

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 25, 2010

**Connections to the Outside World:** The railroad came to Auburn in 1872 and changed the name to Yorklyn. Before that, how did the several milling operations get their raw materials and ship the finished goods out of the tiny community? After 1845, there were three distinct mill sites, and we can only surmise how they prospered and grew.

Some of the history of the Auburn Mills Historic District and its mills was covered in the *Weekly News* of January 11, 2010. Early roads in the general area were discussed in the *Weekly News* of March 23, 2009. The three mill sites were: 1) the old Garrett Grist Mill of 1730, enlarged and changed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a succession of owners, and operated through the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century as the Marshall Brothers Paper Mill on present-day Benge Road, much of which is intact today; 2) the Garrett Snuff Mills, by far the largest employer in the community during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the brick mill buildings of which are mostly gone as a result of floods and neglect; and 3) the Lower Snuff Mill, one-half mile downstream destroyed by fire in 1964.

The only logical ways in and out were: 1) up (or down) the steep hill on present-day Benge Road to Old Public Road, which ran through to connect with Old Wilmington Road; 2) up (or down) the steep hill (although at a somewhat different location prior to 1850) of Snuff Mill Road to Centreville on the Kennett Turnpike; and 3) down Red Clay Creek on the "Creek Road" to Mount Cuba and then either jogging south to a junction with the Lancaster Pike (now Route 48) near "Hercules," or navigating the hills to the Kennett Turnpike.

For the snuff business, tobacco stems (very little leaf was used) and flavored ingredients as well as packaging barrels and tins had to be imported, and the many brands of finished snuff shipped out to wholesale outlets in Philadelphia and Baltimore. For the manufacture of paper, wool and cotton yarn, the same was true: raw materials came into the mills, and the finished products needed to be shipped out. History tells us that the Garrett family, living in Philadelphia through much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, made millions from their snuff mills at Auburn (Yorklyn) but that the several proprietors of the mill on Benge Road had good times and bad, as evidenced by the several products manufactured (flour, cotton yarn, woolen yarn, and paper) and the many turnovers in ownership.

Steam was replacing water power in all the mills by the time the railroad arrived in 1872. Some local firewood was used but coal was the main fuel to power the heavy machinery, and coal had to be shipped in. Freight trains on the new railroad, tiny by today's standards, solved the problem. Not only did the existing mills survive and enlarge, but new industrial expansion was made possible by the ease of moving goods. There is no manufacturing in Yorklyn today, but this might have been the case by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, had it not been for the railroad.