

HISTORIC SOMERSET



Compiled by J. H. VAN HORN

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community can have faith that the inspired dreams of Peter Workman will continue to be realized in ever-increasing proportions.

THE WESTON MILL

*On the Millstone River
Opposite Weston in Manville*

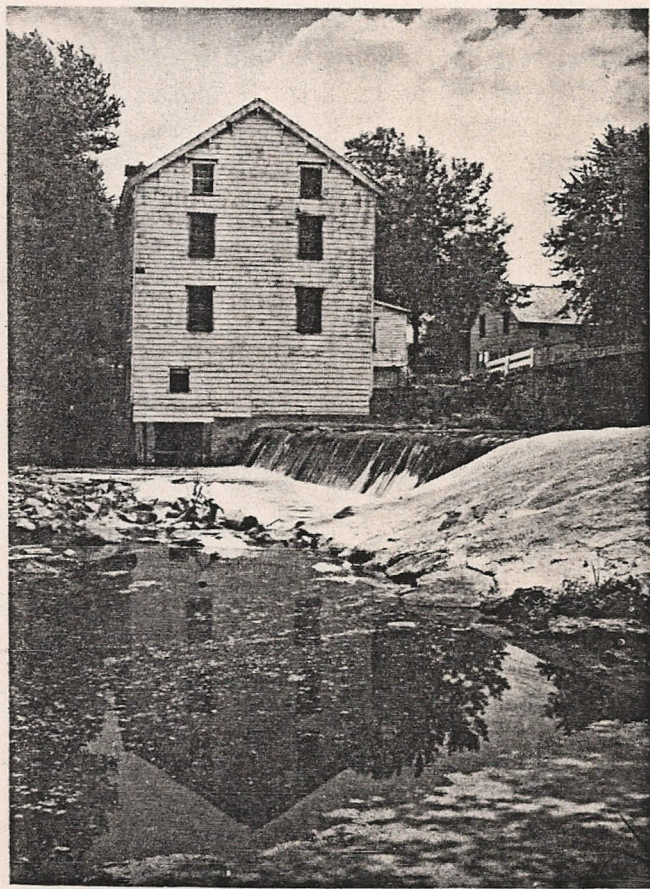
No one knows how many thousand water-powered mills were built during this country's early years. Now almost all of them are gone. Could one but listen to the music of their wheels and the groaning shafts and gears, one would hear echoes of the Early American Symphony.

Here on the Millstone River is one of them which was in use before the Revolution. Surviving British raids, this mill has lived a useful existence in the prosperous community surrounding it. Said to have been built about 1700, rebuilt in 1844 and repaired in 1944, it stands today unused but serviceable. Its name was given it by William T. Rogers, an early proprietor, who identified it with a real estate development of similar name across the river from the mill, now a part of Manville.

As a retaliatory measure applied to the Americans for destroying some riverboats laden with provisions for the British troops in New Brunswick, a raid was made in the mill's immediate vicinity in January of 1777. A foraging party of six hundred British troops came to collect from this neighborhood whatever removable property might be of use to them. When about ready to return to New Brunswick with the plunder taken from the mill and the farms about, four hundred American Militia, under General Dickinson, appeared on the scene and attempted to cross the Weston Bridge to attack them but failed to do so. Outnumbered there, the General took a portion of his force by way of a ford; through ice and water middle-deep, he crossed below the bridge. From that unexpected quarter he made a sudden flank attack with such spirit that the raiders fled in haste, leaving behind their loaded wagons. Losses to the British were 48 baggage wagons, 104 horses, 118 cattle, 70 sheep, and 35 of their men.

Looking inside this long-standing structure, one can see how a wheel assembly can utilize the weight of falling water for performing mechanical work. The construction of the mill itself, its size, the supporting timbers, their size and apparent strength, are noteworthy. This frame building, thirty by sixty feet, standing

on a heavy mud sill laid on piling, has three floors above ground, a basement, and a water-level wheel pit with tail race below. All floors have nine-foot ceilings, a length of sixty feet and a width of thirty feet. Each floor rests on four-by-eleven-inch yellow pine beams thirty feet long, and these in turn are supported by twelve-by-twelve-inch oak cross beams, also thirty feet. Supporting each of the crossbeams at their centers and at each end are



THE WESTON MILL, 1740. A fine example of early craftsmanship.

twelve-by-twelve-inch oak columns. Those supporting the center crossbeams at their center points are capped with beveled oak plates. This type of support permits of adjustment to keep the floors with heavy loads of stored grain level — at times piled ceiling-high. Both heavy and light timbers are joined by tenon and mortise, and throughout are wooden pins of hardest oak such as were used before the days of nails, bolts, and rods of iron. We need go no further in examining the mill's construction. Those who see it are impressed with its strength and condition, while craftsmen of today admit it is an outstanding mechanical job.

Its operation was simple, almost to the point of being self-acting. The river water at dam level flowed through openings in the upstream side of the mill, under the basement floor. Then falling five-feet-eight-inches, it struck at a slant the paddles of the turbine water wheels, forcing them to turn. Down through the wheel pit the water passed into the tail race, floored with heavy plank lying there under four feet of running water for no one knows how long. Then, on and on, back into the downstream of the river, the shunted water went on its way with little loss of time. Thus the river water flowed, the wheels turned, and in doing so they turned the shafts and gears that they might turn the millstones that ground on and on; the one on top turned, the lower one was at rest. Gravity had its part to play, as well. The farmer unloaded his grain; the miller paid by weight, and water power lifted it in a grain elevator to the top floor, where it went through a shaking or cleaning process. Then down it went through a wooden shoot to storage on one of the lower floors before it dropped further to drip onto the stones below. Then, ground either as feed or flour, the product was sacked ready to load, and on its way to market.

As here outlined, these operations went on without cessation for the twelve working hours of every day but Sunday. As recently as 1896, three men and a husky lad of thirteen produced two tons of feed and flour daily. The disposition of this commodity seems to have posed no problem whatsoever. Each day's output was hauled to wholesalers in New Brunswick by the miller's coal-black team, of which it was said, "There is no finer in the State!"

Thus the old Weston Mill did its part as a new nation in the Western world began its role in history.

CHAIN OF TITLE FROM THE BEGINNING OF
RECORDS IN SOMERSET COUNTY:

Built by Henry Schenck between 1740 and 1750.

Book and Page
of Deed

- A-367 Conveys several tracts in Hillsborough and Franklin on Millstone River from the heirs of Abraham Van Nest to Israel L. Norris—dated 7/25/1795.

In the instant case, its records prior to this date more than likely were among those destroyed by the burning of the Court Houses in 1737 and 1779.

This deed recites a deed dated 12/27/1771 from the Estate of Henrich Schenck to Abraham Van Nest, but this deed is not recorded in Somerset County.

Therefore, A-367 is the beginning of the records.

- C-530 Israel L. Norris to John M. Bayard, dated 5/2/1803.
L-58 Executioners of John M. Bayard to William T. Rodgers, dated 10/27/1823.
Z-46 William T. Rodgers (by Sheriff) to Isaac R. Cornell, dated 4/1/1843.
O3-308 Isaac R. Cornell to Rockhill Robeson, dated 5/31/1864. Conveys 149-33a in Hillsborough and Franklin on both sides of the Millstone River by a new description, beginning, "all that farm, plantation, MILLSITE tract, etc." (This is the first mention of the mill.)
K4-165 Rockhill Robeson to George Eldridge, dated 3/29/1872. Conveys 11.10a in Hillsborough and Franklin (part of the tract conveyed by the above-mentioned deeds) by a new description, beginning, "All that cert tract of land, MILLSITE, Grist Mill, Saw Mill, Storm house, Dwelling houses, etc., hereinafter described known as WESTON MILLS situate in the Twps. of Franklin and Hillsborough, etc." (This is the first mention of Weston Mills.)
R4-398 George Eldridge to Alexander Bonnell, dated 3/7/1885. 5-40a in Twsp. of Hillsborough and Franklin and Water rights.
P6-287 Heirs of Nettie I. Havell (by Sheriff) to the Executors of Alexander Bonnell, dated 10/4/1887. Same as G6-155.

- W6-192 Andrew Lemassena, Jr., to Henry Conger, dated 1/28/1888. Same as G6-155.
- D8-353 Henry Conger to Phineas E. Apgar, dated 1/9/1896. Same as G6-155.
- O10-239 Phineas E. Apgar to Reginald T. Bennett, dated 6/8/1905. Same as G6-155.
- Y11-320 Reginald T. Bennett (by Sheriff) to Phineas E. Apgar, dated 2/18/1909. Same as G6-155.
- One of the defendants in this deed is "Peter E. Apgar, Agent for the Weston Milling Company."
- Z11-34 Phineas E. Apgar to Charles D. Erdly, dated 8/14/1909. Same as G6-155.
- N14-59 Charles D. Erdley to Weston Mill Company, Inc., dated 4/7/1913. Same as G6-155.

NOTE: Find no deed from Weston Mill Company, Inc., on the records to date.

Find no deed for the prem described in G6-155 to Wilbur H. Smith.

- H17-188 Declaration of Trust dated 3/12/1919 establishing the
COMMUNITY FLOUR MILL AND GRAIN COM-
PANY and making Charles D. Erdley of Weston, N. J.,
its trustee.

This instrument is also the certificate of incorporation of Community Flour Mill and Grain Company, Weston, N. J.

The Instrument signed by Charles Erdley, Francis Pettit, and Laurence F. Bedford.

(Trust to continue for a period of 21 years after death of last survivor of the trustees.)

(There is no deed of record from this corporation.)

CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION BK: 4-36

OF THE D: 3/26/1915
WESTON MILL COMPANY R: 3/27/1915

Name: Weston Mill Company

Location: Weston, Somerset County, N. J.

Agent: Charles D. Erdley

Objects: General milling business — to buy, sell, mortgage, real estate, etc.

Incorporators:

Charles D. Erdley	10 shares	Weston, N. J.
Anna N. Erdley	2480 shares	Weston, N. J.
T. Leslie Bradbury	10 shares	Brooklyn, N. Y.

Corporation to have perpetual existence.

* * * *

Sold by the Union Mill Co., Inc., February 3, 1925, to Peter H. Smith, who transferred it to his son, Wilbur H. Smith, November 18, 1925, who is its present owner.

JOHN HONEYMAN AND HIS HOME

Intersection of Bunker Hill and Canal Roads, Griggstown

Born in Ireland of Scottish parentage in 1729, John Honeyman found himself one day a conscript soldier in General Wolfe's expedition against Quebec. This experience in 1759 included an event which shaped the course of Honeyman's life. As the English expeditionary force was approaching Quebec, he rendered a personal service to General Wolfe, who but for him, would not have participated in the successful battle that followed. For this achievement, Honeyman was given a letter by the General extolling him for his conduct on that occasion besides making him a member of his body-guard, to be available for personal service as needed.

Here follows excerpts taken from an account by John Van Dyke who was well acquainted with Honeyman and often with him during the last fifteen years of his life. VanDyke also knew Abraham Baird during his later years; in fact, Baird was one of the persons from whom much of the following information comes. All of it, so the author states, is derived from the most unmistakable sources.

* * * * *

"In the operations against Quebec the British, at first unsuccessful, eventually landed their force on the left bank of the St. Lawrence for the purpose of ascending the steep heights up-stream from the city. During the night preceding the attack Honeyman helped row the General to the landing point and with him and four-thousand five-hundred men scaled the perilous heights to reach the Plains of Abraham before daybreak and there wrest Canada from French control. It is generally known that in this action both French and British commanders were killed, though few of Honeyman's friends knew that he assisted in bearing his mortally-wounded chief from the field.