

THE STORY OF SAFE HARBOR

Anyone who has motored through the southwest quadrant of Lancaster County has probably seen the red arrow-shaped signs with the words **SAFE HARBOR** in white letters. Old timers know that these point to the huge hydroelectric plant on the Susquehanna River, and possibly may recall that the place has had quite an interesting history. Newcomers to Lancaster County, however, have been heard to say, "Safe Harbor, my, what a comforting name," or "I wonder if it is a place for boats or a rest home." Perhaps the story of Safe Harbor does need telling, both to refresh the memories of old-time residents, and to answer the questions of more recent arrivals.

The area about which this story evolves lies on both sides of Conestoga Creek, and extends from its confluence with the Susquehanna River on the south, to the county highway bridge over the creek about a mile to the north. Nearby are the hamlets of Highville and little Pittsburg to the west, Rock Hill (formerly Rockville) to the north, and Green Hill and the much larger village of Conestoga, or Conestoga Centre as it was originally called, to the east. All of these places, in one way or another, have contributed to or were affected by the activities at Safe Harbor. It will be necessary, however, to confine this story to Safe Harbor proper, and perhaps the history of its neighbors will be told by others.

The Susquehanna is the largest river flowing into the North Atlantic south of the St. Lawrence. Above Safe Harbor it drains an area of over 26,000 square miles, comprising 43 per cent of Pennsylvania and 13 per cent of New York. It was an important corridor of transportation for the Indian, and even more so for the early white man and his present day descendants. Because of its strategic location it was a natural to play a vital role in the nation's development. Conestoga Creek, while draining only 474 square miles, flows through some of the most productive farm land in the country. It was inevitable that the area surrounding the confluence of these two streams should become important from the standpoint of both history and economics.

THE INDIANS

Eastern Pennsylvania was inhabited prehistorically by the Algonkian Indians. About 1000 A.D. they were driven east to the Delaware River by the Iroquoian group migrating from the middle Mississippi valley. Of the many divisions of the Iroquois, one settled along the lower Susquehanna River and upper Chesapeake Bay. These were the Susquehannocks, or "people living where the water rubs the shore," an appropriate title in view of the many rapids in the lower river. The Susquehannocks reached the height of their power between 1660 and 1667, and in 1675 were defeated by the Five Nations from New York State. Some were carried north as captives and others retreated south to Maryland. Here the latter were almost "exterminated to the last man" by a combined force of Maryland and Virginia whites seeking revenge for frontier atrocities which actually had been committed by the victorious Five Nations. The Conestogas who settled in Indiantown, two and one-half miles northwest of the mouth of the Conestoga, near the end of the seventeenth century, probably were survivors from either the New York or Maryland groups. The remnants of the once mighty Susquehannocks lived here until 1763 when the few remaining members of the tribe were massacred by the Paxtang Boys in the Lancaster jail yard, where they had been taken for refuge against the attacking whites.¹

A group of wandering Shawnees, who were members of the Algonkian linguistic group, lived from 1698 to 1716 in the village of Pequehan, located a mile and a half above the mouth of the Conestoga around the first bend in Manor Township.² Indian relics were found here in 1930-31 when comprehensive archaeological explorations were undertaken by the State Historical Commission in cooperation with the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation. This was during the building of the hydroelectric station and dam on the river. Later discoveries have been made in this area and Reuben Lownsberry, upon whose farm the site is located, has an interesting small collection of relics.

Perhaps the most intriguing and certainly the most mystifying reminders of the early inhabitants of the Safe Harbor area are the petroglyphs or rock inscriptions still visible on Big and Little Indian Rocks located in the river about one-half mile below the present Safe Harbor dam. These inscriptions were photographed and reduced to plaster casts in 1863-64 by the Linnaean Society of Lancaster. The first national recognition given to them was in the Transactions of the Anthropological Institute of New York in 1871. Dr. W. J. Hoffman visited the region in 1889, made sketches of the petroglyphs, and declared them to be of Algonkian origin. In 1930 the rocks were explored thoroughly by the State Historical Commission under Dr. Donald A. Cadzow and new sketches and casts made which are now in Harrisburg.³ While definite evidence is still lacking as to the date of these markings and of the people responsible for them, they do substantiate the premise that the area was important to the pre-white peoples.

THE EARLY WHITE MEN

It is very doubtful that Captain John Smith pushed as far north as the Conestoga at the time of his meeting with the "Sasquesahanocks" at the mouth of the Susquehanna in 1608. It is possible, however, that Etienne Brule, the young French interpreter of Governor Samuel de Champlain, explored the river from the north to its mouth in 1616, and thus may have been the first white man to lay eyes on the Safe Harbor area.⁴ In 1638 William Claybourne came up from Virginia to trade with the Indians, as did the Swedes from the Delaware settlements in 1644. William Penn traveled in the general area in 1684 and again in 1701 during his visit to Indian-town. It is very possible that some of these men and perhaps many other early whites passed through or near Safe Harbor.

In a Deed of Lease, dated March 22, 1681, William Penn, Proprietary of Pennsylvania, granted lands in the Safe Harbor area to Nicholas Moore, Philip Ford, Edward Pierce, Thomas Brassey, Edward Brooks, James Claypoole, William Sharto, John Sincock and Thomas Barker. The land involved was part of a 20,000 acre tract to be laid out in the Province of Pennsylvania "In Trust for the Free Society of Traders in said Province of Pennsylvania, and their successors." It is doubtful that any of these men ever occupied their land. According to H. Frank Eshleman⁵ the white owners of land near Safe Harbor in 1729 on the Manor side were Michael Greider, nearest the mouth of the creek, then Peter Leaman and John Cartlidge. On the Conestoga side, nearest the mouth of the creek, was Fred Maynard, and then Francis Worley. Benedict Eshleman, the well known builder of some of the early large homes in the area, owned a large tract about one half mile east of the Conestoga.

In 1759 Manor Township was formed out of the lower portion of Hempfield Township and included the 16,000 acre Conestoga Manor, surveyed in 1716, and an adjacent parcel north of the Manor.

The boundaries of the original townships of Lancaster County were determined at the meeting of the King's Magistrates in 1729 at John Postlethwaite's Tavern, located about four miles northeast of Safe Harbor on what is now Long Lane, but was then the Great Conestoga Road to Indian-town.⁶ Conestoga Creek was proclaimed the common boundary between Conestoga and Hempfield townships, thus making that stream responsible for dividing the village of Safe Harbor both physically and politically.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AT SAFE HARBOR

The Susquehanna River and the lower Conestoga Creek had long been a favorite fishing ground of the Indians, and the early whites were quick to learn of this fact. Fisheries for shad and other species were established, and hotels became a necessity to accommodate the fisherfolk. By 1807,

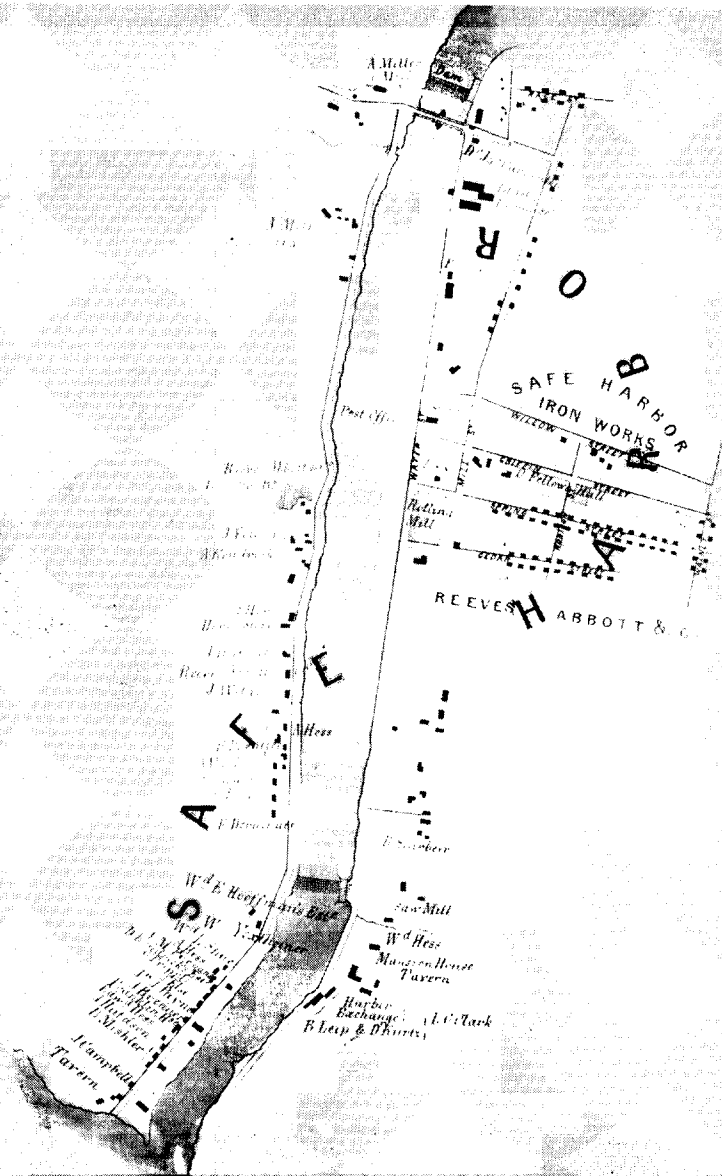
Jacob Menart was operating a tavern near the mouth of the Conestoga on the road from Columbia to Martic Forge. Ziba Webb in 1809 kept a hotel in one end of a large warehouse building near the mouth of the creek on the Conestoga Township side. On the Manor side Israel Nestleroad opened a tavern in 1808, and by 1811 a second one was being operated by Philip Urban further upstream.⁷ These were but the first of a long list of hotels and taverns that served Safe Harbor residents and visitors for over a century.

The first attempt to formally establish a village at the mouth of Conestoga Creek was made in 1811.⁸ Jacob Miller and his mother, the widow of John Miller, who established Millersville by means of a lottery, laid out 16 lots along the creek on the Manor side and called it Millerport. This may have been another of the townsite-exploitation-by-ballot schemes of the Millers. Some of the earliest lot-holders were Israel Nestleroad, Jacob Logan, Christian Kneisly, Christian Otto, John Umbach, Philip Urban, and the Strasburg Company, of which Mike Withers was a large stockholder. By 1815 the lot-holders were Philip Brenner, William Bushrun, John Bean, Adam Fogle, storekeeper; John Funk, Sophia Wright, Jacob Guck, cooper; Henry Hoffman, Henry Klein, Samuel Kimmens, Daniel Kendig, John Kendig, and Catherine Logan. The Millers lived on a farm on the slope of the hill rising westward from the site of their new town. Today the ruins of their house and barn are almost completely overgrown. A lone grave stone near the house carries an inscription in German to the effect that Jacob Miller was born September 22, 1757 and died December 20, 1810. This would indicate that Millerport was laid out before 1811, and recorded deeds show sales by Miller in this area as early as 1806. The small stream which runs through Miller's farm into the Conestoga bears the name Miller's Run, thus perpetuating the name of Safe Harbor's first real estate promoter.

Klein⁹ also states that tavernkeeper Nestleroad took out a patent in 1811 for Sandy Island (now Else's Island) in the Susquehanna opposite the mouth of the Conestoga. During the following year he sold it to Martin Stouffer, John Stouffer, John Sourbeer and Christian Kneisly.

SAFE HARBOR GETS ITS NAME

Prior to the construction of canals on the Susquehanna, lumber, coal, wheat and general merchandise were transported from upriver points to the Chesapeake Bay by log rafts, arks and keel boats. Such navigation was possible only during the high flow season when the many riffles in the river, particularly in its lower reaches, were covered to a safe depth. The period of greatest activity was between 1790 and 1870. For the period April 1 to July 5, 1817 the *Lancaster Journal* reported 343 arks and 989 rafts passing Blue Rock, three miles below Columbia. The *Journal* of April 27,



Map of Safe Harbor in 1852 by R. P. Bridgens

1827 reported 557 arks, 731 rafts and 36 boats passing Marietta so far that season.¹⁰ A statement of shipping entering Baltimore in 1821 from the Susquehanna listed 200 arks carrying 11,000 tons of coal, 1170 arks carrying 41,718 tons of general merchandise, 300 keel boats carrying 300,000 bushels of wheat, and 1638 rafts containing 25 million feet of lumber.¹¹ The rafts were around 30 feet wide and 200 to 300 feet long.

River traffic was obviously heavy, and communities along the route were bound to feel its effects. In view of the sheltered water offered by the Conestoga Creek, it is reasonable to assume that a considerable number of these river craft must have sought haven there on their downriver journey, while their crews patronized the conveniently located hotels. The hotels also provided nourishment for the raftsmen returning from Peach Bottom and Port Deposit on foot along the famous "raftsman's path." This route followed the line of least resistance along the Lancaster County shore. At Safe Harbor it crossed the creek near its mouth, climbed the hill, and followed the ridge paralleling the river to Turkey Hill. To the foot-weary and thirsty raftsmen the place must have seemed something of a safe harbor also.

Credit for first placing the name of Safe Harbor in print should go to three gentlemen: Adam Fogle, Jacob Eshleman, Jr., and Henry Brackbill, who inserted the following notice in the *Lancaster Intelligencer & Weekly Advertiser* of March 15, 1808:

The subscribers inform the Public in general, and their friends in particular, that they and others have erected a large and commodious Storehouse on the Bank of the Mouth of the Conestoga, called Safe Harbor, for the purpose of storing and taking in flour and wheat. This storehouse is 30 by 90 feet, 3 stories high, and along the edge of the river; where Boats and Arks may come with ease, along side, and out of all danger from high wind and hurricanes; where flour and wheat will be hoisted out of boats, on any of the stories, without the labor of carrying and rolling the barrels through dirt and mud.

The Turkey Hill Falls and Stall's Riffles, the only places heretofore considered dangerous, from Columbia to this place, have been greatly improved the last year, by clearing out obstructions; for that they are considered, by the Waterman, no way dangerous. It makes 9 miles difference, in the Toll of Bridges and Turnpikes and in our opinion, will make a difference of 9 d. or a shilling per barrel. Besides, it is a remarkably cool place, where, we believe, flour could be kept much longer from souring than in many other places; and we engage to keep wheat from musting, if delivered dry. From these and other circumstances, we hope to meet a share of the Public Trust, in that line.

We also intend to purchase a good proportion of wheat that may be laid into our trust; and will also be able to assist any Ark or Boat, with men who understand the water well, from Columbia to Safe Harbor. We consider it worthy the attention of some of the Iron-Masters, who send good iron down the River such as would suit

the country Smiths, to be stored here as that article could be sold here very readily.

Salt and plaster may be had here, at a short notice, ground or in the stone."

This warehouse was on the Conestoga side and evidently also the one in which Ziba Webb kept a hotel. The name Safe Harbor apparently was in common use as early as 1808, and the name Millerport given the area by Jacob Miller evidently was not accepted by the natives.

CONESTOGA NAVIGATION

The Conestoga Navigation Company was organized and incorporated in 1805 and authorized to make the Conestoga Creek navigable from its mouth to Lancaster by means of dams and locks. Obviously, Messrs. Fogle, Eshleman and Brackbill, in establishing their warehouse at Safe Harbor, were aware of these plans and were anticipating water-borne traffic on the Conestoga. However, nothing was done by this first company and its charter was abandoned. A second company, The Conestoga and Slack-water Navigation Company, came into existence in 1820, but its charter also became void when no work was accomplished. A third company, again named The Conestoga Navigation Company, was incorporated in 1825



Lock No. 6 of Conestoga Navigation Company in 1958, one mile above mouth of creek; canal in operation 1828-1865.

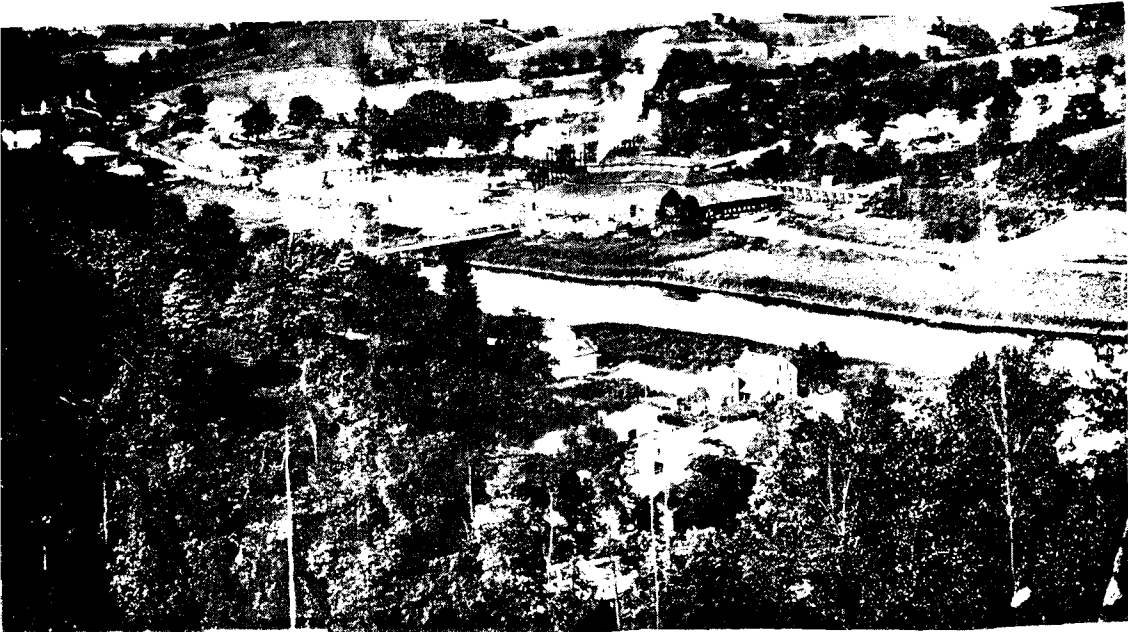
and by 1828 it had managed to complete the nine dams and locks required for the total lift of 62 feet in 18 miles. Two of the dams were at Safe Harbor, one near the mouth of the creek, and the other just above the present county highway bridge.¹² The lock at the latter location is still in good condition and measures 109 feet by 18 feet 6 inches. This is a reasonable check with the statement in Poulson's Advertiser of December 24, 1828 that "the locks were 100 feet by 22 in the chambers, sufficiently large for arks or boats of 90 feet in length." Prof. Barnes¹³ lists the dams at Safe Harbor as Nos. 9 and 8, while the undated map in Ellis and Evans¹⁴ numbers them 7 and 6. A flood had destroyed a few of the dams and in the rebuilding some were eliminated, which may account for the difference in numbers.

The Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal along the west shore of the Susquehanna was completed in 1841. An outlet lock in the canal, at what is now Lockport Hollow, and a rock dam erected across the river a quarter mile below the mouth of Conestoga Creek, provided a connection between the Conestoga navigation and the river canal system. Thus Lancaster could call itself the Port of Lancaster, and Safe Harbor was the pivot point in its connection with the sea.

THE IRON WORKS

Perhaps the biggest single event in the history of old Safe Harbor was the coming of the Iron Works. During the eighteenth century the iron industry had developed rapidly in Lancaster and other southeastern Pennsylvania counties. The charcoal burning cold-blast furnaces of that period, however, had difficulty competing with imports of foreign made iron during the early years of the nineteenth century. Of concern, too, was the depletion of forests necessary for making charcoal. The ailing industry was given new impetus in 1838 with the introduction of the hot-blast furnace, which burned anthracite coal efficiently with a 50 per cent increase in production. Anthracite coal could be shipped to Lancaster County via the canals at low freight rates, a fortunate circumstance responsible for the building of several furnaces along the river at Marietta, Chickies, Columbia and Safe Harbor.¹⁵

Extensive ore deposits found in the Safe Harbor area, particularly close by in Manor Township, were also a factor leading to the erection of the Safe Harbor Iron Works by the Reeves, Abbott & Company. The project was financed by a group of Philadelphia ironmen and financiers, including David and Samuel Reeves, Dr. Joseph Pancoast, and Charles and George Abbott. Property on both sides of the Conestoga was purchased including two farms from Samuel Hess in Conestoga Township on which the principal buildings were erected. As insurance for an outlet for its product and for the necessary water supply, the new company found it necessary to purchase the franchise of the shaky Conestoga Navigation Company in 1846. Construction of the iron works started in that year, but production



View East from Manor Township side, about 1905, during construction of "Low Grade" railroad. The old Rolling Mill in center has been converted into air compressor house and machine shop. The old Iron Works company store with clock tower to left, village to right, and Kerbaugh's stables in foreground.

did not begin until August, 1848. Arranged along the creek on the Conestoga side from north to south were the blast furnace, foundry, blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, employees' store, and the rolling mill. The cost of the project was in excess of \$200,000. A detailed description of the project was written for the August 1848 *Pottsville Miner's Journal* by its correspondent after a visit to Safe Harbor.¹⁶

The furnace stack was 45 feet high, 40 feet square at the base, and 14 feet at the boshes. Eight 40-foot by 38-inch diameter boilers used water from the second navigation dam above the mouth about 100 yards distant, and provided steam to drive the blowers and the engine used in hoisting coal up an inclined plane from the canal boats tied alongside the wharf in the creek. A platform was erected on the small hill on the opposite side of the furnace over which limestone and ore could be conveyed to the tunnel-head. The capacity of the furnace was about 120 tons per week.

The rolling mill was the largest of all the structures. Covering over an acre of ground, it was 165 by 265 feet, and stood on the site of the present Safe Harbor Hydro Club tennis courts. The roof was covered with 5000 square feet of slate from the quarries of T. S. Williamson at Peach Bottom. The original installation included one single puddling furnace, 12 double puddling furnaces, 7 heating furnaces, 2 roller trains, and 16 boilers 40 feet long, so arranged over the top of the furnaces in the mill as to provide steam for operating the roller trains. This arrangement was an innovation which permitted double application of the heat. Eventually the mill was to contain 2 single puddling furnaces and 18 double puddling furnaces. Railroad rail of the new T-shape was the principal product and the mill capacity was 200 tons per week.¹⁷

Between the furnace and the rolling mill were the other buildings all built of stone with slate roofs. The foundry, the walls of which are still standing, was close to the furnace. The company store for its employees was closer to the rolling mill. A four-faced clock in its tower was visible to most of the village and faithfully tolled out the hours for years after the iron works had ceased to operate.

An enterprise of this magnitude, set in such a rural community, was certain to create a housing problem. The company provided the solution by building a complete village close to the iron works. Streets were laid out bearing such names as Water, Mill, Robison (later Hall), and Walnut running parallel to the creek; and Cedar, Spring, Griffin, Willow and Race running normal to it. About 100 frame two-story double houses of uniform style were built in sizes varying from 24 by 28 feet to 32 by 32 feet. Water was obtained from the spring, near Spring Street, of course, and which is the same spring which now discharges at the present picnic grounds of the Safe Harbor Hydro Club. Approximately 250 people were employed, many moving from a considerable distance to live in the new company village, and others coming from already established homes nearby. The Conestoga side of Safe Harbor, which had lagged behind the Manor side in growth, now forged ahead and became the center of activity and industry in the village.

The first superintendent of the iron works was John Griffin, followed by Wyattte W. Miller, Samuel M. Wright, Isaac Reeves, and Theodore F. Patterson. While the enterprise prospered, all was not smooth sailing for the local superintendents or for the management group in Philadelphia. A number of factors were to foster financial difficulty. The blast furnace could only produce less than half the pig iron used by the rail mill. The balance came by costly haul from Shawnee, Chulasky and Franklin Furnaces near Danville, Pa. The rail output of the original installation was sufficient to meet the requirements of the Public Works of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, then engaged in double tracking the "Main Line" of the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad, and that of other small customers. The Pennsylvania Railroad, however, had received a charter from the Commonwealth in 1846 and almost immediately started building its line westward from Harrisburg. Safe Harbor iron was the best obtainable and, with existing capacity, Reeves Abbott estimated it could furnish about 100 tons per week to the Pennsylvania above other commitments. The railroad, however, needed, and was willing to buy, much more than that amount. Expansion appeared to be the answer, so late in 1854 Reeves, Abbott & Co. contracted for additional facilities to nearly double the rolling mill capacity. Doubling of production meant a corresponding increase in pig iron haulage costs. Additional expense was also incurred in the search and experimentation for a more heat-resistant clay for the improved type of furnace. The proper material was found at North East, Md., and was transported to Safe Harbor by boat on the Susquehanna.¹⁸

While the new construction was under way, a period of "tight money" began in 1855. The Company's assets totaled more than \$3,000,000, and its outstanding liabilities only about \$1,000,000, but creditors were demanding payment. In an effort to gain a grace period, the Company called a meeting of its creditors in Philadelphia to consider the situation. In the meantime, the employees at Safe Harbor held a meeting of their own and passed a resolution expressing faith in the Company's future and a willingness to work without pay until conditions improved. When this resolution was presented at the Philadelphia meeting, the creditors decided that they, too, had faith in the Company and agreed to a plan whereby the liabilities were amortized over a 27-month period. It is interesting to note that the faithful workers eventually received their full pay.¹⁹

Railroad construction slacked off with the panic of 1857, and the Iron Company, after suspending payments on its obligations, once again was forced to call a meeting of its creditors in Philadelphia. After examining all the assets and liabilities the creditors agreed to a 29-month amortization program and the mills remained open. Mr. Christopher Hager of Lancaster presided over this meeting.²⁰

With the start of the Civil War in 1861, the demand for heavy ordnance became so great that the Safe Harbor Iron Works stopped production of railroad iron completely and turned to the manufacture of wrought iron cannon for the Union Army. Earlier experiments had been made in casting gun tubes using a process invented by John Griffin, the plant superintendent. His plan was to take a coil containing hundreds of strands of annealed wire and about three inches thick, winding it at red heat around a cast iron core several layers thick, then heating to white heat and finishing in a lathe. This process was claimed to give a very light gun with great resisting power. It has also been told that the cannons were tested at Safe Harbor by firing into an earth bank and that one gun was used by a local political club for celebrations and conventions. On one such occasion the gun burst under a double charge of powder.²¹ It is also very likely that some of the so-called "Soda Bottle" cannon, designed by Lieutenant John A. Dahlgren of Philadelphia, were made at Safe Harbor during the Civil War.²²

In all probability the Safe Harbor Iron Works would have returned to the manufacture of railroad rail after the close of the war except that, on March 18, 1865, only 22 days before Lee's army laid down its arms at Appomattox Court House, the Susquehanna went on a rampage. Racing waters of the fourth highest flood on record, even to date, washed out the navigation dam across the river at Safe Harbor and thus destroyed the connection between the Conestoga Navigation and the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal. With facilities for transporting raw materials and finished products gone, the Safe Harbor Iron Works closed down—temporarily it was thought. However, it was not until the fall of 1879, when the demand for puddled iron was at a peak and many of the old furnaces gone, that the Safe Har-

bor Iron Works reopened and fired the puddling furnaces in the rolling mill. The blast furnace remained cold. A mile long spur track from the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad, recently completed along the east shore of the river, was built to the rolling mill in 1880; thus providing a more reliable connection with the outside world than had been possible with the fickle Conestoga and Susquehanna canal systems. In 1882 the Works turned out 10,000 tons of puddled iron for the Phoenix Iron Company, also owned by the Reeves, Abbott group. In a few years, however, the larger and more centrally located mills elsewhere were meeting the demand more economically and the Safe Harbor Works closed down for good. The enterprise had finally come into the possession of David and Samuel Reeves, whose heirs were owners at the time of the closing. Theodore F. Patterson was the last superintendent.²³

THE CIVIL WAR

The effect of the War Between States on the Safe Harbor iron industry has already been told. With cannon for the Union Forces being cast there, the young men of the village, appropriately enough, called their volunteer company "The Safe Harbor Artillerists." As early as May, 1861, this group had been formed and was drilling, as were the Lancaster Fencibles, Pequea Rifles, Colemanville Guards, Millersville Home Guards, and many others. Captain George H. Hess, son of the Mansion House proprietor, led the Safe Harbor unit. These local companies, when mustered into service, lost their chosen names and were designated by standard company letters and regimental numbers. The Safe Harbor contingent became part of Company D, Thirtieth Regiment (First Reserve) on June 8, 1861. Captain Hess died at Richmond, Va., on July 4, 1862 from wounds received at Charles City Cross Roads on June 30, 1862.²⁴ The local G.A.R. Post was named after him.

War came close to Pennsylvania in 1862 and again in June 1863 when Lee's Army was marching north through York and Adams Counties. Governor Curtin issued a call on June 12, 1863 for every able-bodied man to enroll for the defense of the State and the country. Col. Emlen Franklin was requested to organize Lancaster County troops and place them at vulnerable points along the river to resist possible invasion from the west. Under an order, dated June 16, 1863, he designated the rallying points for groups from each section of the county.²⁵

The citizens of Conestoga and Lancaster Townships shall rendezvous at Shenk's Ferry. The citizens of Manor and Millersville shall rendezvous at Safe Harbor. . . . The line of the river from York Furnace to the line of Columbia borough is placed under the command of Major R. W. Shenk, One Hundred and thirty-fifth Pennsylvania Volunteers, headquarters at Safe Harbor.

The order further stated that,

Each citizen shall provide his own arms and ammunition, until sufficient supply of arms reaches this department, also his own rations for three days to be carried with him. Also intrenching tools, either an axe, shovel or pick.

Response to this order was prompt and the fortification of vulnerable points along the river proceeded with vigor.

CHURCHES

In all boom towns religion, education and culture hasten to step in and attempt to match the pace of industry. Safe Harbor was no exception. The Methodists had organized and built a church in 1847 on the Manor side along the road to Highville, and were thus ready for the sudden influx of iron workers and their families. The first trustees were Adam Miller, Ben Albright, Christian B. Herr, John Eberly, Jos. Urban, Abraham Kauffman, and Jos. Wright. The church was incorporated and a charter received in 1869. Trustees at that time were George A. Tripple, Daniel F. Mellinger, J. W. Hess, R. B. Prentiss, Amos Fry, Jos. Wright, William Bones, C. B. Herr and Daniel Witmer.²⁶ This church has been in continuous existence in the same location, and today is part of the Safe Harbor-Colemanville Circuit. Previous to 1871, Millersville was part of the Circuit, and until 1957 the Conestoga Church was also a member. The headstones in the old cemetery adjacent to the church indicate a strong Welsh element with most of the burials occurring between 1849 and 1861. Among them is that of Esther Griffin, wife of John Griffin, the first superintendent of the Iron Works.

Another early church in the Safe Harbor area was The Evangelical Association or, as it was known in some localities, "The Albrights," after Jacob Albright, a soldier under George Washington and the founder of the sect. This group organized and built its first church in Conestoga Township in 1846 on the road between Safe Harbor and Conestoga Centre. Sometime later it moved to a new building across the lane and which is now the residence of Newell Eckman. In 1873 the church moved into a new brick building at the west end of Conestoga Centre. The congregation split in 1896, one group, Mt. Zion, continued to use the church building, while the other group erected a new building and became the present Bethel Evangelical and Congregational Church. The first trustees of the original church were Jacob McAllister, Jacob Hackman, and Benjamin Kneissley, who also was local preacher. The first cemetery of the sect was adjacent to the site of the original church. Although all bodies are reported to have been moved to the new location in Conestoga Centre there are still evidences of the old burial ground.²⁷

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church of Lancaster organized a mission church in Safe Harbor in 1853. The following year the puddlers of the Iron Works built a beautiful 40 by 62 feet stone chapel with a slate roof near the eastern end of Spring Street on ground loaned from the Iron Company. Construction was supervised by the Rt. Rev. Father Keenan. Bishop Neuman's Diary and Visitation Record states that the cornerstone was blessed on Passion Sunday 1853 at which time fifteen members were confirmed. The first clergyman was the Rev. John Balf, followed by the Reverends O'Brien, J. C. Hickey and McMonogan. Up until the first closing of the Iron Works in 1865, Mass was said every second Sunday, from 1865 until 1880 only at long intervals, and from 1880 until 1882, during the second period of Iron Works operation, every four weeks. In 1883 there were less than a dozen members of the church in the community and services were discontinued.²⁸

The Catholic Church functioned under the Harrisburg Diocese and a Diocesan record shows that in 1897 the pastor of St. Mary's of Marietta went to Safe Harbor and, on finding only one Catholic there, boarded the doors and windows of the church and moved the Stations of the Cross to Marietta. In 1912 Jacob Murry of Conestoga Centre purchased the building from the Diocese for salvage. He removed the woodwork but left the stone walls standing, as the other removals had caused some resentment among former members. One of the double doors of the church served as a table top in the old Mystic Chain Hall in Conestoga Centre. The walls of the church are still standing completely surrounded by woods. There are about fifty graves in the adjacent cemetery with about a dozen legible headstones bearing such names as Madden, Slattery, McManus, McNulty, Logue, Clarkin, Harrington, Donnelly, and Campbell. All except the last one were born in Ireland and died between 1855 and 1866. The last known burial here was on November 7, 1930 when a transient worker on the Safe Harbor Hydroelectric project was interred with the Rev. Father Fisher, of St. Catherine's in Quarryville, officiating.²⁹

The Episcopalians also maintained a mission church in Safe Harbor but no building was erected. Services were held on the first floor of the Odd Fellows Hall. The Church of the Ascension, as it was called, was under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Harrisburg with the Rev. Moran of the Columbia Episcopal Church in charge. Mr. Theodore F. Patterson, superintendent of the Iron Works during its second period of operation, was founder and leading layman of the church. A deed, dated November 25, 1890, shows sale of the Odd Fellows Hall property by David Reeves, et al, to Theodore F. Patterson, et al, Trustees of the Church of Ascension of Safe Harbor. A second deed, dated October 28, 1912, records the sale of this property by John J. Tripple, surviving Trustee of the Church of the Ascension, Safe Harbor, "acting in pursuance of resolution duly adopted at a congregation meeting of said church, September 28, 1912," to the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese of Harrisburg.³⁰ This was apparently the

end of the Episcopalian mission at Safe Harbor. Mrs. Daniel W. Everhart, who with her husband has lived in the Hall since 1951, was baptized by this church and attended its Sunday School. Mrs. Carrie Huber, a schoolmate of Mrs. Everhart, who now lives a short distance east on the road to Conestoga, recalls seeing Mr. and Mrs. Patterson and daughter, Abigail, on many Sunday mornings, walking east from their home, down a flight of steps at Robison Street, to attend services in the Hall.

While not directly in the old village of Safe Harbor, the Green Hill Evangelical United Brethren Church, a mile south on the road to Martic Forge, played an important part in the community life. It was organized in 1887 as the Green Hill United Brethren In Christ Church with U. S. G. Renn as its first pastor. Organization of the church was the outgrowth of a series of revival services held in a stone house nearby and led by the Rev. Tobias Finefrock. Sunday School had been conducted as early as 1868 in a school house located a short distance from where the church was built. W. W. Tripple was its first superintendent and others influential in the Organization were Aaron Warfel, Joseph L. Aston and George Henri.³¹ As the result of the merger with the Evangelical Church in 1946 the Green Hill Church assumed its present name.

SCHOOLS

The public school system was adopted by Conestoga Township in 1836. About 1854 the Safe Harbor Independent School District was formed and separated from the Conestoga Township District. A new school was built at the eastern end of Spring Street, just west of the Roman Catholic Church, on ground owned by the Safe Harbor Iron Works. Nothing remains of this school today except the depression of the former cellar. Ellis and Evans³² reported in 1883 that only one school house was then in existence, as another one, a brick structure also on Iron Works' land, had been destroyed by a storm a few years earlier. About 1880 school was held on the first floor of the Odd Fellows Hall, but later moved to the second floor when the Episcopal Church started using the first floor. There were 80 pupils in attendance here in 1882. Around the turn of the century, the Safe Harbor Independent School District dissolved and reunited with the Conestoga Township District. In 1907 a plot of ground just north of the Odd Fellows Hall was deeded by Charles F. Herr to the Board of School Directors of Conestoga Township. The new school erected here was opened in 1908 with Landis Caldwell as its first teacher. It continued in operation until 1942 when the pupils were taken to Conestoga and the building converted into a residence. Directors of the Independent School District in 1883 were W. W. Bones, president; George T. Rose, secretary; Theodore F. Patterson, treasurer; Christian B. Henry, George A. Tripple, and Alonzo G. Hudson.

Mr. Wyatte W. Miller, one of the Iron Company superintendents, sold

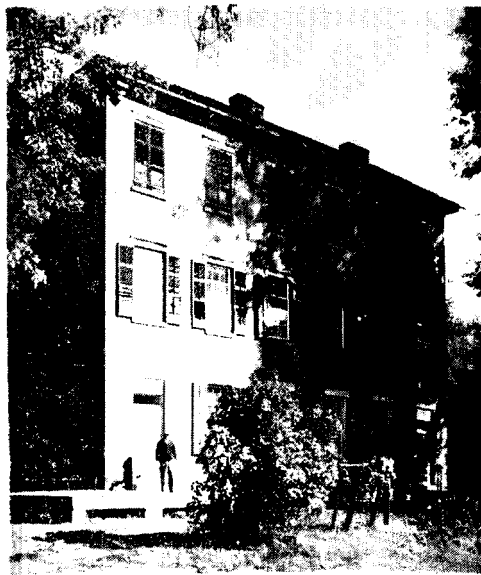
a one acre tract on the Green Hill road to the Conestoga Township School Directors in 1873. A one room school called the Wyatte School continued here until 1915 when the property was sold to John M. Hess who converted the building into a store. The property was purchased by the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation in 1930 and sometime later the building was removed.

The Safe Harbor school in Manor Township was located on the road from the creek to the top of the hill. The stone building was erected in 1867 and ceased to operate as a school in the 1920's. During the construction of the Safe Harbor hydroelectric project, beginning in 1929, an addition was made to the building to convert it into a field hospital. It was razed sometime after 1933 and no trace remains today.

FRATERNAL ORDERS

The social center of old Safe Harbor was the handsome three-story brick building erected by Conestoga Lodge No. 334, I.O.O.F., on the corner of Robison and Griffin Streets. The Lodge was chartered on March 17, 1848 with the following charter members: Benjamin Middleton, James H. Collins, Alexander H. Carpenter, Adna S. Gillet, and Jacob K. Habecker. Reeves, Abbott & Co. on February 8, 1851, for a consideration of \$100, leased the land to John Griffin, Thomas Sheaffer, Theodore B. Gould,

Odd Fellows Hall in 1958. Daniel Webster Everhart, the owner, on porch. Erected about 1854. Served Odd Fellows, Masons, Knights of the Golden Eagle, Church of the Ascension (Episcopal) and Safe Harbor Independent School District.



Charles W. Morris and Charles J. Rhoads, Trustees of the Odd Fellows Association of Safe Harbor. The lease was for a term of 999 years and stipulated that the property be used only for "peaceful enjoyment" and that no store, storehouse, shop, tavern, restaurant, hotel or place of public entertainment be erected upon the premises. The Lodge enjoyed a successful existence until the outbreak of the Civil War when most of its members enlisted. After the close of the war the Lodge again flourished with meetings every Saturday night and a membership of over sixty. Presumably, the Odd Fellows were the original owners of the building, but by 1883 it was the property of the Iron Works. The meeting room on the third floor was furnished at a cost of one thousand dollars. The auditorium on the second floor could accommodate 200 persons and was the scene of many village social gatherings including the meetings of the Capt. Hess Post of the G.A.R. Around 1880 the Odd Fellows moved their lodge to Conestoga Centre and in 1914 moved it again to Millersville.³³⁻³⁴

The Masons were represented by the Charles M. Howell Lodge No. 496, instituted at Safe Harbor on August 17, 1871 with the following charter members: Thomas J. Davis, W.M.; William J. Fordney, S.W.; Charles J. Rhoads, J.W.; William W. Bones, Sec.; David Davis, Treas.; George A. Taylor, David F. Young, W. W. Tripple, Urias Warfel, and John J. Tripple. Meetings were held on the Friday evening on or before full moon on the second floor of the Odd Fellows Hall. In July 1883 there were forty active members and on November 17, 1899 the Lodge removed to Millersville.³⁵⁻³⁶

Mombert's *Authentic History of Lancaster County* (1869) lists for Safe Harbor, No. 180, Manoga Council, Order of United American Mechanics, but further information is lacking. A fourth group, the Knights of the Golden Eagle, also used the Odd Fellows Hall for meetings during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

HOTELS AND TAVERNS

Apparently not all of the citizens of mid-nineteenth century Safe Harbor were culture bent. Joseph Kingston in the *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal*³⁷ tells of a Letters-To-The-Editor War in 1851 in which,

various correspondents of Lancaster newspapers spread it upon the public record that the village of Safe Harbor was one of the "booziest" communities for its size anywhere in the country. Basis for this charge was the admitted fact that Safe Harbor, with a population of about 1200, was supporting no less than five taverns, three liquor stores and six beer halls. The viewers-with-alarm, only a few of whom were residents of Safe Harbor, were inclined to blame this "shocking" state of affairs on the existence of the Safe Harbor Iron Works, many of whose employees — it was alleged — spent all their spare time tippling and carousing in the "joints." This seemed logical, indeed, since the ironworkers had always been among the least likely candidates for enrollment in temperance societies. However,

one cynical old-timer of Safe Harbor wrote in to remind the people of Lancaster that four of those five taverns and two of those liquor stores had been in existence and doing a thriving business long before the Iron Works appeared on the scene. And at that time, the hamlet's population was a mere 200 or so.

Conditions must have improved with time for Everts and Stewart were able to state in their Atlas of 1875 that, "There is quite a settlement here and the place wears an air of business enterprise that reflects credit upon the citizens generally."

One of the most famous of the old hotels was the Mansion House located on the Conestoga side, near the mouth of the creek. It was started in 1807 by Jacob Menart, but in later years was operated by Abraham Hess and his son, Captain George Hess. The Mansion House was destroyed by fire about 1880.

The Harbor Exchange, also called the Exchange Hotel, was built about the time of the Iron Works. It was a stone building located at the foot of the hill across the road from the Mansion House. Everts and Stewart's map of 1875 lists it as J. A. Shober's Hotel, and around the turn of the century, while still owned by the Shober estate, it was operated by Jack Herr and was called the Exchange Hotel. It suffered severe damage from the 1904 ice flood but prospered again during the days of the "Low Grade" railroad construction. The building was torn down about 1913-1914 and its last operator, George Schmook, left to take up hotel-keeping on the Manor side. A small section of rock retaining wall is all that remains today of the once busy Exchange Hotel.

The first hotel on the Manor side was Israel Nestleroad's tavern near the mouth of the creek. About 1841 Edward Hess started a hotel nearby. Upon the completion of the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad in 1877, and the location of the tiny station at the foot of Main Street, Hess' establishment took the more imposing name of the Railroad House. There followed a succession of operators, among which were Ben Markley, during the second operation of the Iron Works, then Johnny Smith, Ashworth, Abe Shenk, Harry Benedict, Reuben Herr, Al Onney, and George Schmook, who was proprietor when it closed for good about 1919. Reuben Herr added the one story frame bar-room to the two story stone building during the "Low Grade" construction. The remains of the building were removed in 1929 at the start of construction of the hyroelectric project.

The Mansion House, Exchange Hotel and the Railroad House were perhaps the best known of the many hotels and taverns which, at one time or another, were operated along the creek. They, along with many less famous establishments, formed an interesting part of Safe Harbor's first hundred years.

THE MATCH FACTORY

The period 1885 to 1904 was relatively uneventful for Safe Harbor except for the operation of the Safe Harbor Match Factory. Adolph Segal of Philadelphia purchased the Iron Works property from Reeves & Son in 1894 and installed equipment for the manufacture of blue-tipped phosphorous matches in the old rolling mill. Employment was provided for many men who had been idled through the second closing of the Iron Works, although the Match Company's payroll included a large proportion of women and children as well. Blain Caldwell, now living in Conestoga, recalls that he and his two brothers worked six 12-hour days for three dollars per week. The brothers "picked splinters" while Blain carried the coils of match sticks to the paraffin dipper. At that time Julius Horowitz was local manager. The factory ceased operations around the turn of the century. Old-timers are inclined to take a somewhat dim view of the Match Company's operations and generally consider it a stock promotion scheme designed to inveigle the powerful Diamond Match Company into buying it in order to eliminate competition. No evidence has been found that indicates this to be true or that Diamond Match showed any concern. Adolph Segal later became president of the Standard Iron Mining and Furnace Company which attempted in 1903 to reopen the Magnetic Mines at Sickman's Mill four miles east of Safe Harbor. Rumors of a promotional deal seem to have surrounded this venture also, but here again substantiating evidence is lacking.³⁸

ICE AND FLOODS

With the unpredictable Susquehanna as a close neighbor, high water and ice jams were no strangers to old Safe Harbor. The record of repeated inundation and damage is long, and in studying it one gets the feeling that Safe Harbor was anything but safe for its residents. At the time of the first recorded floods on the Susquehanna in 1784 and 1786 there were few, if any, buildings along the creek. Nor do the records show that the flood of 1846, about the time that the Iron Works was getting started, caused any damage. It has already been explained how the 1865 flood washed away the navigation dam across the Susquehanna, and thus dealt a severe economic blow to the community by severing its best connection with upriver and coastal cities. Undoubtedly the flood of June 1889, a counterpart of the famous Johnstown Flood, and that of 1894, inundated parts of Safe Harbor.

The greatest damage to the community was not a result of flood waters alone, however, but rather from the combination of massive ice movements and the accompanying excessive backwater. The perennial "spring break-up" of the ice on the river has been, and probably always will be, of great concern to those who live and work along its shores. One of the early "ice freshes," as the natives have labeled them, is described in the January



March 1904 "Ice Fresh." View of Safe Harbor looking northwest across Conestoga Creek to Manor Township.

25, 1873 issue of the *Columbia Spy*. Several feet of water covered the bar-room floor of Miller's Exchange Hotel. The abutment of the bridge under construction over the Conestoga for the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad was split in two and the piers damaged. "The great masses of ice and volumes of water, still rushing upstream struck the bridge that spans the Conestoga about a mile from its mouth, lifted it from its foundation and carried it for a considerable distance upstream, finally breaking it in two and landing one-half of it on the Manor side and the other half on the Conestoga side of the stream." Ice was piled 15 to 25 feet high along the river. Rising waters behind the gorge threatened the island opposite Safe Harbor on which the John Ells family lived. Mr. Ells, his wife, two daughters, and seven year old son were forced to crawl over "this unsubstantial and treacherous bridge of irregular masses of ice" to safety on the Lancaster County shore.

Safe Harbor was also the target for Susquehanna ice in 1887 and again in 1895. A bridge with ten cars of coal placed on it for stability was swept away in the latter year. This was probably the bridge at Safe Harbor since several old residents speak of such an instance. Again in February 28, 1902 the *Columbia News* reports "Safe Harbor under water, —ice and water cause big flood."

It remained, however, for the big "Ice Fresh" of 1904 to really put Safe Harbor in the headlines. The winter of 1903-04 was exceptionally severe and very heavy ice formed over the full length of the Susquehanna

and all of its tributaries. As early as January 1904, old river men were shaking their heads and predicting a violent breakup. Newspapers kept running accounts of the situation as it developed during the following weeks, and by early March it was very evident that the predictions of the river veterans were about to come true. When the breakup did occur, the story was the same all along the river from Sunbury on down. The crushing mass of ice and the swirling waters behind it rushed downstream, damaging or wiping out one town after another. Harrisburg, Middletown, York Haven, Bainbridge, Collins, Marietta, and Columbia, all suffered severe damage. Safe Harbor, however, was dealt a knock-out blow.

Tuesday, March 8, 1904, at 1:30 in the afternoon, the ice gorge above Safe Harbor at Turkey Hill began to move. The water was already high, but the heavy movement of ice was too much for the river to carry, and it began backing up the Conestoga Creek. The stone arch bridge of the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad, completed only six years previously, was lifted up by the ice and dropped in a heap in the stream. Following the pattern of 1873, the covered highway bridge one mile above the mouth was broken in two, with one part being forced up on the Manor shore and the other on the Conestoga side. Water backed up the Conestoga as far as Slackwater and was four feet deep on the floor of the Rock Hill Hotel three and a half miles from the mouth. According to the *Columbia News* the village of Safe Harbor was almost wiped out and many people were destitute. The stores of John D. Tripple and H. M. Stauffer were completely wrecked. The machinery in the Match Factory was under water and there was four feet of water on the second story of the Exchange Hotel. Nearly all of the dwellings on both sides of the creek were either demolished or badly damaged by the huge ice cakes. In some instances residents were forced to flee their homes in boats from second story windows. Ice was piled 18 feet high on the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad. This was the worst disaster to befall Safe Harbor up to that time, the water being five feet higher than in 1873.

Fortunately, no lives were lost or serious injury suffered, but property damage was staggering and hardship cases numerous. Between fifteen and twenty families were rendered homeless and forced to seek shelter where they could, some in churches and schools, some with friends, and others moving into the empty houses of the Iron Works village on the hill. The *Lancaster New Era* carried a strong appeal to outsiders for aid. The response was prompt and a relief committee composed of H. M. Stauffer, John D. Tripple, Squire H. M. Kurtz, and other prominent residents was formed to receive all contributions of food and money and disburse it where most needed.

For the next several Sundays Safe Harbor was a mecca for visitors. Large delegations walked down the tracks from Columbia. Lancastrians rode the trolley to Millersville, and from there it was either a walk over muddy roads or paying fifty cents to a dollar for a round trip in a wagon.

As late as the first week in April there was still too much ice around some of the houses to fully determine the extent of the damage. At that time the railroad tracks had been nearly cleared and the temporary railroad trestle was about half completed. With the highway bridge gone, residents used rowboats or patronized the temporary ferry that operated just downstream from the bridge site. Photographs taken 44 days after the flood still showed ice piled along the roads and houses. Many old residents now living recall vividly the flood and its aftermath. Mrs. Daniel Everhart remembers crossing the creek by boat in July and seeing chunks of ice emerging from the mud.

TRANSPORTATION

While water-borne traffic seemed to offer the principal means of connecting old Safe Harbor with the outside world, travel by land was not entirely lacking. Horse drawn stages to Lancaster and Millersville entered the picture early. *The Lancaster Examiner & Herald* of December 24, 1856 carried this notice:

Mr. Malhorn has started a new stage line between this city and Safe Harbor. It leaves Hess's Tavern on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7 A.M. and leaves C. Shenk's in city Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 2 P.M.

Apparently round trip passengers were expected to spend the night at either terminal. Business, however, must have picked up as this advertisement appeared in the March 18, 1857 issue of the *Examiner & Herald*:

Stages daily from Hess's Mansion House at 7 A.M. Leave Lancaster at 1 P.M. from C. Shenk's and Cooper's Hotels.

During the late 1800's and early 1900's the Safe Harbor-Millersville stage was operated by David Herr of Millersville. The stage was drawn by two horses and could carry fifteen to twenty passengers seated on side benches. The Exchange Hotel was the Safe Harbor terminal. Dave was a great favorite of the village children and several former residents recall his friendliness to small fry. The Millersville-Pequea trolley did not provide a direct connection to Safe Harbor but it was still a much used means of getting close enough so that a three or four mile walk would complete the trip.

July 1, 1877 was a big day transportation-wise for Safe Harbor. The first passenger train on the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad rolled to a stop at the tiny new station and thereby placed Safe Harbor on the nation's railroad map. Construction of the forty mile line along the east bank of the river had been under way for several years. Extensive rock excavation was necessary and many bridges had to be erected. The coming of the railroad provided much needed transportation for Safe Harbor and was a major factor in the reopening of the Iron Works in 1879. It can also be said with assurance that it permitted the village residents to "take the cars"

to any place in the nation and relieved them of sole dependence on horse-drawn stages. Passenger service terminated on January 27, 1935, a victim of the automobile age. However, the line is still an important link for freight traffic in the Pennsylvania Railroad system.

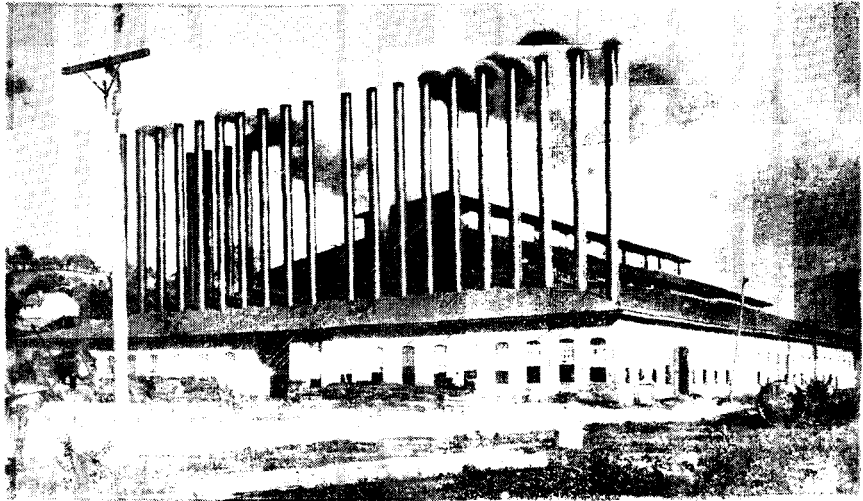
Compared to present day standards, travel in and out of old Safe Harbor was not easy, but perhaps not as difficult as inferred by Mrs. Daniel Everhart's mother who remarked that, "Safe Harbor is so safe you can't get out of it."

THE "LOW GRADE" LINE

Around the turn of the century the management of the expanding Pennsylvania Railroad conceived the idea of a low grade freight line from the eastern seaboard to the middle west. Plans crystallized in 1902 for a 139½ mile route from Marysville, across the river from Harrisburg, to Morrisville, on the Delaware River opposite Trenton. That portion from Marysville to Parkesburg was called the Atglen & Susquehanna Branch. Construction started in 1903 and service inaugurated August 10, 1906. *Railway Age*, June 2, 1905, states, "the hardest piece of work is at Safe Harbor where considerable rock has to be removed. At that point will be erected a viaduct 130 feet high." Many an old-timer who helped build this section will say "Amen" to that. Literally, a shelf had to be cut into an almost sheer rock cliff above the existing C.&P.D. line over the full distance from Creswell, five miles above Safe Harbor, to Shenk's Ferry, two miles below, where the line turns east and inland.³⁹

Originally, the work was awarded to two contractors, Moran and Hassett in the Creswell area, and Charles A. Simms at Safe Harbor. Apparently progress by these two firms was too slow for the railroad and in 1904 a new contract for both sections was given to H. S. Kerbaugh, who had acquired a good reputation for heavy earth and rock excavation. Kerbaugh brought in modern equipment such as steam shovels, tripod drills, well drills, and made extensive use of dynamite. The old rolling mill, later the match factory, was converted into a machine shop and air compressor house. A battery of twenty coal-fired boilers supplied steam to drive the huge air compressors. The compressed air was carried through a six-inch pipe down the creek to the river where it split, one section running north to Creswell, and the other south to Shenk's Ferry. Connections were made along the route for the drills used to bore holes in the rock for dynamite charges.

Kerbaugh worked fast. In the absence of present day automotive equipment, he made lavish use of horses. A stable was built on the Manor side and the creek spanned with two temporary bridges to provide easy access between the working areas on both sides of the creek. The old Iron Works' company store, the building with the four-faced clock in the tower,



H. S. Kerbaugh Air Compressor House and Machine Shop about 1905. This was the Rolling Mill for the Safe Harbor Iron Works 1848-1865 and housed the Safe Harbor Match Factory 1894 to about 1903.

served as his headquarters. The late Frank B. Kreider of Lancaster was boss of the timekeepers for Kerbaugh and recalled that at the peak of construction he helped pay over 2000 men in a day. Pay-day was largely an open-air event on the banks of the Conestoga. The major portion of the laborers were immigrants from Italy, Turkey, Syria, and other south-eastern European countries, who were taken directly from incoming boats to the job. It was hard, dangerous work and C. E. Miller of Millersville, Harry Sourbeer of Pequea, and Daniel Everhart of Safe Harbor all say getting the job done was the thing; safety was secondary. As a consequence, accidents were numerous and the loss of life heavy. Farmers in the area claimed the blasting by Kerbaugh was responsible for wells going dry. Rather than become involved in costly court proceedings, he used his equipment and men to drill new wells for the complainants.

The construction of the low grade line was a boon to Safe Harbor economy which had just been staggered by the 1904 "ice fresh." Those houses in the Iron Works village which had become empty were soon taken over by the railroad workers, and shacks and cottages sprang up on the hillsides and surrounding valleys in all directions. The hotels once more did a thriving business. This period of intense activity came to an end with the completion of the line in 1906. Except for a few, the workers moved on to other jobs, many to McCalls Ferry, eight miles downriver, where construction of the first of the three large hydroelectric projects on the lower river was just getting under way. This was the Holtwood development, now owned by the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company.

OTHER FLOODS

After the completion of the "Low Grade Line" Safe Harbor again lapsed into a period of inactivity. The Susquehanna, however, was not through tormenting the place. Again the *Columbia News* is the chronicler of the river's deeds. The March 20, 1905 issue reports that the ice gorge above Safe Harbor broke, shoving ice up into the creek. The new railroad trestle across the Conestoga was carried away, likewise the foot bridge and the one for teams built by Kerbaugh. In the January 27, 1909 issue, water was reported rising rapidly, coming within a few feet of the bar-room of Al Onney's Railroad House and causing people to start removing furniture. January, 1911, six feet of water was running over the public road in the town. H. M. Stauffer's lumber and coal yard was covered with ice and ice surrounded his store building. On the Manor side the ice was at front doors of many homes and Al Onney's hotel and wagon shed had considerable ice against them. March 1, 1912, water was almost to the second floors of the houses; Stauffer's coal yard was completely inundated; water covered the public roads on both sides of the Conestoga as far as the county bridge. January, 1915, water was backed up the creek, covering the roads on both sides. Seventeen houses were flooded and their occupants were taking safety elsewhere, and once again Stauffer's store was covered.

Two years of good behavior seemed to be about all of which the Susquehanna was capable, for in 1918, Safe Harbor was flooded to a record depth, exceeding the 1904 high water mark by nearly four feet. A gorge in the river at Pequea was responsible. The lower end of the village was almost entirely submerged. Many houses were battered to pieces and trees uprooted by floating ice. Thrilling rescues were common, but perhaps the most memorable was that of Darwin Groff, Michael Henry and his ten year old son, Garvin. While attempting to cross the creek in a small boat at the height of the flood, their craft was dashed against a partially submerged tree and upset. The two men and the boy managed to crawl up on the offending tree from which they were rescued two hours later in an almost frozen condition. This was the last of the big floods at Safe Harbor, although on several occasions, such as 1920 and 1925, cellars were flooded and residents were prepared to flee.⁴⁰

ALMOST A GHOST TOWN

With no industry left in the village, and the Susquehanna either flooding or threatening to flood the area almost every year, it is understandable that new business should shy away, and that long-time residents should seek greener and safer pastures elsewhere. Beginning about 1907, the community gradually went into decline. Many of the buildings of the Iron Works and other enterprises were razed. The largest building, the rolling mill,

was torn down about 1909. About the same time the company store building was razed and the four-faced tower clock sold to the Borough of Mountville for use on top of their town hall. This move aroused the remaining citizens of Safe Harbor to loud protest, as it was claimed that the clock had been purchased and installed by popular subscription. The Iron Works village houses and other miscellaneous buildings had been acquired by William Anderson. He sold the houses for about \$40 each without the land and with the buyer required to remove the buildings. Wood from these houses was used in the building of many dwellings and barns still standing in the vicinity. Other houses and buildings near the creek fell into disuse with repeated floodings and were finally razed. Even the hotels were closing for lack of business and those that attempted to continue finally called it quits with the coming of national prohibition. The Railroad House was the last to go.

Only two churches, the Methodist and Green Hill, remained. All of the fraternal orders had either removed to other localities or ceased to function. The small school next to the Odd Fellows Hall was large enough for the entire population on the Conestoga side. Fishermen still came for sport, but there was no commercial fishing. An aura of lassitude settled over the once bustling community that had reckoned with the boisterous river and canal men, had seen its days and nights lighted up by the fires of the blast furnace and rolling mill, and had helped build the most difficult part of a vital link in the nation's railroad net. But it was not to be a permanent quietness.

THE ELECTRIC POWER ERA

In the late 1920's, strangers appeared in the area with offers to buy property. Rumors quickly spread that some sort of project was in the offing. In the fall of 1929, excitement was high over newspaper announcements that a huge hydroelectric dam was to be built across the Susquehanna at Safe Harbor. Headlines such as "Deserted Village Again On The Map" appeared. The project was the result of many years of planning by the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company, builders of the Holtwood project eight miles downstream. A new company was formed, the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, with Pennsylvania Water & Power Company owning one third of the common stock, and the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company the other two thirds. Decision to start the project in 1929 was made after two officials, J. E. Aldred and J. A. Walls, had returned from an extensive European trip, during which they learned that bankers and government officials there were already looking with alarm at the speculation being indulged in over here. Withdrawals of European funds were occurring in greater and greater amounts. A recession appeared imminent and Aldred, who had a reputation for having foresight and taking risks, convinced the other officials of the two sponsor companies that this was the time to undertake a costly investment such as the one planned for Safe Harbor.

The bond issue for the new company was successfully launched just prior to the 1929 stock market crash. Mr. Walls, former president of both Pennsylvania Water & Power Company and Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, recalls today that the "comforting" name of Safe Harbor in that time of financial uncertainty and distress had much to do with the success of the issue. He remembers overhearing a bond salesman gloat over the help that the name had given him. The stock market crash of "Black Tuesday" in October, 1929, presented reason enough to cancel or postpone plans for the project. It required considerable courage and faith in the future for Aldred, Walls, and Charles E. F. Clarke, the first president of the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, to proceed with the work in the face of these conditions. For Lancaster and York Counties, this was a fortunate decision indeed, for the much needed jobs and the heavy material purchases were a boost to a sagging economy.

During the major construction period, 1930-1932, Safe Harbor attained its greatest population when over 4,200 men, representing nearly all the principal construction trades, were employed on the project. Many lived in the temporary dormitories erected by the company on the Manor side of the creek. Others built shacks in the surrounding hills and valleys, and still others found living quarters with families nearby and in Lancaster. The second floor of the Odd Fellows Hall was converted into a dormitory, and many people with large houses offered board and room. The entire area on both sides of the creek was now spotted with various temporary construction buildings, laced through with 20 miles of railroad spur track connected to the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad.

Echoing back to 1851, the finger of accusation was once again pointed at Safe Harbor residents, or more accurately, at some of the rougher fringe element that nearly always attaches itself to large construction camps. The *Lancaster New Era* of May 7, 1930, reported that a committee of citizens of Conestoga Township had sent a petition to District Attorney Hosterman and the Judges of Lancaster County charging that "bootleg whiskey is being sold openly and freely and that gambling is rampant" in the vicinity of the new Safe Harbor dam. The petitioners were thankful for the good work of the State Police but urged the use of plain clothesmen "to get behind the scenes" to arrest key offenders. In conclusion the District Attorney and Judges were asked to "put forth an earnest effort to see that all offenders be punished with a prison sentence and to the fullest extent of the law."

Active construction in the river began April 1, 1930, and only twenty months later, on December 7, 1931, the first power from one of the generators started flowing over the new transmission line to Baltimore. By 1934, six generators were operating and a seventh was added in 1940 to increase the plant capacity to 230,000 kilowatts, which makes it the second largest investor-owned hydroelectric plant in the nation. The largest is the Philadelphia Electric Company plant at Conowingo, also on the Susuehanna just below the Maryland state line. These two plants together with Holt-

wood have a combined capacity of nearly 600,000 kilowatts and the dams have created 32 miles of lakes on the lower river. In 1955 the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company was merged into the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, and in conjunction with this move the latter company acquired one third of the common stock of the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company still retaining its two thirds share.

The last turbulent period for Safe Harbor came to an end with the completion of the hydro plant and dam and the community became a quiet and pleasant place in which to live. With little apparent effort almost one billion kilowatt hours of electric power are generated each year and fed into the network of transmission lines supplying eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. Many of the employees of the power company live in the modern company-owned village on the hill east of the Conestoga Creek high above any probable flood waters. Twenty-one English-style brick homes, plus two apartment houses, a dormitory, dining hall, and office building are located just a few hundred yards south of the site of the old Iron Works village.

RIVER COAL

Another new operation was started in Safe Harbor in 1954. It, too, is associated with the generation of electric power. Approximately a half million tons of small size anthracite coal are recovered from the lake above the Safe Harbor dam by the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company. The fine coal particles have been eroded into the Susquehanna and some of its tributaries from the famous Pennsylvania anthracite coal fields. Through the years these particles have been carried and rolled by the river waters over a hundred miles to settle out in the relatively quiet waters behind the dam. The coal is mixed with sand and mud so that after being dredged and transported to Safe Harbor by barge, the usable coal must be separated from the silt at the processing plant on the hill between the river and the creek in Manor Township. The moisture content of the recovered coal is reduced in the centrifuge plant along the creek on the Conestoga side, not too far from the site of the old rolling mill. The finished product is hauled by railroad to Holtwood where it is burned in the company's steam electric plant. Thus the river is doing double duty in promoting the generation of electric power by first bringing in coal for the steam stations and then permitting itself to be sent through the turbines of the hydro station. For the third time the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad has served a Safe Harbor industry.

TODAY'S REMINDERS OF OLD SAFE HARBOR

For the most part, the reminders of Safe Harbor's earlier industrial era have been erased. Still remaining, however, are the walls of the foundry building, and until 1953, the blast furnace stood as another monument to the iron making period. The walls of the Catholic Church are com-

pletely surrounded by woods. Large trees are growing within the walls, and some have deflected a bit through the window openings to continue their growth outside the walls. The adjacent cemetery has recently been taken under care by the young people of St. Mary's Church of Lancaster and the long-time growth of underbrush is being cut away. Some of the cellar excavations for the old Iron Works village houses can still be seen. In front of two on Spring Street, carefully placed rock borders remain as a reminder of the love some former housewife had for her lawn or flower plot. Other cellar excavations and some of the old village streets have been leveled and made part of the arboretum for native trees by the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation. Paul M. Hess, present manager of the corporation, lives in the large stone house built in the 1700's and which was traditionally the home of the Iron Works' superintendents. Only two of the original Iron Works village houses still stand. They are on Mill Street. Along the road to Conestoga and east of the superintendent's house are two houses of early vintage, the former homes of Alonzo Hudson and Christian Herr. The navigation lock at Dam No. 6 on the Conestoga is in good condition and can be seen north of the county bridge.

The former Odd Fellows' Hall is in good condition and just as handsome as it was during its period of greatest use in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Daniel W. Everhart, who was watchman during the Low Grade construction, and Mrs. Everhart, who was born on Cedar Street of old Safe Harbor, purchased the building in 1951 and live on the first floor. On the second floor traces remain of the partitions placed in the former auditorium to convert it into a rooming house for construction workers on the hydro project of 1930-1932. On the third floor, the four canopies for the officers of the Odd Fellows and the initiation coffin are still in place in the meeting room. The peephole with its sliding cover in the door between the anteroom and the hall for recognizing visitors is still in working order. The benches on which the Lodge brothers sat during meetings are gone and some found further service in the old Mystic Chain Hall in Conestoga.

The Methodist Church on the Manor side is the only remaining place of worship in Safe Harbor proper. It is part of the Safe Harbor-Colemanville Circuit and still serves the community with church services and Sunday School every week. The present minister is Rev. Albert Frank, ably assisted by Leo Smith of Conestoga. Next to the church is the old Tripple home which at one time was also a store. Near the end of the bridge on the Manor side are the remains of the foundations and the headrace for Witmer's Grist Mill, formerly A. Miller's, and later Tripple and Taylor. Only two houses remain of the many that lined the creek on the Manor side. West of the creek on the hillside, Jacob Miller, who had hoped the name of Millerport would live after him, sleeps peacefully beside the ruins of his old home. Further down the hill the family burial plot of Christian Gerber lies almost completely lost in a jungle of overgrowth.

The story of Safe Harbor has been one of ups and downs, but through it all water has played an important part. Without water there would have been no fisheries, neither would there have been any river or canal navigation, and it is doubtful that the Iron Works could have operated without the water-borne transportation and access to water for its boilers. Water, however, particularly in the solid form of ice, was largely instrumental in destroying old Safe Harbor. It seems appropriate that at last the Susquehanna waters have been put to work, and the threat of damage to the lower section of Conestoga Creek by ice eliminated.

The river, while serving the east as a source of hydro power and providing coal for steam electric power, has become something of a recreational center. Over fifteen thousand fishermen use the facilities at the dam each year, while uncounted others prefer to fish from the rocks along the river and along the less precipitous banks of the Conestoga. Nearly twenty thousand visitors inspect the hydro plant every year and another twenty thousand use the picnic grounds provided by the power company in the same area where the iron workers toiled a century ago. Others use the new recreational area above the navigation lock sponsored by the Conestoga Valley Association. So after a century and a half of turbulent existence, quietness has again settled over the area. Perhaps one can now say, Safe Harbor is safe after all.

Conestoga, Pennsylvania

ERNEST T. SCHULEEN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernest T. Schuleen was born in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1902. He was educated in the public schools in Sioux City and received a degree in Civil Engineering in 1926, and a Master of Science degree with a major in Hydraulics in 1927, both from the University of Iowa. Four years in Pittsburgh, working on hydroelectric projects, were divided between the West Penn Power Company and the Aluminum Company of America. He arrived in Lancaster County in 1931 where he became associated with the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company and the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation as Hydraulic Test Engineer and later Hydrographic Engineer. At present he is Assistant to the Manager for the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation.

Mr. Schuleen lives in Safe Harbor. While his work is largely centered around the use of the Susquehanna River waters for generating electric power, his interest in the history of the community was aroused through his reading and his discussions with old residents.

He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the National Society of Professional Engineers, the American Geophysical Union, the Conestoga Lions Club and is an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster. He is a member of the Lancaster County Historical Society.

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