

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, February 6, 2012

**The Early Mills on Red Clay Creek** (*continued from last week*): Less than a mile downstream from where Burrows Run joins Red Clay Creek, there were two mills at Mount Cuba, served by a single dam and mill race. A stone mill, undoubtedly a grist mill, was just behind a frame mill that served as a saw mill and later as a cider mill. I remember visiting the latter mill in the 1930s, where my mother bought sweet apple cider in the fall. Next to it was a reciprocating blade for timber fed by hand, turning it into rough lumber. When Lamot Copeland bought the property in the mid-1960s, he had the walls of the stone mill restored, and so they stand today with no roof above. When the Wilmington & Western Railroad was built in 1872, the area around the mills and the dam was promoted as a picnic spot and recreational park, popular not only with those who came by special train but with local people as well. Predating Brandywine Springs as a park by 20 years, the "grove" contained a dance hall, a restaurant (of sorts), and a small chapel. At the urging of Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc., Mr. Copeland also rebuilt the dam in the late 1960s, so patrons of the revived Wilmington & Western could again enjoy the mill race and the lake above the dam, adjacent to its present picnic grove.

Over a mile downstream at Wooddale was one of the most famous mill sites, named for James and his son, Alan Wood, who built an iron rolling mill there about 1820. Most of the shovels for hand digging the original Chesapeake and Delaware Canal were manufactured at Wooddale. Alan Wood moved his home and business to Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, where the Alan Wood Steel Company prospered until about 20 years ago. Wood still owned the Wooddale property when the Wilmington & Western came through in 1872, and a station was built to serve the milling community. The mill had other owners until Israel and Elwood Marshall and their brother-in-law, Dr. Taylor S. Mitchell of Hockessin, bought the property in 1894 to expand their papermaking business. J. Albert Marshall, one of Elwood's sons, managed the mill before and during World War I, until a disastrous fire in 1918 burned it to the ground. The property, along with the original Wood mansion and several millhouses, was then purchased by the Rupert and Biggs families, who still own portions of the area today. The most recent dam, obviously rebuilt before 1918, is still intact along Barley Mill Road opposite the Hoopes Reservoir Dam.

The community of Faulkland, on the road of the same name where it crosses Red Clay Creek adjacent to Brandywine Springs Park, also had two distinctive mills served by a single dam. The older grist mill in operation before 1790 was the original location of automated milling machinery installed by local inventor Oliver Evans. The other mill was a spice mill owned and operated by the Fell family for at least three generations. Two of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century homes, a barn, and a carriage house still exist, but the mill buildings are long gone.

I purposely skip the mill at Greenbank, as it warrants a special story yet to come. Downstream over ½ mile, however, was an original mill site at Marshallton that before 1900 had become the Delaware Hard Fibre Company owned by the Rupert family. A sprawling facility, it was serviced by a railroad trestle and several tracks from the Wilmington & Western Railroad. When converted from a fibre mill, it was big in the plastics business under the name Haveg Corporation, which was bought in the late 1960s by Hercules, Inc. Finally this property was known as Ametek and operated as such until about 15 years ago, when all operations shifted to Glasgow, Delaware.