

HISTORY OF THE BEAVER VALLEY.

Correspondence of the Pittsburgh Gazette. BEAVER VALLEY, June, 1873. [Paper No. 14.]

IRON MAKING AT BEAVER FALLS.

As shown in last number, Brighton had fallen to a low estate under the general prostration of business in the country, and it remained in this forsaken and neglected condition until during the year 1820. Mr. Ormsby still owned it, not being able to find a purchaser. The timber had become very scarce and too dear to make charcoal at a cost to enable them to compete with furnaces in the pine country up the Allegheny river, and the iron works were consequently rendered of but little value. At that time, there were no furnaces in this country which made iron from bituminous coal, or other minor coals. It is quite interesting to draw a comparison between the mode of making iron from pig at that time, and as it is now made. The change from the monotonous, dull stroke of the hammer that prepared the bars for use, that of the modern appliances of a well-fitted rolling mill of today, exhibits, in a marked manner, the strides made in industrial arts. Those old worthies never dreamed, probably, that in the course of a few years, the labor required to make a few tons of iron would turn out hundreds of tons of the best marketable iron. But Brighton was destined to see better days. A cloud hung over her, and her hopes and aspirations for the future, though now so far from ever being realized, so far as man could see, were now about to be realized to the full, and the cloud to burst in blessings.

In the Summer of 1829, Mr. James Patterson of Philadelphia, then lately from England, while looking over Western Pennsylvania, for a site upon which to locate and embark in the manufacture of iron, learned that the Brighton property, water power, iron works, &c., were for sale, and visited the place. He visited Mr. Ormsby and bought the property, after thoroughly inspecting it. He got possession of it and held it only after the most vexatious and troublesome hindrances and obstacles, and which, though for a time seemingly put to rest, gave Mr. Patterson an immense amount of trouble for many years afterward. Indeed, his experience alone, is a history of itself. This purchase had an immediate effect for good throughout the entire valley. The people took new heart and set to work to better their fortunes under the new tune of affairs. A commencement was at once made by the new owner to rebuild and improve the place.

MANUFACTURING REVIVED. A new canal race and lock of sufficient size to pass to and from canal boats, equal to any part of the Penna. canal, was built, to render more available the water power. A large merchant flour mill was erected and put into operation with abundant success. A cotton factory with machinery for spinning coarse yards was also put in active work; cotton yarn, which he had spun east of the mountains, was woven and made into plaids, gingham, checks, &c.

A large cooper shop was built, and many coopers employed to make flour barrels, and quite a number of dwelling houses were built of frame, brick and stone. Of course there was plenty of employment for a large number of men, women, boys and girls, scattered throughout the neighborhood around. The flour mill had a capacity of two hundred barrels per day, much of which was shipped to Philadelphia by way of Pittsburgh.

Several canal boats were owned and used by Mr. Patterson to bring wheat to the mill from the Ohio river, and from the valleys north by the canal, which could pass the lock to the mill, unload the grain and carry away a load of flour. Coal banks were opened, and miners put to work mining it out. Quite a trade in wool was established by which it was carried to Philadelphia, the farmers receiving cash for all their sales. During this great prosperity, it was always the rule at the works to engage the working people for cash payments. They received their pay at stated times, and in turn could meet all their engagements.

In addition to the various works of Mr. Patterson, there was erected by Mr. Archibald Robertson, in 1831, a paper mill, which for a number of years made large quantities of printing paper and wall paper, and gave employment to quite a number of people. A few years afterwards this mill was rendered useless by a part of it being burned. The notes of a part of these letters were made on a yellow writing paper, manufactured by Mr. Robertson about forty years ago. It bears well its age, and is a very creditable specimen of writing paper, though a little coarse. It was presented to the writer by Mr. Robertson, whose acquaintance he had the pleasure of enjoying for some years. Mr. Robertson was honored, in his life, with high positions of trust in municipal affairs, and among his noblest and his memory cherished for his purity of mind and the purity of his supply and lives. For about fifteen years there is in the purchase of the Brighton property, Mr. Patterson, the town was in the hands of the most unbounded

prosperity, until the great fire in Pittsburgh in 1845, when a severe setback was given to the enterprise started, Mr. Patterson being a very heavy loser.

BLIGHTED HOPES. In 1849, Mr. Robertson established another paper mill in the upper portion of the town, which is yet in full operation, and very prosperous under the management of Messrs. Frazier, Metzger & Co. In the year 1862, a company was formed and organized under a charter obtained from the Pennsylvania Legislature, under the name of the Beaver County Manufacturing Company, which purchased the Brighton property, and raised the people's hopes and expectations generally, that they would greatly improve the property, and make advances their own and country's best interests. But under unwise management, the company finally failed either to do good for themselves or for any one else. During the time which they held the property a large dwelling house was burned down and the cotton factory with all its machinery was totally destroyed by fire. After this great effort were made to induce eastern manufacturers and others to purchase the property and erect large works upon it, but from various causes all failed of success. Among the causes was undoubtedly the local influence used to drive off capitalists.

The last great effort was made after the destruction of Harper's Ferry National Army, in endeavoring to induce the National Government to buy the property, with its water power, for a national foundry and armory, but this was defeated by certain local jealousies and envy, which finally resulted in that great work being located at Rock Island.

For some years Brighton was not known in the outside busy world, except as a very quiet and pleasantly situated town. Its paper mill was in operation, the flouring mill was run and a soap and candle factory was also doing some business. It had not even the advantage of a post office or a railroad station, those two conveniences being located two miles off, in the borough of New Brighton.

THE PAST AND PRESENT. One minute's walk from the center of the town carried one into the quiet of the beautiful woods that partially surrounded it. The old "Mansion House" was the most commodious and probably the finest dwelling house in town. The little old red brick school house, standing on an eminence and commanding a complete view of the town, was ample for school, religious and lyceum purposes. Venerable sires taught their children that once Brighton was the greatest of all the towns in the valley. Sons listening to the story of the bright pictures of the past, bravely declared that her future should surpass even the greatest prosperity of the past. The broad green valley in its beauty smiled a welcome to all strangers who trod upon it, and the request soon became an urgent one, that once again men of capital should rise in their might and restore the town to its primitive glory and greatness.

So it remained until about the year 1866, when strange rumors began to float on the current of public conversation. Many were the singular proceedings that were taking place in the town. Men began to talk of factories, cutleries, large business houses. A smile overspread the faces of the owners of clay lands, and the brick makers were at peace with the world—and themselves.

A petition brought the post office, and pride marked the happy face of the Brightons, when they read on their envelopes the unmistakable post-mark of their own post office. A station was the occasion of joy, and people had no longer to tread the weary path to the depot across the river, that they might get to the outer world.

The town began to increase and business to look up—all of which, however, will be told in the story of Beaver Falls. These signs and wonders in the quiet town were, after all, only the forerunners of the incoming Beaver Falls, which, with its wealth and industry, and intense business activity and energy, very soon transformed the peaceful little town into a busy, grasping, aggressive little city.

A Costly Cabaret. The largest and most costly cabaret in the Vienna list is that of Lord Bective, an Englishman, which cost \$25,000 and was in hand nearly five years. It is of ebony, inlaid with ivory, and decorated with lapis lazuli and jasper. It is in the pure Italian style, subdivided into three compartments. The lower of the divisions is closed by three paneled ivory-laid doors (the inlaying being executed in fanciful designs); the frieze is borne upon fluted pilasters with exquisitely-carved capitals, both plinth and frieze being paneled and inlaid. The upper division is also enclosed by three doors, the centre one of which is in plate glass, while the other two are paneled with ebony, ivory inlaid, of splendid arabesque design, having fluted columns to support the frieze and cornice. In the centre of the pediment are Lord Bective's armorial bearings and monogram.

Little will have a good notion as to the comparative utility of always being on a little scale.

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