

Donegal Mills: A Case Study In Historical Geography

by Arthur C. Lord

Today Donegal Mills is a refurbished estate in East Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. There is a fascinating story behind these relics of yesterday which still stand; the Mill, the Mansion House, the Miller's House, the Carriage Shed, the Bake House, and the Head and Tail Races. It is a story about people, their births, hardships, lives, religion and deaths. It is also a story about the economic development, streams and water power, land, wealth and trade. For over two-hundred-and-fifty years Donegal Mills has reflected the times and has been a part of Lancaster County's heritage.

Donegal Mills is located in the rolling hills of East Donegal Township, some two miles north of the Susquehanna River. This region is blessed today with fertile limestone soil and is excellent farmland. Little is known about this area during the Indian Occupation, but Samuel Evans does offer the following description of the area and comments about the first settlement:

The land along Chikes Creek, and much of that embraced within the present limits of East Donegal, was termed "barren" land, for the reason that the Indians had destroyed, by their annual fires, all of the timber on higher and rolling land, upon which there was a thick growth of hickory and oak saplings and underbrush. By 1730 this land had been all taken up. '1

The actual site of Donegal Mills is in a valley at the junction of the Donegal Creek's two branches, on Trout Run Road. The boundaries have been changed many times throughout the years, but the major portion of the land slopes up from the streams to the west, to hills which rise from forty to sixty feet above stream level. The waters of the Donegal Creeks and the location of several flowing springs seem good indications of why this site was first selected to establish a pioneer homestead, and then later as a water-powered industrial site.

THE BEGINNING: 1720 to 1784

Samuel Evans stated that, "this township was named from Donegal, a county in the north of Ireland, whence came the pioneer settlers and located near Chikis Creek in the year 1716."² Because of their disregard for Penn's land agents, these Scotch-Irish Presbyterians created many problems for those interested in researching the early history of northwestern Lancaster County.

Having been invited to come to the province and settle they took Penn at his word, and when they landed at New Castle or Philadelphia, they tarried not to hunt the land Commissioner's office to inquire about land warrants, but at once proceeded to settle upon land unsurveyed, and a number of miles further west than the then frontiers; and when firmly established they declined to take out any patents for the land, and particularly those that required an annual payment of a ground-rent to the proprietors.³

Thus, there is little factual data on which to base the date of the first settlement and these Scotch-Irish were, in fact, illegal squatters. Evans claims that the Galbraiths and John Mitchell settled on the Donegal Creek as early as 1718, and that John Galbraith was operating a grist and saw mill on the north side of the Mount Joy-Marietta Turnpike, a half mile south of Donegal Mills, in 1721.

The Penns were highly concerned about these illegal settlements and the resulting loss of revenue. The following letter by Thomas Penn to Secretary James Logan illustrates this concern, and establishes the conditions under which the first land survey and land purchases came about:

Philadelphia, 24th Jan'y 1733

Loving Friend, - Having considered the terms I am willing to offer to the Inhabitants of the township under thy Care North of Donegal, as the people are generally unable to pay money, I shall agree that from the first Day of March next, three years and a half shall be allowed them to provide 15 £ 10 shillings for each hundred acres & that no Interest shall, at the expiration of that time, be demanded for the Delay; That one-half penny an acre, Sterl. money shall be reserved for the quitrent, & that no persons, who shall hereafter settle on the Lands in Your County, shall be entitled to any such length of time, but that all persons settling with out proper authority shall be removed.

I am

Thy loving friend
Tho. Penn⁴

The Penns' stand against the unauthorized settlement of the land seemed to have an effect on the attitude of the Scotch-Irish, because as the years passed and properties increased in value through improvements made, the squatters became interested in obtaining a title to their land. Under the leadership of Rev. James Anderson, the minister of the Donegal Springs Church, letters were exchanged with the Penns. The Penns wanted their money for the land, and the Scotch-Irish now wanted warrants for their land. As a result, "Samuel Blunston, register of the county, was appointed by Thomas Penn in April 1736, deputy surveyor for the townships of Derry, Hempfield, Donegal, and Lebanon." This survey was the first attempt to establish legal boundaries and the ownership of specific parcels of land which had been settled almost eighteen years before.

The first indication of ownership and description of the Donegal Mills was a result of that survey.

By order of the Proprietary Survey's the eighth day of April 1736 to David Byers a Tract of Land in the Township of Donegal in Lancaster County BEGINNING at a Marked Black Oak a Corner of John Galbraith's Land thence North East 292 perches to a White Oak thence North 3 deg West 56 per thence South 75½ D West 127 p to a post thence North 78½ D West 139 p to a White Oak thence South 15 Degrees East 58 p thence South 4 D West 245 p to a post post thence East 40 p to a B Oak thence S 70 E. 29 p to the place of the Beginning Containing 332 Acres & the usual allowance for Roads etc.

Survey'd by
Sa. Blunston

A Warrant dated 24th of Octob'r 1739
to accept Survey.⁶

The first owner of the Donegal Mills, David Byers, remains a mystery. He is listed in none of the Lancaster County histories and is buried in none of the local graveyards. The neighbors, whose lands surrounded Byers' land, John and Andrew Galbraith, Lazarus and John Lowery, The Rev. James Anderson, William and Richard Allison, and James Mitchell, are famous and well documented in all local histories, but poor David Byers is ignored. Even in the plat map of East Donegal showing the original surveys (Original Approved by an Act of the Assembly, 13, June 1907) Byers is omitted and credit for the first ownership goes to John Willson in a warrant dated September 15, 1762.

However, David Byers was apparently the first settler and probably had squatted on the land as early as 1720. Down stream John Galbraith was credited by Evans as being on the land by 1718, and up stream was Richard Allison who is also credited by Evans as being there in 1722. We can therefore assume that Byers was there by approximately 1720. Little is known about Byers in those early years, except that the land was surveyed for him in April 1736, and that the warrant for the land dated October 24th 1739 included the 332 acres mentioned in the survey for which he paid 15 pounds and 10 shillings per 100 acres and ½ penny quitrent.⁷ The next mention of Byers is found

in the first Donegal Tax list,⁸ which can be located today and showed that he was taxed two shillings and a six pence in 1751. In the earliest Assessment List to be found, 1756, Byers is listed as paying a tax on 50 acres of land, 2 acres in grain, 2 horses, and 2 cows. By 1759 he had increased his tax base and he now was taxed on 159 acres, 50 acres improved, 8 acres sown in grain, 2 horses, 2 cows, and 4 sheep. The last data that we have on Byers is that he died intestate in 1762 leaving sons David and John and daughters Jane Smith, wife of Thomas Smith, and Martha Campbell, widow.⁹ The four children sold the property to John Willson on September 17, 1762. David Byers owned the property from October 24, 1739 until his death in 1762, and occupied it for about forty years, from approximately 1720 until 1762.

So, little is known about this first settler who was ignored by the historians, but who lived on the property for over forty years. We do know that his 159 acres, 50 acres improved, 8 acres in grain, 2 horses, 2 cows, and 4 sheep compare well with the average Donegal farm in 1759, which had 131 acres, 41.5 acres improved, 6.8 sown in grain, 2.7 horses, 3.9 cows, and 3.7 sheep.¹⁰ Byers' farm was above average in size, improved acres, and acres in grain and a little below average in the number of horses, cows, and sheep. One thing that remains in question is: why, when he owned 332 acres was he assessed on only 50 acres in 1756, and on only 159 acres in 1759. Although nothing else is known, we may assume that he was an average farmer who lived on a pioneer homestead with a log house and a small log barn.

The second owners of Donegal Mills were apparently speculators who never lived on the property. John and Martha Willson, of York, purchased the property from David Byers' heirs. Willson had requested a resurvey of the property which resulted in minor changes in the description of the property and an increase in the acreage. The property now consisted of 342½ acres plus the usual 6 acres for roads. Willson purchased the property on September 17, 1762 and resold it 22 days later to George and Martha Clingen.

George and Martha Clingen were the third owners but actually the second occupants of the property. In spite of the fact that they owned the property for over ten years, little is known of the Clingens. The only documentation we have of their ownership are the tax and assessment lists of 1769-1771. They show that in 1769 Clingen was assessed on 300 acres, 3 horses, 4 cattle, and 10 sheep; in 1770 on 200 acres, 3 horses, 4 cattle, and no sheep; and in 1771 on 300 acres, 3 horses, and 3 cattle. Not much really for a family who lived there for over 10 years. There apparently wasn't much change since the period of ownership by Byers and it remained a pioneer farm.

Abraham and Barbara Stouffer purchased the property from the Clingens on May 6, 1773. The first real changes in the patterns of Donegal Mills occurred under Stouffer's ownership. Stouffer represented one of the first farmers of Germanic decent to move into the pre-

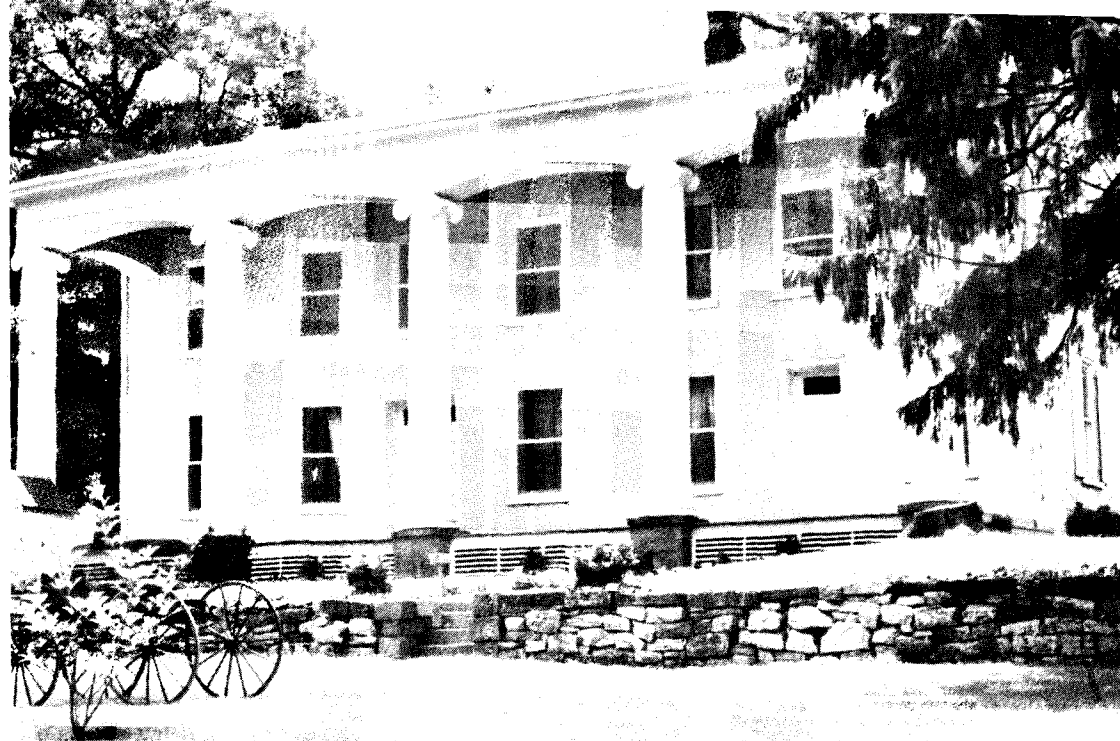


Figure 1. Mansion House of Donegal Mills

dominately Scotch-Irish stronghold. Stouffer was probably a Mennonite but no proof has yet been found that he was. Examination of the assessment list of 1775 shows that Stouffer was assessed on 140 acres, 2 horses, and 4 cattle. This was no great change from the rural farm pattern set by Byers and Clingen. The second great change was the building of mills on the site, which must have occurred before 1779, since Stouffer was then assessed on 175 acres of land, 4 horses, 3 cattle, and 2 mills. Thus, Stouffer must have built the first mill between 1775 and 1779 because it is not shown on the 1775 list, but is listed on the 1779 assessment lists. This is the very first mention of a mill and the beginning of a period of milling which lasted until 1925, the Donegal Mills.

A mill used during this period is usually a water-powered operation, with the same water wheel providing the power for the operation of both a grist and a saw mill. Other operations may have also included clover milling, oil milling, or the operation of a bellows for a blacksmith shop. Water power being the only power available at this period with the exception of man or animal power. At the Donegal Mills there was usually a grist mill and saw mill in operation regardless of whether it was listed as a mill or mills.

During the last half of the 18th Century and the first half of the 19th Century this change from pioneer farming to rural industry occurred many times in Lancaster County and created a new monied-aristocracy. All this was the result of the introduction of water-power to a site. These mill sites became important locations and were often the focus for the creation of road systems. A check of early maps and

atlases illustrates that the mill and the bridge by it were often the focal point of many of the villages and boroughs in the county. The mill and covered bridge may be long gone, but the road system and the village remain. That the miller made money is obvious to anyone who observes the collection of buildings which developed at the mill site and the services that these buildings offered. The size and grandure of the "Big House" or "Mansion House" built by the millers of this period is another measure of the wealth produced by this form of rural industry.

While Donegal Mills never became the center of a village or the focus of a highway system because of its relatively late start, the collection of buildings and the services offered by these buildings made it the center of local economic activity. The "Mansion House," the taxes paid, the other properties purchased, and the presence of servants all attest to the fact that this was a successful operation. In 1783 Stouffer was assessed on 262 acres, five horses, eight cattle, a grist and saw mill, two stills, and a servant — all of which made him a very well-to-do individual in Donegal for that period. A new era of prosperity had arrived at Donegal Mills.

Stouffer must be given credit for starting the rural industry at the Donegal Mills, but he sold out to Jacob Kraybill on November 20, 1784, after owning the property for only 11 years, 6 months, and 14 days. The property that Stouffer sold to Jacob Kraybill was not the entire 342½ acres, because for the first time, the acreage and the shape of the property had changed. The 76 adjoining acres to the north of the original purchase, containing the dam and head race, which Stouffer had just inherited and the eastern most 201½ acres of the original property, including the mill site, were sold to Jacob Kraybill. The property now totaled 277½ acres and became the Donegal Mills — the "home place" for three generations of Kraybills.

THE KRAYBILL YEARS: 1784-1870

The Kraybill years were the glory years for Donegal Mills as well as for the milling industry of southeastern Pennsylvania, and it was during these years that water-powered industries were at their highest level of development and that agriculture in Pennsylvania, wheat in particular, was of great importance to the state's economy.

There were basically two kinds of mills in those years. The first known as the custom mill was a small mill which served the local area with the production of flour, feed, and lumber. The second was the merchant mill, which depended on the importation of grain, milled the flour, and then sold it in the ports of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Wilmington, a purely commercial activity. The merchant mills were the larger mills and the ones to reach the highest peak of development during this period. Fletcher in his "Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life" states that "Wheat dominated Pennsylvania farming until 1840, when livestock gradually supplanted it. In 1840 Pennsyl-

vania produced one-sixth of the wheat crop of the nation,"¹¹ and that:

Before railroads were built, great quantities of wheat from farms along the Susquehanna and its tributaries were floated down the river in arks and other crafts destined for Baltimore or Philadelphia. If for later market, it was transferred to Conestoga Wagons at Middletown or Columbia . . . The millers of the surrounding country usually buy it there and grind it into flour and send it to Philadelphia.¹²

Reference to the mills at Donegal Mills as merchant mills make it clear that quite a bit of its trade was like that described in the above quotation.

The name Kraybill was spelled many ways: Kreibiel, Kreybill, Greybill, or Graybill were the most common alternates, but many other variations do occur. In fact, nearly every deed, will, or tax list seems to reflect a different variation in the spelling. But no matter how it was spelled, Jacob Kraybill was the man who developed the Donegal Mills, and during the 19th century the local term describing the property was that of the Kraybill Mills.

"Jacob Kreibiel (Kraybill) of the Township of Rapho and County of Lancaster aforesaid Miller . . ." purchased from Abraham and Barbara Stouffer on November 20, 1784, the 277½ acres of land and the mills for 3,750 Pounds. This deed identifies Kraybill as a miller and as being from Rapho Township. The assessment lists for Rapho show that a Jacob Greybill owned a mill in 1780, 1783, and 1784. The Lancaster County Deed Book has an entry showing that Peter Grubb, Iron Master, of Warwick Township, on October 22, 1784, purchased 212¼ acres of land and a mill from Jacob and Elizabeth Kraybill for 3,000 Pounds. It was upon this site that Grubb built the Mount Hope Furnace. Then it was only 28 days later that Jacob and Elizabeth Kraybill purchased the new mill from Stouffer, the Donegal Mills.

Jacob Kraybill was born in 1743 making him 41 years of age when he sold out to Grubb in Rapho Township and moved his family to Donegal. His first wife, Barbara Kilheffer had died, and he married Elizabeth Delabaugh sometime between 1777, when Barbara died, and 1782. Jacob, Jr., was born on January 28, 1783. Of Jacob's nine children, we know that Maria was the daughter of Barbara and that Jacob, Jr., Peter, Christian were all sons of Elizabeth. The other five children were girls: Anna, Barbara, Elizabeth, Magdalena, and Catherine. Although we don't know their birth dates or who their mother was, they all grew up on the property and all married. During Jacob's tenure, the nine children were raised at the Donegal Mills.¹³

Assessment lists for the years 1785 to 1789 show the continuation of a situation similar to that of Stouffer; 277 acres, 4 horses, 4 or 5 cattle, mills, and a servant. The first description of the buildings on the site appeared with the Direct Tax of 1798. The buildings were described as follows: A Stone Mill, 36 by 30 feet; A Stone House, 2

stories, 37 by 33 feet; A Barn of Stone, 75 by 30 feet; and A Stone Kitchen, 15 by 12 feet.¹⁴

The stone mill, 36 by 30 feet, was the first mill on the site and was built between 1775 and 1779, and did not appear on the assessment list for 1775, but did appear on the 1779 list. Unfortunately, the lists for the three years between are missing and one cannot estimate it any more accurately than that. Klein states in his "A History of Lancaster County" that the mill stood across the road from the present mill. Examination of the remnants of the head race, tail race, and the old foundation stones also seem to indicate that it stood across the road and to the east of present miller's house. This was the mill built by Abraham Stouffer and purchased by Kraybill in 1784.¹⁵

The house listed as being stone, 37 by 33 feet and two stories high, fits the description of the current Mansion House before the northeast addition was built. The date it was built and who built it still remains a mystery. It could have been built by Stouffer, but was probably built by Kraybill between 1784 and 1798. Unfortunately, there is no visible datestone and though one may be present under the stucco, it has not as yet been found. (Figure 1)

The stone barn, 75 by 30 feet, was a large barn for that period. According to a sample taken in eight townships and the southwest ward of Lancaster Borough, the average-size barn for Lancaster County in 1798 was 59.1 by 26.9 feet, and only 21.2% of them were stone.¹⁶ This is yet another illustration that farming and milling at the Donegal Mills were successful operations.

The last building indicated is the stone kitchen, 15 by 12 feet. There is no stone kitchen remaining today, nor was one ever again recorded. The Mansion House does have a 15 by 12 kitchen wing, but it is frame not stone. Could there have been an error in material or might the frame kitchen wing have replaced an older stone kitchen? We know by examination of the interior wall and the cellar construction that the kitchen wing was a later addition.

In summary, we know that Stouffer built the mill, but do not know whether Stouffer or Kraybill built the house, barn, and kitchen. We do know that they were present in 1798 and what the sizes and building materials were. The fact that stone was used and the size of the building are again good indications of the economic success of both the mill and the farm.

Between 1800 and 1810 the successful operation of the 277½ acre "Home Place" farm and the grist and saw mill continued. Jacob added to his holdings so that each of his sons could be provided with property. He purchased the "Sterret Place" to the north of his holdings and the "Bayly Place" to the south for that express purpose. The last assessment list of Jacob's property, 1808, listed him as being taxed on 686 acres of land.

Jacob died on December 27, 1810 at the age of 67, leaving his 56 year old widow, Elizabeth, and 9 children. Jacob had owned the property for 25 years, 3 months, and 29 days. As evidence of how successful the operation of the farms, grist and saw mills were during these years, Jacob willed his son, Jacob, Jr., the 277½ acre "Home Place" and the mills; to his son, Peter, the "Starret Place;" to his son, Christian, the "Bayly Place;" and provided each of his six daughters with household furnishings and 200 Pounds (\$534.00), and directed that each was to receive 800 pounds more from the sons until she had received a total of 1000 pounds (\$2670.00). His wife received 400 pounds (\$1068.00) from the cash on hand, and all moneys owed Jacob, all household furnishings, and her yearly needs for food, wood, and water were to be provided for her by Jacob, Jr., the inheritor of the mill. To the Old Congregation of Mennonists he gave a parcel of land, 5 by 15 perches (82.5 by 247.5 feet) for a meeting house and cemetery and contributed 40 dollars toward the building in his sons names.

Jacob Kraybill is buried a short distance north of the mill site in the Kraybill Church Cemetery, the land he gave to the Church. In the will is a clause which sheds light on the character of this early Mennonite farmer and miller in terms of his relationship to his Church and to the happiness of his children:

... if any one of my children should marry or if already married to one not belonging to our Society (they) should only have half part of his share (to wit) five hundred pounds in money But if six out of nine children should agree that the one married in manner aforesaid should have his whole share then I am well satisfied as if I had bequethed and allowed it myself.

Jacob Kraybill, Jr. assumed control over the mills and the farm when his father died on December 27, 1810. He did not receive the estate free and clear because he owed his sisters Anna Mumma and Elizabeth Shenck 800 pounds each as part of his father's estate; owed on the Sterret Bonds, for the farm inherited by his brother Peter, 150 pounds per year until paid; and was, in many ways, responsible for his mother for the rest of her life.

Jacob, Jr. started out just where his father had in 1784 with 277½ acres and the mills. Naturally, the mill site had been built up and improvements had been made by Jacob. It was quite an opportunity for a young man of 27 years of age—a 277½ acre farm and a grist and saw mill with an indebtedness of only 350 pounds a year for four years and 150 pounds for the fifth.

Whether Jacob, Jr. was married or not when he inherited his property isn't known, but he couldn't have married long after since his first child, Elizabeth, was born on July 19, 1812. His wife, Barbara Nissley, was a childbride by today's standards and she was only seventeen years of age when her first child was born. Jacob, Jr. was unlucky with his first wife just as his father had been and Barbara died on June 24, 1814.

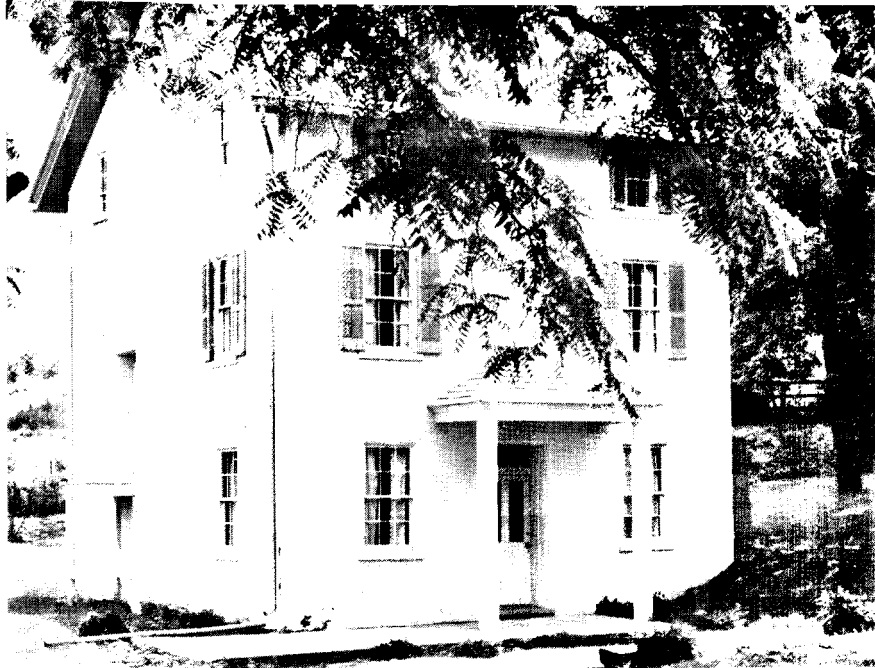


Figure 2. Miller's House of Donegal Mills

The date when Jacob, Jr. remarried is not known, but it couldn't have been much before 1820 as his second wife, Elizabeth Eversole, was born on December 18, 1801.

Between 1812 when his wife died and 1829 Jacob, Jr. continued much in the same way as had his father. He apparently managed his property well, as he owned 3 to 6 horses and from 2 to 6 cows and the 277½ acre farm and ran the mill which he had inherited from his father. There were some changes in the property though, which were reflected in a Special Assessment of 1815, which listed all the property that was owned by Jacob, Jr.. He is listed as owning 278 acres of land, a stone two story mill, 36 by 40 feet; a saw mill; a stone barn, 75 by 36 feet; a two story house, 45 by 32 feet; a one story stone house, 25 by 18 feet; and a log tenant house.¹⁷

The 278 acres recorded are essentially the same 277½ acres inherited from his father, as is the stone mill. We know for the first time, though, that the mill was two stories. Had the mill been enlarged from the 36 by 30 stone mill of the 1798 tax list? Had one or the other assessors used a rough estimate? Unless at some time the foundation is exposed one must continue to guess. We do know that the saw mill was identified and was probably a log or frame shed attached to the mill and made use of the same power source as the mill — the waterwheel.

The large stone barn, 75 by 36 feet, is essentially the same as the 75 by 30 feet barn of stone described in the 1798 Direct Tax. It is assumed, as in the case of the stone mill, that someone made a careless mistake in the estimate of the size of the barn. It was still a large and impressive barn for its day.

The three houses at the mill site do reflect an enlargement in the operation. House number 1 is obviously the "Mansion House" of today, in 1798 it was listed as being 37 by 33 feet which matches the dimensions of the house before the adding of the northeast addition. The present measurements of the "Mansion House" are 54 by 33 feet. How does the measurement of 45 by 32 feet relate to these other figures? Poor measurement or had the northeast addition been added? Many characteristics of the addition would seem to indicate that it could have been by 1815, and that the change from 37 to 45 feet in length reflects this addition. Another question not answered is whether the two-story porch with columns was added at this time. The stone kitchen is missing in 1815, but from Jacob's will we know that his wife, Elizabeth, was given the use of "the kitchen chamber and the chamber on the garret above the kitchen chamber . . .". The only part of the house that this could refer to is the kitchen wing in the rear of the house, which then must have been added before 1810. House number 2, the "Miller's House," was in 1815 a one and one-half story stone cottage, 25 by 18 feet. Examination of the walls of the present house illustrates an 11-foot addition to the rear and the lifting of the roof made it the two and one-half story building that one sees today. (Figure 2) House number 3 was a log house probably occupied by a tenant family responsible for the operation of the farm.

From 1828 to 1832 several changes in the situation occurred. Jacob, Jr. had remarried this time to Elizabeth Eversole sometime before 1829 when his son, Jacob E. Kraybill, was born. Elizabeth bore Jacob, Jr., two children, Jacob E. and later Barbara in 1832. Also, during this period, a new and larger brick grist mill, three stories high, 40 by 36 feet, was built. (Figure 3) The date stone in the west wall says, "Built by Jacob and Elizabeth Krebil, 1830." "Old Mills of Lancaster County" claims that it had an over-shot wheel and could produce ten barrels of flour per day. The new and old mill operated together for awhile, and then the older mill was torn down, probably, in the 1840's.

Jacob Kraybill, Jr., died on August 26, 1832, at 49 years of age, leaving behind a successful business, a young wife, a 3½-year-old son, a 15-months-old daughter, and an new mill operating. Jacob Jr.'s Will and Inventory of the Property are available, and therefore, we can tell a lot about Donegal Mills in 1832.¹⁸

Jacob E. Kraybill, at about 3½ years of age, was left the mills and most of the "home place", over which he would assume control in 1850 when he reached 22 years of age. Until that time, Jacob Jr.'s cousin and son-in-law, Jacob Nissley, and his cousin, Peter Nissley, were to be

the executors of the mill and manage the estate for Jacob Jr.'s two minor children. This was the first time the "home place", the 277½ acre property purchased by Jacob Kraybill in 1784, was subdivided. Apparently, with the building of the new mill in 1830 and the possible enlarging of the Mansion House, he did not have enough money set aside or property purchased to give his youngest daughter, Barbara, an equal share of the estate, therefore, necessitating the division of the property which he had inherited from his father. The older daughter, Elizabeth, had already received a dowery and was left by her father, \$6,000. Jacob E. Kraybill inherited the home, barn, Saw and Grist Mills and land, less "two fields and about ten acres timber making together about forty acres," containing about 160 acres. This was apparently the 201½ acres plot #1 which Jacob Kraybill had purchased from Stouffer in 1784, less 40 acres in the two fields and timber land, for a total of 160 acres.

Barbara, the 15-month-old younger daughter, inherited \$6,000 and received the farm and land where "John Cassel now lives" and the forty acres which Jacob E. did not get, for a total of about 130 acres. If this was forty acres from the 201½ acres plot #1 added to the 87 acres of Jacob Kraybill's plot #2 that would make 116 acres, which is less than the 130 acres specified in the will. An undated assessment list referring to Jacob Kraybill's Estate, probably from 1832 to 1835, shows him owning 278 acres, but his wills bequeth a total of 290 acres. It may be that Jacob, Jr.'s mathematics left something to be desired in his will.

Between 1832 when Jacob Kraybill died and 1850, the estate and mills were under the management of Jacob Nissley and Peter Nissley. Living at the Donegal Mills then were Elizabeth Delabaugh Kraybill, Jacob Kraybill's widow; Elizabeth Eversole Kraybill, Jacob Kraybill Jr.'s widow; and young Barbara and Jacob E. Kraybill. The grandmother, Elizabeth Delabaugh Kraybill died in 1845 at age 90 after living at the Mills for sixty-one years.

Jacob E. Kraybill was awarded control of his inheritance by court order when he was 22 years of age on June 18, 1850, ending an 18 year executorship by Jacob and Peter Nissley. It is unfortunate that during this period, when merchant milling was at its peak in southeastern Pennsylvania, that the control of the property was in the hands of executors rather than in the hands of an energetic owner. Actually, by the time Jacob E. Kraybill reached this maturity, the peak period of milling had ended in this area.

Not much is known of this period of ownership of the Mill, 1832 to 1850, during Jacob's minority and 1850 to 1870 when the property was broken up and began to be sold piecemeal. The old mill was torn down in this period, probably during the 1840's. We do know that a picture of the house at "Greybill's Donegal Mills" was published in 1850 as a lithograph on the side of the East Donegal Township Map, and shows the Mansion House looking much as it does today. On May 10, 1856, in an

effort to restore the original 201½ acre plot #1 of his grandfather, Jacob Kraybill, Jacob E. purchased the forty acres which his sister, Barbara Kraybill Horner, had inherited from her father in 1832. We do know that the *Atlas of Lancaster County* of 1864 lists J.E. Kraybill as owner but little else is known of this period.

Jacob E. married sometime in the late 1840's or early 1850's as he and his wife, Fannie buried a two year old daughter, Fannie on April 13, 1857 in the Kraybill Cemetery. They also may have buried a son as there is a stone that reads, in the Kraybill Cemetery, "Jacob Kraybill, 1850, 7 months," with no hint of the names of the parents. The name and the year make it possible that it could be Jacob E.'s son.

On February 9, 1870, Jacob E., Fannie, and Elizabeth, Jacob Jr.'s widow, sold the Miller's house, the mill and 8 acres and 71 perches and on April 1, 1871, they sold the Mansion house and 115 acres and 40 perches and the era of the Kraybills was ended.

THE DECADE OF CONFUSION: 1870 to 1880

The Decade of Confusion began with the selling of the mill, miller's house, and meadow totaling 8 acres and 71 perches to Isaac P. and Fannie Breneman on February 9, 1870, and ends with the purchase of the mill by Levi R. Nissley on April 1, 1880. This was the first time the ownership of the mill had been out of the Kraybill family for over 86 years, and the first time the mill and the miller's house were separated



Figure 3. Brick Grist Mill of Donegal Mills

from the mansion house and the farm.

During this period the mill property changed hands four times and the mansion house property three times. Jacob E. Kraybill sold the mill property to Isaac P. Breneman on February 9, 1870, Breneman sold it to Jacob H. Musser on March 27, 1872, who resold it on April 4, 1878 to Christian H. Nissley who sold it to his son-in-law, Levi R. Nissley on April 1, 1880. With the mill in the hands of Levi R. Nissley the stability of the milling industry returned. The mill property remained in his hands until 1925, about forty-five years.

The preceding paragraph gives evidence of the 18th Century, rural America custom of selling and purchasing property on or about April the first. By this time the stored crops had been mostly consumed and the spring planting had not yet started.

This period of rapid change over is a result of the post-Civil War years and a changing economic structure in the country. For the local milling industry this was a period of recession and readjustment produced by the movement of wheat farming and the flour processing industry to the upper mid-west, and the introduction of the new "patented flour" and "roller mills" which caused the old stone ground flour to be outdated. In an attempt to up-date these old mills steam engines were introduced during the last half of the 19th Century. In the case of the Donegal Mills the steam engine was installed before 1872, as it is referred to in a deed of that year, by either Jacob E. Kraybill or Isaac P. Breneman. This steam engine enabled the mill to be run a any time, not just during periods of high water.

Little is known of the owners between Jacob E. Kraybill and Levi R. Nissley. They all were apparently trying to make money and they all seemed to fail. In fact, the mill property was seized by court action from the creditors of Jacob H. Musser and sold at auction to satisfy Musser's debts to John L., Jacob and Michael N. Hoffman. After passing through all these owners the price that Levi R. Nissley paid for the mill in 1880 was less than J.E. Kraybill had sold it for in 1870.

There is a very clear lithograph of the Mill and the Miller's House in the *Atlas of Lancaster County, 1875* which shows the mill as being owned by Jacob H. Musser and identifies it as a Steam Mill and even shows a smoke belching smoke stack. (Figure 4) There is little else available in the property for this period.

The Kraybills remained in the Mansion House after the sale of the mill to Breneman for about one year, and then sold the Mansion House and 115 acres and 40 perches of land to John Heistand on April 1, 1871. Heistand died soon after purchasing the Mansion House, and his executors sold it to Isaac P. Breneman on March 29, 1872, only two days after Breneman sold the mill property to Jacob Musser. Isaac and Fannie Breneman didn't own it long either — they sold it three years

later, to the day, on March 29, 1875, to Hiram and Charlotte R. Watson Herr.

During this period of confusion, which lasted some ten years, the four owners of the mill and the three owners of the mansion house illustrate well the period of decline in the milling industry and the economic state of the Country.

THE MILL AND THE NISSLEYS: 1880 to 1925

While Christian H. Nissley purchased the mill property in 1878, he was a part of the decade of confusion. A new period started when he sold the property to his son-in-law, Levi R. Nissley, who was a miller, and the era of Nissley's Mill began. Levi was thirty years of age in 1880 when he purchased the mill, and was a great-great-grandson of Jacob and Elizabeth Kraybill and a member of an extensive Nissley family of East Donegal Township. He married the daughter of Christian and Barbara Nissley, Lizzie, in 1871, and by the time he purchased the mill from his father-in-law in 1880 they already had three children. Over the next ten years three other children were born, and a family of eight lived in the Miller's House and Levi earned a living for them with the mill. The picture in the *Atlas of Lancaster County, 1875*, shows the property looking much as it does today, but a photograph taken pre-1925 shows an eastern addition on the house, a summer kitchen to the rear and a variety of barns and sheds which were added by Levi to house his family and the business. Even without the Mansion House and land this holding was a sizable development.

The milling industry of Levi Nissley was very different from that of the Kraybills as the milling industry had gone down hill and a change had come about. S.W. Fletcher analyzed the situation as follows:

Among the last rural industries to succumb to industrialization were those based on the processing of farm products. Of these, flour milling was the most important. Pennsylvania led the colonies and the nation in this respect until 1860. The industry centered at Philadelphia but there were numerous small mills in all parts of the state, especially in Lancaster, York, and Berks Counties. The miller often was a part-time farmer. By 1900 country water-ground flour had been superseded by "Patent Flour;" then the picturesque old mills, with their ponderous wheels and laboring burrs fell into disuse or were used chiefly for grinding course "chop" for stock feed.¹⁹

The quotation illustrates the situation at Donegal Mills very well. Jacob E. Kraybill sold in 1870, ten years after the start of the decline in 1860. Four other owners tried to save a dead industry until 1880, when Levi R. Nissley took over the old flouring mill, ran it as a flouring mill for awhile and then slowly converted it into a chopping mill with an emphasis on cattle feed. An interview with Levi's son-in-law David H. Eby, and a neighbor for 25 years, brought forth the information that to his knowledge the products of the mill under Levi R. Nissley from 1901 until 1925 when it was sold, included cattle and chicken feed plus cider

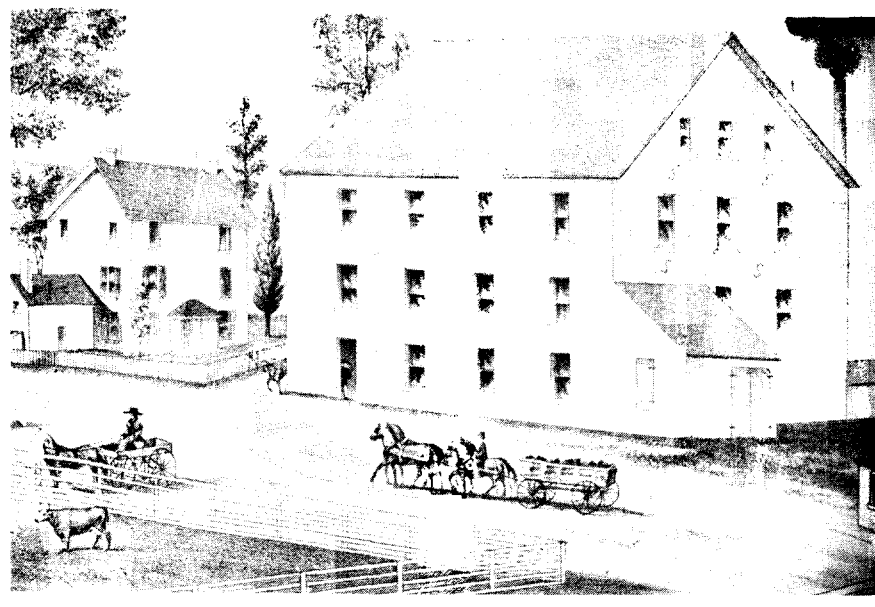


Figure 4. 1875 Lithograph of Mill and Miller's House

from locally-grown apples. During this period both water power and a stationary steam engine were used to run the mill. When there was plenty of water, the race was opened and water power was used. In times of low water, or in the winter, steam was used to run the mill. Local farmers brought wheat to the mill in the 1800's, and later brought their corn and apples to the mill where either the water power was released to turn the ponderous iron water wheel, or the steam engine was started, and the farmer's grain was "chopped" into feed and the apples were made into cider. The "New Merchant Mill" of the Kraybills which produced fine flour for the local area and Philadelphia now was the "Old Chopping Mill" of the Nissleys. The Donegal Mills continued until the 1920's in this manner.

Levi and Lizzie Nissley moved from the mills sometime around 1920, and rented the house and leased the mill to several different people. Several men ran the mill during this period, but were not successful. On March 30, 1925, Levi R. and Lizzie L. Nissley sold the mill, miller's house, and other property, and the forty-five year era of Nissley's Mill was over. Good Mennonites that they were, both Levi and Lizzie are buried in the Kraybill Church graveyard with many other Nissleys and Kraybills.

THE MANSION HOUSE AND THE WATSONS: 1875 to 1930

When Hiram and Charlotte R. Watson Herr purchased the Mansion House and 114 acres and 120 perches of land from Isaac P. and

Fannie Breneman on March 29, 1875, it began a period of fifty-five years of ownership by three daughters and a granddaughter of Dr. Nathaniel Watson, physician, of East Donegal Township.

The history of the Watson family is one of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of Northwestern Lancaster County. The pioneer settler was James Stephenson, who was a contemporary of David Byers - he also was a first settler of old Donegal Township. Ellis and Evans claim that he settled there as early as 1732, and he patented 314 acres of land north of the Donegal Presbyterian Church glebe lands on August 11, 1749. The land passed from James Stephenson to David Watson. There is disagreement as to the relationship of Stephenson to Watson among the different authorities. J. L. Ziegler in "The Donegal Presbyterian Church", though, says that he was a grandson and inherited the property from his grandfather, James Stephenson in 1780. This property was deeded by David Watson to his son, Dr. John Watson, in 1785, and Dr. John Watson deeded it to his son, Dr. Nathaniel Watson in 1843. In 1872, Dr. Nathaniel Watson sold the property to Simon Cameron, and it is now owned by Elizabethtown College and is known as the Cameron Estate. Both Drs. John and Nathaniel Watson were graduates of the Medical College of Pennsylvania and important citizens of East Donegal Township.

With the break up of the Donegal Mills by Jacob E. Kraybill in the 1870's, the Mansion House became a country estate of the Victorian Era type and was no longer the home of a prosperous rural miller. The first of the Watsons to own and live in the house were Charlotte R. and Hiram Herr. Charlotte was the first of Dr. Nathaniel Watson's children to live there, and she and her husband lived there for thirteen years until March 29, 1888, when it was sold to Charlotte's two sisters Harriet P. Watson and Margaret C. Watson Wiley.

Harriet and Margaret had been left an inheritance by their father, Dr. Nathaniel Watson, who had died in 1886 and apparently used this money to purchase the Mansion House and 58 acres and 23 perches from their sister and brother-in-law. Margaret's husband, Henry H. Wiley, was a well-to-do business man in the area and operated with his brother, under the name Wiley Brothers, a Saw Mill at the mouth of Conoy Creek and Wiley Bros. Mills at Locust Grove. The Mansion House may have been used in some years by the sisters as only a summer home, while in later years, was probably used as a full-time residence. Harriet apparently made her home with her sister and brother-in-law and never married. Henry died in 1897, and the two sisters may have lived at the house full time after this period.

Harriet P. Watson died on July 21, 1902, and is buried in the Donegal Presbyterian Church Cemetery as are many of the Watsons. She left her share of the Mansion House property to her sister Margaret C. Watson Wiley, who then became the sole owner. Margaret died on June 16, 1918, leaving the property to her only child, Margaret Jones

Wiley. Margaret had married the Rev. E.S.J. McAllister, and apparently did not make the Mansion House her home, but rented it to different parties. On April 1, 1930, she sold the Mansion House and the 59 acres and 23 perches to Leroy C. Bates. The Mansion House property had passed out of the hands of the Watson Family.

During the period of ownership by the Watsons the Mansion House reached the apex of fashion as an example of the Victorian Country Estate. It was not a paying operation, though the land was ground rented to local farmers, but rather a country estate for wealthy people who often only lived there part of the year. If the period from 1790 to 1840 was the height of the milling era, then the 1880 to 1910 was the period which was the height of the Victorian Country Estate.

THE DECLINING YEARS: 1920 to 1972

The declining years for the Mill and the Mansion House were from the 1920's to 1972. During this period the Donegal Mills were owned by three different parties. The Mansion House and 59 acres and 23 acres and 23 perches were purchased by Leroy C. Bates from the last of the Watsons, Margaret J. W. McAllister, on April 1, 1930, and he re-sold it to George Brown, II, on June 24, 1942. During these years the property fell into a state of disrepair as little money was spent on upkeep, and a series of renters occupied the premises and the Mansion House of the late 18th Century and 19th Century became a run-down relic of the past.

The mill, miller's house, and the 8 acres and 151 perches property were purchased by Hiram E. Wolgemuth on March 30, 1925, because he owned the adjacent farm from which had been retained a strip:

two perches wide, or in breadth, in, upon, and over the said 130 acres of land, by and along the head race thereof, with the full water right and privileges as the same now is held, trained, and farmed to and for the full, final, and absolute use, benefit, and behoof of my said son, Jacob Krebiel, his heirs and assigns, and the holder or holders of my said mills. . . *

and wished to remove this restriction on the use of the stream which flowed across his property. This effectively ended the use of water power at the mills. This restriction had been placed on the farm when it was left by Jacob Kraybill, Jr., to his daughter Barbara in his will dated July 10, 1932. Two months later, on June 1, 1925, Wolgemuth sold the mill and 81.94 perches, about a half acre, to Elmer Strickler and the remaining 8 acres and 151 perches, less the mill and 81.94 perches, and the Miller's house to David H. Eby on the same date.

The mill was purchased by Strickler as a warehouse in which to store tobacco. Elmer Strickler died on March 13, 1937, leaving the mill

* Will of Jacob Kraybill, Jr., 1832

to his wife, Mary A. Strickler, who in turn died on February 6, 1942, leaving the mill to her daughters Mary Nissley Wiedman and Mary Fritz Strickler. The mill was purchased from them by George Brown, II, on June 30, 1945. During these years little was done on the upkeep of the Mill, and spring floods and winter snows took their toll and produced a steady deterioration of the building which was only being used for storage.

The remainder of the mill property, the meadow land, and Miller House, had been purchased by Levi R. Nissley's son-in-law David H. Eby, who lived on the adjoining farm to the east with his wife, Katie Nissley Eby. During the time he owned the property he rented the Miller's House to a series of renters, and as in the case of the Mansion House and mill little money was spent on upkeep and the house was hard used by a series of renters so that it also fell into a state of ill repair. Eby sold the Miller's House and approximately 8 acres to George Brown, II, on May 15, 1946.

George Brown, II, had always admired the Donegal Mills, and had piece by piece acquired the property. First was the Mansion House in

Figure 5. Mansion House Interior



1942, the grist mill, in 1945, and finally, the Miller's House in 1946. He accumulated a parcel of land, 68 acres and 14 perches, and all the buildings remaining of Jacob E. Kraybill's 160 acres inheritance from his father, Jacob Kraybill, Jr. Nothing was done with the property in terms of improvements and the buildings remained in a poor state of repair and were rented to various parties.

George Brown, II died on August 31, 1967 and left the Donegal Mill property to his daughter, JoAnne Brown Zink, and to his son, Benjamin W. Brown, II. Under the co-ownership little change occurred in the condition of the property until Hurricane Agnes in June of 1972. As in the case of many other areas of Lancaster County, there was damage at the Mills due to the flooding of both branches of the Donegal Creek.

THE REBIRTH OF DONEGAL MILLS — 1973 to Date

Mrs. Zink began, with the support of her brother, to rebuild, repair and refurbish the buildings that remained at the Mills after Hurricane Agnes. The damaged frame addition, added by Levi Nissley, was removed from the early 19th century Miller's House, and the building was reconditioned so as to look as it had on the lithograph published in 1875. The pre-1832 bake house was rebuilt and today, with its large brick bake oven and brick floors, it looks as it must have looked in the mid-19th century. The 18th century Mansion House has been refurbished with paint and paper as a Victorian Country Estate. (Figure 5) The 1830 mill has had exterior repair work done on the building, though little work has been done as yet on the interior.

On July 4, 1974, a little over two years after Hurricane Agnes, the Donegal Mills was opened to the public so that many could enjoy a visit to the past and relive a part of the rural history of Lancaster County. The Miller's House has been refurnished as a Miller's House of the early 19th century would have been. The stately Mansion House has been transformed into a palatial residence of a 19th century country estate. The 1830 brick grist mill now contains memorabilia of the milling and agricultural heritage of the area. The bake house has been furnished as an early 19th century summer kitchen with a gift shop attached. Lastly, the grounds, the large trees, and the collection of original 18th and 19th century buildings make the Donegal Mills a truly unique example of a restored rural industrial site and country estate. From the 1720's to the 1970's; Byers, Stouffer, the Kraybills, the Nissley's, the Watson's and lastly the Browns; and all in all, Lancaster County's heritage — the Donegal Mills.

NOTES

1. Franklyn Ellis and Samuel Evans, "History of Lancaster County," (Philadelphia, 1883), pg. 758.
2. Ellis, p. 757.
3. Ellis, p. 758.
4. Ellis, p. 770.
5. *Ibid.*
6. From the State Library, Harrisburg.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Tax and Assessment Lists. All tax and assessment lists from the Lancaster County Historical Society.
9. Deeds and Wills. All deeds and wills from the Lancaster County Court House.
10. Arthur C. Lord, "Pre-Revolutionary Agriculture of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 1975, p. 29.
11. Stevenson W. Fletcher, "Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, 1640 - 1840, Harrisburg, 1950, p. 286.
12. Fletcher, p. 23.
13. Dates for years of birth and death for Kraybills and Nissleys from: Ira D. Landis, "Kraybill Mennonite Cemetery," *Mennonite Research Journal*, Vol. III, No. 3, through Vol. V, No. 3, July 1962 through July 1964.
14. "Direct Tax Records for 1798, Part B of the First District Composed of the County of Lancaster in the 2nd Division of the State of Pennsylvania," National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C., 1962. Microcopy No. 372, Roll #6.
15. H.M.J. Klein, *Lancaster County Pennsylvania, A History*, New York, 1924, p. 491.
16. Arthur C. Lord, "Barns of Lancaster County, 1798," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, Vol. 77, No. 1, 1973, p. 30.
17. Special Assessment of Lancaster County, Lancaster County Historical Society.
18. Jacob Kraybill, Jr.'s Inventory of Property, Lancaster County Historical Society.
19. Fletcher, 1840 - 1940, p. 42.
20. J.L. Ziegler "The Donegal Presbyterian Church," Mount Joy, 1902, pp. 64-68.
21. Birth and Death Dates for the Watson Family from Ziegler and the Tomb Stone in the Donegal Presbyterian Church Cemetery.