

HISTORY
OF
LANCASTER COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA,
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF MANY OF ITS
PIONEERS AND PROMINENT MEN.

BY
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ILLUSTRATED.

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William W. and James R. Hildebrand, his sons, and John N. Goodman, his son-in-law, are engaged extensively in the manufacture of cigars at Strasburg, under the firm-name of Hildebrand & Co.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BART TOWNSHIP.¹

At the November session of the court in Lancaster County, 1743, the citizens of Sadsbury petitioned for a division of that township, and the court appointed Calvin Cooper, George Leonard, Sr., Samuel Ramsey, Robert Wilson, and James Miller, citizens of that township, to divide it. They accomplished their work in the spring of 1744. The name of the township was derived from the titular appendage to the name of Sir William Keith (Baronet, abbreviated to Bart.), who was Governor of the province from 1717 to 1726, in which time the township was settled.

The first settlers were mostly Presbyterians from Scotland and from the north of Ireland, the latter known by the name of Scotch-Irish. They emigrated by thousands to Pennsylvania, and many of them settled among the Friends in "Old Sadsbury," where the principles of civil and religious liberty were in full operation. A historian has truly testified "that a more intelligent, virtuous, and resolute class of men never settled any country." They have ever been the staunch friends of liberty, and of everything else that could elevate the character or promote the welfare of society. They were the most efficient supporters of the American cause during the great struggle for independence, and they have comparatively done as much for the support of learning, morality, and religion as any other class of people. In these respects their descendants, who still inhabit this township, are not excelled by the people in any other section of the county.

Eden was set off from Bart in 1855. The boundaries of the township as at present constituted are Paradise on the north, Sadsbury on the east, Cole-rain on the south, and Eden on the west. It has a length of five miles, an average width of three and one-fourth miles, and an area of ten thousand seven hundred and sixty acres.

A short distance south from the middle of this township the great Chester Valley crosses it from east to west. North and south from this valley the surface is rolling, like that of the other townships in the southern part of the county. The soil, especially in the Chester Valley, is fertile and well adapted to the production of the cereals that flourish in this latitude or to grazing.

Nickel-Mine Run and Meeting-House Run, with their affluents, water the northern and middle portions of the township. They unite toward the southern boundary to form one fork of the west branch of the Octorara. These streams not only water the farms through which they pass, but afford excellent water-power.

The State road between McCall's Ferry and Parkersburg, which passes through the Chester Valley, is the most important thoroughfare in this township, and prior to the advent of railroads its importance was much greater than at present. North and south from this road the township is crossed from east to west by roads, and two principal highways pass through it from north to south, though the easternmost one is somewhat tortuous.

Iron.—Near the Green-Tree tavern, on the farm of William Rakestraw, an iron-mine was opened some years since by the Phoenixville Iron Company. It was worked by this company during several years, and the ore was taken in wagons to Christiana, from which point it was carried by rail to the company's works near Philadelphia. The expense of transportation to Christiana made the production of ore unprofitable, and the mines consequently ceased to be worked.

Nickel-Mines.²—According to authentic history, the Gap mines had been worked for their copper prior to the year 1744, and from traditions of the neighborhood they were first discovered about 1718. For eighty or ninety years after their discovery they were worked at intervals by four or five different companies; but none of those companies ever found sufficient copper to pay expenses, and consequently they would work them at a loss for a time and then let them stand idle till new parties would start them up again.

In 1849, after the mines had been idle thirty or forty years, a stock-company was formed under the name of the Gap Mining Company to work them again for copper. They operated on a rather larger scale than the previous companies; put up a twenty-five horse-power steam-engine for pumping and hoisting, employed a number of miners and laborers, and found considerable copper ore, which they sold to copper smelters in Boston and Baltimore, but there was not nearly enough to pay the expenses of working the mines. Nothing was then known here of nickel, although in mining copper large quantities of nickel ores were mined along with it and thrown away as worthless. It was called by the miners mundic (sulphuret of iron), a very plentiful and nearly worthless mineral.

In the beginning of 1852 the present superintendent of these works came to the Gap mines to work as a miner. He immediately discovered that what was termed mundic, and thrown away as worthless, was not mundic, but some other mineral,—what mineral he could not tell. This led to samples of it

¹ Acknowledgments to Joseph McClure, Esq.

² By Capt. Charles Doble, superintendent.

being sent to Boston and Baltimore, but the analysis at these places was not satisfactory. Finally, in the latter part of 1852 or the beginning of 1853, a sample was sent to Professor F. A. Geuth, a celebrated chemist of Philadelphia, who made an analysis of it, and pronounced it nickel, and gave the percentage of pure nickel in the ore.

At this point the Gap copper mines changed to Gap nickel mines. The Gap Mining Company mined the nickel ore, and sold it to a separate company, which smelted the ore during a time in Philadelphia. A year or two later another separate company erected smelting-works about three-quarters of a mile north of the mines. They bought the ore from the Gap Mining Company, and smelted it there, but the smelting of nickel proved unprofitable, consequently the smelting-works changed hands several times, with considerable loss to the owners. In 1859 the Gap Mining Company bought these smelting-works, and smelted their own ore, but in 1860, finding that neither mining, nor smelting, nor both together would come near paying expenses, they closed the whole concern, mines, smelting-works, and all.

This finished the Gap Mining Company's operations; they never worked it again. It remained idle two years; the mines filled with water, which ran out at the top of the shafts, engines and other machinery rusting out, furnaces and stocks which were nearly worn out before now decaying and crumbling to the ground. Such was the condition of things when the present proprietor, Joseph Wharton, Esq., a Philadelphia Quaker, took hold of it in November, 1862. He at that time bought of the Gap Mining Company one-half of the concern, and leased the other half for a term of years; but shortly afterwards he bought the other half also, thus becoming the owner of the whole concern, mines, smelting-works, machinery and all. He immediately commenced repairing the machinery, pumped the water out of the mines, rebuilt the furnaces and stacks, and by May, 1862, got into operation the mining and refining of nickel. It should be stated here that at the time Mr. Wharton bought the mines and furnaces he also purchased a large manufacturing establishment in Camden, N. J., and fitted it up for a nickel refinery; for be it remembered that when the metal leaves Gap Furnaces it is not nearly pure, only a part of the dross or worthless matter has been taken out; in that condition it is called *matte*, and is shipped to the refinery at Camden, where it goes through many processes, requiring much time, labor, and skill to bring out the pure nickel. In fact, the processes are so tedious and complicated that many months elapse after the ore is mined before finished nickel is produced therefrom. By his perseverance Mr. Wharton has overcome all obstacles, built up one of the most nearly complete nickel establishments in the world, and by energy and economy was made the mining and making of nickel in America a successful industry, thus bringing

many thousands of dollars monthly into Lancaster County.

The establishment is now "Gap Nickel-Mines and Furnaces," owned and worked by Joseph Wharton, of Philadelphia, Capt. Charles Doble, superintendent. The mines are situated in Bart township, and the smelting-works are about three-quarters of a mile north from them in Paradise township. The mine tract in Bart township contains four hundred and fifty acres,¹ and the furnace tract in Paradise ninety acres. There are on these properties a large mansion-house at the mines, where the superintendent of the works resides, a large store and dwelling (White Hall store) near the mines, twenty-three tenant-houses, occupied by the workmen, five barns, stables, sheds, etc. A township school-house is near the mines, and a commodious Episcopal Church, erected in 1857, stands within the limits of the mine tract, the site for the church and cemetery having been donated by the Gap Mining Company.

When in full operation about one hundred and fifty hands are employed in the mines, fifty at the furnaces, and one hundred in the refinery. The mines are opened out on the vein in length, by shafts and tunnels, about two thousand feet, and the deepest point attained is two hundred and thirty-five feet. There are six shafts ranging from one hundred to two hundred and thirty-five feet in depth, and a few others from sixty to eighty feet deep. All these shafts are vertical. The ore is rarely found in paying quantities nearer than sixty feet to the surface. There are two steam-engines at the mines, one a low-pressure Cornish pumping-engine of one hundred horse-power, for pumping water out of the mines, the other a twenty-five horse-power, for hoisting the ore and rubbish out of the mines.

The veinstone, or rock matter, mixed with the ore, is a dark-colored, highly crystalline hornblende, considerable quantities of which are mined and hoisted with the ore. After it is mined the ore is brought through the tunnels to the hoisting shafts in small cars carrying about a ton each. It is then hoisted to the surface in large iron buckets carrying about one thousand pounds each, or in square wooden boxes ("skips") carrying each double that quantity. After the ore is brought to the surface it is prepared for the smelting-works by breaking the large lumps with heavy sledges and picking out the rock or refuse matter, washing and hand-picking the middle size, and "jigging" (a process of separating the rock matter from the ore by the difference in their specific gravity) the finer particles. After it is thus prepared it is taken to the smelting-works and broken by machinery, then put in large roasting kilns and set on fire to drive off a portion of the sulphur it contains. When once on fire it burns four or five weeks without fuel. It is next put into the smelting-furnaces and melted. This

¹ In 1758 the mine lands contained seven hundred acres.

smelting brings out a kind of concentrated ore called matte, which comes from the furnaces in a liquid state and is cast in sand moulds into pigs, like pig-iron from an iron-furnace. This pig-matte is next reduced by machinery to a coarse powder, then put into barrels (one thousand pounds in a barrel) and shipped to the refinery in Camden.

There are two twenty-five horse-power steam-engines at the smelting-works. One drives the blast-cylinders which give air to the furnaces, and the other drives the rock-breaker and Cornish crusher. There are four blast-furnaces, but only two in blast at a time. There are also a cooper-shop, a blacksmith-shop, and a wagon-shop. Seven hundred tons of ore per month are mined and smelted at these works.

Downing Mill.—About one mile below the Green Tree Inn, on the west branch of Octorara Creek, is still standing a house on the end of which is the date of its erection, 1747. Near this house stand the blackened walls of a grist-mill that was built in the same year by Samuel Downing, who was then the owner of the land there. The mill was the property of Mr. Downing till his death, after which the Hurfords purchased it, and in 1830 rebuilt it. From them it passed to Eli Kerns, and subsequently it became the property of his son, Horatio Kerns, from whom it passed to the Heyburgers, who owned it when it was burned, in 1877, and who still own the property.

A mile and a half below this mill, on the same stream, another was built early in the present century by Gen. James Caldwell. It was subsequently burned, and was rebuilt by Maris Kerns, who had become the owner. It is now owned and operated by David Jackson. It is a framed structure, with two runs of stones.

A saw-mill is attached to this mill.

Georgetown Mill.—In 1765, Felix Baughman purchased from the proprietaries of the province the land on which this mill stands, about half a mile southeast from Georgetown, on the west branch of Octorara Creek. In the latter part of the last century a saw-mill was erected at this point either by Felix Baughman or George Baughman, his son, and not long afterward a small grinding-mill was added to it. To this, in 1817, an addition was made, and two runs of burr-stones for grinding wheat were put in it. In 1803 the property passed into the hands of James Baxter, and it was sold by the sheriff to James Downing in 1816, by him to William Downing in 1826, and by him to Morris Cooper in 1834. In 1842, Mr. Cooper erected the present grist- and saw-mill a short distance farther down the stream, and demolished the original mill, which was built mostly of stone. This mill has remained without material alteration till the present time. It is a large stone building, and it has three runs of stones and all the necessary machinery for merchant and grist work. It is worthy of remark that the original overshot water-wheels which were placed in this mill when it was

built are still there in a good state of preservation, without even the buckets having been removed. In 1855 the mill became the property of Jeremiah Cooper, the son of Morris, and it was purchased by Harvey Clendenning, the present owner, in 1883.

Woolen-Factory.—In 1842, William P. Cooper, a brother of Morris Cooper, built a woolen-mill on West Branch, one-fourth of a mile down the stream from Georgetown mill. It was built of stone, and had two sets of machinery for the manufacture of woolen cloth and satinet. Mr. Cooper operated this mill till 1862, when the wood-work and machinery were destroyed by fire. It was at once rebuilt by Mr. Cooper and sold to James Bond, who placed in it modern machinery and operated it till 1876, since when it has not been in use. It is now the property of Jeremiah Cooper.

Schools.—In 1834, soon after the enactment of the school law, its provisions were accepted by the township of Bart, and excellent schools have since been maintained. The township now consists of six sub-districts, named as follows: Nickel Mines, in the northern part; the Georgetown District, in the central portion; Mount Pleasant, in the western part; Mars Hill, in the southwest; the Brick School-House District, in the south; and Harmony, in the southern central part. In the Nickel Mines District the school-house is a wooden building. In the Georgetown District are two houses, one of which is of stone. The Mount Pleasant District has a stone house. All the others are of brick, and all are furnished with modern improved desks and fixtures. The average yearly term of the schools is seven months.

In 1870 a private school was established near Green Tree by Mrs. William H. Good. In this school all branches were taught, and particular attention was given to the preparation of teachers. The school was quite prosperous, and was kept up till the removal of Mr. and Mrs. Good from the locality in 1881.

Octorara United Presbyterian Church.¹—The congregation of the Octorara United Presbyterian Church in Bart has a house of worship on a plat of ground that is on the Valley road, one mile from the village of Georgetown, and that was deeded for church purposes by the heirs of William Penn.

The society was organized Oct. 20, 1754. There are no records of the names of members, etc., until Rev. Easton took charge of this congregation, in connection with the congregations of Oxford and Muddy Run, in 1827. At that time there were thirty-seven members. This congregation originally belonged to the Associate Church of Scotland, better known by some as Seceders. It became United Presbyterian when that body originated, in 1858. It had the one pastor for fifty-two years. In April, 1880, the congregation called its present pastor, Rev. David Anderson. The membership is now seventy-three. In

¹ By Rev. D. Anderson.