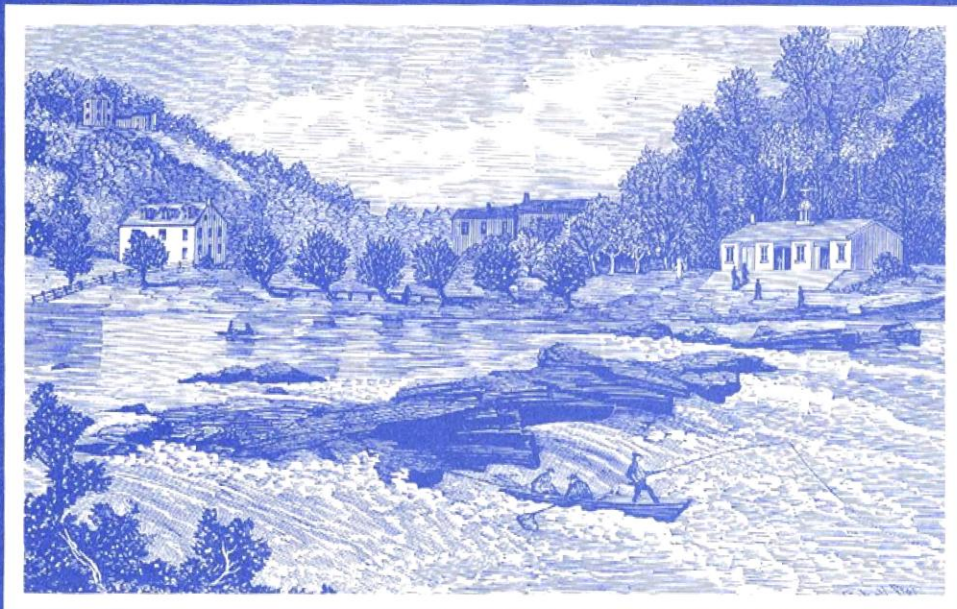


# EAST FALLS



THREE HUNDRED YEARS  
OF HISTORY

**PART 1: Introduction to page 41**



# INTRODUCTION

The following booklet attempts to give a picture of life in East Falls from the early 1600's, when the Lenni Lenape fished at the Falls, up to the 1900's.

Our main sources of information were the scrapbooks compiled by Alex C. Chadwick, editor of the Suburban Press in the 1930's; without his painstaking efforts and thorough records, this booklet would have required many years of intensive research to complete. Thanks to Mr. Chadwick, ten people working nine months was sufficient.

These scrapbooks contained newspaper clippings of stories about East Falls written by Dr. Charles K. Mills, Robert Roberts Shronk, Mr. Chadwick, and others. Further references found in his papers included Charles V. Hagner, John Fanning Watson, Josiah White, William Moore Smith, Michael Arnold, J.F. Magee, and Sidney M. Earle, among many others. Special thanks are given to those who have generously loaned precious pictures and written material for our use. Thanks also to the Falls of Schuylkill branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia for their gracious cooperation by providing access to the Chadwick papers.

Besides eleven written chapters, our book contains six maps showing the development of East Falls. Each map gives a summary of fifty years of growth. This information was gathered from both old maps and research. During especially "booming" periods, when developments sometimes overlapped (as in the late 19th Century), it was difficult to include everything. The resultant maps, however, give a true picture of our community through the years.

For the purposes of this book, we consider the boundaries of East Falls to be the Schuylkill River, the Wissahickon Creek, Wissahickon Avenue, and Hunting Park Avenue to Nicetown Lane.

Proceeds from the sale of this book will be used for the establishment of an East Falls Historical Society which will continue to research and preserve our history.

**August 1976**

*ON THE COVER:* "Where once, with many a toss and quiver, went tumbling down the noisy river." The Falls of the Schuylkill, and Fort St. David's, 1794.

"Rude, rough and rugged rocks surrounding, and clash of broken waves resounding, where waters fall with loud'ning roar, rebellowing down the hilly shore."

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Published by the East Falls Bicentennial Committee—A recognized activity of the Philadelphia Bicentennial Observance

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## EAST FALLS: 300 YEARS OF HISTORY

By Lois Childs

Until the beginning of the 20th Century, the waters of the Wissahickon Creek, the Falls Creek, and the Schuylkill River provided a way of life for the inhabitants of the area now known as East Falls. These waters were the very life of this community, providing simultaneously a wealth of fish and water-power. How appropriate, therefore, that the community clinging to its banks should be named for a phenomenon of the river.

The waterfall pictured on the cover is actually the wellspring of East Falls. The falls are now located beneath the stone railroad bridges which cross the Schuylkill just south of Ferry Road (some of the rocks still peek out of the water); they were submerged by the building of Fairmount Dam in 1822. The falls always provided great fishing for the neighborhood, because of its tendency to trap the fish brought up on high tide.

The Lenni Lenape Indians were the first people of East Falls (they may have referred to the early European settlers as "squatters!"). Their villages of Metopcum, Wissakitkonck, and Nitabakonck ("The place of a warrior") were located in the vicinity of the falls of the Ganshewahanna ("Noisy Waters"), later named the Skookill or Schuylkill ("Hidden River") by the Dutch. Two chiefs of Nitabakonck are mentioned by Lindstrom, a Swedish explorer who visited here in 1654-1655: "Mattawirarcka and Skalitzi were their chiefs who received presents from the Swedes."

The Indians thrived on the plentiful fish brought up the river by each high tide; they also hunted and farmed. Some fascinating descriptions of early life in East Falls were recorded by John Campanius, Lutheran chaplain to Governor Printz of the Swedish settlement on the Delaware, who visited with the Indians here from 1641 to 1646.

A description of Campanius' records by C.H. Brown: "He tells of trees, wild plums, wild grapes, hemp and hops, everywhere. And of the wonderful gourd, 'calabash,' which when dried hard, was fashioned into dishes and cups, tipped with silver, some being so large they held a gallon.

"With arrows painted with sharp stones, the Indians killed deer and other creatures. They made axes of stone which they fastened to sticks to fell trees where they intended to plant. Both men and women smoked tobacco, which is found

in great abundance. They wear head-dresses of feathers and snakeskin and feed upon bear meat, venison, fish, birds, and maize.

"When the Indians go in the night a'hunting, they fasten these insects (fireflies) to their hands and feet, by which they can see their way as well as in the daytime. There is also (about the Falls) a large and terrible serpeant which is called the rattle snake. It has a head like a dog, and can bite off a man's leg as if cut with an axe — these snakes are three yards long, and thick as the thickest part of a man's leg."

In 1683, William Penn wrote to the Free Society of Traders: "Their houses are mats of bark of trees, set on poles, in the fashion of the English barn; but out of the power of the winds; for they are hardly higher than a man; they lie on reeds of grass. In traveling they lodge in the woods about a great fire, with the mantle of duffils they wear by day wrapt around them, and a few boughs stuck around them."

Sidney M. Earle, in his *Fairmount Park*, provides a later account.

Earle states: "In the spring and summer particularly, many Indians were along the shores of the river and in canoes of bark or buttonwood paddling quietly over the surface of the water, spearing or netting the migratory fish with a bush net made of wild hemp and milkweed. As was their custom, the women and children cleaned and dried the catch. Again in the fall after such crops as they grew were taken care of, the hunt for wild fowl and animals brought tasks of dressing and preserving to their women folk and children. . . .

"A band of some 40 Indians, mostly women and children, under the guidance of Tedyscung, departed from the shores about the falls in 1755, to go to their new lands on the Susquehanna River."

The first fishery established by white colonists in East Falls was, as far as we know, the fishing resort of Fort St. Davids. Shown on the cover sketch, on a rocky ledge at the falls, it was built in 1732 by wealthy Welshmen from the city. It was so prominent in this area that the community surrounding it was sometimes referred to as "Fort St. Davids." (However, even in the 1700's the name "Falls of Schuylkill" was used; evidence for this is the following ad taken from the May 1, 1776, issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*: "To be Lett for the Summer Season, a Genteel House, about six Miles

from the City of Philadelphia, a high and pleasant Situation as any in the County. Enquire of Peter Ott, on the Premises, or of John Palmer, at the Falls of Schuylkill.")

The colonial playboys were perfectly situated to enjoy excellent fishing. They also developed a fine museum of peculiar artifacts, and a culinary tradition of excellence which probably inspired the famous catfish and waffle dinners at nearby taverns in the 1800's.

The location of Fort St. David's is beautifully described in the history of The State in Schuylkill, another fishing club farther south on the Schuylkill, which merged with Fort St. David's in the early 1800's: "...no place on the river equalled the Falls, for rock and perch fishing; and small blue catfish were taken in abundance by hand nets, dipped in the eddies of the stream, or in the circular water-worn cavities of the tide deserted rocks. Here was the chief barrier of the rising flood. When the tide was out, the roaring of the turbulent waters, precipitated over the continuous and rugged chain of rocks, extending from shore to shore, was heard on still evenings many miles over the surrounding country, and was often borne on the wings of the wind with distinctness to the city, a measured distance of five miles."



Catfish

With the beginning of our War for Independence, the Society of Fort St. David's temporarily disbanded to form the First City Troop. They hid the treasures of their museum until safer times, and abandoned the building to the invading British and Hessian soldiers who used it rather roughly.

When the Hessians fled our infant country, they left many scenes of plunder and ruin; among these was the noble Fort St. David's. Undaunted, the members of the Society rebuilt the Fort and occupied it until the early 1800's, when it caught fire; they then merged with the State in Schuylkill Fishing Club.

According to historian Charles V. Hagner, the fire was started accidentally by the Godfrey Shronk family when they were spinning flax; Shronk was the caretaker and resident of the Fort during



the winter months. Like many of his neighbors, Shronk made his living during warm weather catching fish; he operated a fishery on the Schuylkill, and supplied fish to the Fishing Company of St. David's, which cooked forty dozen catfish at a time. He became quite a success in the business that was helping to change the village into a town.

Charles V. Hagner, in his book "Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Etc." published in 1869, gives an interesting picture of how we might have earned our livings at the beginning of the 19th Century: "I have seen men, in one scoop of the dip-net, have it so full of these catfish as to be unable to lift them in the boat, but were obliged to take them out of it with their hands and other contrivances, and I have known as many as seven large shad taken at one scoop of the dip-net. There were a number of persons at the Falls, who, in the fishing season — lasting some three months — made enough by catching shad in a simple hoop or dip-net to support their families for a whole year.

"They anchored, or fastened to the rocks in the rapids, the small boats from which they fished; some of the particular stations were more valuable than others, and there was much rivalry in the early spring who should first get possession of the favored spots, which the boat never left during the whole season; if it did, by a rule among themselves, any one else was at liberty to take possession."

The catfish became a legend in this area when Mrs. Watkins, proprietor of the Falls Hotel, introduced the "catfish and waffles" supper. It was picked up by taverns and hotels along the Ridge Road and Wissahickon Lane, and through the 1800's became popular with the pleasure-seekers from the city who rode out to the Falls in carriages or on horses. They traveled from the city via the old Ford Road to visit such hotels as the Falls Tavern and Bobby Evan's Fountain Park Hotel on Ridge Road, and Wissahickon Hall, the Maple Springs Hotel, and Tommy Llewellyn's Log Cabin on Wissahickon Lane along Wissahickon Creek. Many establishments built tanks or ponds to keep fresh catfish beyond the fishing season.

Eli Bowen has provided us with a contemporary (1850) account of a pleasure trip out to the Falls: "The vicinity of the Falls is much frequented in the summertime by the citizens of Philadelphia . . . The romantic and picturesque Wissahickon empties into the Schuylkill a short distance above the village, and this is the principal source of attraction. Its banks are bold and rocky, over grown with stately trees whose shade afford a cool retreat from the heat and dust of the city. There are several hotels or places of refreshment, both in the village and on the Wissahickon, and there is no lack of material to gratify or amuse the visitor. The drive from the city



*The Old Log Cabin on Wissahickon Drive*

is very refreshing — the road being remarkably smooth and studded all along with handsome cottages and tasteful scenery as well as with objects of historical and general interest. It is customary to enjoy the ride late in the afternoon before dusk, while many drive out to partake of the celebrated catfish and coffee and return by the 'light of the moon.' Riding horseback, both for ladies and gentlemen, is, in these days, one of the requisites of a polite education, and the taste for the exercise is indulged to the fullest extent — though there is still a corresponding number of vehicles, some of them splendid equipages, to be met on the road."

In the 1930's, A.C. Chadwick published a description of one of the roadhouses — the Log Cabin: "It was intended for headquarters of a political club in the Presidential campaign of 1840, when William Henry Harrison was essaying on Al Smith.

"After the election, John Cully conducted the cabin as a resort for picnics and dance parties. Volunteer firemen of the city had festivities of various kinds there, and sometimes pugilistic encounters were a feature. The place gained its greatest fame under the management of Thomas Llewellyn, who succeeded Cully. He sold spruce beer in big stone jugs for 5¢ a jug, and ginger cakes at 1¢ each, while those who sought diversion other than that of appeasing the sense of taste, could hire row boats on the creek. The Fourth of July and Whitsuntide were notable occasions of the year, when great throngs spent the day in the neighborhood of the Log Cabin.

"As his business increased, Llewellyn enlarged the building, and he also procured several monkeys and bears for

the amusement of his patrons. One of the performances that delighted the crowds was that of having the bears pull corks out of spruce beer bottles. It is said that occasionally Llewellyn had some of the bottles charged with an extra allowance of carbonic gas, so that when the wire securing the cork was released there was a loud pop and the frothing beer deluged the bear. It is said that Llewellyn's collection of wild animals was the forerunner of our present great Zoological Gardens."

Business was brisk until the late 1800's, when a combination of events forced a slow-down. After Fairmount Park acquired the land along the Wissahickon in 1872, it demolished all but Wissahickon Hall; Iowa's High Bridge Hotel then took over the Dobson residence at the beautiful "High Bridge," which had just been built to carry the Norristown Railroad over the Wissahickon near Ridge Avenue. The other catastrophe for local businesses was the closing of Ford Road, which had provided easy and direct access to the Falls from the city.

A few hotels lingered into the 20th Century and provided enjoyment to the community for many years.

The first settlers in this area knew that the rivers and streams offered them much more than fish. From the beginning, they set to work harnessing the great water-power flowing down the banks of the Schuylkill River. More than fifty years before the founding of the fishing club of Fort St. David's, a small community had taken root around the several mills on Wissahickon and Falls Creeks.

At the mouth of the Wissahickon, there still remains a grist mill (now occupied by the Philadelphia Canoe Club)



which, according to one source, was built in 1668; it is the only original mill remaining of the 25 colonial mills erected on the Wissahickon and its branches in Roxborough and Germantown Townships. According to an earlier historian, the infamous Doane gang of the Revolution were supposed to have used the mill as a hide-out. The *Revolutionary Bulletin* of May 23, 1976, states: "The Doanes were active as bandits and hold-up men in Bucks County for perhaps five years before the Revolution. Moses Doane was the leader. With him rode his brothers, Aaron, Levi, Mahlon and Joseph, and his cousin Abraham. . . ."

"When the Revolution began, the Doanes directed their activities at the rebels; Moses Doane was ever faithful to the king whose laws he loved to break . . . The Doanes also did some spying for the British."

After years of use as a grist mill, the building was acquired by Fairmount Park when it started its expansion into the Wissahickon Creek area. From 1876 until 1902, when the Canoe Club took over, the State in Schuylkill fishing club rented the old mill from the Fairmount Park Commission.

The famous Robeson mills at Ridge Avenue and the Wissahickon were originally built by Joshua Tittery and Richard Townsend in 1686. They were sold to Andrew Robeson, Sr. in 1691, and remained in that family until the late 1800's, except for a period of time during the Revolution when they belonged to John Vandaring (or Vandaren). Next to the mill, the Robeson's built a mansion in which James Dobson first lived when he started his woolen mills on the site; the Robeson mansion is known to people of this century as Barnett's Gardens.

Besides the enduring Wissahickon Creek and many nameless smaller streams, the millers relied greatly on the power of the Falls Creek (see maps). Most local historians agree with Charles Hagner's estimation of the former size of the Falls Creek: "In those days, that stream of water was very different from now; even in my time there was at each of

those mills power sufficient to drive, at all times, a pair of five-foot mill-stones, generally two, and sometimes three pair. The mill lowest down the road had two waterwheels."

Records indicate that as far back as the 1680's a Capt. Hans Moens was supposed to build a mill on Falls Creek. On the Scull and Heap map of 1750, a saw mill is located at the mouth of Falls Creek. By 1850, the Creek had powered many mills; Redinger's, White & Hazard, Traquair's stonecutting, Shaw's, Winpenny's, Stoever's, and Philip Hagner's drug mill and cotton mill, are a few that historians mention.

Over this hundred years our country's economy had changed. Prior to the Revolution, we were primarily dependent for manufactured goods on our "mother country" England. During the Revolution, we had to turn to other countries for imports. To ensure that we would never again be so dependent on another country, much emphasis was placed on the development of domestic manufacturing.

Charles Hagner writes of his father Philip's part in the movement for economic independence: "Thomas Jefferson, afterwards President of the United States, was a personal friend of my father, and knowing he had mills at the Falls, early indoctrinated him with the manufacturing fever, and he procured — how or where I never knew — some, what would now be considered very antiquated machinery, for spinning cotton. The farthest back, and all that I can remember of it is, its being used for spinning candle-wick, for which there was great demand in those days."

Another figure in the Revolution, financier Robert Morris, built a glass factory on the western side of the Schuylkill, opposite what is now Midvale Avenue. In 1808, a man named Thoburn turned this into a calico printing mill which operated until 1835, when William Simpson began his "Washington Print Works." Simpson mainly printed patterns on silk, with handkerchiefs being a specialty. The Simpson printing mills had great success until the

time of the Civil War, when the demand for silk declined. The Simpson Mills finally relocated, and the buildings were demolished by the Fairmount Park Commission.



Robert Morris

At about the same time, the Dobson mills were getting their start. The Civil War had caused an increase in the demand for woolen products. The Dobson mill, then at Ridge Avenue and the Wissahickon Creek, produced woolen blankets for the Union Army; this mill was also demolished, in 1872, by order of the Fairmount Park Commission, which was extending the Park along the Wissahickon Creek.

Dobson's then moved to Scott's Lane, where it expanded and prospered until it closed down operations in the 1930's; by then, it had diversified its production to include most textile products.

In the late 1800's, another great industry in the Falls which used the many springs in the area was brewing. Henry J. Becker built a brewery (Steppacher and Becker) in 1857 at the end of what is now Arnold Street in "Dutch Hollow." In 1870, this was taken over by Jacob Hohenadel, who called it Falls Park Brewery.



Robeson's Flour Mill and Mansion, built 1686-89. The Philadelphia-Germantown-Norristown Railroad Bridge built 1834 (now Reading R.R.) spans the Wissahickon. The Mansion later became Barnett Garden.

The following was published in 1875: "Falls Park Brewery, located at the Falls of Schuylkill, Twenty-Eighth Ward, Philadelphia, occupies a site formerly owned by Richard Penn Smith ... The property includes about 6 acres, with a beautifully shaded park for accommodations for picnics and private parties. On one side of the grove stands the brewery, and a building about 100 X 55 feet; and being built in the side of a bank, with four vaults ["the caves"] hewn from the solid rock, each 30 X 142 feet. It varies from 3 to 5 stories in height. Within the brewery there are fine springs of water, furnishing an abundant supply, while upon the premises are other large springs. It now employs about 13 men, producing 8000 barrels of lager beer per annum; but there is capacity for the production of more than double the quantity. It is supplied with all the best appliances for brewing a superior article of beer."

Many more breweries emerged in the Falls of Schuylkill in the latter half of the 19th Century — as they did all over the city at that time. In 1873, Philip Guckes started a brewery on what is now Warden Drive, and opened a park at School House Lane and Ridge Avenue. John Stein bought the old Mifflin estate, and established a beer garden there. Finally, in 1894, another Hohenadel brewery was built at Conrad Street and Indian Queen Lane; although the tavern at the railroad is gone, the brewery still stands, now being used as a warehouse. Every brewery was built in connection with a pleasure park of some kind, perhaps carrying on the tradition of the German "beer garden."

Mention should be made here of the various parks which existed during the 1800's around the Falls. Without television and the convenience of modern transportation, people spent their leisure times in various activities close to home.

The area now covered by the Queen Lane reservoir and "the Manor" was at one time bisected by Indian Queen Lane, which went straight through to Germantown Avenue. South of the lane was the Schuetzen Park operated by the Philadelphia Rifle Club, and north was its rival, Mund and Albrecht. Also in the neighborhood were Arnholdt's Schuylkill Falls Park, Riverside Park at the mouth of the Wissahickon, and Washington Park south of the Falls on the Schuylkill.

One last enterprise which can't be overlooked is the Powers & Weightman Chemical Company, which started in 1848 on Ridge Avenue north of what is now Calumet Street. Under different names over the years, its presence has been felt into the 20th Century. Many people now living can tell of their homes on "Laboratory Hill;" these were homes built by the company for its employees.

Building homes for one's workers was a tradition born from a scarcity of labor; a company in a very small town could attract homeless immigrants by ensuring

that there would be enough homes available. As more and more people gathered around the industries of the Falls, the community, with its churches, schools, and corner stores, grew.

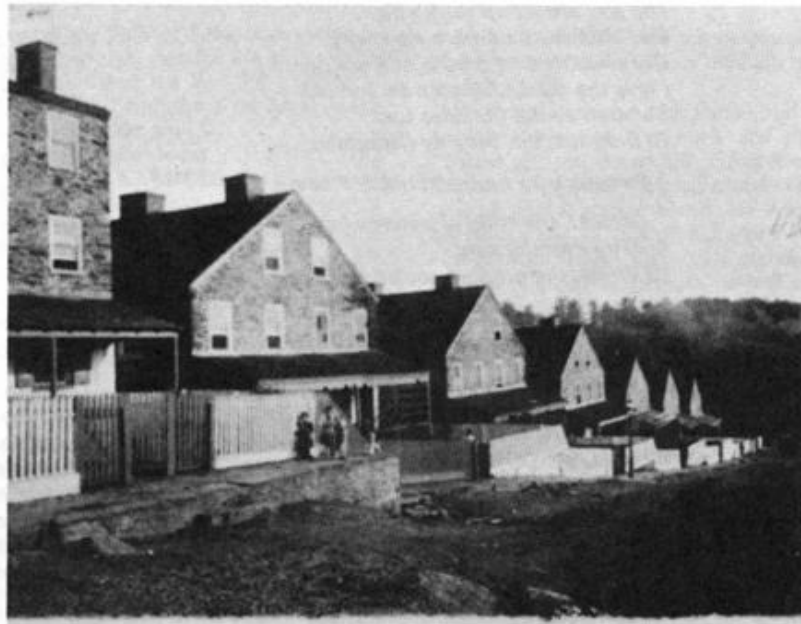
Robert Morris built homes south of his glass factory on the western side of the Schuylkill; this community grew to become Wood's Landing, and later Cook-sockey. Henry J. Becker built many of the homes in "Dutch Hollow" (which was named for him, possibly because he was German — "Deutsch").

Probably the most ambitious builder at the time was Powers, Weightman, & Harrison, which constructed not only homes, but also a school and community

for 20th Century working men and women.

Through the interaction of people and jobs, the Falls of Schuylkill grew. Churches were formed, schools established, the corner store sprang up everywhere. The Falls of Schuylkill, like most communities of the day, was one in which people both lived and worked. For the most part, their whole existence centered around the Falls.

During the 20th Century, this changed. With an increase in means of transportation, and a decline in local businesses, people more frequently could live apart from their occupations. The Falls of



Laboratory Hill, showing a portion of the row of houses occupied by employees of the works. From the C.K. mills collection.

building. These extra benefits were due to the benevolence of George L. Harrison, who lived on School House Lane; when he retired, they were converted to extra homes. The Dobson family also contributed materially to the community by helping to build St. James the Less Episcopal Church, and the Falls Presbyterian Church.

The 19th Century working man or boy (child labor laws had not yet abolished the brutal exploitation of children) occasionally enjoyed the fruits of his employer's benevolence, but unfortunately lacked the comparative security and working conditions that unions later won

Schuylkill, now East Falls (appropriately enough named for its commuter railroad station), is a community where most people must travel greater distances to their jobs than they did in the past.

In this modern community it takes a greater effort to "commune" or live together as our ancestors did; we can't rely on common jobs to hold us together. The writers of this booklet, and the members of the Bicentennial Committee, hope that this short history of the Falls will fill the "heritage gap" that we suffer. If we can reacquire a pride in our community, perhaps the effort to "stick together" will not seem so great.



## *The Schuylkill - A Centennial Poem*

By Dr. Charles K. Mills

*O Natal village! dear to me  
Thy Name and fame and people are;  
Thou shalt, wherever shines my star,  
The still attracting centre be;  
(For little matter where we roam,  
Our childhood's home is still our home.)  
I love the tales, though trite and old,  
So often by the firesides told:  
Of Schronk, the doughty fisherman,*

*Famous with line, and net, and seine;*

*Of Neef, the child of nature plain,  
Apostle Pestalozzian;  
Of White, the prophet-souled and brave,*

*Who melted first the heat and light,  
And to our homes and workshops gave*

*The stony-hearted Anthracite;  
Of Smith, the provost and divine,  
Who learning loved, and dinners fine;  
Of Sims, who ate from golden plate,—  
The wealthy lord of broad estate;  
Of Carson-blessings on his head!  
Who succoring came in hour of dread.  
Here welcome-looking hostelries,  
Well porched, and shadowed well by trees,  
For sun-escaping pilgrims planned,  
Back from the dusty road-way stand:  
On one side sheds in semi-square,  
Upon the other garden fair;  
And, in the fore-ground,—vision cool,  
Refreshing as Siloah's pool,—  
The horse-trough, gnawed and green inlaid,  
Beneath a willow's grateful shade,  
Where horses, with a queer surprise,*

*Look down into the water rare,  
And see, strange sight for horses' eyes,*

*Their curious selves reflected there;  
Or with the children, charmed, behold,  
Fish clad in silver, red, and gold.*

*Far-famed these inns through many a year  
For hospitality and cheer,  
For bill of fare peculiar here—  
Catfish, and coffee, beefsteak fine,  
Broiled chicken, waffles, and good wine.  
Such fare Savarin sure would glad,  
Or drive a monk with pleasure mad.*

\*\*\*

*Above the highway rising bold,  
The pillared Mifflin house behold!  
Where once a score of fountains played,  
And acres spread of lordly shade;  
And deer forgot their woodland home,  
So wide their limits were to roam;  
Where men and dames of high degree  
Were often wont of old to be.*

*Once had this place for me weird charm,  
Even though not free from some alarm.  
Come shuddering now the stories told  
Of ghostly figures strutting bold;  
Of dark recess, and double floor,  
And never-shutting chamber door;  
Of noises strange, and flashing light,  
Oft heard and seen at dead of night.*

*Alas! O age degenerate!*

*All that once fascinated here*

*Has yielded—ignominious fate!*

*Unto the reign of lager beer.*

\*\*\*

*Above the creek upon the hill,  
I see the yellow school house still;  
Still standing where of old it stood,  
Surrounded by a pleasant wood,  
Though by its side, a grander mate  
Has reared its haughtier head of late.  
How fondly memory recalls  
The joys I knew around these walls!*



# FAMOUS FALLS FOLKS

By Elizabeth Ryan

In his poem, "The Schuylkill, A Centennial Poem," Charles K. Mills' spirit of pride and sense of historical responsibility sets a beautiful stage for a pageant of "stars."

What follows are some biographical sketches of these important characters who shaped the history of the Falls. Some were serious businessmen, and others humorous "cronies," while some were ever inventive — affecting history and progress beyond the limits of East Falls.

First things first! ... Lights please ... The year is 1876, and the setting is the Falls of Schuylkill.

Center stage: **Charles V. Hagner** and **Dr. Charles K. Mills**. It is with pleasure we begin our pageant with these two men who have recorded and published information about the Falls. These two local historians deserve our applause and respect for their keen interest in our heritage.

**CHARLES V. HAGNER** — This historian's family made history during the early days of the Falls.

The Hagner family was founded in America by Frederick Hagner, of Manheim, Germany, who settled here in 1745. His son, Philip, lived at Falls of Schuylkill, after buying a paper mill on Falls Creek, in 1791. This mill was said to have been purchased from the German printer, Christopher Sower, who printed the first Bibles in German in America.

Colonel Philip Hagner, a personal friend of Thomas Jefferson, served the colonial cause in the Revolutionary War, and was responsible for moving the bells of Old Christ Church to Bethlehem to prevent their being melted down by the British.

At one time, Hagner produced a chocolate at his mill — "P. Hagner Chocolate" — which was known throughout the East Coast and in Europe.

Philip's son, Charles V. Hagner, while working for his father, accidentally discovered a revolutionary method of preparing drugs. In an account he wrote in a medical journal, he told his story of the first drug mill in America.

A Dr. Haral of Philadelphia, had 6000 pounds of creme of tartar to grind. By the old method, hand-grinding with mortar and pestle, the work would have taken months to complete. Charles hauled the creme of tartar to his father's mills, and did the job in one night.

Upon receiving his order the next morning, Dr. Haral vowed his drug had

been ruined. A group of druggists were assembled to analyze the substance, and they had only to report that it was of the finest quality.

In 1812, Charles Hagner took up arms, and with a rank of Captain, fought in the War of 1812. In 1817, when he obtained complete control of his father's mills, he began expanding. He purchased power-looms for the weaving of satinetts — the first time in Pennsylvania they were used for this purpose. He later moved to Manayunk, and erected a mill adapted for the grinding of powerful drugs.

In 1869, he published the *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill*, giving us an early insight into the life of the Falls. He established the first Post Office in Manayunk, and the first local stage coach line in the city.

The second local historian, **DR. CHARLES K. MILLS**, was a famous pioneer among neurologists; a wing of Philadelphia General Hospital is named for him. He began his education at the Old Yellow School on the Carson Estate, and also at the Old Academy, when it served the community as a school. He published three works on the history of the Falls.

During the Civil War, he served as a private in Company I of the "Blue Reserves." With John Dobson, he saw action at the shelling of Carlisle and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

From his poem, let's meet the cast on this historical "playbill."

**GODFREY SCHRONK**, was an early resident of the Falls of Schuylkill. He acquired much land in the vicinity of Midvale Avenue through to School House Lane. He established a fishery just south of the Falls bridge, and for easy access to the river, he made a lane from the Ridge Rd. A legend states that Schronk would just put his net into the water and haul up thousands of catfish in one day's work. His son, Robert Roberts Schronk, was a reporter during the 1800's, and from his records, A.C. Chadwick, a reporter and historian during the early 1900's, gained much information about the Falls. He was especially precise in his descriptions of war conditions in The Falls.

In 1808, **JOSEPH NEEF** established the first kindergarten in the U.S., here on Midvale Ave. in East Falls.

In 1809, Neef established a school on the old Smith estate (Plush Hill), in an octagon-shaped building called "Smith's Folly." He was referred to as a "child of nature" because he was often seen taking

part in the boys' sports. He taught without books using only blackboards and slates, often conducting his classes outdoors. He offered to the boys of the Falls a progressive form of education modeled after the Italian educator, Pestalozzi.

A partial listing of some of Neef's students includes: George McCall (sea captain); Richard Penn Smith (attorney); Philip Wogsie (Hagner) (storekeeper); Robert Morris (attorney); Charles Wetherill (druggist); Oliver Evans (mechanic); Issac Peace (Super Cargo); Charlie Heath (merchant); and Joseph Sorber (doctor).

**JOSIAH WHITE** was the proprietor of the wire mills located near the Falls on the Schuylkill.

He became known as the Father of the Lehigh Navigation Company, and the "Father of the Schuylkill Navigation Company." White was a remarkable man of great inventive talents. He listed no fewer than 27 inventions, which he headed with "rollen nails." He claimed the inventions of wire fences, as well as "wire bridges."

He had a spiritual revelation early in his life, according to his autobiography: "...I finally concluded that I would be more likely to be happy in this world and in the next, also, if I took the course that would be useful to others, in all my undertakings..."

"In consequence of this revelation, I bought the Falls — its water power — and gave \$14,000 for it. I had not been in possession of it twelve months before I discovered I had jumped from the frying pan into the fire."

White struggled from 1810 to 1817 to make a superpower plant by building a dam on the Schuylkill, and hoped to prosper by leasing out water power; but he failed. However, he did suggest the present site of the Fairmount Park Dam. More important, White discovered, accidentally, the successful use of anthracite coal.

After experimenting at his mill trying to get anthracite coal to burn, White and some workers finally, in disgust, threw a large quantity of the "blackstones" into the furnace, shut the door, and left for home. But one worker, going back afterwards for a jacket, discovered a tremendous fire in the furnace. He immediately called all hands, and they ran through three separate heats of iron with that one fire. Thus, they discovered that, unlike soft coal, anthracite needed extra



time to get started; but that it was worth the extra effort. The use of hard coal as a fuel had started.

White figured it would cost \$12 a ton to bring anthracite down from the newly opened Schuylkill mines to Philadelphia. Considering this, he changed his base of operations. He moved to the Lehigh River, cleverly obtained a lease on the Lehigh Mine Company, and formed the Lehigh Navigation & Coal Company. It was the idea of White and his venturesome pioneer coal magnates to narrow the Lehigh River, forcing the water into a channel that would float coal barges. Mauch Chunk, Pa., became the center of activities, but coal was so new in the 1820's that capitalists were fearful to venture.

In 1819, he discovered there was not enough water in the Lehigh to form a permanent channel. White then experimented with an idea of his father's, and did succeed in producing a "lock" or a sluice called the "Bear Trap."

In 1824, Philadelphia managers ordered 3000 tons of coal for one year as a try-out. White sent 9541 tons, and he was lucky! Stove-makers and grate sellers now began, in 1825, to boast of new patterns for burning anthracite. That winter, according to White, may be considered the turning point in the use of anthracite.

**WILLIAM SMITH** (1727-1803), the first Provost of the College of Philadelphia, which later became the University of Pennsylvania, was born in Scotland. He was a teacher, preacher, writer, and politician of strong educational background. In 1759, he built a home in Falls of Schuylkill on a site known today as "Plush Hill." New additions were constantly being added to this house, hence, the title "Smith's Folly." He also purchased the Falls Tavern on Ridge Road.

His contemporaries either admired him for his scholastic accomplishments, or despised him for his unpleasant personal habits, particularly intemperance.



William Smith

He apparently remained loyal to the Crown during the Revolutionary War, creating for himself many enemies. Over this matter, he became a bitter political enemy of Benjamin Franklin. They constantly criticized each other.

In 1755, he was appointed Provost of the College of Philadelphia. This was a new title, due to the fact that Franklin refused to relinquish his own title to Smith.

Smith was a great fund-raiser, and a founder who helped bring about the development of the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1758, Smith and Justice-of-the-Peace, William Moore, of Chester County, were arrested for libel against the Pennsylvania Assembly. The charges were cleared, and in the same year, Smith married Moore's daughter, Rebecca.

Ironically, Smith was chosen by the American Philosophical Society to deliver the eulogy at the burial of Ben Franklin. He probably knew the man longer than anyone else, and he was probably the best public speaker in Philadelphia at that time.

It would have been a good chance to poke fun at Franklin for the last time. Surprisingly enough, however, the eulogy was a great tribute to the man. Most of it was devoted to Franklin's rise in the world. Toward the finish, he addressed the dead man:

*"...Yes thou dear departed friend and fellow-citizen! Thou, too, art gone before us — thy chair, thy celestial car, was first ready! We must soon follow, and we know to where to find thee. May we seek to follow thee by lives of virtue and benevolence like thine!"*

After the burial, he returned home, where his daughter, Becky, reportedly exclaimed:

*"Oh Papa, I don't think you believed more than one-tenth of what you said of old Ben-Lightening-rod!"*

Later, at a dinner at Governor Mifflin's mansion in the Falls, he delivered quite a different eulogy!

*"But to covet political fame  
Was in him a degrading ambition;  
A spark which from Lucifer came,  
Enkindled the blaze of sedition.*

*Let candor then write on his urn,  
'Here lies the renowned inventor,  
Whose flame to the skies ought to burn  
But inverted, descended to the center!'"*

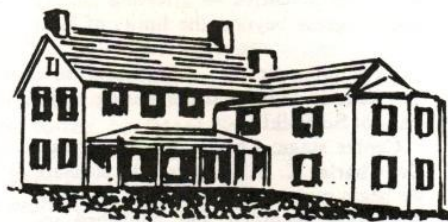
When Smith sold the Falls Tavern, the money was used to pay for the erection of a large marble mausoleum on his property on Plush Hill, where he wished to be buried.

Smith was known throughout the Falls for not paying bills without first being threatened or sued. He was also very quick to criticize his neighbors for their bad habits. Once he chastized Godfrey Schronk for fishing on Sunday. Schronk replied:

*"If your dinner was at the bottom of the Schuylkill, you, too, would be very apt to fish for it."*

Smith's greatest ambition was to become the first Episcopal Bishop in America. He was even nominated once, despite Ben Franklin's influence. But, before he was ever consecrated, he became inebriated while chairman of a Church Convention in New York, and lost the nomination. He was never nominated again.

Smith's son, William Moore Smith, and his wife Ann, contributed part of their estate for community use. This gift was to the men, women, and children of the immediate neighborhood for educational, religious, and recreational purposes. On that land, the Old Academy was built.



The Smith Mansion as it appeared in 1733 on Plush Hill

**DOCTOR JOSEPH CARSON** was born in 1808. He was Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy at the University of Pennsylvania. He established a summer-house here at the Falls of Schuylkill, south of Smith's estate.

During the cholera epidemic of 1832, he proved invaluable to the neighborhood in instruction and prevention of the disease. Later, his estate was used for the Forest School (or "Old Yellow School"). He was also a member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

**Joseph Sorber** served the people of the Falls in 1804, from his office and drug store on Ridge Avenue below Indian Queen Lane. A supporting cast to Dr. Mills' poem would include many other doctors who served the folks of the Falls.

**Hannah E. Longshore**, had a difficult time "hanging a shingle" here in the Falls. The general objection, in 1860, was:

*"...women do not have the ability to stand up under the bodily and mental strain of the profession, and the practice of medicine is incompatible with the best home influence of a woman and the duties of the mother, and last, incomprehensible as it may seem, today, feminine modesty would suffer."*

Druggists refused to fill her prescriptions. In time, though, her service was finally accepted without question.

**Dr. Lecky Service**, a physician of the Falls of Schuylkill in 1856, was the first to discover the "real" nature of the Spot-



ted-fever epidemic in the Falls. He worked closely with Dr. Jonathon Knight Uhler.

The Uhler brothers were all doctors who gave service to the people of the Falls. Walter was Manager and Chief-Chemist at the Powers and Weightman Chemical plant. Jonathon Knight Uhler opened an office at Peter Schronk's house in 1855. Later, he moved to Indian Queen Lane, into the Hohenadel house. In 1869, he bought the Smith mansion from John Dobson. Harry Uhler moved to Manayunk, and Algernon Uhler died very young.

**Dr. Otto Rath**, of Indian Queen Lane, was a surgeon associated with Roxborough Memorial Hospital. He served East Falls for the longest period of these early doctors.

**Dr. Clayton Entwistle** served his internship at Roxborough Memorial Hospital. He married Esther Fellows and settled in East Falls, on Indian Queen Lane.

**THOMAS MIFFLIN** (1744-1800), was born of a Quaker family in Philadelphia. He was a graduate of the College of Philadelphia. In 1787, he resided at the Falls of Schuylkill, and in the same year, along with seven other Pennsylvanians, he signed the Constitution of the United States. Mifflin's contributions to our nation's development are impressive.

He was a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature from 1772 to 1773; and in 1774 and 1775, he was sent as a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses. He became Washington's First Aide-de-camp with a rank of colonel (even though he preferred Hratio Gates over Washington as Commander-in-Chief). In 1782, he was elected to Congress and became its president. He also served the state of Pennsylvania as its first governor.

His mansion at the Falls was located on a hill overlooking Ridge Road (at Frederick and Stanton Streets). His home often welcomed many famous and noteworthy Philadelphians — Robert Morris, Ben Franklin, and Dr. William Smith were frequent guests.



Home of Thomas Mifflin in 1775 — demolished 1893 site near Eveline & Frederick Sts.



Thomas Mifflin, first Governor of Pennsylvania

**Henry Hill** was a wealthy Philadelphia wine merchant. In 1780, he expanded his farmhouse into a large, attractive mansion known as "Carlton," on Midvale Avenue. Hill was a Justice of the Peace, a member of the Original First City Troop, and a colonel of a regiment of militia. In 1780, he subscribed £5000 to the Pennsylvania Bank to procure provisions for the Continental Army. Washington made the Hill farmhouse his headquarters while encamped here.

**Mrs. Robert Watkins, Sr.**, of the Fort St. David's Hotel, was probably the first in the area to serve her patrons "catfish and waffles." The time was between 1800-1850. According to Cornelius Weygandt's *The Wissahickon Hills* (1930), the meal was usually like this: "Catfish and waffles began with fried catfish and a relish. A steak of beef followed with fried potatoes, generally a simple form of what we know now as 'hashed brown.' Then came stewed chicken and the waffles. After the chicken and waffles, the coffee. Dessert was served at some places."

**Bob Evans** succeeded Mrs. Watkins, and the establishment was then called the Falls Tavern. He did not stay long; he sold the Tavern, and took to renovating a large house directly across the street. He called this establishment the Fountain Park Hotel.

In 1865, the proprietor was **Joe Evans**. He had a pet elk, which one day became vicious and attacked his mother-in-law. Throwing her into a ditch, the elk severely injured the aged lady. With its head down, the elk was ready to charge again, when Albert Ripka, of Manayunk, killed it with one shot between the eyes.

A Virginian, named **Arnold**, purchased the Falls Hotel. He erected a wharf on the river-front for the accommodation of the Fairmount barge clubs. "Big times" were had there during the spring and summer.

His son, **Michael Arnold**, became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas, here in Philadelphia. Judge Arnold campaigned bitterly against the re-election of Lincoln.

**Captain William Palmer** was the proprietor of Palmer's Tavern on Ridge Road, near Indian Queen Lane, opposite the Old Falls Tavern. It became an important establishment during the Revolutionary period, when Washington's troops began holding courts-martial there.

**Joseph "Rooty" Smith** was the genial host of the Maple Springs Hotel, a structure erected shortly after Civil War with the timber that had been used in a soldiers' hospital that stood near the Town Hall in Germantown.

He received his nickname, "Rooty," and lots of attention for his Inn, through his propensity for fashioning animals, birds, furniture, and bric-a-brac out of the roots of trees and vines.

The Inn was located along Wissahickon Drive, above Gypsy Lane, where there was a stretch of lawn and a background of thickly intertwined underbush, called the "Jungle".

Smith was a self-taught sculptor, and a natural "Jack of all trades." He first gained fame in the depths of the mines in the anthracite coal region, at the brisk mining town of Ashland.

He would say, "See this twisted laurel-root," lecturing to a group of blackened miners, "to your uninstructed eyes, it appears a mere shapeless snag; but turn it over, give a hitch to its tail, and jerk to its head, let the light fall on these glass beads I have inserted to form its eyes, and you have the original demon of the Coal Mine to which you are all slaves."

Emerging from the mines, he moved eastward to the Wissahickon Valley, and established himself as the unrivaled artist and landlord of Maple Springs Hotel.

His sculpture gallery soon grew to be an enormous Museum of twisted wooden monstrosities, dug up out of the wild laurel thickets of Pennsylvania and Maryland. In every gnarled root or complicated branch, the prolific fancy of the artist saw a goblin or a caricature, each with its own anecdote or legend.

As a result of this singular industry continuing over many years, the inn was crowded with an infinity of the strangest creatures. In the midst of these animals, was the family portrait gallery of His Satanic Majesty, Mr. & Mrs. Beelzebub, and the reigning princes, all of whom the proprietor knew well.

It was little wonder that Rooty Smith firmly believed and openly boasted that his museum was the most marvelous affair in the world; he sincerely felt that the Fairmount Park Commission, who in 1869 acquired title to his property, should offer a good sum for his collection for the perpetual benefit and instruction of the people of Philadelphia. The Commission, however, did not agree with him.

A walk through *Laurel Hill Cemetery*, farther down the River Road, is like a walk through history. It is the final resting spot for many important people.



Thirty-five soldiers and patriots of the Revolutionary War, and ten of Philadelphia's Mayors are buried at Laurel Hill. Here are a few short stories of some of these famous people.

**Charles Thomson**, the first secretary to the Continental Congress, died in 1824 at age 96, and was interred at Laurel Hill.

James Buchanan's young sweetheart, **Elizabeth Colman**, is also interred at Laurel Hill. Buchanan, the only President from Pennsylvania, was often seen at the tomb of Miss Colman. He blamed himself for her death.

While courting, they were to attend some gala affair, but late in the day Buchanan received word of a business associate's attempt to reach him by nightfall. Regretfully, he sent word to Miss Colman, and she lovingly understood. When, by nine o'clock the man had not shown up, Buchanan started home. He passed the well-lit and beautifully decorated hall, where music and laughter roared. He decided to drop in for a few moments.

Some of Miss Colman's "friends" were anxious to inform her of her date's "true business meeting." That night, heart-broken, she committed suicide with an overdose of a sleeping potion.

Also at Laurel Hill is the grave of **Elisha Kent Kane**, who in 1853 blazed a trail for Admiral Robert E. Perry; Kane Basin, in Greenland, bears his name. In 1850, he set out to the Arctic with DeHaven to solve the disappearance of Sir John Franklin. In 1853, he discovered Humboldt glacier on the west coast of Greenland.

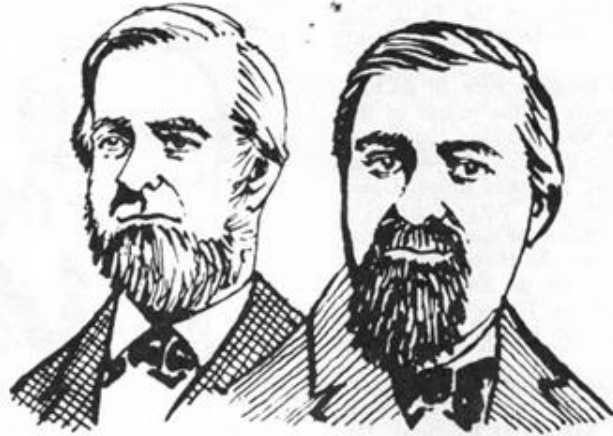
Also at Laurel Hill is **John Campbell Harris** (1840-1916), who married Nancy Powers, daughter of Thomas Powers (Powers & Weightman Chemical Plant). Harris was very active in the Civil War with Admiral Farragut.

**Jacob Hohenadel**, born in Germany in 1838, came to America in 1852. Five years later, he purchased ground which had once belonged to Richard Penn Smith. The property consisted of six acres and a house with a beautifully shaded porch, on Indian Queen Lane. He bought a brewery on Arnold Street, which had been built by Henry J. Becker.

**John Hohenadel** established the brewery on Indian Queen Lane, and for a while, "Indian Queen Ale" was all the rage.

**Philip Guckes'** brewery, established in 1873, was wiped-out by fire. It was located near the present Warden Drive. A lake near the brewery was a fine swimming hole for young boys in the Falls ("Guckie's Pond"). He came from Germany in 1842.

**George Mundy**, a neighborhood character, was supposedly the first man to go "hatless" about 100 years ago, in East Falls. He claimed "the Saviour never wore a hat," and that he was following His example.



John and James Dobson, manufacturers of carpet, yarn and blankets (1857)

Important to any community's development are opportunities for employment. In addition to previously mentioned mills, is the famous Dobson Mill.

**James Dobson**, "Boss Jim," founder of the great textile manufacturing plant in East Falls, was born in England in 1837. He traveled to America at the age of 17, and was employed at Mill Creek, Pennsylvania, under Seville Schofield, also from England, who was one of the leading textile pioneers of the nation. Schofield later became Jim's father-in-law.

With \$125 of his own, Dobson felt confident enough to start his own business. His older brother, **John**, moved with him to Manayunk, and together they began a business of their own. Shortly afterwards, they resettled to the Falls of Schuylkill.

The Dobson brothers married the Scofield daughters. James and his wife, Mary Ann Scofield, first settled at Ridge and Wissahickon roads. Later, they

moved to "Bella Vista," 33rd Street and Abbottsford Avenue.

During the Civil War, James assisted in the defense of the State against Lee's invasion attempt, 1862-63. As a Co-Captain, of Co. I of the "Blue Reserves," he drilled fellow "Fallers" in target practice on the grounds of the present-day Medical College and Hospital. He saw action at the shelling of Carlisle and Chambersburg, Pa.

His wife became the grand lady of the Falls, with her energy and support of many public movements and charitable and church events. She died at 96 years of age.

A sister, Bessie Dobson Altemus, shared the Dobson's community spirit, especially during World War I. She was very generous of her time and money in preparing "Comfy" kits for the boys, and in organizing the women of East Falls to meet at the "White House," on Midvale Avenue, to make knitted articles for those in the war.

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## "KELLYVILLE — U.S.A."



"KELLYVILLE" is nickname oft given to "Falls." Reason is the large family (5 boys, 3 girls, shown here in 1891) of the late John Kelly, extreme left, poor Irish immigrant of the '80's, whose five brawny sons achieved fame in varied fields. The chubby 2-year-old on his late mother's lap, right, is John B. (Jack) Kelly, Democratic City Chairman, Olympic oarsman. Behind him (wearing bow tie) is Charles V., builder. The two young blades seated in center are the late Patrick H. ("P.H."), wealthy contractor and political figure, left, and Walter C. (famed "Virginia Judge"). Between them is George, Pulitzer-prize winning playwright ... Other noted Fallsians (but not in the picture): Mrs. Bessie Dobson Altemus, Women's G.O.P. leader; Judge Albert S.C. Millar, Judge Francis Biddle, former Director of Public Safety Andrew J. Emanuel. (Phila. Record, Oct. 29, 1939)

That Kelly family was founded by **John Henry Kelly** and **Mary Ann Costello Kelly**. The Kellys' "five aces" had politics, contracting, athletics, writing, and the stage, as backgrounds for their success. These sons of the Irish immigrant who labored most of his life for meager pay, never enjoyed the advantages of long formal schooling. Yet, each achieved what many college graduates might envy.

**Patrick H. Kelly**, a carpet-mill apprentice at age eleven, became successively a bricklayer, labor organizer, and a prominent contractor. He constructed the huge Free Library of Philadelphia building on the Parkway.

**Walter Kelly**, known as the "Virginia Judge," left school at an early age for the carpet mills, and in turn became a mechanic, a candidate for Congress, a

hotel keeper, and a successful stage monologist.

**George Kelly**, the playwright, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1925 for "Craig's Wife." Another famous Kelly play, "The Show-Off," was supposedly written after a character from the Falls.

**Charles V. Kelly**, another graduate from carpet-mill and bricklayer apprenticeships, turned contractor with his brother. He was also a noted athlete, as a runner, high-jumper, and basketball player.

**John B. Kelly**, the caddy, bricklayer, mason, night-school student, and contractor, achieved his greatest fame on the Schuylkill. He was the acknowledged master of all oarsmen when he, along with his cousin Paul Costello, won the Olympic Championships at Antwerp, Belgium, in 1920.

In 1935, John B. entered a political race, and after hitting his opponent with everything but an oar, he lost to the Republican candidate for mayor of Philadelphia, S. Davis Wilson.

His children have added more fame and spirit of success to the Falls of Schuylkill. John B. and Margaret were proud of their only son "Kell," when he won the Diamond Sculls twice and the English Classic. Their second daughter, Grace, a Hollywood Oscar Award winner, captured the heart of a prince. In 1956, Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier of Monaco, and became the Falls' first "real" princess.

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Kelly were greatly admired by the people of the Falls for their generous efforts in helping to shape the community. Mrs. Kelly is still involved with the Medical College and Hospital of Pennsylvania.





# FISHING HOUSES OF THE SCHUYLKILL

By Bobby Daily

Because of the location of East Falls along the banks of the Schuylkill River, fishing became very popular even before the Revolution.

At both the famous fishing clubs on the Schuylkill — The State in Schuylkill opposite Fairmount, and Fort St. Davids at the Falls — catfish stood high in the estimation of the members, epicures all. Their cooking was an art which was understood more perfectly by the clubs' amateurs than by the recognized chefs of city restaurants.

Says the historian of The State in Schuylkill: "The fish are fried in the best butter of the market to a golden brown color, and never shapelessly broken by turning; but in regularly laid rows and adhering to each other, and not to the pan, are dextrously tossed in the same compact form, with great ease after a little practice, to the surprise and admiration of spectators."

## Fort St. Davids

During the 18th century, the Society of Fort St. Davids had enrolled on its lists a

large and respectable number of associates termed "Nobility of those days." Many members of this fishing club, established in 1732 at the Falls of Schuylkill, were Welshmen, some of the Society of Friends, companions of William Penn and coimmigrants to the New World.

On an elevated and extensive rock, contiguous to the Eastern Bank of the river and projecting into the rapids, was Fort St. Davids. The rapids are gone now, but when the river is rough you can almost see them under the twin bridges of the Roosevelt Expressway.

Fort St. Davids was an oblong building constructed from the timbers of the forest on the West Bank. It was painted brown, and roomy enough to accommodate a large company. Approached by a flight of stairs, it had a large door in the center, and ample windows for light and air. A square cupola containing a bell rose from the roof, and was surmounted with a spire, a ball, and an emblematic rock fish serving as a vane.

The "Fort" was organized and

governed in the manner of a garrison or fortification; it had its commander-in-chief, governor, captains, lieutenants, etc. The commander issued his orders, proclamations, etc., in regular military style.

The building contained a museum, the only one in Pennsylvania at that time, consisting of a great variety of foreign and domestic, natural and artificial curiosities.

The War of Independence dispersed the garrison of Fort St. Davids. The Hessians, under General Wilhelm von Knyphausen, quartered in what was later known as the Falls Tavern, plundered the place of everything not secured before their arrival. They used part of it for a barrack, until they destroyed it. After the Revolution, the Fort was rebuilt and visited for several years, until it caught fire. After this destruction the members joined the State in Schuylkill.



CATFISH

## State in Schuylkill

The State in Schuylkill founders called their club-house "Castle." The original Castle was built in 1732, and replaced in 1812 at Eggesfield, where it remained until 1822. The building of the Fairmount Dam and obstruction of navigation along the Schuylkill made it necessary to remove the State in Schuylkill from its domain.

In 1876 the club, now joined with Fort St. Davids, leased Colony Castle from the Park Commission. Colony Castle is the old building on the bank where the Wissahickon Creek meets the Schuylkill River. This building is now the headquarters of the Philadelphia Canoe Club. It was one of the first grist mills in the country.

The State in Schuylkill was the earliest society for the furtherance of sport and the protection of sportsmen in the country. When the Revolution was brought to a successful conclusion, and the colonies became the United States, the club adopted a constitution which followed the one drawn up for the Union.

Over the door of Colony Castle was the inscription:

"Let no one bear beyond  
This threshold hence  
Words uttered here  
In friendly confidence."

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# THE LAND AND THE BUILDINGS

By Grace Lenahan

When William Penn first conceived his "greene Countrie Towne," one of his ideas was to have his inner City surrounded by farms that would nurture it. With this thought, land beyond the original city limits was laid out in large acreages named "Liberty Lands." These were particularly available to city property owners at a nominal cost to encourage growth.

On the handbills which Penn circulated in London to secure settlers, land was offered for sale at ten cents an acre, and to renters for a penny a year. A half million acres were sold the first year.

"William Penn by ye grace of God and King Proprietor of the Province of Pennsylvania 20th day of the first month of 1684" granted to Robert Turner 500 acres of land called "Sumac Park" in Penn's Manor of Springettsbury (Roxborough township) at a yearly rental of one shilling for each 100 acres. This township extended as far south as Faire Mount, where the present Philadelphia Art Museum stands.

Tract #1, as it was known, contained 500 acres of territory from the Schuylkill River to what is now Wissahickon Avenue and from Wissahickon Creek to what is now Midvale Avenue, where it adjoined the property of Garrett Garretson, a Swede who had bought his land from the Indians in 1677 and was probably the region's first settler.

The Garrett home was a one-room log cabin "up in the woods" at what is now Vaux and Ainslie Streets. The property remained in the family until very recently. The former Garrett house, it has been said, was occupied by Court Von Donop, one of the commanders of the Hessian contingent to the British Army, prior to the Battle of Germantown.

The Robert Turner who purchased Tract #1 was a close friend of Penn's, and one of the Colony's provisional Governors; he was also one of Penn's Commissioners.

On June 19, 1686, Robert Turner leased for 101 years, 50½ acres along the Wissahickon to Joshua Tittery, a broad-glass maker, and Richard Townsend, a millwright from London. The partners agreed to build mills and improve the property. Richard Townsend embarked on the Welcome with William Penn, and brought with him material for a grist mill, all ready to erect, including millstones.

The grist mill, saw mill, and a dwelling are mentioned in a deed of 1689. The grist mill, with three pair of stones under one roof, was south of Wissahickon

Creek, about where "Barnett's Gardens" of 1933 stood; the saw mill was on the north, where the gas station is, at the foot of Wissahickon hill. In 1690, the mills and lands were sold to Andrew Robeson, Sr., and Charles Saunders, a millwright. The Robeson family, for more than 150 years, afterward owned the mills and the mansion on Ridge Avenue.

Andrew Robeson, Sr., died in 1694. In 1696, Samuel Robeson, executor for his father, sold his half-interest to his cousin Andrew Robeson, 2nd; this contained the mills. The eastern half of the tract was sold to Joseph and Benjamin Morgan.

In 1703, Sara Saunders wished to sell her ½ interest to Andrew also, but the courts decided that the 8 acres at the mouth of the Wissahickon could not be divided, so she retained her half interest. These 8 acres of land at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek, contain the only original mill building still existing along the Wissahickon. This building now houses the Philadelphia Canoe Club.

Although some reports indicate a date of 1668, we know for sure that this mill was built before 1733, and was then called "the Wissahickon Grist and Bolt-ing Mill." Alex Chadwick, in his papers states, "it was the first cut nail factory in America."

Back in 1905, a group of young Falls men decided the old building would make an excellent canoe club. They were Dr. David Boone, grandson of Dr. Eli Berry of Indian Queen Lane, William J. Benhour of Penn Street, W.J. Jamison, and Frank Kerber.

On their first visit, before renting the place, none of them would enter it except Boone, because it was in such terrible shape; but they realized it was an ideal location, and set about revitalizing it. In those days, the men were often warned not to stay overnight, because the place was haunted.

The part of the mill that contained the waterwheel is now a large cellar-like stone room under the first floor of the Club. "Colony Castle," as it was sometimes called (because Colony or State in Schuylkill Fishing Club once used it), is just as interesting on the inside as out. It has a large open fireplace in one corner of the great living room, with a massive colonial mantelpiece.

Andrew Robeson, 2nd, continued to operate the grist and saw mills on Ridge Road. He became a very large landowner — Provost Smith's land (Plush Hill) was originally Robeson's, as was the Dobson mill property. There are so many changes of deeds due to sales and inheritance it

would be impossible to include all of them.

For a time during the Revolution, the mills all belonged to John Vandaren, who purchased them in 1755. During the year 1786, he placed a mortgage of 2500 pounds sterling on them, and subsequently lost them. At a Sheriff's sale, the Robeson's repurchased the property.

In the early 1800's, Peter Robeson built and gave to his son, Andrew 4th, as a wedding present, "Milverton," a double dwelling with a large central hall "surrounded with unusually fine trees." It was afterwards known as Riverside Mansion, a public hostelry at which steamboats stopped during their heyday; it was on the Schuylkill, north of the Wissahickon.

On August 13th, 1862, the Robeson mill was destroyed by fire. At that time, it was owned by Andrew Robeson, 4th, and rented to John and James Dobson. In 1869, the city purchased all the land through which the Wissahickon flowed for Fairmount Park. All the mills were destroyed, except for what is now the Canoe Club.

The Robeson house also remained, the walls of which stood for many years as part of Barnetts Gardens, a summer place for ice cream and soda in the '30's. It was enclosed in long screened-in porches, decorated with bright Chinese lanterns. This property was demolished when the Wissahickon over-pass was built, although there is a small section of stone wall visible on the Southeast side of Ridge Ave. The house was also an early home for James Dobson, who became the textile manufacturer, and Mrs. Bessie Dobson Altemus was born there.

On the map of Philadelphia by Scull and Heap dated 1750, there are three other local properties recorded.

One, the old Morgan house, was a strange looking Colonial farmhouse



Peter Robeson 1748-1833

alongside a stream which was used on old maps as the boundary line between North Penn and Roxborough townships. (At one time, Roxborough township — now the 21st Ward — extended below School House Lane to about where Midvale Ave. is today.) It is now the location of McMichael Park.

The second is identified as "Ashmead" on the map, and referred to elsewhere in history as "Carlton." The estate was originally deeded by William Penn to John and Anne Charlotte Lowther jointly, and comprised 5000 acres. In 1731, this was sold by the Lowthers to Joseph Turner, who sold it to Joseph Ashmead.

Carlton mansion stood at Stokeley St. and Midvale Ave. When Washington occupied it as his headquarters during the Continental army encampment on the reservoir grounds, it was evidently in Roxborough township, for old documents often refer to it as "The Roxborough Plantation."

Portions of the land were sold from time to time, and later it belonged to Thomas Lee, brother of the Presiding Episcopal Bishop. Scratched on one rear window, probably by a diamond, was the signature "M.R. Lee 1827 Roxborough." This was Lee's daughter Mary. Lee sold it to John Craig, who married Miss Jane Josephine Biddle. The property was sold to Cornelius S. Smith in May 1840.



Carlton Mansion, Midvale Ave. and Stokeley Street, around 1900.

The third property on the 1750 map is marked Palmer. The Palmers of the Falls were, in all probability, descendants from George Palmer of Nonsuch, County Surry, England, who was one of the first purchasers of lands from William Penn on April 26, 1682. William Palmer was the son of George and Elizabeth Palmer, and is listed in old documents as being "of Wissahickon, Phila. County." This probably relates to his residence at the Falls, which was within a mile of the Wissahickon Creek.

He is mentioned as a mill-wright, as is his son William. Old maps show that William Palmer, probably a grandson, owned a tract of land which included the very heart of the village, and also further south and east. The present Scotts Lane



High Bridge Hotel, at the Junction of Ridge Rd. & Wissahickon Dr., in 1910. Later Barnett's Gardens. From the C.K. Mills Collection.

was at one time Palmer's Lane, and one or perhaps two mills were owned by the Palmer family.

In the notes of Washington's encampment, it is stated that a court-martial was held at Captain Palmer's Tavern at the Falls on Aug. 6, 1777. The Tavern, built before the Revolution, was located on Ridge Road at the bottom of Indian Queen Lane.

Later, Joseph E. Sorber, son of a Revolutionary scout, moved from Germantown to the Falls, and occupied the house in about 1803. In the adjacent stone building to the south, Sorber conducted a carriage building shop. (I remember visiting my father there, as a little girl, for he used it as his first place of business). It fell into great disrepair, and had to be demolished for safety in 1929.

The Palmer Tavern itself remained into the 1930's as a private home. One of its last residents was "Billy" Donahue. It is now the parking lot for the local liquor store.

There were a number of Taverns along Ridge Rd: The Dove and Swan at Ford Rd. (near Clearfield St.), the Robin Hood at Nicetown Lane, and the Old Falls Tavern on Ridge Ave. at the foot of Indian Queen Lane.

The Falls Tavern was licensed to sell liquor in 1731 (it was originally called Fort St. David's Hotel). In looks, it resembled many of the old Inns still operating in the countryside around Philadelphia.

It was two and 1/2 stories high, of heavy white-washed plaster, with a steep pitched roof. In the front was a two-storied porch, the upper section of which was decorated with a fanciful black iron balustrade. In the back, facing the river,

were more porches where people could enjoy refreshments. Entering the central double doors, which had long panels of glass, you were greeted by a colonial staircase covered with deep red carpet. To the right was the bar room; it was dark panelled, and had a big fireplace which was kept burning on snowy nights.

In early days, it had a great reputation as the best place to find catfish and waffle dinners. A long way back, it was operated by Mrs. Robert Watkins, Sr., in connection with a ferry across the Schuylkill River. The fish were taken directly from the river, for prior to the building of the Fairmount Dam, the river teemed with fish.

When "Bobby" Evans moved from his Second Street tavern to succeed Mrs. Watkins as proprietor, he diverted part of Mifflin Run, forming a pond in which he kept a large supply of fish.

Later, Michael Arnold purchased the business and increased it greatly. He erected a wharf on the riverfront for the accommodation of the Fairmount Barge Clubs, which came in great numbers all summer long. But the tavern began to decline as Fairmount Park took over the riverfront, and after an old road called "Summer Road," which had been a very popular horse and carriage route from Broad and Diamond to Clearfield St., was abandoned. John Dobson became the owner, and it later became the property of the late Mrs. Matilda Whelen.

It was reopened in 1935 by the old Drury Corporation of Phila., who promised "a modern dance orchestra, chefs, and drinks of all description."





*Old Falls Hotel*

I remember, on a visit to my parents about four years ago, standing with my children, watching helplessly as a huge metal ball, swinging from the end of a crane, smashed the place to pieces, and left it in a pile of rubble. Today, it remains a weed-filled lot.

On the river, at the foot of a hill near the present Stone Arched Bridge below Ferry Road, the Fishing Company of Fort St. David was founded in about 1732. It was patterned after a military Garrison. The building was a rude but strong structure of timbers cut from the West river forests. On the hill behind it (which extended from the river bank up to the Ridge Rd.), a tall flag staff was erected from which floated King George II's flag.

Inside hung a picture of His Majesty and Queen Charlotte, and another of Hendrick, King of the Mohawks. The room was decorated with an immense hat, four foot wide; dried fish, turtles, and Indian curiosities. There were wine glasses and decanters — great pewter platters, a gift of the Penn family, and a set of china with the Schuylkill coat of arms. The company also had a flag on which was a moon, a fish, and a crown.

During the Revolution, the club house was unused, its members being engaged in the war. Hessian soldiers quartered near it and the Rock Fish Inn (Falls Tavern).

In 1734, three years after the Falls Tavern was granted a license, the Smith mansion on "Plush Hill" was built. Dr. William Smith, the first Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, lived for many years on this hill south of Indian Queen Lane. It commanded a beautiful view of the Schuylkill.

Three buildings were used as residences. The mansion was an L-shaped house, the main arm of which faced west. It was substantially built, with a fine porch on its western face, and terraces and a great lawn extending to the south. The grounds were entered from Indian Queen Lane by a drive which passed the barn, probably the existing access drive to Haywood St.

The two other large buildings were often spoken of as the octagon and the hexagon; the former was to the south, west, and was the place where Joseph Neef held classes. The remaining building, the hexagon, was situated overlooking the Lane where the old stone wall and iron fence still stand, it was toward the eastern boundary.

During Washington's occupancy of the district, the Smith mansion was used as headquarters for General Stephens, of Virginia. Later, during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, General Knox, Secretary of War, and Oliver Walcott, Jr., Auditor of the Treasury, conducted the new nation's business from this house.

There is a portrait of Provost Smith by the famed artist Gilbert Stuart, showing him looking down from his hill upon the Falls' rapids. As early as 1911, and as late as the 1940's, there had been movements to save the old building, but as with most of the Falls' Colonial past, it was destroyed. All that remains is the driveway through another empty, overgrown lot.

Thomas Mifflin was the first governor of Pennsylvania after the adoption of the constitution, having been elected to that position in 1790. A short time before, he chose another of the East Falls hills on which to build his riverside mansion and country estate. The house stood on a site near Eveline and Frederick Streets, facing the river.

Mifflin directed the erection of the mansion himself. It was of Georgian architecture, two and ½ stories high with twin chimneys on the north and south ends, and four massive pillars in front supporting a balcony. The windows were ceiling to floor, and the handsome double door entrance was topped by a graceful fan light.

It was surrounded as late as the middle 1800's by fine trees — elms, oaks, and a great horse chestnut. Deer were left in its nearby park as late as 1855.

In an embarrassed financial position, he like many other well-known men of post-Revolutionary times (including Provost Smith), had more or less engaged in land speculation. He was, however, still a member of the Pennsyl-

vania Assembly, and he died in 1800 at 56 while in attendance at Lancaster.

The mansion then passed through various owners.

Algernon Roberts, of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Andrew McMacklin, a well-known journalist were two. Roberts gave it the name "Fountain Park," a name which was purloined by one of the old hotels which stood opposite the Mifflin property on the East River Drive at a later time.

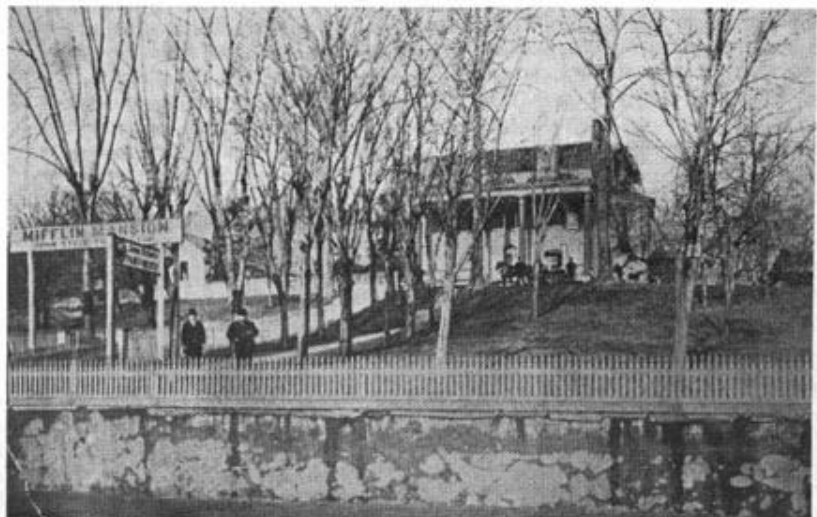
Later owners were brewers. Vaults for the brewery were built on the side of the hill facing Midvale. It was turned into a restaurant and picnic place, with gardens and fountains. Later, it fell into disrepair and became wild and overgrown, and there are stories in old newspapers of frightening ghosts terrifying passersby.

When it was torn down in 1893, a hidden room was found between the first and second stories, and double partitions to allow a passageway between rooms which descended to the cellar where an underground passage led to the stables and beyond, ending in the rocky hollow at the foot of the hill.

## ABBOTTSFORD

At the time when Governor Mifflin occupied his house, "there were a number of beautiful country seats in the vicinity of the Falls, occupied in the summer season by parties from the city. They were remarkably healthy and delightful retreats until the chills and fevers of 1821, after which they were mostly abandoned." Disease spread up the Schuylkill River when the Fairmount Dam backed up the waters.

One lovely house that remained occupied was known as "Abbottsford" (this was not its original name). It is now the



*The Old Mifflin Mansion, from Ridge Avenue, while in use as John Stein's Park and Brewery.*

site of the Pennsylvania Medical College, Henry Avenue and Abbottsford Road. It was built in 1752 by a Nickerson or Nicholson (although Mr. Hagner, in his book, refers to the place as "the seat of Mr. Nicklin, up Indian Queen Lane, a short half mile from Ridge road.") By whichever name, the man was a business partner of Robert Morris, the celebrated financier of the Revolution.

After the war, Nicklin and Morris "erected on the west side of the river about opposite Governor Mifflin's mansion, a glass house" (an establishment for making glassware). A row of stone houses was built a little lower down the river to accommodate the "hands" working in it. About 1880, it was altered into a calico printing establishment, later to become the famous Simpson Print Mills.

The grounds of the Abbottsford estate sloped, on one side, down to what is now the Norristown tracks of the Reading Railroad, and the lawns extended back to a wood toward Abbottsford road. At the point where Indian Queen Lane turns northwest (head of Scotts Lane), Abbottsford Lane once had its beginning. The first hundred yards or so was a private entrance to Nicklin's house and two others.

The wood behind it was the place of an encampment of Hessian troops under General Knyphausen at the time of Lord Howe's possession of Philadelphia, during Washington's sojourn at White-marsh.

On the eve of the Battle of Germantown, October 4, 1777, the Hessians marched from these woods to the encounter along the banks of the Wissahickon.

Lillian North writes the following reminiscences (1876): "Some of the Abbott family still remember" a black man, a worker on the estate, "who saw the Hessians leave camp and march on the longest and hardest route (due to ignorance of the countryside) to their battle positions along the Wissahickon." He set off on horseback to meet the American troops marching down Bethlehem Pike; catching them at Mount Airy, he informed them of the Hessians' route. "He lived to be a very old age," proud of his brave attempt to do the country a service.

Between the old house and the southeast corner of what is now the reservoir, was a small private burying ground during the Revolution. The place was enclosed by a fence, and one of the stones memorialized a Captain Sims, an English infantry officer. Also buried there were some Hessian soldiers who had died from yellow fever.

When changes were being made around the house — probably in the 1800's — an underground passage was discovered leading toward Scotts Lane. The tunnel was wide and high enough to crawl through. It was thought to be a secret way to escape in time of attack. We know there was another tunnel at



"Abbottsford" — The Estate formerly on the present grounds of the Medical College. Building and land in neglected condition, early 1900's.

Governor Mifflin's home, and supposedly at Provost Smith's home.

At the time of the tunnel discovery, musket balls, grape shot, and military buttons were also unearthed.

The house was largely altered sometime before 1869, according to Hagner's description. It was occupied by several well-known Philadelphia families: White, Moss, Bird, Wilson, and lastly Charles F. Abbott (whose name is also listed as the original builder of the old Hohenadel house on Indian Queen Lane).

Mr. Abbott was at one time a member of the Board of Education, and was very beneficial in connection with the Falls Baptist Church.

His wife must have been the daughter of Griffith Evans, for his son Samuel's death notice reads — "His grandfather, Griffith Evans, was onetime United States Minister to Spain."

At the time Charles F. Abbott was master, the house was a large white building; a square three-storied central block, with a fairly flat roof and shuttered windows. It was flanked on either side by two-storied wings with pitched roofs and a bay extending to the east. The front door was graced by a pillared portico supporting a small balcony on a second floor door. Its entrance was reached by a wide circular drive.

It also had a stable, granary, and other outbuildings. It must have had a big ice house as well, for there is mention that Mr. Abbott was generous in giving ice to those who had none.

Sometime later, the estate became part of the prominent Schuetzen Park. The directory of 1876 had this to say: "This enclosure is the property of the Philadelphia Rifle Association, a shooting club organized about 1855." It was originally near Mount Pleasant, and when that became part of Fairmount Park, it moved to Abbottsford, and was opened for use August 15, 1870.

"It has every convenience for shooting with galleries, pits, and targets. There are buildings for concerts, dancing, and other amusements. The place is a great resort of the German population."

When the Brooks High License law went into effect, the neighbors remonstrated against renewing the Park's license. The Rifle Club exerted its influence with Mayor Fidler's administration, and had the city take over the park as part of the site for the reservoir (which had originally been planned for the hill on the west side of the river). This blocked off the mansion, which in 1917 was described as "now a pitiful evidence of neglect."

There is an interesting listing of



damage claims against the city over land used for the reservoir. According to the Suburban Press, August 25, 1932, there were twenty-one claims in all. Here are the largest: Rifle Club — \$95,895.55; William Warden — \$82,876.15; Elizabeth Abbott — \$64,142.33; Estate of Dr. Horace Evans (Griffith Evans' grandson) — \$19,401.95. The rest were smaller; in all it amounted to \$342,130.25.

After that, the house stood alone, until the coming of the "Women's Medical College and Hospital." On Tuesday, June 11, 1929, at four o'clock, the ground was broken for the beginning of a new era.

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Griffith Evans occupied the house at Fox and Abbottsford, once known as the Williams Farm and used as headquarters of the British Cavalry during the Battle of Germantown.

This house, the second on the private Abbottsford Lane, was also once occupied by Blair McClenachan of Revolutionary War fame, also a partner of Robert Morris. "Blair McClenachan had made a fortune in privateering. He was a high-tempered Irishman and helped Robert Morris finance the Revolution. Truly Irish, he sympathized with the French Revolution, and was a strong Jeffersonian. He sat in the Pennsylvania Legislature from 1790 to 1795, and in Congress from 1797 to 1799."

"Summit Place" was the third house that used the private lane long ago; it belonged to Rev. John M. Richards. He was an evangelical preacher who was a great organizer of churches. He preached in the Old Academy, and also baptized many converts in the Schuylkill at the mouth of Mifflin Run.

In his early manhood, he had married Sara Evans, Griffith's daughter. They had three children born to them in the Richards' mansion, Summit Place.

Cafe de la Riviera stood between Ridge Avenue and East River Drive at the foot of Stanton Street. The oldest part of the building is believed to have been built in 1845 and was known in the early days as "Bobby Evans' Fountain Park Hotel."

It was at the Falls Tavern that Evans introduced the famous catfish, waffles, and coffee suppers which became very popular. In 1847 he moved to the Fountain Park Hotel, "which he had fitted up after renting the place from James Spencer who had bought the property from William Griffith." Still later it was familiar as "Tissot's," and after its acquirement by the Betz estate the structure was used as a saloon, dining room, and dancing pavilion by various owners, among these being William Kerbaugh, and, previous to 1933, Hardwich and Oplinger.

But the greatest fame the old hotel achieved was under Evans and Tissot. In December, 1861, Louis Tissot gave a public hog-killing. "Three large hogs which Tissot had fed principally on corn



Cafe La Riviera — 1918, facing East River Drive.

meal weighed more than half a ton. At night he gave a dinner for those who had helped at the killing. You should have seen how fast the waffles, catfish, fried chicken, and roast veal disappeared."

Tissot was a good host, and he always poured out the whiskey himself to prevent any of the men getting drunk.

The Cafe was the scene of many boxing and wrestling matches by some of the most famous fighters of those days.

Near Scott's Lane was the location of the Dobson mill. Before Dobson came into possession some interesting things happened there.

John Redinger, a miller, bought land on the lane in the early 18th century and built a home just below the Reading Railroad tracks. In 1934, it still stood, with a datestone in its peak which read "J.R. 1814." He milled flour there and also built some small houses for his workers.

Hugh Scott, an Irishman, came to the Village later in the same century and bought most of Redinger's holdings. Scott enlarged the mill dam. Long after water power was abandoned, the dam remained. On January 25, 1839, after a terrible storm, the dam burst. Winpenny's little mill at Ridge and Crawford was flooded and holes had to be chopped in the floors to rescue people trapped in the lower floors. A stable and wagon shed belonging to John Burk, a contractor, was swept into the Schuylkill along with all his horses and wagons. What little is left of the run can still be seen as it empties into the river from a sewer pipe at the foot of Ferry Road.

Scott was an ardent supporter of Henry Clay and was so sure Clay would be elected President of the United States that he bet part of what was known as Scott's Lot against a large sum of money with General Cadwalader. "Scott lost, and is said to have stood the loss with true sportmanship."

The Dobson brothers, John and James,

came to America from England about 1854. They worked in Mill Creek, Pa., and James the younger, after saving \$125, felt he had enough capital to strike out on his own — he and his brother went to Manayunk and shortly thereafter came to the Falls.

The two brothers married two sisters, the daughters of the man they had worked for. John married Sara Schofield and Jim married Mary Ann. (James and his wife lived in the old Robeson house, and John at his mill.)

In 1855, John Dobson made his appearance in the Falls. John, in a partnership with James Lee of Manayunk, obtained possession of the Newman mill on Scott's Lane and began the manufacture of yarn. The following year the mill was destroyed by fire; there was no insurance.

After the fire, Dobson offered Lee to either give or take \$6,000 and make one of them the sole owner. Lee decided to retire. Dobson rebuilt the mill, fitted part of it up as a residence and lived there until 1865 when he built his home on Allegheny Avenue.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Dobson secured a subcontract to furnish the Union Army with blankets, and his were the first to reach the army in the field. Afterward, he obtained original contracts and began enlarging the plant to which he kept adding until his death. He purchased the Scott and Cadwalader properties and his real estate holding became quite large.

It's hard for anyone who grew up in the old part of the Falls to view the Dobson mills dispassionately. Even though they had ceased to be the life-blood of the community before the Great Depression of the 1930's, the fact that "the mills were closed" seemed to hang over stories that were told to us as children.

Not all the stories were pleasant; children in the mill at thirteen, hours from 6 A.M. to 5 P.M., for three dollars a week.





It wasn't all sadness either. There are stories of the girls in the spinning room, walking to work arm-in-arm through the snow singing in harmony, and teenagers tying the wooden spools to their shoes and skating around the aisles before the "boss" caught them.

But the Dobson mills, before easy transportation, had a monopoly on employment, and that power was used. If one member of a family offended, sometimes all the working members of that family were laid off.

The mill stone buildings still stand and are mostly occupied. There is an eerie grace to their great stone walls and slightly curved windows. Somehow tramping through their courtyards, you forget the dirt and clutter and they seem like medieval walled cities.

About 1868, John Dobson decided to build a fine home. He chose the property between Scotts Lane and the Summer Road (Clearfield St.); it had belonged to Frederick Stoever. At the corner, in 1856, Thomas Delahunty had started a small scale marble business.

"Back from Ridge Avenue was a spring house in which Benjamin Johnson and his wife Nancy made their home until their frame dwelling up in the woods was completed. Back of the Stoever field was the Scott farm, owned by Squire Robert Knox Scott, the only survivor of Hugh Scott. It was occupied by Billy Simons, truck farmer."

It was on the brow of the hill where Billy Simons raised choice strawberries that the house was built. Today on Allegheny Avenue, on the north side, a little east of the Ridge, the gate house still stands, occupied as a home.

James Dobson built his home in 1875 and called it Bella Vista. It was in the middle of what is now the Abbottsford Housing Project. I remember the evening Mrs. Bessie Dobson Altemus said, "Goodbye." My father was president of the East Falls Businessmen's Association and he took me with him. Mrs. Altemus made a speech referring to the fact that the house was to be torn down and she would be leaving the neighborhood. She seemed sad. She was a



The main parlor of "Bella Vista," the James Dobson Estate at Abbottsford and Henry Aves. (Courier)

tall, graceful woman with a high top-knot of white hair. I remember she said some of the gray cut stones from the old house would go into a kind of community building on the grounds.

Bella Vista was an imposing stone mansion that became a landmark and was known as "The Manor." It overlooked the old mills and the village. It was surrounded by woods and fields which gradually disappeared with the grading of new streets. It was said to be furnished with many prize pieces of furniture from the Centennial Exposition.

Mary Elizabeth Altemus (Jim Dobson's granddaughter) married John Hay Whitney (of the Whitney fortune and racing fame) on September 2, 1930, at St. James the Less. "Liz" was a magnificently beautiful girl. All the little girls from the local Protestant churches were invited to dress up in white dresses and come to the wed-

ding to throw rose petals at the happy couple.

In June, 1885, the Dobson mills installed two 450-horsepower engines in their carpet mill. The engines from the C.H. Brown Company of Fitchburg received a gold medal for their work at the New Orleans Exhibition. "Hopefully this will insure against any future breakdowns in the carpet mill."

Pinehurst, now the property of Penn Charter, formerly belonged to the Misses Waln. These ladies were animal lovers and maintained an animal refuge for the injured and stray; they had a cemetery on their property.

"White Corners," at Henry Avenue and School House Lane, southeast side, is the old home of Daniel H. Carstairs. It was built in 1914 — 134 years after its yellow and white painted neighbor. "White Corners" is Greek revival architecture.

On the opposite corner, a charming property contains "as a playhouse" a building that was the exhibit of the *Camden Courier* at the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition.

Adjoining this was the Merrick property and land once owned by Philip Guckes who had a large brewery in what is now the center of lower Warden Drive. After the brewery fell into disrepair, the springs turned it into a fine swimming hole for adventurous boys.

Farther west is Ravenhill, formerly the home of William Weightman, now the Academy of the Assumption. William Weightman was the senior partner of the Chemical Co. that for many years occupied "Laboratory Hill." It was in 1847 that Powers, Weightman and Harrison purchased property from James Spencer



Ghostlike ruins of the Old Dobson Mills on Scott's Lane. (Phila. Record)

(for whom James and Spencer Streets were named) and George Shronk, along Ridge Road where the Falls of Schuylkill Housing Project is now. They "erected a plant in the hollow." On the hill behind, they built a number of dwellings for their workmen and their families. There was also a schoolhouse for the children, the second story of which was equipped for a reading room and library.

In 1849, the lower works (west of Ridge Avenue) were built on property secured from Mrs. John Miller, who traded the site for one which was afterward occupied by Turf Villa and is now part of Fairmount Park. The firm at one time had a wharf on the Schuylkill.

The works on west Ridge Avenue were erected for an alcohol distillery, and property owners nearby had many claims and law suits because of the obnoxious gasses. Most of the claims were settled by the company's buying the properties. Thousands of dollars were spent trying to remedy the situation; eventually changes in refining methods and variance in products settled the matter. The company eventually became part of Merck Chemical Company.

William Weightman built his huge fortune himself. He had come from England as a young boy and got his first job in a chemical plant. Just before the Civil War, the firm of Powers & Weightman had begun to enlarge. They purchased much ground along the Ridge from the Shronk and Roberts families.

It is said that the high price of quinine during the Civil War sent the firm's fortunes soaring. That and the wisdom of Weightman's investing his money in real estate made him very wealthy.

His daughter Ann Marie was born in Philadelphia in 1844 in the old Weightman homestead. In 1862, at age 18, she married Robert Walker, a young lawyer recently graduated from Harvard. The couple, in 1878, moved to Williamsport to take care of the Weightman's interest there. Walker was elected to Congress and they had one son who died while in college. In 1895, Walker was taken into the firm; when he died in 1903, Ann Marie inherited his interests. She became her father's partner and amassed a personal fortune of \$5,000,000. In 1908, she married Frederick Penfield, ex-consul general and diplomatic agent of the United States for Cairo, Egypt.

She became a convert to the Catholic faith, and their marriage was performed in St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, by Archbishop Farly; The Pope cabled his blessings. As Mrs. Penfield, she supported numerous charities throughout the world; the Pope appointed her Papal Marchioness. After touring the world, the Penfields made their home at what is now Ravenhill Academy. When she died in March, 1932, she left an estimated fortune of \$60,000,000 and was generally considered the wealthiest woman in the United States.

In conjunction with some of the history

of School Lane is the following: May 14, 1916 — "The largest sale of land in Philadelphia in recent years was consummated last Thursday when twenty-three tracts in Falls of Schuylkill were conveyed to the School Lane Land Company by Sara W. Warden for \$446,650. The land extends from Sunnyside Avenue to Coulter Street and along Midvale to Wissahickon Avenue. It adjoins property already owned by the company which they recently developed with a large building operation. The land acquired will be improved with dwellings."

When the Falls of Schuylkill branch of the Free Library opened at Midvale Avenue and Warden Drive on November 18, 1913, there was a great celebration. "It was one of the most delightful affairs the community ever witnessed. The building tastefully decorated and illuminated was thrown open for the inspection of the invited guests at 7:30, and was thronged continually throughout the entire evening. The spacious library room was banked with flowers, forming a pleasing background for the many beautiful gowns worn by the women who were present."

The firm of Rankin, Kellogg & Crane, one of the leading firms of architects in the United States, were the designers of the building. Mr. Crane was present at the party and gave an interesting description of the structure. He described it as being the "English collegiate type" which happily harmonizes with its surroundings in this locality.

J.W. Flanagan, president of the Falls Businessmen's Association told of the formation of the first free library in the Falls, at a meeting held in June, 1901, at the Old Academy.

He gave credit to the promoters of the project, Charles L. Dykes and John Hohenadel. He also paid tribute to Messrs. Warden and Merrick, and to "that great philanthropist and benefactor, Andrew

Carnegie." It was at Carnegie's bequest that the Falls library came into being; it was the fourteenth of the thirty he donated to the City of Philadelphia.

The staff of the new Library was Miss Ellen Schurch, librarian, Miss Ella M. Boyd, first assistant, and Miss Therese H. Wheeler, assistant. The first person to check out a book was Miss E. Sudell of Ainslie Street.

Before Mifflin School was built at Midvale and Conrad Street, the Samuel Breck red brick building was the local public grammar school. This was preceded by "the Old Yellow School" (Forest School) erected in 1851. When it was first opened on the old Carson Estate along Crawford Street, the pupils marched down Indian Queen Lane from the Old Academy where they had previously attended classes. Rev. Robert Mackie was principal and Mrs. Jane Palmer and Miss Annie Conway were teachers.

Other old schools included one on Laboratory Hill, erected by the Chemical firm of Powers, Weightman, and Harrison for the children of their workers about 1840; a school on the west side of the river in Cookssockey, taught by Miss Mary Hagner, the last of that well-known mill family; and the school of Joseph Neef and Prof. Nicholas Maquire on Indian Queen Lane at the old Smith Octagon House.

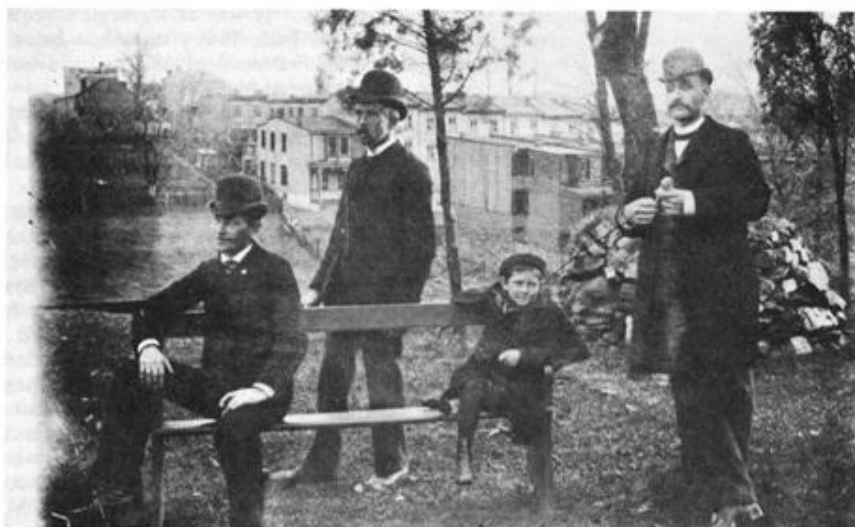
New schools in the confines of the original Falls include Thomas Mifflin School (to which the children and their principal, Dr. Israel Galter, trooped from the old Breck School), Penn Charter, Ravenhill Academy, East Falls School, Women's Medical College (now the Medical College of Pennsylvania).

The University of Pennsylvania established an upriver boat club, but the property was sold and became the Anchorage, later the Jamaican Inn; it recently was destroyed by fire, and a new structure has been built.



Ravenhill residence of Mrs. E. Courtland Penfield, daughter of Wm. Weightman, on the site of the former residence of Mr. Weightman. From the C.K. Mills Collection.





View from the Garrett Estate at Vaux and Ainslie Streets

Laurel Hill Cemetery was chartered in 1835. The North portion, which lies on the Falls side of Nicetown Lane, was originally the country estate of Joseph Sim, a wealthy merchant from center city. The Central section, also on the north side of Nicetown Lane, was the home of George Worten Pepper.

Inside the iron entrance gate is a sculptured group by Mr. Thom, a well-known Scottish sculptor. It depicts Sir Walter Scott telling his tale of "Old Mortality."

"Dutch Hollow" near Midvale Avenue (Arnold and Creswell Streets) was developed in 1855 by a German stone mason, Henry J. Becker. He erected the rows of dwellings in the "Hollow" as well as a large brewery which afterwards became the property of Jacob Hohenadel. The ruins of this brewery can be seen at the end of Arnold Street.

The present location of the city employment office (Ridge and Indian Queen Lane) was built before 1868 and was known as the Beary Building.

1913—"The new Post Office being built on Midvale Avenue is nearing completion. Contractor P.H. Kelly has struck a snag in the digging of the foundations, encountering three springs. Kelly purchased twenty feet of property between the Post Office and the church property where he plans to build a house."

Ainslie Street (about 1876) — Lillian North, *Public Ledger*: "Some recent building operations near Fairview Avenue (now Ainslie Street) and Thirty-fifth Street (now Conrad) have led to the discovery of a number of rifle pits and a few mementoes of that period during the Revolution when the fighting came closest to the heart of the city." The existing two-family stone houses in the 3500 block were erected at the time of the Centennial and were publicized as "houses of the future."

1913—"A store and dwelling costing

\$3,775 is being built for Mary E. Potter by Gottlieb Steinle at the southeast corner of Ridge Avenue and Queen Lane. The structure will be of stone and measure 17 x 50 feet."

1916—"At the time of the Civil War, the *Public Ledger* was the principal Philadelphia newspaper and had but four pages. Mr. James Mills had a store on Ridge Avenue opposite Calumet Street. He kept a horse stabled in the rear end of the cellar of the ten-pin alley next to the store and drove in a wagon every morning to Third and Chestnut Streets for the daily supply of papers."

1916—"Young Women's Christian Association headquarters at Ridge Avenue and Ferry Road is one of the finest and best kept properties along the Avenue."

\*From the *Forecast* May 4, 1916: "Ground was broken on Saturday a week ago for the building of forty-one houses to be erected on the south side of Queen Lane, Bowman Street, Vaux Street, and the north side of Queen Lane. The houses will be of the type usually found in the exclusive sections of Philadelphia with the most modern improvements, such as parquetry floors, hot water heat, sunken bathtubs with tile floors, etc., etc."

"The houses will have an artistic porch, large well-lighted rooms, in fact, everything usually found in a house selling for seven or eight thousand dollars, while the price placed on these houses will be within the reach of every family in this town desirous of living in comfort to which they are entitled." The builder was Thomas J. Gavaghan of Ainslie Street, and the architect was Joseph P. Tyrrell of Krail Street.

1928—"A building now under construction at 3520 Indian Queen Lane has been sold by John H. Smith to the American Engineering Company, subject to a mortgage of \$60,000. It occupies a lot comprising more than an acre and has a frontage on the Norristown branch of the Reading Railroad."

From an old description: "Stehle's Hotel, at the beginning of the present century, was one of the meccas of horse-lovers in or near Philadelphia, and with the opening of the speedway in West Fairmount Park, the hotel was renamed the Speedway Hotel, and in the sheds, just off the East River Drive, could be seen some of the most famous horses of the period. Their owners would meet at 'the Speedway' to arrange races, or chatting over the merits of their fast-stepping equines."



Breck School, Class of 1914 (Old Forest School Building)

While merchants were hauling their goods along Ridge Road into Philadelphia, travelers were also using Bensell's Lane (School House Lane). Long ago, it was part of the old Indian trail from Tacony to the Schuylkill and beyond. As far as can be learned, it was the second public road opened in the original Roxborough Township; the first being Ridge Road. The lane led from "Market House in Germantown to Robert's Ferry and Robeson's mill by William Palmer's." The same Palmer who owned the tavern on Ridge Road, which indicated he owned land "in the upper end of Northern Liberties" to the Wissahickon Creek.

Robert's Ferry was located on the Schuylkill River just above the Falls village. The petition for opening Bensell's Lane was filed in March, 1732. In early days it was much used by the people of Germantown to reach the river-ferry and cross over into Merion Meeting and other inland districts.

The name was derived from Dr. George Bensell who lived on the lane at its junction with Germantown Road. It became School House Lane after the establishing of Germantown Academy in 1760.

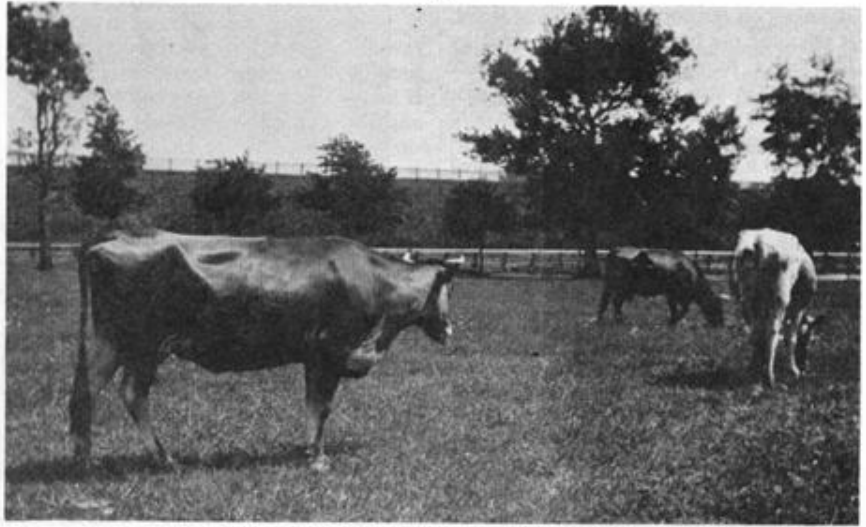
At the time of the Battle of Germantown, School Lane from Wayne Avenue to about Henry Avenue was the camping ground for a division of Hessian and British forces. John Fanning Watson tells: "A large body of Hessians were huted in Ashmead's fields out the School Lane, near the woods; their huts were constructed of the rails from fences, set up at a 45° angle, resting on a cross beam center; over these were laid straw and grass sod. They were close and warm.

"Those for the officers had wicker doors with a 'glass-light' and were interwoven with plaited straw; they also had chimneys made of grass sod." They were planning to spend the winter, but the battle destroyed their plans.

The first house was built on School House Lane in 1779. "Netherfields" was the oldest house west of Wissahickon Avenue. "Its style was southern, of colored roughcast stone, painted Colonial buff and the trim white. It had a semi-circular porch in front and was surrounded by rare trees, arbors and an old-fashioned flower garden."

When the house was occupied by Jeremiah Brown, many years ago, employees were clearing a stream near what is now Midvale Avenue (probably in what is now the north section of McMichael Park), when "thick clumps of laurel bushes were uncovered and numerous Indian implements used for cooking, hunting, and war purposes were found, which indicated that it was the site of an ancient Indian Village." The stream still runs under Midvale Avenue.

The house next to Netherfields going west was built in 1781, and called "Roxborough." It also was owned by the Brown's, although it is said to have been



*Fannings Field — between Henry Ave. and Vaux St., and Ainslie St. and Indian Queen La. Reservoir in the Background.*

built by a Richard Morris, and later owned by Dr. Casper Wister (an amateur botanist who brought from China the vine that is now named for him.) It is a quaint frame building with a low roof and peculiar dormer windows. The house is painted yellow with white trim.

At the end of the War for Independence, the Falls was a green and leafy place. The stone mills with their big water-wheels beside the rushing creeks were the livelihood of the village. The "Ridge" with its taverns was a dirt road used for hauling lumber and flour from the "Wissahickon Mills" into Philadelphia. People came up the river to fish at the clubs and along the river banks. Bensell's Lane was a country trail leading to a rope river-ferry, and the Indian Queen Lane was another dirt road from the center of the village to Germantown Meeting. It was also the entrance to the few estates and farms in the vicinity.

On the Old Falls Run, a great gushing stream, was a stone-cutting mill belonging to a Mr. Traquair. This mill had a 36-foot diameter water-wheel. It was equipped with a number of saws for cutting marble. They were similar to the old "buck" saw and swung back and forth across the stone that was being cut. Farther up were the remains of an "ancient powder-mill."

When the rushing water of the Falls Creek reached the bottom, it meandered along the east side of Ridge Road, where it went into a culvert and crossed under, south of the Falls Tavern. "Between the stream and the road was a row of willow trees."

A stone dam had been built where the water surfaced on the west side of the Ridge at Ferry Road. This created a bay of water, and a mill had been built there, the entrance of which was reached by crossing over a stone arched bridge.

Charles Hagner writes, "it was and had been for many years a paper mill, one of the oldest in the country." It may have belonged to Christopher Sower, the famous Germantown printer who published the first Bibles in America. Sower was accused of being a Tory and his property was confiscated and later would have been available for sale.

The records show that "Sometime prior to 1773 Joseph Potts who owned land in the vicinity (Ridge and Ferry Rds.), joined with Isaac Parrish and Benedict Dorsey in the erection of a stone dam breast and a paper mill. The paper mill was on the west side of Ridge Road and was sold January 1, 1773, to Morris Truman and Joseph Cruickshanks, who on April 30, 1784, deeded the property to Joseph Few."

Seven years later, Philip Hagner purchased the mill, referred to by the Chadwick papers as "a snuff factory." As a result of confiscation, the mill came to Hagner from John Taylor and his wife Ann.

The Hagner's were then living in a "mansion" on a small hill north of the Falls Creek and east of Ridge Road. It survived for many years as the office of the Dobson Mills. The mansion was a long two-story stone house, a colonial farm house with a steep peaked roof and dormer windows on the second floor. It faced toward the river and was fronted by a long one-story wide wooden porch. It stood there until very recently.

During Hagner's ownership, the mill on Falls Creek was used for grinding flax, mustard, and chocolate, which was sold under the name of P. Hagner, Philadelphia, and became very well known. In 1812, the mill began to grind drugs. This established Charles Hagner, who then owned the mill, as the first to machine-grind drugs; until that time, all drugs had been ground by mortar and pestle.



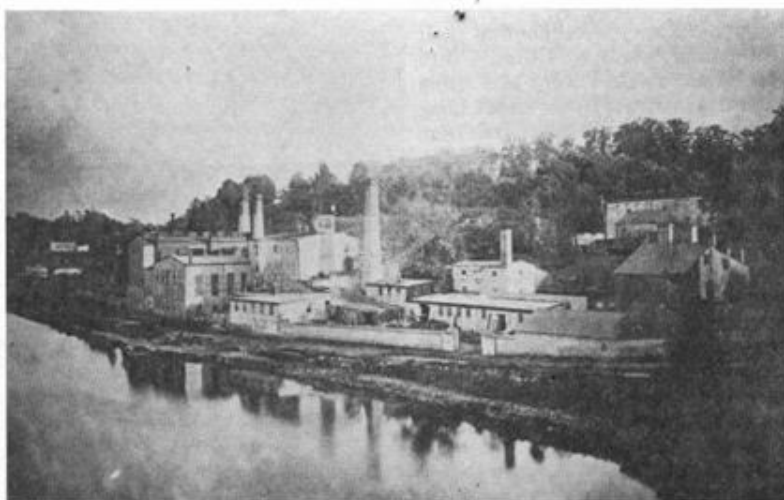
In 1934, part of the drug mill was still standing; on the north side of Ferry Road, it adjoined the building formerly used by the Y.W.C.A. A long time after Hagner had sold the mill, Dr. Rose kept a drugstore in the upper floors. Then Winibald Nagele took it over and turned the basement into a slaughterhouse and established a large and profitable business. In 1890, he erected stores in the front of the old mill building, and these were still standing in 1936. Nagele's wife, Elizabeth Naher, was the daughter of Louis Naher, who opened the first lager beer saloon in the Falls.

When Charles Hagner began to work in his father's mill, the glass-house Robert Morris and Mr. Nicholson had built on the west side of the river, had already been altered into a calico printing establishment. John Thoburn had made the changes, and then sold it to William Simpson and it became the famous "Washington Print Works."

"Simpson's" was the employer of many of the Falls' townspeople. At one time, it was a very profitable industry, and became one of the largest silk handkerchief manufacturers in the country.

"The block printers were chiefly Scotchmen and others from the British Isles. The silk was imported from China. The handkerchiefs were printed on heavy tables, padded with a thick blanket and muslin cloth. Beside each table was a color tub in the form of a quartered hogshead. In the tub on a mass of old colors called 'swimmins' was suspended a case in which a stretch of thin felt or flannel was laid. On this a boy known as a 'te cress' would with a flat brush, spread the color. The printer would dip his block, on the face of which was the pattern, on the flannel, and then with a leaded maul pound it upon the silk.

"The handkerchiefs were generally of two colors, red and black, but in some instances contained as many as nine colors. As the handkerchiefs would be



*Simpson's Mills, West Falls opposite Midvale Ave.*

printed on silk measuring thirty or more yards in length, they would be drawn up on the drying rollers above the tables. After passing through various chemical processes and drying, the silk would be cut into several handkerchief-lengths and shipped.

"The blocks were made of maple and the pattern was engraved in the face or made by driving shapes of brass or copper into the hard wood. It used to be the ambition of boys in the neighborhood to become a block printer, at which they were compelled to spend seven years apprenticeship. The bandanna handkerchief printed in a solid color — a deep crimson, orange, or chocolate — was made chiefly to be sold to Quakers."

One of the reasons given for the passing of the silk handkerchief was the decline in the snuff-taking habit. After the Civil War, the handkerchief part of the plant was sold to a man named Crabtree and removed to Staten Island, New York.

Between Chamounix Mansion and Neill Drive was the home of William Simpson, owner of the Washington Print Works. The only remains of his holdings are the Chamounix Lakes, which were originally the mill dams. Maple trees still standing on the north side of the lakes were planted by "Mother Simpson;" they are some of the finest specimens anywhere in Fairmount Park.



*The Old Academy*

In 1819, the Old Academy, the first community center in Philadelphia, was built "by popular subscription and personal work by the citizens of the Falls." William Moore Smith, son of the Rev. William Smith, first provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and his wife Ann, donated the ground on Indian Queen Lane for this purpose in 1816; it was to be used for a place of education and worship.

The original building, which still stands on Indian Queen Lane a short distance west of the railroad, is of white plaster, having a basement, first floor, second floor, and attic. Because it was to be used as a church, school, and meeting hall, it also had a belfry. It stands about forty feet wide and seventy feet deep, and gives the appearance of a one-room schoolhouse. There is an old description which reads: "It was the school on weekdays and church on Sunday. Public exhibitions, concerts, etc., were also given; Indians, mock and real, came there."

A report from the Forecast of July 27, 1916, should give present neighbors a laugh: "It is needless to point out that



*The Hagner Mansion, once occupied by Philip Hagner and his family. Now (1910) the office building of Dobson's Mill. It was situated a little east of the Falls Creek and Ridge Rd. The creek has since disappeared within the plant. From the C.K. Mills Collection.*

some of the pastimes which have been indulged in around the building will not be tolerated anymore. If young men and boys are wise they will recognize the fact." Some things never change.

When the Moment Musical Club became the Old Academy Players and moved into the building in 1932, reconstruction began to turn it into a theatre. Through the generosity of John B. Kelly, John Hohenadle, and others, the stage was raised and a lobby and a backstage were added. The building today is made up of three separate parts. The back building made of brick contains the make-up and dressing rooms upstairs, and can also be used as a stage for cabarets, with tables and chairs arranged in the separate clubroom. The downstairs of this part of the building contains the back stage and is used for storing props for the show in progress.

In the original structure, the upstairs is used for meetings and to serve refreshments during intermissions.

In the theatre itself, the room was constructed to accommodate an audience of 133 with an excellent view of the stage from every seat. The interior is very charming, and air conditioning adds to the comfortable surroundings.

When the Fairmount Dam was erected in 1822, it put an end to the water-power, fisheries, and mills at the Falls; from a "thriving, bustling little place, it became a comparatively deserted village for some years." With the arrival of steam it again regained some of its former vitality but it lost some of its beauty.

Steam power brought about the growth of the railroads, and the railroad made many fortunes. John Tucker was a man who acquired one of them. He was the first president of the Reading Railway, and "up back of the Reservoir" he erected, in 1835, a palatial mansion known as "Old Oaks." The house was constructed by Christian Swartz, the railroad's master mason. (Swartz later utilized a new method of stone construction in building the Reading's stone bridge at the Falls.)

The house "was a huge brown stone pile." We have no actual description of it, but behind it were large stables, coach houses and other buildings of hewn brownstone. There was a large octagon-shaped summer house of ornamental iron, erected over a deep ice-preserving house. These structures were all surrounded by towering oak trees, from which the place derived its name. West of the great house and down in the hollow were many grape arbors and a green-house. The latter had an arched roof "glazed with bent French glass of the finest quality." On the ends and along the sides were pictures of fruit and vegetables in rich coloring.

"When occupied by the Tucker family, the house was the scene of many brilliant social functions." It was entered by a driveway from Nicetown Lane.

In 1870, the property was sold and made into Old Oaks Cemetery. It turned out,

however, that the ground was full of springs and as soon as a grave was dug, it would fill with water. The cemetery was moved elsewhere. Opening railroad lines ironically disfigured the property and it became an ashdump, which killed the surviving oaks. Later it became the industrial site of the old Atwater-Kent Manufacturing Company. At present it is used by the federal government.

The opening of the Women's Medical College at Abbottsford Road and Henry Avenue in September, 1930, was the culmination of hard work and a dream. Beginning at 627 Arch Street, Philadelphia, in 1853, the first class graduated eight women. The school then was a dark little house with six professors and forty students.

The new building cost \$1,000,000 and is still a handsome brick structure, with tall pillars in the front and a graceful drive

similar to the Abbottsford estate. The college did not just happen here. Numerous town meetings and pleas to the city government and others, including the Medical School directors, preceeded the actual building.

A description was published as follows: "The new building is designed to use sunlight as much as possible as a curative measure, according to Henry H. King, technical architect. In addition to a solarium in the children's ward, there will be sun parlors available to all patients. The building will face north so that every room will have sunlight at some time of day.

"The children's ward will be known as 'The Lovers of Children' in honor of an organization of which Kate Douglas Wiggin (author of Peter Rabbit Stories) is chairman. This organization underwrote the structural cost of the children's ward."

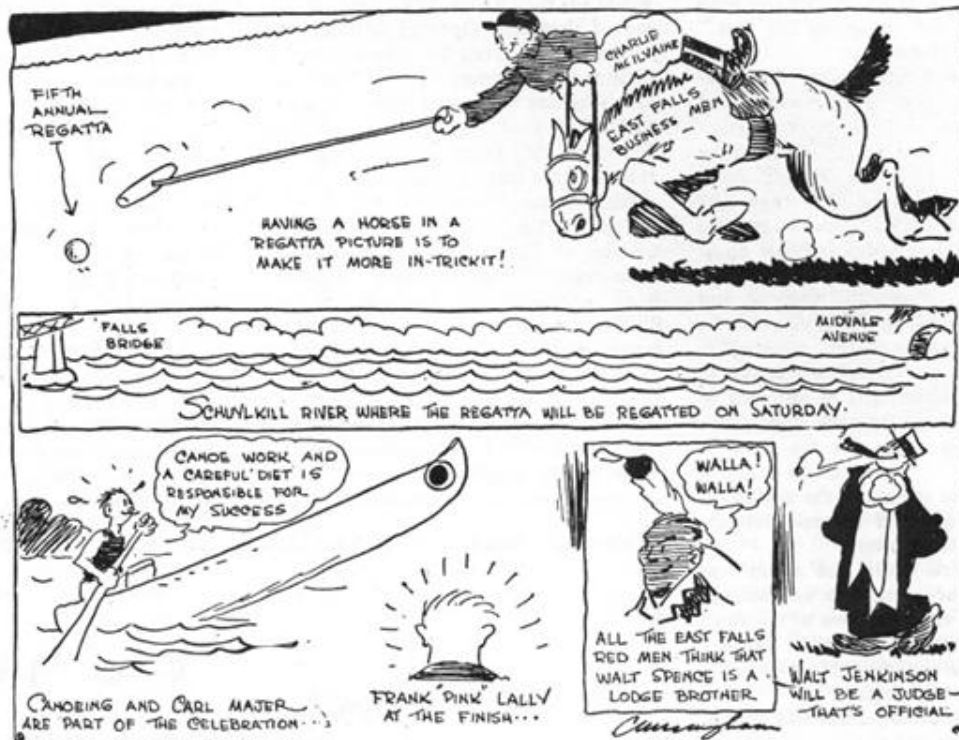
There were many fundraising activities

Phone <b>JAMES PARKS</b> 4114 Ridge Avenue <i>Fruit and Produce</i> East Falls	<b>GEO. MAGILL</b> Haberdashery and Dry Goods Shop Ridge and Midvale Avenues Next to Manayunk National Bank
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Philadelphia Record, June 19, 1929

in the community. Some of the greatest support came from the East Falls Business Men's Association. They donated the proceeds of their highly successful "Schuylkill Regattas" to the hospital fund and underwrote the cost of supporting a bed.

On the day of the groundbreaking, there was a grand parade. Many prominent people of the city attended. The East Falls Businessmen, marshalled by William B. McFarland and P.J. Kelley and led by the Roxborough band, accompanied the parochial and public school children as they marched all through the town.

Among the many honored guests were Dr. Charles K. Mills, local historian, and Mrs. John Hohenadel, who headed the committee of Falls women who aided in the campaign for the new building. The principal speaker was Mayor Harry A. Mackey who spoke on "Love."

The history of Colonial and Federal times in Falls of Schuylkill are possible to research, but when we get to more modern times, the twenties and thirties, it is more difficult because as the village became a part of the city, events became interwoven. One thing, however, stands out clearly — the leadership of the East Falls Business Men's Association, during those years. They were local men who cared what happened here. They fought bureaucracy and indifference time after time. They fought for a new grammar school, a playground, a

new swimming pool, a boy's club, street paving, lights, and pleaded for a hospital.

Night after night, they went to meetings begging for improvements of the Falls. We were small and if improvements were being made, Roxborough or Germantown came first. For years they hounded the Board of Education for what eventually became Mifflin School.

In a copy of the old *Forecast* for August of 1913, John W. Flanagan is listed as President, and there is a line in the article which reads: "Don't be too modest or backward or lack the ginger to make your requests known, for if you do, it's a sure bet they will never be attended to in your time, at least. Let us know what you want and, if possible, we will do the rest." They were working on having Arnold and Cresswell Streets paved, and later Fisk Avenue, and having one-way traffic on the Calumet Street bridge.

There must have been a decline and a reorganization after that time, because a new Constitution and By-laws was dated February 4, 1925, and the organization chartered in April of 1928. Its motto was "For a Bigger, Better, Busier Community." The purpose for which it was formed was "the protection and encouragement of trade and commerce among the merchants, artisans and professional men of East Falls; the fostering of a spirit of friendship among the same and the residents of East Falls, and

the promotion and encouragement of civic and social affairs."

It states it will be non-political and non-sectarian and will not "lend its influence to further controversies between any political or religious groups."

They had a great esprit-de-corps, a true comradeship, despite some animosities. They had good times too; their annual East Falls Regatta was one of the highlights of the whole year. There were programs, prizes, selling of "ads," hunting, river floats, a parade, and their "skimmer" straw hats banded in red, white and blue.

When the depression came they tried to help each other. I can remember "Henny" Frisching and William McFarland laying tile in a window of a store on Midvale Avenue. It was an exhibit for the local N.R.A. office, an effort to encourage local people to apply for home improvement loans, and stimulate business of local merchants and contractors.

"It is all right to be historic and to have something in the past to glory in. Those who helped to make the history of the place nobly did their part, and they have given the present generation a goodly heritage. What the 'Falls' needs in addition to a reverent respect for the past is a living present, men and women who will work for the betterment of the place and the good of its young people so that they may have something to be proud of." — December 19, 1917

# FALLS BAPTIST CHURCH

By Florence Childs

The first evidence of religious activity in the Falls of Schuylkill was about 1810, when a number of families living on both sides of the Schuylkill met intermittently at different private homes, and sometimes listened to itinerant preachers from Philadelphia and New Jersey. This system eventually developed into the Falls of Schuylkill Baptist Church, which was formally constituted on Thursday, June 7, 1838, with ten members.

There was no other Baptist church from Philadelphia to Roxborough, and from Blockley to Chestnut Hill. For the first 13 years, the group met in the Old Academy on Indian Queen Lane, or what was known at that time as Bowman's Lane.

A slow growth was experienced for the first 3 or 4 years. In 1842, 21 converts

were added by baptism, making a total membership of 51. In 1848, however, the 51 members had dwindled to 27 members due to removals, deaths, etc. Membership increased from 1838 to 1888 to a total of 682: Baptism — 519, Letter — 142, Experience — 7, Restoration — 14.

Before the church was built, a number of baptisms took place in the Schuylkill River, and the last such baptism was probably Mrs. Christine Wholly. The baptisms took place at the south of Mifflin Run, now Midvale Ave.

At the corner of Ferry Rd. was a frame building that once belonged to Watkin's ferry. In that dwelling, the converts would put on dry clothing after being baptized.

The foundation of the church building

was laid in July of 1851. The cornerstone was laid at the southwest corner just below the floor joints with public ceremonies on the afternoon of September 11, 1851. The lecture room was completed and opened for public service and Sunday School on March 21, 1852, at three services — morning, afternoon, and evening. Rev. A.D. Gillette, D.C., officiated. At the morning service, Rev. Dr. Dowling preached; at the afternoon service, Rev. William M. Collom preached; and at the evening service, Rev. William Shadrack, D.C., preached.

The main audience room was opened, and the entire completed house was formally dedicated for worship on Sunday, December 5, 1852.

The church rests on a bed of solid rock 4 feet thick.

The net cost of the completed structure was about \$15,000. No expense was incurred for outside supervision during the erection of the building, which was completed without any debt or claim resting on the property.

In 1869, general repairs of church property were undertaken at a cost of \$2,400, including renovation of the entire building, and the furnishing of a new organ. In 1875, the lecture room was enlarged, and an additional building built in the rear at an expense of about \$1,200. In 1881, a debt that had been fixed upon the property, and also a floating indebtedness, altogether amounting to \$5,500, was liquidated.

The itinerant pastors who preached previous to 1838, while in the Old Academy were: H.C. Jones, D.C.; Robert Compton, Lansing Burrows, Thomas Winters, D.C.; Charles Tucker, William J. Gleddil.

The missionary pastors were: Robert Compton, 1838; S.J. Cresswell, 1840; J.S. Eisenbrey, 1844; W.M. Collum, 1848; Joseph Sharp, 1850; John M. Richards; and Emerson Andrews.

The pastors following the missionaries were: Rev. Mark R. Watkinson, commencing April, 1853; N.J. Clark, October, 1856; C.S. Steinman, February, 1859; W.R. McNeil, September, 1860; John F. Chesshire, February, 1863; I.F. Stidham, D.C., March, 1868; Alfred Free, January, 1873; H.W. Jones, April, 1880; T.A.T. Hanna, D.C., March, 1887; Oliver B. Kinney, September, 1893; and Dr. I.F. Stidham (second pastorate), December, 1897.



Falls of Schuylkill Baptist Church — original building.



Also, C.I. Seasholes, D.C.; B.F. Bray, Edwin Saylor, William J. Hayes, 1924 — 1946; Robert Kevorkian, 1947; Donald Gough, 1950; Samuel Appel, 1954 — 1962; Dr. Norman Maring (interim); Donald K. Flint, 1962; Frederick Annesley, 1964 — 1969; Dr. Norman Maring (interim), 1969; Gordon E. Abrams, 1969 — 1971; G. Kenneth Carpenter, 1971 — 1973; Dr. J. Eugene Wright (interim), 1973; and William J. Chapman 1973 — 1976.

The church has been represented in the foreign field rather generously for a church of its size. The first in the field were: Mrs. J.L. Douglass to India, and Emily Hanna to Burma (who followed her world-known grandfather, Adoniram Judson). Her brother, Thomas Carson Hanna, entered the ministry, and died at his pulpit in Bethlehem, Pa.).

Minnie Morris spent 25 years in the field at Shanghai, China, and 8 years in the hills of India. Minnie died at the Baptist Home, Philadelphia. Harold Blatt went to the field in the Philippines, and spent 5 years on the Island of Negros, Occidental.

Dr. Robert Larsen and his wife served in a Baptist Hospital in India. Rev. Robert Bell and his wife are presently serving as missionaries for Unevangelized Fields Mission, and have spent several years in Haiti. Dr. Lilla (Head) Langford and her husband are serving in Zaire.

The new part of the church building facing Midvale Avenue (formerly Mifflin Street) was built and presented by James Simmons Swartz in memory of his father, Christian, and his mother, Eliza. It was dedicated December 8, 1929.

Falls of Schuylkill Baptist Sunday School originated from the Union Sunday School, one of the first church schools in the area. It was Union Sunday School which apparently started the Fourth-of-July picnic tradition among the East Falls, Manayunk, and Roxborough churches.

Some time during the early life of the church, the present parsonage was loaned to the church by Dr. Horace Evans. About 1887, he had the third floor added to supply more bedrooms. The parsonage was finally willed to the church on the death of Dr. Evans.

Miss Ellen Campbell, who died about this time, left three properties to the church; two on Conrad Street, and one on the site of 3712 Midvale Ave. The properties on Conrad Street were sold, and the stone house on Midvale Ave. was razed, and the present Midvale Avenue property built.

Deacon Jacob Hoffman left \$1000 to the church which is still intact and cannot be spent. Also, an interest in the estate of Miss Mary Schofield was left to the church. The money is in control of the Girard Trust-Corn Exchange Bank and Trust Company. In the event this church is dissolved, the share accruing to the church is to be divided between the Judson Press and the American Baptist Convention. The principal cannot be used for any purpose. Sums of money were also donated by Harmon Johnson and James S. Swartz but these were wiped out during the 1929 depression.

Prior to the building of the church, a site on Clearfield Street was considered, but rejected on the advice of Mr. Abbott. At this time, another site was offered by the Estate of Governor Thomas F. Mifflin. It embraced the ground from Ridge Road to beyond the Norristown Railroad, and from James Street (now Stanton) to Mifflin Street (now Midvale Avenue), for the sum of \$3,500. The offer also included the Old Mifflin mansion which stood above Ridge Avenue about the present Evaline Street.

The Committee entrusted with the erection of the church on its present site on Indian Queen Lane, was composed of three members — James Morrison, Benjamin Marley, and Charles F. Abbott. The church property was not actually turned over to the church for about twenty years, but remained in the name of Charles Abbott, probably due to an oversight.

It may be noted that a one-time pastor of the church was responsible for having the religious motto "In God We Trust" placed on our currency. Rev. Mark R. Watkinson, the first regular appointed pastor of our church, 1853 — 1856, penned a letter to Salmon Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, suggesting "recognition of Almighty God in some form on our coins." Under an Act of April 22, 1864, our short-lived "Two Cent Piece" was created, and with it the motto "In God We Trust" appeared for the first time.

Although the two-cent denomination was destined to disappear after 1873, the future of the motto was assured by an Act of March 3, 1865. Today, all U.S. coins and some paper money carry the inscription "In God We Trust," and since 1956, by designation of Congress, it has been our national motto.

*In this Bicentennial year of our nation's history, as we reflect on our American heritage, it seems fitting that we pause to reflect also on our religious heritage as recorded in the pages of church history, and to give thanks for the "Faith of our Fathers through the ages ... and living still."*

## ST. JAMES THE LESS EPISCOPAL

St. James the Less Episcopal Church began holding services at the Old Academy in 1846. Previous to that, they had held services at Mount Peace, the home of Robert Ralston, in what is now Mount Peace Cemetery. Mr. Ralston donated the ground on which the edifice at Nicetown and Clearfield was built. This old parish house was built about 1887, by the late John Dobson.

The new building on Clearfield Street, near 33rd, and opposite the old parish house, rectory, and sexton's house, was erected in 1917. It was dedicated in December of that year, on a Saturday afternoon, by Bishop Thos. Garland, assisted by the Rev. Ed Ritchie, in the presence of a large congregation of people.

It was made possible by Mrs. H. Wilson Catherwood, of Philadelphia, as a memorial for her daughter, Mrs. Alfred Tucker. The site was donated by Mrs. Elizabeth Dobson Riddle, and her niece, Mrs. Walter Jefford. The newer building is of gothic style and contains a large assembly room, a fully-equipped gymnasium, and numerous other rooms.

*By Lois Childs*



*St. James the Less, located at the junction of Nicetown Lane (Hunting Park Ave.) and Clearfield Street. From the C.K. Mills Collection.*

# FALLS UNITED METHODIST

*By Edward Wilson*

The early records of the Falls of Schuylkill United Methodist Church are christened with such names as Dehaven, Slacking, Jackson, Smith, Foster, Sutton, Shronk, and Wonderly. It is people like these, and many others, who helped to build the foundation which today presents God's word in accordance with the Methodist belief.

The church is an outgrowth of a class formed in 1837 in the Germantown circuit. Early weekly prayer meetings were held in a room provided by John Jackson and Daniel Glecking, of Ridge Ave.

By December, 1837, special meetings were held in the Old School House or Old Academy on Indian Queen Lane, and Sunday afternoon classes were held in the home of Andrew Gilmore on Ridge Ave.

From 1839 to 1845, the church society numbered only 7 people part of the time. Rev. Robert A. McNamee and Rev. John Henry were the preachers during that period.

In 1845, Israel Foster and his family joined the society. Foster manufactured woolen goods, and employed several Methodists. Because of his Methodist affiliation, many workers at his factory joined the society.

Worship was held in the Old School House until 1851, at which time a property on Frederick and James St. (now Stanton St.) was offered to the society for \$900. The property was a lot 53 ft. front by 100 ft. deep. After a meeting between Rev. William Barnes, the Pastor, and the Board of Trustees, Mr. Foster was instructed to purchase the property at once.

The first Board of Trustees included Israel Foster, Joseph Clegg, Albert G. Marley, Thomas G. Wyatt, Andrew McGaw, James Dykes, James Mills, Edward Preston, and Charles H. Sutton.

Between June and September of 1851, the building was renovated, and 15' was added to the front on James St., making it 45' by 30'.

The church was dedicated on September 14, 1851. The sanctuary seated 216 people, and cost \$2258.65½ when finished. Three services were held that day — in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Three different Ministers, the Reverends McCaskey, Williams, and Greenbanks, presided.

By 1868, the location on James St. was becoming undesirable because of a neighboring brewery and the need for extensive repairs to the church building.



*Falls of Schuylkill United Methodist Church — present Sanctuary Altar.*

On March 18, 1871, a committee consisting of James Mills, John Shronk, and John Schofield bought the present lot on Indian Queen Lane and Krail St. for \$1875.

The foundation for the new church was laid in 1872, and the building was finished in February, 1873. The stone for the front of the church came from a quarry at Ridge Ave. and Crawford St., and the rest of the stone came from an old mill located where Gustine Lake now stands.

On January 17, 1885, the building of the parsonage was started; the total cost was \$2885.

By March 18, 1886, there were 150 members in the church, and Rev. N. Turner was the Pastor. During this time, the iron railings and front stone steps were added to the church.

During the years, many improvements were made, including new windows, new

flooring, outside railings, and complete renovations of the sanctuary and Sunday school rooms.

In 1935, \$2000 was spent on renovating the church organ, and a set of Deagan chimes was given to the church. The membership at this time had increased to 425, and church school enrollment was 250.

The church, as it stands today, is the result of a major renovation undertaken in 1944 when the whole sanctuary was remodeled in hand-carved silver oak. Among the highlights of the change are the shields placed around the top of the sanctuary, each depicting a different religious event.

Today, the church is ministered to by Reverend Philip Palmer and his wife Ruth, who are dedicated to serving the changing needs of the church's congregation.





# ST. BRIDGET'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

*By Rev. Charles Sullivan*

## Early History (1825-1855)

The first permanent Catholic resident of the Falls of Schuylkill was Thomas Hickey, who came here in 1825. His son, Daniel (born November 27, 1826), was the first Catholic child born in the Falls. At that time, there was no Catholic church in this community. Saint Augustine's, at Fourth and Vine Streets, was the nearest Catholic church, and this is where Daniel Hickey was baptized.

In 1834, Laurel Hill College, a Catholic college for men, was established by Reverend Jeremiah Kiely on what is now the site of Laurel Hill Cemetery. Here, at the college chapel, Mass was celebrated publicly for the first time in this area. In 1835, Laurel Hill College was sold and became, as it is known to this day, Laurel Hill Cemetery.

As the Catholic population of Philadelphia increased, new churches were established within the northwest area. First, Saint John the Baptist in Manayunk in 1831; second, Saint Stephen's in Nicetown in 1843. The pioneer Catholics of the Falls worshipped at both churches, and buried their dead at Saint John's parish cemetery.

Before Saint Bridget's became a parish, it was a mission of Saint Stephen's. Different dedicated priests (Father Domenech, C.M., Father McMahon, and Father Cullen) from that church attended to the spiritual needs of the Falls. These latter two priests became St. Bridget's first and second pastors, respectively.

In 1850, religion classes and Mass were held at the Old Academy building on Indian Queen Lane. Mass was celebrated at various homes in the community; among these were the Richard Kelly home (later the office building of Dobson's Mills), and the homes of Alexander McBride and Christopher Kelly (both on James Street, opposite the original church). As their number grew, the Catholic people were determined to have their own church in the Falls.

Early in 1853, a small group of people met to compile a list of the Catholic families living in the community. From this meeting came a request from twenty families to the Most Reverend John Neumann, then the bishop of Philadelphia, that a church be established in the Falls of Schuylkill. In July of the same year,

Bishop Neumann named Reverend Hugh McMahon, the pastor of Saint Stephen's Church in Nicetown, to begin work on a new church in this community.

After a site had been purchased on James Street (now Stanton), the men of the parish began the actual work of erecting a permanent church. Father McMahon directed their labors up to the laying of the cornerstone on September 18, 1853, and then returned to his duties at Nicetown. Reverend James Cullen was appointed pastor, and on April 15, 1855, Mass was celebrated for the first time in the original church dedicated to Saint Bridget.

## Age of Growth (1855-1918)

Under the administration of Father Cullen (1853-1865), Saint Bridget's began an age of growth. In 1856 there were forty-six baptisms. During Father Cullen's pastorate, Thomas Barry entered Saint Charles Seminary; he was the first seminarian of the new parish, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1867.

Reverend Thomas Fox (1865-1874) was the next pastor. In his ten years he furnished the church with permanent pews, an organ, a bell, and finally in 1870, a 171-foot steeple which became a landmark in the community.

In 1878 the church celebrated its Silver Anniversary with Reverend Richard O'Connor (1874-1883) as pastor. Father O'Connor built a rectory at the rear of the church, installed stained glass windows and added galleries to the church.

Father Michael Martin was the next pastor from 1883 to 1884. He was followed by the Reverend William Walsh (1884-1908). He purchased additional ground on upper Stanton Street to provide a Catholic school for his parishioners. In September of 1888, the school, under the direction of Sister Laurentia, of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, and seven other nuns, began a tradition of Catholic education which continues to this day.

In preparation for the Golden Jubilee of the church in 1903, "Father William" Walsh had the church renovated with new marble altars and statuary. He built the parochial building on Midvale Avenue, which is now the convent occupied by the Sisters.

With the death of Father Walsh in 1908, Reverend Bernard Gallagher became pas-



*Original Saint Bridget's Church dedicated in 1855.*



tor (1908-1918). In his pastorate, he cleared the debt on the church buildings, enlarged the existing school, and began a building fund to provide for the future expansion of the parish facilities to accommodate a congregation which then numbered over 3,500 people.

#### Modern History (1918-1976)

The First World War had hardly ended when Father Gallagher died; he was succeeded by Monsignor Wenceslaus Walsh (1918-1928). Since the inception of the parish in 1853, there had been many changes in East Falls. The Falls, which had been a rural village outside of the city, had become a heavily populated community within the city limits of Philadelphia. Monsignor Walsh ministered to the spiritual needs of his people, and, through the cooperation and energy of his church collectors, he organized the Church Building Fund Association in 1920 to provide for the future of the parish. In 1923 a new rectory (facing Midvale Avenue) was completed. In the spring of 1925, Monsignor Walsh announced that a new Saint Bridget's Church (the present gothic structure) would be built on Midvale Avenue. On January 30, 1927, the existing parish church was solemnly dedicated by Dennis Cardinal Dougherty. The transition from a small mission church to a large city parish had been made, and the people looked to an age of consolidation.

But this was not to be. Monsignor Walsh died in 1928, and the Reverend David Munyon (1928-1947) became pastor. The parish building program left the parish heavily in debt. It was not until 1944 that the parish debt was liquidated. Father Munyon's health had been failing, so in 1944 Reverend Henry Kortekamp, an assistant pastor, was appointed Administrator. After Father Kortekamp's death in 1945, Reverend Edward Allen (1947-1952) was appointed Administrator, and finally with the death of Father Munyon in 1947, he was named pastor.

Under Father Allen's able leadership, Saint Bridget's modern new school (entrance on Stanton Street), with sixteen class rooms and a large auditorium, was opened in September, 1949. The old parish church, which had been used as a parish hall since 1927, was demolished in 1949, and the site is still in use today as a playground.

Father Allen died in 1952, and was succeeded by Reverend John Cartin (1952-1973). In November of 1953, the parish celebrated its 100th Anniversary. Father Cartin ministered to a greatly expanded parish brought about by the Second World War and additional housing facilities created within the community. In 1962, the parish had over 2,500 families and 1260 children in the school. Father Cartin liquidated the debt on the new school, and

twice redecored the church, including the present reredos and the marble altar facing the people. He retired in 1973, and Reverend James Murphy, the present pastor, was appointed. In the summer of 1973, both school buildings were refurbished. Additional buildings on Midvale Avenue were purchased in 1975 to be used for expanding parish programs.

In the year of our national Bicentennial, Saint Bridget's Church, with over 5,200

members, looks forward to its 125th anniversary in 1978.

*This short history of the parish has stressed the work of the pastors and their accomplishments in bringing about the physical presence of the Catholic church in East Falls. The church is much more than its leaders and its buildings; the strength of the church is the faith of the people. And this faith from the past to the present is the real history of the church of Saint Bridget.*

## GRACE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH

By Lois Childs



*Grace Reformed Episcopal Church between Ridge Rd. and the Schuylkill River, just north of Calumet St. From the C.K. Mills Collection.*

Grace Reformed Episcopal Church, which moved to Roxborough from East Falls, had an interesting beginning. This church started in a frame edifice off Ridge Avenue above Calumet Street. It grew out of a mission known as Holy Trinity Mission, started in the Old Academy Building by the Church of St. James the Less, with the Rev. Robert Mackie, a former principal of the Forest School, in charge.

About that time, the Reformed Episcopal Church came into existence. Thomas H. Powers, of the laboratory of Powers & Weightman, and Thomas Moore, manager of the laboratory, became interested in the mission, and through them and others it was swung into the Reform movement.

Services were held in Odd Fellows' Hall while the edifice at Ridge and

Calumet Street was being erected by Mr. Powers at his personal expense. He completed the building, and gave it over to the church for a rental of one dollar a year.

During its existence, it was ministered to by Revs. Fuguet, Feltwell, Sloan, Finley, Moffett, Oakford, and Collins (among others).

Mr. Powers bought the property from Joseph Shantz at a time when a law suit, which was instituted by Shantz, was pending against the firm on the charge that chemicals from the laboratory, percolating through the ground, had ruined the water in Shantz' well. It was the first of many similar complaints that reached court, and Mr. Weightman is said to have been greatly displeased because Mr. Powers did not allow the case to be tried.

# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*By Walter H. MacIndoe*

The need for a Presbyterian church was felt by many in and about the Falls of the Schuylkill long before any active measures were taken for its organization.

In 1855, a number of devout Christian men and women, mostly of Scotch and Scotch-Irish ancestry, held cottage prayer meetings in their homes. These meetings grew in number and, as the homes were too small to accommodate all those who wished to attend, it was decided to engage the upper room of the Old Academy on Indian Queen Lane.

The meetings held there were helped and encouraged by Rev. Andrew Culver of the Manayunk Presbyterian Church, and Rev. William Fulton of the Dutch Reformed Church, now known as the Fourth Reformed Church of Manayunk.

As the meetings were proving highly successful, it was decided to put the building in proper condition for worship. This was done at a cost of \$70.

The first sermon in the newly renovated building was preached by the Rev. Mr. Knox of Germantown. So much were the people encouraged that in October of 1856 a petition, signed by 34 individuals, was presented to the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia requesting that body to organize a distinct church to be known as the Presbyterian Church of the Falls of the Schuylkill.

This petition was favorably received and a committee to attend to the business of organization was appointed. The committee consisted of Rev. Job F. Halsey, Rev. Joseph Nesbitt, Rev. Joseph Beggs, and Elders Robert Mogie and Francis H. Latch.

The committee convened on the 7th of November, 1856, and Rev. Halsey preached a sermon from the Gospel of St. Mark, after which the church was duly organized with the admission of ten members by certificate and twelve on profession of their faith. Mr. John Kinnier and Mr. John Hope were elected ruling elders, and thus became the first Session of the church.

On April 28, 1859 Rev. Joseph Beggs, D.D., began his ministry with the new congregation as a supply preacher on half-time, the other half being devoted to the Roxborough Presbyterian Church.

Eventually, the room in the Old Academy could not accommodate the growing congregation, and they decided to build a church. A call was extended to Dr. Beggs to be pastor full-time. He resigned his charge in Roxborough and devoted himself to the building up of the new con-

gregation and the construction of a church edifice.

After many disappointments and trials, a suitable lot was purchased on Ridge Avenue below School House Lane. On September 7, 1867, the cornerstone of the new church was laid. The new church building was dedicated on Sunday, October 11, 1868.

The first pipe organ installed in the church was presented by Mr. James Dobson, and was played for the first time on November 27, 1870.

As the Sunday school had outgrown its quarters, it was decided to construct a new Sunday school building. Ground was broken on April 22, 1889; Miss Sarah Dobson took up the first spadeful of earth. The cornerstone was laid on June 8, 1889, by Dr. Beggs. The building was dedicated on May 11, 1890, with the superintendent, Mr. Josiah Linton, presiding. Addresses were made by the Hon. George S. Graham, at that time district attorney of Philadelphia, and by Mr. John Wanamaker, founder of the Wanamaker store.

On April 17, 1894, Dr. Beggs resigned because of advancing years and ill health. After reluctantly accepting his resignation, the congregation elected Dr. Beggs Pastor Emeritus. He lived in retirement until April 14, 1899, when he died at his home in Germantown and was buried in Mt. Vernon Cemetery.

Dr. Beggs was succeeded by Rev. Sherman H. Doyle. Rev. Doyle was installed on January 10, 1895. He continued as minister until May 1, 1900, when he resigned to accept a call to the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia.

The next minister was Rev. John Milton Thompson. Rev. Thompson served from October 25, 1900, until May 15, 1904, when he accepted a call to the Ninth Presbyterian Church of Troy, N.Y.

Rev. Thompson was succeeded by Rev. William Melancthon Glasgow of Wellsville, Ohio. During Rev. Glasgow's pastorate a new Bartholomay pipe organ was installed, an addition was made to the front of the church, new pews were installed, a new pulpit and choir loft were built, and the church was recarpeted. The



*First Presbyterian Church of the Falls of Schuylkill.*



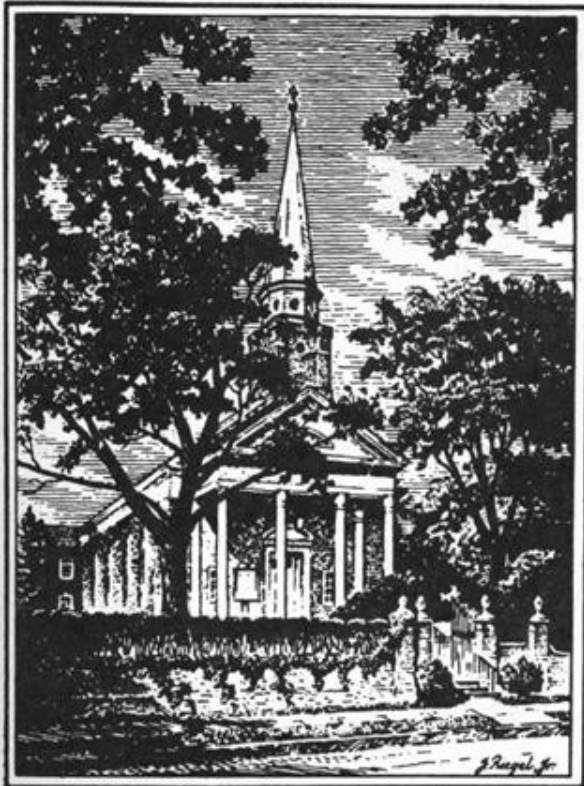
adjacent to the Church, since the lower part of the Church building was no longer adequate for the Church School.

Shortly after the preliminary reports on the project were given, Pastor Curtis was called to be Librarian at Northwestern Lutheran Seminary. He relinquished his office in June, 1963. When he left Redeemer, the Church had grown to 402 baptized members, of whom 209 were communing members, the highest in her history.

When the Rev. William J. Ducker became Pastor in July, 1964, the congregation had voted to build the Parish Building and had already begun to raise the necessary funds. Under his leadership the project was brought to completion, and the new building was dedicated on November 1, 1964. Further improvements were made in the Sanctuary during the next years.

Pastor Ducker resigned his pastorate in July, 1970, in order to retire from the Ministry. During the next six years pastoral service was provided by 3 vice-pastors, each serving a term of approximately one year: The Rev. L. Crosby Deaton, September, 1970, to September, 1971; the Rev. Russell E. Fink, September, 1972, to December, 1973; The Rev. David J. Paterno, June, 1974, to April, 1975. Rev. Paterno was called as Pastor in April, 1975, and is Redeemer's present minister.

*The life of a Church is more than the succession of her Pastors and maintenance of a group of buildings. The life of Redeemer is the life of her total family. Her life has been enriched by the untiring and devoted service of her many members over an eighty-five year period of time, as she has sought to witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in worship and activity. This is her mission and she has stood up to the task in faith, hope, and love.*



The Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd, on The Oak Road.

# THE MEMORIAL CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD EPISCOPAL

By Rev. Maurice Coombs

The Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd, like many another Church, had its beginning in a Sunday School. It was during Lent, on Sunday afternoon, March 1, 1914 that a group of children and adults met at the invitation of the Rev. J.C. Mitchell, then Rector of Calvary Church, Germantown, to hold its first service.

A unique organization, the Manor Sunday School Association, was formed. Its members, all men, paid annual dues sufficient to support the work. A small churchly building was erected on the corner of Midvale Avenue and McMichael Street on rented ground (the rent being the taxes assessed on the property by the City.)

It was here that the Church was organized in the fall of 1919 with the Reverend William Y. Edwards appointed minister by Bishop Rhinelander. The congregation grew, applied for a charter as The Church of the Good Shepherd, and in 1921 became an independent Episcopal parish with Mr. Edwards as Rector.

The Church was successful from the start. The building soon became much too small. Adjacent ground was purchased, together with the lot on which the church stood, and plans were drawn for a larger church and parish house.

At this juncture a piece of good fortune came along. The sons of the late Henry W. Brown offered to build a church on The Oak Road in memory of their parents. Sufficient ground was provided also for a parish house. This was gratefully accepted.

On October 30, 1926, the cornerstones for the church and parish house were laid. The church was built and given by the Browns, but the congregation built the parish house at a cost of \$50,000, and on October 16, 1927, the Church was consecrated and the parish house dedicated.

The late Dr. Hugh E. Montgomery succeeded Mr. Edwards in 1937 and continued on until he retired in 1944. He then moved to California. The next Rector was the Rev. John Vander Horst who came in 1945 from St. Paul's Church in Macon, Georgia. He remained for five years and left to become Rector of a church in Tennessee. He was later elected Bishop of Tennessee.

In the fall of 1951, The Reverend R. Dunham Taylor came as pastor. Dr. Taylor retired in March, 1974. The Parish then called an Australian, The Very Reverend Maurice A. Coombs, to succeed Dr. Taylor. Father Coombs began his ministry in August of 1974, and continues to the present.

1976 marks the 50th Anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Church on The Oak Road. The building was consecrated in October, 1927, and the Parish is organizing now to mark this Jubilee year.

*Throughout its relatively short history in the lower Germantown and East Falls Community, the Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd has attempted to provide a place of worship, witness, and service to the whole community. The white spired building on The Oak Road points to the beauty and peace at the heart of the Creator and is a constant reminder that our community life is only viable in terms of eternal values made real for us all in the person of Jesus.*





