

J--ROBEY'S MILL HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Robey's Mill Historic Overlay District was established in 1980 to protect the 18th century mill, miller's house, and the surviving outbuildings and their surroundings.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- o The area retains a rural feeling.
- o The topography is steep and slopes sharply down to Piney Branch, which runs through the middle of the district from north to south.
- o Popes Head Road, a narrow, two-lane road, bisects the district from east to west, following a dip between the crests of the land north and south of the road. It slopes down toward its bridge over Piney Branch and then rises.
- o The landscape is densely wooded with deciduous trees.
- o The buildings of the mill complex are clustered at the lowest point in the district, near Piney Branch. They are near the road and face it directly. The rest of the district has few buildings.
- o The mill complex buildings (except for the mill itself) and the board fence marking the mill property are primarily white, creating a strong visual cohesiveness among the mill complex structures.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Robey's Mill complex was once part of the 1000-acre Hope Park plantation; the mill was probably constructed in the late 18th century during Dr. David Stuart's ownership of the property. Dr. Stuart was the husband of Eleanor Calvert Custis, widow of Martha Custis Washington's son. Neighborhood grist mills, such as this one, served their owner and other local farmers. Along with the mill is a miller's house, a servant's house, a springhouse, and a smokehouse. After the Civil War, the mill complex was separated from the Hope Park property and sold to Frank Robey. He ran the mill and a small store on the property. The mill was the social and commercial center of the area until Robey's death in 1906. Such mills were among the first industrial buildings in Virginia and were often the center of community activity. The Hope Park, or Robey's, mill is a rare surviving example of its type and is made even more valuable by the existence of the miller's house and many of the outbuildings. This surviving complex is a visual landmark which provides an almost complete picture of a rural miller's family life. The mill complex was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE DISTRICT

- o ARCHITECTURE: The buildings of the Robey's mill complex are unified by their common siting, materials, and form. They are

grouped along Popes Head Road at its crossing of Piney Branch. All are wood structures, painted white (except for the mill itself) and are rectangular with gable roofs. The mill is a two-and-a-half story structure covered with unpainted, random-width vertical siding. Built into the hillside, the miller's house is a three-story, side-gabled, frame building with a stone foundation. Large chimneys stand at the gable end and a second story porch extends across the front. The smokehouse and springhouse are small square log structures in front of the house. Across the road is a small log servant's quarters, similar to the outbuildings. Near that is a tenant house, a small, two-story, frame structure built in the early 20th century which is compatible with the miller's house and mill and contributes to the district's architectural character.

The majority of the other structures in the district, particularly those west of the mill, are not visible from the road.

o HISTORIC AND CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES: In the report substantiating the zoning amendment that established the Robey's Mill Historic Overlay District, only the mill property itself (12124 Popes Head Road, parcel number 67-3-001-10)--which includes the mill, miller's house, tenant house, and all related outbuildings--are listed as historic. No contributing properties are listed.

o LANDSCAPE AND SITE FEATURES: The topography and landscape are crucial characteristics of the district. The land form and its use are interlocked and the steep slope down to Piney Branch made this an ideal mill site. As the water source for the mill, Piney Branch is both an important visual and historic feature. The hillsides are densely wooded but, around the banks of Piney Branch is a small open area. The landscape around the mill buildings blends with the natural, informal landscape. To the east of the mill, a new subdivision, Windsor Gates, breaks the pattern of woods with large expanses of smooth green lawns.

Popes Head Road cuts through the heart of the district. It crosses Piney Branch on a low, narrow, simple, concrete bridge. White, wood, horizontal board fences line the road through the center of the district near the mill complex.

o ARCHAEOLOGY: No known archaeological features exist within the district but subsurface features and artifact scatters are likely to be found throughout the developed area. A thorough study of these deposits would increase our knowledge about early milling and the lives of the occupants and possibly fix the date of construction and later chronology more exactly.

DISTRICT GOAL

The goal for the Robey's Mill Historic District is the preservation and protection of the mill and associated structures. The district also seeks to preserve the scenic rural character of the area.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The following section presents standards which should be maintained and promoted in order to achieve the goal of the district. Specific guidelines suggest ways to maintain those standards.

STANDARD 1--Preserve the alignment and rural character of Pope's Head Road.

GUIDELINES

- 1.1 Maintain Popes Head Road as a two-lane curving road without curb and gutter or shoulders.
- 1.2 Do not alter the slope of the road.
- 1.3 Blend new driveways with the material, scale, and design of Popes Head Road.
- 1.4 Keep the bridge over Piney Branch a simple concrete or wood structure.

STANDARD 2--Preserve natural features.

GUIDELINES

- 2.1 Retain natural land contours.
- 2.2 Protect Piney Branch and the surrounding flood plain from adverse environmental influences.

STANDARD 3--Conserve and enhance existing tree cover and landscaping.

- 3.1 Avoid removal of existing healthy trees. Replace trees with like material.
- 3.2 Retain informal, natural landscaping, particularly around Piney Branch and along Popes Head Road.
- 3.3 Avoid large expanses of manicured lawn and formal landscaping.

STANDARD 4--Protect the integrity of the historic structures.

GUIDELINES

- 4.1 Follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for all preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the mill, miller's house, servant's house, springhouse, and smokehouse.
- 4.2 Maintain the 20th century structures on the mill property--the garage, stable, and tenant house--as compatible structures, as they exist in their current state.
- 4.3 Maintain the white horizontal board fence along the mill property which visually distinguishes the historic property from its surroundings.

- 4.4 Consider the potential for archaeological resources early in development and construction plans and mitigate adverse effects.

STANDARD 5--Preserve as much open space and tree cover as possible.

GUIDELINES

- 5.1 Maintain a 100 foot deep wooded buffer along Popes Head Road.
- 5.2 Site design should minimize disruption of natural drainage, topography, and tree cover.

STANDARD 6--New construction should not detract from or overwhelm the mill complex.

GUIDELINES

- 6.1 Houses should fit into, rather than dominate, the topography.
- 6.2 All parking areas should be screened and unobtrusive.
- 6.3 Structures colored white should be discouraged. (The mill complex is visually set apart by the contrast of its white buildings against the wooded landscape; other white structures would compete for attention and dilute the complex's visual coherence.)
- 6.4 Do not use bright colors which would be visible from the road or the mill complex.
- 6.5 Rear elevations should not be visible from the road.

STANDARD 7--Signs and fences should not detract from or overwhelm the mill site.

GUIDELINES

- 7.1 Signs should be simple, low, in neutral colors, and no wider than four feet. Painted wood will be preferred.
- 7.2 Do not use internally lighted signs. Lighting may be simple fixtures mounted on the sign or on the ground near the sign.
- 7.3 All fences should be wood, open, horizontal board or rail fences. Entrance gates should be simple posts. Off of the mill property, natural-colored fences are preferred.
- 7.4 Tall privacy fences within sight of the road or the mill complex should be discouraged.