

The subject assigned to me for investigation was the "Eastern Branch of the Octorara and its Tributaries," with their present and extinct industries as far south as the hamlet of Steeleville.

I have carefully examined the geography and history of this region and find much that is inaccurate and many important landmarks missing. Although I have personal knowledge of nearly half a century of this territory, and have heard many of the traditions relating thereto, both historical and biographical (some of the yarns rather tough ones), yet I am not self-confident that my work is perfect, having to cull from a mass of contradictory traditions from equally reliable traditionists, who evidently are impressed by that biblical text found in Second Thessalonians, second chapter, and fifteenth verse, which reads, "Stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught." I have endeavored to verify the results of my investigation which I now have the honor to present to this learned society.

Here I desire to extend my thanks to Hon. Wm. McGowan, Postmaster John Borland, both of Christiana, and to Squire H. H. Bower, of West Grove, Chester county, for valuable assistance rendered in compiling and collating this record.

I also want to enter my protest against a very common spelling of the term Octorara. The ending of the last syllable should be an a and not an o. The name Octorara is of Indian origin and was used to designate a sub-tribe of Indians, having a village or encampment near the eastern

banks of this stream on lands now owned by Lewis Newcomer, of Upper Oxford township, Chester county.

History and traditions are alike silent as to whether they belonged to the Shawanese or Delawares. The term is also applied to the entire southeastern slope of Lancaster county, which is drained by this stream. The name has also been appropriated by at least five churches. The post-office at Andrews Bridge is named Octorara, and numerous beneficial and social organizations have borne this title.

The Eastern Branch of the Octorara is formed by the union of the waters of Buck run, Williams run, Pownall's run and Pine run. Each of these streams has its source near the watershed of the Mine Hill range.

This region, in which are found the many sources of the numerous tributaries contributing to the formation of this romantic and beautiful stream, is now included in the township of Sadsbury, where the first settlements, in what is now Lancaster county, were made while the territory was yet in the mother county of Chester previous to the organization of Lancaster county in 1729. This territory on either side of the inter-county line was largely settled by Friends, they being induced to locate here because of the Penn reservation of one thousand acres of land, which was here established immediately south of what is now the Gap station, on the Pennsylvania Railroad. This reservation was surveyed at the time Wm. Penn visited King Wopaththa, of the Shawanese Indian tribe, A. D. 1700. This tract of land is still known as Penn's Manor, the name being perpetuated through title deeds, notwithstanding Penn named the reservation Springtown, a very appropriate name.

Several of those who accompanied

Penn on this occasion, serving as staff officers, as it were, to the proprietor, also pre-empted tracts of land in this vicinity some of which were in the Pequea Valley, then known as Conestoga, and others on the southern slope of the hills extending south of and embracing the ground upon which Christiana now stands.

To return to the subject proper, I think I can truthfully assert that no stream within the boundaries or confines of Lancaster county can show such utilization of its water power in the past and present as the Eastern Branch of the Octorara and its tributaries from the diverse sources to its mouth. Particularly was this true during the early half of the nineteenth century. The longest tributary to the Eastern Branch of the Octorara is known as Buck run. It is an intra-county branch, and rises on the southern slope of the Mine Hill ridge, on the farm owned and operated for years *by* Hon. Wm. Hamilton, recently Senator, representing Lancaster county in the General Assembly. This branch, about three miles long, meanders through the farms known as Maxwell's, Webster's and others, receiving contributory branches. Where it enters the farm of Jacob Townsend it is now, and has been for more than a half century, under contribution by the Townsend saw mill, which was built in 1841 by John Townsend, father of the present proprietor. Near to the saw mill is the Smyrna creamery, recently erected. One-half mile down the stream we find a flouring mill, known as Spring mill, in good condition. It was built by John Townsend, Sr., in 1841, and is now owned and operated by John F. Reed. Along the road leading from Smyrna to Christiana the stream was again four decades since laid under tribute by one Christopher Corbett, a ^Peculiar character, who may have been **an** ancestor of the noted pugilist.

He erected mills for sawing timber and cleaning cloverseed, but their existence was of short duration, and even the ruins have been obliterated. On this stream, in the western part of Christiana, stands **an** unused flouring mill, which was erected A. D. 1816 by Dr. Robert Agnew, father of the late Professor David Hayes Agnew, **M. D.**, who for years was professor of surgery in his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania. The quaint old farm house, in which the professor was born, is still in good repair. For years the driveway leading to the farm buildings was on the embankment of the mill pond.

This mill w is known as Earnest's, and later as Hanway's, but the power has been abandoned and decaying walls guard the site. If you will pardon the digression I will state that this mill was the scene of the premeditated, atrocious, diabolical violation of the constitution of these United States, by which act one Reuben Chambers, although not specifically mentioned in that instrument, nevertheless was entitled to all the rights and immunities guaranteed to citizens of this nation, yet, notwithstanding this assured protection, he was deprived of valuable property, to wit : sundry bags of sumac tops and berries, as depicted by a former narrator. Although foreign to my subject, yet, following closely the text of his biographers, permit me to assert that the world may never know what was lost to humankind by this wanton destruction of Rhus Glabrum, since Reuben was famed for manufacturing and compounding medicinal preparations unthought of by the medical profession.

Reuben, alone of all the great army of veterinarians, could provoke emesis in equines. I think 'Squire Evans' Brackbill's gray mare was the subject of the

experiment at a period after her subjugation by means of the blue horse cart, which was loaded with stones.

The Williams run rises on the Maxwell farm a few hundred yards from the source of Buck run, and passes through the farms of Rea Moore, Calvin Carter and Isaac Slokom, and then forms a junction with Buck run on the western border of Christiana.

The Pownall run rises on the Hathaway farm, runs a southerly course, crossing and recrossing the Pennsylvania railroad, and empties into the Williams run near the confluence of that stream with Buck run. After the union of these waters the stream enters the Noble mill pond to contribute to the formation of the East Branch of the Octorara. The inter county stream, known as Pine run, continues as the eastern boundary of Lancaster county for one and one-half miles north of Christiana, when the inter-county line leaves the stream on the farm of Benjamin Pownall and bears off northeast to the course of the stream. Pine run rises near the site of the former Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, on the farm of Mrs. Shaw, on the southern slope of the Gap hills. One-half mile south of its course are found the ruins of Lear's mills comprising flouring, sawing and clover mills. These mills were formerly Gest's mills. Continuing south, near to Salsbury meeting house, thirty years ago, was the Amos Townsend saw mill. Below these ruins we find the site of the Denny machine shops, unused for years.

Within the borough of Christiana water power was furnished by Pine run, which was utilized for nearly sixty years to furnish power for the foundry and machine shops now operated by the Christiana Machine Company, but the power has not been used for eight years, having been supplanted by steam power.

The head waters of Pine run are now utilized by the borough of Christiana in furnishing the water supply to her inhabitants. The water is conducted by small pipes leading from springs to a common reservoir or basin, from which it flows to the borough through larger pipes by gravity, a distance of two miles. Within the borough there is a head pressure of one hundred and sixty feet, rendering fire engines unnecessary. The water is generally distributed through the town and is assuredly an excellent system of water supply, furnishing as it does to Christiana the most potable water of any borough or town in Lancaster county. Neither mud nor microbes need apply.

After the confluence of Buck and Pine runs in Noble's dam, the name of the Eastern Branch of the Octorara is given to the stream. This dam is in the southern part of Christiana and furnishes power to drive a flouring and feed mill. Years ago there were saw and plaster mills attached. These mills are yet known as Noble's mills. Forty years ago they were owned and operated by Thomas Whitson, of anti-slavery fame, the father of Thomas Whitson, Esq., of the Lancaster Bar. These mills are now in the occupancy of Henry Rakestraw, who also operates a creamery nearby. South of Nobleville, on the old Noble farm, now owned by Henry Rakestraw, are found the ruins of a woolen factory which was burned fifty years ago.

Near this locality the stream is reinforced by the waters of Valley run, which rises in Bart township, flows in a southerly course past Bart meeting house, then adopts an easterly direction to its mouth. The first utilization of its waters was sixty years ago, when Hood's tanyard exacted tribute. Only tradition can point the site. Journeying down the stream we find

the chopping mill and creamery of Cyrus Brinton. This building a half century ago was a woolen factory known as Rose Hill. Later, lime spreaders were here manufactured. Both enterprises were managed by Lewis Cooper.

One mile east of this plant we find the ruins of the Burnt Mill, formerly known as the Brick Mill, built by Samuel Irwin in 1825, and for years owned by his son, Ellis Irwin ; then later the property of Wm. Spencer. In 1853 it was burned ; the site alone remains. This mill was being operated during the time of the Christiana riots by Castner Hanway, who, with Elijah Lewis and Jos. Scarlet, was tried for treason to the United States by reason of being implicated in this first battle of the great American conflict for human liberty and the emancipation of the American slave. The scene of this resistance to tyrants in obedience to God was on the south bank of this stream, about two miles distant from Christiana.

Near the confluence of this stream from the west the East Branch receives a tributary from the mother county, known as Glen run, evidently a token of maternal love. This stream rises in Sadsbury, Chester county, flows southwest through the borough of Atglen, immediately north of the Pennsylvania railroad. On this stream, years ago, was the Buckley forge, known as Greenwood. The buildings are now used as a foundry for manufacturing iron novelties, especially Mrs. Potts' sad irons. The Chalfant Company operates the works.

In the southern part of the town are found the ruins of Crawford mill. Glen run supplied the power. This mill furnished great quantities of cornmeal for export during the time of the famine in the emerald of the ocean.

When her children like lost Israel's tribes
were scattered as the leaves,
Yet round every standard but their own
are twining laurel wreaths.

On a branch of Glen run, flowing
from the east, the ruins of Boyd's mill
are found. A creamery occupies the
site.

Near the confluence of this stream with
the East Branch a flouring mill, late
known as Ann's. now Ferguson's, is be-
ing operated. Below this mill we come to
Mercer's dam, which, like all dams on the
East Branch, is long and rather narrow.
A half century since this dam furnished
power for two flouring mills, which were
built in the last century by one Downing,
saith tradition. Evans, In his "History of
Lancaster County," says by Sterrett
Brothers in 1781. These mills ground
much of the wheat raised in Pequea valley
on its way to the Wilmington market.
They were also used to grind corn for
Ireland during the famine, at which time
they were operated by John Mercer, father
of Captain John Q. Mercer, late of Lan-
caster city. Years since one of these
mills was converted into a paper board
mill, but this industry is on the wane.

Flowing into Mercer's dam from the
Chester county side is an unnamed stream
on which forty years ago was a tilt-ham-
mer shop for the manufacture of mow-
ing and cradling scythes operated by
James Moore. Here at Mercer's mills a
covered bridge spans the stream. The
road leads toward Cochranville, Chester
county. From Mercer's mills to
Steelville, a distance of three miles,
the east branch flows through what a
Western cowboy would denominate a
mountain gorge, bounded on either side
by ranges of lofty hills, broken at
intervals by canons through which
some tributary *flows*. The rocky ledges
and stony character of the soil, with a
forty five degree

elevation of the hillsides, renders any attempt at cultivation impossible until the table land is reached. These hills, covered as they are with a foliage presenting all the varied tints of the rainbow, present to the lover of natural scenery a panorama wonderful to behold.

Here in these mountain fastnesses nature has hidden many of her choicest floral germs. Here in the sweet seclusion of nature's first temples such eminent botanists as H. H. Bower, Esq., of West Grove, Chester county, and the late Howard W. Gilbert, formerly of the Lancaster city High School, received the inspiration which carried them into the front rank of scientists.

The grandly natural picturesqueness of the scenery along this part of the stream from the great valley to Steeleville is without rivalry in Lancaster county.

Twenty years ago, through the persistent efforts of Hon. Marriott Brosius, ably supported by the foreman of the road jury, the late lamented George W. Hensel, father of our own General W. U. Hensel, the Lancaster county court opened a driveway along the western bank of the stream from Mercer's mills to Steeleville, which is largely patronized by lovers of natural views, which are here beheld in all their pristine beauty. Here during the summer months are found camps of those desiring seclusion and restful enjoyment. Here picnickers abound and fishing parties are in evidence to catch the gamey bass, with which the stream was stocked twenty years ago.

This was the hunting ground of that famed trio of Nimrods, Prof. Hall, of Lancaster ; George Pownall and William H. Sproul, of Christiana, and woe betide the unlucky grouse, quail, rabbit or squirrel that became the object of their unerring aim.

Down the stream from the Mercer mills, along the Brosius road, are found the ruins of Sadsbury Forge No. 1, known as the upper forge, and Sadsbury Forge No. 2, known as the middle forge. They were purchased by James Sproul (who moved there from White Rock Forge, Little Britain township, A. D. 1828), from John Withers, who also owned and operated Mount Eden Furnace in Eden township.

A half mile down the stream we come to a break in the Lancaster county range of hills which led to the Sproul mansion, near which on the surrounding plateau were erected barns and stables required to accommodate the great number of horses and mules used in transporting the smelted iron from Lancaster to the Sadsbury forges and to return the finished bar iron to water transportation. This was before the era of the Pennsylvania railroad. Teams were also necessary to haul the charcoal for the surrounding country to the forges, where it was consumed in the reduction of the iron.

I well remember, during the boom of 1844, of seeing processions of six to eight six-horse teams all engaged in hauling the product of a single furnace plant to the Pennsylvania railroad.

Near to the headquarfers mansion the No. 2 Sadsbury Forge, known as the middle forge, was in operation, No. 1 forge furnishing chafery iron, which was manufactured in No. 2 forge into octagonal bars, and were largely sold to a New England company, the Whitney, to be used in manufacturing gun barrels.

After Mr. Sproul's death, which occurred in 1847, No. 1 forge was unused. Mr. Goodman and son continued the bloomery enterprise at No. 2 forge for some time, but the scarcity of charcoal, and their efforts to manufacture coke

having failed, this forge was also abandoned and only ruins remain.

Journeying southward the nett utilization of the stream was without doubt the first effort to manufacture iron on the East Branch and probably was inaugurated by one Duquesne. Evans says by Michael Withers about the middle of the last century. This forge afterward became the property of James Buckley, who purchased a large tract of land in this locality, a portion of which became the property of James Sproul, A. D. 1837, he having purchased it from the Buckley brothers, sons of James Buckley.

Years ago, when writing up the local history of Chester county, I received the above tradition from Dr. A. V. B. Orr, who was closely identified with this locality from his birth, in 1809, up to his death, in 1880. Even the ruins of this forge are almost obliterated, a high stone wall, part of a coal house, alone remaining to mark the site of the Duquesne forge.

A half mile down the stream we come to the ruins of Ringwood forge, which was built by the Buckley brothers early in the present century. John McGowan, father of Hon. William McGowan, became proprietor of the forge in 1837 and here manufactured forge iron until 1848. Charles Cloud, of the Pennsylvania railroad, was engaged here for some years as proprietor, when Thomas Bailey succeeded to the business. Bailey attempted to manufacture iron from the slag of former operators, but failed. His assignee, Wm. Borland, however, was successful in the enterprise. Twenty-five years ago a freshet tore out the plant, which was not rebuilt. Three-fourths of a mile below Ringwood forge, through a rift in the Lancaster county hills, a stream known as Knott's run contributes its waters to the swelling East Branch. On this run General Steele built a large cotton factory. The

stream, though not abounding in water, furnished ample fall to guarantee sufficient power. This enterprise was a failure, and for years only stone walls remained to tell the tale of the General's venture. Thirty years ago a paper board mill was erected on the site, but this attempt was abortive, and crumbling walls alone appear in evidence.

The water, after operating the large factory during the Steele administration, was conducted around a spur of the southern range and by means of an aqueduct was again required to furnish power for a less pretentious cotton factory, but in after years this building was converted into a dwelling, and as such is in fair repair at present time, though lacking modern improvements. Thus far the waters of the East Branch and tributaries in their journey to the Susquehanna, except Glen Run and the Tilt-hammer stream, have only furnished power for present and extinct industries on the Lancaster county side of the stream. Now the sites of decaying industries as we enter Steeleville (so named by General Steele) are only found upon the Chester county side. Covered bridge, No. 2, is found here. Steeleville three score and ten years ago was a place of moment. The busy mart for the entire region, it was not only a business centre but it was a social and political centre also. Her business men were of the most enterprising type. Her politicians were patriots. Two of her citizens were Colonels in the Continental Army, Colonel Taylor and Colonel Thompson, and General Steele served his country with distinction during the war of 1812. Her matrons and maidens were amongst the fairest of the fair and the hands of the latter were sought in marriage by the gifted and educated at home and abroad. But Steeleville's prowess is no more ; it

is only a country cross-roads post-office villa, fast hastening into obscurity. Business activity is lost. The dignified citizen has departed. Science no longer has a foothold.

The lyceum, which numbered amongst its members men who have adorned the professions, men who have given to the scientific world gems from nature's hidden stores, men who have contributed to the ennobling of humanity, has long since ceased its meetings and crumbling walls which once echoed in response to oratory alone remain.

Here in this comparatively deserted hamlet we view the site of a former paper mill built by General Steele and successfully operated by him for many years, but the industry ceased shortly before his death, fifty years ago, and only vestiges of the plant are found.

To the antiquarian is shown the site of a tanyard built and operated by Thos. Woods for decades, but in consequence of the scarcity of oak bark and new methods in competition this industry was discontinued.

The only present industry is a flouring mill owned and operated by John Evans, which supplies the demands of the surrounding farmers.

Tradition tells of a copper mine once worked in Steeleville at a time unto which the memory of the oldest inhabitant runneth not back, traditions all fixing the time previous to the revolution. Twenty-five years ago a weak effort was made to locate and reopen the mine, but beyond locating and finding evidence of the existence of former shafts and drifts, nothing was accomplished ; no ore was found.

This gorge, through which the East Branch flows from the great valley to Steeleville, was at one time, early in the present century and even as late as forty years ago, as my day book shows, dotted

with tenement houses wherever it was possible to erect a dwelling with safe ingress and exit. There were nearly two score of them on the hillside tenanted by the employes of the various industries. For years these buildings have been deserted, and those not razed by the hand of time are fast crumbling into ruin. The only habitation except the old cotton mill on this stretch of three miles is the Goodman mansion, erected on the lawn of the former Sproul home and which is now owned by Thomas Griest, a brother of our townsman, Ellwood Griest, editor of the Lancaster *inquirer*. Thomas Griest owns and operates a large farm on the table lands adjacent to the mansion house.

The southeastern slope of Lancaster county drained by the Octorara has not only been celebrated in the past and present for its industries and agricultural production, but the people comprised within its area, principally descendants of English Friends and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, are noted for industry, integrity, intelligence and piety ; imbued as they are with a love for civil and religious liberty, their patriotism is intertwined with their religious convictions, and their sympathies reach out to other lands less fortunate in their forms of government.

In conclusion, permit me to say in personification of our good old city of Lancaster that no brighter jewels bedeck her starry crown, as you well know, than some of the gems gathered from the valley of the Octorara.

Still laughingly on the East Branch flows,
By the haunted dell where the hazel grows ;
Ever onward, never finding repose,

For its waters so sparkling and clear;
Enriching the verdure on its sinuous shores,
Willingly giving, of its bounteous stores,
As it hastens along o'er its pebbly floors,
A creation of God for his children so dear

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