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OLD MILLS OF MILL CREEK, LOWER MERION.

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Singing but faintly "the song of long ago," the shrunken stream of Mill creek winds through Lower Merion township. Of the half-score or more millwheels that it once kept in motion, not one is turning. Finger-boards, indeed, from the neighboring heights, point the way to Righter's mill, McClenachan's mill, Roberts's—but these may not be found; and, except for a building or two converted to other uses, only crumbling fragments of masonry mark the sites of once thriving industries.

Let us see how these industries developed, and why they declined. The immediate needs of the first settler were food and shelter. At first, he lived in a hut or cave, and bought food from the Indians. Meanwhile, he cleared the land and raised his log house, and for mortar carried lime from the kilns of Upper Merion or Plymouth. After the hard labor of felling big trees, came the tilling among standing stumps, then, the sowing, and, in due time, the harvest.

But grinding the grist was another matter. With water rights reserved to the Proprietary and his few favored associates, individual venture in water-mills was prohibited. The first Proprietary mill was built

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on Chester creek, in 1683, and, although ten to twelve miles distant, must have been resorted to by Lower Merion farmers; for Joseph Price, in his unique dairy, relates a family tradition that his great-grandfather, Edward Rees, used to shoulder a bag of wheat, and tramp off to mill at Chester creek—or perhaps (he adds) it was Naaman's creek! But the Proprietary venture proved unsuccessful; in 1687, Thomas Coe-bourne built a water-mill on Chester creek; in the following year, Haverford mill, on Cobbs creek, was in operation; and within two years more, the first mill within the present bounds of Lower Merion—that of John Roberts—was being turned by the waters of Mill creek.

John Roberts, a Welshman, had been an early purchaser of land in Lower Merion, and his two hundred and fifty acres embraced both banks of Mill creek, from near Merion Square road to Murray's mill. On this property, in 1690, he built a log house, which, although outwardly changed, is still standing. On the site of the ruin which is now placarded "Ye Olde Grist Mill," he raised his earlier grist mill—earlier by half a century—and gave the place an old Welsh name, *Wain*. A year or two more saw a road (perhaps not the present one) opened from the Gulph to Roberts's mill. Another, now known as Cherry lane, led to "Wain" from "Meirion road," now Montgomery avenue. Over the first, the corn of Upper Merion was brought to mill; over the second, "the Meal that comes Carted from John Roberts's Mill" was hauled, by way of Powell's ferry at Fairmount, to Philadelphia.

In 1690, John Roberts, "of Wayn, Philadelphia county, batchelor" married Elizabeth Owen. He died in 1704, leaving three young children: Rebecca, John and Matthew. John was apprenticed a wheelwright; Matthew, a blacksmith—very necessary trades, in those days of makeshift carts and backwoods roads. On

coming of age, John fell heir to the "dwelling house and plantation mill." Trade was thriving; two roads now connected the mill with Upper Merion; and in 1712, one of these, together with its extension eastward to join the "great road" (Montgomery avenue), was laid out by the Court of Quarter Sessions as a public road, and was returned as opened in the following year. But the new proprietorship was short-lived. In 1721, when less than twenty-six years old, and having married but the year before, John Roberts died. A son, born after his death, was named, for the father, John.

The will of John Roberts, wheelwright, bequeathed to his wife "my dwelling house & plantacon together with one Grist Mill," towards her maintenance and "bringing up & Educating of my Children (in Case I have one)." The widow re-married, and removed to Chester county; and lessees, presumably, operated the mill until the heir came into possession.

In 1743, ten months after attaining his majority, John Roberts—third of the name—married Jane Downing, of Chester county; the same year, he obtained a patent for his estate on Mill creek. Here he built, in 1746—as the date stone attests—a stone grist mill, probably replacing the older building. Perhaps as early as 1758, he built a paper mill, where Murray's old mill now stands. Business increasing, he raised a second grist mill, together with a saw mill, near the site of the present township pumping station; and in 1762, the Court granted a road (now mistakenly called "Old Gulph road") to give access to these new industries. Roads to Barren Hill and to the site of Ardmore had already been opened. The miller now became a flour merchant, also. His cooper shop, at the height of his prosperity, contained "150 flower casks" and "15 Thousand Staves, and heading," and nearby were "a great number of out-houses of divers kinds," so that a small village, towards which all the township's

roads seemed converging, grew up around the colonial dwelling (known, in later years, as "the haunted house") where lived John Roberts, the miller.

By purchase, John Roberts acquired other real estate. Part lay on the Schuylkill, extending back along Mill creek. With this land, came a saw mill; a powder mill was built here (as we shall see), 1776-7; and in 1779, there was also an oil mill on the tract. John Roberts became one of the township's largest landholders, owning, in all, nearly 700 acres, and controlling both banks of Mill creek for two miles. No wonder the stream was sometimes called *John Roberts's* Mill creek!

A birthright member of the Society of Friends, John Roberts was active in the Society's counsels. He was appointed a trustee, in 1763, for the purchase of land for Merion Meeting. His neighbors recognized his integrity and business ability by making him executor or trustee of their estates; and those who proved willing, when the need arose, to sign themselves his beneficiaries, were numbered by scores. He was made a Commissioner for improving Schuylkill navigation, in 1773; was appointed to the Committee of Correspondence, to protest against the Boston Port Bill, in 1774; and was delegate to the Convention for the Province of Pennsylvania, held at the State House in 1775, for the suppression of the slave trade. Then came the Revolution—and the tragedy.

We must not attempt here to establish the innocence of John Roberts, or to refute the mediæval folk-stories which, like ivy transplanted from some old ruin, have obediently spread their tendrils over the fragment of his grist mill. Incensed at the banishment, by the Revolutionary government, of some of his friends, he joined the British army, on its approach to Philadelphia, in September, 1777, with the purpose of having the exiles released. For this, and for acting, it was

charged, as guide to the British, the Supreme Executive Council declared him outlawed. An attainder of treason issued against him, and, despite efforts of family and friends, was relentlessly pressed. His execution followed, in November, 1778.

No less ruthless was the confiscation of property. Household and live stock, lands and mills—all were ordered to the auctioneer's block. Of the two hundred acres on Schuylkill, Thomas Roberts, the miller's eldest son, made good his claim to the greater part; the residue, remaining unsold until 1794, was then, by an eleventh-hour act of restitution, returned to the widow of John Roberts. All else of value was swept away. On December 16, 1780, the homestead, four mills and three hundred and seventy-eight acres of land, were sold to one Edward Milner, of Bucks county. Four days later, Milner re-conveyed the whole, for the same consideration, to John Maxwell Nesbitt, John Donaldson, and William Erskine. As Nesbitt was treasurer of the Council of Safety, as well as of the Board of War, the reader will not fail to draw his own conclusions. Nor, perhaps, will he wonder at the magnanimity of the Revolutionary government in paying to the widow of the man they had had executed, an annual pension!

Reading Howell's map, published in 1792, indicates the position of Donaldson's grist mill, near the present township pumping station. In that year, the property was again put up for sale. Among an array of buildings, it included a three-story stone merchant mill (the one now placarded "Ye Olde Grist Mill"), a two-story stone grist mill, a stone paper mill and a saw mill. In 1797, the whole was bought by George McClenachan, son of Blair McClenachan, that picturesque figure of the Revolution, whom William Cobbett, the satirist, called

"Blair, the great,
The Irish guardian of the State."

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Ten years later, George McClenachan sold the paper mill, but remained in possession of the rest of the property until his death, in 1833.

Because of the inaccessibility, from other parts of Lower Merion, of its Schuylkill shore, some of the industries there were founded by men from Whitemarsh and Roxborough, to whom the easily forded river offered less obstacle than did the almost trackless woods to their neighbors on the opposite side. The streams flowing down the Lower Merion slopes provided power for the mills; and the Schuylkill, a natural highway for the transportation of their raw material, as well as of their product. As the need for lumber grew, saw mills to supply the demand sprung up all along the Schuylkill. One of these was built by Thomas Rees, a Roxborough stonecutter, on land he had bought, in 1735, on Mill creek. The property was described as "fronting upon Scylkil so that the said Mill may be cheaply supply'd with Timber." Rees's executors sold the mill, in 1741, and in the next thirteen years it changed owners half a dozen times. David Davis, who owned it in 1748-9, called it "very convenient for water carriage, both for bringing loads to the mill, and rafting timber to Philadelphia." In 1754, it was bought by Christopher Robins, of Whitemarsh, of whom more later.

In 1768, Robins sold the saw mill property to John Roberts, miller, who gave it, with adjoining lands, to his son Thomas, but made no deed for it. It was therefore seized, in 1779, as the father's estate; but the son exhibited his claim before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and the lands were awarded to him. In 1792, he sold out his interest. Within the next few years, the saw mill changed hands several times. In 1806, two generations after our first notice of it, it was still there, and, presumably, still running.

Following the news of the battle of Lexington, a

hurry call had gone forth for munitions. With Old World supplies practically cut off, the Colonies found themselves thrown upon their own resources, with the urge of necessity as a spur to their development. Powder, above all things, was wanted quickly, and in quantity; and to hasten its manufacture, the Committee of Safety for Pennsylvania offered to lend money, on security, to "such persons as are willing to erect Powder Mills in this Province within fifty Miles distance of this City." All powder made in such mills was to be bought by the Committee, which was, moreover, to find all saltpetre.

In February, 1776, George Lush reported to the Committee that he had rented two powder mill seats, one of them being "on a stream call'd the Mill Creek, in the possession of John Roberts, about 10 miles from Town." Being duly encouraged, he went about setting up his mill on Mill creek, close to the Schuylkill. In March, 1777, "*Jacob Losch, of Lower Merion, in Philadelphia County, powder maker,*" represented to the Committee that he had completed a mill, and had "worked up the greatest part" of five tons of saltpetre in the manufacture of powder; but that he had "no Brimstone to work up the Quantity of Saltpetre left." He made a pathetic appeal for both ingredients, but, perhaps, in vain. All gunpowder had by this time been removed from the mills at French creek and Norrington (Norristown) to a safer place; in September, 1777, the British occupied Philadelphia, and in the following December, Cornwallis raided Lower Merion so thoroughly that we may hardly believe the powder mill was overlooked.

In 1779, however, this powder mill is mentioned in the inventory of the confiscated estate of John Roberts, to whom, therefore, it must have reverted. Roberts had already given the property to his son Thomas; under the latter's ownership, the powder mill was set

running again. From this time on, its history is read chiefly in the light of its numerous "flares." In July, 1788, 150 pounds of powder exploded, demolishing the mill, but, fortunately, harming no one. But in the following August, Richard Sill, in trying to empty mortars with a chisel, set off sixty pounds of powder and was blown to the roof, receiving fatal injuries.

A partnership for the manufacture of gunpowder was formed, in December, 1791, between Rees Price and Richard Tunis, of Lower Merion; Henry Fraley, carpenter, of Germantown, and Henry Keyser, Cheltenham, powdermaker. A new mill, with forty stampers, was completed in the following summer. It had been running less than a month, however, when, with a detonation that was heard at Schuylkill ferry, and was there supposed to be an earthquake, a great quantity of powder—thought to have been several tons—let go, killing Keyser and three others, and seriously injuring Fraley and his daughter.

Such a disaster naturally brought operations to an end, and as quickly as practicable, the surviving partners disposed of their rights in the property. But general war in Europe made powder making profitable, and in the spring of 1804, a new mill started, under the firm name of Young and Homes. A series of disasters followed. In October, two men were fatally burned by the explosion of the mill. Only two months later, the graining house, containing several hundred-weight of powder, blew up, killing two more; and in May, 1806, the roof was blown off the mill, and the miller killed. "And," significantly remarks the burial record of Merion Meeting, "they now Give out makeing." A few years later, the building of Flat Rock dam so raised the level of the river as to render useless the site of the ill-starred powder mill.

As early as 1746, David Davis had a fulling mill on Mill creek, where customers might have "all sorts of

woolen cloth, or druggets mill'd, dy'd, shear'd and pressed, after the best manner; also tammies and duroys scour'd and pressed; linen or woollen dyed blue, either in cloth or yarn; old garments scower'd and pressed; stains or mildews taken out of pieces damaged by sea." Goods could be delivered either at the mill, "in Merion," or "at John Chappel's, at the sign of the Black Bull, in Market street, Philadelphia." In 1748, Davis, having "removed down to Darby," sold mill, house and one hundred acres of land, to Conrad Scheetz, a Germantown paper-maker.

Between "Harriton" and the Schuylkill, a distance of four miles, Mill creek has a fall of two hundred and fifty feet, while its pure, clear and abundant water once made it, perhaps, more than usually adaptable to the manufacture of white paper. Favored by these conditions, numerous paper mills sprang up along the creek, and for many years, paper-making was the leading industry of the township. Of this industry, Conrad Scheetz (or, as he was sometimes mistakenly called *Schultz*), was the pioneer. Scull and Heap's "Map of Philadelphia and Parts Adjacent," published in 1750, makes "Shultz Paper Mill" appear as a frontier outpost of Lower Merion, and, apparently, high and dry—but this map is inclined to be fanciful as regards "parts adjacent" to the city. In 1769, Conrad Scheetz was taxed for two paper mills. One of these, the "lower mill," stood, with the house, at the ford, by the 10-mile stone, where the ruins of both may yet be seen. Picturesque Dove Lake, impounded in 1873, covers the site of the "upper mill."

Among the servants and apprentices that were indentured just previous to the Revolution, one, George Christopher Helmbold, was bound to Henry Cammerer, Philadelphia, for two years. In 1778, this George Christopher Helmbold, now become a paper-maker, married Elizabeth, daughter of Conrad Scheetz. An-

other daughter, Mary, married Simon Stetekorn, also a paper-maker. The "Pennsylvania Gazette" for June 15, 1785, tells of a fatal accident which befell an employee "at the paper-mill of Mr. Simon Steddikorn, near this city." Catharine, a third daughter of Conrad Scheetz, married Henry Kammerer, paper-dealer, of Philadelphia. The minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, for 1789 and 1790, show that sundry orders were drawn on the treasurer, during that period, in favor of Henry Kammerer, for writing-paper furnished for the use of Council and of the Comptroller General. In view of Kammerer's relationship to the Scheetz family, these records lend color to the tradition that paper for the Continental currency was made at the Scheetz mills.

After the death of Conrad Scheetz, in 1771, the mills were run by his widow, Catherine, and sons Benjamin and Frederick. The Revolution intervening, the estate remained unsettled until 1788, when, the widow being then dead, and the children all of age, the property was awarded, after some litigation, to Henry Kammerer, who then deeded the upper mill to George Helmbold, and the lower, to Frederick Scheetz.

With each mill, went sixty acres of land, for the original survey had included a large "overplus." In 1798, George Helmbold sold his portion, with the mill, to Thomas Amies, cordwainer, of Philadelphia.

Thomas Amies appears in the Philadelphia city directories as "cordwainer," or "shoemaker," with shop on south Second street, until 1809; then he is "paper manufacturer," at the same address, for about ten years. Then, those interested are directed to inquire for him at 109 High street, which may be taken to mean that increase of business called for his continuous attendance at the mill. A quarter-century after his purchase of the mill, there is the first mention of "paper

mill, Lower Merion, Montgomery county. Orders left at Isaac Pearson's, 109 High, always attended to." Later, customers are directed to leave orders at Thomas Desilver's book-bindery; then, at Charles Dull's paper warehouse. In 1839 (the year of his death), Thomas Amies is set down as "merchant," with office at 13 Minor street.

Because of its watermark,—a dove and branch—a device already in use at the Willcox Ivy Mills, Chester, where, it is said, Amies had been superintendent—the Amies mill in Lower Merion became known as "Dove Mill." Much of the product of Dove Mill was used by the second Bank of the United States, which then occupied its handsome building (now the Custom House) on Chestnut street, Philadelphia. Examination of letters, orders and printed blanks of the Bank, for the period 1820–1830, reveals the mark of the dove, sometimes lacking the branch, and looking more like a crow, but with the identifying name, variously given as "AMIES," "AMIES PHILADA.," etc. One brand of paper bears the additional mark, "CONGRESS U S." Some of the record books used in the offices of nearby counties, during the same period, are found to be made of Dove Mill paper. A sample of the actual paper, forms an illustration in Dard Hunter's monograph, "Old Papermaking."

Lyman H. Weeks, in his "History of Paper Manufacturing in the United States," relates that in 1817 a quantity of paper was produced by Thomas Amies for the purpose of printing the Declaration of Independence. This paper, says Weeks,

"was designed to surpass everything that had been attempted in that way in America. The moulds and felts were got up expressly for the purpose, the size of the sheet was 26x36 inches, and nothing was used but the finest linen rags. Each ream weighed 140 pounds, and the price was \$125. Amies was at one time superintendent of the Willcox Ivy Mills at Chester, but when he made this paper he owned and operated the Dove Paper Mills, Lower Merion, Montgomery county."

In 1754, a tract of land, with a saw mill, lying along Mill creek at the Schuylkill, was conveyed by John Johnson and wife, of Germantown, to Christopher Robins, a German with an Anglicized name, who is best known as proprietor of the "Three Tuns" tavern in Whitemarsh. In January, 1758, Robins bought an adjoining tract, with a house, and at the following June term of Court, he, with others, "Inhabitants on both Sides of the River Schuylkill," presented a petition, setting forth

"That your Petitioner hath built a Convenient Saw Mill and Paper Mill on a Stream of Water in Lower Merion and that there is no Road to or from the Said Mills, but what is altogether on Sufferance.

May it therefore please the Honourable Justices to take your Petitioners Case into Consideration and grant that they may have a road from Said Mills to the Conestogoe Road and also another Road from Sd. Mills over Schuylkill to Norriton Road."

At the September Sessions, this road, an original draft of which is found among the Norris MSS. in possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, was confirmed and ordered opened, and was known as "Christopher Robins Mill Road" until 1769, when its proprietor (having already disposed of his saw mill), sold the paper mill to Jacob Hagy, paper-maker, of Whitemarsh. The highway then became "Hagy's Ford road," a name which it still bears, although much of the original route has been vacated.

Jacob Hagy evidently placed his son William in charge of the paper mill on Mill creek, for in 1785, the former conveyed to the latter (who was then living in Lower Merion) the mill and 71½ acres of land. William Hagy became a man of prominence in the township, serving in several township offices, and representing his district in the Legislature. In his will, made in 1832, he styles himself "gentleman," and refers to "the Messuage and Plantation whereon I now live together with the Mills. . . . Situate in the Township of Lower Merion aforesaid containing One hundred and

seventy Acres." Forty years later, members of the family still held an interest in the paper mill on Mill creek, with part of the original plantation.

John Righter, son of Bartle Righter, of Roxborough, and brother to Peter, the Schuylkill ferryman, was a yeoman, living in Lower Merion, when, in 1760, he bought from the widow of Richard Harrison, Esq., a tract of 102 acres. This farm, lying athwart the Mill Creek valley, extended from Summit avenue to Gladwyne, and downstream from Murray's mill to the little bridge where, until recently, Righter's Mill road crossed. In 1760, however, this road was yet a mere horse path, which, for forty years, had connected the trail to Rees ap Edward's ford (Young's Ford road) with that leading to the mouth of Mill creek (Hagy's Ford road). Just above where path met creek, John Righter built a dam (whose abutments may yet be seen), and raised a stone grist-and-saw mill. On the strength of these improvements, he petitioned the Court of Quarter Sessions, in March, 1763, to have the horse path viewed and opened as a public road; and in the following September, it was accordingly returned and confirmed as such. Righter had, meantime, bought an additional 75 acres, adjoining his mill property on the eastward. But in doing so, perhaps he had incurred too great an obligation, for, in 1769, handbills advertising the sale of his personal property were posted up at the local taverns by Joseph Redman, the sheriff. Among the effects noted were

"2 waggons and gears, a pair of timber wheels, screw and carriage . . . a parcel of buckwheat in the mill, a quantity of scantling boards and logs, a cross-cut saw, chain millstone, &c. Likewise a Negroe man, about 25 years of age, who understands milling and sawing."

In the following year, the owner himself put up for sale all his real estate, comprising 175 acres "in Lower Merion, about 9 miles from Philadelphia," including

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"a valuable and well-accustomed grist-mill, with two pair of stones, one French burr, the other country stones, together with two boulting-cloths, a fan, and hoisting-gears all going by water;"

also, a saw mill, etc. Some of this land he sold, but the rumblings of revolution probably spoiled the prospect for the mills.

"A valuable Mill Seat" in Lower Merion, with 26 acres of land, is offered for sale by John Righter, in 1793. "The mill seat," he says,

"is well adapted for erecting a paper mill on it, having thirteen feet fall, and spring water can be brought into the engine, at a small expence."

The next year, he finds a purchaser in his neighbor, Jonathan Robeson, the blacksmith. The deed conveys with the land, which lies on both sides of Mill creek, the right to dam the creek, and the use of a road leading into Righter's road. "Robeson is going Build his paper Mill," writes a local diarist, in May, 1795; and in the following September the same hand records a fatal accident which has befallen David Loyd, who "fell off the Gangway Carrying stones at Jonathan Robeson's paper mill."

With the paper trade booming, John Righter entered his own mill as a paper manufactory, and, evidently, with some success. Weeks refers to him (although with mis-spelled name) as one of the well-known paper-makers in the vicinity of Philadelphia. Righter employed one John Reader, an Englishman, who, at the time of his death, in 1798, was said to have been the first in this country to bring paper-making to perfection. Weeks doubts this, but credits him with having been an expert at his trade.

In his will, made in 1808, John Righter styles himself "paper-maker," and in a codicil, signed two years later, he refers to "my Plantation . . . *mills* and houses in Lower Merion." He is likewise called "paper-maker" in a deed executed by him in 1812. He

died in 1824, having reached the good old age of, perhaps, 90 years, and having been twice married. His first wife was Hannah, daughter of Anthony Tunis, the Lower Merion weaver; his second, Jane, daughter of William McAfee, of the same township. In his will, William McAfee made son-in-law John Righter an executor; and Joseph Price, in his diary, notes that he attended the funeral to Middletown Presbyterian Church, and that, as regards expenses, "Righter paid all"—a matter of some moment to Joseph, who gave freely of his time and labor to all men, and was poor in consequence.

Adjoining John Righter's property on the eastward, Frederick Bicking, another paper-maker, bought, in 1762, a tract of 150 acres, extending for a mile down Mill creek. From the main tract, a long arm of land (probably for the purpose of including a small stream of water), reached out over the hill now known as Fairview. Although Frederick Bicking was living in Lower Merion when he made this purchase, he had possibly learned his trade elsewhere. When, in 1752, he had married, at St. Michael's Church, Germantown, the daughter of Johannes Unverzagt, of that place, the good pastor who made the record had set him down as "a young member and — miller," and no doubt should have written "paper-miller." One of Bicking's own daughters afterwards married a grandson of William Dewees, the noted Germantown paper-maker. These facts indicate an early acquaintance with the paper mills of the Wissahickon.

In 1763, Frederick Bicking took the oath of allegiance to King George III. In 1769, he was taxed for one paper-mill and 150 acres in Lower Merion. The following year, he bought a tract of 105 acres adjoining his property and extending to the Schuylkill at Rummel Falls (now Flat Rock dam). By this purchase, he also acquired two valuable shad fisheries.

One of these, including an island in the Schuylkill, he sold in 1807; the other, known as Rummel Falls fishery, remained a source of income until disposed of, in 1810 by his executors.

In 1784, he bought from the estate of Robert Jones 50 acres more, lying in an angle of the road leading to Haggy's ford, on the top of what is now Fairview hill. He also owned, from 1793 to 1798, a large tract, with saw mill, at the mouth of Mill creek.

He shared in the usual troubles of employers. The newspapers of the period set forth not a few of his advertisements for runaway servants—German, English and Negro—and in 1776, the general conscription of labor for the Continental army made him one of the signers of a memorial to the Committee of Safety, praying that paper-makers be exempted from service. Although evidently not a Lutheran, he contributed liberally to several funds of the "Dutch Church" (now St. Paul's, Ardmore), where, doubtless, some of his workmen regularly attended. He served the township as Constable in 1768.

He died in 1809, having bequeathed his house, paper mill and 110 acres to his son Frederick, and a log house to his son David. By the provisions of his will, all his other real estate was to be sold; and numerous deeds of record show how the large tract was divided among various small purchasers. A part, however, was excepted by the testator in these words:

"the burial place now on part of the said Land to be used as the same is now enclosed with a stone wall by my family and their Descendants and Husbands and Wives as a family burial ground forever."

This little cemetery is now embraced in "Penshurst," the estate of Mr. Percival Roberts, Jr. Here, in a plot fifty feet square, screened from the road by a patch of woodland, lie the remains of the old miller, his first wife Catharine, their daughter Sarah, and numerous others,

known and unknown—family, neighbors and humble workers in the nearby paper mill. The tombstones inform us that Frederick Bicking was a native of Winterburg, in Germany, and that Catharine, his wife, was born in Otwiller, in Germany, also.

Mention has already been made of the sale, in 1807, by George McClenachan, of a portion of the original Roberts Mill tract, with the paper mill. The buyer was Peter Walover, a Lower Merion paper-maker. Previous to making this purchase, he had operated, on lease, the Paul Jones paper mill near West Manayunk; but after the sale of that property to George Helmbold, another paper-maker (of whom we have already spoken), he probably found it desirable to set up for himself.

To Robert Sutcliffe, a noted Friend, we are indebted for what is undoubtedly a picture of Wallover and his mill, although Sutcliffe's quaint delicacy forbids his referring to anybody except by initials. The account, as extracted from his Diary, is as follows:

Having been several times kindly invited, I dined with P.W., a respectable paper-maker in the neighborhood of Merion, where I spent the afternoon pleasantly. The situation is beautifully romantic, being a deep narrow valley, the steep hills on either side of which are covered with wood. The mill which would be considered as an extensive one even in England, is almost wholly employed in making writing and printing paper, with large quantities of which he supplies the printers and stationers in Philadelphia. During the visit he gave me a little history of his life. About twenty years ago, being then twelve years of age, he left Mentz, his native place in Germany, accompanied by his father, who died on the passage to this country. Being of that class of immigrants called redemptioners already mentioned, P. W. on the arrival of the ship in the Delaware, was hired by Henry Drinker, and was employed about the house as a waiting boy, and assistant to the girls in the kitchen. After spending nearly four years in this family, and having acquired the English language, he had the good sense to discern, that it would be more to his interest to be taught some manufacture; and requested liberty of his master to be put apprentice to a paper-maker, which was readily granted, although his first indenture was not yet expired. After having obtained a knowledge of the manufacture of paper, he, by industry and care, acquired sufficient property and credit to enable him to begin business; which he has now, for

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several years, carried on to advantage. I never was in a paper-mill where the business was managed with more neatness and order."

This is surely a picture of prosperity, but unfortunately the picture has two sides. For a sheriff's sale swept away the little property, which was knocked down to Evan Jones. The latter continued to operate the paper mill until 1848; then changed it to a cotton and woollen mill, probably making, at the same time, alterations in the building, as the present date stone

C

reads: E J. From Evan Jones, the property
1848

passed to his son Evan G. Jones, who fitted it up as a grist mill, thereafter conducting his business under the name of Merion Flour Mills. Speaking of this mill in 1884, Bean's History of Montgomery County says that it "is in excellent condition, notwithstanding its great age." In later years, it has been best known as the property of Edward S. Murray, who has added his name to the date stone. But the greatest change of all came in 1924, when, under the ownership of Mr. James Crosby Browne, of whose estate, "Clifton Wynyates," it now forms a part, the old mill was metamorphosed into a modern apartment house, whose blue shutters and brass door-knocker are not the least attractive features of that very picturesque corner of Lower Merion.

The first paper mill in America was founded by William Rittenhouse on a branch of the Wissahickon creek; and throughout the Colonial period, Pennsylvania held the lead thus taken in the paper-making industry. The many streams which drained the steep slopes within a few miles of Philadelphia, not only provided any power needed for the mills, but also furnished an abundant supply of the pure, clear water so necessary in the manufacture of white paper. There was timber, too, in plenty, for the making of wood pulp for printing-

papers. With the coming of the redemptioners, the skilled labor of Germany was always ready to hand, while the crown laws prohibiting importation cut off the competition of continental Europe.

So the home industry flourished apace. At the outbreak of the Revolution, the paper mills in the county of Philadelphia (which then included Montgomery) outnumbered those in all the rest of the continent combined. There were in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware forty or more mills, producing annually £100,000 worth of paper, and of these, Mill creek, in Lower Merion Township, had four—as many as could be found in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire together.

But with the opening of war, trouble began. Although the Revolutionary government needed paper badly, it needed men, too. The conscription officer was armed with a writ which he served without fear or favor. The paper millers, threatened with the loss of their skilled labor, wasted no time in forwarding to the authorities a petition, which is here given in full:

"To the Honorable the Committee of Safety for Pennsylvania:

The Memorial of the Subscribers, being Paper Makers in the County of Philadelphia, on behalf of themselves and the Rest of the Paper makers, in that Neighborhood, humbly representing:

That when at this present time it is insisted on by the Officers and Privates in the Association, that every Man, from 16 to 50 years of age, shall join in the Troops now marching to the Camp out of the Province, Your Memorialists conceive they ought to submit to any inconveniences which on the Occasion are common to Men of all Trades and Occupations; But that at the same time it is their indispensable duty to mention to your Honorable Board, That if all the Paper Makers, Masters' Apprentices, and Journeymen within the Ages aforesaid, should now leave the Trade and follow the Camp, then all and every the Paper Mills in Philad'a County, making the Majority of Paper Mills on this Continent, must immediately be shut up, and, of course, in a few weeks, the printing Offices, even Cartridge Paper, would soon fail. Leaving this Matter to the Wisdom of Your Honorable Board, Your Memorialists most humbly pray for Your Order & Direction in the Premises. And Your Memorialists, as in duty bound, & ca.

HENRY KATZ

FREDERICK BECKING."

20 *Old Mills of Mill Creek, Lower Merion.*

That this appeal was not barren of results, is shown by a notice which was set forth in the "Pennsylvania Gazette":

"IN CONGRESS, July 19, 1776

Resolved, That the PAPER-MAKERS in Pennsylvania be detained from proceeding with the Associators to New Jersey. Extract from the minutes.

CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary."

This was emphasized by an order which appeared, the following month, in the columns of the same journal:

"IN COUNCIL of SAFETY, Philadelphia.

August 9, 1776.

The Honourable Congress having resolved that the PAPER MAKERS in PENNSYLVANIA be detained from proceeding with the Associators to New Jersey, all officers of this State are required to pay a strict regard to the same.

By order of the Council of Safety.

THOMAS WHARTON, jun, President."

Another petition to Congress, at about this time, resulted in the ordering home from war of Nathan Sellers, of Darby, who had joined the Continental army, and on whose expert knowledge of the manufacture of moulds the paper-makers depended. No further proof is needed of the importance of the industry at this time!

War had its certain aftermath. With the cessation of hostilities, the price of paper, which, soon after the Declaration of Independence, had been advanced by the publishers, went soaring. Post-war labor came so high that it tended to discourage publication of anything except laws, newspapers and pamphlets. On the other hand, however, the competition of foreign papers, which would naturally have been felt just at this time, was entirely cut off by European war. So business continued to boom. Within a few years after the Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution, there were 50 paper mills running in Pennsylvania. Of these, five were on Mill creek, in Lower Merion township.

Instead of the scarcity of men, there was now a dearth of raw material, and word went forth to "save rags." Meanwhile, new mills were going up. Lloyd Jones, in 1791, raised his paper mill, on a small stream near West Manayunk. Two years later, Paul Jones put up another, nearby; it contained "three presses and two iron screws, a large drying-loft, together with every other requisite," and was "situate on a never failing stream of water in Lower Merion township." In 1795, as already noted, Jonathan Robeson built a paper mill on Mill creek.

A heavy rain, in July, 1795, which carried away nearly all the dams in Lower Merion, including those of Bicking, Hagy and Paul Jones, seems to have brought only a temporary interruption to trade. In 1804, an old resident of Lower Merion, attending the funeral of a child who had been killed in "Bicking's old mill," observes that it is "amaising what a number of people that Crick does imploy . . . at the paper mills; their is 7 of them in Less than 3 miles . . . the hills swarm with Children." These seven mills employed, perhaps, 100 persons, and supported several times that number. They were Democrats, too, almost to a man; and the more conservative Federalists "viewed with alarm" the doubtful prospect of a township controlled by "Journeyman paper Makers."

In 1810, there were 60 paper mills in Pennsylvania; in 1813, there were 64 in Pennsylvania and 4 in Delaware. A few years later, at the peak of prosperity, the 70 mills of Pennsylvania and Delaware were employing 950 persons, of whom half were women and children, while \$800,000 worth of paper was being produced annually within 40 miles of Philadelphia. Then, following peace in Europe, came the flood of foreign paper, and the American mills, which hitherto had used only the hand process, were brought into competition with the machine-made product of the Continent. By 1820,

the number of vats at work in Pennsylvania and Delaware had fallen from 95 to 17; the number of employees, from 950 to 175, and the paper-makers were urging a duty on paper to save their business from ruin.

With the decline of paper-making, and the conversion of its mills into woollen and cotton factories, and manufactories of buttons, kettles, "Deringers" and what-not (about all of which another and longer chapter might be written), the family names so long associated with the industry begin to disappear from the neighborhood. That most of them were German, well bears out the statement of Dr. Benjamin Rush, that paper-making was one of the industries in which the German immigrant excelled. One or two of these names may still be heard in Lower Merion, but of Conrad, Frederick and Francis Scheetz (Schütz); Frederick Bicking, senior and junior; Christopher Robins (Rap); Jacob, William and Joseph Hagy; George and Henry Helmbold; Jacob Newhouse, Simon Class, Simon Steddikorn, Peter Bechtel, Philip Fritz, Christian Oblinger, Peter Wallover, John Boy, and John Righter—all lessees or owners, journeymen or masters, in the trade of paper-making—the busy township of today knows nothing.