

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, March 23, 2009

**Local Roads, Then and Now:** A New Castle County map of 1849 shows Snuff Mill Road (coming from Centreville) not making a turn down the steep hill toward Yorklyn as it does now, but rather running straight across what is now a hillside field to connect with Upper Snuff Mill Row and continue on to the snuff mills. While road building was intense in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some roads were relocated and the old right-of-ways abandoned. At that time, there is little evidence that the present Benge Road continued beyond the Irish settlement of Killeen, just up the hill from Anne Cleary's home. Rather, Old Public Road, now dead-ended, extended through to Old Wilmington Road, providing a way for the Quaker farmers around Hockessin Meeting House to transport their crops to John Garrett's grist mill at Auburn (adjacent to Auburn Heights). The present Yorklyn Road did not exist.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the portion of Lancaster Pike between Hobson's Garage (northwest of Hercules), separating the present Coffee Run Condominiums from Cokesbury Village, to its junction with Route 41, did not exist, although there had to be some sort of lane into the tiny Roman Catholic Coffee Run Cemetery. Old Wilmington Road was the route from Wilmington to Hockessin Meeting and on into Pennsylvania, while Newport-Gap Turnpike (basically Route 41), running parallel to it for several miles, was the road now called Old Lancaster Pike through present-day Hockessin and continuing northwest toward Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

When my father made frequent trips to Middletown in his Stanley to court my mother, Lidie W. Mitchell (grandmother of Jim, proprietor of Woodside Farm Creamery), told me she would see him sailing by and she and her husband, Henry, knew what he was up to. That route seems likely enough today, but my father told me he came out on the present Paper Mill Road at Milford Cross Roads. When I was younger, as you approached this crossroad from the Newark side, a gate across a farm lane was straight ahead (Paper Mill Road swings to the right), and my father said that was the road he used to travel. Looking at present-day maps, I am baffled as to his exact route.

Meeting House Road near Hockessin, now just over one mile long, used to extend to Marshall's Bridge (and present Route 82) from its junction with Old Wilmington Road. I remember riding through this road with Bate and Ella Dennis in a Model T Ford before it was closed about 1930. The DeStafney Farm, much of which is now part of the Auburn Heights Preserve, was entered from this former public road. About 1937 it was still possible to ride through on a bicycle although by that time it was overgrown with weeds. Portions of this road, at both ends, are presently used as rights-of-way into housing developments

In the general area of Mount Cuba, several roads were closed. First, the building of the Edgar Hoopes Reservoir in 1932 completely changed the location of Route 82 between Mt. Cuba and the Kennett Pike (Route 52). Instead of passing Hillside Mill, inundated by the reservoir, over a new road, we learned to make a sharp right turn at Walnut Green School, one of the last one-room schoolhouses to operate in Delaware (it closed in 1948), which took us across a causeway at the upper end of the reservoir. Traveling in the opposite direction on Route 82 and keeping straight at Walnut Green, Campbell Road dead-ends at Pyle's Ford Road, but it didn't do so when I started to drive. Keeping straight through on a dirt road brought you over a hill with an old farm on the right, the barn for which was on a steep hillside. Two elderly bearded brothers had a small dairy there, and each morning brought their milk with a horse-drawn cart to a milk stand at the other end of this road along Route 82 between Mount Cuba and Way Road. This road, long since closed, seemed to have three names: Walnut Green, Dean, and Ice Box. On the west edge of Mount Cuba running from Barley Mill Road to Old Wilmington Road was Ramsey Road, finally closed off about 25 years ago. Both Ramsey Road and Ice Box Road had become favorite dumping grounds for all kinds of junk, which contributed to their demise.