

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, March 5, 2012

The Greenbank Mill (Part 2): Members of Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc. who come to mind as mill volunteers in the 1960s were Herb McQueston, Will Molinari, the Johnson family, Don Cook, Hastings Carey, Joe Mitchell, and State Senator Margaret Manning. All encouraged Roy Magargal to continue his operation, but the mill was tidied up for visitors as well. Molinari succeeded in restoring a large diesel stationary engine, not used for years but probably installed in the 1920s to supplement water power when the flow of Red Clay Creek was low. Magargal was very protective of "his" water rights and spent a lot of time shoring up the dams (there were two, as a small island in the creek created two branches of the stream) and keeping the mill race flowing and clear of debris. The old Greenbank Road made a 90-degree turn around two sides of the mill, and a large pipe under the road carried water from the race into the penstock under the mill floor. On more than one occasion, Magargal was known to go upstream and find Hercules using water from the creek to spray its golf course in dry weather. He made them stop until the flow of the creek came back to normal! On a summer afternoon about 1965, Route 82 was covered with water next to the Yorklyn School (CCArts). I went home and called Roy Magargal, and he opened the flood gates from the Greenbank mill race. In subsequent days, he thanked me many times over for giving him warning. I forget the details, but the crest of a flood on Red Clay Creek moves at about 4 m.p.h., and high water at Greenbank would have been about 1½ hours behind Yorklyn.

On a humid August morning in 1969, the phone rang at Auburn Heights about 5:00 a.m. It was John Walters, the nearest neighbor to the mill, telling me that arsonists had torched the mill during the night, and there was not much left but ruins. When I arrived, the fire engines were leaving, a lot of people were around, and what had been a historic mill was a smoldering ruin. While the stone walls were standing on the Madison factory, the roof was gone. A few days later, a meeting of those interested was held under the big sycamore tree next to the railroad across the creek, and it was decided to begin the cleanup and try to rebuild. Don Cook hauled an Amish builder named Aaron Lapp and his helpers from Lancaster County each day to reconstruct the timbers and get a roof over the frame section of the mill (their religious beliefs did not allow them to own or operate motor vehicles). Roy Magargal continued to sell feed at the mill and was always on hand, but his milling machinery had been destroyed, and nothing operated. It was feared that the Madison factory's stone walls were unsafe, and subsequently they were torn down. The young man and his accomplices who started the fire were brought to trial, but they were acquitted.

In the early 1970s, Greenbank Road was relocated with a new bridge across the creek, the new alignment requiring the foot bridge from the mill to the Wilmington & Western station to be removed. Roy Magargal died in 1972, so the daily caretaker at the mill was no more. As an active and viable project, the Greenbank Mill languished, as Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc.'s volunteers were mostly railroad enthusiasts. About 1980, "Meg" Manning, then on HRCV's Board, petitioned to have the mill separated from the railroad, and after several years of trying, Greenbank Mill Associates was founded. The mill had new life, and things began to happen. The structure was strengthened and rebuilt, the Madison factory reconstructed, a water wheel installed, and living quarters and a conference room incorporated into the plans, allowing room for future operation of some of the milling machinery. An Executive Director was hired, and subsequently the Philips Farm, with its 18th-century house and barn across the old road, was purchased. Special events are planned throughout the year, and a visit is well worthwhile. On the front of the local section of yesterday's *News Journal* was a picture of the sheep at the Philips Farm.