

THE GATES MILLS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE MUSEUM AT THE SOUTHWICK HOUSE

7580 OLD MILL ROAD, GATES MILLS, OH. 44040



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Village photos are on
our Facebook page.

The Museum
is open by
appointment.
440-423-1040

“THE MILLS” LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The article below was written in 1943 by Dr. W. O. Jenks and is taken from

HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF THE VILLAGE OF GATES MILLS, ©1943.

The mills of Gates Mills have disappeared. Not a trace of them is left, except the abutments of the dam that are still there, making a beautiful pond of water which used to be called the Gates Mills mill pond.

A few rods up, the stream mill race was dug across the river road and spanned by a bridge. This was brought down on a line with the mill dam, and at this point the water ran through well constructed stone bulkheads. Wooden gates made it possible to cut off water at the bulkheads. A short distance from the bulkheads (a few rods below) a spillway was constructed to carry the surplus water back into the river below the dam. This race extended parallel with the river road or main street for a distance of about half a mile. The water was carried through this mill race and supplied the power to different water wheels which ran the mills.

Three mills were supplied with this water power: First, the grist mill which was built to the left of the race. The grist mill was a three story structure, with a length and width to give it an outline of good proportions. A platform was built across the front of the mill to the height of a wagon. The platform was generally loaded with bags and barrels of wheat and feed to be ground. The doors of the mill were wide and ample so that anything could be wheeled inside easily. At the front of the mill, there was a hoisting apparatus consisting of a large rope with tackles for hoisting bags and barrels to the upper floors used mostly for storage. The building was well shingled and was always kept painted pure white. On the side next to the street the words, “Gates Mills” were painted in large letters. This mill stood about twenty-five rods west of the present club house. The man who ran the mill at the time (about 1860) was Mr. Washington Gates, the oldest son of Mr. Halsey Gates, a hard working, quiet, and kindly man. He was called a good miller.



old Gates' grist mill; 1908.



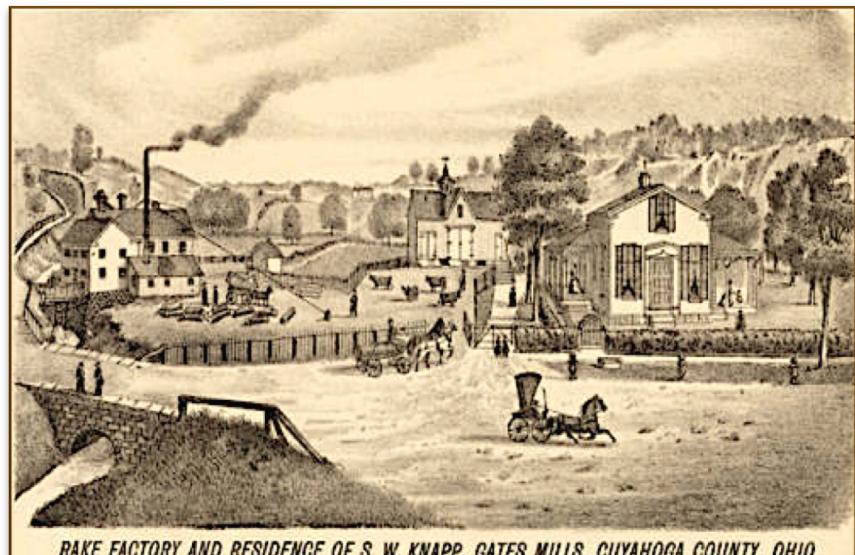
Old Gates' saw mill with old sluice gate: 1906

On the other side of the mill race, nearer the street and a little farther from the club house, stood the old saw mill, which had one upright saw only. It was strongly framed, rough roofed, rough sided, and unpainted. This is the mill that Mr. Halsey Gates kept under his special care. It was nearly always running, and he ran it his own way which was the best possible way for it to be run. Every board he sawed was as perfect as could be produced from the mill logs. Carpenters of today would use such boards almost with reverence. Once, when my brother and I were hauling away some very fine boards which he had just sawed, Mr. Gates peered out at us and when he saw those beautiful boards being put on our wagon, he remarked, "Pretty well done, eh? Pretty well done, eh? I call that pretty well done." To these remarks, my brother and I profusely agreed, and Mr. Gates beamed on us.

The other mill was called the rake factory. It stood on the main street, not opposite, but below the saw mill. Its power came from a huge overshot water wheel, fed from an underground conduit which led from the race somewhere. No boy was allowed to loaf around that mill for it was considered dangerous. Sometimes the noise of this mill was terrific, especially when they were polishing rakes' stakes, now called handles.

A great many of them were put into a circular box and the box was made to revolve. The polishing of those rakes' stakes was perfect, but was a very noisy process. One of the hand rakes made at his time was a work of art. The head of the rake was the hardest of hickory, as were the teeth and bows, and the stake was made of second growth white ash.

And that is where the three mills were, run by power of the little Chagrin River at Gates Mills.
(Note: a rod equals 5.5 yards or 15.5 feet.)



RAKE FACTORY AND RESIDENCE OF S. W. KNAPP, GATES MILLS, CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO.