

Walter Hadfield Interview, 1979

The Eight Water Powered Mills Along Beaver Creek

Excerpts of sections relating to the Beaver Creek Farm and Creamery

Total time 31:36

Time 5:05 (26:31 remain)

Nevertheless, we're talking about the eight mills along the Beaver Creek. And the second one was Brown's Mills or Brown's Mill which is located at the corner of Zynnville Road and Hadfield Road. That one had a good fall. They manufactured flour from grain.

Another half mile below, exactly a half mile below, Hadfield's Mill came in. And in the center of the woods between Brown's and Hadfield's was where the race picked up to provide the power for the Hadfield Mill. And this formed what was and this formed a dam. And the dam was rampant with Muskrats and other wildlife. And there was a lot of wild game at that time. My cousin Earl Hadfield is reported to have gone hunting, gone gunning, on a warm November afternoon and he came to this dam in the upper woods of the Beaver Creek, in the upper Hadfield property, and he lay down along the banks. Now picture doing this today. And he was so thirsty he had to get a drink of water. So he drank and he drank and after a bit he heard a little noise and looked around and there and behold ten feet behind him was a large bull Buffalo. Well, Earl got up in a hurry and went on home without his shotgun. And the Buffalo bull went back up to where Buffalo Bill had his wild animals, which later on became Peale's, which we described a minute ago.

At any rate, the water went down through Hadfield's race and turned the water wheel there, which in turn worked wood working machinery and a creamery and manufactured products like butter and cheese which were taken weekly to the Reading Farmer's Market in Philadelphia.

My first recollection of the old farm, Hadfield Farm where I was raised, the driveways were paved with shells, mostly oyster shells. They were fully paved with oyster shells and I couldn't understand why exactly that was a good place to get rid of them. But they made a good made a good top for the driveway.

Time 12:05 (19:31 remain)

The East Brandywine Barn Stars were a basketball team which played with the roughest out of bounds known to basketball even then or now, which was the old Hadfield Mill on the third story. Here the stones, the rough stones, that they used to finish off, well it wasn't really

finished off at all, it was just the rough stones. And here the basketball players could find a sudden stop in their efforts. But they were the East Brandywine Barn Stars and they attracted basketball teams from as far as Philadelphia. That would be back in the mid 20's.

Time 16:39 (14:57 remain)

The old three story mill. You'll notice they all were three or four stories, and this gave the advantage of the big loading boom at the top of the third or fourth story. The loading boom stuck out. You can still see it in some of the older mills in Lancaster County. And the load, whatever it was, came on a platform and was picked up by this boom and lowered onto the wagons below. Four horse wagons, and they would pick up an number of things.

You can imagine if they made a tour down the creek what they'd pick up. They'd pick up a barrel at Reeceville and fill it up with flour at Brown's mills. And if they had a second barrel, or third barrel, they could fill it up with fresh pressed cider at the Hadfield's Mill. They had orchards around there and I can remember crops of apples brought in in dump, now understand this, don't think I'm going to say dump trucks. Four horse dump wagons would drive over the chute [on the] second floor of the old Mill building, the Hadfield Mill building, and pull a lever and all these several tons of apples would go rattling down into the cider press. A few minutes later would come out nice sweet cider and go into the barrels.

Time 20:00 (11:36 remain)

Alright, well this would be ah, this would be ah, little stories or incidentals that might happen to put together the society, should we call it, or the goings on that would make for an active day's schedule or week's schedule, particularly in the summer time the road would be busy not with automobiles and trucks, and I doubt whether Hadfield Road today is traveled as much as it was around the turn of the century. I doubt it. It was busy then. This valley was busy at the turn of the century. It was a bustling valley... baseball team, band... and one of the events that happened was that my cousin, Edith Hadfield, who is Earl Hadfield's sister, Edith is deceased, and what a wealth she could turn to. And she could tell you of her experiences when she was a girl and raised on the farm, just up the road here, at the old Hadfield farm, which was called Old Beaver Creek Farm, by the way.

And when Edith was a small girl, about thirteen or fourteen, there was a runaway on the property and a horse ran away with her brother Bill somehow, and he was pretty well busted up, broken up, and injured before they got the horse and brother Bill back. And she

took a bicycle and started for Guthriesville for Dr. Richmond. So down at the turn of the bend just below the old homestead, headed for Bondsville, there's a bad turn which goes to the Beaver Creek. Well Edith had an old Diamond type mens bicycle she was riding at the time and it got away from her and she ran through the fence and into the Beaver Creek. But that didn't stop our Edith. She shook her head and got up and back onto the bike and back up to Dr. Richmond's. And finally Dr. Richmond took a good long look at Edith Hadfield and said "My dear are you sure that you're not the patient yourself?" And so back they went, loading the bicycle onto Dr. Richmond's buggy, and back to treat the wounded back at Beaver Creek Farm.

But that's not all that our Edith got into in Beaver Creek Farm. In the mills, she was a regular tomboy in those days, and she wore her hair long, almost down to her waist in the back. And she was a great favorite of her three Uncles, Uncle Tom, Uncle Bill, and the second Uncle Bill, or Uncle William. Let me see now, would that be her father. Now I'm a little mixed up, but Earl Hadfield could straighten you out on the relationship, but I'm simply going to tell you of how Edith could get into things, because she was rambunctious and full of life. Can you imagine at fifteen or sixteen, with all the mill and all the shafts bustling and all the machines running, she would run through the mill and down to the lower portion. And then then, just before they'd start the mill, she would say "Grandpa" or "Uncle Bill when are you gonna start? May I start it? May I start it?" And there would be a big lever there where you could allow, slowly allow, this tremendous onrush of water to come in and strike these fins. I imagine the fins on on a waterwheel would be about 24 inches by maybe 18 by about 8 inches deep, and the water would be eased in on these fins real slowly until the wheel would just perceptibly turn. A little bit faster; a little bit faster, until it was whirling at a high speed. At that point, the various shafts could be engaged. But what Edith wanted to do was to have the pleasure of pulling this big lever which set the main shafts into action, which sent the big pulley on the waterwheel to pulling the main shafts. And as she did this, pulled down on the pulley, pulled down on the handle, on the large handle, she got all the way out to the end of it and stood on her tippytoes and pulled down on it. And with that, she gave a flick of her head and turned and said "See Uncle Bill, I can do it." And turned her hair, her long hair, directly into the main shaft of the waterwheel where it started to turn and turn and turn and getting tighter and tighter. Whereupon, in their desperation, Uncle Bill and Bill Hadfield grasp the wheel itself and grasp the pulley itself and literally by bull strength stopped the wheel until Edith could get extricated from having been scalped with no Indians around.