

Montague Hall: Its Place in Winchester History

In Winchester, only Montague Hall (originally known as the Pestus Hahn Miller House), and Abrams Delight remain standing as landmarks to signify the most essential commercial activity in the lower Shenandoah Valley during a 150 year period: the milling industry. Interestingly, Montague Hall's history is inextricably linked to Abrams Delight, located a short distance to the east, through two early Quaker families.

Montague Hall was built along the Valley Turnpike, now known as Valley Avenue or Route 11 South. This road was originally a much traversed Indian hunting and war path, later became the Great Wagon Road, and finally served as the major connecting route between Staunton, Virginia and points north.

Today, Winchester-1988, there is little visible evidence to reflect the once prosperous mills that produced basic commodities for the Winchester population and beyond. Montague Hall and another miller's house, Willow Lawn once were the two significant residential structures on the Valley Turnpike just south of Winchester. They were located across the road from each other. Unfortunately, Willow Lawn was demolished to make way for a car dealership in 1964. National Register status for Montague Hall will offer the protection it needs to ensure its endurance and provide a statement of the bygone milling industry of Winchester.

Milling in Winchester and Frederick County

The first settlers to the Shenandoah Valley found it difficult to produce and process food for their families. When Quakers first settled the Valley in the early 1700's, the use of water to power milling operations was virtually non-existent. The advent of water driven mills was actually quite revolutionary in the Valley as in other settlements.

Where the City of Winchester now stands, the early mills were built along Abrams Creek (also called Abraham's Creek). Historical maps and records reveal a number of mills in operation along Abrams Creek as early as 1746 and through the late 1800's and early 1900's. The importance of Abram's Creek and its mills is noted in Cartmell's Shenandoah Valley Pioneers and Their Descendants:

In tracing the Opequon from source to flow, mention is made of Abrams Creek. This stream is entitled to a fuller description, while treating of the waterways of the county...Abrams Creek, - a stream noted for its splendid mill sites, where factories and mills were erected in the early part of the Nineteenth Century.

An 1809 map of Frederick County shows eleven separate mill locations on Abrams Creek alone. Including those on the Opequon

Creek, there were over 35 mills of different sorts operating in the Winchester area in 1809. An 1829 map of Frederick County shows ten separate mill locations on Abrams Creek. On some of these properties, such as the Parkins' land, several mills were operating. The 1850 Occupational Survey lists 66 millers.

A 1873 map of Winchester shows a location called Milltown which, according to historical references, included at least three operating mills. Festus Hahn owned one of these. D.J. Lake and Co's. 1885 map of Frederick County lists five operating mills along Abram's Creek. They were (1) Stonewall Woolen Mills operated by B. Williams & Sons (note: on the map side it shows Festus Hahn as proprietor of Stonewall Mills, a manufacturer of flour mill feed. However, this appears to be an error because the map has him as owner of the Milltown Flour Mill which is what court records and all other historical records indicate he owned and operated); (2) Milltown Flour Mill operated by Festus Hahn; (3) Winchester Paper Mill; (4) grist mill (operator unknown); and (5) a grist mill operated by the Hollingsworth family.

Hollingsworth and Parkins Families

The lower Shenandoah Valley was originally settled by emigrating Quaker families. Seventy Quaker families came to the Valley, mostly from Pennsylvania, through a patent (land grant) issued under the authority of the Orders in Council and signed by William Gooch, Lieutenant Governor of the colony at that time. The patents are dated November 12, 1735 and according to the Hopewell Friends History can be located in the State Land Office in Richmond in Book 16, pages 314-15. Two of these Quaker families were the Hollingsworths and Parkins. The Abrams Delight site was settled by Abraham Hollingsworth. The Montague Hall site was settled by Isaac Parkins.

Both the Hollingsworth and Parkins families were influential Friends (Quakers), neighbors, and millers. The first Quaker meetings for worship were held in the homes of these families. The still in tact Parkins-Hollingsworth Quaker cemetery stands a short distance from Montague Hall. These two families were ultimately linked through marriage.

The Shenandoah Valley Hollingsworths were decedents of Valentine Hollingsworth, Sr., who came to America as part of an Irish Quaker immigration. Valentine arrived in Pennsylvania a few months after William Penn's ship, the "Welcome," landed. He settled on about 1000 acres in Brandywine-Hundred, Delaware. Valentine was a member of the first Pennsylvania Assembly 1682-3 and the Assemblies of 1687, 1688, 1695, and 1700. He was a signer of Penn's Charter and an overseer of Friends meetings for many years. He died in 1711. Valentine never set foot in the Shenandoah Valley, but his decedents did.

One of Valentine's sons named Thomas, born in County Armagh, Ireland in March, 1661, came to America with his father. In 1733 Thomas visited his son Abraham in Winchester, and during that

trip was killed by a wild buffalo while hunting. According to family tradition, Abraham Hollingsworth, the son of Thomas and grandson of Valentine, purchased 582 acres of land called "Abraham's Delight" three times: first, in 1729 from the Shawnee Indians; second, from Alexander Ross; and third from Lord Fairfax.

Isaac Parkins (sometimes referred to as Isaac Perkins) purchased 1000 acres in about 1735. The Hopewell Friends History cites the patent which provides that 725 acres of the total 1000 acres lay "... just south of and partly within, the present corporate limits of Winchester..." It was Isaac Parkins who built the first mill on Abrams Creek between 1736 and 1746. The original mill was replaced in about 1827 by a three-story lime mill built by Isaac Hollingsworth and operated and later purchased by Shenandoah County miller, Festus Hahn (Haun).

The Parkins mill and Quaker involvement in milling operations is described in some detail in the Hopewell Friends History:

Friends early established grist mills on streams running through their plantations, for their individual use, and only a few years after their arrival were operating commercial flour mills. It is known that Isaac Parkins had a flour mill on his property as early as 1736 --probably in connection with a saw mill--as an order is entered in the minutes of the Frederick County Court, December term 1743, being the second meeting of this court, directing that he be paid tobacco to the value of \$62.00 for "1000 feet of sawn plank" furnished by him and used in the erection of the first court house and county jail. The Parkins family owned and operated one or more flour mills on Abrams Creek from 1736 to 1874. In 1812 it was operating three mills one mile south of Winchester on Abram's Creek under the name of "The Union Mills, Nathan Parkins & Co. Owners."

Isaac Parkins was prominent in community affairs, served as a justice, a captain in the militia, a vestryman, and was elected to the House of Burgess in the years 1754-5. Isaac, while serving in the House of Burgesses used his influence to secure the release of Friends imprisoned for "conscience sake" having violated laws requiring obedience to the "established church."

The first Quaker marriage in the Valley took place in the Parkin's house. Friends' records provide that on "Ye 19th day of December in ye year of our Lord 1734, appeared in a public assembly of ye said people and others mett at ye house of Isaac Parkins of ye ... George Hollingsworth taking ye sd. Hannah McKoy by the hand ..." Meeting for worship was often held in the Parkins's house and it was these meetings that resulted in establishing Winchester Centre Meeting which still meets, although at a different location, in a brick building at the corner of Washington and Picadilly Streets.

Isaac Parkins, Sr. had a daughter, Hannah Parkins, who married Isaac Hollingsworth, a great-grandson of Valentine Hollingsworth, Sr. As a result of the marriage, most of the Parkins' homestead and mills passed to Hannah and her new husband, Isaac Hollingsworth, by gift and through purchase.

Festus Hahn

Festus Hahn, a Winchester miller and first owner of Montague Hall, was born in Shenandoah County, Virginia, in 1832. His father, Jacob, was a native of that county where Festus spent his childhood. Festus Hahn moved to Winchester in about 1856. This date is supported by a review of the 1850 and 1860 Census Reports and the Schedule of Inhabitants.

The 1860 Census is the first census that shows Hahn residing in Winchester. In the 1870 Census and Schedule of Inhabitants, Isaac Hollingsworth is listed as a "farmer" and Festus Hahn as a "miller." By 1870, Festus had not yet purchased the mill but because he is listed as a miller, he was apparently operating one of the mills through some arrangement with the Hollingsworths during part of the the Civil War. Festus Hahn was listed with \$5,000 of personal property but no real estate as of that date. He was 36, his wife Sidney was 30; they had married in 1869.

During the Civil War reference is made to the Hahn property. Festus resided in the area and was a miller during the Civil War and often told of his experiences and observations of the movements of both armies passing through. On March 11, 1862 General Jackson sent Colonel Burks to stop a Brigade of Union troops. Burks was replaced by Turner Ashby who led the attack between the Parkins and Hahn mills. The property was in the midst of the action during the First Battle of Winchester on May 25, 1862, and while most buildings were destroyed, the mill was spared.

By deed dated January 20, 1872, Festus Hahn purchased from Isaac Hollingsworth and his wife Alcinda, five acres which included the Parkins/Hollingsworth mill and the log and stone miller house. The deed read, in part:

that piece or parcel of land known as the "Milltown mills" property situated in Frederick County, State of Virginia and fronting on the west side of the Valley Turnpike... and embracing the Mill, the Miller's house, and Mill Dam, all the machinery and fixtures in, belonging to and attached to the said mill, together with all the water rights, privileges and appurtenances belonging to said properties...

When Festus Hahn purchased the Parkins/Hollingsworth mill, he had it fitted with "new and improved machinery." The major improvement was a "Butler Roller Process," which produced the finest grades of flour. The machinery was operated by a twenty-horsepower engine. Sheriff's Shenandoah Valley Railroad Directory, 1878-79, lists Hahn as one of eight flour millers.

Eighteen months later, in a deed dated September 2, 1873, Festus Hahn purchased 21 acres on the east side of the Valley Turnpike (Route 11 South). It was shortly thereafter on this tract that he built his "substantial brick residence." Between 1885-1895 some changes to the location of Valley Avenue were made since Hahn constructed his house. Road maps drawn before that time site the house on the west side of the road; later maps show it where it is today, on the east side.

This L-plan, 2 1/2 story Italianate style house with its front center hallway, six fireplaces and eight rooms provided its owners with 3,500 square feet of living space. A beautiful medallion, still unscathed, graced the ceiling of the Trophy Room. Four millstones from the Festus Hahn mill straddled the walkway to the house. (Greater detail on the features of the house is contained in the preliminary information request.)

Hahn is described in the History of the Lower Shenandoah Valley as a "... self-made man, and, by energy and industry, has been successful in his business ventures." He was involved in Democratic politics and was a member of the Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Society". Cartmell, in Shenandoah Valley Pioneers comments that Hahn managed to amass quite a little fortune from his hard work.

According to the 1880 census and Schedule of Inhabitants, Festus Hahn, age 48, was listed as still married to Sidney, age 37, with five living children: Gertrude, age 10; Robert, age 8; Katie, age 6; Maggie, age 4; and Taylor, age nine months.

Festus Hahn died in 1894 and left his estate to his wife who then sold the homestead and part of the land to Robert Montague Henry in 1904. The Milltown Flour Mill, although it survived the Civil War, apparently burned in 1911 and no longer exists.

Robert Montague Henry

Robert Montague Henry was a Winchester merchant, horse trainer, and harness-racer. Some years later, Henry built a large barn behind the house with stables for his horses. It was a marvel of the times with a slate roof and stalls made as if they could be used as living quarters for humans. Beside this structure stood Mr. Henry's own miniature race track used for exercising his horses.

Montague Hall became a center of activity for the lifestyle of a man and his horses. The main room downstairs to the right of the front foyer became the "Trophy Room" containing a variety of trophies and ribbons won from Henry's horse racing ventures. According to family stories, Robert went to Madison Square Garden in New York to purchase horses. After being given a hard time about his lavish expenditures, he would fabricate purchase prices to family members.

Robert Montague Henry died in January, 1924. His will conveyed the property to his wife Stella. The property left the Henry family in 1937 and passed through a few additional owners, the most well-known in Winchester being Dr. Carrington Harrison. To some Winchester residents, Montague Hall is still referred to as the "Harrison House."

Today, Montague Hall stands in tact with its sturdy brick interior and exterior walls and limestone foundation. The only missing pieces are one fireplace mantel and the four millstones gracing the front entrance. These will be replaced as part of the restoration of this former Winchester miller's house under the direction of present-day Winchester Quakers.