

Crum Creek Valley

The Other Historic Stream Valley on the Upper Main Line

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The Upper Main Line is flanked by two beautiful stream valleys, Valley Creek on the north and Crum Creek on the south. Valley Creek is better known because of its terminus at Valley Forge, but the southern watershed has the same beauty and almost as much historical significance.

Crum Creek rises in Malvern and in Paoli. The east branch meanders south past the Anthony Wayne home-
stead and through bucolic Easttown and Willistown Townships, where it joins the west branch of Crum Creek.¹
This article reviews the history of and the historic places in the upper Crum Creek Valley.

Paoli Water Company

An 1897 map of downtown Paoli, reproduced below, shows “The Paoli Water Company” between Circular Avenue and what is now Spring Street.² This is the site of the spring from which Crum Creek still flows freely, next to Spring Street, crossing Circular Avenue, following Poplar Avenue and South Valley Road.

The spring and the Paoli Water Company are between Circular Avenue and what is now Spring Street. Today the spring is under the Bell Telephone (now Verizon) building and the parking lot at the rear of 30 South Valley Road. This spring forms one of the principal tributaries of Crum Creek.

In 1897, many of the lots in downtown Paoli were owned by Paoli Heights Land Company. This development was serviced with water from Paoli Water Company and the spring. Two years earlier, in 1895, officials of American Pipe Company of Philadelphia incorporated five water companies including Easttown Water Company, Tredyffrin Water Company and Willistown Water Company. One week after the five companies were chartered, Easttown



Water was renamed Berwyn Water Company, and it acquired the other four distributors. In 1899, North Springfield Water Company acquired Berwyn Water. The growing water industry, shared by many companies, was consolidated on May 11, 1925, when North Springfield Water and four other community suppliers were acquired by Philadelphia Suburban Water Company. Through mergers and acquisitions, the water company became Aqua, the present water company. As with much of the history of the Upper Main Line, water distribution has been driven by the Pennsylvania Railroad, which required a source of water.³

Crum Creek flows under Circular Avenue and emerges as a pretty little stream along Poplar Avenue. A small footbridge has a plaque commemorating the bridge as “Justice’s Memorial.” The bridge provides a good viewing platform for observing the creek in its picturesque form, which it retains for the rest of its journey through the Upper Main Line.

The Wayne Homestead

The Wayne family was one of the early families to reside in the Crum Creek Valley.⁴ William Penn’s first patent to the land for 1,050 acres was made to British merchant James Claypoole. He constructed a small stone dwelling on the land, which was later incorporated into the larger house that still stands today.⁵ The land passed through several subsequent owners before 386 acres of it was deeded to the grandfather of Revolutionary War general Anthony Wayne. At one time a tannery operated on the property. Crum Creek is referred to as Tannery Creek in some early references.



The Raymond Shortlidge family has lived on Poplar Avenue since 1930. Mr. Shortlidge was a lawyer. Mrs. Shortlidge’s maiden name was Justice. Their children, Caroline and Justice, attended local schools. The family left us this pretty bridge with a small wooden plaque commemorating “Justice’s Memorial Bridge.” *All photos in this article are by Dave Reid.*

Anthony Wayne married Mary Penrose at Christ Church, Philadelphia, in 1766. He raised a regiment at the beginning of the Revolutionary War and rose to the rank of general. General Anthony Wayne made many improvements to the house during his residency. In 1980, the property was acquired by Easttown Township, which restored the house beautifully. Today the house is a jewel of which all local residents can be rightfully proud.

Crum Creek flows past the Wayne house and barn, across Waynesborough Road and through Waynesborough Country Club.

Waynesborough Country Club

The Waynesborough Country Club is on a lovely 200 acres of rolling hills bisected by Crum Creek. It was owned by the Liggett family whose name is best known for the Liggett Drug Stores. In the early 1960s, the Crum Creek property was owned by Robert Liggett and his wife. Their home was on the edge of Valley Forge Park along Valley Creek near the covered bridge. Mr. Liggett and his wife began exploring the possibilities of disposing of the Crum Creek property. Bryn Mawr Hospital expressed interest in building a hospital on the

property. Mr. and Mrs. Liggett approved of this use; however, the Chester County land use authorities quickly concluded that this was not a permitted use because effluent from the hospital would contaminate the pristine waters of the creek.

A famous professional golfer and golf course designer, George Fazio, and his partner, Bill Elliott, became interested in the property. They developed a plan to build a “pay-for-play” golf course on the property. Fazio and Elliott’s complete plan for a public golf course included the price per acre which would be paid to the Liggett family as part of this development.

Robert Liggett is usually described as an “elegant gentleman.” He was not enthusiastic about putting a public golf course on this beautiful property, which had been owned by his family for many years. In 1964, forward-looking local business and professional men saw the need for a top flight, family oriented country club in the Paoli area.⁶ Meeting at each other’s homes, they conceived a club with first rate facilities that could be enjoyed by every member of the family. The enthusiasm of the founders quickly ran into the hard reality of the value of the land which needed to be purchased from the Liggett family. The value which the Fazio group put on the land became the “reasonable” price which would have to be paid by a private group wishing to establish a country club. After months of difficult negotiations, the group seemed no closer to raising the money required. Then tragedy struck. Robert Liggett had a severe heart attack which put him in Bryn Mawr Hospital for many weeks. Here is how Tom Cameron, the leader of the founding group, tells the story of the successful acquisition of the property for Waynesborough County Club.

“On a cold winter day a substantial snow fall had blanketed the Upper Main Line area. I took my six-year old son, Tommy, for a ride which included a drive to the top of the hill where the present Waynesborough Club House stands. It was a beautiful sight. We were joined by another car, a Buick carrying Robert Liggett and his wife home from the hospital. The Liggetts exchanged pleasantries with me and my son. Tommy pushed his face against the window of the new Buick and during a break in the conversation, Tommy Cameron said, ‘Mr. Liggett, your new car smells like fish’. Everyone laughed uproariously.”

Early the following week, Mr. Liggett called to tell the founders that a very generous lease and sale financing plan was possible. Robert Liggett’s broker, George McFadden, created an ingenious financing plan and construction began.

Tom Fazio, a nephew of George Fazio, was a construction worker on the team that built Waynesborough. Today, Tom Fazio is a renowned golf course architect himself. He was a bulldozer operator on the team that built the golf course and alleges that he buried a car on the second hole where it remains to this day.⁷

Waynesborough Country Club was founded in 1965, thus preserving one of the most beautiful historical properties in Chester County. Six other golf courses in the Crum Creek



Is a car buried on the second hole at Waynesborough Country Club?

Valley are part of the beauty of the Valley. These courses include White Manor, Old Masters, Paxon Hollow, Springfield and Springhaven.

The Paoli Massacre

Another branch of Crum Creek originates on the site of the so-called Paoli Massacre. After the Battle of Brandywine during the Revolutionary War, General Washington and his troops limped north into the area of the Upper Main Line. A regiment of this army commanded by General Anthony Wayne camped in what is now Malvern. Here, the British caught them in a surprise night attack which hereafter has been called the “Paoli Massacre.” The skirmish in Malvern became the rallying event for colonists who wanted to secede from the



Crum Creek rises in marshy ground just east of this monument in Malvern.

oppressive rule of the British Empire.⁸ While this minor skirmish is not usually considered significant to the outcome of the Revolutionary War, the battle cry “Remember Paoli” became the focus of the struggle for independence.

The grounds of the battlefield are beautifully preserved on Monument Avenue in Malvern. Crum Creek rises in the northeast corner of the battlefield. The creek flows through Malvern Preparatory School property into a small lake created by a decaying dam at the corner of Warren Avenue and Paoli Pike. From there the creek crosses Paoli Pike and flows through the well-cared-for estates of Willistown Township.

Crum Creek Flows Through Beautiful Farmland

The stream was historically important to the local economy as a source of power for mills engaged in a variety of manufactures, and for recreational and esthetic values to an increasingly crowded populace. A small branch

originates at historic Sugartown Farm. The west branch joins the main branch of Crum Creek near the Isaac Garrett house.

The earliest inhabitants of Crum Creek Valley were the Algonquin tribe of Lenape, who inhabited the woodlands for thousands of years. The Crum Creek stream valley was settled in the 1700s by Welsh and English farmers who found the fertile soil of the stream valley conducive to productive farming. Dutch and Swedish traders were also present in the area during the 17th century, but never settled in great numbers. An influx of Northern European settlers led by English and Welsh Quakers seeking religious freedom lived peacefully with the Native Americans in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Their growing presence changed the character of the land and culture after it was peacefully transferred from Lenape ownership to William Penn in 1684 and renamed Penn's Woods.

“Crum” means “crooked” in Dutch. The literal Dutch translation of Crum Creek is certainly descriptive of the path the stream

takes, but the English meaning associated with “crummy” is not very flattering. The crooked creek provided water power for numerous mills, which ground the wheat and corn grown by the early settlers and sawed lumber for their buildings.

Grubb's Mill

Grubb's Mill on Grubb's Mill Road is a handsome stone building. Na-



Grubb's Mill was used to grind corn, wheat, and other grain for the 18th century settlers.

thaniel Grubb, who built the original mill and a house for the miller's family in about 1782, was a Scottish Quaker carpenter. The original Grubb's Mill Road went right by the old mill. The old road has been closed but the mill can still be seen from present day Grubb's Mill Road. The property owners in this area of Willistown Township are commendable for their preservation of history in the area through which Crum Creek flows.

The mill race has been preserved in the same state as it was during the 18th century. At least 90 percent of the property structures remain in their original form. In the Upper Main Line area, Grubb's Mill was the preeminent mill on Crum Creek.

Another mill, Dutton's, still stands on the lower Crum Creek, but Grubb's Mill is the only remaining intact mill in the Upper Main Line. The mill remains also as the name of several roads in the area. Between Darby Road and Paoli Pike a “Grubb Road,” a “Grubb Mill Road,” a “Grubb's Mill Road” and a “Mill Road” all cross or flow near Crum Creek.



The miller's residence has been restored and is occupied today by the property owners.

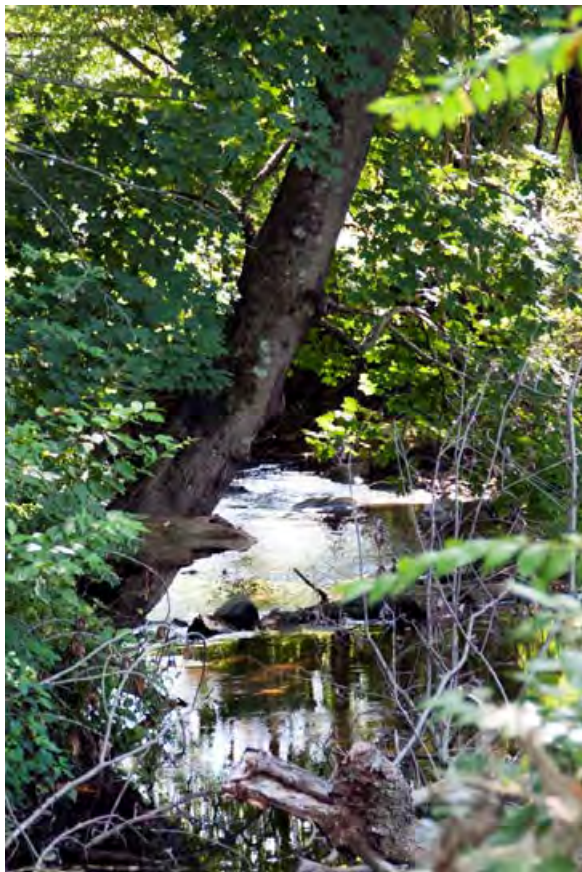
In colonial times the miller typically did not own the mill. He leased it from the owner of the property. The miller typically employed several indentured servants to help him with the operation of the mill. Some of these servants apparently did not care for the working conditions at the mill. Grubb's Mill is recorded in history by an inordinately large number of newspaper advertisements seeking the return of runaway servants.⁹

The mill and the miller's residence on Grubb's Mill Road are a beautifully preserved tribute to the owners of the property. They are situated on private property, the owners of which deserve respect for their right to privacy on the property they have preserved. If you visit the mill, please respect the privacy rights of the owners.

Grubb's Mill and the Maris Grist Mill are reminders of 18th century commerce on the Upper Main Line. The Maris Grist Mill has been demolished, but its foundation remains on Mill Road near General Wayne Elementary School.

The Okehocking Indian Reservation

William Penn established the first Indian Reservation in Chester County. It is just downstream from Grubb's Mill. The Okehocking Tribe of the Leni Lenape occupied this reservation after being forced out of their homeland along the lower Ridley and Crum Creeks by the European settlers. The Willistown supervisors, Chester County, and state officials set aside about 50 acres of this land for a nature conservancy. This conservancy can be accessed from a parking lot on Grubb's Mill Road just south of the mill site. From another parking lot, a visitor can walk to the Sheephole.



A rope extending from a tree branch carried swimmers from the bank to the middle of the sheephole for a refreshing summer dip.

The Sheephole

A natural dam across Crum Creek forms a swimming spot known as the “Sheephole.” The sheephole has been used by young residents of Paoli and Malvern for many generations. I swam there and my son swam there. A long rope always extended from a tree branch adjacent to the creek. Swimmers would take a running jump from the bank of Crum Creek holding onto the rope until it got them to the middle of the sheephole where they dropped off and splashed into the creek. Unfortunately, swimming is understandably prohibited in the sheephole today but it was always worth the five mile bicycle ride from downtown Paoli to the sheephole.

The sheephole and the Indian Reservation are at the limits of the geographical boundary of the Upper Main Line. Therefore, this story ends here, but Crum Creek continues running south until it reaches the Springton Reservoir in Delaware County, then continues to the Delaware River. Crum Creek has always been a beautiful part of the Upper Main Line.

References

1. Crum Creek Watershed Conservation Plan, Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association, Natural Lands Trust. Media, Pa.: Natural Lands Trust, 2005. Fig. 17 is a map showing Historic Resources of the Crum Creek Watershed. The southern watershed of the Upper Main Line also includes Darby Creek which flows south to the Delaware River paralleling Crum Creek for most of its length.
2. *Atlas of Properties on [Main] Line of Pennsylvania R.R., Plate 12 from Rosemont to West Chester*. Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1897.
3. *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVIII, p.39. This article has a short description of the history of the water companies on the Upper Main Line.
4. Dittman, Stephen, “A Brief Look at the History of Waynesborough and . . . its Barn” in *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2, April 2001.
5. Fry, Herb, “The Woods” *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Oct., 2002.
6. The founders of Waynesborough Country Club included Tom Cameron, A. John May, Esq., Bud Fretz, C.T. Alexander, George Knight, Dr. Eric Corkhill, and Joseph Ewing, Esquire.
7. Personal conversations with Tom Cameron, Judy Owens, Robert Washburn and other Waynesborough members, Oct. 2009.
8. McGuire, Thomas J. “Battle of Paoli”, copyright 2000, Stackpole Books.
9. John Charles Nagy and Penny Teaf Golding, “Acres of Quakers,” 2006, Willistown Township Historical Commission.

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CLEAN WATER

It is more than a resource or an amenity.

Throughout the history of man, clean, cold water has been valued and protected. Importantly so, since fresh-water is a component of man's survival, second only to the air we breathe. Our bodies are 57% water and we can only live for a few days without it.

As America was settled and its seemingly endless resources tapped, our water resources were used and abused. Our waterways provided the early highways for exploration and commerce. Streams and rivers were later changed by the installation of thousands of mill dams where water power was used to grind grain to flour, saw logs to lumber, and to run mills and factories that produced all manner of goods and clothing. Later, bigger dams were constructed on bigger rivers to create canal systems, and later still to generate electrical power. All of these changes to the natural water systems had great negative effects on the quality of the water and on the ecosystems that relied on them.

Streams and rivers also were great places to dump wastes, as they were carried away from those who did the dumping. The explosion of industrial activity happened along our waterways, as they provided the source of power and transportation of raw materials and finished goods. This high usage also had degrading effects to water quality, as industrial discharges and accidental spills occurred. An expanding population coupled with the activity previously mentioned created serious water quality issues on our eastern streams and rivers by the time of the Civil War.

The Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law was created in 1937 to regulate the discharge of sewage, industrial waste or any substance which causes or contributes to pollution, into the waters of the Commonwealth. The law was amended several times, including in the 1960s to add water quality standards. In the late 1970s and 1980, the Clean Streams Law was amended to align its requirements more closely with those of the federal Clean Water Act. The federal Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, with its objective being to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological health of our water and waterways.

Pennsylvania's Clean Streams Law established protection for streams and rivers based on the use made of the waterway. The most valuable waters are those whose physical, biological, chemical and cultural attributes are in the highest tier of Pennsylvania's 83,000 miles of streams and rivers. At the very highest protection level are the "Exceptional Value" (EV) waters; next are "High Quality" (HQ) waters, which are followed by lesser levels. The regulations say that an EV water cannot be degraded for any reason, and further states that there must be a compelling socio-economic reason to degrade a High Quality waterway. Degrading has been interpreted to mean the discharge of storm water, other forms of pollution to include silt-laden runoff, additional volumes and rates of water, and changes in temperature.

We are lucky to live in an area blessed with both EV and HQ waters. Valley Creek, with its headwaters in East Whiteland, flows through Valley Forge National Historical Park, and is classified as Exceptional Value. Crum Creek, with its headwaters in Paoli, Malvern and Willistown, drains into the Delaware River, and carries a High Quality classification. Both streams now enjoy high water quality, especially locally, but that was not always the case. That, however, is a subject for future articles.

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Pete is the president of Valley Forge Trout Unlimited, a local chapter of the national Trout Unlimited organization. VFTU is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring trout habitat throughout Chester County. See their website at www.valleyforgetu.org for more information. In addition, Pete serves on the board of the Open Land Conservancy, is a past board member of the Great Valley Nature Center, and is a member of the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society.