

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, December 12, 2016

**Local Roads and When They Were Built:** (A similar article appeared in the *Weekly News* of March 23, 2009).

Available road maps of northern New Castle County are available from 1849, 1868, and 1884 (all dates approximate), and in addition we have C. A. Weslager's monograph "140 Years Along Old Public Road" published in 1962. I have deduced the following:

About 1730, early Quaker farmers around present-day Hockessin encouraged John Garrett, the first settler along nearby Red Clay Creek to build a grist mill, harnessing the waters of this fast-moving stream. We believe there was a trail following the creek that connected present-day Kennett Square with the Auburn Mill, the name coined by Garrett for his important location. Garrett's customers, however, were mostly in the direction of Hockessin Meetinghouse, so a hilly cart road was built from the mill to a junction with another trail that gained in importance and is now known as Old Wilmington Road. The cart road became known as Old Public Road. As the Garrett family in Auburn shifted to manufacturing snuff, the new location of the snuff mills, ½ mile downstream from the original grist mill, had no easy road over which they could receive raw materials or ship out the finished product. This condition existed well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Newport-to-Gap Turnpike, built to accommodate Conestoga Wagons from the fertile fields of Lancaster County to the wharves on the Christina River (for shipment to Philadelphia) was opened shortly after 1800. Less than 20 years later the beginnings of Brandywine Springs Park with its large frame hotel was built along this road, a location easily accessible by river boat and a short carriage ride. The road passed through present-day Hockessin on what is known as Old Lancaster Pike. Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the only connection between Old Wilmington Road and Newport-Gap Pike was the northeastern end of Valley Road. The Limestone Road, connecting farms on high ground west of and parallel to Newport-Gap Pike, was an early route favored by some teamsters with Conestoga Wagons.

In September, 1777, when the American Revolution touched the area, British and Hessian troops under Generals Howe and Cornwallis marched through en-route from the mouth of the Elk River near present-day Elkton with the objective of capturing Philadelphia. With a skirmish at Cooch's Bridge, they passed near Newark and up to the Limestone Road. The Hessian commander Knyphausen continued north past New Garden, torching many buildings in his wake. Howe and Cornwallis turned toward the east and followed Southwood Road into present-day Hockessin, as most of Valley Road did not yet exist. They encamped for the night in and around Hockessin Meetinghouse, which was the center of activity for the surrounding area at that time. George Washington kept his Continental Army between the British and Philadelphia until they clashed at Chadds Ford, where the Continentals were beaten back and the British soon took Philadelphia. It's thought that Washington's forces marched from the Stanton area and followed Red Clay Creek to Mount Cuba, after which they followed a trail called Pyle's Ford Road until it reached the Brandywine valley near the present-day Meadows-on-the-Brandywine.

In the 1830s, a regular stage service operated between Wilmington and Lancaster, Pennsylvania. A connection was built southeast of Hockessin between Old Wilmington Road and Newport-Gap Pike, so the coaches had a fairly direct but hilly route from Wilmington to Gap, 15 miles east of Lancaster. Leaving Wilmington about 6 a.m., the coach would arrive at White Chimneys, an inn just west of Gap in time for a late mid-day dinner before moving on for the last leg to Lancaster.

Back in Auburn, the Garretts were needing an easier way to transport their snuff, and in 1863 most of what is now Yorklyn Road was built from the snuff mills to a junction with Old Wilmington Road near a kaolin quarry (later Golding's). We assume that Valley Road had been extended southwest to the Limestone Road by this time, and Meetinghouse Road connected Old Wilmington Road with Marshall's Bridge, just over 2 miles away. All this time there must have been a creek road following the present Route 82 from Auburn to Kennett Square.

As early as 1849, a semblance of Snuff Mill Road existed eastward toward Centreville. The route near Auburn was somewhat different as the descent into the Red Clay Valley was north of its present location. On the other side of town, several families from Ireland who worked in the snuff mills established a settlement of about six houses called Kileen, just west of Old Public Road. Our active volunteer Anne Cleary lives in what used to be Kileen.

When the Wilmington & Western Rail Road came in 1872, travel patterns changed forever and Auburn became Yorklyn. The center of Hockessin moved from the Meetinghouse corner to a site along the new railroad where Newport-Gap Pike was crossed. A passenger and freight station was built here, followed by a lumber and coal yard, a few “hotels,” and many modest homes. Yorklyn Road was extended from its junction with Old Wilmington Road into the new town center. Hockessin became a hub for the highly-profitable kaolin clay industry. Telegraph lines paralleled the railroad, and the Garrett Snuff Mills had a telephone by the 1880s. News traveled at an amazing pace! Old Public Road from the paper mill, built by the Marshall brothers in 1890 on the site of John Garrett’s original grist mill, was in use until the southwest portion was closed soon after 1900. By that time, a connecting road heading west through Kileen had been built, and is now known as Benge Road. The north end of Meetinghouse Road, part of which formed the western boundary of the Auburn Heights Preserve, was closed about 1930.

Route 82 was known as “Creek Road,” at least from Kennett Square to Mount Cuba. We think an Indian trail along this route was used by the original John Garrett about 1726 to arrive at what was soon to become Auburn Mill. From Mount Cuba to the Kennett Turnpike the future Route 82 went over the hills, past Hillside Mill and a small lake formed by the dam for the mill. Before reaching the sluice for the mill’s water wheel, the water from the dam flowed over the road, no problem most of the year, but treacherous when frozen. Coleman du Pont owned this mill and modified the building as a summer residence. When the Hoopes Reservoir was built in 1931-’32, the area around the mill was soon under 20 feet or more of water. Route 82 was re-routed to the north and made a right-angle turn at Walnut Green School, an active one-room public school until 1948.