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Hockessin and Yorklyn, 1930s: Both villages are on the south side of the arc that separates Delaware from Pennsylvania. Neither was a bedroom community. Wilmington people had heard of Hockessin but didn't know where it was; they had never heard of Yorklyn. The Census of 1930 showed Hockessin's population to be about 400; Yorklyn was slightly above 200. Hockessin was a residential community, although segregated, with over 40% black residents. Yorklyn was a mill town with only one black family, with 3/4 of its residents living in company-owned housing. Both had post offices with their postmasters holding patronage positions (subject to who was in the White House). The phones in Yorklyn came through the Hockessin exchange, where an operator (sometimes called "Central") was on duty from 6 am until 12 midnight. The phone number at Auburn Heights was Hockessin 36.

Both communities had identical railroad stations with a Western Union office for telegrams and a railway Express office (both handled by the railroad's station agent). Both were served earlier in the 20th century, not only by passenger trains to Wilmington and Philadelphia but also an electric railway line from Kennett Square to Brandywine Springs, both replaced by the 1930s by a Short Line Bus. Hockessin was 9 miles from Wilmington and 6 miles from Kennett Square; Yorklyn was 10 miles from Wilmington and 4 miles from Kennett. Yorklyn had one and sometimes two general stores; Hockessin had two plus an ice cream shop and a barber shop. Yorklyn had a community clubhouse and a nationally known trapshooting club; Hockessin had an Odd Fellows Hall. Gasoline was available at both, but Yorklyn did not have a station with a mechanic on duty. Both communities had public schools, grades one through eight, first built in 1869 and modernized with new buildings in 1932. Although none are schools, all these buildings are still being used today.

Yorklyn had paper, vulcanized fiber, and snuff mills, with about 300 employees. Hockessin had an active lumberyard and many mushroom houses, all making the Landenberg Branch exceedingly profitable. Hockessin was on the Newport-Gap Pike, also known as the Lancaster Pike. Yorklyn was on Red Clay Creek but was served only by secondary roads. Hockessin had four churches; Yorklyn had none.

Both communities were settled by Quakers, whose descendants worshipped at the Hockessin Friends Meeting House. Hockessin also had an Irish-American community, an Italian-American community and St. John's Roman Catholic Church, and there was a sizeable Protestant population who worshipped at Hockessin Methodist Church. Not to be overlooked is the fact that farming was still a major occupation on the hillsides surrounding both communities, and the stores and services still catered to farmers' needs.

Certainly not treated like blacks in the south, Hockessin's black community was nonetheless segregated. Numbering over 40% of Hockessin's total population, the social life of black people was centered on Chippey A.U.M.P. Church on Mill Creek Road. A new all-black school was built next to the church, with "separate but equal" philosophy governing. Many of the black families lived in shacks and small houses within walking distance of the church, with a few on Valley Road and a secondary community at Brackenville, close to the present location of Walgreen's Pharmacy. A few of the black men worked at Hockessin Supply or in the mushroom industry, but most worked for NVF in Yorklyn. The Irish-American population in both Hockessin and Yorklyn came to the area in the 19th century as a result of the potato famine in their native land. Many of them worked in the Yorklyn mills and lived in company houses there. Yorklyn also had several Polish-American families, most of whom worked in the snuff mills. The Italians came as laborers to build the suburban electric trolley lines all over the area just after 1900, and when this work dried up, they engaged in the new mushroom-growing industry. Although Kennett Square claimed to be the "Mushroom Capital of the World," at least 10 Italian-American families in the Hockessin area were growing mushrooms. (Today, there are several large mushroom operations in the Kennett-Avondale areas, but all the Hockessin growers are gone.)

In Yorklyn, Charles J. Gormley operated a country store, much like a "company store," at the Snuff Mills during World War I, but he soon moved to Hockessin, where his reasonably priced food and merchandise soon

became a fixture. Gormley's Store on Old Lancaster Pike at the end of Yorklyn Road was in business for about 75 years, and the post office was located there when a Democrat was in the White House. Fred Gebhart operated a slightly upscale food store with a meat cutter and gas pumps in front on the first floor of the Odd Fellows Building. This later became Lake's Store and retained its reputation for fresh meats and produce. Grover C. Gregg came with his young family to Yorklyn in 1913 and operated his country store next to the fibre mills until his death in 1976. Four generations of Greggs worked in the store, and both Grover and his son Grover Jr "Juney" served as Yorklyn postmaster. From the 1930s until it closed, it was also the social center of Yorklyn. It also served as a bank to cash NVF employee paychecks, which made it possible for many customers to balance their account with the store. Aristocrat Ice Cream was 40 cents per quart. Engineer's caps were 25 cents. There were no drug stores or medical doctors in Hockessin or Yorklyn in the 1930s, but at the turn of the 20th century, family doctors Crumbaugh and Taylor S. Mitchell served Hockessin and environs. Dr. Mitchell had married Mary Marshall, the only sister of the Marshall Brothers, Israel and Elwood.

Sport competition, mostly baseball, was intense between Hockessin and Yorklyn. Both communities had teams that belonged to a local league, including Mount Cuba, Centreville, and, off and on, several other communities. The ball diamonds were at the new schools in Hockessin and Yorklyn. When there was enough ice on Red Clay Creek, ice hockey games took place, but this could not be organized far in advance.

In 1949, with increasing truck traffic handling freight to the Yorklyn mills, a rough and narrow Yorklyn Road was completely rebuilt, and in 1954, a by-pass for Lancaster Pike was constructed around Hockessin and from the state line to Sanford School. At the end of World War II, with more money in their pockets, many families moved out of the company housing at Yorklyn and the older houses in Hockessin, and suburban sprawl started to develop the farmland around these communities. Most of the new homes were served by the Hockessin Post Office, as it had R.F.D. routes not available from Yorklyn. This trend has continued for 70 years. While neither community was ever incorporated, it is my estimate that greater Hockessin can claim over 10,000 people today, whereas Yorklyn, with some of its company housing demolished and the remainder individually owned, is not more than 500. With all the Yorklyn mills gone, the State of Delaware, through DNREC and the Division of Parks and Recreation, is cleaning up the sites, building hiking trails, and preserving the surrounding open space. Hockessin offers specialty shopping of all kinds and boasts of at least eight restaurants, while Yorklyn's resurgence is in the near future.