

### The History of Mills in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Mills operated on waterways such as creeks, specifically the Conoy and Conewago in Elizabethtown, since they were run by turbines and there was no electricity, meaning they depended on the force of the water to make them turn and generate power. The mills produced a variety of products during their time of operation including flour, grain, hemp, flax, oil, and woolen cloth in addition to mills specific to lumber, distilleries, and metal working.<sup>1</sup> By 1783, there were eighteen grain mills, sixteen saw mills, one fulling mill, four oil mills, two boring and grinding mills for gun barrels, and thirteen gristmills.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, these numbers rose to one hundred and fifty-four grain mills, two hundred and one gristmills, and one hundred and seventeen saw mills however, by 1916 this number was down to thirty.<sup>3</sup> In around 1750, Christian Eby built the Willow Banks Mill on Hammer Creek and sold it to his son Christian Eby II in 1760, at which point it was a grist and saw mill.<sup>4</sup> In 1796, Johannes Eby inherited the mill and proved very successful financially.<sup>5</sup> After his death, his son Elias took over the mill but it burned down in 1850 with no insurance coverage and could not be rebuilt due to lack of funds.<sup>6</sup> At this time, his cousin Christian Eby built a new mill across the creek which was taken over by Henry Hess and his son Sam after Eby's death.<sup>7</sup> The Hess's owned and operated the mill only until Sam dies at which point Preacher Christian S. Risser obtained it, ultimately selling it in 1875 to John Snaveley.<sup>8</sup> In 1890, ownership shifted to his son David H. and in 1906 his nephew Ben B. Snaveley who sold it to his son L. Miles in 1941.<sup>9</sup> For wooden mills such as Roller Mills, all that remains are the millstones which once ground the raw product but now remain underground or as decoration, rendered useless.<sup>10</sup> Roller Mills was built in 1876 on Negley's Run by Joseph K. Groff who was a member of the Church of the Brethren.<sup>11</sup> In 1877 he sold it to Jacob Stauffer who renamed it the Elizabethtown Flouring Mills and began the production of Silver Cloud Flour, Blue Ribbon Corn Meal, hard wood, and lumber, specifically telegraph poles.<sup>12</sup> In 1898 the mill was sold again this time to John F. Binkley whose grandson Jacob custom milled for local farmers starting in 1918.<sup>13</sup> The mill stones, prior to being decorations, had grooves cut into them which pushed the grain which was crushed as they rolled against each other off to the side.<sup>14</sup> Elizabethtown was extremely dependent on mills since they were the link between local farmers and industry.<sup>15</sup> Also as a result of this importance, millers held a large quantity of power in the economy and community, acting as price-setter, counselor, buyer, and seller in addition to being the local banker and a source of business advice.<sup>16</sup> Similarly due to the importance placed on mills, roads and railroads were directed toward mills for ease of transport of raw materials and manufactured goods.<sup>17</sup> Mills like Windom Mill Farms were often used for more than one product over the course of their existence, specifically in this case as a creamery and a cider mill.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, many, if not all, of these mills have changed hands from one family to another at

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, "Milling Played Major Role in Development of Elizabethtown Area," *Elizabethtown Advocate* 8, no. 9 (Thursday March 2, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Ira David Landis, Old Mills in Lancaster County (Lancaster: Franklin and Marshall College, 1964), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>10</sup> Benowitz.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> David B. Schneider, Foundations in a Fertile Soil : Farming and Farm Buildings in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Lancaster: Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County, 1994), 84.

least once often changing the type of product produced at the same time.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, there were many mills with the same name which were in different locations, operated by different families, and produced different products.<sup>20</sup> When milling grain to make flour, the wheat gets separated into the husk or bran which could be sold as animal feed and the grain inside which gets pulverized into flour by the millstones.<sup>21</sup> Union, Roller, and Aberdeen Mills all were built along the Chiques, Conoy, and Conewago Creeks and are all still standing though no longer operating as mills.<sup>22</sup> Union Mill was built in 1817 and is now called Union Mill Acres where flowers, Christmas trees, and pumpkins are sold.<sup>23</sup> Aberdeen Mill was built in 1774 and operated until the 1960s with the current owner making plans for the usage of the mill.<sup>24</sup> Grubb Mill also remains in Elizabethtown as the only functioning mill in the area, though it is now called White Oak Mills.<sup>25</sup> Grubb also owned Mount Hope Mill and Aberdeen Mill.<sup>26</sup> Elizabethtown became the supplier for the nearby area as well as Baltimore, Harrisburg, and Lancaster for wheat and other milled goods, with milling coming second to distillery in importance and profitability.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Landis, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Michael W. Shank, Rural Lancaster County Technology of the 1850's (Lancaster: Lancaster Theological Seminary, 1972), 34.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, Images of America: Elizabethtown (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 48-49.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour (2015), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Benowitz.