

EARLY SILVER MINING IN LANCASTER COUNTY AND LOCATION OF MINES.

Read by D. J. Eckman.

The Old Colonial records, in referring to the mining of minerals in this section, did not fix the exact location, other than back of Conestoga. Therefore it is my purpose to try to establish the fact, that the farm known as the Silver Mine Farm located in Pequea Township about one and one-half miles southeast of Conestoga Centre, is the place referred to where silver and lead were mined over two hundred years ago.

In Vol. 2 of the Colonial Records, page 403, under the date February 24, 1707, it is set forth that, "upon a message from the Indians of Conestoga, by Harry, the interpreter, they met accordingly; and the said messenger laying upon the board six loose strings of white Wampum for his Credentials, declared that he was sent by the Queen and Principal men of Conestoga aforesaid, to the Governor and the Council here, to acquaint that divers Europeans, viz: Mitchell (a Swiss), Peter Bezalion, James Letort, Martin Chartier, the French Glover of Philadelphia, Frank, a young man of Canada, who was lately taken up here, being all Frenchmen, and one from Virginia, who also spoke French, had seated themselves and built houses upon the branches of the Potomac, within this Government, and pretended that they were in search of some Mineral or ore, that in the Governor's name they had required the Indians of Conestoga to send some of their people with them to assist them and be serviceable to them, for which the Governor would pay them; that those of Conestoga, not thinking these proceedings to be consistent with their past treaties and leagues of friendship, desired to know whether the said persons were really sent by the Government, and had thus seated themselves by their approbation, and whether they had any orders to desire the assistance of the said Indians; if not, that they then might be called home. The said Interpreter further added, that although Mitchell was the person who had first led them thither, yet he had left them many weeks past, and pretended that he wanted one Clark, of Maryland, (who is said to be now under an Attainder, by an Act of Assembly of that Government), to assist him in the discovery; and the said messenger being asked divers other questions relating hereunto he was ordered to withdraw.

The Council takes the Premises into consideration, first inquired whether any of the above mentioned persons had a license to trade, in pursuance of the Act of Assembly, lately passed in this Province, for maintaining a better correspondence with the Indians, and thereupon the form of the license was read, and an account of all those who were licensed in pursuance of the said law, was produced by which it appeared that none of those before mentioned is licensed, saving Peter Bezalion, and that if they had all been so, yet that would not justify them for seating themselves in such a manner as has been before expressed. Whereupon it was resolved that an answer should be prepared to be sent to the said Queen, in which her care in acquainting this Government with what the messenger had related, should be acknowledged, and that the aforementioned persons should be forthwith required to repair to Philadelphia, to give an account of the reasons of their seating themselves in the aforesaid place, and the Secretary is ordered to make said answer against four of the clock in the afternoon, to which the Council is adjourned.

No comment need be added to this item more than to say that the whites in this neighborhood of Conestoga were ready to use these Conestoga Indians for any purpose which would be of advantage to them. I merely quote this

record to show that they were mining or about to mine ore at that early date.

In Vol. 2, of the Penn and Logan correspondence, page 321, dated the third of March, 1709, there is a letter from William Penn to James Logan in which he sets forth (p. 323), that he understands Ex-Governor Evans is making 100 Pounds, if not twice that each week out of a mine somewhere back of Conestoga. Penn says that he understands, "The Indians chiefly discovered the mine and worked it on the spot. And it is the King of the Shawnoe Indians and some few of his subjects that perform this business for Col. Evans." Penn then says to Logan that he should scrutinize the matter well and let him hear all he can about it for if there is a mine, Penn is entitled to royalties out of it.

James Logan in the same book, in a letter to Penn, found p. 316, says at p. 319, that he hopes Colonel Evans is acting honorably about the mines and that he believes that there is no real discovery of any value made yet, though it is expected that there will be most any day. He further adds, that Louis Mitchell, the Swiss, is gone over to treat with the Crown of England for a tract for his countrymen, and that settlement is the pretense but that miners are the real thing Mitchell is interested in, and that it must be guarded against until this is better understood. Logan thinks that minerals will be found near where Mitchell has pitched. In a note at the bottom of the book last named, Logan in a letter to Penn says, "There is yet nothing certainly discovered about the mines. Colonel Evans has been very free with me on that head. There has been none opened and I heartily wish I may be able to tell thee more of the matter hereafter, for I believe that Mitchell Bazillion has tricked us all." He says that this tract supposed to have minerals lies in the neighborhood of the Potomac, but that they must keep their eyes open.

I cite this merely to show that agitations about minerals being found in the neighborhood of the Conestoga and Shawnese Indian country, and off to the Southwest were frequent and that the spirit of securing valuable minerals had gotten among the Indians of this neighborhood as well as among the white people.

In this record Ex-Governor Evans says there has been no mine opened, but I think there was or was very shortly after that time, and Penn may have had some reliable information about the mine. To substantiate my belief I am going to tell the story as told to me, by two very good friends of mine, Mr. D. K. Kendig, 129 E. Walnut Street, and Mr. B. F. Good, 721 N. Duke Street, this city. Both were born and raised about Conestoga Centre and both worked when very young men on this Silver Mine Farm with prospectors during the year of 1874 and 1875, the farm at that time was owned by Harvey Filly, a Silver Smith of Market Street, Philadelphia. Messrs. Henry and John Baumgardner and Jacob Peters were helping finance the company.

Thomas Hollow, an Englishman, was superintendent. Their was also a mineralogist named Abraham Bechtol on the job who at one time was superintendent of the Baker Mining Co., Colorado, who declared that the outcroppings showed up better than anything he had seen in the west. Mr. Kendig tells of the shafts and drifts he worked in, but the most interesting was a shaft they were sinking which to my mind will take us back to the date of 1709 when William Penn thought he was loosing some royalties on minerals being mined by Ex-Governor Evans with the help of the Shawanese Indians.

While sinking this shaft they had to do considerable blasting, the last blast they made in the shaft blew down instead of up. They could not understand just what happened but after some picking they worked through the shell of rock into an old drift, which revealed without a doubt, evidence of being worked years ago. The rock was full of pick and drill marks. Mr. Kendig admitted that Mr. Good was the most venturesome and he followed

several leads in the drift. Mr. Good says one led toward Pequea Creek. He followed this one until he came to water and the air being very bad, gave it up. However, Mr. Good found several English Powder cans and a rod for cleaning the dust out of the drill holes. This drift or working was so old they could find no trace of the original opening. Now the question, who worked these mines at this early date? I believe it was either Ex-Governor Evans with the Shawanese Indians or the Frenchmen who were after the Conestoga Indians to help dig ore. Mr. Kendig says that during the late civil war there was a Capt. Joseph Buzzo worked at mining on this same farm and it was the general opinion that he got considerable silver at that time. There is a number of shafts and drifts, one drift extending to a depth five or six hundred feet, but the shaft which opened the old drift is closed up with rocks and rubbish. The farm is now owned by Frank Hess and has been in the Hess family for a number of years. It was merely by accident that I learned of Mr. Kendig's connection with the silver mining and by Mr. Kendig of Mr. Good, to both I am very much indebted for the information they gave, for I believe it completes an unfinished chapter of history of the early mining of minerals back of Conestoga. At this point it will be interesting to quote (with permission of Mr. D. H. Landis, Windom, Lancaster County, Pa.,) a letter he wrote to me, August 26, 1925:

Aug. 26, 1925

Mr. D. J. Eckman,
Lancaster, Pa.

My dear Mr. Eckman:—

In connection with what you told me concerning the paper you are preparing on the Marticville mine, I found a few items in my catalogue of my Indian curios which you may wish to add to your paper as they are in keeping with what you already have.

Roger Williams in his book "A Key Into the Languages Of America 1643":—States concerning the Narragansett Indians Page 73,—“They have an excellent art to cast our pewter and brass into very neat and artificial pipes”.

We know from numerous sources that the Swedish Traders from the colony along the Delaware made frequent trips to Conestoga and traded with the Indians here.

In a letter dated April 12th, 1643, Gov. Printz of New Sweden (The colony along the Delaware), in his description of the Indians states:—“They are skilled in making all kinds of things from lead.”

The proof of this in my collection consists of a lead tobacco pipe having a stem about two feet long and ornamented with an animal of the same metal which has a ring of brass about its neck, also portions of two smaller lead pipe bowls and a stem of a lead pipe. All these were found in Indian graves south of Washington Boro.

The question of where the Indians here secured the lead of which these pipes are made is an interesting item in connection with your paper on the Martic mine, especially in connection with William Penn's statement in his letter to Sec. Logan:—“He understands that Ex-Governor Evans is making one hundred pounds, if not twice that per week out of a mine somewhere back of Conestoga and also adds, the Indians chiefly discovered the mine and worked it on the spot and it is the King of the Shawone Indians and some few of his subjects that perform this business for Col. Evans.”—March 3rd, 1709,—Penn and Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, Page 321. This you have noticed doubtless in H. Frank Eshleman's "Annals of the Susquehannocks", page 199.

This clearly states that the Indians discovered the vein of ore and secured their supply of lead there, as you know the mineral which occurs there is

argentiferous galenite, a sulphide of lead containing a percentage of silver, which they could very easily reduce to metal.

Prof. Beck has analyzed this mineral and found it contained 250 oz. of silver and a trace of gold per ton. It would be interesting to have Prof. Beck take a small portion of one of my lead pipes and see if the analysis corresponds with that of the galenite of the Marticville mine.

Trusting this may be of interest to you, I remain,

Yours respectfully,

D. H. Landis.

So according to the facts revealed in Mr. Landis' letter this same mine may have produced a considerable amount of lead. Mr. Landis in his wonderful collection of Traders relics has some lead pipes the same as he refers to in his letter that were found in graves near Washingtonboro and it certainly would be interesting to know if the lead used in these pipes was mined back of Conestoga or these same mines.

The Shawanese Indians came to this County about 1678 or near that date. History says there were sixty families moved here from North Carolina and settled along the Pequea back of Conestoga. It is quite likely they were the first to discover the mineral back of Conestoga, but just what mineral they were most interested in, is hard to say. It may have been lead as that was much easier to work. I have located a place that shows evidence of a large village site near this Silver Mine Farm. Was it the Shawanese? I believe it was; but I also believe the same site was occupied by another tribe at an earlier period, as indicated by the difference in the stone implements found there. If the records quoted in Mr. Landis' letter (which dates back to 1643) are correct, then these mines may have been worked long before the Shawanese came to Pequea, for that date is fixed as 1678 or possibly a few years latter. It would be interesting to know just what tribe of Indians first discovered the mineral and the date, but it is not my purpose to even make a guess at the date; nor the amount of minerals taken from these mines, but it is my purpose to fix the exact location of the mines which caused so much agitation among the Indians and a good deal of concern to William Penn, at that early date, and that is what is now known as the Silver Mine Farm.

D. J. Eckman.

February 4, 1927.

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