Mending a Fractured Landscape: Balancing Culture & Nature in the Vanishing Mill Town of Daniels, Maryland

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Presentation Overview

- Problem Statement
- Methodology
- Introduce the Site
- A Rich Cultural Heritage
  - Elysville – Early Industrial Landscape
  - Alberton – Model Factory Town
  - Daniels – Town in Transition
- Patapsco Valley a Natural Resource
- Demolition, Devastation, Decline
- Preserving What Remains
  - A Cultural Landscape?
- Recommendations
To explore the fragmented landscape and heritage of the lost mill town, examining how the conflict between environmental conservation and historic preservation has impacted the site, and determining if preservation of Daniels Mill, as a cultural landscape or heritage area, would reconcile the contrasting needs of natural conservation and cultural heritage.
Methodology

Research Current Ownership & Preservation Status

Research Mill History & Heritage

Research Natural Resource Development

Develop the Historic Context of Site & Region

Consider Preservation Alternatives

Howard County Tax Map, 2020 Daniels Road.
A Fractured Landscape

Natural Environment

Industrial Heritage
Industrial History of the Patapsco Valley

Agricultural Area

Embargo Act of 1807

War of 1812

Rise of the Factory

Textiles

The Iron Roadway
By 1833 Thomas & Asher Ely established a cotton factory along the Patapsco.

During the next 20 years the small village added tenement homes, a rail depot, and post office.

The brothers had financial difficulties and developed a reputation for property disputes.
Alberton: A Model Factory Town
James S. Gary & Son Manufacturing Company

James Sullivan Gary
- Worked in cotton mills from the age of 5
- Managed and owned several others mills
- Purchased the mill and surrounding lands

James Albert Gary
- Developed “model company town”
- Prominent Baltimore merchant and politician

E. Stanley Gary
- Identified with Baltimore elites
- Managed firm through the depression.
The Mill..

Was known as Alberton Cotton Mills

Expanded to an office in Baltimore and an office in St. Louis.

Manufactured Cotton Duck, Osnaburgs, and twills.
A Model Company Town

Architecture

Community
Life in Alberton..
Changing Times....

Increased competition from the south
Depressed economy
C.R. Daniels acquires the town:

- 550 acres
- Mill buildings
- 3 churches
- Village store
- Town hall
- 118 tenement homes

Newspapers Report...
Residents are eager to return to work and are pleased with the sale.
Daniels

The C.R. Daniels Company:
Maintains the community
Increases employment at the site.
Adds assembly areas for the manufacture of canvas and denim goods.
Patapsco Valley State Park

Natural Elements for Protection

Animal Habitats
Streams & Tributaries
The River
The Scenic Natural Gorge
Timber Reserves
Water Conservation
1950 Development Plan for the Patapsco River Valley Park

Alberton/Daniels
A Town No More

- C.R. Daniels announces intention to demolish all homes (circa 1966).

- Preservation organizations and local advocacy groups work to save the historic structures.
Damage from Hurricane Agnes 1972
Historic Mill Destroyed by Fire, 1977
What Remains?

Gary Memorial United Methodist Church
Natural Resource
Recommendations

Preservation as a Cultural Landscape
Next Steps

Comprehensive Site Analysis

Consideration of Ownership & Partner Organizations

Enhanced Preservation for Cultural Resources

Re-establishing Spatial Connections

Interpretive Plan/Educational Programs

Inclusion in a Larger Heritage Area or Historic District
This study provides a concrete example of the need for greater coordination with our colleagues engaged in natural resource conservation.

“a landscape valued for both its natural and cultural intensity can be either a point of contention or an opportunity for collaboration and cooperation. It is the collaboration of ways of thinking about landscapes that may assist us truly to value them in a rich and rewarding way.”

- Robert Melnick

Thank You!

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