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Deardorff's Mill House Celebrates 200th Birthday

Mill begun in 1773

by: L. Lamar Nisly

In the past month, we have celebrated the one-hundredth birthday of the Statue of Liberty. But a local structure which is twice as old as that statue hasn't received nearly as much recognition: Deardorff's Mill outside of York Springs is celebrating its two-hundredth birthday this year.

the Historical Society, the Wolfes have pieced together quite a lot of history about the mill.

Deardorff's Mill has been on York County maps since 1773 when it was first begun. Mills were important social and economic centers along fast-running creeks. And Isaac certainly appears to have done well. At one point, the complex included a blacksmith shop, a creamery (and possibly two), a barn, and the mill. Although it is hard to pinpoint exactly what happened at what time since the only records are fairly vague tax statements and oral history, it is quite clear that the mill dam ran an oil mill, a grist mill, and a saw mill.

This center was obviously important to the newly formed Adams County since its first official act of road building was to construct a road from Deardorff's Mill to Gettysburg. Also passing through the complex was the Old Baltimore Pike.

The mill complex was also important to the surrounding community. At one point, the Deardorffs even produced a newspaper called the *Bragtown News*. Every spring, too, the neighbors came together for their annual cleaning of the mill race, the channel bringing water to the mill. In exchange for cleaning the races, the workers were allowed to catch the many fish which thrived in the deep, food-filled water.

HAPPY 200th BIRTHDAY!



Actually, the mill itself has long fallen down. But the red sandstone house which Isaac Deardorff built in 1786 is in excellent condition, and is in fact inhabited right now.

The current owners of the house and the surrounding 118 acres are Arthur and Mary Wolfe.

Deardorff's Mill has been on York County maps since 1773 when it was first begun.

This couple has a lively interest in the mill complex — and appropriately so. Mary's father grew up on a neighboring farm and often told his children about the gatherings at the old mill and about the mill's operations. Besides this connection, Mary is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Isaac Deardorff. Through this oral history as well as through documents from

Isaac was concerned with building a sturdy dwelling. His first home was a typical one-room cabin built of hewed logs. He then built a new house, completed in 1786, which was framed and finished with sawed lumber; no hewed beams typical of most eighteenth century houses were used. Since they were situated along a busy road, Isaac also used this eight room house as



The red sandstone house built in 1786 by Isaac Deardorff.

an inn. The old cabin with a "walk-in" fireplace and an exterior Dutch oven was ideally suited for its probable role when it was moved next to the larger house and used as a summer kitchen.

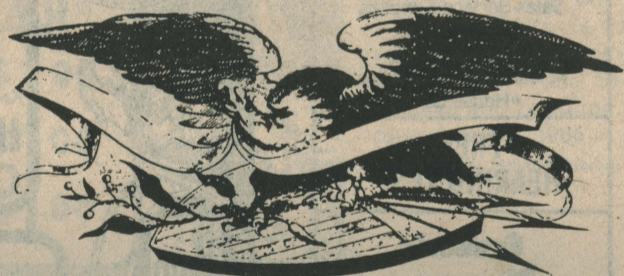
Another house included in the mill complex is the miller's house. This log cabin existed in 1781 and was plastered in 1826. An additional room, a gable roof, and a basement were added sometime between 1781 and 1826.

Besides overseeing the mill, Isaac was Provisional Tax Collector of the township. He also had an interest in the German Baptists; that group met in his home and later received land from him on which they built a church; and he was one of the original shareholders of the Hanover-Carlisle Turnpike.

When Isaac died in 1823, he had expanded his original 200 acres to 500. His son George inherited 285 acres and the mill complex. The mill was operated by George and later his son, George, Jr. until George, Jr.'s death. George Jr.'s widow sold off the water rights to the

State of Pennsylvania DOT in the 1920's. The mill was dismantled by its next owner, Chester B. Worley as a safety precaution.

The mill area had remained in the possession of Chester B. Worley until it was purchased by the Wolfes in 1983.



The foundation of the mill.

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