



Welcome to a Walk Through Time.....

FACT OR FICTION- MURDER IN WEST NANTMEAL?

In 1933, two slain girls, Florence Miller and Ethel Marshall, also known as Ethel Greentree, we found in a shallow grave in a cornfield two miles north of Brandywine Manor in West Nantmeal Township. Their bodies were about two feet below the surface with an iron stake driven into the ground to mark the site (about ten yards from the Coatesville- Reading Highway- route 82). J. Edgar McLaughlin and William J. Hall found the bodies.” The funny thing,” said McLaughlin,” was a stake standing up in the middle. I pushed this up and down and it hit something. Then we got a spade and started to dig”.

Ethel had a cloak room concession at the Club Alabam, Broad and Bainbridge Streets, Philadelphia, formerly run by the notorious Lanzetti Brothers. Florence apparently was never employed regularly but nonetheless she never seemed pinched for money. Rent and all other incidental bills were paid on time. Both girls also worked as night club girls.

The automobile of Ethel Marshall was abandoned near Brandywine Manor, again in West Nantmeal Township, the back seat and floor were covered with fresh blood and bullet holes through the rear cushions.

The killing of one racketeer and the slaying of Florence and Ethel was the work of two Toledo gangsters according to authorities investigating the three murders. Also, according to the authorities, another car was used as the getaway car as well as two different guns.

Gangland slayings of Florence and Ethel occurred because the girls knew ‘too much” and the gangsters wanted to “seal their lips.” All the victims were lured from a hotel in Camden.

NOTE: THIS IS FACT

Tidbits (answers on second page)

- 1. What was the source of the water used to run the recently stabilized Lewis Mill gristmill on Bollinger Road?
- 2. Millstones, the flat round stones used in grinding grain, can weigh how many pounds?

Reflections on Historical Commission.....

I recently volunteered for membership in the West Nantmeal Historical Commission, which combined with my general long-term interest in history, has allowed me to focus on the fascinating story of this very local look at a long and fascinating history right on my doorstep.

As a relative newcomer to the area, I had no appreciation for the important role that the township and surrounding areas, and its early inhabitants had on the support for and development of what would become the mighty nation that we all call home today.

I am doubly blessed by the opportunity to learn and explore the details of a resilient and hard working people who occupied our township so many years ago and carved out of the wilderness of that time a thriving and productive governing ethic that continues to provide a uniquely beautiful place to live.

A real bonus in my undertaking is the opportunity to work with a dedicated and affable group of people committed to reaching back through the mists of time to bring to light the incredibly interesting story of West Nantmeal and surrounding areas and their emergence into the modern world.

It has been a wonderful experience meeting all of you and I look forward to further understanding and appreciation of our story through our ongoing efforts, which I am very happy to be a part of.

The West Nantmeal Historical Commission was founded in 1998 by local residents who wanted a way to preserve the township’s past. The mission of the commission is to gather and maintain historical records for the township; identify historical structures and encourage their preservation and restoration; and promote community awareness and appreciation for the historic nature of West Nantmeal. Over the years, the Commission has undertaken several projects to document the history of the township structures and properties, as well as historic events in the township. Our next meeting is at the Township building on November 10 at 1:00 PM and is open for all to attend. Check our website westnantmealhc.com for future dates. We are always ready to welcome new members!

Lewis Mill: A Family Enterprise

Lewis Mill on Bollinger Rd. was one of three mills in West Nantmeal Twp. Owned and operated by the Lewis family, one of the early surnames to appear in the township’s history. Recently, its ruined remains were stabilized and a gathering was held at the site. WNHC members Kathy Duncan and Caryl Ann Cooper composed the following in its honor:

Approximately in the late 1600’s, fur trading was very active along the banks of the streams in this area. There were abundant fox, deer, mink, skunk, raccoon, fish, opossum and possibly black bear. As the years went on more settlers arrived in the area. It became apparent that with the fast-moving streams, their power could be harnessed for mills to be built along the stream.

Three mills were built in the area. Two along the Brandywine, and one along which is now known as Perkins Run. Daily wheat was brought to the mills for grinding into flour. We also pressed apples for cider, corn for animal feed and corn meal.

As wagons are coming and bringing their wheat, I am hearing men talking about a war. The people were talking about an upheaval with the British. The conversation I heard from many people was that it was going to be called the War of Independence (1775-1783). We are not sure how this is going to impact us. I stayed busy both day and night with an abundance of wheat, corn and rye being brought in for grinding. There is always lively talk among the neighbors when they meet at the mill.

The conversation around the mill, is that a furnace is being built down from the mill on Perkins Run. Yet, another use for the waters of Perkins Run. Excitement in the area as the Furnace will employ local help.

The War of Independence proved fruitful for the colonies. The colonies banded together and a new nation as been formed and a constitution has been written.

Slaves seeking freedom are moving through the area. The chatter at the mill is another war looming on the horizon. Something called the Civil War (1861-1865). Local young men volunteered to fight for the North to ensure everyone’s freedom. Barneston Store was a conscription site to enlist in this effort.

Another rumor that was going around the mill, was that a castle or an “Iron Mansion” (1890) was being erected nearby. A railroad has now been established to transport people and products from the new furnace to various sites. Wagons are arriving daily. New births, new animals, new crops and new deaths were some of the topics of conversation. It is now 1898, as transportation improves, the need for the need for me is waning. I will soon be obsolete.

As the years go by, vines overtake me, trees sprout in my center and my walls start crumbling. Two more World Wars have come and gone and cars zip by without even noticing me. In April 2021, the West Nantmeal Historic Commission and the Talucci Family decided to uncover me and to outline my footprint. My partial walls have been stabilized using the original stone found nearby. Our hope is that the stabilized mill can be appreciated for the future.

Mill History

According to the genealogy of Ada Lewis-Meyers, the mill was built in the 1760’s by James Lewis (1732-1815.) One of the smaller mills in the area, it is listed in the 1820 US Census as having “1 wheel and 2 pair Stones.” The owner at this time was Samuel Lewis, who also owned a forge close by.

The mill operated continuously throughout the 19th Century, but industrial innovations and new modes of transportation reduced the need for small scale grist mills.

As the mill became abandoned many of its stones were carried away to be used for other construction projects until it became overgrown and barely discernable from the road.



Tidbits answers	1.	Perkins Run Creek	2.	1,500 to 3,300 lbs
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