historic Jerusalem Mill Village Lives On
(back cover text)

By 1850, rural areas in Harford County such as Mill Green, Clermont Mills, Rock Run, and Jerusalem Mill had developed into small villages of twenty to fifty people clustered around a gristmill. Several decades later this tranquil village lifestyle was to be disrupted by emerging technology. Chilled-steel roller-mill improvements changed the way wheat was ground into flour, eventually bringing an end to centuries of stone milling.

Jerusalem Mill, which had been operated by the Lee family for more than a hundred years, was no exception. Faced with increasing competition and lower flour prices, the mill was sold in 1886. Subsequent owners made improvements, keeping the facility operating, but the golden era of milling had faded; and along with it, so did the prosperity of the sawmill, blacksmith shop, wheelwright shop, general store, and the surrounding village.

Looking back, it is ironic there was an unnoticed upside to this slow steady decline. As there did not exist an economic incentive to tear down the old and build the new, most of the structures remained in place. Although becoming dilapidated over time, these eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings became the crown jewels of a volunteer-led historic restoration program that began in 1984.

Today, Jerusalem Mill Village stands as a microcosm of America's early cultural, social, and technical heritage. The Friends of Jerusalem Mill provide costumed interpretive guides that relive the village's history through demonstrations such as blacksmithing, tinsmithing, and fireside cooking. McCourtney's general store yields a glimpse into the past and a mill museum highlights an industry that played a dominant role in village growth throughout Harford County as well as in colonial America.