



Welcome to a Walk Through Time.....

Lewis Grist and Sawmill, West Nantmeal, PA

November 1762

It is a crisp Fall morning and Mordecai Piersol is finding his way to the construction site of the new grist mill. With the skills he learned in Wales, England, the location was carefully selected on the banks of the Brandywine Creek, hugging a little hill. Today, a fresh batch of field stone from a local quarry will arrive by wagon. Mordecai cannot wait to position each stone and see how the construction will grow with this new supply arrival. He is satisfied with the solid walls, thirty-eight inches wide at the base and tapering to about eighteen inches in the attic. His hope is that this two and a half story high construction will even outlast the Revolutionary War.

December 1777

General George Washington moved the Continental Army towards Valley Forge. He has called on all farmers in the surrounding counties to help with the food supplies. As one of the local millers, Mordecai and his team work long hours to grind the corn and wheat. Inside the mill, empty barrels are filled with grist and flour. Horse carriages and wagons line up at the loading bay to pick up the barrels for the journey to Valley Forge some twenty miles away.

A number of years later—Lewis Mill

Samuel Lewis is excited about the prospects of owning and operating the grist mill he acquired from Mordecai. The Revolutionary War is now over, and the population is booming. Agriculture which is the primary pursuit of the area, promise enough corn and wheat supplies to grind. A map of 1873 reveals that the Lewis Mill compound consist of four distinct buildings. The Millers' House and the store house now both privately owned residences, the grist mill, and a sawmill.

January 2022

It was a snowy Sunday afternoon. The majestic old building on the corner of Creek and Lewis Mills Road was patiently waiting for the new custodians to drive by and fall in love with the idea of saving and preserving this stately construction. Their eyes caught a "For Sale" sign, and it was love at first sight.

Summer 2022

Working on the property is an act of deep love, respect and honor for a construction that is 260 years old. More history unfolds as more land is reclaimed. A dried stacked wall with a stone lintel over one and half yards in length, an old historic anchor wall and an underground vault. Research into these items will reveal what functions they fulfilled in days gone by. Chipping of the stucco made from horsehair and lime, is slowly changing the character of this beautiful building. Every stone is meticulously addressed and neighbors stop by to share stories and memories of the mill.

To be continued.....



Unique West Nantmeal Holiday gifts!

With the holidays approaching and looking for affordable local gifts, West Nantmeal Historical Commission has some unique items. Available during office hours or call 610-286-9722 ext. 18 for other options.

West Nantmeal mugs, green & cream with a local scene	\$2.00
8 pack notecards with local scenes	\$4.00
Black and white historical calendar photos	\$2.00
Hidden Township ruins 16 x 20 poster	\$20.00

Tidbit (answer on second page)

1. The original spelling was West "Nantmel". Do you know what "Nantmel" means?
2. Abraham Lincoln has ties to West Nantmeal as his great-grandfather lived on the Brookdale Farm property for a time. What was his great grandfather's first name?

Challenges in Interpreting 17th and 18th Century Deeds

For anyone researching Colonial era deeds in Chester County, Pennsylvania, one is confronted with a number of challenges. First there is often the difficulty of reading the cursive handwriting of that period.

For example there was the practice, when two S's occur together, to form the first S as if it were an F. And the individual handwriting can vary from clear and neat to the almost illegible.

And then there is the extreme redundancy and verbosity that seemed to be built into legal documents at the time. Sentences will run for hundreds of words until a period finally appears.

In addition so much of the terminology is indecipherable to the modern reader. There is a comprehensive list of deed terminology on the website below.

<http://www.historicpages.com/texts/velhist.htm>

All deeds include a description of land and its boundaries whose markers could be something as impermanent as a tree. Distances were measured in Rods or Perches, both of which could be used interchangeably, with a measurement of 16,5 feet. Acres were the same then as today.

Fortunately for the local researcher, the Chester County Archives has a dedicated and knowledgeable staff which is ready to offer any assistance in your quest for deed interpretation. Happy searching!



FARMING IN WEST NANTMEAL TOWNSHIP.....

Our township is basically a farming area and many of the farms have been actively farmed since the 1700's. In this issue we will discuss one of the many lovely farms we have in our community. The Beam Farm: The Beam family has deeds, indentures and bonds granted for more than 200 years of history on their farm. The oldest being from 1741 for William and Mary Clews for 203 acres for 31 pounds, 9 shillings and 3 pence. There was also a yearly rent (quit) of ½ penny sterling for each acre. This was signed by Lieutenant Governor of the province of Pennsylvania. John, Thomas and Richard Penn, sons of William Penn, names appear on this document. In 1770, an indenture was between James Cresswell and John Moore. On this document West Nantmeal is spelled the way it is spelled today all done in beautiful script. In 1891 the house was rented to Franklin Miller. According to Harry Livengood there was a fire in one of the five fireplaces in the basement. Mr. Miller had a large family and luckily the family was outside. Unfortunately, his pregnant wife went back in to go upstairs to get some money, believed to be a piece of gold. The fire blocked her retreat so she was unable to get back down the way she got up. Two of her sons were able to get her onto the porch roof but she subsequently fell to her death. This fire destroyed the house except for the stone walls and a few beams in the far north corner of the basement. On the rebuilt chimney there is the date of June 16, 1891 and the names George Patton and R.J. Cirters, believed to be plasterers. James Livengood acquired the farm in 1899, then Mr. Harry Livengood his son in 1923. William Beam bought the farm in 1942. The turnpike purchased 14.9 acres in 1953. Titus Beam and his wife Violet bought the farm in 1970. It is still owned today by William (Bill) Beam. It now sells sawdust and wood shavings to local farmers in addition to growing corn, soybeans, wheat and hay.

* * This information was given to our historical commission by Violet Beam

Tidbit answers.... 1. Sweet water or the land of the sweet stream. 2. John

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