Grist Milling in Eighteenth-Century Virginia Society: Legal, Social, and Economic Aspects

Paul Brent Hensley
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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GRIST MILLING IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA SOCIETY:
LEGAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Paul Brent Hanley
1969
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

[Signature]
Author

Approved, September 1969

[Signature]
Edward M. Riley, Ph.D.

[Signature]
Richard M. Brown, Ph.D.

[Signature]
Lester J. Cappon, Ph.D.
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The purpose of this thesis is to study the miller in eighteenth-century Virginia society, with primary emphasis on his legal, social, and economic positions. In order to place the miller in a representative physical setting, a case study was made of a particular mill. Attention was directed to the techniques of mill construction, materials used in construction, and methods of milling, as well as the impact of industrialism on water-milling. Thus Chapter I deals with a gristmill in Campbell County in Virginia, Graves Mill. Chapters II and III deal with the legal, social, and economic aspects of milling.

It was found that mills, along with churches, were the first buildings to be constructed in a frontier community. Quite often mills were the products of community cooperation. The materials used in construction were usually got from the surrounding countryside. The stones were sometimes hewn from indigenous rock; sometimes they were imported from Europe, particularly France.

No matter how sturdily mills were built or how many customers they drew from the surrounding communities, the heyday of water-milling saw an eclipse around the beginning of the twentieth century. Water-powered mills simply could not meet the competition of the new engine-driven commercial mills.

The laws concerning millers reflect society's estimation of that group. The codes indicate that the miller was considered important enough to be restricted from leaving his mill. Millers' exemption from muster duty is a case in point. Other acts, such as prohibition of excessive toll and regulations concerning purity of flour, suggest that millers were not completely trustworthy.

There was a high degree of interaction between the social and economic positions of the miller. The term "miller" suggested any one of three categories: owner-non-operator; owner-operator; and hireling or slave. While millers in none of the categories became rich (prominent planters considered milling a by-product of plantation production and seldom made large profits), the owner-operators of mills (particularly German millers in the Valley of Virginia) not only did fairly well economically but also were more highly respected by their neighbors than those who operated mills for hire.
GRIST MILLING IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA SOCIETY:

LEGAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS
INTRODUCTION

On May 25, 1751 John Blair entered a remark in his diary about a heavy afternoon rain which threatened his milldam. The following day another entry appeared: "My mills escap[ed] thank God."¹ Well might he have thanked God, for grist milling was one of the most important of eighteenth-century industries. In fact, so important were mills that numerous acts of the General Assembly cited them in determining the direction roads would take.² Good transportation, then as now, was a prerequisite for successful manufacturing and trade, a fact which was not lost on the inhabitants of each town or village that was blessed with a mill. Mills were centers of community activity, quite comparable to the famed rural country store. The former, along with churches, were the first buildings to be erected in the founding of a settlement.³ The maxim that man cannot live by bread alone was attested to by the numerous churches ranging from spired edifices throughout the Tidewater to the simple log structures dotting the Back Country. But particularly to the frontier settlers, a reverse of the maxim seemed just as true. Religion

¹Diary of John Blair," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st. Ser., VII (January, 1899), 140.
could wait but eating could not. To a section of the colonies which was
gaining fame for its culinary accomplishments, good flour was insisted
upon and valued highly. Indeed, "opulent diet, as represented by the
cherished hot breads of eastern Virginia, stopped at the [farthest]
milldam."\(^4\)

Mills were numerous as well as important. Governor Fauquier in a
letter to the Board of Trade in December, 1766 mentioned in his list of
industries carried on in Virginia that "they daily set up mills to grind
their wheat into flour for exportation."\(^5\) Often as many as half-dozen
mills were within a radius of six miles.\(^6\) Within a twelve-mile radius
of a proposed millsite in Tidewater Virginia, twenty-three other mills
were counted.\(^7\) As for the Shenandoah Valley (usually referred to simply
as the Valley) an account in a Moravian diary of travels through Virginia
in the 1750's gives a good indication of the prevalence of mills:\(^8\)

On October 18, we rose early at 3 o'clock.
After the morning worship Bro. Gottlob,
Haberland, and J. Loesch preceded us to
Frederickstown [Winchester] to order several
things. We followed soon afterwards with the
wagon. We had but one mile to Robert Korniken's

\(^4\)Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington: A Biography,

\(^5\)"Letters of Governor Francis Fauquier," William and Mary
Quarterly, 1st Ser., XXI (1912-1913), 170.

\(^6\)"Historical and Genealogical Notes," Tyler's Quarterly Historical
and Genealogical Magazine, I (1919-1920), 142.

\(^7\)Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United
States to 1860, 2 vols., I (Washington: Carnegie Institute of

\(^8\)William J. Hinke and Charles E. Kemper, "Moravian Diaries of
Travels Through Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and
Biography, XII (1905), 141-43.
mill and eleven further to Frederickstown, but no water for seven miles.... At noon we passed Frederickstown.... A mile beyond Frederickstown we stopped at a mill and bought some bread and corn. Bro. Gottlob and Haberland again joined us. We continued and again soon came to water. We still had four miles to Jost Haid's mill.... We traveled five miles farther and came to Baumann's mill. We bought several bushels of oats, but had to wait several hours till it had been threshed.... We still had five miles to Justice Funk's mill, but we had to drive for some time during the night and arrived there pretty late.

Though lagging behind both the Tidewater and the Valley, the Piedmont had a number of mills, particularly on the Rivanna River and its branches in Albemarle County, including George Martin's, Nathaniel Burnley's at Rio, John Randolph Bryan's, and Henderson's mill at Milton. 9

Owners of mills covered a wide range. There were large planters like William Byrd of Westover, Robert Carter of Corotoman, who left to his son John Carter alone a tract of 10,000 acres, 10 John's brothers (Robert of Nomini, Charles of Cleve, and Landon of Sabine Hall), George Washington of Mount Vernon, and Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. There were average planters such as John Baylor, William Taylor, and James Webb, and small planters of Christopher Johnson's stamp. Finally, there were the more numerous small farmers typified by Jost Hite and the


10 "Will of Robert (King) Carter," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, V (1898), 409.
Orendorff family, German farmers in the Valley. As early as 1757 Peter Jefferson built a mill at Shadwell. Both the mill and milldam were destroyed, however, during the flood of 1771, and son Thomas was unable to rebuild them until after the Revolution. Colonel John Baylor, a member of the House of Burgesses representing Caroline County from 1742 until 1765, left at his death in 1772 several parcels of land along with a mill and mill quarter lands to his son, John. In his will, dated August 10, 1772, William Taylor bequeathed to his wife "... the plantation where I live, 400 acres, my water grist mill, 13 negroes, furniture, stock of cattle, [etc.], my buffet with all my plate therein, china, [etc.], and my driving chaise." James Webb of the Parish of South Farnham (Essex County) had an interest in several mills. Justic


of the peace of Essex County and a signer of the Northern Neck Association against the Stamp Act, he bequeathed to his son James "... the land on Piscataway Creek and that known by the name of Faulkners and my right to the place where he has erected a mill known by the name of Bushs old mill also the Water Mill adjoining the land where he now lives...."^{15}

Christopher Johnson, Quaker holder of a 500 acre plantation in Bedford County, obtained permission from the Court in 1774 to build a mill on his property.^{16}

If mills were seemingly springing up overnight, they were frequently sold as well. Advertisements abounded in colonial newspapers with references to potential mill sites or mill seats themselves. On Friday, April 25, 1777 the following advertisement appeared in the

*Virginia Gazette*:^{17}

For Sale
A very valuable Merchant Mill about four miles below the town of Fredericksburg and about two from navigation, situated in the heart of a very plentiful grain country. The mill house is 26 by 36 feet, the first floor of stone, the second of wood is covered with a Dutch roof. There is but one mill erected yet, with bolting gears, etc., but the house is full large to admit of another. The purchaser may have 10 or 20 acres of land with the mill, a great part of which is exceeding fine meadow land; and the whole may, on occasion be watered from the mill race. Whoever inclines to purchase may know the terms by applying to the subscribers, near the premises.

Francis Taliaferro

John Taliaferro

Spotsylvania, April 3, 1777

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^{15}"Will of James Webb," *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, VII (April, 1926), 270.

^{16}Bedford County Courthouse Records, Order Book 5A, p. 263.

^{17}*The Virginia Gazette*, 25 April 1777.
An advertisement in 1776 affords another clear indication of the importance of mills in colonial society:  

Residence of John Robinson, Speaker  
To be Sold For Ready Money  
That beautiful Seat on Mattapony River, where the late Speaker Robinson lived; there are 1,381 Acres of high Land and 600 acres of Marsh, equal to any in the Country, and may be reclaimed at a moderate Expense; besides the Marsh there are about 20 acres of Swamp, which may easily be converted into a valuable meadow; on the above tract there is a Mill, which is rather out of repair at present, but may be made without much Expense as valuable as Mills generally are.... Any person inclinable to purchase will be shown the Land and Houses by applying to Mr. Street, who lives on the Spot, and the Terms of Sale made known by applying to Burwell Bassett, Esq.; in New Kent, Mr. James Hill, near Williamsburg, or to the Subscriber at Mr. Dernon's near Alexandria.  
John Parke Custis

The proximity of mills to real estate that was for sale was sure to be mentioned in an attempt to lure prospective buyers. Philip Buckner's advertisement in April, 1751, described his 1500 acres of land as "convenient to Churches, Mills, Court-House, and Warehouses." In November, 1776, Edmund Randolph, Jr. advertised a tract of land in the lower end of Bedford, known as Locust Thicket, "containing 5300 acres, well watered by three considerable branches of Staunton's river, and very convenient to church or mill."  

There have been various types of mills in history and the develop-

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18 As cited from the Virginia Gazette in the William and Mary Quarterly, 1st. Ser., XV (January, 1907), 161-62.
19 Ibid., XII (July, 1903), 79.
20 The Virginia Gazette, 22 November 1776. One is immediately struck by the similarity of these eighteenth-century advertisements to those of today. Of course the style of language is somewhat different, but if one substitutes "school" for "church" and "supermarket" for "mill" the degree of similarity is remarkable.
ment of the milling industry makes an interesting story. The first method of making flour was to pound grain in the hollow of a stone, a technique originating some 4,000 years ago.\textsuperscript{21} This first stage, known as the household system, was characterized by both production and use in the home.\textsuperscript{22} The saddle stone to be followed still later by the mortar and the quern ushered in the second stage, the "handicraft system."\textsuperscript{23} The quern employed a circular motion and the first true grinding. Later on, grooves were added to the grinding surfaces, whereby the meal was forced by pressure and centrifugal force to the rim of the stone.\textsuperscript{24} In this second stage, production was carried on in terms of barter or sale outside the home. Referred to also as the "direct market" stage, this period saw its limits in the confines of the local or community market.\textsuperscript{25}

While it is virtually impossible to determine just when these first stages of milling began, it is somewhat easier to estimate the date of the beginning of milling by the use of power, although even here the records are far from clear.\textsuperscript{25} Polydore Virgilius stated that after much research into the origins of inventions, he was able to ascertain only that wind-


\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 98.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25}Pausonius, a second-century historian, was bold enough to assert that milling was first invented in the Spartan kingdom of Laconia by Mylettes, son of Lelex, first king of that province. As late as A.D. 1480 Pomponius Sabinus suggested that handmills were first used in Cappadocia, but Polydore Virgilius as well as other medieval historians demurred on the subject. See Richard Bennett and John Elton, \textit{History of Corn Milling}, 3 vols., II (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Company, Ltd., 1899), p. 3.
mills were developed before water mills and discovered nothing to indicate the origin of water-power milling itself. 26 Certainly the water mill must have been invented before the beginning of the first century A.D., for that type of mill was introduced into England during the reign of Julius Caesar. 27 In fact the first reference to a water mill appears in an epigram by Antipater of Thessalonica, who lived around 95 B.C.:

Ye maids who toiled so faithful at the mill,
Now cease your work, and from those toils be still;
Sleep now till dawn, and let the birds with glee
Sing to the ruddy morn on the bush and tree;
For what your hands performed so long and true,
Ceres has charged the water-nymphs to do. 28

Probably Richard Bennett is right in concluding that watermilling originated in Greece shortly before the birth of Christ. 29

At any rate, the power-milling stage was extremely important, a period that, except for improvements in the latter part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lasted with little alteration until the end of the latter century and, in many cases, beyond. Within this stage occurred a transition from the primitive Greek (or Norse) water mill, the type mentioned in the epigram by Antipater, to the more complicated Roman mill. The former consisted of a water wheel lying vertically upon or in the water to which was connected a perpendicular central shaft. The upper end of the shaft met two quern-like grindingstones, passing through the lower

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26 Ibid., p. 4.
28 Bennett, p. 6.
29 Ibid., p. 5.
stone but attached to the upper. The lower stone was the only stationary part of the works, the water wheel, shaft, and upper stone all turning as water propelled the wheel.\textsuperscript{30} The second type of water mill was the result of cultural borrowing and innovation. The Romans acquired in their conquest of Greece, among other customs, that of milling, and improvements were not long in coming. The result was the Roman mill consisting of a vertical instead of horizontal water wheel and, another innovation, cog gearings.\textsuperscript{31}

It was apparently not until after the year A.D. 398 that the Romans introduced this more advanced mill into Britain. Once there mills thrived, so that by the time of the Norman Conquest, mills were beginning to cover the English countryside.\textsuperscript{32} The Domesday Survey, a six-year effort begun in 1080, provides the best information on the number (over a thousand) and nature of mills in early England. The mills listed in the Survey changed little until the eighteenth century. An innovation occurred in the 1200's with the development of windmills, but it was not until 1784 that milling by steam came onto the scene.\textsuperscript{33}

With emigration from England to America, the custom of milling as well as millers and millwrights crossed the Atlantic. With the growth of the colonies, that industry grew apace. The earliest development of mills was in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, and as the forces of expa-

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 31-32.


\textsuperscript{33}Dondlinger, p. 266. For a list of mills in England from the reign of Edward the Confessor to the Survey, see Bennett and Elton, II, pp. 131-180.
sion moved westward. Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, and Michigan became milling centers. 34

In Virginia as early as 1621 the Treasurer of the Colony was instructed to erect a water mill, and in 1634 millwrights, whom William Claiborne had brought into the colony, set up a mill at Kecoughtan. 35 Corn mills were also growing in number so that by 1645 regulatory laws had to be imposed on the industry. 36 By 1649, Virginia boasted five water mills, four windmills, and numerous horse and hand mills. 37 In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, mills sprang up at an even more rapid pace but could not meet the increasing demands of a growing population, as indicated by the attractive inducements offered to those who would erect mills. 38

By the middle of the seventeenth century, then, Virginia had entered the third era of the milling industry, the "domestic stage." The characteristics of this stage were the production and processing of grain owned by others, under a toll system whereby the producer assumed no risks of market changes. 39 This period, characterized by the use of animal, wind, and water power, would see no major transition except the improvements made by Oliver Evans in the 1790's, until the 1870's when the first middling purifiers and the "new process" were instituted, launching milling

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34 Ibid., p. 279.
35 Bruce, II, p. 487.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 488.
38 Ibid.
into its fourth and final era, the factory stage.\textsuperscript{40}

The transition in milling affected the miller as well as the mill. One will recall Antipater's lines about the maids toiling faithfully at the mill. Faithful toilers or not, women in early times were assigned the task of milling and baking.\textsuperscript{41} Gradually, as the milling technique became more complicated, women relinquished their roles as millers to the men (probably with little regret), and baking became a separate endeavor.\textsuperscript{42} No longer could feminine forms, white with dust, be seen bending over the quern or hand mill. Milling was developing into a distinct trade, and the miller, for better or worse, was becoming somewhat a man of the world.\textsuperscript{43} Feudal laws which had held the miller in bondage were ceasing to be effective with the decline of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{44} The miller now could grind as a free man, but if he made a mistake he alone had to bear the consequences; the feudal lord would share the blame no longer.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., pp. 98-100.
\textsuperscript{41} Edgar, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} For the man-of-the-world characteristics of the miller see Bennett's comments on Chaucer's \textit{Canterbury Tales} (pp. 129-130). Although the tale told about the miller does little credit to that profession, Bennett correctly points out that "it was told by the Reeve in retaliation of a vindictive story which had been previously told by a miller." (p. 129)
\textsuperscript{44} Edgar, p. 146.
\end{flushright}
CHAPTER I

GRAVES MILL: A SYMBOL OF THE PAST

On February 28, 1774 the Bedford County Court granted permissions for a mill to be constructed on Tomahawk Creek in Campbell County.\(^1\)

Shortly after permission was received, the new mill was built by means of community cooperation. No further records tell the story of the initial construction of the mill which, standing until 1967 was known variously as Clay's Mill, Powhatan Mill, Tomahawk Mill, and Graves Mill. However, an excellent though imaginary account of the building of a similar grist mill in the Shenandoah Valley may be found in Marshall Fishwick's *Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion*:

Building a mill took weeks or even months of labor. No machinery or standardized parts were available, only human strength and ingenuity. Except for a few parts the blacksmith might forge, everything had to be made from wood and stone. This is how they did it.

A good site was found, and a building writ got from the court. (For a while nobody bothered about the writs.) Limestone foundation walls were erected, topped by log, or perhaps a stone, superstructure. Then it was time to call in the neighbors. Everybody who could came, men, women, children, with axes, saws, augurs, and ready muscles. The men, working in teams, hoisted the huge logs into place as the leader shouted:

"See that ye carry your corners up plumb. I couldn't stand to see 'em leaning over whopper-jawed. Easy, now. Shake it back, boys, jest a

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\(^1\) The mill was located on what is now State Route 126. See Bedford County Court Records, Order Book 5A, February 28, 1774, p. 263.
Occasionally a handspike would slip and a log would drop. A scathing un-Presbyterian oath would go rolling across the Valley as a hand was crushed. The rest would keep on building.

Women and boys did the lighter jobs, such as fashioning the shingles for the roof. To do this they sawed logs into blocks, took out the heart, and worked the slabs with frows and mallets. The boys kept busy with the ax, and women with the kettle, so that logs and victuals were always on hand.

Then the millwright, called in for the job, was ready to take over. Under his supervision two pillars went up, one inside and one outside the basement wall, to support the wheel shaft. A section of a white oak tree, about four feet long, would be brought to the site, trued up, and punctured with morticed openings into which hewn-oak spokes of the wheel could be inserted. Yellow locust journals, upon which the wheel revolved, were fitted into each end of the shaft. They rested on hardwood blocks topping the piers, and were lubricated with tallow.

"How we gonna git that shaft into place, mister?" a strapping farm hand might ask the millwright.

"By main strength and awkwardness, young'un, and the muscle in yer back!"

The shaft would be put in place, arms fitted on, timbers sawed to make water buckets, millstones put into place. A hopper would be built to carry the precious golden grain to the stones, and the millrace flooded. Finally the mill would be in operation. Simple sweaty farmers would watch, silent and proud as knights at a coronation, as the first corn was ground. They didn't have to ask for whom the wheel turned. It turned for them.2

The mill built in Bedford County was owned by Christopher Johnson, a Quaker planter and abolitionist. Earlier records of the Court indicate that in 1764, Johnson bought from David Meriwether "569 acres on both sides of Tomahawk, a branch of Blackwater Creek" at a cost of £59, 12.3

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3Bedford County Court Records, Deed Book 2, September 25, 1764, p. 474.
Little is known about Johnson before he erected the mill, except that he had constructed a house for himself and his family seven years earlier. Douglas Summers Brown mentioned that "another Quaker home, among others, went up in this community in 1767. This house was the Christopher Johnson cottage which is still standing in the side yard of the Graves' estate known as Powhatan Mill." (Fig. 1)

Christopher Johnson was one of those numerous small planters who often were obscured by the prestige of their big-planter neighbors. Lula Parker, in her History of Bedford County, indicated that there were as many as 150 to 200 plantations of various sizes in Bedford County at the time of its formation on May 10, 1754. These plantations ranged from large (10,000 - 15,000 acres) to average (1,000 - 2,000 acres) to small (about 500 acres). Johnson's lands, totaling 569 acres, would thus be classified as a small plantation.

Miss Parker further states that on smaller plantations, where slaves were few, a high degree of cooperation among landowners was necessary:

"When a new house was built, all the men of the neighborhood came together, cut the logs from the forest, and, when on a hillside, rolled them to where they would be accessible to wagon and team. Then all took part in building the residence, which, within a few days, was ready for occupancy."

Slavery was non-existent on the Johnson plantation. Christopher

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6Ibid.

7Ibid.
Johnson was a good Quaker by all reports. He adhered strictly to the decisions of the Quaker Yearly Meeting, which as early as 1711 had begun to denounce slavery. By 1775 or '76, the Meeting compelled the expulsion of any of its members who refused to free their slaves, and by 1787 all slaves of Quakers in Virginia were emancipated.

The land transactions that involved the mill and its owners provide an interesting account of much of the history of both Bedford and Campbell Counties. In 1832 Odin G. Clay, son of the Reverend Charles Clay, acquired the mill and 115 acres from the Johnson family for the sum of $984.75. The Reverend Charles Clay was rector of St. Anne's Parish in Albemarle County from 1769 to 1785. Later he moved to Bedford County and died there in 1819. He left to his son, Odin, an inheritance of 1700 acres of land in Campbell County and a lot in Lynchburg.

Odin G. Clay was born in 1800 near the Old Forest depot. He married his cousin, Anne Clayton, a daughter of Samuel Boyle and Elizabeth McCulloch-Davies, in 1822. In 1832, he named his newly acquired estate in Campbell County "Roseland." Very soon thereafter he built a large brick house which he called "Rosedale". (Fig. 2) The Clay family lived in the former Johnson Cottage until the much finer brick house could

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8Brown, p. 81
9Ibid.
10Bedford County Court Records, Deed Book 23, September 19, 1832, p. 181.
12Ibid.
13Ibid.
be completed. R. H. Early states that Graves' Mill (at this time called Clay's Mill) was built by Clay. Apparently the last three stories of the mill were constructed later than the basement and the first story. Bedford County Court records reveal that Christopher Johnson built at least part of the mill in 1774, but there is no specific information as to the extent of construction. It seems most logical that Odin G. Clay added three more stories to an already existing basement and first floor. Perhaps this is what Miss Early meant when she said that Graves' Mill was built by Clay.

It is clear that Odin G. Clay was a highly prominent person in the affairs of Campbell County and Lynchburg. From 1827 to 1847 he served as representative of Campbell County in the Virginia House of Delegates. In 1835 Clay served as one of the county justices and, in 1854, was appointed a member of the Board of Public Works. In 1848, he was chosen, along with Charles C. Mosby, to represent Lynchburg in the Virginia House of Delegates. The following year Clay became President of the Virginia and Tennessee (now Norfolk and Western) Railroad which he had helped to organize.

Graves' Mill was soon to have another owner. In 1882, Odin G. Clay

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 376.
16 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Early, p. 144.
died, and his property was divided among his children. One of his sons, Charles Clay, sold the home place and the mill to William E. Graves and Harvey E. Graves in 1893. The total amount of land transferred was 598 acres and the price was "Thirteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars, cash in hand paid." The estate remains today in the possession of the Graves family.

Both the mill itself and its owners had interesting connections with the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. In 1777, Robert Clark, brother-in-law of Christopher Johnson, was appointed by the Bedford County Court to purchase provisions for the wives and children of Jacob Hutts, Christopher Johnson, and William McMinimy, who were "in the service of the United States." Clark was recommended for a position as militia captain in the same year.

The period of struggle for independence, with scarcity of food, inflated currency, and chaotic economic conditions in general, was a particularly trying one for the colonists, and the milling business, as other industries, felt the pressures. When the State government resorted to the requisition system, apparently not all millers were willing to cooperate. In a letter to Captain John Pierce dated September 19, 1781, Governor Nelson wrote:

It is with the greatest concern, that I find your prospects so bad in Powhatan. The Millers and Country People must be obliged to lend their

20 Bedord County Court Records, Deed Book 71, December 23, 1893, p. 570.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., Order Book 6, July 28, 1777, p. 130.
23 Ibid., pp. 157, 187.
aid to the support of the Army. If you judge it necessary, you are hereby empowered to impress any grain, in or out of the straw, Mills, waggons, carts, Horses or negroes. If any resistance should be offered you apply to the Commanding Officer of the respective Counties for parties of the Militia..."24

All was not bleak, however. In the same month the citizens of Powhatan County "unanimously agreed to carry one fourth of their crops of wheat to the mills."25 The same letter suggested that the "millers will not complain if their mills are impressed; but are willing, if money is furnished them to buy barrels, or if coopers are detailed from the militia to make them, to work for the public."26

Another difficulty for the miller was the danger that his mill would go up in smoke, a victim of British torches. James Stevens, engaged in the milling business in Halifax County, faced that possibility when, toward the close of the Revolution, a British expedition under General William Phillips was sent to the James River and vicinity with orders to destroy all mills, warehouses, and other sources of supply for the patriot army.27 When Phillips and Benedict Arnold captured Petersburg in April, 1781, Colonel John Banister wrote to Colonel Theodoric Bland: "The enemy ... has not as yet burned my mills, but have taken all the bread and flour to

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24 "Letter of Governor Nelson to Captain John Pierce," Calendar of Virginia State Papers, II (1781), 467-468.
26 Ibid., p. 499.
27 Notes and Queries, "James Stevens," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXX (1922), 66.
the amount of £800, or £1000 ..."  

During the Civil War, one of Odin G. Clay's sons, Calhoun, a captain in the Confederacy, was killed in action. Four other ones served in the 2nd Virginia Cavalry, Army of Northern Virginia. Mr. Graves states that, according to Mrs. Sue Terrell, Union General Hunter's cavalry dumped kegs of nails into the works of Graves Mill in an attempt to immobilize them. While Civil War records do document Hunter's campaign in the environs of Bedford (then called Liberty), no specific reference to this incident can be found.

Another interesting tradition has grown up around Graves Mill. Mr. Salmon reports that Dr. John Terrell claimed that Indians once camped in the wooded section back of the mill. R. H. Early, in her Campbell County Chronicles and Family Sketches, makes reference to the presence of hallowed-out stones in the area of Graves Mill upon which it is said Indians pounded corn to make meal. A number of these stones have been found lying in Tomahawk Creek, and one may be seen on the Graves property behind the family house. Upon examining the stone, one is convinced that it was hewn by man. Water rushing over such a stone lodged in a creek bed possibly could create a smooth spoon-like depression, but it could never create the sharp rectangular depression such as this stone

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29 Early, p. 374.
30 Ibid., p. 374.
31 Ibid., p. 376.
Who hollowed out these stones is open to speculation. It is possible that an Indian could have chipped them out hundreds of years ago. Numerous arrowheads, many of which I found as a boy, suggest that a fairly well-developed Indian culture existed. The presence of Indians in the area within Campbell County is documented by the *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*. According to this source, an exploring party headed by Major William Harris and John Lederer started out in 1670 from what is now Richmond and got within a few miles of the present sight of Lynchburg. At this point, Major Harris decided to turn back toward Richmond, but Lederer continued on. After five days march through the wilderness, Lederer found himself in a village of Saponi Indians. That tribe, or some other, may very well have carved out the stones in question. It is perhaps more than just a coincidence that the creek which begins at Poplar Forest and flows past Graves Mill is called Tomahawk.

Graves' Mill itself was an impressive structure (Fig. 4). Including the basement, the foundations of which are some twenty inches thick, (Fig. 5) the mill was five stories tall, the last story breaking off in an octagonal fashion to support a huge roof of tin shingles. The solid and massive appearance of the weatherboarding was broken only by an

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32 An interesting question arises as to why these stones are in Tomahawk Creek in the first place. Perhaps Indians were wont to refine their corn on the creek banks near flowing water, but this does not explain how the stones got in the creekbed itself. It is possible that the stones were moved by white settlers after Indians had left them; but for what reason?


34 Paul Graves, interview with the author at Graves' Mill.
occasional window some of which had long since lost their panes. In the interior the heavy timbers, which were hewn with foot adzes, (Fig. 6) were morticed and pegged. The main beams were of oak, and the flooring was of heart pine. On the outside of the mill again, one saw two giant water wheels on the northwest side. Although both wheels there were of iron, in earlier years there was only one all-wooden wheel. Later the single wheel was treaded with iron much as a wagon wheel would be. Finally, the two all-iron wheels replaced the wood and iron wheel (Fig. 7).  

There was good reason, back in the days of the all-wooden wheel, for placing it on the northwest side of the mill. There no sunlight could reach the wooden sections which, soaked by the water channeled over the wheel by means of the millrace, would warp if dried out too quickly, thus damaging the wheel. 

Since Graves' Mill is on relatively high ground above Tomahawk Creek, it was necessary to build a dam a quarter-mile upstream so that the water would be on the same level as the millrace (Fig. 8). Potential energy, controlled and stored, could be utilized as needed to turn the mill wheels. 

Graves' Mill was destroyed by fire in 1967, and now no detailed measurements can be made of its structure. However, one can get a fair idea of the size and the amount of timber that went into the mill by

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35 Graves.  
36 Salmon.  
37 Ibid.  
38 Graves.
Fig. 8:
comparing it to the following list of materials used to build a three story mill in Pennsylvania: 39

Bill of scantling for a mill, thirty-two feet, three stories high; the walls of mason work.

For the First Floor

2 sills, 29 feet long, 8 by 12 inches, to lay on the walls for the joists to lie on.
48 joists, 10 feet long, 4 by 9 inches, all of timber that will last well in dampness.

For the Second Floor

2 posts, 9 feet long, 12 by 12 inches.
2 girders, 30 feet long, 14 by 16 inches.
48 joists, 10 feet long, 4 by 9 inches.

For the Third Floor

4 posts, 9 feet long, 12 by 12 inches to support the girders.
2 girder:posts, 7 feet long, 12 by 12 inches to stand on the water house.
2 girders, 53 feet long, 14 by 16 inches.
90 joists, 10 feet long, 4 by 9 inches.

For the Fourth Floor

6 posts, 8 feet long, 10 by 10 inches, to support the girders.
2 girders, 53 feet long, 13 by 15 inches.
30 joists, 10 feet long, 4 by 8 inches, for the middle tier of the floor.
60 joists, 12 feet long, 4 by 8 inches, for the outside tiers or cornice which extends 12 inches over the walls, for the rafters to stand on.
2 plates, 54 feet long, 3 by 10 inches: these lie on the top of the walls and the joists on them.

For the Roof

54 rafters, 22 feet long, 3 inches thick, 6½ wide at the bottom, and 4½ at the top end.
25 collar beams, 17 feet long, 3 by 7 inches.
7000 shingles.

For the Doors and Window Frames

12 pieces, 12 feet long, 6 by 6 inches, for door frames.
36 pieces, 8 feet long, 5 by 5 inches, for window frames.

For the Husk of a Mill with one Water Wheel and Two Pair of Stones

2 sills, 24 feet long, 12 by 12 inches.
4 corner posts, 7 feet long, 12 by 14 inches.
2 front posts, 8 feet long, 8 by 12 inches.
2 back posts, 8 feet long, 10 by 12 inches, to support the back ends of the bridge trees.
2 other back posts, 8 feet long, 8 by 8 inches.
3 tomkin posts, 12 feet long, 12 by 14 inches.
2 inner tiae, 9 feet long, 12 by 12 inches, for the outer ends of the little cog wheel shafts to rest on.
2 top pieces, 10 feet 6 inches long, 10 by 10 inches.
2 beams, 24 feet long, 16 by 16 inches.
2 bray trees, 8½ feet long, 6 by 14 inches.
2 bridge trees, 9 feet long, 10 by 10 inches.
4 planks, 8 feet long, 6 by 14 inches, for the stone bearers.
20 planks, 9 feet long, 4 by 15 inches, for the top of the husk.
2 head blocks, 7 feet long, 12 by 15 inches, for the wallower shafts to run on. They serve as spurs also for the head block for the water wheel shaft.

There were several types of water wheels used in milling: The overshot, the type at Graves' Mill, required a large wheel and a relatively high fall of water. Propulsion was achieved by water flowing into buckets at the top of the wheel. The undershot wheel received water at its bottom, and water was fed into the breast wheel at a point about mid-way between the bottom and top. The overshot wheel was the more efficient since the weight of falling water gave more momentum to the

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41 Ibid.
wheel than did the velocity and mass of a moving stream, as in the case of the undershot and breast wheels.\footnote{Eric Sloane, "The Mills of Early America," \textit{American Heritage}, VI (1955), 107. For an interesting nineteenth-century description of the behavior of water pressure and the effect of friction and eddies on the efficiency of mill wheels, see Horace Greeley, et. al., \textit{The Great Industries of the United States} (Hartford, Connecticut: J. B. Burr & Hyde, 1872), pp. 159-160.}

The amount and nature of materials that went into water wheels are interesting. The Swedish traveler Peter Kalm observed that the axletrees of New Jersey mill wheels were made of white oak, if available, and the cogs and pulleys of hickory.\footnote{Victor Clark, \textit{History of Manufactures in the United States}, I (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), p. 178.} Again statistics are available on the materials going into a Pennsylvania mill wheel, an eighteen-foot overshot:\footnote{Engart, p. 130.}

\begin{itemize}
  \item The Water Wheel
  \begin{itemize}
    \item 1 shaft, 18 feet long, 2 feet in diameter.
    \item 8 arms for the water wheel, 18 feet long, 3 by 9 inches.
    \item 16 shrouds, 8\frac{1}{2} feet long, 2 inches thick and 8 inches deep.
    \item 16 face boards, 8 feet long, 1 inch thick and 9 inches deep.
    \item 56 bucket boards, 2 feet 4 inches long and 17 inches wide.
    \item 140 feet of boards, for soaling the wheel.
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

The mill wheel was only as efficient as the stones it turned. Often the best grade of stones were imported. Cologne stones were used frequently, and the French burr was perhaps the most popular of all.\footnote{Clark, I, p. 178.}

Nicholas Creswell noted in his \textbf{Journal} that Washington's mill at Alexandria, "with a pair of Cologne, and a pair of French stones," made
as good flour as he ever saw. In 1751, an advertisement appeared in the Virginia Gazette for the sale of "two Water Grist Mills with Cullon Stones." In 1786, James Stevens went to Scotland to purchase stones for his flour mill in Halifax County.

The stones at Graves' Mill, however, were not imported. According to Mr. W. B. Salmon, miller at Graves' Mill, the mill's stones came from Brush Mountain in Virginia. There, near Price's Mill in Montgomery County, one may find several layers of millstone grit measuring 245 feet in the thickest part. This deposit was exploited for a number of years, and many mills in the Richmond area contained stones from it.

Though domestic, Graves' Mill's stones operated little differently from those of any other mill. There were always two stones within the wooden casing that collected the meal and guided it to a chute leading to the bin. The lower stone rested on the floor of the mill, while the upper stone revolved at an average rate of 120 turns per minute. The space between the stones was very narrow, and it was imperative that they should not touch, for fear of scorched meal or ruined stones, because of excess heat. Each stone was faced with a series of sickle-shaped or straight

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47 As cited from the Virginia Gazette in the William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Ser., XII (1903), 165.
48 "Steven's Diary," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXIX (1921), 385.
50 Hamilton, p. 4.
51 Ibid., p. 6.
grooves radiating from the center. When the upper stone began to revolve, the grain was caught between the opposing blades of the furrows and was pulverized, husk and all, into flour or meal which emerged at the edge of the stone.  

Millstones became dull with use and had to be redressed at regular intervals. In order to save time, everything was got ready before the stones were stopped. Picks of the best temper were sharpened; several were kept on hand. The casing was removed and the upper stone, often weighing as much as a ton, was raised, swung around by a simple crane, and laid face-up on the floor. The miller, straddling the stone with pick in both hands, commenced to make the furrows deeper and remove any high spots which might have developed. These high spots were located by using a "redstick," or straight stick coated with red clay.  

A journey to Graves' Mill must have been exciting for the young boy who was allowed to ride in the wagon with his father. For sons of Bedford County farmers, the preparation before the journey must have been interesting also. First, the grain that had been sown by hand and harvested by reap hook or cradle was separated from the chaff by beating the grain with hickory flails and then putting it through a winnowing process by pouring it from one sheet to another in a heavy wind. An alternate process consisted of placing the grain, heads turned inward, on a treading floor over

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52 Ibid., p. 5.
53 Ibid., p. 8.
54 Ibid.
55 Parker, p. 96; see also Edward Miles Riley, ed. The Journal of John Harrower: An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773–1776 (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg), pp. 102, 104.
which horses were driven until the grain separated from the straw, then passing the grain through a fan to rid it of chaff and dust.\footnote{For an excellent description of this process, see Harrower, p. 107.}

The grain was then ready for a trip to the mill. The farmer loaded his wagon, drawn by either horses or oxen, adjusted his sweat-stained hat to keep out the morning sun, headed his team in the direction of the mill, and shouted "Git up!" When the mill was in sight, a tight rein had to be kept on the horses. Mill wheels and gears made a welcome sound to men but sometimes frightened even experienced horses.\footnote{Engart, p. 105.} Arriving at the mill, the wheat was unloaded into small carts and then trucked down to a large bin level with the first floor.\footnote{Salmon.}

The miller carefully poured the grain into the hopper leading into the eye of the upper millstone (Fig. 9). It was important that the amount of grain entering the eye be regulated, lest an excess choke up the stone. That problem was solved by means of the shoe, a trough-like device that allowed only a trickle of grain to enter the eye.\footnote{Salmon.} This done, a lever was thrown opening the flood gates, and the milling process began.\footnote{Hamilton, p. 7.}

Wheat and corn were milled similarly but were kept separate in early days.\footnote{Salmon.} The process was simple. The stones ground the corn or wheat into meal or flour, and then the rough product had to be bolted, or refined. This work required a strong back. If the bolts were in the base-
ment of the mill, the flour had to be carried up to the first floor. If
the bolts were on the second floor, the chop or meal had to be carried
there. The tailings left over from the bolting, consisting of bran,
middlings, and adherent flour, were sifted again and reground.

Milling, then, in the eighteenth century was neither continuous
nor was it automatic. By 1785 Oliver Evans revolutionized the milling
industry with his invention of the elevator, a chain-like device re­
sembling a miniature rollercoaster, designed to carry the meal from one
floor to the next; the conveyor, which carried the grain from place to
place; the hopper-boy, which dried and cooled the grain; and the drill
which moved the grain much as a conveyor but with rakes instead of
buckets. In 1798 J. U. Niemcewicz, a Polish gentleman visiting Mount
Vernon, remarked about seeing "a very large mill built of stones, and an
American engine invented by Mr. Oliver Evans ... for the ventilation of
flour." Still other improvements came in the 1870's with the "new pro­
cess signaled by the use of rollers made of porcelain or of chilled iron
which took the place of the ancient millstone.

Graves' Mill was affected by the milling revolution too. In the

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62 Benjamin William Dedrick, Practical Milling (Chicago: National
Miller, 1925), p. 22.
63 Edgar, p. 147.
64 Dedrick, p. 22.
65 J. Leander Bishop, A History of American Manufactures From 1608
Ladies' Association, 1940), p. 11.
67 Peter T. Dondlinger, The Book of Wheat: An Economic History and
Practical Manual of the Wheat Industry (New York: Orange Judd
1820's Odin G. Clay had the single mill wheel treaded with iron, and just before the 1900's, William E. Graves had the single wheel removed and replaced by two wheels made completely of iron. Graves also put in the most up-to-date flour milling equipment, consisting of machinery made by Allis-Chalmers and the Case Company. Prior to the 1900's three reels were used to bolt the wheat. A reel consisted of a round frame about seven or eight feet long, over which was stretched silk of various grades of thickness. One of these reels was replaced by a sifter, another instance of William Graves' increased mechanizing of the mill works.

The milling process at Graves Mill during the nineteenth century was begun with the opening of the gate to the millrace. Water rushed over the wheels, and the front wheel (the wheel nearest the millrace) was thrown into gear. A shaft connecting the wheel to the wheat stones on the inside of the mill put them into operation immediately. At the bottom of the wheat bin a paddle pushed the wheat into an elevator (Fig. 10) which transported the grain up to the top floor where it was dumped into a spout leading down to the separator on the second floor (Fig. 11). From there the grain was carried down to the receiving scales on the main floor, was weighed and then dumped into a bin underneath the scales. The grain was then carried by an elevator to the top floor again, only to descend to the second floor where it passed through polishing machines. The polished grain then returned to the basement. At this point the grain went into another elevator and was lifted back to the stock hopper on the

68 Graves.
69 Ibid.
70 I am indebted to Mr. Salmon for the following complete description of the processing of both wheat and corn.
Fig. 10:

Fig. 11:
first floor. There the grain entered a spout leading to the first stand of rollers on the same floor, this stand being one in a series of three rollers inside steel casings, corrugated rollers in the first and second sets, and smooth rollers in the third set (Fig. 12). An automatic feeder on the rollers gauged the right amount of wheat to be admitted at any one time. After passing through the first stand of rollers, the wheat descended to the basement and entered an elevator leading up into the first section of the sifter on the third floor, called the scalping section. Constant vibrations of the sifter caused part of the flour to fall down on a gauze. Flour that was not fine enough to penetrate this gauze went back to the second stand of rollers for further reduction. The rest dropped down on a bolting cloth. Flour that was too bulky to penetrate the bolting cloth "tailed over" and went back to the smooth rollers to be reduced. The flour went through still further processing by means of a disintegrator which smoothed and sifted the flour (Fig. 13). Part of the flour then went to the packer (Fig. 14) on the first floor, the shoot of which was controlled by a spring handle. Handle released, the flour poured into either barrels or sacks and was ready for the farmer.

The processing of corn was far simpler. For this operation the grinding stones continued to be used in the nineteenth century. The second paddle wheel, to which the two stones were connected by gears, controlled the corn processing. As the stones turned, about a half-bushel of corn was poured into the hopper, and soon the customer saw his meal being deposited into a big chest sitting on the floor next to the stones. The miller used a paddle to scoop up the meal, dumped it into sacks, and loaded it onto the customer's wagon.

The activity of eighteenth- as well as nineteenth-century farmers
Fig. 13:

Fig. 14:
while waiting for their flour or meal reveals much about the pattern of life of their day. The center of attention was the mill office, usually occupying an enclosed corner of the first floor. Here the farmers gathered to discuss agricultural methods and county politics, to swap jokes reserved for men's ears only, and to tell an occasional tale that wound up somewhat taller with each telling. Mr. Salmon recalls a Mr. Mays who liked to talk about his fox-hunting excursions. Although Mr. Salmon did not say so, one can imagine some farmer topping Mays by boasting how he talked that 'possum out of a tree.

Running a grist mill entailed obligations. The primary responsibility was getting grain processed on time. Milling was an important business. Graves' Mill was a one-barrel-per-hour mill, producing a barrel of flour in about 55 minutes, and processing about 3,000 bushels of wheat per year. Nature dictated that this would not be a steady production. When the rains failed and water behind the dam reached low levels, milling operations had to cease. When rain did come, there was much grinding to catch up. Consequently, the mill often operated by and night, taking advantage of the swollen waters. Mr. Salmon devised an ingenious system whereby he was able to maintain watch over the operations during the night and yet snatch intervals of sleep. He constructed a cot-like apparatus next to the packing machine. The packer had an automatic cut-off

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Complaints about the weather were numerous in connection with milling. A Revolutionary Army order in 1779 cited "the Extremi
driness of the weather which has prevented many mills from grinding...." (Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXI (1913), p. 378.)
device on it which, when the barrel was full of flour, would trip a lever throwing the packer out of gear. Attached to this lever was a staff upon which Mr. Salmon would prop his foot while dozing. When the lever kicked, the barrel would be full and he would be awakened.

The customer had obligations too, because each of them was required to wait his turn for his wheat or corn to be processed. This requirement sometimes caused conflict. Often fifteen or twenty wagons were lined up waiting to be loaded or unloaded. Mr. Salmon remembers a Dr. R--------becoming impatient. The doctor wanted to pick up his flour but had to wait for the other wagons. He suggested that he did not have all day to wait, whereupon Mr. Salmon informed him that he could wait his turn or come back later.74

Customers had to pay a toll for services received at the mill. Mr. Salmon's standard toll was 5½ bushels of wheat for each barrel of flour milled.75 There was good reason for charging toll. Milling could be a risky business. There was always the danger that flour stored in the mill might suffer a loss of moisture. Rats that escaped extermination were also a threat. In addition, it was imperative during dry periods when milling had to be stopped to have extra flour on hand.76

Graves' Mill meant a great deal to the people of the Campbell community. However, this community was soon to feel the impact of change. The appearance of the automobile in the Bedford City streets in 1903 was prophetic. The closing of many mills during the first half of the

74Salmon.
75Ibid.
76Ibid.
twentieth century was evidence of the change. Cities and towns were growing rapidly. Larger mills were established from which merchants found it more convenient to buy their flour and meal.\textsuperscript{77} Graves' Mill was no exception. As Lynchburg grew, merchants were looking to big mills for service. Mr. Salmon expressed it simply but succinctly: "Things just played out." Milling operations went on a two-day-a-week basis in the early 1950's and the mill closed down shortly after 1956.\textsuperscript{78}

Thus one more mill has been relegated to comparative obscurity at the hands of progress. Yet the memory of Graves' Mill and its significance in history are anything but obscure in the minds of those people whose ancestors were closely connected with it. One is reminded of the remark made by Herbert H. Beck as he read a paper on a mill in Pennsylvania to the Lancaster County Historical Society:\textsuperscript{79}

\begin{quote}
All that we could possibly see or hear today would reveal but the merest experiences that were in the lives of those who have had their day and gone their way about an old place like this.

Aware of this fact, that at its best history is often fragmentary, that the most it can do at any time is to suggest pathways for the fertile imagination to follow, the reader turns with more confidence to remind the audience of the aesthetic charm of the place.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{77}Lula Jeter Parker, \textit{Scrapbook \#5 on Bedford County} (unpublished: on file in Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, Virginia, p. 18.)

\textsuperscript{78}Salmon.

CHAPTER II

MILLING AND THE MILLER: A STUDY IN LEGALISM

One will find in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* an allusion to the following proverb: "Every miller has a thumb of gold." Another old saying described the miller's hogs as always the fattest in the neighborhood. Since there were few yellow thumbs around and plenty of fat hogs, it is not surprising that millers were not always above suspicion by their customers and the magistrates. In fact, stories abound of milling methods which were somewhat less than ethical. For example, a popular method among some millers was to build a square casing around the millstones instead of the normal round one. The ground grain would collect in the corners of the square, the customer would be cheated out of part of his flour, and the miller's hogs would get even fatter.

Whether millers were more dishonest than other tradesmen is debatable (businessmen, from money changers to Indian traders to oil magnates, have been discredited throughout the centuries), but for evidence that laws were necessary to restrain milling practices, one need look

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3 Magee, p. 2.
only at the code. As early as A.D. 485, authorities saw the necessity of curbing the miller's penchant for using public water to drive his mill. An enactment of Zeno in that year stated:

A thing which it is obvious was forbidden by the old imperial regulations, and which, as every one knows, has been decreed for the future about such matters: - That any suburban farm, bath, watermill, or garden, for the service of which the public water has been drawn off; or any of these places near aqueduct and having trees planted injurious to the aqueduct, then to whatsoever place, man, or house it may belong, it shall be liable to confiscation and may rightly be claimed by the imperial Treasury.

Anglo-Saxon law made occasional reference to mills, one in particular warning against encroachments of mills upon the Roman highways crossing the country. In thirteenth-century England, when control of milling practices came under the jurisdiction of the Lord High Admiral, the following law was entered in the Black Book of the Admiralty in 1216:

Let inquiry be made of all those who set up mills on water whether the streams of the said mills gather sand, stones, or earth whereby the port near the said mills is impaired and in danger to be spoiled; and if any one is convicted thereof by twelve men, the Admiral shall send his warrant to the sheriff that (by reason of the obedience he oweth to the Admiral) he pull down the said mills; and the owners thereof shall be fined to the king.

With emigration of colonists from England and the sea-change of institutions to America, laws were enacted in Virginia similar to those of the homeland. By 1645 the number of mills in the colony had reached

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5 Ibid., p. 98.
6 Ibid., p. 182.
such proportions that legislative provisions were necessary. Many such provisions were similar to that decreed by the Amelia Court in 1745. Early settlers in Amelia and Goochland Counties had found the Appomattox River to be their lifeline "for carrying tobacco in boats seventy miles above the falls," roads which had been hewn through the wilderness being poor. All would have been well had not the river become impeded by scattered mill dams and stone stops. The Court directed that owners of dams maintain adequate passages for boats and other vessels, but apparently this order had little effect. The next year Amelia County petitioned the Virginia Assembly for the passage of a law requiring those who owned dams to build "convenient passages" or else suffer the penalty of destruction of their dams.

Mill owners in the area wasted no time in presenting a counter petition stating that they had permission of the House of Burgesses to maintain such dams across the Appomattox, but their appeal was not successful. The Assembly of 1745-46, deciding in the public interest, directed the county courts at Henrico, Prince George, Amelia, Goochland, and Albemarle to order the demolition of all stone stops, hedges, and mill dams along the James and Appomattox rivers, unless the owners could devise locks or other effective means of passage before October 1. For those dams

9Ibid.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., p. 469.
which had to be destroyed, four judges were appointed to appraise their value, and on their report to the Assembly, that body would provide adequate compensation to the owners. 12

Other county courts were plagued with controversies over mills. On November 7, 1795, Thomas Jefferson wrote to the heirs of Bennett Henderson: 13

Be pleased to take notice that on the 24th of November at the dwelling house of Thomas Morgan between the hours of eleven and one in the day, I shall proceed to take the deposition of the said Thomas Morgan by virtue of a commission issued from the high court of Chancery in a suit instituted by me against you in the sd court concerning the reflowing of backwater on my mill seat occasioned by your mill dam.

The Court decided in favor of Jefferson and ordered the restraint of the Henderson heirs "from flooding the mill seat of Jefferson, Plaintiff." 14

Laws were necessary not only for control of mills in operation, but for regulating their construction as well. The first thing that had to be done, after choosing the sight, was to obtain a writ from the county court granting permission to build a grist mill. To the frontier especially, and even to the older settlements, a permit to build a mill or to add extensions was a valuable asset. 15 On September 7, 1798, James Talley of Richmond wrote the following persuasive letter to Governor James

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12 Ibid.
14 Ibid., p. 353.
Wood, Jr. at Richmond in an attempt to get a writ.\textsuperscript{16}

Being the owner of a lot on the So. side of the canal opposite to Mr. Paine's Coal yard, it is my wish to erect a Grist-Mill thereon. I therefore take the liberty to ask of you and the Hon'ble the Council, permission that the water from my mill be suffered to pass down a run which is conveyed under the canal by an arch and thro' my lott and a part of the public Ground to the River. It is presumed the additional water which will be necessary for my mill will not in any manner injure the ground belonging to the Commonwealth, particularly as there is a bottom of rock almost the whole way, and it is not desired that the course of the present run of water should be changed. Should it be thought proper that the ground should be viewed by a person skilled in such business, I will attend at any time and explain my plan and point out the course for discharge of the water from the mill to the River.

Getting permission to build a mill was not always easy. When John David Wilper sent a petition to the Augusta County Court stating that he had been at considerable trouble in coming from the northward into those parts, had rented three lots in the newly settled town of Staunton through which ran a good stream of water, and desired to build a grist and fulling mill, John Lewis, planning to erect a mill in the vicinity, opposed it.\textsuperscript{17} Since building a mill was justified only by a considerable density of population,\textsuperscript{18} Lewis may have been in the right. At any rate, the case


\textsuperscript{17}"Augusta County: Scraps From the Records," \textit{Virginia Historical Register}, III (1850), 76.

was taken before the General Court. 19

Legal aspects of milling were not all negative. Frequently attractive inducements were offered to persons who would erect grist mills. As early as 1639, for example, the Virginia Assembly directed the lieutenant governor and the council to spend as much as 10,000 pounds of tobacco to persuade someone to build a mill. 20 Mills being considered public utilities, provision was made for the exercise of eminent domain in order to procure suitable sites. "An Act Concerning Water Mills," passed in October, 1748, stipulated: 21

That where any person, intending to build a water mill, on some convenient run, shall have land only on one side thereof, such person shall petition the court of that county wherein the land on the other side shall lie, for one acre to be laid off for such use, which court is hereby authorized and required upon such petition, at the costs and charges of the petitioner to issue their order to the sheriff, commanding him to summon a jury of twelve freeholders of the vincinage, to meet upon the land petitioned for,...diligently view and examine the said land, and the lands adjacent thereto, on both sides of the run, in the same or the next county, which may be affected or laid under water by building such mill, together with the timber and other conveniences thereon, and shall report the same, with the true value of the acre, petitioned

19"Augusta County: Scraps From the Records," p. 76. For a reference to John D. Wilper's petition to build a grist mill, see Lyman Chalkley's, Records of Augusta County, 1745-1800. Volume one, which abstracts the order books, states that on May 30, 1751, the petition was rejected because John Lewis noted that he was going to build a mill in the vicinity. No record of the General Court's decision of the case is extant, since the records of the said court were destroyed by fire on April 3, 1865, during the evacuation of Richmond.

20 Gray, I, p. 36.

21 Hening's Statutes at Large, VI, 55-56.
for, and of the damages to the party holding the same, or to any other person or persons, under their hands and seals; which report shall be returned by the sheriff, to the court whence such order issued, and if thereupon it appears reasonable to such court, and if it takes not away houses, orchards, or other immediate conveniences, then they may, and are hereby authorised and impowered to such acre to the petitioner....

Moreover, if the person appropriating the land did not begin construction of a mill within one year, and complete it within three, as well as keep the mill in good repair once it was finished, the acre would revert to the former owner, or his heirs. 22

Other laws concerned mills and their immediate surroundings. If, during the construction of a mill, anyone sustained an injury directly attributable to the building of the mill, the injured party could bring suit against the owner or owners. In case a mill was destroyed by fire, flood, or any other means, the owner was given three years in which to make repairs. 23 If the owner was disabled or imprisoned, he was given liberty to make repairs within three years after such disability was removed. 24 Liberty was granted, in addition, for neighbors to make fair game of the miller's hogs in certain instances, mainly that "if any hogs, belonging to the owners or occupier of [a] mill, shall be found running at large, it shall be lawful for the proprietors of the land adjoining to such mill, to kill, or cause to be killed or destroyed, all such hogs." 25

The business methods employed in milling were also subject to regu-

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 58.
24 Ibid., p. 57.
25 Ibid., p. 59.
atory laws. Most important of these acts was the regulation of toll. Although laws regulating the amount of toll were passed in Virginia as early as 1645, it was not until the 1750’s that such laws became very strict. An early law had set the limit on toll charges at one-sixth of the Indian corn brought by the customer for grinding. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the rate was still one-sixth for corn, but wheat also carried a toll charge. The following law, enacted in 1748, stated that:

all millers shall well and sufficiently grind the grain brought to their mills, and in due turn as the same shall be brought, and may take for toll one eighth part of the grain and no more: And every miller or occupier of a mill, who shall not in due turn, or take or exact more toll, shall for every such offence, forfeit and pay fifteen shillings to the party injured, recoverable with costs before a justice of the peace, of the county where such offence shall be committed; and where the miller shall be an imported servant, or slave, he shall upon the first conviction, for such offense, receive thirty lashes, and upon a second conviction forty lashes upon his bare back, well laid, in lieu of the forfeiture aforesaid; but upon a third conviction, his master or owner shall be liable to pay fifteen shillings, and so for every offence, by such servant or slave afterwards committed: Provided always, That every owner or occupier of a mill may grind his, or her own grain at any time.


29 Hening, VI, 58-59.
Regulatory laws were concerned with the inspection of flour as well as the packing and branding of the finished product. In 1765 a law was passed requiring the miller, if a white man, to take an oath that the flour intended for exportation was "fine, clean, and not mixed with meal of Indian corn, pease, or any other grain or pulse, and that his casks [were] justly tared to the best of his knowledge." Furthermore, the law decreed that the duly appointed inspector should examine both the casks and the flour contained in them. If the flour was found to be acceptable, the inspector stamped the cask with "the letter "Y" for Virginia, the first letter of his own christian name, his whole surname at length, the word fine, and the gross, tare and next weight thereof." For his services the inspector received three pence for every barrel containing 220 pounds, and six pence for every barrel of greater weight. Should the inspector neglect his duty, he would be obliged to pay twenty shillings for each offence, recoverable by the informer at the office of the justice of the peace in the county in which the offence was committed.

Apparently loopholes were found in these milling laws, because they had to be revised again and again. In February of 1772, a new law added the requirement that every owner of a mill keep a manifest of all

30 Hening, VIII, 143.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 144. The same law offered a practical solution to the problem of the miller-inspector who might be reluctant to reject his own flour or that of fellow millers by decreeing that "from and after the passing of this act no miller shall be appointed an inspector of flour."

For comments on other laws such as the one requiring standard size scales at all mills and another requiring carriers of flour to protect it against bad weather see Klushman, p. 32.

33 Ibid.
casks processed, showing markings, numbers, and net weight of each.\textsuperscript{34} The law also stipulated that all weights and measures at mills be checked by appointed inspectors once a year.\textsuperscript{35} An act passed in November, 1781, began with the following: \textsuperscript{36}

Whereas the law now in force for one inspection of flour, is found insufficient for giving due encouragement to so valuable a branch of our commerce in guarding against abuses: and as sound policy requires that our flour trade should be put upon a respectable footing, which can only be done by establishing such regulations as will prevent the manufacturer from bringing to market any flour that will not pass the public inspections with credit, or entitle the merchant to preference in every foreign market: Be it therefore enacted ..., That so much of the act passed in May, [1778], as relates to the inspection of flour, be, and the same hereby repealed.

That law then made the towns of Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Richmond, Petersburg, and West-Point official inspection points. It also laid down specifications for the construction of barrels containing the flour: sound and well-seasoned wood, sufficiently thick; twelve hoops to a barrel; each barrel to contain no less than 196 pounds nor more than 204 pounds of flour.\textsuperscript{37} For millers and shippers who lived in places too distant from the regular inspection points, inspectors were appointed at New-Castle, York, Falmouth, Port-Royal, Hobbs-Hole, Colchester, Dumfries, Manchester, Osborne's, Pokahuntus, Nonomy, Broadway, Low-Point in Surrey, Suffolk,

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 512.
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., x, 496-97.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 497.
South-Quay, and Norfolk.  

By 1787, the list of inspection points had grown to include Louisville, Morgan's Town, Clarkesburg, Smithfield, Fort Wheeling, Hanover-Town, Portsmouth, and Lynchburg.  

Perhaps the most interesting laws concerned the miller's somewhat unique place in society. As one writer has suggested, the miller seemed "to have had a split personality - at least in the public mind." Millers might be rogues or they might, as in at least one case, be prominent planters, but they were an important part of the fabric of colonial society. It was simply a case of any shortcomings the miller might have versus the miller's indispensability. For hungry frontiersmen, the latter decidedly outweighed the former.  

Law, as usual, followed the practical bent. While some codes were instituted to restrain the miller, others were passed to keep him at home. One of the best ways of doing that was to prevent him from showing up at muster. Militia musters were often gala affairs, as one of William Hogarth's paintings on the subject clearly shows. Sabers made good turn-sprits for roasting fat hens over a fire, and ample bottles of brandy or rum were usually brought along. With all the ingredients for merriment

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38 Ibid.  
39 Ibid., XII, 515.  
40 Magee, p. 19.  
41 See Joseph S. Ewing, "The Correspondence of Archibald McCall and George McCall, 1777-1783," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXIII (1965), 312-353. Archibald McCall was both owner and operator of a large merchant mill for manufacture of flour in Essex County near Church Road Swamp. Next to the mill was his plantation consisting of 502 acres. He owned other land at Clydeside Plantation on Piscataway Creek.  
42 Magee, p. 19.
to be had, any miller who attended muster was likely to be absent from his mill for a long time. Therefore laws like the following were passed:

Be it enacted, by the governor, council, and burgesses, of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same, That from and after the publication of this act, the colonial or chief officer of the militia of every county have full power and authority to list all male persons whatsoever, from sixteen to sixty years of age within his respective county, to serve in horse or foot, as in his discretion he shall cause and think reasonable, having regard to the ability of each person, he appoints to serve in the horse, and to order and place them and every of them under the command of such captain in the respective counties of their abode, as he shall think fitt.

Provided nevertheless, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to give any power or authority to any colonel or chief officer, to list any person that shall be, or shall have been of her majesty's council in this colony, or any person that shall be, or shall have been speaker of the house of burgesses, or any person that shall be, or shall have been her majesty's attorney general, or any person that shall be, or shall have been a justice of the peace within this colony, or any person that shall have born any military commission within this colony as high as the commission of captain, or any minister, or the clerk of the general court for the time being, or any county court clerk during his being such, or any miller who hath a mill in keeping, or any servant by importation, or any slave, but that all and every such person or persons exempted from serving either in horse or foot.

Obviously at least a few millers continued to be attracted by the militia exercises, for in 1783, a law stated that any exempted miller who "shall presume to appear at the muster, or in any muster field whatsoever, on the day on which such muster shall be appointed; the party so offending,

43Hening, III, 336.
shall, for every offence forfeit and pay ten shillings, or one hundred pounds of tobacco." 44

A study of the laws pertaining to mills and milling reveals a surprising amount of state control during the eighteenth century. It provides also a clue to the social position of the miller. Law reflected much about society's estimation of the groups included within the codes. Regulations intent upon keeping the miller at his mill also reflected the pragmatic attitude of colonial Americans; the miller could serve society far better by staying close to his grinding stones. However, this avenue of approach is only a beginning. Additional insight is needed into both the social and economic positions of the miller. The final chapter will attempt to provide this insight.

44 Ibid., V, 22. Practicality, at least as far as the militia was concerned, had its limits. By May, 1780, millers were no longer able to claim exemptions from the military. (Arthur J. Alexander, "Exemptions From Military Service in the Old Dominion," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LIII (1943), 167.)
WANTED - GOOD MILLERS: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POSITION OF THE MILLER IN VIRGINIA SOCIETY

Since good millers were often hard to find - and to keep - mill owners frequently had to search diligently for someone to operate their mills. President George Washington, in danger of losing his miller, found it necessary to get Tobias Lear to do his searching for him. He instructed Lear to seek the advice of Oliver Evans in Pennsylvania concerning a reasonable wage for a first-class miller. Washington's miller had asked for an increase in wages and the President was intent upon replacing him should his demands prove unreasonable. The following letter of Lear to Evans in 1792 reveals much about what was expected of millers on the part of the mill owners and also the status of millers in society.¹

Sir,

The President presuming from your general acquaintance with the Mills and Millers, that you will be able to give him the best information of the annual sum for which he can obtain a first-rate miller, that is, one capable of taking charge of a merchant mill, for his Mill in Virginia, in addition to the perquisites which he allows to his present miller, and which will be stated has directed me to write to you for that purpose.

* * * * *

The present miller by his agreement (which would also be expected from any other) is to

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superintend a Cooper's shop, which is within a few rods of the mill, where two negro men and a boy are kept at work, - and to work at the business himself when he is not actually engaged in the mill. He is likewise to do any small repairs in the mill which may be necessary, such as putting in cogs etc. and such things as do not require the aid of a professed Mill-Wright. The duties at this mill are far from being heavy; for from the month of April to the month of November there is scarcely water enough to grind for the President's own people - and at other times there is not always enough to keep her employed. But a Miller who may be engaged must not calculate from these circumstances, upon being idle any part of the time; for it is the President's intention, if practicable, to turn such streams into his Mill-Race as will keep her going at all times - and if that should not be done, the Cooper's business will give employment to an industrious man. As to the situation of the Mill etc. your brother who was there last fall, can give the best information.

Upon this view of the matter, the President wishes you to let him know for what annual sum, in addition to the before mentioned perquisites, he could be able to obtain such a miller as is before mentioned: - and likewise to inform him of the wages and perquisites (if any) that are given to such a person at the Brandy Wine and other noted mills.

The President will be thankful for this information as soon as it can be obtained, in order that he may be able therefrom to make arrangements with respect to his mill immediately. If you know of any complete Miller that can be obtained about the last of May next - you will be so good as to let the President know his name, abode - and all other qualities; the first of June being the day when the year for which his miller is engaged, expires, he must determine three months before that time whether he shall engage him for another year, or get a new one. A married man with a small family would be preferred to a single one, as his inducements to be absent would be less.

Tobias Lear

Apparently the only problem with Washington's miller was that he wanted increased pay. Records indicate that other millers presented considerably greater problems. Washington's first miller, whose name was
Roberts, craved alcohol even more than money, and finally Washington, unable to endure his intolerable behavior any longer, had to dismiss him in 1785.² Numerous advertisements like the one that appeared in the Virginia Gazette made the following stipulation in hiring a miller:³

Wanted, a Miller that understands the management of a Merchant Mill. A good Recommendation will be necessary.

William Byrd stated in a letter to John Custis in 1711 that John Bates had given the miller who served him last "an ill character."⁴ George McCall complained to Archibald McCall in 1778 that since millers Braxton and Reynolds were put in possession of the former's mill, the gears had been damaged and the mill was standing idle.⁵ On October 3, 1761, James Gordon went to his mill and found his new miller, Tom, with whom he was well pleased. A week later Tom proved to be not so dependable. Gordon "found the miller Tom very unwell; [Tom] is afraid Sambo has poisoned him."⁶

All millers were not disreputable, however. Youen Carden, for example was an excellent miller who remained with Jefferson from 1808 to 1824.⁷ Jacob McConathy, when he moved from Fairfax, Virginia to

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²Ibid., p. 32.
³The Virginia Gazette, 22 August 1771.
⁵Joseph S. Ewing, "The Correspondence of Archibald McCall and George McCall, 1777-1783," Ibid., LXXIII (1965), 339.
Kentucky about 1797, carried the following letter of recommendation with him:  

Fairfax Co. Va. To all whom it may concern...

That the bearer Jacob ... miller came well Recommended into [these parts] ... three years ... last 
... has been faithful honest Peadeable and sober 
and as he is desireous to move to Caintucky we 
think it our duty to give him a few lines of 
Recommendation as a good miller fully acquainted 
with the manufacture of wheat & grinding other 
grain to our satisfaction. Given under our hand 
this tenth day of April 1796.

John & Wm Sheppard

Archibald McCall, planter-miller, has already been mentioned, and at least 
one miller was a parson also. That distinction belonged to Parson James 
Craig of Cumberland Parish who, between sermons, was active in grinding 
corn at his own mill for the Virginia forces. He was so active, in fact, 
that he was arrested by Colonel Tarleton, but was released after a peti-
tion signed by a hundred citizens asked the Governor to have him ex-
changed.  

Whether good or bad the miller was, as we have seen, the hub of 
rural society. He was, in the words of Eric Sloane, "America's first in-
dustrial inventor. He was builder, banker, businessman, and host to the 
countryside." Being at the center of society, he could afford to be 
temperamental as Thurston R. Hopkins, who made a study of early twentieth-
century English gristmillers, found out. Assuming human nature has 
changed little, Hopkin's findings go a long way toward explaining why the

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8"Jacob McConathy's Letter of Recommendation," William and Mary 
Quarterly, 1st Ser., XXVII (1919), 247.

9"The Planting of the Church in Virginia," Ibid., 2nd Ser., X 
(1930), 342.

(1955), 104.
eighteenth-century miller could be both loved and hated at the same time:

I have met and known to some extent more than a few millers of one class or another - wind-millers, watermillers, and steam-millers and I should describe the breed as decidedly temperamental.... You will agree with me that the water-miller is the most interesting type, of which there are many variations.

* * *

I have met many of the pessimistic kind. They frown as they meet you at the door; they listen doubtfully as you explain to them that you are writing a book on mills; apparently disbelieve that there is anyone in the world so mad as to write such a book, or become very suspicious that you are looking for lost treasure in their millponds. They are pensive, saturnine men, who look as if they met in secret caves to plot the downfall of the world. They look so fixedly before them into another world that you wonder how they ever see anyone who calls to trade with them. Grim, grey-eyed men, they take you around their mills as if they were taking you to Fentonville to be hanged, and were glad to do so.

Try not your latest jokes on these fellows; flash no temperamental flattery on the gloomy miller. He will slowly turn the betting brows of his dark, resentful eyes on you, and you will wish to cut the interview and take a header into the mill-pond. But always when you spend time with them you will find them lovable fellows. Once break through the hard shell of the water-miller's moroseness and you will find a staunch heart and a certain calm wisdom.

Apparently there were some dramatists in Virginia who were able to penetrate the miller's character well enough to find him the subject for good comedy. In May, 1768, the Virginia Gazette announced the debut of a comedy to which was added a farce called The Miller of Mansfield. The all-star cast included Mr. Verling as the King, Mr. Parker as the Miller, and Mr. Godwin in the role of Lord Lurewell. Tickets were to be had at

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Rathell's store or at the theater. Curtain time was 7 o'clock.\textsuperscript{12} 

Thus far the term "miller" has been used to refer to the actual operator of a mill. However, the term has been used loosely in the past, and in order to avoid confusion the various meanings should be explained. In early days when mills were small, the miller was often both owner and operator.\textsuperscript{13} He usually had one or two assistants working under his orders or a couple of apprentices.\textsuperscript{14} As mills became larger, owners were no longer millers in the full sense of the term. The owner, finding that the business aspects of milling occupied all of his time, now hired millers to do the grinding and oversee the milling operations.\textsuperscript{15} The miller had thus become a hired laborer, contracting with the owner for limited periods and receiving instructions from the owner.

Categories are always subject to exceptions. Some millers continued to be owners and operators. Particularly in the Valley, where the plantation system did not prevail and small farms predominated, wheat rather than tobacco was the main crop.\textsuperscript{16} Mills there were usually operated by one person or family.\textsuperscript{17} Most notable were the Germans who preferred the limestone soils of the Valley and operated numerous flour

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] The \textit{Virginia Gazette} (Purdie and Dixon) 12 May 1768.
\item[14] Ibid.
\item[15] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
German millers were in a very real sense the most useful of the country specialists. Following the tradition which had been a part of the life of their European ancestors for centuries, they received grain brought in farmers' wagons pulled overland from miles around and ground the corn and wheat for local custom.

There exists a fairly extensive description of at least one mill-owning-operating English family, the Bickley family: Charles Bickley, born in 1753 in Russell County, migrated to the Clinch River area when he was seventeen. A member of the "Clinch settlement" where Daniel Boone stayed from time to time, he acquired 264 acres of land on the river. Nearby he built a grist and saw mill. During the Revolution, Bickley became a private and fought under Colonel William Campbell at King's Mountain. Later he was a surveyor and worked on the construction of the "Road to Kentuck." Upon his death, his son John took over operations of the Bickley mills and added cabinet shops and carding machines.

The miller as operative-non-owner was the more common type, especially in the Tidewater and the Piedmont where the plantation system flourished. Within this group were included two other types: the hireling and the slave. The former made up a small artisan class including, in addition to millers, weavers, spinners, carpenters, bricklayers, coopers,
and jobbers. Often the artisans were assisted by slaves who were expected to learn the trade well enough within a number of years to take over the duties of milling. Such was the case on Robert Carter's plantation at Nomini. Captain Richard Littlepage of Cumberland Plantation in New Kent County used slaves at his mill also, and John Harrower in a letter to his wife made mention of a slave girl who was "the Miller's wife on the next plantation." Usually a slave was eager to attain a position such as miller or cooper because it meant an increase in status among his peers and partial or total exemption from field work.

Both the artisan and the slave received directions from the owner of the plantation or his overseer, depending largely upon the size and number of plantations a planter owned. On Carter's plantation at Nomini, each overseer was assigned a specified number of slaves for whom he had to purchase a certain amount of corn and then send it to the plantation mill to be ground. Jefferson, although he had overseers at each of his plantations, liked to keep watch over operations himself, so much so that he

21Louis Morton, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall: A Tobacco Planter of the Eighteenth Century (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial

22Ibid.


26Morton, p. 149.
personally supervised the construction of a number of his mills in Albemarle County. 27

The term "planter" requires analysis. To contemporaries the term "planter" meant any person who planted; little regard was given to how much he planted or his economic status. 28 Actually, two types may be included in the technical meaning: large planters like Jefferson, Washington, and the Carters and their small-planter neighbors such as William Taylor, James Webb, and Christopher Johnson. The distinction is important, for as Aubrey C. Land, a recent student of the economics of eighteenth-century Chesapeake society, observes: 29

...the great planters had roles different in kind from those of the small producers. They were not, in other words, small planters writ large.

Except for the graceless term, "entrepreneur," no designation quite fits this Chesapeake type. "Merchant" suggests too much the countinghouse and blue-water commerce. Yet the handful of men who came to the top of the economic pile in Maryland and Virginia during the last eight decades of the old empire won their wealth in ways quite like their mercantile counterparts to the north and by exercise of the same talents. But always, too, they had a foot in tobacco production.... Whatever the term describing their twofold commitment, these men of enterprise took advantage of the investment-price-profit spiral as they provided the Chesapeake some of the needed commercial services.

Land further points out that local debts held by the large planters are not seen, while the debts due British merchants, a fraction of the whole, show clear and

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27 Bathe, p. 124.


29 Ibid., pp. 475-478.
sparkling. But for the provincial holders they were solid assets, as reliable as those held by the British, and not mere paper values. They represented in the final analysis the created capital — the houses, barns, wharves, fences, orchards, ships, gristmills, sawmills — of a century when the rate of capital formation was high. 30

The fact that planters could engage in such economic pursuits is evidence that an agricultural transition had occurred to a degree in much of Virginia. Tobacco was being replaced by wheat during the latter half of the eighteenth century, particularly because of the settlement of the Piedmont. 31 Both Washington and Jefferson encouraged the growing of grains, and the following letter which the latter received in 1793 from Robert Gamble, a merchant in Staunton, must have been good news indeed: 32

Sir:

...As a Virginian, I am truly anxious that our markets should not be always dependant on Philadelphia or any other part. Our planters are turning farmers. Our mills make flour that is not surpassed by any in America. In 4 years the 3 little counties of Augusta, Rockbridge, and Rockingham, which is contiguous to your seat, — from having but one manufacturing mill only has upwards of 100 merchant mills in great perfection, and our adventuring farmers are coming with their Batteaus loaded down James River thro' the Blue Ridge within 3 & 4 miles of Lexington. Yesterday and today I recd upwards of 500 bushels sent to me by this mode, and the men assure me 2000 will come the same route in this month exclusive of the quantities that now come to Milton & Warren in your neighborhood over Rockfish Gap. Jefferson himself wrote in the same year that in spite of the distance to markets and lack of mills, Albemarle County was "going entirely into the

30 Ibid., p. 479.
31 Gray, I, p. 608.
Trade in flour was expanding as well. By the 1780's, Richmond and Petersburg were well-established milling centers. Norfolk and Alexandria, too, had become important wheat cities. As early as 1763, Lieutenant Governor Fauquier commented on the shift in wheat trade from the northern part of the colony to the southern, observing that the James River and the Town of Norfolk "almost wholly engaged the West India and Grain trade." Wheat exports reached as high as 5,357,000 bushels in the decade ending with the death of Washington. Bishop's *History of American Manufactures* estimates the exports from Virginia in the ten years before the Revolution at 800,000 bushels of wheat and 600,000 bushels of Indian corn every two years, Petersburg alone during that period manufacturing approximately 26,000 barrels of flour annually. In 1791, 10,090 barrels of flour were exported from City Point; by 1793 the figure had risen to 28,877. The total exports from the colonies in 1770 were, including bread flour and meal, 458,368 barrels valued at $2,362,190. For 1791 the United States total export was 619,681 barrels.

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33 Gray, I, p. 608.
35 Gray, I, p. 168.
36 Ibid., II, p. 817.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
General statistics tell only a part of the story, however. Economic records of specific mills are important also. The initial cost of constructing a mill had to be deducted from any profits the owner might make, a cost that could be quite high, especially in the case of merchant mills. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, Edward Chisman erected a mill in York County. His expenses included £37 13 0 for the stones and iron, imported from England, and 10,000 pounds of tobacco for remuneration of the millwright. The total cost of the mill was 21,405 pounds of tobacco ( £170 sterling), while the annual profits amounted to 4,000 pounds of tobacco. Jefferson's manufacturing mill cost over $10,000, and $5,000 per year was required to keep only one of Robert Carter's mills running. The mill at Nomoni was capable of grinding 25,000 bushels of wheat a year, and Carter had two ovens which could bake 100 pounds of flour at a time. Carter's milling operations had grown to sizeable proportions by the time he build the new merchant mill at Nomoni. In 1774, his millers were grinding corn for customers as far away as Maryland though making small profits of £4 12 3. Niemcewicz, Washington's Polish visitor, remarked that about a thousand barrels of flour each year

42 Ibid.
43 Betts, p. 343.
45 Morton, p. 343.
46 Ibid.
were sold from the mill at Mount Vernon at a value of at least $5,000.  

Profits in milling could be lost quickly because of bad management or economic fluctuation. The Jefferson mills at Shadwell, due to poor management and constant expensive repairs, had to be sold in 1829.  

In 1796, Robert Pollard wrote to Wilson Cary Nicholas at Richmond that there was "no market for flour. The same case all over the Continent at this time." The next year Washington wrote Henry Lee:  

I am told that the present price of wheat in Alexandria is 8s. but I can fix no price now for what may be delivered 2, 3, 4, or even 6 months hence or perhaps not at all (if you depend upon purchasing) in case of a rise when there is no objection to delivering any specific quantity, or at any specified time.

What of the hired miller? Perhaps the simplest thing that can be said is that his wages were whatever he and the mill owner could agree upon, as Lear's correspondence to Oliver suggests. There were limits, however, on the wages of even the best millers. For example, first rate millers in Pennsylvania received only about £6 per month, without perquisites and with heavy duties. Washington had this in mind when his miller requested £75 per year, even though he was already enjoying per-


48 Betts, p. 343.

49 Robert Pollard to Wilson Cary Nicholas, March 27, 1796, Nicholas Papers, University of Virginia Library. For extracts of the day book of Wilson Cary Nicholas' mill at Warren in Albemarle County, see Appendix.


51 Bathe, p. 32.
quisites such as:

a good and convenient dwelling house, within a few yards of his mill, with a Garden ad­
joining, sufficiently large to raise such vegetables and garden roots as are necessary for his family - and other accommodations suited to such a dwelling - he is furnished with a Cow and keeping for the same - he re­ceives 5,00 wt. of Pork per annum - is per­mitted to keep as many dunghill fowls as he may have occasion for in his family (but is not allowed to raise any for sale) - and has his wood found him and brought to his door. There is moreover a smart young negro man who acts as a Assistant in the mill, in which business he has been employed for several years, and of course may be calculated upon as understanding the common & ordinary business of milling. 52

Other mill owners were able to hire millers at more reasonable rates. Robert Carter of Nomini employed millers at £ 25 per year, with Negroes assisting. 53 Carter, like Washington, found it necessary to look northward for help in his mills, occasionally sending to New Jersey for trained laborers. 54 James Craig, owner of a mill in the Valley, fared even better, He was able to strike a bargain with Henry Vigall whereby the latter would attend a gristmill and still with the help of a negro wench or such other labor as the said James Craig shall find necessary on his plan­tation for and during the space of one year beginning on January the 15th, 1782, in con­sideration of which the said James Craig is to give the said Henry Vigall fifteen pounds twelve shillings in gold or silver and also one acre of land for corn and if the said James Craig can furnish the said Henry Vigall with clothing or other necessaries they are to be at the old price such as

52Ibid., p. 31.
53Morton, pp. 96-97.
54Ibid.
shoes at eight shillings, 6 pence and also if the said Henry Vigall should be obliged to go away or be exchanged the said James Craig shall pay him for the time he stays.\textsuperscript{55}

The social and economic milieu in which the planter-mill-owner lived and worked, then, differed radically from that of the hired miller. In an era in which deference to the better sort had not disappeared, disdain of the meaner sort had not ceased to exist either. One occasionally runs across a letter from a merchant to a planter or from a planter to another planter reprimanding him for inadequate service at his mill or for bad shipments of milled products. The following excerpt from a letter of Robert Pollard to Wilson Cary Nicholas in 1796 serves as a good example:\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{quote}
Your last flour ... came down in extreme bad order ... in consequence of your not having a Nail \textsuperscript{[in]} one of the Hoops nor neither of the barrels lined. You will there \textsuperscript{[fore]} please desire your cooper to pay more attention to the flour for the future and have ... the Hoops nailed before they are sent here and greatly oblige.
\end{quote}

James Gordon reserved expressions of dissatisfaction he and his wife had with the service at a Colonel Seldon's mill for the pages of his journal,\textsuperscript{57} and Charles Carter of Corotoman complained that people did not come to his mill but went to Eustace's instead.\textsuperscript{58} However, a planter would never have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55}Charles W. Kemper, "Valley of Virginia Notes," \textit{Virginia Magazine of History and Biography}, XXXI (1923), 251.
\item \textsuperscript{56}Robert Pollard to Wilson Cary Nicholas, March 27, 1796, Nicholas Papers, University of Virginia Library.
\item \textsuperscript{57}"Journal of James Gordon," \textit{William and Mary Quarterly}, 1st. Ser., XI (1903), 218.
\item \textsuperscript{58}"Diary of Colonel Landon Carter," \textit{Ibid.}, 1st. Ser., XIII (1904), 158.
\end{itemize}
remarked about his fellow planters in the manner that George Washington described a hired miller. Washington's scathing remarks appeared in a letter to Lund Washington concerning a miller who was in charge of one of the General's mills: 59

Although I never hear of the Mill under the direction of Simpson, without a degree of warmth & vexation at his extreme stupidity, yet, if you can spare money from other Purposes, I could wish to have it sent to him, that it may, if possible, be set agoing before the Works get ruined & spoilt, & my whole money perhaps totally lost....

Milling had been considered menial labor since early times. At first it was a task delegated to women, and it was assigned to slaves and criminals during the late Roman period. 60 But the same labor is not always considered menial under different circumstances. New England millers who owned and operated their mills, as well as bourgeois millers of the middle colonies, decidedly outranked hired members of the profession in Virginia. 61 One gets the distinct impression that the German millers in the Valley, most of whom owned their own mills, although considered strange because of their characteristic reclusiveness, were highly regarded as grinders of grain. 62 The statement that "the Virginia miller was


62For valuable comments on relations of the Valley Germans with their neighbors, see Klaus G. Wust, "German Mystics and Sabbatarians in Virginia, 1700-1764," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXII (1964), 330-347.
uniformly a man of low estate," is an over simplification. A distinction has to be made between those millers who owned their mills and those who worked for hire. It is to the latter group that the statement more correctly pertains.
APPENDIX

FROM THE
DAY BOOK OF WILSON CARY NICHOLAS' MILL AT WARREN
IN ALBEMARLE COUNTY

SALES of barrels flour for account of
Wilson Cary Nicholas Esquire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 barrels</td>
<td>32/68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jany</td>
<td>Wilson C. Nicholas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Pendleton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Geddy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Barrek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baltazor Dorish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Darmasdat</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>137/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Fenwick</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>552/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Pollard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash, for 1 barrell with the head out &amp; some flour missg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>144/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Col Robert Gamble</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>144/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The figures shown above and arrangement of columns are as found in the original ledger. For a detailed biographical description of Wilson Cary Nicholas, see The Dictionary of American Biography, XII, 486-487.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 10</td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>1 12 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>Thomas Mason</td>
<td>78 32/124 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship to Norfolk to</td>
<td>Capt Vennock</td>
<td>428 1037 barrells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>982 0 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794 Jan 17</td>
<td>Paid waggonage of 100 lbs. from canal</td>
<td>2 10 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for stowing ditto</td>
<td>&quot; 2:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for turning ditto out &amp; in to inspect</td>
<td>&quot; 1:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for inspecting 96 barrells flour</td>
<td>&quot; 11:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Cooperage of 5 barrells</td>
<td>&quot; 1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dryage of 336 barrels @ 9</td>
<td>12:12:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for 525 4\text{d} Nails.</td>
<td>&quot; 2:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Castlin for coopering 172 barrells</td>
<td>&quot; 1:8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for 400 4\text{d} Nails.</td>
<td>&quot; 2.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Paid for Coopering 60 barrells</td>
<td>2 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for 500 4\text{d} Nails.</td>
<td>&quot; 2:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\text{d}</td>
<td>for inspecting 50 barrells</td>
<td>&quot; 7.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid for inspecting 335 barrells</td>
<td>2 0:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>for halling 120 barrells @ 9</td>
<td>4:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for hands to unload flour</td>
<td>&quot; 3:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried over.</td>
<td></td>
<td>28:7 982 0 6</td>
</tr>
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VITA

Paul Brent Hensley