

Grist Mills Played Large Role In Early Lancaster Farming

By JACK REICHARD

(Special to Lancaster Farming)

An urgent necessity of the first white settler-farmers in Lancaster County was to devise means of grinding the grain they grew on their clearings into meal and flour. Until such means were provided, grain was pulverized with stone pestles in hollowed out tree stumps and concave stones, Indian fashion, or transported on horseback to the Brandywine, where the first water-powered grist mills in Penn's domain were built.

One of the first inland mills on record, in Lancaster County, was a Spanish type mill found on the Alger Shirk farm in West Cocalico Township, a tract deeded by William Penn's sons to

Ulrich Shirk in 1732. The mill, consisting of a one-piece bed stone about 16 inches thick with a basin about 12 inches deep, and a basin stone about 16 inches thick, which was revolved on edge by the motive power of horses or oxen; may be seen today at the Martie Forge Millstone Collection along route 324, approximately 10 miles south of Lancaster.

First Imported from England.

The miller, like the blacksmith and wheelwright, was indispensable to the farmer. Although a grist mill required considerable equipment for efficient operation, its most important installations were the waterwheel and millstones.

The earliest stones were imported from England. The British held a monopoly on the millstone supply to the American colonies and states until about 1800, when the French buhrs and native stones were introduced. These two factors added to the trouble with England in the War of 1812 and finally brought about the end of the use of English stones in this country. Following the war the "Cocalico Stones" were adapted for grinding grain by many millers in Lancaster County.

The "Cocalico" stones were cut in the South Mountains in West Cocalico and Clay Townships, and in the Turkey Hill area, near Terre Hill, in the northern section of the county.

Konigsmahers Early Dealers

Among the earliest dealers of the Lancaster County stones on record was the Konigsmaher family in the Ephrata section. The last millstone dealer, most widely known in the county, was Benjamin Wissler, of Lincoln, Ephrata Township, who also dealt in stone troughs, hearth, paving and building stones.

One of the largest collections of old millstones in the world today is the collection at Martie Forge, comprising over 100 stones, representing more than a score of early American industries. Paul B. Flory, Pequea, RD 1, the owner and collector, is a third generation miller of a milling family, and active partner with his brother Jacob B. of Flory's Mill, near East Petersburg, one of the last flour mills still in operation in the county.

7 Tips for Safe Driving During Heavy Snowfalls

HARRISBURG — Seven tips for safe driving during heavy snowfalls were offered today by Col. E. J. Henry, Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner.

His recommendations are:

1. When starting out in slippery weather, get the "feel" of the road before you enter heavy traffic.
2. Allow an extra margin of safety between your car and the vehicle ahead.
3. Signal your intention to turn or stop well in advance.

In the collection, at Martie Forge, may be seen stones which were comparably old while the country was still young, two bearing dates of 1752 and 1784. Another pair of stones of great historical interest, imported from England in 1740, were used for grinding oatmeal in a mill situated in Chester County. History records that the mill supplied meal and grain to Washington's army during the historic encampment at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78.

Most of the stones in the collection reached their grinding peak during the latter part of the 19th century, when portable grinding mills traveling from place to place ushered in a new era of progress in the farming industry. The portable grinder, coupled with an expansion of the flour industry in the west, caused a rapid decline of the milling industry throughout the eastern section of the nation.

Nobis Elected President of Angus Breeders

Otto G. Nobis, new president of the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association, is an Iowa farmer and the son of a South Dakota homesteader.

With his son, Dick, Mr. Nobis operates Wilton Farms at Davenport, which he purchased and stocked with registered Angus in 1934.



OTTO G. NOBIS

Mr. Nobis was born and reared at Kimball, South Dakota, on a farm which had been homesteaded by his parents in 1880. He attended business college and worked at several jobs before becoming office manager for the Central Engineering Company in 1917.

Wilton Farms has achieved a wide and respected reputation in Iowa and throughout the country for breeding fine cattle. The Wilton show string has won many prizes during the years it has been on the tanbark trail, and in 1939 a Wilton heifer Blackcap 23rd of Page, was named International Grand Champion female in Chicago.

In addition to their son, Dick, Mr. and Mrs. Nobis have a son, Tom, and daughter, Janette.

Otto Nobis was first elected to the board of directors of the national Angus organization in 1939, and once before—in 1944—served as president. He was elected 1956 president of the Association at its annual meeting last November 30, at the Palmer House in Chicago.

4. Keep your windshield and windows clear, despite falling snow. Windshield wiper blades should be of "live" rubber, equal to the task of removing rain or snow without streaking. The defroster should function without difficulty, to provide you with adequate visibility. Stop if necessary to clear snow from the rear window.

5. Make gradual starts and stops. Using a pumping action in braking.

6. Reduce speed to a point where you are confident you have control of the vehicle in case an emergency should arise. Remember it takes three to 12 times as much distance to stop on snow or ice without help of tire chains, as it does on dry concrete. Even with the tremendous help afforded by tire chains, which cut stopping distance in half and enable you to keep going, snow is still slippery.

7. When driving after dark in a heavy snowfall, drive with extraordinary care, rather than risk becoming stranded following a skid into a snowbank.

"Highway maintenance crews do their best to keep roads open to travel day and night in all kinds of weather, but when snow falls steadily for hours, the going can be rough for a long spell," said Col. Henry.

"When severe snow and ice conditions prevail, any trips that are not really essential should be postponed until the weather and the roads are more conducive to convenience in traveling," he added. "If motorists observe a thoughtful attitude in this regard, then highways will be less congested and much safer for those cars, trucks and buses which are properly equipped and able to get through to destinations in face of snow or ice conditions."



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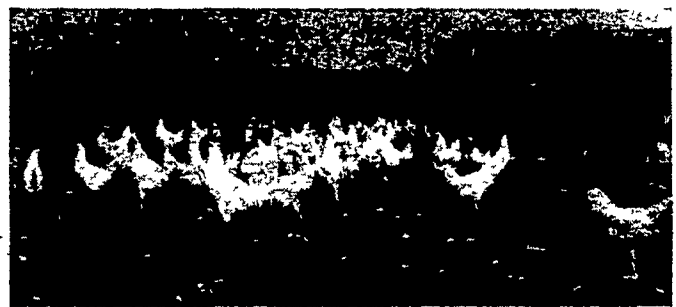
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