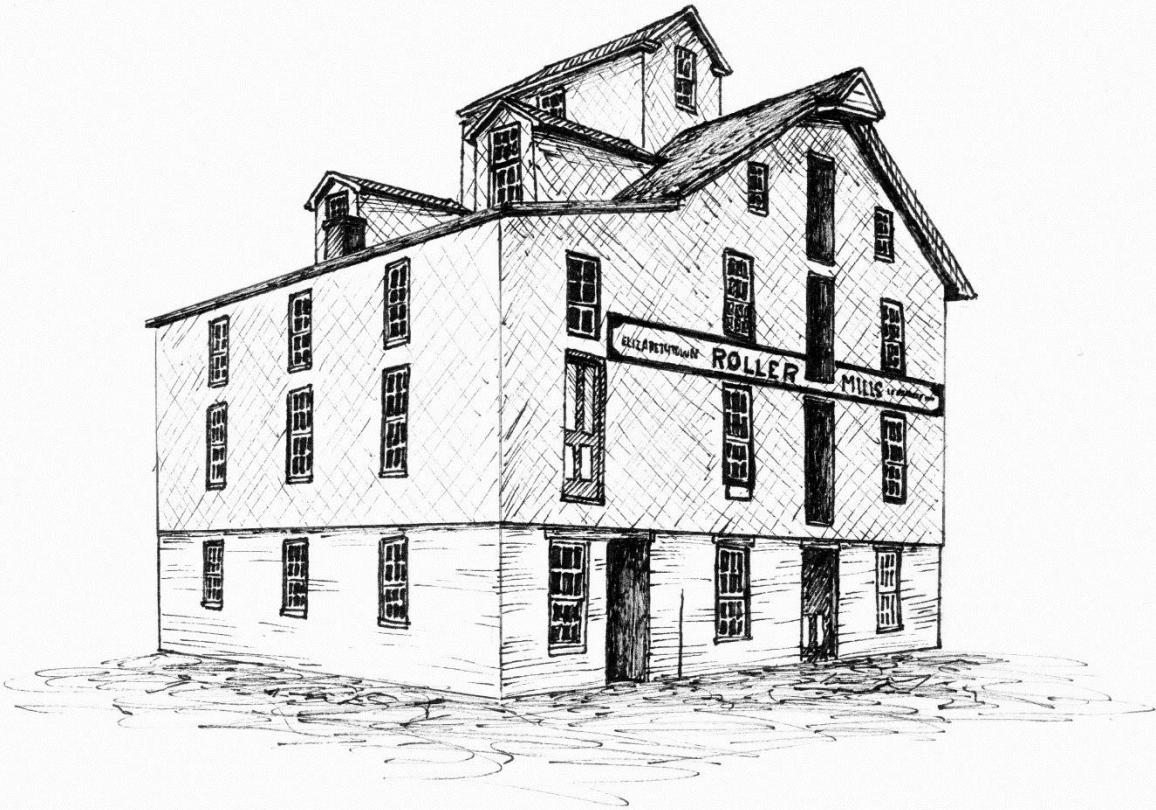


Jean-Paul Benowitz, "Milling Played Major Role in Development of Elizabethtown Area," *Elizabethtown Advocate* 8, no. 9 (Thursday March 2, 2017).



*Elizabethtown Roller Mills used to stand on the corner of South Market and West Bainbridge Streets.*

According to the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (1973), at the University of Nebraska (1869), March is National Flour Month. To this end, let us reflect on the history of mills and milling in Elizabethtown.

The Mennonite minister Ira David Landis (1899-1977), founder of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (1958), authored a study entitled "Old Mills in Lancaster County." In 1964 Franklin and Marshall College (1787) published this study as part of their series *Community Historians Annual*. According to Landis there were thousands of mills along every waterway in Chester, Lancaster, and York counties.

To give you a sense of the density of mills in Lancaster, take for example the 1,000 acres of the Ephrata Cloisters (1732). The German Seventh Day Baptists established saw, flour, oil, paper, bark, and fulling mills along the Cocalico Creek.

In Elizabethtown there used to be several mills along the Conoy and Conewago Creeks. There were grain, flour, flax, hemp, clover, and oil mills. There were fulling mills for woolen cloth making. There were mills for sawing, dyeing, boring, and grinding to make gun barrels. There were distillery mills for making cider, vinegar, whiskey, and rum.

Many of the wooden mills have long since disappeared; their indestructible grinding stones have remained. Today on the corner of West Bainbridge and South Market Streets is a small garden displaying the millstones of the former Elizabethtown Roller Mills.

Featured in the illustration for this column, The Elizabethtown Roller Mills was built on Negley's Run in 1876 by Joseph K. Groff, descendant of Mennonite Hans Groff (1661-1746) from Baretswil, Switzerland who in 1695 settled in Pennsylvania. The Elizabethtown Groff was a member of the Church of the Brethren. In 1877 Groff sold his steam powered mill to Jacob Stauffer who re-named it the Elizabethtown Flouring Mills.

Here Stauffer produced Silver Cloud Flower, Blue Ribbon Corn Meal, poultry feed, grain, and salt. The mill daily produced 50 barrels equaling 10,000 pounds of flour. He also milled hard wood lumber and specialized in telegraph poles. Stauffer was a descendent of the Mennonite Hans Stauffer (1644-1710) from Berne,

Switzerland who in 1710 settled in Pennsylvania. In 1898 Stauffer sold the mill to his son-in-law John F. Binkley. In 1918 Binkley's grandson Jacob V. Binkley began custom milling for area farmers.

All around Lancaster County you will find millstones scattered about the countryside, sunk in the ground as monuments, and placed side by side to make walls for landscaping country gardens. "Dressed" with cut grooves, they turned one upon the other, crushing the grain and at the same time pushing it outward to spill off the ends of the stones.

Because of the resemblance to plowed farmland, the grooves in millstones were called "furrows" and the plain surface of the stone was called "the land." The intersecting patterns resulting from the different millstone dresses are now almost lost records, yet many a Pennsylvania German patchwork quilt or hex sign on a Lancaster Swiss bank barn was inspired by the creator's own preference in millstone design.

The first reason why early villages like Elizabethtown were established near water, such as the Conoy and Conewago Creeks, was because there was no other way for transporting heavy loads. Elizabethtown ultimately prospered because of its water-powered mills. The metal turbine which is a housed underwater wheel, replaced the wood water wheel because, operating under the level of winter's ice, it was less subject to freezing. Many of the early mills still operating in Elizabethtown area are now powered with modern turbines, turning the same ancient machinery.

We might forget how dependent Elizabethtown was on the technology of mills. Any chore could be made lighter by water or wind power for the miller. In Elizabethtown there were few more important cogs in the mechanics of American business than the millers and their mills. Whether there was timber to be cut, salt to be made, flour to be ground or meal to be milled, the mills in Elizabethtown were always the links between farmer and industry.

The miller became a price-setter, counselor, buyer, and seller. Often he was the local banker and his advice on business and banking matters was sought and frequently paid for as would be the services of a lawyer. But mostly, he was host to the entire countryside, an early American captain of industry and politician. Several of the mill owners in Elizabethtown served in various offices of the local government and on the board of directors of local banks.

The original roads and bridges in Elizabethtown were carved into the countryside leading to the mills. Mills were built on the Conoy and Conewago Creeks and all the roads in the community were built around the arrangement of mills. The mills located in Elizabethtown were always the center where people came with their produce.

Today only three mills remain in Elizabethtown: Aberdeen Mill on Mill Road, White Oak Mills on West High Street, and Union Mill on Elizabethtown Road.

Aberdeen Mill is the oldest in Elizabethtown, built in 1774 on the Conewago Creek by Prussian Mennonite Ulrich Scheer. He was a descendant of Mennonite Sam Scheer who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1732. From this mill Scheer sent cornmeal to Lancaster, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. There was also a distillery for corn whiskey and rye or barley rum which was sent to Harrisburg, floated over the Susquehanna, and sent to the western frontier. There was also a saw mill and coppersmith shop for making the barrels to transport the whiskey and rum.

Union Mill was built in 1817 on Chiques Creek by the Swiss Mennonite Daniel Heistand. He was a descendent of Mennonite Henry Heistand (1704-1779) from Zurich, Switzerland who in 1743 settled in Pennsylvania. Eventually the Heistand family joined the Episcopal Church and in 1911 established St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church on the corner of South Spruce and East Park Streets.

In the 1950s the parish was closed by the Right Reverend Thomas Heistand, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania in Harrisburg. Parishioners transferred their membership to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Mount Joy. The datestone for St. Elizabeth's was moved to the property of St. Luke's.

Since 1999 the Heistand Mill has been known as Union Mill Acres where the current owners grow and retail flowers, fruits and vegetables, pumpkins, and Christmas trees.

Most residents of Elizabethtown will remember White Oak Mills used to be the Grubb Mill. Built in 1871 this is the only functioning mill remaining in the borough. White Oak Mills began in 1930 when it purchased a mill in Manheim originally built in 1815 and rebuilt in 1925. In 1976 Mark and John Wagner bought White Oak Mills. In 1986 White Oak Mills bought the Grubb Mill in Elizabethtown.

The Grubb family descended from Mennonite Henry Grubb (1695-1727) who in 1718 came to Philadelphia from Switzerland. Some of the Swiss Grubb family came to America as Quakers through England and others as Church of the Brethren through Germany.

The Grubb family iron dynasty was a succession of iron manufacturing enterprises owned and operated by the Grubb family for more than 165 years. Collectively, they were Pennsylvania's leading iron manufacturers between 1840 and 1870. In 1677, John Grubb (1652-1708) came from Cornwall, England and settled in Brandywine Hundred, Delaware, where he established a tannery. His son Peter launched iron operations eventually linking six generations of Grubbs. Henry Bates Grubb (1774 - 1823), Peter Jr.'s youngest son, built the Grubb family iron empire from 1800 to 1823.

In 1800 Henry Grubb built Mount Vernon Iron Furnace on Zeager Road in Elizabethtown. Grubb also invested in mills such as Mount Hope Mill in Cornwall near his Cornwall Furnace, Aberdeen Mill in Elizabethtown, and Grubb Mill on East High Street.

Elizabethtown is strategically located an equal distance of twenty miles from Lancaster and Harrisburg along Market Street. With access to the Susquehanna River, Elizabethtown mills played an important role in supplying the markets of Baltimore. By 1920 Lancaster County mills, Elizabethtown among them, consumed 543,970,038 bushels of wheat. In the early nineteenth century, in value and importance, milling wheat was second only to distilling.

Elizabethtown mills and millers were associated with the outlet of the domestic and export trade in Philadelphia via the Conestoga wagon (made by the Mennonites) promenade. Elizabethtown mills were connected to Philadelphia markets on a route running north and south on Market Street, which was known as the road between Lancaster and Harris' Ferry and by 1807 as the Lancaster, Elizabethtown, and Middletown Turnpike. We will discuss Elizabethtown's strategic location for transportation, business, and economics in future columns.

This column is dedicated in memory to my mentor Dr. Thomas R. Winpenny, III (1941-2017). Professor Winpenny earned his Ph.D. at the University of Delaware in the History Department's Hagley Program for the study of Capitalism, Technology, and Culture. For almost fifty years, from 1968-2014, Dr. Winpenny taught American History at Elizabethtown College with an emphasis on industrialization, capitalism, technology, consumption, business, and labor.

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