

Historical Notes for the GHS Alberton Road Trail Hike

By John Brantley, September 2023

Alberton Road Trail Hike Map

Our hike will begin at the Alberton Road Trail Marker (#1), not far from the intersection of Dogwood & Alberton Roads. The Upton House, which we hope to be able to tour, is located just before the Trail Marker to the right. The St Stanislaus Church ruins are located uphill a few hundred yards to the north of the trail (#2). In the heyday of the Alberton Mill, dozens of houses of mill workers lined Alberton Road, some of them abandoned and torn down after the Gary Company reduced mill operations in the 1950s and the rest were lost to Hurricane Agnes in 1972. The mill used to be located on the peninsular area in Howard County between the railroad tracks and the river. The Alberton Road Trail goes under the current B&O Railroad bridge (#4). The ruins of the Pentecostal Holiness Church lay a little to the right of the trail past the railroad bridge (#5). The Daniels Dam is a short distance further on (#6).

Attached trail map is printed from AllTrails.com.

A Brief History of Daniels, Maryland

In 1829 six Ely brothers, Joseph, John, William, Thomas, Asher and Hugh, chartered the Elysville Manufacturing Company and began acquiring land along the Patapsco River, some 200 acres in an area known as *Limestone Valley*. By 1839 a cotton mill had been established and a new town was growing up around it complete with train station and post office. This wasn't the first milling venture for the Ely brothers; in 1811 they started the *Mechanics Cotton Mill*, a spinning mill, located on their father's farmland along Ben's Run.

Financial troubles soon developed. At the end of 1841 the mill was offered for rent to a third party. In 1843 the Elysville Company was re-chartered with new investment as the Okisko Corporation, with Archer, Hugh and John still involved in managing the company. The mill was soon in trouble again, and Jacob Albert, one of the primary creditors, acquired controlling interest in 1850; then in 1853 the Alberton Manufacturing Company was chartered. The town would eventually become known as Alberton. Then in 1858 the mill again was sold and eventually, in 1861, acquired by James Gary. Over the next few years he acquired the remaining assets and remaining real estate of the Elysville Manufacturing Company from Joseph Ely, the last remaining brother. The Gary family kept ownership of the mill and town until 1941, when C.R. Daniels, Inc acquired the property from the Gary family trustee.

Attached is a copy of a poster depicting the Alberton Mill from 1870.

The Daniels Dam

In James Walter Peirce's book, *A Guide to Patapsco Valley Mill Sites*, he writes that a concrete dam at Daniels was constructed in 1829 with a 14 foot fall. In the 1841 newspaper ad for rent of the Elysville mill (mentioned above) the dam is said to be 15 feet tall. A strange act of sabotage involving the dam took place in August of 1850. A 7-foot hole was cut into the Baltimore County side of the dam. The new trustees of the mill (those who had taken over the Okisko assets) sent a crew of workmen to repair the dam but were met by Asher and John Ely, who were armed. Asher claimed that the dam was on his Baltimore County property (property lying along a river was considered to extend to the middle of the river) and he ordered the

workmen to leave. Some violence ensued and Asher was shot; he remained close to death for some days. Although never proved, it seems likely that Asher and John sabotaged the dam as revenge for losing control of the mill.

In 1867 James Gary either built a new dam or expanded the size of the existing dam. He entered into agreements with two landowners on the Baltimore County side of the river, Joseph Wright and Noah Worthington. The water level of the river behind the dam, according to those agreements, would rise by 18 inches, causing each to lose use of a small amount of their land, for which each was paid \$300.

According to a *Baltimore Sun* article published in 2002, the fish ladder at the Daniels Dam was built in 1993.

Attached photograph of Daniels Dam taken in 2000. In the foreground is an abutment for a bridge that used to cross the river from Howard to Baltimore County.

St Stanislaus Kostka Church

When the Woodstock College Jesuits moved to Granite in 1869, they undertook, as one of their “missions”, the establishment of Catholic parishes in the area, an area heretofore devoid of them. St Alphonsus, of course, was one of those parishes, as were Holy Family in Randallstown, St Joseph’s in Sykesville and St Michael’s in Poplar Springs. Another was St Stanislaus Kostka in Alberton. Jesuit involvement in all of these parishes is documented in *The Woodstock Letters*

On November 21st, 1875, the Jesuits held the first ever Catholic Sunday School class in Alberton at the home of one Mrs. Love. According to the *Letters*, the Jesuits in attendance were happy that Mrs. Love’s home was located outside of the town, about a half-mile upriver towards Brice’s Run, “on account of the bigotry of the town’s inhabitants”. The *Letters* describes the town of Alberton in those days as a “nest of Methodists”. The first mass in Alberton was said the following Spring by Father John Van Krevel. Forty persons crammed into Mrs. Love’s two small rooms. According to the *Letters*, half of them weren’t even Catholic. They were Protestants who “came of out of curiosity having never actually seen a priest before.”

A year later Cornelius Meehan, a public-school teacher in Alberton, offered the use of his home and so for the first time Woodstock Jesuits finally entered the town. Father John Van Krevel left Woodstock in 1876 and so responsibility for the Alberton mission fell to Father Aemilio de Augustinis. It was he who approached James Gary (son of the original James Gary) with plans to build a Catholic church. Mr. Gary, a Methodist, graciously donated land and contributed \$750 towards construction of a beautiful little stone church perched on the hillside overlooking the river from the Baltimore County side. The cornerstone of St Stanislaus Kostka was laid in September of 1879. Unfortunately, on September 24th, 1926, lightning struck and the church was destroyed by fire. Catonsville Fire Department responded to the scene but found it difficult to drag heavy hoses up the hill to the church. Sacred vessels and candlesticks and vestments were saved from the church sacristy by Emory Sapp, a member of the fire company, and Rev Herbert Parker, pastor at Alberton, who rushed to the scene from Woodstock. The *Letters* credits the “heroism of a young girl of thirteen years coupled with the efforts of her two non-Catholic friends” with saving the children’s library.

Attached two photographs, exterior and interior, of St Stanislaus Church taken by Father John Brosnan in 1894

Attached is photograph of the ruins of St Stanislaus Church taken around 1940.

The Upton House

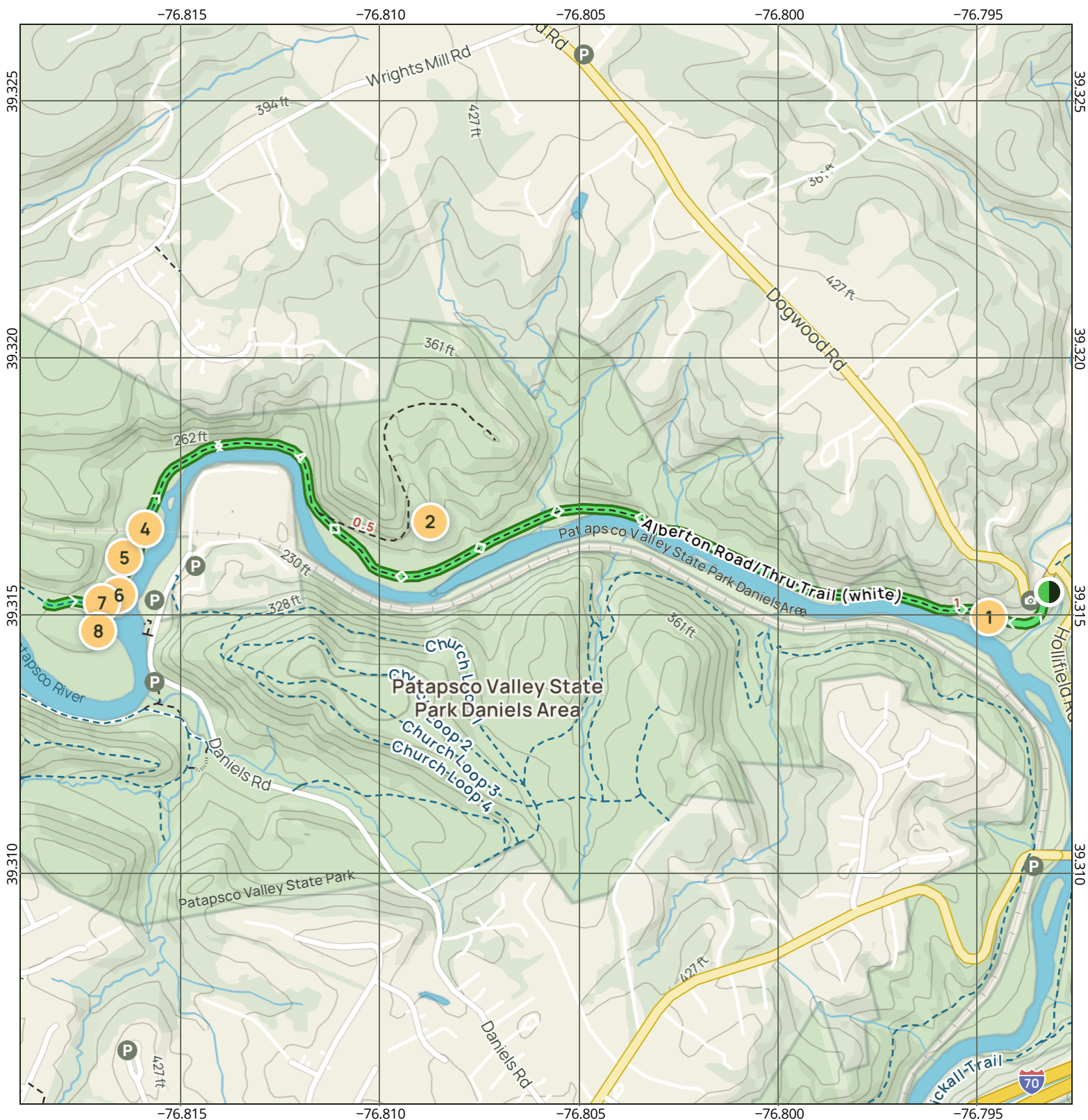
Located at 8106 Alberton Road. A two-story, fieldstone house. The house was probably built in 1851 by William and Sarah Upton. A frame addition at the west end of the house was added at a later date.

Sarah's maiden name was Marriott, daughter of William Marriott. In 1793 Marriott acquired a plot of land called *Ayres Desire* patented for 28 acres in 1736 by Nathaniel Ayers. Marriott had the land surveyed and re-patented it as *Ayres Desire Resurveyed* for 71 acres. This land lay along the Baltimore County side of the Patapsco and extended east along Ben's Run and north to more-or-less the top of Quaker Hill. Sarah and William Upton were married in 1828 and it seems, according to the 1830 and 1840 censuses that they lived with Sarah's older sister, Ann Marriott, in a house located just below Quaker Hill along Bens Run. In 1847 William Marriott's estate was settled and Sarah received two lots from his holdings, both 2 ¼ acres. It was on one of those lots where she and her husband would build the two-story stone house. Note that in 1867 William Upton, along with other landowners along the Patapsco, sold James Gary a 28-foot right-of-way in order to establish Alberton Road.

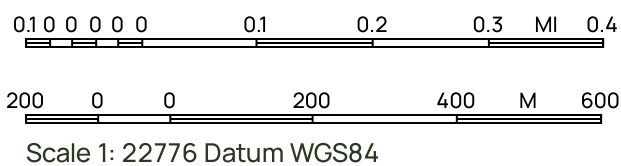
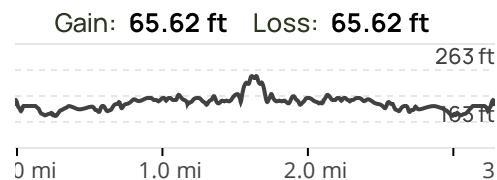
There's some dispute about the origins of the Upton House. In his book, *Old MD Mills*, John McGrain writes that the house served as the miller's house at Gardner's Mill, which operated along Bens Run between 1783 and 1787. Terilynn Murray, who lived in the house for 14 years before selling it to the DNR this past January, also says she had always been told that her house had been the miller's house. However, McGrain also writes that one George Upton owned the mill property in 1783, but there's no record of anyone named George Upton anywhere in Maryland at that time. When 1798 Federal tax assessment was made, two houses are listed for William Marriott's *Ayer's Desire* property, both log cabins. Presumably it was in one of those log houses, or a frame replacement for one of them, where Ann Marriott lived in the 1830s and 40s on her father's property along with her sister and brother-in-law. And presumably, it was that frame replacement or a second one which stood on the narrow strip of ground between Alberton Road and Bens Run – that property was acquired in the 1970s by DNR and occupied by a park ranger until it was torn down in the 1990s.

Photograph attached of the Upton House taken about 2012 it was occupied by Terilynn Murry. The west frame addition is identifiable.

Photograph attached of the original stone house. Date unknown. This photo shows a large front porch, torn down in the later photo, and the bottom story of the stone structure is covered with siding, also eliminated in the later photo.

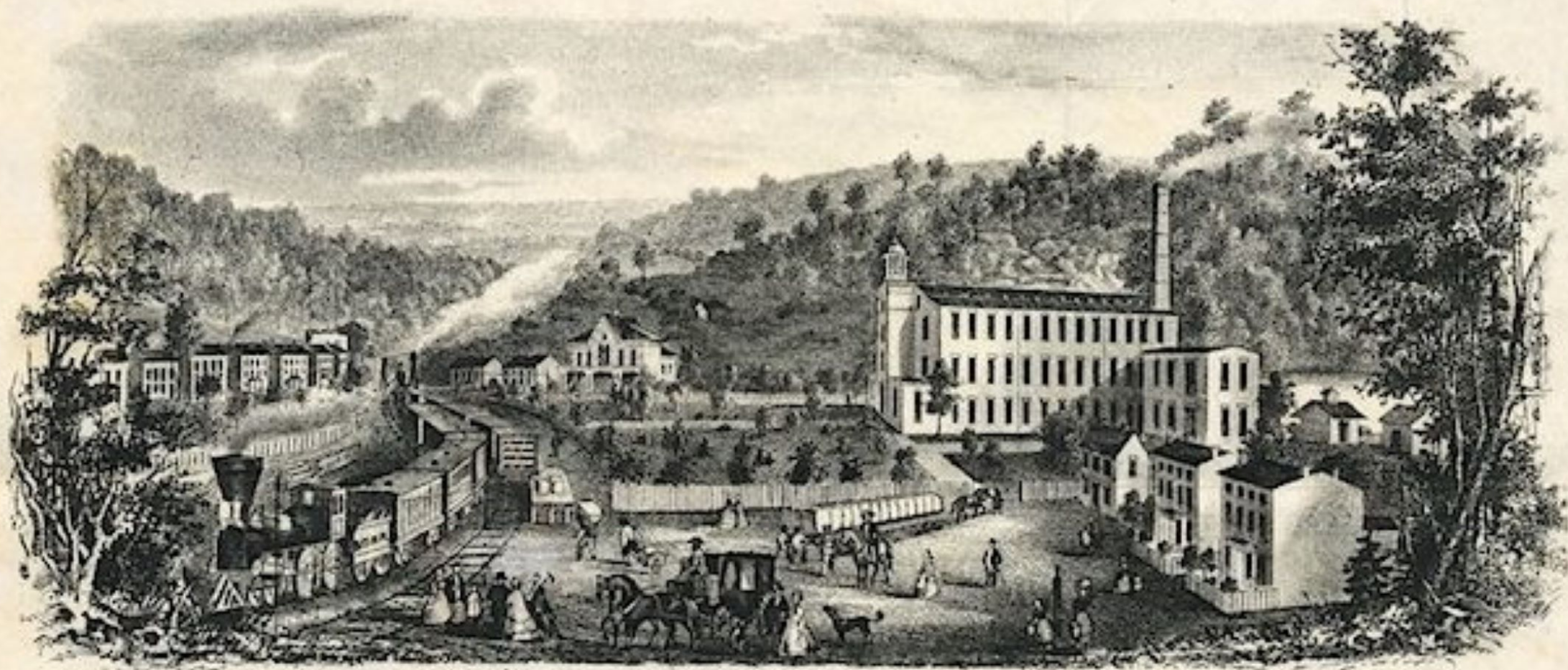


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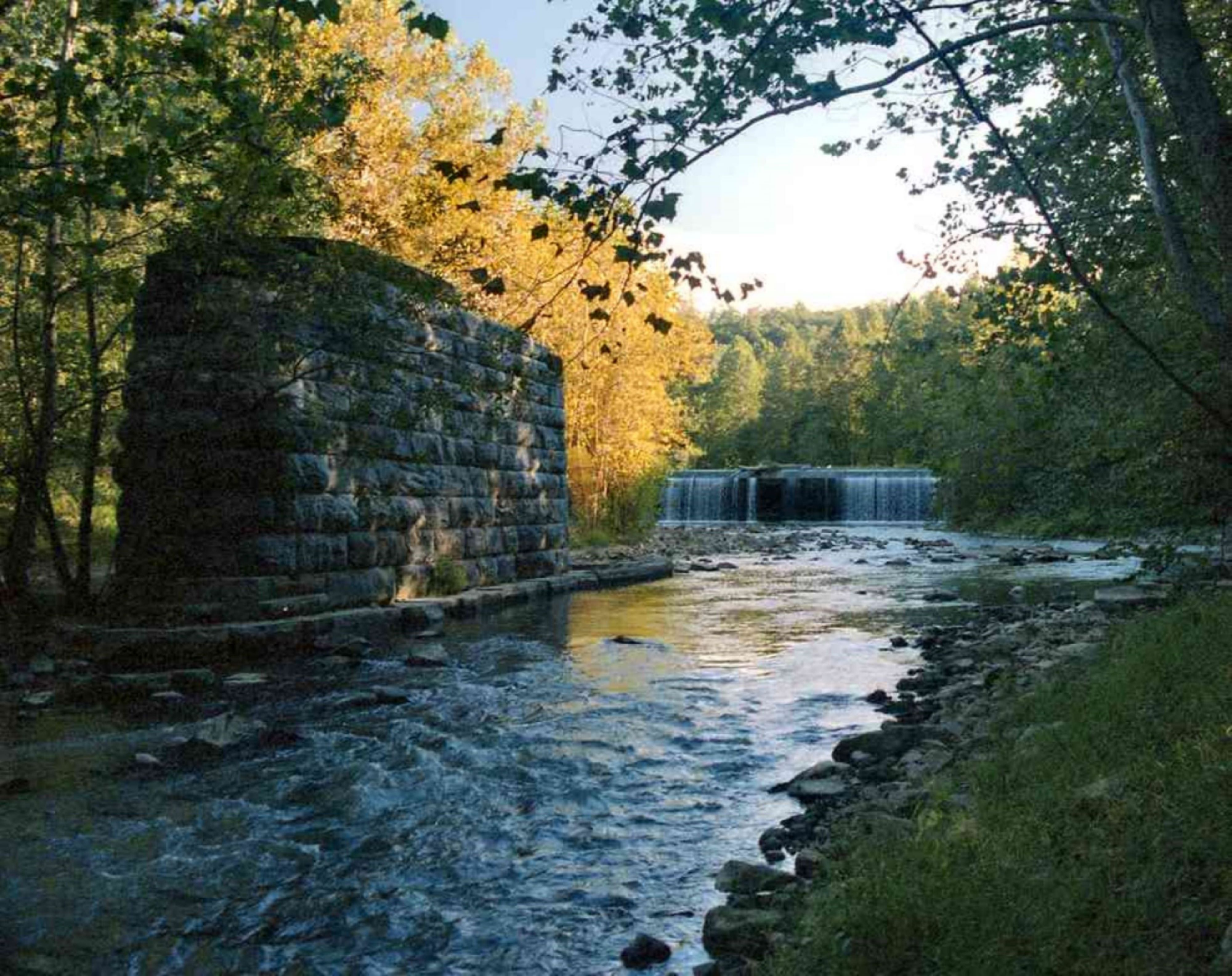
Alberton Road Trail
Windsor Mill, MD





ALBERTON COTTON FACTORY,
HOWARD COUNTY, MD

Baltimore, July 25th 1870.

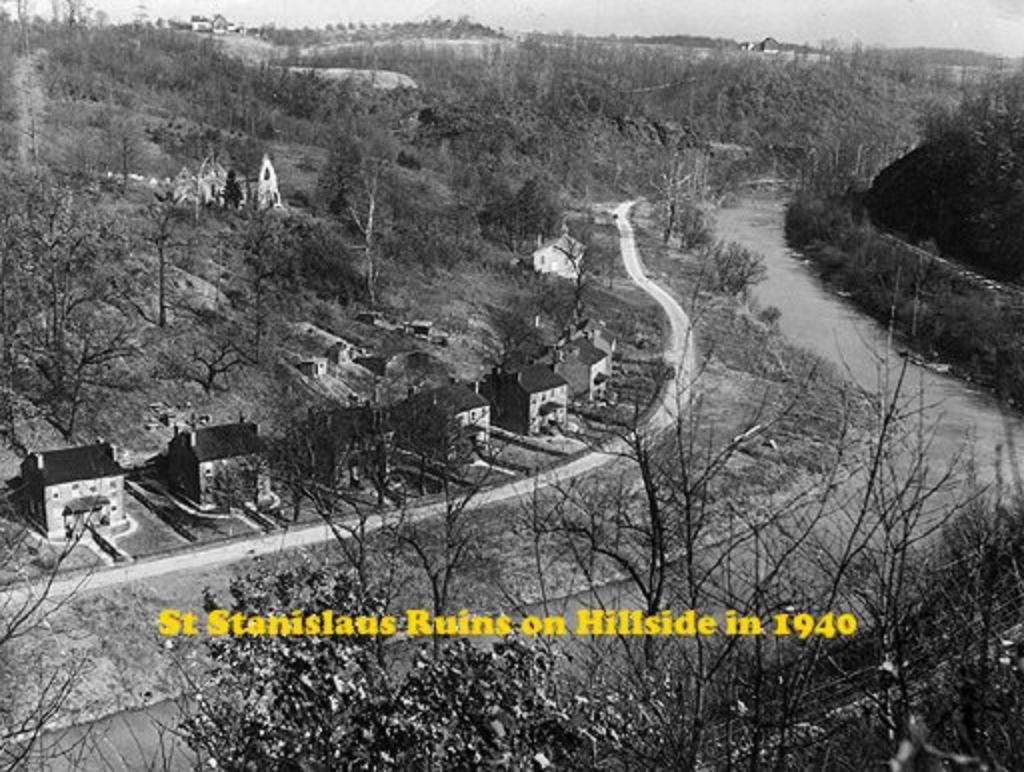




St Stanislaus Church in Elysville



St Stanislaus Kosta Church Interior



St Stanislaus Ruins on Hillside in 1940



