

History

Paper Mill House & Museum

By Doug Humes

One of Newtown Township's five National Register sites is the Paper Mill House & Museum overlooking Darby Creek at St. David's & Paper Mill roads. The site has been a center of activity in the community for 4 centuries. If only those walls could talk!

The earliest structure at the site is believed to have been built in the late 1700's by Captain William Hayman, a US naval captain during the American Revolution. The Captain married a local girl, Ann Wayne, sister of General Mad Anthony Wayne. Can you imagine being a fly on the wall and hearing the Captain and the General sitting around telling war stories?

There was no bridge over the creek, and so when nearby farmer Thomas Walsh died in 1810, he offered in his will to contribute \$400, if the County would contribute the same, to build a bridge within 6 years. The County accepted the offer, and a beautiful arched bridge was constructed. The bridge remains today, with the original memorial plaque honoring Thomas Walsh.

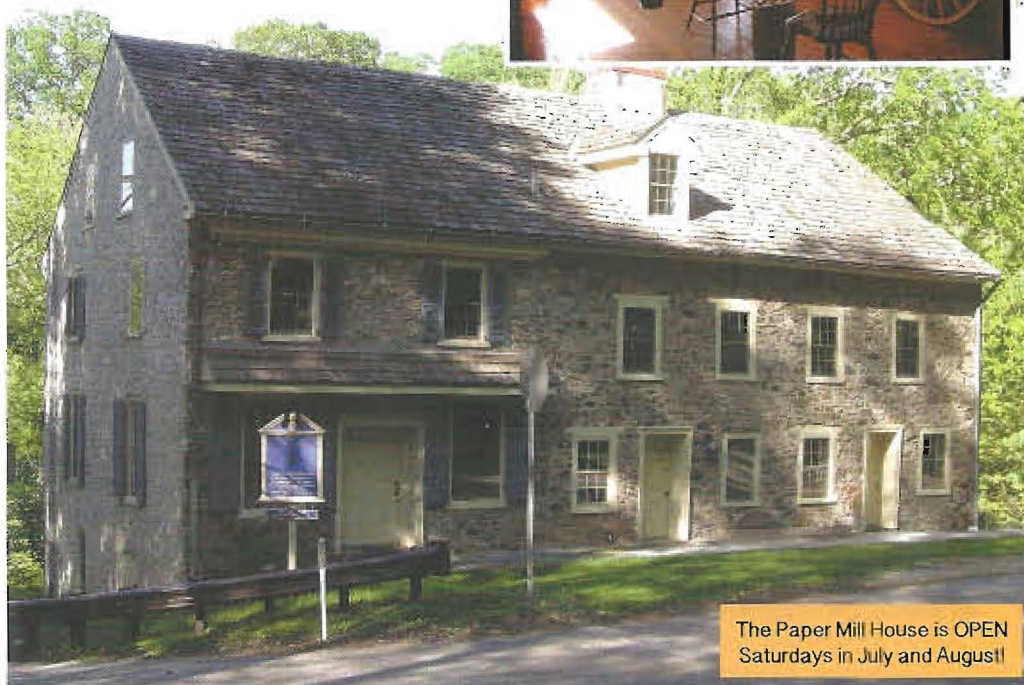
When Captain Hayman died, William Crosley bought the 187 acre property south of St. David's road in 1828, and erected the first in a series of mills that would populate that site for the next 60 years. He added on to the Hayman structure, building housing for workers at his mill. By the time of the 1860 census, there were a series of mills along the creek – including a woolen and a paper mill at the property, with millworkers living in buildings perched above the creek along Paper Mill Road. Of the 841 people in Newtown Township that year, about 125 of them were millworkers and families.

The mill era came to an end in 1887 when fire destroyed the paper mill. The western suburbs were changing then – with the growth of the new suburbs on the "Main Line". The president of Franklin Sugar Company, Charles Custis Harrison, bought the mill property and the property across the street and had prominent architect Frank Furness design a home there. The Paper Mill House was rented out to a variety of tenants, including several Italian immigrant families in the 1920's.

The Harrisons held the properties on both sides of St. Davids Road through three generations. In 1976, the celebration of the nation's Bicentennial kindled local interest in our history – and several founders of the Historical Society convinced the Harrison estate to deed the Paper Mill House property to the Township. The Society renovated the house, and created a local history museum, including an 1850's general store and several period rooms.

It's our turn to make memories at the site, and pass it along to future generations so that they know these connections to our past. History comes alive when the walls start talking.

Doug Humes is a board member and former president of the Newtown Square Historical Society. For more stories on local history, and membership information, please visit our website at www.historicnewtownsquare.org.



The Paper Mill House is OPEN Saturdays in July and August!

