

# *Two Rivers and a Village*

## *The Story of Safe Harbor*

By Ernest T. Schuleen

*T*wo beautiful rivers with two beautiful names, the Susquehanna and the Conestoga, and where the two join, the village with the comforting name, Safe Harbor. The history of the village over the past two centuries, with its economic ups and downs and its damaging experiences with ice and floods, is so commingled with that of the two streams that any story of the village would not be complete without consideration of its two rivers. The Susquehanna and the Conestoga are each rich in history and deserving of far more comprehensive treatment than will be given here. Enough needs to be said, however, to emphasize the vital effect each had on life in Safe Harbor.

### *The Two Rivers*

*F*irst the Susquehanna, which 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 percent of the total area of Pennsylvania and 13 percent of New York. The river has provided many benefits to mankind but its greatest impact on the people of early Safe Harbor came from its waterborne transportation. Prior to the construction of the canal systems in the Susque-

hanna basin the agricultural, mineral and manufactured products from central Pennsylvania were transported by river on rafts, arks and keel boats. Such navigation was downstream only and possible only during the high flow season when the many riffles, particularly in the lower reaches, were covered to a safe depth. Some of the cargo was destined for various localities along the river, but most of it continued on to Port Deposit, Maryland where it was reloaded for shipment to Baltimore and other salt water ports. Hence the name Port Deposit. The log rafts could be towed in the Bay with little change but the arks and keel boats were dismantled and sold for lumber. The period of greatest activity was between 1790 and 1870. The Lancaster Journal reported 343 arks and 989 rafts passing Blue Rock, three miles below Columbia, from April 1 to July 5, 1817. The Journal for April 27, 1827 listed 557 arks, 36 boats and 731 rafts passing Marietta so far for that season.<sup>8</sup> A statement of shipping entering the port of Baltimore in 1821 from the Susquehanna included 200 arks carrying 11,000 tons of coal, 1170 arks carrying 41,718 tons of general merchandise, 300 keel boats loaded with 300,000 bushels of wheat, and 1638 rafts containing 25 million feet of lumber.<sup>9</sup>

River traffic was obviously heavy and communities along the route were bound to feel its effects. Navigation on the river was limited to daylight hours making it necessary to tie up along the shore at night. The mouth of the Conestoga was a favorite haven for such overnight stops with the added inducement of several conveniently located taverns and hotels ready to provide relaxation for the crew members. These establishments also catered to the needs of these men who, after their one-way ride downriver, had to walk back along the famous Raftsmen's Path on the east side of the river. At Safe Harbor the path crossed the Conestoga, climbed the hill, and followed the ridge parallel to the river to Turkey Hill. To the returning foot-weary and thirsty rivermen the place must have seemed something of a safe harbor also.

Following the trend of canal construction in other eastern states during the first quarter of the 19th century, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania authorized its Canal Commissioners to embark on a vast canal building program on the state's major rivers. The section on the Susquehanna, known as the Eastern Division, began operation in 1833. From its southern terminal at Columbia the canal system extended upstream to the New York line and for substantial distances up the West Branch and Juniata Rivers. Traffic was now possible both up and down river and throughout the year except when ice or floods were a problem. As part of the overall transportation scheme the Commonwealth also built a railroad from Philadelphia to Columbia to divert to Philadelphia much of the produce from central Pennsylvania that had previously gone on down river to Maryland.

As might be expected the Maryland interests, when threatened with the loss of the bulk of the Susquehanna traffic of which they had long been almost

the sole beneficiaries, initiated counter measures. With private financial backing the Susquehanna & Tidewater Canal was built along the 42-mile stretch on the west bank from Wrightsville, Pennsylvania to Havre de Grace, Maryland. The 232 foot difference in elevation between the two points was taken care of by 28 locks, each 17 by 170 feet. A low timber and rock dam below Columbia provided a pool for transfer of boats between the southern end of the Pennsylvania Canal and the northern end of the Tidewater Canal. About a half-mile above the present Safe Harbor power dam, at a point still known as Lockport Hollow, provision was made to transfer boats to and from the river. A series of low rock and timber dams linked a chain of islands extending from just below the mouth of the Conestoga on the east shore diagonally across the river to Lockport on the west shore to create a pool for passage of craft between the Tidewater Canal and the Conestoga navigation system. Operation of the Tidewater Canal began in 1840 and continued until around the turn of the century.

The second river, the Conestoga, drains an area of only 475 square miles, nearly all in Lancaster County. Its small size, however, does not diminish its stature in history. Like its big sister, the Susquehanna, the Conestoga's greatest impact on early Safe Harbor was from waterborne transportation. From 1828 to 1865, through a succession of private owners, the last being the Reeves, Abbott and Company, operators of the Safe Harbor Iron Works, the 18-mile stretch from Lancaster to Safe Harbor was made navigable. The 62-foot drop in elevation was taken care of originally by nine locks and dams. Two of these locks were at Safe Harbor, one near the mouth of the Conestoga, and the other just above the present county highway bridge. The lock at the latter location is still in good condition and measures 109 feet by 18 feet six 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 90 feet in length." Prof. Horace R. Barnes<sup>10</sup> lists the dams at Safe Harbor as Nos. 9 and 8, while an undated map in Ellis and Evans<sup>11</sup> numbers them 7 and 6. A flood had destroyed a few dams and in rebuilding some were apparently eliminated, which may account for the difference in numbers. No actual canals were involved as on the Susquehanna. The dams provided slack-water through which boats could be pulled by mules on the tow path along the left bank. Traffic for points beyond Safe Harbor could be towed across the Susquehanna to enter the Tidewater Canal at Lockport and continue the journey either up or down the river. It was then possible to travel by water from Lancaster to Philadelphia by use of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Thus Lancaster could call itself the Port of Lancaster and Safe Harbor was the pivot point in its access to the sea.

### *The Village*

*T*he area about which the story of Safe Harbor evolves lies on both sides



*Remains of Lock No. 6 of Conestoga Navigation Company, one mile above mouth of Conestoga River; in operation 1828 - 1865.*

of the Conestoga River and extends from its confluence with the Susquehanna to the county highway bridge about a mile up stream. 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. In the preceding paragraphs considerable emphasis has been placed on the importance of the navigation enterprises on the Susquehanna and Conestoga Rivers to the life and growth of Safe Harbor village. It must be stressed that even before that era the two rivers were a factor in attracting Indians and the early white men to the Safe Harbor area. This part of the story should also be told.

### *The Indians*

**E**astern 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 un-

per 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 in a battle near Washington Boro. 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 from the Harrisburg area in the Lancaster Jail yard, where the Indians had taken refuge after earlier attacks by white men.<sup>1</sup>

A group of wandering Shawnees, who were members of the Algonkian linguistic group, lived from 1698 to 1716 in the village of Pequehan, located in Manor Township a mile and a half above the mouth of the Conestoga.<sup>2</sup> Indian relics were found here in 1930-31 when comprehensive archaeological explorations were undertaken by the State Historical and Museum Commission under the leadership of Dr. Donald A. Cadzow in cooperation with the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation.<sup>3</sup> This was during the building of the hydroelectric station and dam on the Susquehanna River.

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 Susquehanna 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 1931 these rocks, and also rocks with similar markings on Big and Little Walnut Islands above the Safe Harbor dam and now submerged, were thoroughly explored by Dr. Gadzow. Sketches and casts were made which are now in storage at the museum in Harrisburg.<sup>3</sup> 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*

*I*t 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 Indiantown. 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 Eshleman<sup>5</sup> the white owners of land near Safe Harbor in 1729 on the Manor Township side were Michael Greider, nearest the mouth of the Conestoga River, then Peter Leaman and John Carlidge. On the Conestoga Township side, nearest the mouth, 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.

The boundaries of Conestoga and Manor Townships had been rather loosely defined as early as 1718. They were made definite 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 Indiantown.<sup>5</sup> Conestoga River was proclaimed the common boundary between Conestoga and Manor Townships, thus making that stream responsible for dividing the village of Safe Harbor both physically and politically.

### *Early Settlement at Safe Harbor*

**T**he Susquehanna River and the lower Conestoga River 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 Conestoga River 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.<sup>6</sup> These were but the first of a long list of hotels and taverns that served

Safe Harbor residents and visitors for over a century. Tavernkeeper Nestleroad also 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.<sup>7</sup>

The first attempt to formally establish a village at the mouth of Conestoga River was made by Jacob Miller, son of Valentine Miller, who had obtained a William Penn Patent for 140 acres in Manor Township in 1756. According to current research by Diane Miller Fisher, a direct descendant of Jacob, this property was left to Jacob who later increased his holdings to 450 acres through acquisition of adjacent tracts. Prior to his death in 1810 Jacob had laid out 16 lots along the Conestoga near its mouth for a settlement to be called Millerport.<sup>7</sup> Apparently a few sales had been made before his death, some as early as 1806. Court records indicate that Jacob died Intestate and his land sold at public sale, presumably including the lots in Millerport – later contracted to Millport. Subsequent deeds appear for sales of land in “Millerport, commonly known as Safe Harbor.” Some of the lot-holders in 1811 were Isreal 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 lot-holders were Philip Brenner, William Bushrun, John Bean, storekeeper Adam Fogle, John Funk, Sophia Wrihti, Jacob Guck, Henry Hoffman, Henry Klein, Samuel Kimmens, Daniel Kendig, John Kendig and Catherine Logan.<sup>7</sup> The Millers lived on a farm on the slope rising westward from the site of their new town. In later years the farm area was covered by silt deposits from an operation that recovered anthracite coal particles from the Susquehanna. Jacob Miller's gravestone, and those of others buried in the area, were gathered in a central plot farther up on the hill overlooking the Susquehanna. Miller's stone carries an inscription in German to the effect that he was born September 22, 1757 and died December 20, 1810. The small stream which flows through Miller's former farm into the Conestoga bears the name Miller's Run, thus perpetuating the name of Safe Harbor's first real estate promoter.

Historian, Dr. H. M. J. Klein <sup>7</sup>, 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, This island is now partially submerged by the water impounded by the Safe Harbor power dam, the east – west axis of which lies athwart the island.

An earlier and possible source of the name “Safe Harbor” was suggested by the late Dr. Herbert H. Beck, Professor of Chemistry at Franklin & Marshall College and a recognized authority on Lancaster County history. Dr. Beck cites William Penn's selection prior to 1695 of 16,000 acres in present Manor Township for which Penn planned a “chief city” to rival Philadelphia. Dr. Beck also believed that records of the era indicate that Penn hoped to open a shipping

channel in the Susquehanna upstream from the Chesapeake Bay and to widen the Conestoga River above its mouth for a "safe harbor". There seemed to have been little interest in London for purchase of lots in the "Manor" and the land was eventually disposed of in farm-sized plots. Penn Manor High School takes its name from this proposed development.

### *Safe Harbor Gets Its Name*

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 Watermen, no way dangerous. It makes nine 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 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 Township side and evidently also was the building 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 later to the area by Jacob Miller evidently was not accepted by the natives.

### *The Iron Works*

Perhaps the biggest single event in the history of old Safe Harbor was the coming of the Iron Works in 1846. During the eighteenth century the iron industry had developed rapidly in Lancaster and other southeastern Pennsylvania

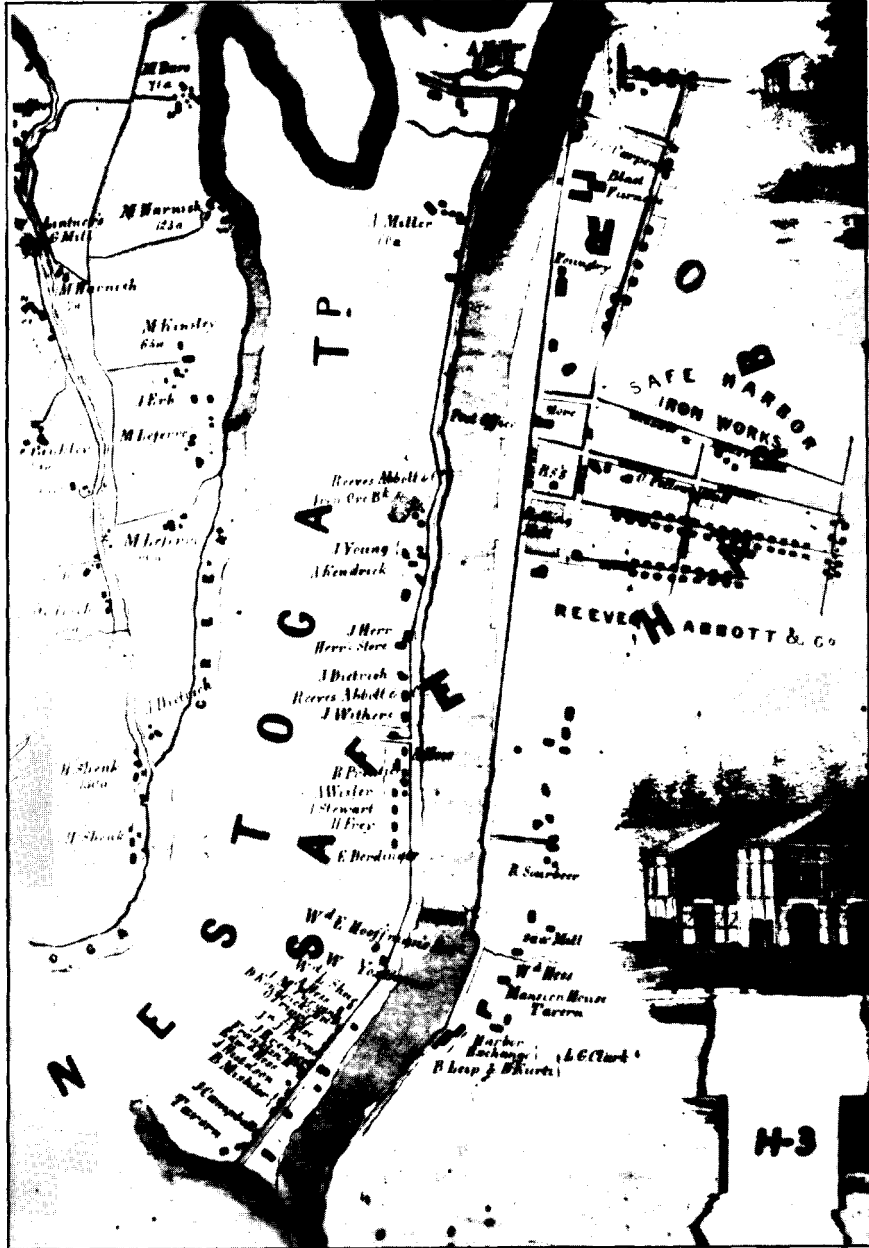


counties. The charcoal burning cold-blast furnaces of that period, however, had difficulty competing with imports of foreign-made iron during the early years of the nineteenth century. Of concern, too, was the depletion of forests necessary for making charcoal. The ailing industry was given new impetus in 1838 with the introduction of the hot-blast furnace, which burned anthracite coal efficiently with a 50 percent 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 Susquehanna River at Marietta, Chickies, Columbia and Safe Harbor.<sup>1 2</sup>

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 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 River was purchased including two large farms from Samuel Hess in Conestoga Township on which the principal buildings of the enterprise were erected. To assure an outlet for its product and for 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 did not begin until August 1848. 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.<sup>1 3</sup> Initial cost of the undertaking was in excess of \$200,000.

All of the buildings were arranged along the Conestoga River. Closest to the highway bridge was the blast furnace. The 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 and about 200 yards distant. They provided steam to drive the blowers and the engine used in hauling coal up an inclined plane from the canal boats tied alongside the wharf. 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 tennis courts. The roof was covered with 50,000 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, seven heating furnaces, two roller trains, and 16 boilers 40 feet long, so arranged over the top of the furnaces in the mill as to also 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 two single puddling furnaces and 18 double puddling furnaces. Railroad rail of the new T-shape became the principal



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

product and the mill capacity was increased to 280 tons per week.<sup>14</sup>

Between the blast furnace and the rolling mill were the other buildings, mostly all built of stone with slate roofs. This type of construction seems to indicate that the enterprise was planned as a long-time operation. The foundry and the blacksmith and carpenter shops were next in line. Then came the company store for its employees located 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.

A project 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 works. Streets were laid out bearing such names as Water, Mill, Robinson (later Hall), and Walnut running parallel to the Conestoga River; and Cedar, Spring, Griffin, Willow and Race running normal to it. About 70 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. This same spring still discharges from a pipe at the present Safe Harbor picnic grounds. Approximately 250 people were employed, many moving from a considerable distance, some direct from Ireland, and others coming from already established homes nearby. The Conestoga Township side of Safe Harbor, which had lagged behind the Manor side in growth, now forged ahead to become the center of activity and industry in the village. The first superintendent of the Iron Works and continuing until 1855 was John Griffin (also spelled Griffen), followed in order by Wyatte W. Miller, Samuel M. Wright, Isaac Reeves and Theodore F. Patterson.

Although production of some products began in 1848, the manufacture of railroad rails did not get into full production until 1849. John Fritz, a well-known expert in iron making equipment and machinery, was called in by the Iron Works superintendent to expedite installation of the rail making equipment in the rolling mill. Fritz writes in his "Autobiography of John Fritz," New York, 1912:

In May 1849, I went to Safe Harbor. In Lancaster, while waiting for a conveyance to carry my trunk to its destination, I met a gentleman whom I happened to know, who knew all about Safe Harbor, and tried to persuade me not to go there, saying it was the worst place in the whole state of Pennsylvania for fever and ague, and that no stranger escaped it. From the way he talked the probabilities were that I would die with it. I told him my object in going there. He shook hands, smiled, and said good-by.

Undaunted by this encounter Fritz went on to Safe Harbor by stage and in due time was able to overcome several difficult problems being experienced with the installation of the roller trains for rail making. He also supervised erection of the gas and hot air system for the blast furnace. The length of Fritz's stay in Safe Harbor is not known but he did admit, however, to having a bout with the "fever and ague" before his assignment was completed.

While the Iron Works prospered, all was not smooth sailing for the local superintendent 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. 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.<sup>15</sup>

While the new construction was under way in 1855 a period of "tight money" developed. 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 would be amortized over a 27-month period. It is interesting to note that the faithful workers eventually received their full pay.<sup>15</sup>

Railroad construction slacked off with the financial 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.<sup>16</sup>

While John Griffin was well known as the first superintendent of the Safe Harbor Iron Works, he is perhaps more famous for having developed a new-type wrought iron rifled cannon. In 1854 the Safe Harbor plant was making 5½ and

6½ inch diameter forged round iron for use in federal lighthouse construction. Griffin believed that wrought iron guns could be manufactured like these rounds and then bored, a process that involved winding at red-hot heat several layers of stranded annealed wire around a cast iron core, then heating to white-heat and finishing in a lathe. Griffin received permission from Samuel J. Reeves, then head of the business, to experiment. The process was perfected and the gun test-fired at Safe Harbor. Griffin received a patent for the design in 1855, the same year in which he was transferred to the Phoenix Iron Company in Phoenixville Pa., also a Reeves-Abbott enterprise. The U. S. Army was presented with one of the new guns and adopted it to replace the bronze cannon then in use and which often split when fired, endangering both friend and foe. Information received in 1863 from the Phoenix Steel Company stated, "Subsequently, (up until 1865) 1400 of these fine 3-inch light field artillery pieces were manufactured at the Phoenixville Plant, a number of which saw active service during the Civil War."

It is not certain to what extent the Safe Harbor Iron Works shifted production from rail making to heavy ordnance for the Union Army during the Civil War. Possibly some of the "Griffin Guns" were also made at Safe Harbor. Phoenixville Steel Company reports that it has no records on the Safe Harbor works after 1855 leading to the conclusion that Phoenixville had no connection with Safe Harbor after that date. It is known that the guns were test-fired at Safe Harbor by firing into an earth bank and that the guns were used by a local political club for celebrations and conventions. On one such occasion the gun burst under a double charge of powder.<sup>17</sup> It is also likely that some of the so-called "Soda Bottle" cannon, designed by Lieutenant John A. Dahlgren, U. S. Navy, Philadelphia, were made at Safe Harbor during the Civil War.<sup>18</sup>

In all probability the Safe Harbor Iron Works would have resumed 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 fifth highest flood on record, even to date, washed out the navigation dam across the river at Safe Harbor and thus destroyed the vital connection between the Conestoga Navigation System and the Susquehanna & Tidewater Canal. With facilities for conveniently transporting raw materials in and finished products out by water, the Safe Harbor Iron Works shut down. The population of the village at this time was approximately 1,000. The closing was announced as temporary but it was not until the fall of 1879, when demand for puddled iron was at a peak and many of the old furnaces gone, that the Safe Harbor Iron Works reopened and fired the puddling furnaces in the rolling mill. The blast furnace remained cold. A spur track from the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad, which had been completed in 1877 along the east shore of the river, was laid to the rolling mill in 1880. This provided a more reliable connection with the outside world than had been possible with the fickle Conestoga and Susquehanna navigation systems. In 1882 the Works delivered 10,000 tons of puddled iron to the Phoenix Iron Com-

pany. Within 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.<sup>19</sup>

### *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.<sup>20</sup> The local G. A. R. Post was named after him.

War came close to Pennsylvania in 1862 with the battle of Antietam near Sharpsburg, Maryland and again in June 1863 when Lee's Army was marching north into Pennsylvania through Adams and York Counties. Governor Curtin issued a call on June 12, 1863 for every able-bodied man to enroll for the defense of the States and the country. Col. Emlen Franklin was requested to organize Lancaster County troops and place them at vulnerable points along the Susquehanna to resist possible invasion from the west. In an order, dated June 16, 1863, he designated the rallying points for the groups from each section of the County.<sup>21</sup> For the Safe Harbor area it read:

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. The invasion threat to Lancaster County

ended when the advance of Confederate General John B. Gordon's troops was thwarted by the burning of the Columbia – Wrightsville bridge on June 28 by Union forces and the subsequent defeat of General Lee's army at Gettysburg July 1-3, 1863.

## *Churches*

*I*n nearly 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 Township side along 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, Joseph Urban, Abraham Kauffman, and Joseph 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. Prentise, Amos Fry, Joseph Wright, William Bones, C. B. Herr and Daniel Witmer.<sup>22</sup> 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 adjacent cemetery indicate a strong Welsh element with most of the burials occurring between 1849 and 1861. Among them is that of Esther Griffin, died 1849 age 30, wife of John Griffin, then 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 south side of the road between Safe Harbor and Conestoga Centre. Sometime later the congregation moved into a new building across the land leading into the Catholic Church. It is now a private residence. In 1873 the church moved into a new brick building on the north side of the road 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 frame building across the road and became the present Bethel Evangelical Congregational Church. The first trustees of the original church were Jacob McAllister, Jacob Hackman and Benjamin Kneisley, who also was the local preacher. The first cemetery of the sect was adjacent to the site of the original church. Although bodies are reported to have been moved to the new location in Conestoga there are still evidences of the old burial ground.<sup>23</sup>

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 east-



*Remains of St. Mary's Catholic Church, built in 1853.*

ern end of Spring Street on ground loaned from the Iron Company. Construction was supervised by the Rt. Reverend Father Keenan. Bishop Neuman's Diary and Visitation Record states that the corner stone was blessed on Passion Sunday 1853 at which time fifteen members were confirmed. The first clergymen were the Rev. John Balf, followed by 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 the 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.<sup>24</sup>

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 1917 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 only about a dozen legible headstones bearing such names as Madden, Slattery,



McManus, McNulty, Logue, Charkin, 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.<sup>25</sup>

The Episcopaleans 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. 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 congregational meeting of said church, September 28, 1912," to the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese of Harrisburg.<sup>26</sup> This was apparently the end of the Episcopalean mission at Safe Harbor. Mrs. Daniel W. Eberhart, who with her husband made the Hall their home in 1951, was baptised in this church and attended its Sunday School. Mrs. Carrie Huber, a schoolmate of Mrs. Eberhart, who lived a short distance east on the road to Conestoga, recalled seeing Mr. and Mrs. Patterson and daughter Abigail on many Sunday mornings, walking east from their home, down the 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 United Methodist 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 Evangelical United Brethren in Christ Church with the Rev. U. S. G. Renn as its first pastor. Organization of this church was the outgrowth of a series of revival services led by the Rev. Tobias Finefrock in the stone house near the present church and now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Horst. 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 superintendent and others influential in the organization were Aaron Warfel, Joseph L. Aston and George Henry.<sup>27</sup> The church merged with the Evangelical Church in 1946, and when this group joined the Methodists in 1968 Green Hill assumed its present name.

### *Schools*

**T**he public school system was adopted by Conestoga Township in 1836. About 1854 the Safe Harbor Independent School District was formed and sepa-

rated from the Conestoga Township District. A new School was built at the eastern end of Spring Street next to the Roman Catholic Church on ground owned by the Safe Harbor Iron Works. Nothing remains of this school building except the depression of the former cellar. Ellis and Evans<sup>23</sup> reported that another school house, a brick structure also on Iron Work's land, was destroyed by a storm. About 1880 classes were being held on the first floor of the Odd Fellows Hall. Later they were 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 Conestoga River 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*

**T**he 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, Abbot & Co. on February 8, 1851, for a consideration of \$100, leased the land to John Griffin, Thomas Sheaffer, Theodore B. Gould, 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



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

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 ownership ap-

parently had reverted to 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 G. A. R. Around 1880 the Odd Fellows moved their lodge to Conestoga Centre and in 1914 moved it again to Millersville.<sup>29 - 30</sup>

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 moved to Millersville.<sup>31 - 32</sup>

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*<sup>33</sup> 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 Conestoga River. It was started in 1807 by Jacob Menart, but in later years was operated by Abraham Shakespeare 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.

The first hotel on the Manor side was Israel Nestleroad's tavern near the mouth of the Conestoga. 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

*The Railroad House near station in Manor Township; in operation 1841 - 1919.*





*The Safe Harbor Match Factory, located in former Iron Works Rolling Mill, in operation about 1895 - 1903.*

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 hydroelectric 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 Conestoga River. They, along with many less famous establishments, formed a lively and 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 brief operation of the Safe Harbor Match Factory. Adolph Segal of Philadelphia purchased the Iron Works property from Reeves & Son in 1894 and installed equipment in the old rolling mill building for the manufacture of blue-tipped phosphorus matches. Production began in November 1894. Employment was provided for many men who had been idled through the second closing of the Iron Works, although photographs indicate that the Match Factory payroll included a large proportion of women and children as well. Blain Caldwell, a Conestoga resident now deceased, recalled that he and his two brothers worked six 12-hour days for three dollars per week. The brothers picked "spinters" while Blain carried the coils of match sticks to the parafin dipper. At that time Mulius Horowitz was local manager. Apparently it was a losing venture from the

start with the payroll not always met on schedule. Operations ceased in 1899, a victim of competition from the well-established Diamond Match Company, which in 1896 introduced a safe and less malodorous product. Some contemporaries were inclined to a suspicious view of the Match Factory's operations and thought it a stock promotion scheme designed to inveigle powerful Diamond Match into buying it to eliminate competition. One story had a man disguised as a tramp sneaking past the plant guards on several occasions only to be caught and ejected. Eventually, he was unmasked as a Pinkerton detective intent on photographing with a hidden camera a machine which allegedly infringed on Diamond Match patents. A camera small enough to be "hidden" at that time seems implausible and there is no positive evidence of any interest on the part of Diamond Match. Adolph Segal again appeared on the local scene in 1903 as president of the Standard Iron Mining and Furnance Company which was attempting to reopen the magnetic ore mines at Sickman's Mill four miles east of Safe Harbor. Rumors persist that this too was a promotional deal, but again substantiating evidence is lacking.<sup>3 4</sup>

### *Early Floods and Ice Jams*

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 Conestoga River. 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 transportation 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 with frequent gorging and the accompanying excessive backwater. The perennial "spring breakup" of the ice of the Susquehanna 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 25, 1873 issue of the Columbia Spy. Several feet of water covered the barroom 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.



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

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 underwater, — 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 published 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. Crushing masses of ice and swirling waters 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 Susquehanna to carry, and it began backing up the Conestoga. The stone arch bridge of the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad, rebuilt only six years previously after the 1895 ice trouble, 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 Township 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 closed 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 Conestoga 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 and 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 responses 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 de-

termine 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 to cross the Conestoga 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 recall vividly the flood and its aftermath. Mrs. Daniel Everhart remembered crossing the Conestoga by boat in July and seeing chunks of ice emerging from the mud.

### *Transportation*

While waterborne 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*:

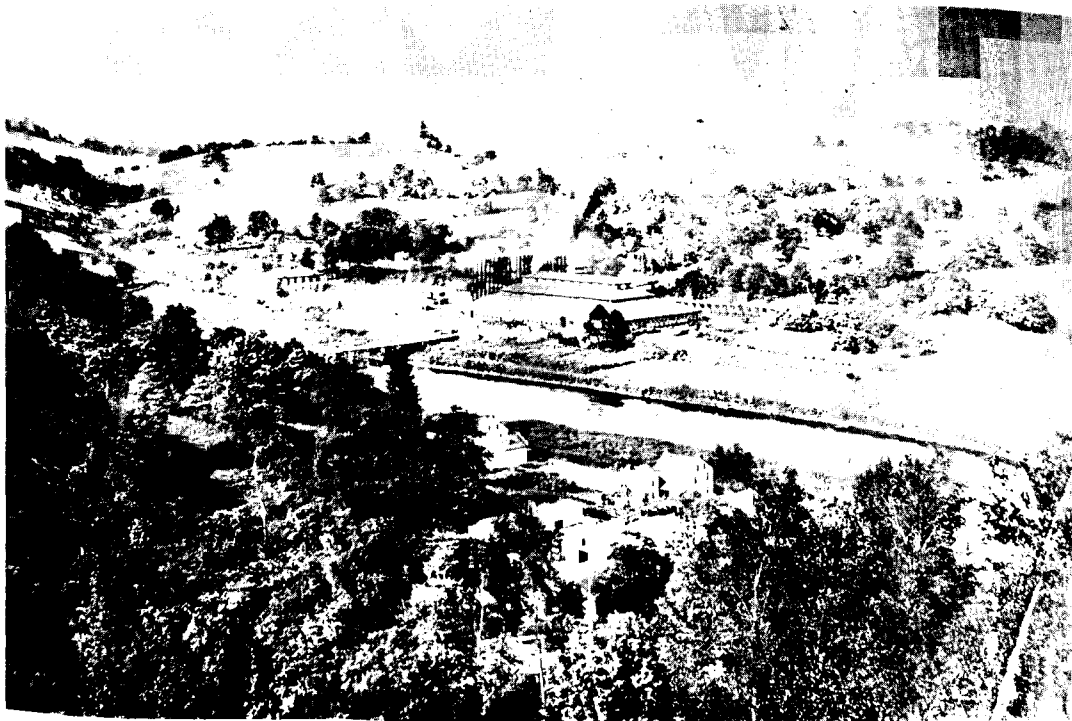
Stages daily from Hess's Mansion House at 7 A.M. Leave Lancaster at 1 P.M. from C. Shenk's and Cooper's Hotels.

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 was a late comer (1903-30) and did not provide a direct connection to Safe Harbor but it was a means of getting close enough so that a four-mile walk would complete the trip.

July 1, 1877 was a big day 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 present Conrail System, the federal agency that maintains service on tracks or the former Pennsylvania and other railroad companies.

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 in 1904 that, "Safe Harbor is so safe you can't get out of it."



*View of Safe Harbor in 1905 during "Low Grade" railroad construction. Buildings and village houses of the defunct Iron Works occupy Conestoga Township side of the Conestoga River.*

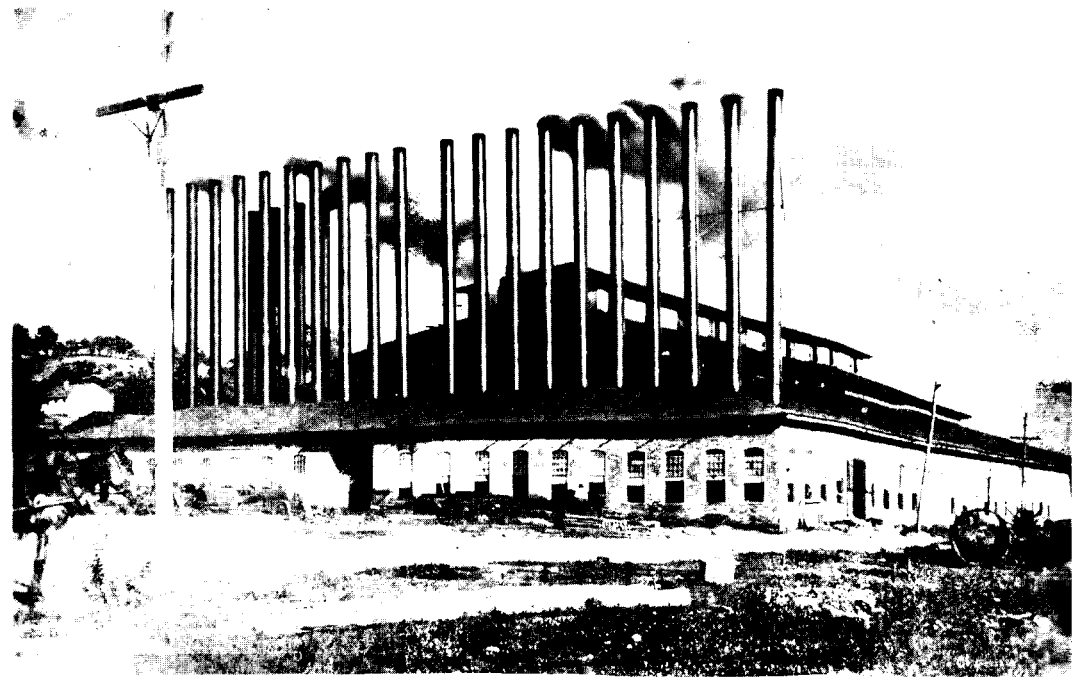
### *The "Low Grade" Line*

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 Morrisville, on the Delaware opposite Trenton, to Marysville, on the Susquehanna across from Harrisburg. That portion from Parkersburg to Marysville

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 Shenk's Ferry, two miles below Safe Harbor, where the rails reach the Susquehanna from the east, to Creswell, five miles above Safe Harbor.<sup>3 5</sup>

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 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 Conestoga to the Susquehanna 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.

*The old Rolling Mill converted to a machine shop and air compressor house by contractor H. S. Kerbaugh for construction of "Low Grade" railroad 1904 - 1906.*



Kerbaugh worked fast. In the absence of present day automotive equipment, he made lavish use of horses. A stable was built on the Manor Township side and the Conestoga River spanned with two temporary bridges to provide easy access between the working areas on both sides of the stream. The old Iron Works' company store, the building with the four-faced clock in the tower, 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 southeastern 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 said getting the job done was the thing, safety was secondary. As a consequence, accidents were numerous and loss of life heavy. The records of Andrew Zercher, then undertaker in Conestoga Centre, lists thirty-four workers killed during construction, including several victims of shootings and stabbings. 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 Conestoga River. The new railroad trestle across the stream 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. Ice covered H. M. Stauffer's lumber and coal yard and 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 Conestoga, covering the roads on both sides. Seventeen houses were inundated and their occupants evacuated. Stauffer's store was again covered.

Two years of good behavior seemed to be about all the Susquehanna was capable of, as on February 22, 1918, backwater from an ice jam in the Narrows below Pequea reached a level at Safe Harbor four feet higher than in 1904, a record that still stands. The lower end of the village was almost entirely submerged. Many houses were shattered 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 Conestoga in a small boat at the peak of the flood, the craft carrying the three was dashed against a partially submerged tree and capsized. 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. Only slightly less spectacular was the rescue of Postmaster William Bones from the second story window of the post office which was located in one of Stauffer's buildings. Bones said he could see large masses of ice moving up the Conestoga and lodging against the county bridge. After 1918 there was no major flooding at Safe Harbor until 1972, although on several occasions, such as 1920 and 1925, cellars were flooded and residents were prepared to flee.<sup>3 6</sup>

### *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 businesses should avoid the village, 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 taken down about 1909. The company store building was dismantled in 1912 and the four-faced tower clock sold to the Borough of Mountville where it was mounted on top of the town hall, now the quarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This move aroused the remaining citizens of Safe Harbor to loud protest, as it was claimed that funds to purchase and install the clock were raised 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 erection 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 in 1919. The Railroad House was the last to go.

Only two churches, the Safe Harbor Methodist and Green Hill United Brethren, remained. All of the fraternal orders had either moved 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 work. But it was not to be a permanent quietude.

### *The Electric Power Era Begins*

**I**n 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. Lancaster and York newspapers carried headlines such as: "Deserted Village Again On The Map" and "Ghost Town Comes Alive Again." 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 Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company (now the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company) the other two-thirds. Charles E. F. Clarke, then president of Pennsylvania Water & Power Company, was made president of the new company and the lake above the new dam named in his honor. In a letter to the author in 1958 John A. Walls, vice president and chief engineer in 1929 and later president of the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company, describes some of the events leading up to the decision to build the Safe Harbor project:

In the early part of 1929, Aldred (John E. Aldred, then Chairman of the Boards of both Pennsylvania and Baltimore companies) and I were in Europe in connection with some financing. We learned from bankers and government officials there, that they were already looking with alarm at the speculation being indulged in over here. They were withdrawing loaned funds in greater and greater amounts, and advised us of the extent of those withdrawals.

Aldred liked to plan ahead, and had the courage to take risks. Safe Harbor had been planned for a much later development. He decided that the time to build a costly development was when a recession was under way. Then machinery would be cheap and labor would be plentiful and efficient. He would take the risk of being able to raise the money for construction. Both Penn-Water and Consolidated Gas were in good cash position. Con-Gas needed more power and was about to build a steam extension with its cash.

Aldred called Wagner (Herbert A. Wagner then president of Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company) and myself to New York in September, and pointed out the opportunity he considered ripe. Favorable costs, and hydro instead of steam for Baltimore, were incentives. Neither Wagner nor I was inclined to go ahead. Wagner wanted to build his steam station. I had learned to fear tight money markets, and the warnings from Europe were fresh in my mind.

But Wagner and I were won over. We started. October came with its panic, and we stuck to our decision. Of course none of us expected that a depression would endure long after 1935. Before that came about, Aldred seized the precisely right month, out of many years, to launch the Safe Harbor bond issues – and that *comforting name*, in that time of financial uncertainty and distress, had lots to do with the immediate success of the issue. I heard bond salesmen gloat over the help that name gave them, for I was there.

The construction diary for the Safe Harbor project, for its initial entry on November 4, 1929, carries this terse statement:

Job started at 7 A.M.  
G. H. Angell, Gen'l Supt  
Nature of work:  
Erb – Carp – 6 men – Building  
partitions for temporary field office.  
Anderson – Labor – 9 men – Clearing  
at yard track site along creek.

General Superintendent Angell had just finished a similar assignment on the Conowingo development. He died in April 1931 in the midst of the Safe Harbor project and his assistant, and also a Conowingo veteran, Harry E. Whitney, was selected as his successor. The Arundel Corporation of Baltimore was awarded the general contract. Like Angell and Whitney this firm had also participated in the construction of Conowingo.

The decision to proceed promptly with the Safe Harbor project was a fortunate one for Lancaster and York Counties. The much needed jobs and the large orders for a variety of materials were a boost to a badly sagging economy both locally and nationally. During the major construction period, 1930-31, Safe Harbor attained its greatest population when employment on the project reached nearly 4,000 men, representing almost every construction trade. For many it was an easy transition from the just being completed inter-county bridge between Columbia and Wrightsville. Others had local roots, but many came from various parts of the country. Some lived in the temporary dormitories and ate in the dining halls erected by the company on the Manor side of the Conestoga. Some men built shacks in the surrounding hills and valleys, and still others found room and board with private families nearby or in Lancaster. The second

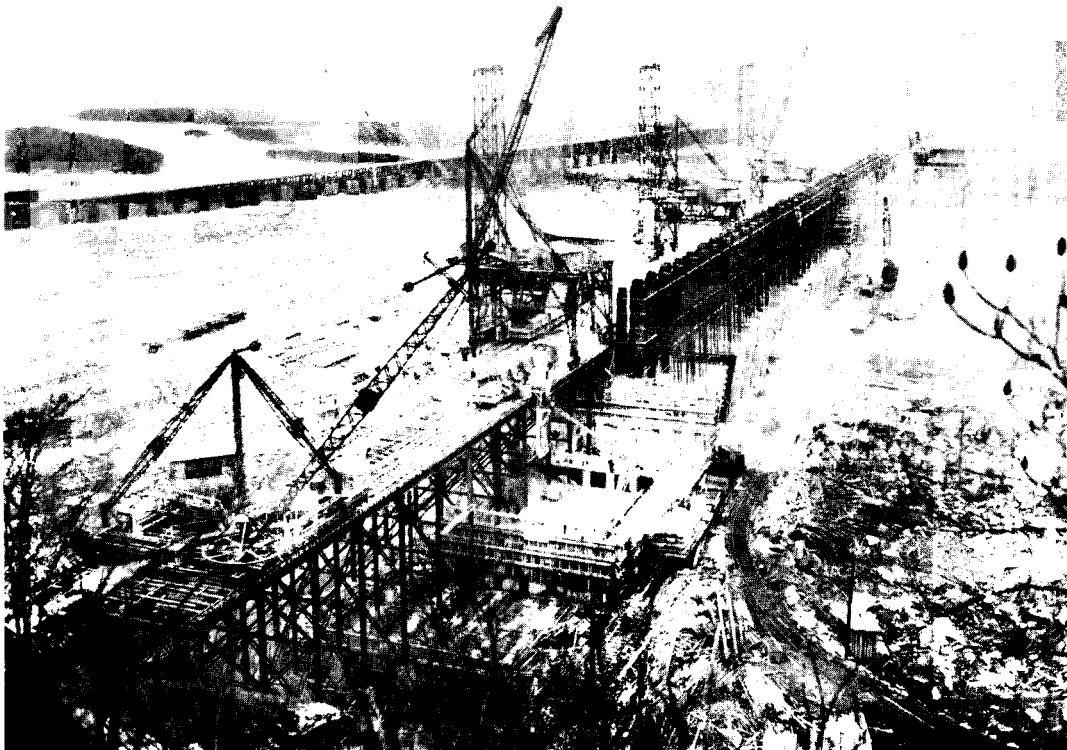


floor of the Odd Fellows Hall was converted into a dormitory. The entire area on both sides of the Conestoga was spotted with temporary construction buildings, laced through with many miles of railroad spur track connected to the Columbia & Port Deposit Railroad. The quarry and rock crushing plant were located in the valley between the present village and the Green Hill road. A stockpile of crushed rock and some components of the crusher remain as evidences of the operation.

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 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 made it the second largest investor-owned hydroelectric plant in the nation at that time. The largest was the Philadelphia Electric Company plant at Conowingo, also on the Susquehanna five miles below the Maryland state line. These two plants together with Holtwood then had a combined generating capacity of nearly 600,000 kilowatts. This was increased to over 800,000 kilowatts in 1964 when four additional generators were added to the Conowingo station. The 32-mile chain of lakes created by the three power dams has become a prime recreation attraction. In 1955 the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company was merged into the Pennsylvania Power & Light Company, and through this move the latter company acquired one-third of the common stock of the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Baltimore Gas & Electric Company still retaining its two-thirds share.

Another exciting period for the Safe Harbor area came to an end with the completion of the hydro project and the community became a quiet and pleasant place in which to live. With little apparent effort an average of almost one billion Kilowatt-hours of electric power per year were being generated at Safe Harbor. This power, along with that from Holtwood and Conowingo, is fed into the eleven-company transmission network known as the Pennsylvania - New Jersey - Maryland Interconnection (PJM) to help supply the energy needs of



*River bottom unwatered by cofferdams for construction of powerhouse and dam for Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation 1930 - 1931.*

the mid-Atlantic region. Following the precedent set at Holtwood and Conowingo, and elsewhere, the Safe Harbor project included construction of a company-owned village for a key segment of its operating, maintenance and supervisory personnel. Twenty-one Tudor-style single brick houses, and two office buildings were erected on a hill a few hundred yards south of the site of the old Iron Works village.

### *River Coal*

Still another industry related to the generation of electric power was started in Safe Harbor in 1953, the recovery of coal from the Susquehanna River. Ever since mining began in the famous Pennsylvania anthracite fields culm or spoil banks, containing a high proportion of fine-grain coal, have eroded into the river and its tributaries along with soil of various types from other sources. The smaller particles are carried downstream in suspension while the larger ones are rolled along the river bottom. Much of the river's sediment load settled in the lakes created by the power dams on the lower river. Recovery of the coal portion of the deposits started in Lake Aldred above the Holtwood dam in 1925. The product was used to fire the boilers of the just completed steam electric generating station located adjacent to the Holtwood hydro plant. The capacity

of the steam station was trippled in 1954 and the coal recovery operations shifted to Lake Clarke above the Safe Harbor dam which now was intercepting most of the oncoming sediment. Here Pennsylvania Power & Light Company used a floating dredge, a tug boat, and a fleet of barges to bring the mixture of coal, sand and mud to Safe Harbor where it was pumped to a washing plant on the hill in Manor Township. With most of the non-combustibles removed the product of the washing plant flowed down the opposite side of the hill through a pipe to the centrifuge plant on the banks of the Conestoga River. The excess water was extracted here and the coal loaded onto railroad cars for the eight-mile trip to Holtwood. Declining economic advantage over other sources of fine-grain coal, environmental concerns, plus the dislocation of the deposits in the lake by the June 1972 flood, led to the shutdown of the twenty-year operation in 1973.

### *More Floods And Ice Jams*

No story of Safe Harbor would be complete without mention of two extraordinary natural phenomena occurring in the 1970s. The first was the Agn s Flood of June 1972, the result of up to 19 inches of rain being released over the Susquehanna River basin by Hurricane Agnes. Flood peaks, several feet higher than any on record, were reached at several points on the Chemung River in New York and on the main trunk of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Damage in the Corning-Elmira area and at Wilkes-Barre and Harrisburg was exceptionally heavy. The flood walls at Wilkes-Barre were topped by over four feet. Because of lesser amounts of rain over the West Branch the walls at Williamsport and Sunbury were not breached. Harrisburg has no flood walls. The damage was also severe at many smaller localities including Marietta, 14 miles above Safe Harbor. There were 51 flood-related deaths in Pennsylvania, ten in Lancaster County, where the Conestoga River also set new records. At Safe Harbor dam 26 of 32 spillway gates were open, discharging a record 1,000,000 cubic feet of water per second. The previous record was in March 1936 when approximately 850,000 cubic feet per second were discharged. The maximum elevation of the water below the dam was six inches higher than the floor of the generator room. Through concerted efforts by the employees, all openings to the station were sealed and sandbags placed around all outside doors before the flood peak arrived. The generator room was kept dry while leakage into the lower levels was successfully handled by pumps. There was no interruption of power output and no significant damage to structures and equipment. Access roads to both the plant and the operator's village were covered with water and both places could only be reached by circuitous routes on foot. Water and food had to be carried in for the village residents.

The second event occurred on January 27, 1978. It was the most damaging in the history of the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation. Unprecedented high

river flow as in 1972 was not the case this time but a combination of only moderate flow and two monumental ice jams, one above the dam and a later one below. Increased river flow from basin-wide rains during the first half of January carried most of the heavy ice cover from upriver into Lake Clarke, but was not high enough to flush much of the ice through the spillway gates. Ice jams formed at Turkey Hill, five miles above Safe Harbor; at Columbia, five miles further upstream and the head of Lake Clarke; and at Chickies Rapids, two miles above Columbia. A second increase in river flow, induced by heavy rains on January 25-26, brought in more ice and water. The ice jams at Chickies and Columbia gave way on the morning of the 27th to join the jam at Turkey Hill which was still holding. The water level behind this jam rose rapidly throughout the day, reaching a peak two feet higher than at anytime since the dam was built. Shortly after 5 p.m. the jam suddenly broke. Within seven hours all of the backed-up water had been released and passed through the spillway gates along with immense quantities of ice, some in masses "as big as box cars". This unprecedented discharge of ice in such a short time caused another jam to form in the Narrows six miles below Safe Harbor where the river is only 1300 feet wide, and where in the enveloping darkness was unobserved by human eyes. No serious ice jam had occurred below the Safe Harbor plant in its 47 years of operation.

Backwater from this unexpected jam was first noticed at Pequea, three miles below Safe Harbor. Then the water level on the downstream side of the powerhouse started rising at a rate of over four feet per hour. There was no time to close openings or to place sandbags. The lower levels of the powerhouse were quickly filled and when water covered the generator room floor, those generators that were still operating had to be shut down and connections to outside power sources were severed, leaving the station without power, light, heat and drinking water. Access was limited to either climbing the nearby hill or making a long hike along the Columbia and Port Deposit Railroad tracks. The operator's village was similarly isolated and residents were evacuated on foot. Eventually, the water reached a depth of seven and a half feet on the generator room floor, 26 feet higher than it would have been if the downstream ice jam had not formed. Damage was extensive. All of the generators, plus untold numbers of other items, had to be cleaned and dried, and in many cases dismantled, repaired or replaced. Nearly four months passed before all main generators were back in service, some at partial capacity until they could be rewound. Almost two years elapsed before all other repairs and corrective measures to prevent a recurrence were completed. Any story of this disastrous event, and of the Agnes flood of 1972, has to be a saga of the courage, resourcefulness and endurance of loyal employees working under extremely trying circumstances.

### *Today's Reminders Of Old Safe Harbor*

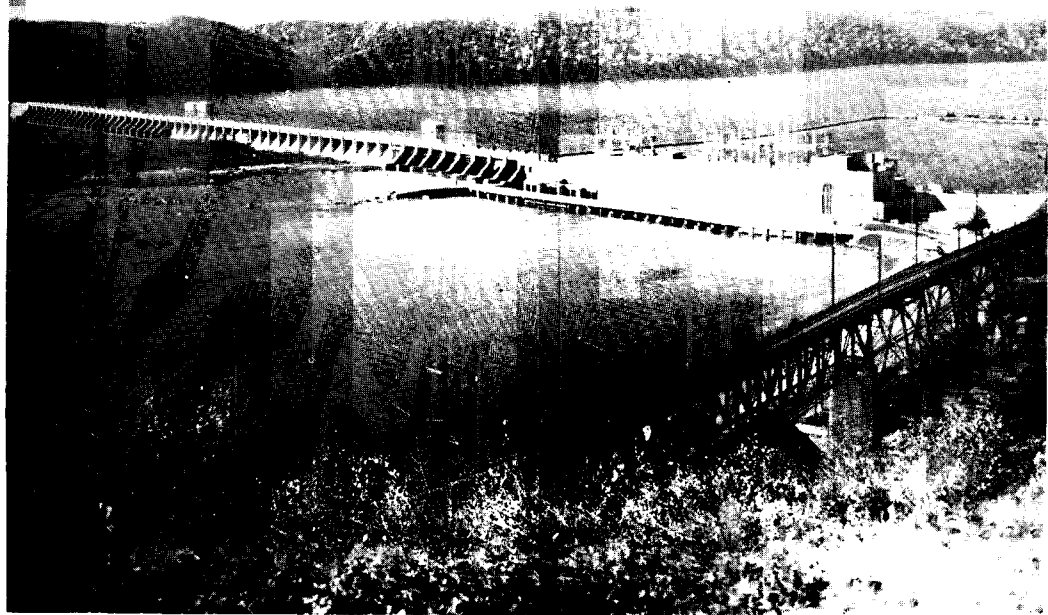
**F**or the most part physical evidences of Safe Harbor's earlier history have

been erased. The few that remain serve as reminders that the area's quiet and peaceful present is but an outgrowth of an exciting and turbulent past. What is perhaps the oldest building, built in the mid-1700s, possibly by Benedict Eshelman, still stands near the junction of River Road and the road to the village of Conestoga. This large handsome stone house, traditionally the home of the several superintendents of the Iron Works, is now, in keeping with this custom, the home of Paul M. Hess, retired as the first superintendent and later the first manager of the Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation. Only two of the original Iron Works dwellings remain in use. They are located on Groff Avenue, known as Mill Street during the iron making era. Along the road to Conestoga are two other houses of early vintage, the former homes of Alonzo Hudson and Christian Herr.

Nothing remains of the Iron Works buildings. The area between River Road and the Conestoga River, once occupied by the blast furnace and the foundry, is now the setting for a picnic pavillion and other recreational features provided by the power company. North of this area and just beyond the highway bridge is another picnic area, first developed by the Conestoga Valley Association, but now maintained by the power company. Of particular interest here is the only remaining lock of the Conestoga Navigation system. On the east side of River Road and on the site of the former rolling mill, later the match factory and the air compressor house for the Low Grade railroad construction, are the tennis courts, baseball field, two pavilions, and the bandstand that are part of a larger recreation area provided by Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation. Extending eastward up the slope from this park are traces of the former Spring and Cedar Streets along which most of the houses of the Iron Works village were located. A few depressions for cellars are still discernable. That part of the old village area nearest the present park has been transformed into an arboretum that includes specimens of trees and shrubs native to southeast Pennsylvania.

The old Odd Fellows Hall on the former Robison Street between Spring Street and the present road to Conestoga is still in good condition, appearing just as handsome as it was during its period of greatest use, the last half of the nineteenth century. During the construction of the hydro plant, 1930-32, the auditorium on the second floor was converted into a dormitory for workers. The third floor still retains vestiges of its use by some of the fraternal orders that shared quarters here. The building is currently used as a private residence. Farther east on old Spring Street and nestled comfortably in the surrounding woods are the walls of the once beautiful stone St. Mary's Catholic Church. Large trees grow within the walls, and some have deflected through the window openings to continue their growth outside the walls. The church site and the adjacent cemetery have been taken under the care of the young people of the sponsor church St. Mary's of Lancaster.

The only remaining church in Safe Harbor proper is the United Methodist



*The Safe Harbor hydroelectric project in 1981. The powerhouse will be extended left to the spillways to cover five additional generators by 1985. Low Grade rail-road bridge over the Conestoga in the right foreground.*

located just across the highway bridge in Manor Township. It is part of the Colemanville-Safe Harbor circuit. Next to the church is the former home of the Tripple family. At one time it was also a store. Across the road and near the bridge are remains of the foundations and headrace of Witmer's Mill, formerly A. Millers and later Tripple and Taylor. Downstream from the bridge on the Manor side only three houses remain of the thirty or so that once lined that side of the Conestoga River. Near the river's mouth only a few crumbling stone foundations provide evidence of Jacob Miller's real estate development called Millerport.

### *The Electric Power Era Continues*

**I**n 1981 Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation celebrated fifty years of electric power generation. It has the longest life by far of any of the previous ventures in the area: river transportation, canals, iron making and processing, match factory, railroad construction, or river coal recovery. The corporation's future as an investor-owned hydroelectric facility has been assured at least until the year 2030 with the issuance in 1980 of a second fifty-year license by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. During the original construction of the project, 1930-32, partial substructure components were provided for five additional generators. The powerhouse, however, was only made long enough to enclose the seven original units. In its application for license renewal Safe Harbor

proposed to install five new generators in the existing open spaces. This proposal was approved by the Commission but with a mandate that the concerns of other federal, state and local government agencies be resolved through comprehensive studies of such items as: water quality, shoreline fish spawning, restoration of migratory fish, archeological and historical preservation, ice jams, debris management, flood plain management, and the need for and size of the fifth new unit as related to required minimum flow release.

The Boston engineering firm of Chas. T. Main, Inc. was selected for design and supervision of construction. Barring unforeseen delays completion of the expansion program is expected in 1985. Station capacity will then have been increased from 230,000 kilowatts to about 417,000 kilowatts. The project as originally conceived in 1930 will then be completed. The question could well be asked why this expansion was not made sooner. Certainly the demand for power has been there. The question of license renewal was a factor in the delay but, more importantly, the rapidly increasing cost and questionable availability in recent years of suitable oil, gas and coal supplies for firing steam electric stations has greatly enhanced the value of hydro power.

The expansion of Safe Harbor hydro in the 1980s may be simpler and easier to carry out from an engineering standpoint than the construction performed in the 1930s. The problems of meeting the demands of the many federal and state agencies, however, are exceedingly more complex and time consuming. Then there are the local government units and private groups and individuals whose concerns must also be considered. The contrast between the two eras is perhaps best illustrated by considering that the original dam, generating and transmitting facilities, and the operator's village were built over a two-year period with nearly 4,000 employees at a cost of about \$35,000,000. Securing the federal license renewal in 1980 was preceded by three years of negotiation followed by the making of the several mandated studies with conclusions acceptable to various federal, state and local governmental agencies. Actual construction of the 1981-85 expansion for only five additional generating units and auxiliaries will extend over three years with about 400 tradesmen involved at a cost in the range of \$120-175,000,000.

Along with the phenomenal growth in governmental and public interest, there is the increasing awareness on the part of public utilities of their responsibilities to the people they serve and the need to listen and respond to what they have to say. Evidence of this concern on the part of Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation was the formation of the Safe Harbor Advisory Citizens Committee (SHACC), composed of about thirty prominent citizens, legislators, county and city officials from the general Lancaster and York County area surrounding Lake Clarke. The group held its first meeting in October 1980. Officers were subsequently elected and sub-committees appointed to work in such areas as: plant expansion, ice and floods, recreation, fishways, historical preservation and

pollution. Safe Harbor's Personnel Director is the liaison between the Committee and the Company, providing information that has been requested or appears pertinent, and bringing in individuals with expertise in areas of particular concern. The concept of such a committee is not new with Safe Harbor and has proved beneficial to other companies and to other localities. The primary purpose is to help bring about better understanding between the company and its neighbors.

### *Epilogue*

**T**he story of Safe Harbor is an ongoing one. The author is grateful for the opportunity to revise and update the original version published in the Society Journal of April 1959. During the interim he has spoken with many people who themselves had lived or worked in the Safe Harbor area or whose family members had done so. The author also believes research by others will in time uncover more pertinent information. Safe Harbor's history is a saga of economic ups and downs interspersed by all too frequent bouts with ice and floods. Through it all, however, and in spite of their sometimes adverse behavior, its become increasingly apparent that the Susquehanna and Conestoga Rivers were the principal reason for the village coming into being. Without them there would have been no fisheries, neither would there have been any river and canal navigation to nudge the early residents into the busy world of industry and commerce. It is very doubtful that without the rivers the iron works could have operated, dependent as it was on waterborne transportation, and on adequate water supply for its many boilers.

Since 1931 the Susquehanna has proved a very valuable servant in producing an average of nearly one billion kilowatt hours of electricity per year from the Safe Harbor hydroelectric station, and in making possible the recovery of sufficient fine-grain anthracite coal to fire the boilers in the Holtwood steam electric station. The floods and ice jams that have plagued the community have been minimized but not entirely eliminated by the construction of the Safe Harbor dam. The length in time during which continuous records of stream-flow and precipitation have been kept is miniscule compared to the estimated 10-14,000 year life of the Susquehanna since the retreat of the last major glacier, the Wisconsin. One can only be certain that this grand old lady and her little sister, the Conestoga, will continue to flow on in their seemingly capricious and sometimes unpredictable fashion, and will all too frequently assert themselves with new challenges to the generations that follow. To the question, frequently asked over the years, "How safe is Safe Harbor", one can only say, "Yes, it is safe, but keep an eye on those two rivers."



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania Historical Commission, Archaeological Studies of Susquehannock Indians of Pennsylvania, Safe Harbor Report No. 2, Donald A. Cadzow.
- <sup>2</sup> Lancaster County Historical Society, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1919, David H. Landis.
- <sup>3</sup> Pennsylvania Historical Commission, Petroglyphs in the Susquehanna River near Safe Harbor Report No. 1, Donald A. Cadzow.
- <sup>4</sup> Lancaster County History, Dr. H. M. J. Klein, p. 10, 1921.
- <sup>5</sup> L.C.H.S. Vol. XIX, No. 8, 1915, H. Frank Eshleman.
- <sup>6</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 738, 1883.
- <sup>7</sup> Lancaster County History, Klein, p. 39.
- <sup>8</sup> L.C.H.S. Vol. XXXIV, Arks and Rafts on the Susquehanna, William Frederic Worner.
- <sup>9</sup> L.C.H.S. Vol. XXIV, No. 9, Rafting on the Susquehanna, D. F. Magee.
- <sup>10</sup> L.C.H.S. Vol. XXXIX, The Conestoga Navigation, Prof. Horace R. Barnes.
- <sup>11</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, Map insert, no number.
- <sup>12</sup> L.C.H.S. Vol. LVIII, No. 4, A Survey of 19th Century Iron Industry in Lancaster County, J. W. W. Loose.
- <sup>13</sup> The Sunday News, August 22, 1948, Joseph T. Kingston.
- <sup>14</sup> Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, February 18, 1955, Joseph T. Kingston.
- <sup>15</sup> Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, January 17, 1955, Joseph T. Kingston.
- <sup>16</sup> Lancaster Examiner & Herald, September 16, 1857.
- <sup>17</sup> The Daily Examiner, March 19, 1904.
- <sup>18</sup> The Sunday News, September 25, 1949.
- <sup>19</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 745.
- <sup>20</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 94.
- <sup>21</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 84.
- <sup>22</sup> Lancaster County Court House Records.
- <sup>23</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 742.
- <sup>24</sup> Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Property Records.
- <sup>25</sup> Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Property Records.
- <sup>26</sup> Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Property Records.
- <sup>27</sup> Anniversary Brochure of Green Hill E. U. B. Church.
- <sup>28</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 741.
- <sup>29</sup> Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Property Records.
- <sup>30</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 744.
- <sup>31</sup> Lancaster County History, Klein, p. 1043.
- <sup>32</sup> History of Lancaster County, Ellis and Evans, p. 744.
- <sup>33</sup> Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, August 21, 1851.
- <sup>34</sup> L.C.H.S. Vol. LVII, Vol. No. 2, A History of the Magnetic Mines of Conestoga and Martic Townships, John W. Price, Sr.
- <sup>35</sup> The Growth and Development of the Pennsylvania Railroad Co. 1846-1929, H. W. Schotter and records in Pennsylvania Railroad Library.
- <sup>36</sup> The Columbia News.

### *Other References:*

Today and Yesteryear by Hugo W. Lowy, Pennsylvania Water & Power Co. (1945).

The Lower Susquehanna Lake Region by Dr. Herbert H. Beck and William B. Crane, Pennsylvania Water & Power Company and Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation (1954).

### *About the Author*

Ernest T. Schuleen is a native of Sioux City, Iowa. He received two degrees from the University of Iowa, B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1926 and a M.S. in Hydraulics in 1927. The next four years were spent in Pittsburgh, PA on hydroelectric development studies for the West Penn Power Company and the Aluminum Company of America. He came to Lancaster County in 1931 as an Engineering Assistant at Holtwood where testing of models of the Safe Harbor adjustable blade turbines was in progress. He was transferred to Safe Harbor in 1947 as Hydrographic Engineer and became Assistant Manager in 1955 and Manager in 1964, retiring in 1968. He is a registered Professional Engineer in Pennsylvania and a Fellow in the American Society of Civil Engineers. At present he serves on the Board of Directors of the Susquehanna River Tri-State Association and the Conestoga Valley Association. □