

Greenwood Valley:

Visit to Millville, Columbia Co.

Introduction: The article is reprinted from the Columbia County Historical Society *Historical Leaflet Series Publications*, Vol. IV (1977). However, it first appeared in the Williamsport *Gazette & Bulletin* in 1899, and then was re-published in the Bloomsburg newspaper, *Democratic Sentinel* in the same year. Unfortunately, there is no information about the author, John of Lancaster.

It begins with the author recounting his railroad trip from Watsonstown, located on the east bank of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River in Northumberland County to Millville in Columbia County. He writes about the early history and his observations of the community. Construction of the Wilkes-Barre and Western Railroad began in 1885 and two years later the first train from Watsonville arrived in Millville. The writer's prediction for the railroad's growth did not materialize. In time the management changed and the railroad became the Susquehanna, Bloomsburg & Berwick Railroad Company and reached Berwick in 1903.

MILLVILLE, Nov. 19.--It is twenty-one miles from Watsonstown to this place via Wilkes-Barre and Western Railroad, and the run is made across an interesting country. The road passes up Warrior Run (a stream which has figured in history from the earliest time) for a half dozen miles, touches the edge of Paradise, bears away through the Black Swamp, dashes through a tunnel and debouches into Greenwood Valley, when it ascends Little Fishing Creek to its present terminus. Turbutville, named after Turbut Francis, once an extensive landholder and one of the early justices of Northumberland County, is seen to the right. It is situated on the edge of the richest agricultural districts in this part of the State, and is noted for its three tall church spires. Washingtonville, Montour County, is seen far to the right, after a run of eleven miles has been made from Watsonstown. The Washingtonville station was first named "Let-Her-Go," because the residents of the quiet village did not give the railroad people any encouragement to run near them, and they passed around her nearly two miles away, saying "Lethergo!" Things have changed, however. The name has been dropped and the station is known as Washingtonville. Far to the right, on the way out, that lovely rural district known as Paradise is seen. Jerseytown, one of the oldest hamlets in that part of the country, is passed. It is sixteen miles from Watsonstown. The great highway running from Muncy to Bloomsburg passes through Jerseytown. The name was derived from New Jersey settlers. William Wilson, John Rogers, Jasper Yeates and Benj. Humphreys were the original warrantees for the land. Although a hundred years old Jerseytown has grown but little and is about as large today as it was at the beginning of the century. The surrounding country is hilly and broken, and after passing through the mountain, Greenwood Valley, Columbia County is reached and a run of a few miles brings the traveler to Millville.

The pretty village of Millville is located on Little Fishing Creek, which runs through Greenwood Valley until it unites with the main stream some distance below. The

surrounding scenery is bold and picturesque. The high hills are covered with a dense growth of hemlock which gives them a somber appearance. In summer time the valley is particularly attractive and a most delightful place of resort. The pure water of the stream and the refreshing shade, coupled with the natural beauty of the surrounding hills, the wild flocks and rugged rocks, conspire to make the valley one of the most attractive in Columbia county.

As early as 1769 William McMeans secured a warrant for a large tract of land. Soon afterwards John Eves came here from Delaware, being conducted to the valley by two Indian guides, to examine the land, with a view of locating. On reaching the summit of a hill called Fairview, which overlooks the valley, he was so charmed with its appearance that he at once resolved on settling there. After making a careful examination of the soil and timber, he returned with his dusky guides to the West Branch, and then proceeded to his home in Delaware. The subsequent spring he returned with his son Thomas and built a log cabin on the West Bank of the creek, and a year later he moved into it with his family. In the meantime McMeans sold his title to Reuben Haines, and from him John Eves, in 1774, purchased 1,200 acres of land. This was the beginning of the settlement which developed into the village of Millville. At that time it was an exceedingly wild section of the country. An Indian path led through here from Muncy to Nanticoke and Wyoming, and it was frequently traversed by painted savages. John Eves was a Quaker and he cultivated the friendship of the Indians. Soon after his settlement here he built a mill, hence the name of the town. When the massacre of Wyoming occurred he was warned of the danger of remaining by friendly Indians, and hastily collecting some provisions and goods together, he took his family and fled to Delaware.

When peace was restored Eves and family returned in 1785, but they found their house and mill in ashes and all their improvements destroyed. He at once set to work and built two houses and a mill. The latter stood on the site of the mill now owned and operated by Josiah Heacock.

This mill, which was one of the landmarks of the place, was again destroyed by fire in 1849, after having done good service sixty-four years. A new mill was soon afterwards built by George Masters and John Betz. The mill is now run by Josiah Heacock and it is famed for the superior quality of buckwheat flour manufactured in season and shipped to Philadelphia. And it may not be out of place to note in this connection, that Judge Ikeler, now President Judge of the Bloomsburg Judicial District, was once associated with Mr. Heacock in the milling business, and he knows how to make buckwheat flour. Josiah, in addition to his milling business, serves as the village gunsmith, and keeps the rifle and shot guns of the people in good order.

The first public house in Millville was opened in 1797 by Jacob Link; and in 1825 another was opened by William Sprole. The present fine hotel is owned by the Millville Hotel Company having been purchased in 1883. The company is composed as follows: William Masters, C. W. Eves, Dr. A. P. Heller, Joseph W. Eves, Ellis Eves, John Eves and Chandlee Eves. On acquiring this property they mutually agreed that it never should

be used for the sale of intoxicating liquors, and this agreement has been rigidly adhered to up to the present time.

The first post-office was opened in 1831 and David Eves was commissioned postmaster. It was held by members of this family until 1842, when James Masters succeeded to the office, and it was held by members of his family for about forty-five years. There are several stores in the village and one or two manufacturing industries. Among these may be mentioned the wagon factory, which has gained a wide reputation on account of the excellence of the work turned out.

Being a Quaker settlement, an early interest was taken in the cause of education. The Friends' meeting house was built in 1795 on the site of the present building, which is of brick. In the rear of the building is the cemetery. It is filled with numerous grave markers, but no stately tombstones or monuments have been reared to commemorate the virtues of the dead, that custom not being in accordance with the Quaker faith.

Near by is the Greenwood Seminary building. This school gained a wide celebrity under the management of Anna Dorland. It is still a popular institution, and is noted for its efficiency. Although under the management of the Society of Friends, the school is open to all denominations.

Another of the institutions of this model community is the Mutual Fire Insurance Company, of Millville, which was organized in 1875.

Millville is noted for its neat, clean and thrifty appearance. The buildings are substantial and everything about them betokens good taste and intelligence on the part of the people. Before the advent of the railroad the town occupied an isolated position. It is ten miles distant from Bloomsburg, where the principal business of the people was transacted. The railroad has resulted in giving a fresh impetus to every branch of business, and many new buildings have been erected during the past year. Josiah Heacock, one of the sagacious men of the village, freely says he believes the railroad has trebled the business. Once it is extended through to Nanticoke greater benefits may be expected, as the town will then be on the line of an important thoroughfare between the two rivers and their magnificent valleys. The railroad station is neat and commodious, much more so than is often found in more pretentious places. The settlement is rich in history, but it is impossible to give it in detail in a letter like this.

If the Wilkes-Barre and Western Railroad has already done so much for this section of the State, it is destined to do much more when it is completed. It will in time cross the river at Watsonstown, pass through Sugar Valley and on to Mill Hall, where it will unite with the Beech Creek. This, with its connection at Nanticoke, the Western outlet to the coal fields of Clearfield county, will make it an important thoroughfare. The benefits it will confer on White Deer and Sugar Valleys will be as great as those conferred on Greenwood Valley, and other points along the line, and infuse new life and vigor into people who have been so long deprived of railroad advantages.