The Flow of History along Chester Creek

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The Chester Creek watershed comprises 67.2 square miles of southeastern Pennsylvania and includes parts of fourteen townships, five boroughs, and one city. The main branch flows from its source in Westtown Township and runs a length of 24.5 miles through rural, suburban, and urban parts of Chester and Delaware Counties before reaching the Delaware River. The western topographical boundary of the Chester Creek watershed roughly follows US Route 202 along its mid-portions and continues along High Street in West Chester Borough towards the northwest. That is the location of a major tributary known as Goose Creek. Another major tributary, East Branch Chester Creek, has its origins at the northern end of the watershed on the slopes of the South Valley Hills. Its upper reaches are bounded by PA Route 100 on the west and Boot Road on the east. The largest tributary of Chester Creek is its West Branch. Its drainage area in the southwest portion of the watershed is bounded by US Route 202, PA Route 491, PA Route 261, and Concord Road. Concord Road forms an arc along the southern edge of the watershed through the middle of Aston Township to the city of Chester. The eastern topographical boundary of the Chester Creek watershed is traversed by PA Route 352 throughout almost its entire length along with a portion of Boot Road in the north. These topographic boundaries of the Chester Creek watershed correspond to early colonial roads that were built on the high ground of the divides between neighboring watersheds.
Chester Creek, as well as the city and county of that name, are named for Cheshire in England. According to an often told but disputed story, when William Penn arrived in 1682 aboard the ship Welcome at the town of Upland during the first landfall in his new colony at the mouth of the creek, he turned to his friend Robert Pearson, whom he referred to as “the companion of my perils” and asked him to rename the town. Pearson supposedly suggested the name of his own hometown in England. It seems likely that the name of the town was actually changed during a meeting of the colonial assembly when they established the names of the first three counties of Pennsylvania, one of which was Chester for the many colonists from Cheshire. The name for Chester Creek followed, as its lowermost reaches flow through Chester. Previously it had been referred to as Upland Creeke, or Upland Kill, its name from the Swedish and Dutch occupation. The Lenape name for the stream was supposedly Mecoponack.

The Chester Creek watershed is the catchment area for all the precipitation which falls within its topographic boundaries and drains into the Delaware River through Chester Creek and its tributaries. Watersheds can be studied as ecosystems within which water, energy, and
nutrients flow. Plants capture energy from sunlight and convert water and carbon dioxide from the air into the sugar molecules which make up their structures. They draw further nutrients up through the soil, which consists of decaying organisms and crumbling rock. Animals eat plants and nutrients are further pumped up the food chain as animals are eaten by other animals. When they die, they return to the soil. Gravity forces the downhill flow of nutrients and takes them out of the watershed ecosystem to the sea. More nutrients are added by the further decay of bedrock beneath the soil. At least, this is the picture of the Chester Creek watershed ecosystem without humans in the equation. The natural operation of the eastern deciduous forest which is native to the Chester Creek watershed has changed drastically in the last few centuries. The Lenape burned the forest to open up areas for hunting and small-scale agriculture. When the Europeans arrived, they cleared land for farming and altered the flow of the streams to tap its energy for their watermills. With scientific farming and the industrial revolution, more and more energy and nutrient inputs came from further and further outside of what the watershed ecosystem produced itself. Now, in the early part of the twenty-first century, the connections that the Chester Creek watershed has beyond its boundaries are truly global.

The story that follows highlights many of the natural and cultural features of the Chester Creek watershed, from its sources to where the creek finally meets the waters of the Delaware River. Some of the treatments are shallow, and some of them go deep. This is an ongoing project to promote the engagement of people with the landscape within which they live.

Westtown Township

The source of Chester Creek is in Westtown Township just east of US Route 202/322 near the Westtown Township building. Its waters flow toward the southeast and pass under Pleasant Grove Road just to the east of Saint Maximilian Kolbe Parish Church and School. From there, it flows through the subdivisions of Pleasant Grove and West Glen and meanders under PA Route 926, Street Road, briefly before bending to the northeast. After flowing under South Concord Road, Chester Creek flows through a wooded corridor that traverses this suburban landscape and arrives at its confluence with Goose Creek behind the Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School. On old maps these headwaters of Chester Creek are referred to as Walton’s Run and “Goose Creek” is considered either the main branch of Chester Creek or a West Branch.
“Goose Creek”

“Goose Creek” is a major tributary of Chester Creek that originates in West Goshen Township in a wetland along Turner Lane, opposite the West Goshen Shopping Center at Turner Square. Goose Creek is technically an unnamed tributary because its name isn’t registered with the USGS Board on Geographic Names. The woodland surrounding this wetland is on property owned by the West Chester Area School District. The administrative buildings for the school district adjoin the woodland to the south, where they face Paoli Pike.

Goose Creek from west side of Turner Lane
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Goose Creek flows towards the southwest. As it traverses this parcel, the woodland narrows to a riparian corridor impinged upon by the parking lots and buildings of small industry and apartments. The next street under which Goose Creek then flows is Garfield Avenue. On this street, Goose Creek flows past Brewer Heating and Air Conditioning.
On the other side of Garfield Avenue is a small cemetery through which Goose Creek flows. The stream makes its way through another small woodland in this block, which is backed onto by businesses fronting Gay Street to the southeast and lots facing Washington Street to the northwest. Approaching the town of West Chester, Paoli Pike has changed to the main west bound commercial street of Gay Street for that town.

At the end of the block, Goose Creek flows under Montgomery Avenue. It passes West Goshen Pumping Station No. 1 on one side of Montgomery Avenue and skirts the edge of Henderson High School’s playing field and stadium on the other. Up the hill is perched the large colonial revival structure of Henderson High School itself.
In this portion of West Goshen Township, Goose Creek passes to the north of a twisted set of major thoroughfares as they transition to the main commercial streets of the Borough of West Chester. Gay Street is one-way going west through West Chester, and Market Street is one-way going east through West Chester. One block to the east of the West Chester border at Garfield Avenue/Westtown Road, these one-way streets take traffic that weave to and from both Paoli Pike and West Chester Pike.

After Goose Creek flows under Montgomery Avenue it passes behind the DK Diner which faces Gay Street. Once Goose Creek flows under Gay Street, it enters the Borough of West Chester.
Goose Creek headwaters in wooded portions of West Goshen Township

Image: Google, 2017
Borough of West Chester

The Borough of West Chester has been the county seat of Chester County, Pennsylvania since 1799.

Goose Creek drains the southeastern portion of the Borough of West Chester from south of Marshall Square Park and east of High Street. High Street is the main north-south thoroughfare through town. To the north and west, West Chester is drained by tributaries of Brandywine Creek. Goose Creek flows under Gay Street and Market Street, after which it passes next to the terminus for the West Chester Railroad. At that point, it begins to flow towards the southeast and make a wide bend through town.

The block along High Street between Gay and Market Streets is the heart of the historic political and economic center of the Borough of West Chester. On the west side is the entrance to the old court house, and on the east side of the street are the bank buildings critical to financing the early growth of the town.

March for the Environment, rally at Chester County Courthouse
Speaker: Carolyn Committa, PA state representative & former West Chester mayor
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017
The brick building between the two structures with classical porticoes was the Bank of Chester County where William Darlington was president for 33 years starting in 1830.

After flowing invisibly under Gay and Market Streets, Goose Creek flows due southwest for a couple of blocks between streets and alleys to just beyond Franklin Street where it begins its bend towards the southeast and flows parallel to that street for several blocks.

Along this course, Goose Creek is closely encroached upon by the town’s infrastructure, such as the auto parts warehouses along East Barnard Street.
Goose Creek alongside West Chester Railroad Bridge over East Barnard Street, West Chester
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Goose Creek at East Barnard Street, upstream (left) and downstream (right)
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
Typical West Chester residential block at East Barnard and South Matlack Streets
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Three blocks downstream, Goose Creek flows under Lacey Street and past the rail yards of the West Chester Railroad. At Lacey Street, Goose Creek flows under a bridge past the Borough of West Chester’s Public Works Department.

Goose Creek at Lacey Street, West Chester Public Works Department on left
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

A building on Lacey Street which looks like a structure from the early days of the railroad is occupied by the BYL Group of Companies, through which bill and debt collection, background screening, and accounts receivable management can be outsourced.
Until 1986, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) ran a commuter line to West Chester from Philadelphia. Its West Chester terminus was between Market and Barnard Streets. After regular passenger service ceased to West Chester, enthusiasts began to use the railroad for excursions.
Riggtown

Goose Creek continues to flow towards the southeast and through the Riggtown neighborhood of the Borough of West Chester. The stream flows parallel to Franklin Street for
one block, passes under Nields Street and flows for another block alongside Franklin Street alongside the Ramsgate Towne Homes.
At Linden Street, Goose Creek bends more abruptly towards the southeast and passes under Franklin Street where it flows between the southern margin of Greenfield Park and a Quonset hut that is occupied by the JHL Lawn & Landscape business. Greenfield Park is a 1.9 acre town park used for athletic events by different organizations. Part of the land for the park was purchased from Harry Taylor in 1941 for the grand sum of one dollar. A second piece of land for the park was purchased in 1963 for an additional $400.

Past Greenfield Park, Goose Creek flows in a southeasterly direction parallel with the West Chester Railroad. On the other side of the tracks, is the chemical manufacturing plant of Sartomer.
Once Goose Creek passes under Rosedale Avenue, it exits the Borough of West Chester and reenters West Goshen Township. There, Goose Creek is entered by an unnamed tributary which flows in from the northeast. The tributary originates at the southwest corner of the interchange between U.S. Routes 3 and 202. It flows between the two cemeteries of the Green Mount Cemetery Association and Rolling Green Memorial Park, past the Chester County Government Services buildings and the playing fields of the West Chester United Soccer Club. The tributary then flows under Westtown Road, past car dealerships and trucking depots, under South Bolmar Street and into Goose Creek.

Goose Creek then flows between the A. Duie Pyle trucking warehouse and depot on South Bolmar Street and The Edge at West Chester, which are luxury apartments for students of West Chester University on Matlack Street. Other structures along Matlack Street associated with West Chester University include its Graphics & Printing Department, Human Resources and Facilities offices, and the Alumni & Foundation Center. The Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders is on Carter Drive, which turns off Matlack Street and runs closer to Goose Creek. Along its length are many small industries and retail outlets that back onto the stream.
Goose Creek skirts the eastern edge of the West Chester University campus, particularly the facilities along Matlack Street and Carter Drive within West Goshen Township. The rest of campus lies within the headwaters of the Plum Run tributary of Brandywine Creek. West Chester University evolved from its origin in 1871 as the West Chester Normal School to become the four-year West Chester State Teacher’s College in 1927, and then West Chester State College in 1960 after it added a liberal arts program. Finally, it became a comprehensive regional university in 1983 as part of the newly created Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

As it approaches the West Chester Bypass (U.S. Routes 202/322), Goose Creek catches the outflow of the West Chester Borough Sewage Treatment Plant. Next to the treatment plant is the Fire Department Training Center.
U.S. Route 202/322 Corridor

Goose Creek flows past small industrial parks on the U.S. Route 202/322 Corridor. After it passes under the highway, Goose Creek flows past the Willow Brook Industrial Park. A bridge across the stream leads to the driving range and putting greens of Tee It Up Golf.

Just downstream, Goose Creek catches the outflow of the West Goshen Township Sewage Treatment Plant. It’s due to the presence of two major sewage treatment plants and large areas of impervious surface in its headwaters that the PA Department of Environmental Protection has classified Goose Creek with the relatively low water quality designation of Warm Water Fisheries.
After it passes the West Goshen Sewerage Plant, Goose Creek enters Westtown Township. It flows between the leafy residential subdivisions of Coventry and Wild Goose Park and enters a wooded valley as it passes under Oakbourne Road. The West Chester Railroad continues to follow alongside Goose Creek. The stream passes back and forth beneath it a couple times during its course. For part of its length through this section, Goose Creek flows through a portion of Oakbourne Park.
Goose Creek then reaches the woods and fields of Oakbourne Park, a Westtown Township public park established on an old estate. The park lies to both sides of South Concord Road. The uphill side to the west of South Concord Road contains the Oakbourne Mansion and its spectacular water tower. The township rents out the mansion for events and holds public meetings there. The downhill side of the park to the east of South Concord Road includes the wooded valley of Goose Creek and a sweeping vista of agricultural fields that alternate between corn and soybean crops over the years.

By the late 1800s, the site was the summer residence of a Mr. and Mrs. John Hulme. In 1882, it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. James Smith, who enlarged the original granite mansion and named it “Oakbourne.” They added an ornate copper cornice and other features, such as a tower which afforded a wide view of the surrounding countryside. For about a decade they enjoyed the house and the grounds. They raised livestock and created a park along the north edge of the property among the large trees. There, they created a small pond along an unnamed tributary of Goose Creek. Goldfish inhabit the pond. The Smiths also built ornamental stone walls, some of which can be seen crumbling along Oakbourne Road.

They willed the property to the Philadelphia Protestant Episcopal City Mission, which established a convalescent home for white women in 1893 according to the stipulation in the will. It was called the James C. Smith Memorial Home.

Ninety-six acres of the property was sold to establish the Pennsylvania Epileptic Hospital and Colony Farm in 1896. Eventually the property was subdivided to form Oakbourne Park, Gaudenzia House, and the Pleasant Grove residential neighborhood. The convalescent home was forced to close its doors due to prohibitive operational costs in 1971, so Westtown Township purchased the property to establish Oakbourne Park. The efforts of retired Westtown Township supervisor L. Charles Scipione were instrumental in the restoration of the water tower.
Views of Oakbourne Mansion  
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Fountain and carriage house, Oakbourne Mansion  
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Two sides of the Oakbourne Mansion water tower  
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
Tributary of Goose Creek and pond

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Ruins of stone wall and serpentinite gate post near Oakbourne Road

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Goose Creek under railroad bridge, Oakbourne Park

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Goose Creek in Oakbourne Park

Fields and wooded edges of Oakbourne Park

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
Goose Creek continues to flow towards the southeast alongside the railroad. To the east is the leafy Westtown Coventry Estates subdivision. Goose Creek flows under Westbourne Road next to the Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School. There is a large cattail marsh along the creek to the south of Westbourne Road.

Westbourne Road over Goose Creek at Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Goose Creek from Westbourne Road and nearby cattail marsh
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School

The Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School is one of the public elementary schools in the West Chester Area School District. Goose Creek enters Chester Creek in an open wetland meadow behind the school. The combined streams bend around the grounds of the school on the back side, while Westbourne Road bends around the front side of the school in a sharp right-angled turn.
Chester Creek flows under the opposite bend in Westbourne Road and then takes a sharp turn towards the southeast parallel to both the road and the tracks of the old Philadelphia and West Chester Railroad once again. Smooth alder grows along its banks.
Westbourne Road over Chester Creek, behind the Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Chester Creek downstream from Westbourne Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Bayard Rustin High School

Chester Creek flows past the grounds of Bayard Rustin High School, one of the high schools in the West Chester Area School District. It is named in honor of the chief advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was the man who introduced Dr. King to the concept of non-violent resistance to social injustice. Bayard Rustin was a native of West Chester.

Westtown Train Station

Chester Creek then flows under PA Route 926, Street Road, and enters Thornbury Township, Chester County. Just to the east of Chester Creek, the railroad also passes under PA Route 926. The old Westtown train station located here serves as an art gallery. Between the rail line and the creek is a small commercial center that includes the art gallery, the Westtown post office, a karate studio, and the Goose Creek Grille.
Bridge over Chester Creek, PA 926, Street Road

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Westtown Post Office, McCormack Karate, and the Goose Creek Grill

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Westtown Station Gallery and sculpture garden

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
Chester Creek forms a south-pointing meander bend behind this commercial center, where it embraces the acreage of a Thornbury Township park known as Goose Creek Park. When the restaurant and the park were named, the assumption must have been that they were located right along Goose Creek, which is reasonably close by. A small unnamed tributary enters Chester Creek from the southwest as it begins to bend around the park. Goose Creek Park facilities include a picnic pavilion, a playground, and a paved perimeter trail.
View of Goose Creek Park from Chester Creek

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Erosion along Chester Creek and unnamed tributary between Goose Creek Park and Bainbridge subdivision

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Waln Run

As Chester Creek leaves Goose Creek Park, it is joined by the waters of Waln Run, another tributary. Waln Run flows into Chester Creek out of the southwest. Its entire length is contained within Thornbury Township, Chester County.

Penn Oaks Country Club

Waln Run originates as a water trap on the golf course of the Penn Oaks Country Club.

Waln Run flows towards the northwest through the Sage Hill and Bainbridge subdivisions of Thornbury Township, Chester County.

Waln Run Park

Between the two subdivisions, is open space designated as Waln Run Park. The entrance is along a cul-de-sac off of Westtown-Thornton Road called Echo Hill Road. The park includes a wetland comprising both cattails and Phragmites reeds. Waln Run is difficult to access in the park through a tangle of multi-flora rose and wineberry brambles.
Waln Run then enters Chester Creek between Goose Creek Park and Westtown-Thornton Road.

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An enlarged Chester Creek then flows east under Westtown-Thornton Road, which itself passes under a railroad bridge of the West Chester line at this point.
Less than a quarter mile past the railroad bridge is a confluence with a major tributary, the East Branch Chester Creek, which flows into Chester Creek from the north.
East Branch Chester Creek

The source of the East Branch Chester Creek is in the Wyntre Brooke Apartment complex at the southern edge of West Whiteland Township. The stream emerges from a culvert next to the tennis court behind a row of apartments. The waters from the East Branch percolate through a cattail marsh situated there. The apartments are located near where Ship Road, Boot Road, and Phoenixville Pike all come together.

Source of East Branch Chester Creek, Wyntre Brook Apartments, West Whiteland Township
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

East Branch Chester Creek flows south towards Boot Road. As it does so, it passes into West Goshen Township.

Boot Tavern

The intersection of Boot Road and Phoenixville Pike was the site of the Boot Tavern, where General Howe ordered his Hessian mercenaries to position themselves following the Battle of the Brandywine in order to intercept the retreating Continental army. On September 16, 1777 there was a brief inconclusive skirmish near the tavern on the Meredith farm in bad weather. It was one of two skirmishes that comprised the so-called Battle of the Clouds.
East Branch Chester Creek along Boot Road near Phoenixville Pike
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

East Branch Chester Creek passes under Boot Road and enters the Knollwood and Brookfield subdivisions within West Goshen Township.

East Branch Chester Creek at Knollwood Drive, Knollwood subdivision
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

From its source, the East Branch Chester Creek has been running south, roughly parallel to Phoenixville Pike to its west. Downstream from the residential housing subdivisions, it enters a narrowing convergence of PA Route 100 and Phoenixville Pike where the landscape becomes considerably more industrial. The Brandywine Valley SPCA and the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s
Witnesses are on its east bank. Both of those institutions front onto Phoenixville Pike. Just before the creek passes under Phoenixville Pike, it passes between two discontinuous ends of Greenhill Road, which was interrupted to build PA Route 100.

![Old Greenhill Road bridge over East Branch Chester Creek](image)

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Greenhill Corporate Park

Downstream from this point, East Branch Chester Creek skirts the southwestern edge of the Greenhill Corporate Park, home to the Chesterbrook Academy Elementary School, the Graduate Center of West Chester University, and various businesses. Access to the corporate park is through McDermott Drive off Greenhill Road.

At the southern end of the Greenhill Corporate Park, East Branch Chester Creek flows under PA Route 100 close to the access ramps with U.S. Route 202. On its west bank is the Deer Run Industrial Park. The stream continues flowing towards the southeast and passes beneath U.S. Route 202 as well. Closely parallel to the highway, is North 5 Points Road, which the stream also passes under.
East Branch Chester Creek from North Five Points Road, looking towards U.S. Route 202
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

East Branch Chester Creek flows towards the east after passing under North Five Points Road, where the waters soon widen into the West Chester Reservoir, also known as Fern Hill Lake. To the north of the lake are QVC Studio Park, the American Helicopter Museum, the Brandywine Airport, and the Brandywine Business Center. The latter is a corporate park that includes a large UPS facility. To the south of the reservoir is the Woodcrest residential subdivision, businesses such as Ice Line Quad Rinks and Moonbounce Adventures, and the West Goshen Community Park. The dam for the reservoir is along Airport Road, which forms a boundary between West and East Goshen Townships.
Industries surrounding East Branch Chester Creek and Fernhill Lake in West Goshen Township

Image: Google, 2017

American Helicopter Museum and Education Center

The American Helicopter Museum and Education Center is the nation’s premier museum dedicated to rotary wing aircraft. It was founded in 1993 and opened its doors to the public in 1996. Its creation can be largely credited to Peter Wright, a founder of Keystone Helicopter and a pioneer in the commercial helicopter industry. The Philadelphia area has been a hotbed of rotary wing aircraft innovation, and the museum is a tribute to those pioneers and a showcase for a large variety of rotary aircraft.
Entrance to the American Helicopter Museum
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2014

V-22 Osprey, built along Ridley Creek
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2014

Views inside the American Helicopter Museum
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2014
Larry Barrett, a resident of Thornbury Township, Delaware County, is a retired mechanical engineer who worked for Boeing at their helicopter factory along Ridley Creek for thirty years. He designed the rotary bearings for Chinook and Sea Knight helicopters, which have been manufactured there since the 1960s. Larry had been a very active board member of the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association for many years. He focuses particularly on the water quality of Chester Creek as it flows through Thornbury Township, Delaware County, and open space issues within his municipality.

West Chester Reservoir

The West Chester Reservoir is also known as Fernhill Lake. It’s a back-up water storage facility owned by Aqua Pennsylvania. The dam and spillway can be viewed from Airport Road, which also serves as a boundary line between West Goshen and East Goshen Townships.
The view of East Branch Chester Creek downstream from Airport Road reveals a small patch of rural landscape in the midst of a predominantly industrialized area. As East Branch Chester Creek enters East Goshen Township, it flows past the West Chester Area YMCA facility to its south, and two units of the Goshen Corporate Park to its northwest and northeast. An unnamed tributary enters from the northwest after passing among these corporate parks and some residential subdivisions in East Goshen Township. East Branch Chester Creek then flows under Paoli Pike.
Another small unnamed tributary enters from the southwest in West Goshen Township. It originates behind the West Goshen Town Center shopping facility which fronts onto West Chester Pike. As it flows towards the northeast, it wends its way through Coopersmith Park and then past the Fugett Middle School and East Senior High School of the West Chester Area School District. At the corner of the school district property, the tributary flows under Ellis Lane and enters East Goshen Township and its confluence with East Branch Chester Creek.

Coopersmith Park

Coopersmith Park is a West Goshen Township park. It has a picnic pavilion and a wooded portion along the stream with a walking trail. The Goshen Terrace Nature Trail can be accessed from the Goshen Terrace Apartments. The apartments have Tudor-style facades on streets with names such as Queen Lane and Kings Way Drive. The woodland in Coopersmith Park consists primarily of Norway maples and Paulownia trees with a tangled undergrowth of Japanese honeysuckle.

![Goshen Terrace and Goshen Terrace Nature Trailhead in Coopersmith Park](image)

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

![Graffiti wall and unnamed stream, Coopersmith Park](image)

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
At its confluence with the unnamed tributary East Branch Chester Creek is in the middle of a bend that takes its flow towards the northeast. Once it completes the bend so that it continues its general southeasterly trend, the creek flows parallel to Reservoir Road, which lies to its east. It passes a large agricultural estate to the west, a rare sight amidst this landscape of residential subdivisions and corporate parks. A stream restoration project took place on the East Branch Chester Creek along Reservoir Road north of its intersection with Strasburg Road. East Goshen Township received a Pennsylvania Growing Greener Grant in 2001 to restore about 1500 linear feet of severely eroded and undercut creek banks through this section. The project was completed in 2004, and entailed relocating sections of stream, lowering the stream bank, creating wetland pools, and restoring the floodplain and riparian buffer. A find stand of river birches grows along the creek.
East Branch Chester Creek passes under Reservoir Road and then Strasburg Road close to where the two roads intersect. On the other side of Strasburg Road, the waters of the creek had for many years been impounded to form the Milltown Reservoir. Reservoir Road runs along the western edge of the basin.

**Milltown Reservoir**

In 2017, the dam for the Milltown Reservoir was scheduled to be breached.
East Branch Chester Creek flows south from the reservoir and passes under West Chester Pike, PA Route 3. Above its west bank near the highway sits Service King Collision Repair of West Goshen (even though it is in East Goshen Township). After the creek passes under the pike, it enters the Ridgewood subdivision. It flows parallel to Westtown Way, which runs along its east side. Along Westtown Way, a sign posted at a picket gate indicates the “Township Yard,” which appears to be a storage area for the Public Works Department of East Goshen Township. East Branch Chester Creek then flows under Westtown Way between two cul-de-sacs, Westtown Circle and Dutts Mill East.

Both the East Branch Chester Creek and Westtown Way turn towards the southwest after the creek flows under the road. At this point, Westtown Way forms the boundary between East, and then West Goshen Townships and Westtown Township. Through this section, the creek meanders through a dense woodland that is part of the property belonging to the Westtown School within Westtown Township.
Westtown Way comes to a T at Westtown Road. At the southwest corner of the intersection of the two roads, East Branch Chester Creek is joined by a tributary called Forsythe Run, which flows down from the northwest.

**Forsythe Run**

Forsythe Run is a tributary of East Branch Chester Creek that flows almost entirely within the southeast corner of West Goshen Township. Its source is within the Concord Manor residential subdivision, just a few cul-de-sacs south of Rolling Green Memorial Park. As it
passes through the neighboring Westtown Acres subdivision, its waters are fed from a large stormwater basin along Basin Drive. The stormwater basin is surrounded by numerous suburban cul-de-sacs. Forsythe Run is visible at numerous points as it wends its way through the subdivisions of West Goshen Township. As it does so, it approaches closer and closer to Westtown Road until it is flowing parallel with it just after passing beneath Partridge Lane.
Forsythe Run flows near Barker Park, a small West Goshen Township park, which is situated on Westtown Way just east of its intersection with Westtown Road.

Forsythe Run then meets the East Branch Chester Creek in Westtown Township just south of the intersection between Westtown Road and Westtown Way.
Intersection of Westtown Way (on right) with Westtown Road

Forsythe Run just north of Westtown Way

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Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Downstream from Westtown Way and its confluence with Forsythe Run, East Branch Chester Creek bends towards the southeast and flows between Westtown Road and the Westtown School woods.

Downstream from Westtown Way, the East Branch Chester Creek winds through the woods and fields of the Westtown School, a Quaker boarding school dating from 1799. Its founders wanted to provide a “guarded education” for Quaker youth in the Chester County countryside far from corrupting city influences of Philadelphia. For this reason, not even music
and art was taught at the school for many generations. Natural history was a major focus, though, as a worthy study of God’s creation. As a result, the Westtown School produced many naturalists and scientists, especially during the formative years of the republic in the nineteenth century.

Several of the earliest Westtown School graduates were also involved in some interesting social experiments. The industrial revolution produced profound changes in social relationships. Automation began to replace hand craftsmanship, artisan’s guilds, and master-apprentice relationships. During this transition, utopian notions of factory work were embraced and promoted. These ideals were based on the Enlightenment notions of reason and progress, which upheld a harmonious association between workers and owners. Their most influential proponent was Robert Owen, a Scottish industrialist who inspired a number of experiments in both Great Britain and the United States in the 1820s. At least three graduates of the Westtown School were intimately involved in ventures inspired by Robert Owen. Joshua Gilpin initially set up his paper mill on the Brandywine on Owenite principals. Thomas Say joined Robert Owen himself at the utopian colony of New Harmony, Indiana, and Rueben Haines was a founder of the equally ill-fated Valley Forge Commune. In their efforts to establish harmony in these communities, the utopian associationists had inferred, through the powers of reason, that certain traditional practices had always led to conflict in society. These traditions were marriage, private property, and religion. However, their attempts to abolish these practices also generated a lot of conflict. For this and other reasons, the utopian experiments were short-lived.

At the founding of the school, as at many new settlements of the time, a saw mill and a grist mill were erected. The East Branch Chester Creek was dammed to provide water power for the mills. The head races for both mills and the remains of a dam are visible in the woods south of Westtown Way and north of the school campus. They appear to be dry ditches extending along the forest floor. The old dam is just upstream from the bridge that carries Westtown Road over the creek.

Remains of the old dam, East Branch Chester Creek near Westtown School
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
East Branch Chester Creek meanders through the woods associated with the Westtown School. During the course of one of its larger meanders, it flows under Westtown Road and continues to flow roughly parallel to it, but on the west side rather than the east side.

Just downstream from the bridge, East Branch Chester Creek flows past the Westtown Township Waste Water Treatment Facility, and absorbs its treated outflow.
A short distance downstream from the waste water treatment facility, East Branch Chester Creek is joined by Hickman Run, a tributary that flows into it from the northeast and is dammed on the other side of Westtown Road to form Westtown Lake.

**Hickman Run**

Hickman Run is a tributary of East Branch Chester Creek that drains a large portion of northeastern Westtown Township between the intersection of PA Routes 3 and 352 and the Westtown School. It originates in a residential subdivision in that portion of Westtown Township. Its headwaters include a couple of small tributaries.
Hickman Run flows towards the southwest. Once it passes under Walnut Hill Road, it enters woodland on Westtown School property. There, it flows amongst a ropes course that is used by the school.

Hickman Run is dammed to form Westtown Lake on the campus of the Westtown School. The lake is a popular stopover for migratory waterfowl. During the day in early November when these photos were taken, ruddy ducks, pied-billed grebes, and mallards were observed.
Between Westtown Lake and the woods to the north are agricultural fields that are planted with corn, soybeans, and pumpkins. This was once an orchard that included apple, peach, and cherry trees. Also, south of the lake, the Westtown track was once the Boy’s Orchard and the field beside the Stadium Tennis Courts was the Girl’s Orchard. The students were permitted to pick up fallen fruit to snack on.

Hickman Run continues in the form of outflow from the dam and passes under Westtown Road and joins the East Branch Chester Creek.
Hickman Run continues as outflow from the Westtown Lake dam and passes under Westtown Road. From there, it flows through meadows and woodland and enters East Branch Chester Creek.

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Southeast of Westtown Lake is the main cluster of buildings that comprises the campus of the Westtown School. Its centerpiece is the Main Building, completed in 1888 from a design by Quaker architect Addison Hutton.
The buildings look out over a substantial vista which includes the athletic and agricultural fields belonging to the school.

Below its confluence with Hickman Run, East Branch Chester Creek continues to meander through a wide floodplain between Westtown Road and the Plumly Farms subdivision to the west.

Along this stretch of the stream, the original grist mill once stood. The tail race downstream from the grist mill is still visible as a shallow ditch. The miller’s house along Westtown Road is used by the Westtown School as a residence.
Grist mill tail race, Westtown School

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

East Branch Chester Creek with damage from Hurricane Sandy

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
A zip line carries travelers across East Branch Chester Creek along this stretch of the stream courtesy of local landowner Alan Wright.

Silver maples and black willows line the banks of the creek as it winds through an increasingly open meadow on its way south.
Upon passing under PA Route 926, Street Road, at the L. Charles Scipione Bridge, the East Branch Chester Creek passes into Thornbury Township, Chester County. L. Charles Scipione was an influential member of the Westtown Township Board of Supervisors.

Views of East Branch Chester Creek and surrounding meadows upstream from L. Charles Scipione Bridge
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
Two perspectives of the L. Charles Scipione Bridge  Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Downstream from the bridge, East Branch Chester Creek is joined by Westtown Run from the east.
Westtown Run

Westtown Run originates behind Penn Wood Elementary School in Westtown Township. It is one of ten public elementary schools within the West Chester Area School District. From there, Westtown Run flows towards the southwest, and passes under Robin Drive and Shady Grove Way as it traverses the Woodcock Farm residential subdivision.

Westtown Run at Shady Grove Way

Westtown Run traverses the southeast corner of Pete’s Produce Farm, an agricultural and educational enterprise of the Westtown School. Amidst the fields, the stream flows through a tangled riparian corridor of scrubby trees and brush, as well as a wetland glade of sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*).
After flowing under PA Route 926, Street Road, Westtown Run enters Thornbury Township, Chester County at the location of a small pond in a residential area along Cheyney Road.

Westtown Run skirts the northern edge of the campus of Cheyney University and flows parallel to Street Road before entering the East Branch Chester Creek just to the west of Westtown Road within the Thornbury Soccer Park. Just before this confluence, Westtown flows behind The Concept School at the southeast corner of Street and Westtown Roads.

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Thornbury Soccer Park

The confluence of the East Branch with the main branch of Chester Creek occurs at the southern edge of the extensive playing fields of Thornbury Soccer Park, the home of the West Chester United Soccer Club. The floodplain of Chester Creek is at one of its widest points here.
East Branch Chester Creek at the Thornbury Soccer Park

Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Canada geese at the Thornbury Soccer Park during the off-season

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
The enlarged waters of Chester Creek then flow parallel to the railroad bed of the old Philadelphia and West Chester Railroad to the south and Westtown Road to the north. Across Westtown Road stands the Meadowcroft Presbyterian Church.

Chester Creek then flows along the southern edge of Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, the nation’s oldest HBCU (Historically Black College or University). At the west end of campus, Chester Creek passes under Dilworthtown Road. At the east end of campus, it passes under Cheyney Road. In between, the creek is joined by three small unnamed tributaries from the south. Chester Creek passes through the Cheyney Wetland, which provides habitat for migratory waterfowl.
Bridge over Chester Creek at Dilworthtown Road; Railroad crossing in distance
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Chester Creek from Dilworthtown Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Cheyney University is one of the fourteen universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. It is also the oldest Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in the United States. Prior to its move in 1902 to the farm of George Cheyney along Chester Creek, it had its start as the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. It was founded through a bequest begun in 1837 by Richard Humphreys, a Quaker philanthropist who had been born in the West Indies and became concerned for the struggles of African Americans upon moving to Philadelphia. He envisioned a curriculum based on agriculture and the mechanical arts as the basis for improving the lives of African Americans.

The Institute for Colored Youth was chartered by the state legislature in 1842, and a spacious building was erected on Lombard Street in 1851. It was the most important school for African-American youth in Philadelphia for the rest of the 19th century. Charles L. Reason, anabolitionist and America’s first black college professor (at New York Central College), was principal from 1852 until 1855. He instituted a rigorous classical curriculum and started a library and public lecture series. Instruction in the sciences intensified with the hiring of Robert Campbell in 1855. In order to improve his own scientific knowledge, Campbell tried to enroll in a lecture series at the Franklin Institute, but was prevented from doing so because of his race. He then became an ardent abolitionist and advocate for black emigration to Africa and the Caribbean.

Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett succeeded Charles L. Reason as principal in 1856. He de-emphasized the sciences in favor of more civics and a reform-oriented curriculum. This included a new emphasis on teacher training with the passage of Pennsylvania’s Normal School Act in 1857. Bassett’s most famous student was Octavius V. Catto, the 1858 class valedictorian who became a prominent civil rights activist, baseball player, and instructor at the school. In 1869, Bassett left the school to become the country’s first black diplomat through his appointment as Minister to Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

He was succeeded as principal by Fanny Jackson Coppin, an Oberlin College graduate who built the school’s reputation and programs in an exemplary fashion. She did this in the face of rising post-Reconstruction racial discrimination, exemplified tragically through the murder of Octavius V. Catto during Philadelphia election riots in 1871. She modernized and expanded the curriculum, expanded the network of the school’s benefactors, and hired top-notch faculty. These included Richard T. Greener, the first black graduate of Harvard, who taught English; and
Edward Bouchet, the first black graduate of Yale, who headed the science program. The school continued its emphasis on teacher training, but under Fanny Coppin also began a successful vocational training program, which anticipated by several years Booker T. Washington’s advocacy of such industrial education to enhance the self-sufficiency of African-Americans in society. Towards the end of her time at the Institute, Fanny Coppin prepared it for its move to Cheyney Station in Thornbury Township along Chester Creek from its last location in Philadelphia at 9th and Bainbridge Streets. When the Institute relocated in 1902, she parted for Maryland to found Coppin State College.

In 1913, the Institute for Colored Youth was renamed the State Normal School at Cheyney; in 1921 it became Cheyney State Teachers College; in 1959 it became Cheyney State College; and in 1983 it joined the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education as Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. It continues its mission of educating people for the teaching profession, but has expanded its programs to over 30 disciplines. Prominent graduates have included journalist Ed Bradley of the CBS program “60 Minutes”; Robert C. Bogle, publisher of the Philadelphia Tribune, the oldest newspaper continuously owned and operated by an African American; state representatives Thaddeus Kirkland and Michael Horsey; U.S. Congressman Curt Weldon; Robert L. Woodson, founder and president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise; and Ambassador Joseph M. Segars.
Emlen Hall (Keystone Honors Academy) and Humphreys Hall, Cheyney University
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Biddle Hall (includes President’s Office), Cheyney University
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017
Burleigh Hall (includes University College and Residence Life), Cheyney University  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Browne Hall, Cheyney University  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017
Melrose Cottage, Cheyney University  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Alpha Phi Alpha terrace overlooking Martin Luther King, Jr. Hall, Cheyney University  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017
Under the leadership of Dr. Steven G. Hughes, Cheyney University offers a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Marine Biology with a concentration in either marine biology or aquaculture. Dr. Hughes is the director of the Aquaculture Research and Education Laboratory, which he designed to “help meet the educational, research and extension needs of the Mid-Atlantic region and its critical waterways” by training professionals in the various sciences. The laboratory has several recirculating systems for research on both tropical and cool to cold water species. There are two 3,000 square foot wet laboratories that also include a separate 200 square foot aquarium room dedicated to aquarium fish and shellfish culture and a feed mixing and preparation room. Dry laboratory facilities are used for both water quality analyses and assessments of fish nutrition and physiology. Students in the program have also gotten internships in such places as Disney World, the USDA-ARS Laboratories, and the Institute for Marine and Environmental Technology in Maryland.
Recirculating system in the wet lab, AREL, Cheyney University
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Rows of tilapia, Aquaculture Research & Education Laboratory, Cheyney University
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017
The laboratory and Cheyney University have also established a public-private collaboration with Herban Farms LLC and built a 10,000 square foot aquaponic greenhouse on campus. The greenhouse is used for the commercial production of basil and fish. Students are able to conduct research and study the economics of the system. In doing so, they work on developing methods to increase the production efficiency of both. The basil is distributed to local grocery stores.
Lots of aquaponic basil, Herban Farms LLC  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Basil delivery van outside of greenhouse, Herban Farms LLC  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017
Creek Road is a continuation of Westtown Road under a different name as it skirts the southern end of Cheyney University’s campus. Creek Road parallels Chester Creek from this point all the way to Glen Mills. Before Chester Creek flows under Cheyney Road and leaves the vicinity of campus, though, it passes by the Cheyney University Wastewater Treatment Plant located at the eastern end of the large university parking lot on Creek Road.
Thornbury Township, Delaware County

The southeast corner of Cheyney University’s campus is in Thornbury Township, Delaware County, while the rest of it is in Thornbury Township, Chester County. Chester Creek enters Thornbury Township, Delaware County just past the confluence of the second of the three unnamed tributaries that flow into it from the south there, which is near where Westtown Road turns into Creek Road.

The original Thornbury Township was split between the two counties when Delaware County was formed out of Chester County in 1789.

After Chester Creek flows under Cheyney Road it continues a wide bend that it had been making around the southern end of Cheyney University and flows towards the northeast. As it does so, the creek enters an area of woodland and a large meadowland, known as Barrett Meadows.

Barrett Meadows
Barrett Meadows is open space set aside within Thornbury Township, Delaware County to be preserved in perpetuity as habitat for birds and other wildlife. It is named for Larry Barrett, retired Boeing mechanical engineer and a longtime resident of the township who has been active in promoting open space and environmental issues. Al Guarante of the Delaware County Birding Club has reported seeing rare Lincoln’s sparrows and Nelson (formerly known as sharp-tailed) sparrows here. Both species favor open grassland habitat, which has become scarce in the region.
At the eastern end of Barrett Meadows, Chester Creek is joined by an unnamed tributary that flows out of the northwest that is known locally as Cheyney Run. It originates in Thornbury Township, Delaware County, but passes in and out of Thornbury Township, Chester County by way of the Squire Cheyney Farm. Thomas Cheyney (1731-1811) was a local farmer whose warning to George Washington about the British flanking movements at the Battle of Brandywine in 1777 went unheeded. He served as a delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention in 1787 and as a local justice of the peace for 25 years.
Squire Cheyney Farm as housing subdivision with renovation of original farmhouse
Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association tree planting along Cheyney Run
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2015

Cheyney Run as meadow rivulet
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2015
“Tanguy Run”

Just before entering Barrett Meadows, Cheyney Run is joined by another small unnamed tributary given the local name of Tanguy Run. This tributary runs through the Tanguy community, a single-tax social experiment established by Quakers.

Tanguy Run flows out of the northeast along the east side of Tanguy Road and enters Cheyney Run at Creek Road just north of Barrett Meadows.

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Cheyney Run joins Chester Creek at the eastern end of Barrett Meadows, just before it flows under Station Road. Station Road forms an obtuse angle that encloses the eastern and southern borders of Barrett Meadows. Cheyney Station is at the western end of Station Road where it intersects with Cheyney Road.

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The bridge that carries Station Road over Chester Creek is a simple concrete structure that was built in 1914 by road contractor James J. Skelly, who started his career as a superintendent at the quarries just downstream from this bridge. As far as bridges go, it is not one of the more aesthetically pleasing examples in the watershed.
Barrett Meadows is included within an extensive trail system within Thornbury Township, Delaware County. From there, an extensive trail runs between Chester Creek and the tracks of the old West Chester and Philadelphia Railroad, which was SEPTA’s West Chester commuter line until 1986. The trail provides good vantage points for viewing flora and fauna in and around the creek in the extensively wooded area between Barrett Meadows and Glen Mills.
The trail network extends into neighboring parks and public properties that cover a variety of habitats and provide views of ruins of the township’s industrial past. A local birder encountered on the trail by the name of John Mercer reported that the woods here were a good place to see unusual migratory thrushes in the spring.
Along this corridor, Chester Creek passes under a bridge that carries Locksley Road over it. On the southern bank of the creek just upstream from the bridge is Locksley Station, which was just a whistle-stop.
On the north side of the creek near this location is the Locksley Grist Mill, also known as the Luckenbach Mill to reflect the name of its more recent owners who were responsible for its restoration and conversion into a fine home. It was originally built in 1790. Some of the stone to build the mill was obtained from the original grist mill along Chester Creek nearby that was built in 1718. For most of its existence it was operated by the James family.

In 1962, the property was bought by Richard “Bud” Luckenbach, an accomplished stonemason and millwright. He operated a historic restoration business called “18th Century Building” through which he restored many old farm houses and other structures in southeastern Pennsylvania until his death in 1987. He took on the Locksley grist mill as his personal project, restoring it from its remaining two walls into his family home, completed in 1966.
Locksley Hall and Luckenbach Mill from Chester Creek  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

View of Chester Creek from abandoned bridge across from Grist Mill Road  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Some stone ruins can be observed along the Thornbury Township Trail downstream from the Locksley Station. Most of the ruins are of structures that dated from the early decades of the twentieth century when the John T. Dyer quarries were in operation. There are some earlier structures that were incorporated into the later structures, though. An early saw mill and grist mill were built at this location by the Cheyney family. The grist mill dated from 1718. Its stonework was incorporated into the 1790 Luckenbach mill. The mill dam is visible on the edges of Chester Creek, even though the middle had been breached long ago. Along the west side of the creek can be seen the old mill race. It is dry now, but it carried water in a controlled fashion from the pond impounded behind the dam down to the waterwheels of the mills. The mill race was probably altered and widened several times during its history. Thornbury Township historian Sam Neuman speculates that it and the earliest mills were built by slaves. There are records that show that the Willcox mills downstream were built by slaves. Some Quakers kept slaves in Pennsylvania until 1776. Ultimately the mill race was capable of carrying a large volume of water since it appears to have been about eight feet deep and ten feet wide.
One large set of ruins is next to the railroad tracks and has the mill race running between two widely set pair of walls. A combination of stone walls and poured concrete walls constitute the foundation of the Locksley sawmill, which apparently was rebuilt and expanded upon perhaps more than once, while incorporating older walls. While it operated from 1860 until 1890 it was under the ownership of the resident of nearby Locksley Hall.
Portion of Locksley saw mill with deep mill race in foreground

The trees’ revenge on the old saw mill

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2016
Detail of Everts & Stewart atlas map showing locations of Locksley grist and saw mills. They were owned by Daniel James at the time.
John T. Dyer Quarries

On the opposite side of the tracks is a larger ruin also consisting of stone walls. These match the location on a 1911 map of one of the stone crushers associated with the John T. Dyer quarries.
The quarries themselves can be found by exploring the trails that enter the woods, where a railroad spur to a second quarry and another stone crusher once existed. The quarry stone consists of trap rock, a form of igneous rock known to geologists as diabase. It is highly desirable as road aggregate due to its durability and uniform quality. Diabase solidified from magma that was released from below as the Earth’s crust weakened and as the magma was trapped in the surrounding rock. The weakening of the crust was due to continental rifting that occurred approximately 600 million years ago during the break-up of the supercontinent Rodinia and the opening of the Iapetus Ocean. (When the continents came back together again over 200 million years later, the more famous supercontinent Pangea was formed, and when it split up, the Atlantic Ocean was formed. Iapetus was the father of Atlas in Greek mythology).

John T. Dyer is known to have used poured concrete in the 1920s to create foundations for his stone crushers in Berks County, and he used stone for the stone crusher foundations built earlier.
The early twentieth century photo of the John T. Dyer trap rock quarry and stone crushers in Birdsboro, Pennsylvania convey an impression of what the Chester Creek valley in the vicinity of Dyer’s Thornbury operation must have been like since they are contemporaneous. The Dyer quarry in Birdsboro is still in business into the twenty-first century, though.
A 1934 map shows that the owner of the Thornbury property is John T. Dyer 2nd. The quarries ceased operation in 1942.

The first John T. Dyer was a prominent Norristown businessman who was born in Lehigh County in 1848. He was descended from early Quaker settlers who founded Dyerstown in Bucks County. John T. Dyer’s father moved from there to Lehigh County to teach school, but then
became involved in building and contracting, lumbering, and general merchandizing to the New
York and Philadelphia markets. After receiving his public school education, John T. Dyer
became a clerk at one of the slate quarries in Slattington, Lehigh County. He soon became
involved as the superintendent of new railroad lines as they were being constructed. By 1880 he
had his own railroad contracts, the first one being for the New York, Ontario, and Western line.
He did a lot of construction on the Pennsylvania Schuylkill Valley line, which led to him moving
permanently to Norristown. He received many further contracts to build railroads in Maryland,
the Midwest, and the Ohio valley, as well as for trolley line construction in Norristown itself.

John T. Dyer was also in the crushed stone business. He had quarries near Norristown
and at Howellville in Tredyffrin Township as well as the Locksley Quarries in Thornbury
Township. His biggest operation was in Birdsboro, Berks County where he had trap rock
quarries on a large scale. These quarries are still active under the name Birdsboro Materials, a
division of the H & K Group.

John T. Dyer acquired the tract in Thornbury Township by early in 1901. The Chester
Times lists a real estate transaction on January 8 as follows:

    Thornbury -- Thomas F. Reilly, of Philadelphia to The John T. Dyer Quarry, Co., of Pa.,
    stone quarrying plant, other machinery, etc., and tract of 20 acres, also house and tract
    of 2 ¾ acres, 9 square perches, $22,500.

    It appears as though some stone quarrying equipment was already in place and was part
of the purchase. The stone crushing equipment was steam-powered, and fueled with considerable
amounts of coal. The quarry was shut down temporarily in late 1902 due to the lack of coal in the
aftermath of the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902. The strike ended with the intervention of
President Theodore Roosevelt.

    That was the same year that twenty-year old James J. Skelly of Norristown became a
superintendent for the John T. Dyer Company. In 1903, he moved to Delaware County and
became the superintendent of the Locksley Quarries. John T. Dyer seems to have gotten into the
crushed stone business to supply a need of the railroad construction industry, but a new market
was opening up as the paving of roads became more prevalent. Particularly with the enactment of
the Sproul Highway Act, townships received funding from the State Commissioner of Highways
to top dress the new state highways with fine crushed stone. Townships in Delaware County
obtained some of this stone from the Locksley Quarries. Aston Township received five train car
loads in 1905.

    Perhaps it was because of the pressures of keeping up with the demand for crushed stone,
but the John T. Dyer Quarry Company got into trouble with its neighbors starting in 1906. The
House of Refuge, which later became known as the Glen Mills Schools, and a large number of
other local residents brought suit against the quarry company in the Delaware County Court of
Common Pleas. They complained of heavy blasting that woke them in the early hours, houses
shaken, roofs damaged, and dangerous flying stone. The case was in the courts until 1909, when
the decision against the quarry was sustained and the plaintiffs were free to ask for an injunction
against the quarry company.

    It might have been no coincidence that 1909 was also the year that James J. Skelly left his
job at the Locksley Quarries and started his own contracting business based in Lima,
Middletown Township. James J. Skelly went on to be a major road builder in Delaware County.
His company built Baltimore Pike from Media to Chester Heights, which included one of the
first cloverleafs in the state, located at the intersection with Middletown Road, PA Route 352. He built the first section of Interstate 95 through Delaware County, known as the Chester Expressway. At the time of his death in 1967, his company was building the first section of the Blue Route, which started in Radnor Township. He was a national figure, having been elected as the president of the American Road Builders’ Association at their annual Chicago convention in 1945.

West Chester Railroad bed, with old railroad ties perhaps belonging to spur leading to Dyer quarries
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2016
The Thornbury Township Trails and Chester Creek enter Bonner Park, which contains the ruins of the Taylor/Frazer house. John Taylor built the house in 1739. When he died in 1759, his daughter Mary inherited the house, the farm, and the nearby Sarum Forge on Chester Creek. Upon her marriage to Persifor Frazer (1736-1792), the property then belonged to her husband as dictated by the laws and customs of the time. Women may have been second-class citizens in the eighteenth century, but Mary Taylor Frazer did not take a secondary role with regards to her husband or the property. They both fought as American patriots in the Revolutionary War in their own way. During the long periods when Persifor Frazer was soldiering, Mary ran the farm and the forge. On 15 October 1776, Squire Cheyne wrote to Persifor Frazer, “Your wife...has managed your business to admiration...I believe the buffet [table] must be neglected, for farming seems to engage all her attentions.”
Taylor/Frazer house ruins – 1739 original portion on left; 1770 addition on right
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2017

Views of Taylor/Frazer house, 1893; addition from 1770 visible in right photo
Photos: William Bonner & Chester County Historical Society
Persifor Frazer was born in nearby Newtown Township. At the time of the Revolutionary War, he became Captain of Company A, Fourth Pennsylvania Battalion and then Lieutenant Colonel of the Fifth Pennsylvania line, both under General Anthony Wayne. He fought at the Battle of Brandywine. Two days after the battle, on September 13th, 1777, Mary defiantly faced British troops as they arrived to plunder the farm and sought to capture her husband. While her children, servants, and an injured American soldier escaped into the woods, she and a slave named Rachel protected the farm. Mary hid important papers and valuable family heirlooms, and when demanded to help the British soldiers find supplies, she refused. As she told the tale years later, she even confronted the looting soldiers and made them return some of the stolen items. They had taken food, clothing, horses, liquor, and a precious store of salt. After the British took Philadelphia and the Continental Army settled down for the hard winter in Valley Forge, Mary rode all over the countryside on horseback gathering supplies donated by friends and neighbors and took them to the camp herself. At least, these were the stories that we can imagine her telling around the hearth that can be still seen in the old Taylor/Frazer farmhouse ruins.
Persifor Frazer was eventually captured and held prisoner in the new Walnut Street Prison in Philadelphia. Mary took great risks and visited him there several times in the British held city. After one visit, she smuggled out some of the maggot-ridden bread that he had been given to eat and a letter he had written and showed them to George Washington. Washington wrote a letter to General Howe of the occupying British army about the disgraceful conditions in the Walnut Street Prison and was able to get them somewhat better treatment. After his release, Frazer became Brigadier General of the Pennsylvania State Militia.

The house was made into a bakery in 1920. There was a large oven, which has been reduced to a mound of bricks. The house burned down in 1926. The ruins are on the National Register of Historic Places. The ruins were stabilized in the year 2000, and are maintained by the Thornbury Township Historic Commission and the Thornbury Historical Society.
Remains of the 1920s bakery, Taylor/Frazer house

Bonner Park’s woods are partly dominated by tulip poplar and partly by American beech. Saplings of American beech are profuse in the understory.

American beech woods in Bonner Park

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Chester Creek bends towards the southeast around Bonner Park, continuing to flow between the railroad and Creek Road. As all three (“river”, road, & rail) make the bend, Slitting Mill Road enters Creek Road from the northeast. The road’s name likely dates from the days of Sarum Forge.
Just past Bonner Park on the southwest are the grounds of the Glen Mills Schools for adjudicated youth. The Glen Mills Schools originated as a House of Refuge in Philadelphia in 1826 as part of an early reform movement to separate incarcerated juveniles from the influence of the adult prison population. This educational institution moved to the Chester Creek watershed in 1910. In 1931 the Sleighton Farm School for girls was legally separated from the Glen Mills School and became its own institution.
A small unnamed tributary flows through the school grounds after originating farther to the southwest on the south side of Glen Mills Road across from the Glen Mills Golf Course through which it also flows.
Unnamed tributary of Chester Creek at edge of Glen Mills Golf Course and Bonner Park
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Chester Creek then arrives at the historic village of Glen Mills. Creek Road converges with Glen Mills Road and Sweetwater Road at the bridge over the creek here.
The railroad passes through here, too. It had arrived in 1858. The picturesque Glen Mills Train Station was active from 1880 until 1986 and is now the home of the Thornbury Historical Society.

John Taylor established Sarum Forge here in 1746. He had devised an innovative new method of rolling sheets of iron between heavy metal rollers. The resulting denser and smoother iron provided finished products that were of higher quality than previously used methods. The British felt threatened by this economic competition from the colonies, and passed the Iron Act of 1750. This prohibition against the domestic production of iron work was ignored, but both the resentment it engendered and the continued output from Sarum Forge contributed to the struggle for independence from Great Britain. The next owner and operator of Sarum Forge was Percifor Frazer, the husband of John Taylor’s daughter Mary. He was a Continental Army officer serving under General Anthony Wayne. In 1836 the Wilcox family expanded their paper mill operations from the West Branch Chester Creek to the site of the old Sarum Forge, and renamed the location Glen Mills. At Glen Mills they produced paper with innovative anti-counterfeiting measures for the national currency. Willcox purchased the Sarum Forge on Chester Creek in 1836 and built the Glen Mills Upper Mill which was a paper mill in the family until about 1914. Until the 1920s, Joseph Dohan owned it and made cardboard. The Glen Mills Lower Mill was in operation from 1845 until around 1926.
Just downstream from Glen Mills and on the east bank of the creek is a huge hole in the ground. It is the Glen Mills Quarry of the former General Crushed Stone Company, now owned by Hanson Aggregates. It is also the site of an HMA (Hot Mix Asphalt) plant. First opened in 1884, the quarry was the source of much of the ballast used by SEPTA and in Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor.
In 2013, the quarry was the nesting site of a pair of Common Ravens, the first such record for Delaware County. The southern portion of the quarry is in Middletown Township.

As Chester Creek flows past the quarry, it pours over two dams in rapid succession. The upper dam is a high, vertical concrete wall and the lower dam has a more gradual incline.

After Chester Creek flows past the northwest corner of Middletown Township at the former site of one of the Wilcox paper mills, the creek forms the boundary between Thornbury Township on the west and Middletown on the east side. The creek then flows under Forge Road at another former site of a Wilcox paper mill.
Martin Park

A short distance downstream, Chester Creek curves around the eastern end of Martin Park, a Thornbury Township park located between the creek and Stoney Bank Road to the west. Along Stoney Bank Road are a variety of old structures, including tenement houses from the era of the Wilcox paper mills. One of the mills owned by Mark and James Wilcox was along Chester Creek at a location within or near the park where the creek runs close to the railroad tracks.
Later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Darlington family operated the Cornucopia Dairies on the other side of Chester Creek at this location.

A small unnamed tributary flows through Martin Park out of the west from the direction of mature American beech woods on the other side of Stoney Bank Road. Outcrops of folded gneiss bedrock and loose boulders can be found in the woods.

The small unnamed tributary had a saw mill located on it at one time. There is an old mill pond and evidence of old mill race within the park and some stone rubble that may have been part of the saw mill.
Martin Park lies within a portion of Thornbury Township that was part of Aston Township until 1842. An act of legislature annexed the portion of Aston Township to Thornbury Township north of the Stoney Bank Churchyard and between the border with Concord Township to the west and Chester Creek to the east. As a result, the map of Thornbury Township, Delaware County has a short southeasterly projecting panhandle that is traversed from the northeast to southwest by Stoney Bank Road.
Past Martin Park, Chester Creek forms the boundary of Chester Heights Borough to the southwest and Middletown Township on its northeast flank. It continues to flow more-or-less parallel to the railroad tracks.

Borough of Chester Heights

The Borough of Chester Heights also was once part of Aston Township. In 1946, the residents of this neighborhood seceded from Aston Township because they were unhappy with the taxes.
About a half mile downstream and just below the bridge that carries Darlington Road over Chester Creek, a small unnamed tributary enters from the west. The tributary originates in a subdivision called Hamanassett at Darlington within the Borough of Chester Heights. The subdivision is built around a historic house with a tragic history that serves as a bed & breakfast in the early twenty-first century.

Hamanassett

Hamanassett was built in 1856 by Dr. Charles Delucena Meigs (1792-1869) on a hill overlooking the Chester Creek valley near where Darlington Road meets Baltimore Pike. It was named after the area in Connecticut where Dr. Meigs’ ancestors had settled in the 1600s. He himself was raised in Georgia. His unusual middle name was in honor of a Spanish gentleman greatly admired by his maternal grandfather during the Revolutionary War.

Charles D. Meigs was made chair of obstetrics of the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1841. Through his dramatic looks and theatrical lectures he became the leading U.S. authority on women’s health. He was uncompromising in his sense of moral righteousness and in his conviction that he was correct in all matters of women’s health. His chief rival at Jefferson Medical College was the chair of surgery, Thomas Dent Mütter, whose teaching specimens later became the core collection of the Mütter Museum at the College of Physicians in Philadelphia. Whereas Dr. Mütter was concerned with his patients’ comfort and the cleanliness of everything that came in contact with them, Dr. Meigs could not even be bothered to wash his hands because that would imply that “doctors were not gentlemen.” Throughout his career, he advocated copious amounts of bloodletting and leeching, and taught his students the technique for applying leeches to the inside of a woman’s uterus using a speculum. Ultimately, his vociferous denial of the contagious nature of diseases and his prejudice against anesthesia led to a crumbling of his reputation as these two ideas became more accepted. His ultimate downfall in Philadelphia society was precipitated by his appearance at the Union League in Philadelphia, which his abolitionist son John helped to found. When Dr. Charles Meigs agreed to speak on behalf of abolition at the Union League his son was thrilled at first. But, when he argued that the real problem with slavery was that it encouraged the “comingling” of races leading to “half-breed” children of his “godlike race, the archetype of the Grecian demigods and heroes” and the “nude and barbarous tribes of the African race,” it was too much. The group that had gathered to argue for the equality of the races was so offended that John Meigs had to resign from the Union League.

Charles D. Meigs submitted his letter of resignation to Jefferson Medical College in 1860. He had bought thirty-seven acres of land in Delaware County and planned on retiring there. He built his house on top of the hill, along with a barn and a stable, a tenant house, a springhouse, an icehouse, and a workshop. He created a refuge where he could escape his critics and spend his time with his children and grandchildren, and read and write poetry. He no longer had any interest in medicine, which was changing too fast for him to understand it any longer. His retirement was not as relaxing as he hoped. The Civil War broke out. In his isolation, Meigs had an agreement with the conductor of the train that passed nearby each day to give two whistles for news of a disastrous battle but to “whistle twice as often” for a successful one. He had great interest in the war. His son Montgomery C. Meigs was quartermaster general for the Union. When his favorite grandson died in battle and his wife died seven months later, Meigs began to pine away. His children demanded that he move back to Philadelphia where they could care for him, and he finally died there in his sleep at the age of seventy-seven.
The east bank of Chester Creek in Middletown Township between Forge Road and Rocky Run is known as the Darlington Valley, where many generations of the Darlington family lived. It was the location of the Darlington Dairies, run by the Darlington family for six generations. Starting in 1795, Jesse Darlington (born 1764) shipped fresh-churned butter to shops in both Delaware and Chester Counties.

The Darlington Dairies were the first in the Philadelphia market to ship butter packed in ice. As the railroad network developed, the Darlington family was quick to adopt it for the distribution of their product. Starting in 1858, they began shipping butter by rail to Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Darlington butter was used in the White House in 1879.

When, in the late 19th century, the Darlington family was using the name Cornucopia Dairies for their business, they got in a trademark dispute with the Pratt family, their neighbors in Middletown Township. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court in 1886 where the right of the Darlington family to use the trademark was upheld. In 1938, Paul Darlington, Sr. died and the dairies were inherited by his sons Paul Darlington, Jr. and Richard Stiles Darlington, Sr., the
last of the Darlington family to run the business. In those days, the Darlington Brothers Dairies focused on delivery of milk and other dairy products to homes, schools, and local Dairy Queens. As supermarkets began to dominate the dairy market and home deliveries became unpopular, Darlington Brothers Dairies couldn’t compete with the neighboring Wawa Dairies, which adapted by expanding into the convenient store business. In 1966, the Darlington Brothers Dairies was sold to the Calbusera Brothers, who operated it only until 1969.

There are several historic estates associated with the Darlington family. The original Darlington farm at first belonged to John Sharpless, who was perhaps the same Quaker settler who was the first to set up a homestead in Nether Providence Township. The 1687 map made by William Penn’s surveyor Thomas Holme shows parcels held by a John Sharples in both locations. The founder of the dairies, Jesse Darlington (born 1762) married Amy Sharpless and thus came by the family property in Middletown Township. Jesse was the son of Thomas Darlington (born 1724) and Hannah Brinton. Incidentally, he had an older brother named Edward (born 1755) who married Hannah Townsend. One of the sons of Edward and Hannah was William Darlington, the famous citizen of West Chester and founder of many institutions there, and who happened to be Jesse Darlington’s nephew.

The original Sharpless/Darlington farmhouse, 1682 – visible from the Darlington Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Sign showing ownership history of the historic Darlington farm
Photo: Richard Stiles Darlington, Jr.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Sharpless</td>
<td>1682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Sharpless</td>
<td>1703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Sharpless</td>
<td>1753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Darlington</td>
<td>1797</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Sharpless</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jared Darlington</td>
<td>1830</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marry Dutton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward Darlington</td>
<td>1856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Palmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jared Darlington</td>
<td>1891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marion Shortledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Darlington</td>
<td>1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Bender</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>George Wood</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wawa Dairy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William &amp; Audrey Burke</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton &amp; Hope Brooks</td>
<td>1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Bosacco</td>
<td>1984</td>
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<td>Priscilla Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Mills</td>
<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann Bosacco</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Bosacco</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<td>Amy Mills</td>
<td>1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danny Mills</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<td>Molly Ann Mills</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Anna</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Bosacco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Mills</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last Darlington to own the historic Darlington farm was Charles Darlington. The sign would lead one to believe that he inherited it from his father Jared. In fact, during his entire career he worked for DuPont, and bought the farm from his father Jared in order to save the older man from bankruptcy. Since he saw no money to be made in farming, Charles sold the farm to George Wood of Wawa. His father Jared bought another farm in Chester Heights, went into the mushroom business, and went bankrupt again.

Farther upstream along Chester Creek and next to the railroad track is a house built in the early 1800s that is next to the site of the former Cornucopia Dairies facilities. This was the home of one of the last two Darlington brothers who owned the dairy, Richard Stiles Darlington Sr. His son Richard Jr. grew up there. As a boy, he worked in the dairy next door. His father sold the house and property in the 1980s to owners who had little appreciation for historic structures. The property deteriorated and eventually went into foreclosure. New owners deemed the dairy buildings structurally unsound and hired contractors to demolish them in the fall of 2016. Some of the business records of the dairy were stored in the attic. The contractors came on a weekend when the owners were away and the records were destroyed along with the buildings – a historian’s nightmare.
About a half mile down the railroad tracks near Darlington Road is a house built in 1753. It is just yards from where the Darlington Railroad Station once stood, as well as the site of the Darling post office. Martha Sharples Darlington was the well-known postmistress of the Darling post office. She lived in the house. Starting around 1860, the post office was located in the train station, but it 1909 it moved into its own building across Darlington Road. In 1918, the name of the post office was changed from Darlington to Darling in order to prevent its mail from getting sent to another post office in Beaver County that was also named Darlington. In 1963 the post office was moved to the east side of the tracks. It was a tiny office, and was famed for being the smallest post office in the nation. It closed in 1974.
In more recent times, Jared and Nancy Darlington lived in the house. In 1993, they moved into the house after Jared retired from a long career working for the Scott Paper Company. They embarked on a long period of lovingly renovating the house. Jared Darlington died in 2013, and when Nancy died in 2017, for the first time in over 225 years there was no longer a Darlington living on the land of their ancestors in Middletown Township.

Martha Sharples Darlington’s house lately owned by Jared and Nancy Darlington, built in 1753
Photo: Richard Stiles Darlington, Jr.

As it flows under Darlington Road, the Chester Creek flows through a wooded area known as the Darling Woods. Broad-winged Hawks have been known to nest here.

Cornucopia and Darlington Trails

Middletown Township has an elaborate network of walking trails. The Darlington Trail makes a loop that is bisected by Darlington Road. It hugs the east bank of Chester Creek closely in and out of the tight meander loop where Darlington Road crosses the creek. At its northern end the Darlington Trail overlaps with the smaller Cornucopia Trail loop as the two form a figure eight. At the southern end, the Darlington Trail loop is connected to the Rocky Run Trail, which follows the Chester Creek tributary by that name.
Darlington Valley subdivision along the Cornucopia Trail near the site of the former dairy
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

The downstream railroad bridge over Chester Creek visible from the Darlington Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Folded gneiss outcrops along the Darlington Trail
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
Unnamed tributary of Chester Creek traversed along the Darlington Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

The upstream railroad bridge over Chester Creek encountered on the Darlington Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
View of Chester Creek from the Darlington Trail, downstream of Darlington Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Sign for the Darlington Trail at Darlington Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Chester Creek flowing under Darlington Road, as viewed from the Darlington Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

View of Chester Creek along Darlington Trail upstream from Darlington Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Where the Darlington Trail crosses the railroad tracks  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Shagbark hickories along the Darlington Trail  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Horse farm along the Darlington Trail  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Meadow overlooking the Darlington Valley, Darlington Trail  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Unusual architecture along the Darlington Trail

Downhill from the historic Darlington farm, the Darlington Trail crosses the unnamed tributary again near Darlington Road

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Blazing maple along the Darlington Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Rocky Run

Chester Creek is joined from the northeast by Rocky Run near where Middletown Township’s Rocky Run Trail converges with the Darlington Trail.

Rocky Run is the most pristine stream in the Chester Creek watershed. It has a High Quality-Cold Water Fisheries classification with the PA Department of Environmental Protection. It also is designated a Migratory Fisheries due to the presence of American Eels.

Gradyville

Rocky Run’s source is behind the old Edgmont Fire Station at Gradyville crossroads in Edgmont Township where Gradyville Road intersects with Middletown Road, PA Route 352.

Gamble Cotton Lap Factory

Rocky Run flows towards the southeast for a short distance and passes beneath Gradyville Road. On the upstream side of the road was the location of the Gamble Cotton Lap Factory.

Where Rocky Run flows under Gradyville Road

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Rocky Run flows towards the southeast through the Deep Meadow subdivision of Edgmont Township. It then passes under Sycamore Mills Road in the vicinity of the Sycamore Woods Estates subdivision, consisting of small cul-de-sacs off Sycamore Mills Road.

Sleighton School for Girls

Rocky Run flows through the grounds of the now closed Sleighton School for Girls. It had been part of the Glen Mills School until legally separated from that institution in 1931. In 1975, the Sleighton School became co-educational. Due to financial difficulties, it closed in 2001.
While flowing through the grounds of the Sleighton School, Rocky Run crosses the border between Edgmont Township and Middletown Township.
Pratt Family Farms

Between Forge Road and Old Forge Road were located three farms belonging to the Pratt family. The Pratt family property was on both sides of Middletown Road. They produced large quantities of ice cream that was carted to Chester and also transported by boat to Philadelphia. This enterprise was led by Thomas Pratt (1818-1882), who was succeeded by his sons Peter W. Pratt and William Pratt. Peter W. Pratt’s house is on the southwest corner of Middletown and Yearsley Mill Roads. The Pratt family got in a trademark dispute with the Darlington family over the name Cornucopia Dairies. The Pratt family lost the case in a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

After it flows under Forge Road, Rocky Run passes behind the campus of the Delaware County branch of Penn State University.

Penn State University, Brandywine Campus

In the early twenty-first century, the branch campus of Penn State University in Delaware County was renamed the Brandywine Campus despite the fact that the Brandywine Creek watershed is almost eight miles to the west. A public relations company hired by the institution settled on the name Brandywine as conferring the most regional prestige, but with careless geographic disregard to Rocky Run, the fine stream that actually flows through the woodland behind the built campus.

The ground breaking for this branch campus of Penn State took place in 1968, and it was dedicated in 1971.

The tulip poplar dominated woods at the back of the built campus can be entered from behind the Vairo Library. A cross-country running trail provides access to the Rocky Run valley.
As it flows past the misnamed Brandywine branch campus of Penn State, Rocky Run begins a gradual bend towards the southwest and passes under Old Forge Road near its intersection with Yearsley Mill Road.

Yearsley Mill

Yearsley Mill is located along Rocky Run at the end of Yearsley Mill Road just beyond where Yearsley Mill Road comes to a “T” at Old Forge Road. The original grist mill was built in 1741 on the land of John Talbot. It was sold in 1792 to Joseph Emlen, who built the current mill. It was purchased by Nathan Yearsley in 1823, and by 1836 it was operated by Humphrey Yearsley.
On the opposite side of the road are an old farmhouse and an associated barn that has also been converted to a residence. They were contemporary with the mill, which is no longer standing. The farm was bought by George Wood in the early twentieth century and became Wawa Farm #4.

A few hundred yards downstream from the site of Yearsley Mill, Rocky Run passes beneath Darlington Road.
At this point, both the road and the stream skirt the property of Delaware County where a number of county institutions are clustered. These include the Delaware County Library System central offices, the Delaware County Medical Examiner, the Regional Crime Lab, the Juvenile Detention Center, and most prominently, the Fair Acres Geriatric Center. The northern end of Middletown Township’s Rocky Run Trail is located at Old Forge Road in front of the Fair Acres Geriatric Center.

Fair Acres Geriatric Center

The Fair Acres Geriatric Center is Delaware County’s publicly funded institution for the care of the elderly. It is a direct descendant of the Delaware County Poor Farm, which was relocated to this site in Middletown Township when its previous location was appropriated in 1850 for the site of the new county seat of Media. Building began on the new site in 1856 after the property was purchased from Abraham Pennell and was completed in 1857. A women’s building was added in 1949. A burst of new construction occurred from 1957 until 1960, and the first high-rise was added in 1963. The county ran a working farm and canning operation at the facility until 1967. Building 8 of the Fair Acres complex is the tallest building in Delaware County.

Building 8 of the Fair Acres Geriatric Center viewed from the Rocky Run Trail
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Winter view of Building 8

View of Fair Acres complex and Chester Creek valley from sixth floor window of Building 8
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2017
Rocky Run flows towards the southwest downstream of the county complex where it passes through woods and meadows that can be enjoyed by walkers along the Rocky Run Trail.

Granite Farms Estates

Rocky Run flows through the grounds of the retirement community of Granite Farms Estates. A small unnamed tributary enters from the east. It originates between the county complex to the north and the Thomas Chevrolet dealership to the south. It flows behind Thomas Chevrolet, the Rocky Run YMCA, and Granite Farms Estates, all of which are entered from U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike.
Granite Farms Estates looming above the valley of Rocky Run  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Rocky Run Trail over unnamed tributary emerging from woods behind Granite Farms Estates  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Rocky Run flows parallel to Valley Road as it approaches the Wawa Dairies facility. The stream is lined with some very large American sycamores.

Pennell Mills

Along this portion of Rocky Run once stood a saw mill complex that was owned by Abraham Pennell. He lived in a house just downstream located just behind the Wawa Dairies, which he had enlarged in 1799. Abraham’s son James subsequently lived in the house. George Wood bought the Pennell house and farm in 1900 as he began the Wawa Dairies enterprise. Abraham’s son Joseph lived in a house that is on the old Franklin Mint property across U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike. Abraham was the son of William Pennell, who in the 18th century owned mills at what became Glen Riddle further down the Chester Creek valley.
Wawa Dairy Farms

Rocky Run flows behind the main facilities of a thriving enterprise that has its roots in the dairy industry, Wawa Inc. The Wawa Dairy Farm was opened by George Wood at this location in 1902. In 1900 he had bought three farms in this location, including the Rocky Run Dairy Farm. He started with one bull and six cows on his 1100 acres. In those muckraking days prior to the Pure Food Laws, George Wood made available certified milk bottled under sanitary conditions. In 1914, his main market in Philadelphia required all milk to be pasteurized unless certified as produced in a healthy manner. In 1928 the laws required separate plants for certified milk and pasteurized milk. In that year Wawa built a combined plant that complied with the laws, and it still operates (for slightly different purposes) at its location facing U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike at Valley Road.
Towers of milk and juice, Wawa Dairies  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Water treatment facility on Rocky Run behind Wawa Dairies, east side of Valley Road  
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Rocky Run Trail

Rocky Run flows beneath Valley Road and passes behind the Wawa Corporate University. A parking area for users of the Rocky Run Trail is accessible from Valley Road at this location. Downstream from here, Rocky Run and accompanying trail passes through particularly scenic woodland. The woods are dominated by American beech and tulip poplar, but there are also quite a number of red and white oaks. Spicebush dominates in the understory. As befits a stream named Rocky Run, the geology is notable. There are outcrops and boulders of beautifully folded gneiss. Some large crystals of feldspar can be found in pegmatite boulders visible at a specific spot along the trail.
Parking for the Rocky Run Trail along Valley Road

Gneiss boulder along the Rocky Run Trail
Pegmatite along the Rocky Run Trail

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Rocky Run, true to its name

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
The Rocky Run Trail crosses over Rocky Run a couple places as the stream makes its last meander bend on its approach to Chester Creek. Right after the last crossing of the Rocky Run Trail over Rocky Run, the trail joins the Darlington Trail and Rocky Run passes through the railroad embankment and joins Chester Creek on the other side.
About an eighth of a mile downstream of where Rocky Run enters it, Chester Creek flows under U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike.

U.S. Route 1

U.S. Route 1 is a long ribbon of asphalt between Maine and Florida. It was once known as America’s Main Street when it was the main conveyor of traffic along the eastern seaboard of the United States before that role was taken over by Interstate 95.
On the west bank of Chester Creek within the Borough of Chester Heights is the unofficial village of Wawa. A once active rail station by that name was located within a meander bend of the creek here. Prior to the arrival of George Wood, who conferred the name of Wawa on the place, it was called Grubb’s Bridge. Henry Grubb was an eighteenth century landowner who sold the property to William Pennell. Much of the Pennell family farmland then came into the possession of George Wood as he established and expanded the Wawa Dairy Farms during the first decade of the twentieth century. It is said that George Wood named Wawa after the Lenape name for “wild goose” which he found in abundance here. He no doubt was inspired by the local goose population, but the derivation of the name was more likely inspired by the use of the word “Wawa” in The Song of Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The Lenape name for goose is not “Wawa” in any case. Longfellow used Ojibwe inspired words in his poem, which incidentally was about a spiritual leader of the Seneca, who spoke yet an even different language.

After Chester Creek flows under the bridge at U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike, it passes through a portion of the Wawa Preserve of the Natural Lands Trust. In 2012, trees were planted along the creek here to provide a riparian buffer. The rest of Wawa Woods is a mature grove of American beech trees. A small unnamed tributary enters Chester Creek from the southwest at the preserve.
Chester Creek then bends around the Wawa Railroad Station, which has undergone a hiatus in service since 1986, but is being refurbished in order to extend service beyond the current rail terminus at Elwyn. Along Chester Creek near the Wawa Station was located Thatcher’s Tilt Mill.

Franklin Mint

Downstream from the station, a small unnamed tributary flows into Chester Creek from the northeast where it originates in a large tract of mixed woods in between the Pennsylvania State Trooper Media Barracks and Glenwood Elementary School. This tributary flows behind the former Franklin Mint, defunct producer of coins and collectibles. The owners of the Franklin Mint property have been going through a long process of permit applications in order to build a town center development there.

The Franklin Mint was founded in 1964 by Joseph Segel. The large manufacturing facility and museum for the display of its coins and collectibles was built on Baltimore Pike in 1976. It was sold in 1980 and became a subsidiary of Eastern Mountain Sports. In its heyday, it produced the coinage for nearly twenty sovereign nations. It was better known for its many lines of collectible plates, figures, and other objects, many of which depicted icons of popular culture that were featured in full-page magazine advertisements. It went out of business along with a lot of other enterprises at the turn of the twenty-first century and the bursting of the so-called dot.com bubble.

Traffic on U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike, in front of the defunct Franklin Mint
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
On the slope between the Franklin Mint and Chester Creek was once located the Wild Goose Tea Room, operated from the 1920s until 1963 by Katherine Willcox. George Wood donated milk to her enterprise in its early days, because he was interested in seeing it succeed. Jack Kelly operated the tea room from 1963 until 1968, but then sold it to John Megen who changed it into the Lobster Pot & Steakhouse Restaurant. Franklin Mint bought the property in 1975, but it continued to operate as a restaurant for another couple decades until it was abandoned and demolished.

Logtown

High on the west bank of Chester Creek off of Valley Brook Road is the site of Logtown. This was the location of an old Presbyterian church that was called Mount Gilead, or Blue Church. As an outpost of the Middletown Presbyterian Church, it was where Scots-Irish workers from the Old Sarum Forge worshiped. The congregation was formed in 1728, and the most recent church building had been constructed in 1766.

Chester Creek continues to flow towards the southeast parallel to the railroad tracks, and soon arrives at the village of Lenni.
Lenni

The unnamed tributary that originates between Glenwood Elementary School and the Pennsylvania State Police Barracks enters Chester Creek at the upper end of a widening in the creek known as Lenni Lake. The widening was created by Lenni Dam, which once served the mill community of Lenni. The village clusters along Lenni Road on both sides of its bridge over Chester Creek. Downstream from Lenni Road, Chester Creek forms the boundary between Aston Township to the southwest and Middletown Township, which is still to the northeast.

John Lundgren had a paper mill at Lenni on Chester Creek from 1798 until 1816. Lenni then became the farthest upstream of the seven major cotton mill communities that thrived in the Chester Creek valley between the 1830s and 1850s. Peter Hill established the first cotton mill at Lenni in 1825. He was a gentleman farmer and failed merchant, whose profligate ways led to his holdings at Lenni and Parkmount to be held in trust by his father-in-law Nathan Sellers. Hannah Sellers Hill, Nathan’s daughter and Peter’s wife, subsequently leased the Lenni Mills to Daniel Lammot, Jr., a merchant of French descent who was connected to the du Pont family of the Brandywine Valley. Daniel Lammot’s daughter Margareta married Eleuthére Irenée duPont’s son Alfred Victor duPont. The Lenni Mills were a major center of cotton spinning and weaving prior to the Civil War.
The Lammot family belonged to the Church of New Jerusalem. The family of Nathan Sellers and the Hills were Swedenborgians.

Sources also indicate that the prior name for Lenni was Taylor Town. It was renamed in 1825 by William Martin who also is mentioned as the owner of Lenni Mills at that time.
During the Great Flood of 1843, the water at Lenni surged eighteen feet above its normal level. On the morning of August 5, 1843, the lower Delaware River valley region was saturated by a nor’easter. This was followed in the afternoon by three hours of violently stormy weather at the headwaters of Chester Creek and its neighboring streams. There was continuous thunder and lightning. The upper Chester Creek valley received 16 inches of rainfall in those three hours. By 4:30 p.m. the creek had escaped its banks and rose one foot per minute. A sloping wall of water between five and ten feet high moved downstream at 20 miles per hour between the hours of 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. The water wall surged at the mill hamlets where dams burst. Bridges clogged with debris also blocked the water until they burst. Daniel Lammot lost his office at Lenni and several other buildings were swept away.

The Lenni Mill also suffered from a fire in 1845 and was subsequently rebuilt. Peter Hill died in 1851 and Daniel Lammot moved to the Brandywine Creek. For a time the mills in Lenni were leased to General Robert F. Patterson, who was mainly known for the notoriety of letting Confederate reinforcements get through at the First Battle of Bull Run.

In 1885, the mill was leased by Daniel Lees to produce yarns and plusses, and his estate continued production after his death. By 1906 the mills were vacant, but were occupied again by the Victoria Plush Mills in the first half of the twentieth century up until 1946. The surviving Lenni mill buildings are now part of an industrial complex belonging to Westlake Plastics, which has been at this location since 1947. Another business established around the same time (1945) in the industrial heart of Lenni was a manufacturer of insulation for electrical motors called Lenni Products.

The Maplewood Hotel on Lenni Road in the heart of Lenni was built in 1850 as a general store and residence. From 1879 until 1979 it was a hotel as well as a tavern, the latter function having experienced a brief interruption during Prohibition.
The Philadelphia and West Chester Railroad had a train station at Lenni, which was part of the SEPTA commuter line to West Chester until 1986. At the Lenni Station is a large outcrop of a rock formation which has been named the Confluence Gneiss, after the confluence of Chester Creek with the West Branch Chester Creek located a short distance downstream.
Lenni Station was also the northern terminus of the Chester Creek Branch Railroad, which operated between 1869 and 1972. From Lenni, the Philadelphia and West Chester Railroad heads east and out of the Chester Creek valley. After many years of effort, the bed of the Chester Creek Branch Railroad has been finally converted to the Chester Creek Rail Trail.
The Chester Creek Rail Trail was the vision of a dedicated bicycle enthusiast named Mike Fusco. After a long process of generating support, getting the cooperation of the municipalities, and preparing the trail, a section of the Chester Creek Rail Trail from Lenni to Knowlton was finally dedicated and opened in 2017. Sadly, Mike Fusco didn’t live long enough to see his dream realized.

After passing beneath the bridge for Lenni Road, Chester Creek flows between industrial buildings, including Westcott Electric on its western shore. As it does so, it bends so that its general direction of flow changes from southeasterly to a more eastward direction. Several hundred feet downstream, Chester Creek arrives at the sites of two more 19th century cotton mill communities. Parkmount is on the north bank, and Crozerville is on the south bank.

The first mill at Parkmount was a cotton spinning mill built by Peter Hill in 1829 for Samuel W. Riddle, who leased the Parkmount Mills before investing his money in the establishment of Glen Riddle. Samuel W. Riddle and his brother James came to Pennsylvania from Belfast in the early 1820s.

While Samuel remained a Presbyterian, James became a Methodist minister in the wake of a local revival inspired by the itinerant preacher James Caughey from England. In 1839 he married a Quaker lady and moved to the Leiper estate at Avondale on Crum Creek where he
opened a cotton mill. In 1844, he purchased the Gilpin estate at Kentmere on the Brandywine, opened a cotton mill, and built a Methodist chapel.

Meanwhile, Samuel first went to Crum Creek and rented a mill at Avondale from Thomas Leiper in 1827 before coming to Parkmount. By 1850, an Irish carpet weaver named George Callaghan was operating the Parkmount mills for Riddle, while Riddle himself developed operations at what became Glen Riddle, which he purchased in 1843. Parkmount Mills in 1850 wove cotton counterpanes and figured tablecloths on power looms, and woolen carpets on draw looms, which were large complex pre-Jacquard hand looms. There were a total of 18 looms at Parkmount Mills at that time.

The mills at Parkmount experienced fires in 1862 and 1887. The current buildings date from 1888. By 1870, Parkmount was the home of the Parkmount Mills Cotton & Woolen Company. Starting in 1955, the Aldon Rug Company operated in Parkmount. When it stopped operation in 1970, the last vestige of the once great textile industry in the Chester Creek valley came to an end.

Parkmount has been the location of the Diffusalite Company since 1970, originally owned by Hugh Aiken. It is a manufacturer of lenses for lighting fixtures. Also located in Parkmount are Applied Powder and Coatings, and a company called DGF Products. The latter produces filtration and coils for industrial and commercial uses.
The first mill in Crozerville was the Bottomley Brothers Woolen Mill established as early as 1811. John B. Duckett operated a paper mill here starting in 1826, but it failed by 1837 during the financial panic of that year. John P. Crozer bought the mill from the Bank of Delaware County in 1838, and thus founded the mill community of Crozerville which he expanded, and where he first created his fortune. Incidentally, Crozer was a director of the Bank of Delaware County from 1825 until 1862. Crozerville Mills was itself an expansion of John P. Crozer’s operation at the West Branch Mill. When Crozer moved into a house next to his new mill in Crozerville in 1839, he brought the Sunday school that had been meeting at the West Branch Chapel with him.

During the Great Flood of 1843, Chester Creek carved out a new course along the tail race of the mill at Crozerville.

In 1854, John P. Crozer had the Crozerville Methodist Episcopal Church built on Mount Road for his Methodist workers. He thought that Mt. Hope Methodist Church on Concord Road was too far away for them to go. Reverend George W. McLaughlin was its first pastor.
Crozerville United Methodist Church on Mount Road

Dutchman’s Fountains (left) on Mount Road

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
During its heyday in the 1850s, yarn was produced from over 7,000 spindles at the Crozerville Mills. From 1867 until 1881 the mills were operated by John P. Crozer’s son, Samuel A. Crozer while John P. Crozer lived in Upland near the mills he opened there. From 1881 until 1884, they were operated by his son-in-law, William H. Robinson, and then the mills closed. The mills opened again and had various operators between 1887 and 1902. They were called the Yorkshire Mills starting in 1905, but then they closed as textile mills for good in 1960.

The former Crozerville Mills are have been owned and occupied since 1961 by the Container Research Corporation, manufacturers of reusable shipping containers. Part of the complex is also occupied by the Res-Kem Corporation. The whole complex has been given the name Riddle Valley Industrial Park.

St. Francis de Sales Church

The St. Francis de Sales Church is located along New Road in Crozerville. It started out as a mission of the St. Thomas the Apostle Church in the 1880s. The church was dedicated in 1894 with Reverend Edward J. O’Reilly as its first pastor.
Chester Creek Cotton Industry

At the border area of Aston and Middletown Townships, Crozerville was one of seven mill hamlets that developed along the steep valleys around the confluence of the West Branch and main branch of Chester Creek. This is the most precipitous part of the fall line along the entire creek. The fall line is where a stream drops from a higher to a lower elevation. On the eastern seaboard that takes place where the hills of the Piedmont transition to the flat Coastal Plain. Along the three mile stretch of Chester Creek where the cotton mill hamlets were located the water drops from 120 feet above sea level to 30 feet above sea level. Most of these sites had
started out with mills of other kinds, but by the 1830s they were all centers of water-powered cotton textile production. Each cotton mill community also had machine shops, as well as grist mills and saw mills associated with them. Each mill seat included a dam, a headrace, a wheelpit, the mill itself, and a tailrace. Because of the steep terrain, headraces could be short and still accommodate the ten to twenty foot head of water necessary to power the mill wheels. The steep rocky terrain also kept this portion of the Chester Creek valley from being farmed. Along the West Branch of Chester Creek was the aptly named West Branch mill complex. Crozerville was at the confluence, and from north to south, Lenni, Parkmount, Glen Riddle, Rockdale, and Knowlton were all along the main branch of Chester Creek.

In the United States, the Industrial Revolution began in earnest in the 1820s when water-powered automated factories for the spinning and weaving of cotton began to be profitable. By the 1790s in Great Britain, the power loom invented by Edmund Cartwright was working in tandem with James Hargreaves’ spinning jenny that was invented a decade or so earlier. This technology was imported to the United States, but the American textile mills that had gotten started around the turn of the nineteenth century failed because of the resumption of cheaper British imports when the War of 1812 ended. Finally, a new tariff was imposed on British imports in 1824 so that American textiles could compete. To build the new industry, early entrepreneurs bought up old grist mills, saw mills, paper mills, and iron forges and converted them into textile mills. The creek valleys of southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware were a center for this new industry along with Lowell, Massachusetts and Paterson, New Jersey. The early textile mills along the Pennsylvania creeks and the Brandywine were smaller operations than the ones farther north. They were not heavily capitalized at first and tended to be financed as partnerships by friends and relatives from profits made from other enterprises. Because of the smaller amounts of capital and the use of the mills for prior purposes, the cotton mills were smaller along Chester Creek than in other parts of the country. The spinning and weaving often took place in separate buildings.

Self-contained mill villages grew up around each mill seat. Multi-family worker’s houses were built close to the mill, usually along a road next to the stream. A store, a school, and a church were built nearby to meet most material and spiritual needs. Farther up the valley slopes were situated the slightly larger foreman’s and mill operator’s houses, and at the very top with a grand view over everything was the mansion of the mill owner and his family. This hierarchical and patriarchal commercial society was built on trust. For the owners, faithfulness to contractual obligations is what defined a real man. The family was the cornerstone economic unit at all levels. For the owners, family connections were important sources of capital and the continuity of ownership. For the mill workers, families provided income from all the cumulative labor that could be provided, from children to the parents, to any live-in grandparents, who were usually widowed. A member of the family also had to stay home to take care of the children who were too young to work, but that workless period was very short for each child.

Major players in this emerging Chester Creek textile industry were mill owners John P. Crozer, Samuel Riddle, Daniel Lammot, and Richard Smith. The cotton they used as raw material came into the port of Chester mainly from slave plantations of the Piedmont region of Georgia and the Carolinas. They spun and wove it in their factories to produce coarse cloth, mainly for work clothes, sleeping clothes, flannel underwear, ticking, table cloths, calicos, and muslin. Finer quality cotton textiles at the time were still mainly produced in Great Britain. Labor in the Chester Creek cotton mills was for the most part provided by immigrant families from England and northern Ireland.
The early nineteenth century was the time of the Second Great Awakening, when renewed religious enthusiasm spread among those who reacted against the Enlightenment era emphasis on reason as the core of human values and progress. The Smith family were evangelical Episcopalians, and John P. Crozer was an evangelical Baptist. They, in particular, strived to create self-contained paternalistic mill villages in which the spiritual and material well-being of every level of the community was cultivated by institutions they created. They did this through founding Sunday School societies, and building churches such as the Smith’s Calvary Episcopal Church in Rockdale and Crozer’s Baptist Chapel near West Branch. Crozer also built a church so his Methodist workers wouldn’t have to travel very far, the Crozerville Methodist Episcopal Church on Mount Road.

Crozerville lies right where Chester Creek meets its West Branch.
West Branch Chester Creek

Dilworthtown Crossing

West Branch Chester Creek originates on the east side of U.S. Route 202/322 and south of Dilworthtown Road, at the Shoppes at Dilworthtown Crossing in Thornbury Township, Delaware County. The source of the stream lies between Hellman Auto Service Center and a Super Wawa convenience store.

Access road to the Dilworthtown Crossing Super Wawa above the West Branch headwaters
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

West Branch Chester Creek flows towards the west through a wetland of *Phragmites* reeds on its way towards the Cherry Creek subdivision.
Cherry Creek Subdivision

West Branch Chester Creek passes through the middle of the Cherry Creek subdivision, a residential development of large, multi-gabled, oatmeal-colored, single family homes with high-pitched roofs. The subdivision incorporates an original farmhouse and renovated barn that are situated along the two main intersecting loop streets of the development, Cherry Farm Lane and Old Barn Drive. The West Branch Chester Creek bisects the larger of the two loops as it flows parallel to a cul-de-sac called West Branch Lane. Within this loop formed by Cherry Farm Lane is also a wooded open space.
The Old Barn, Cherry Creek subdivision

West Branch Chester Creek in the Cherry Creek subdivision

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
West Branch Chester Creek makes a slight bend towards the southeast and enters the community of Brinton Lake.

Brinton Lake

West Branch Chester Creek was dammed to form Brinton Lake. There are many architecturally unique dwellings among the Brinton Lake community along the west shore of the water, which was originally a mill pond. Access to the community is from Brinton Lake Road. On the other side of the road along the West Branch were once the grist and saw mills of Caleb Brinton. The Brinton Lake Wetland is a stopover for migratory birds.
North on Brinton Lake Road, just south of where it meets Dilworhtown Road, is located Thornbury Township, Delaware County’s most charming and whimsical parks, Palmer Arboretum. Palmer Arboretum includes a boxwood labyrinth, two giant Adirondack chairs, a hopscotch board, a wishing well, and a pavilion that houses a cross-section of the former
National Champion white ash. The tree once stood on the grounds of Thornbury Elementary School at the corner of Creek and Gradyville Roads. These features are surrounded by a grove of river birch and sweet gum.

Palmer Arboretum boxwood labyrinth in its early stages
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Shrine to former White Ash champion, Palmer Arboretum
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Shortly after West Branch Chester Creek flows under Brinton Lake Road, it then passes under Mill Road. To either side of the creek between these two roads was located the grist and saw mills of Caleb Brinton.

At Mill Road, West Branch Chester Creek crosses the boundary from Thornbury Township, Delaware County to Concord Township.

Concord Township was incorporated in 1683.

Just south of Mill Road, West Branch Chester Creek is joined from the southwest by a small unnamed tributary that has as its source a series of water traps on the golf course of the Concord Country Club.

As it continues to flow towards the east, West Branch Chester Creek skirts the northern edge of the adjoining Brinton Lake Corporate Center, Shoppes at Brinton Lake, and the Concordville Industrial Park. The largest structure in this complex is the Costco Wholesale big box store. Other major structures include the warehouses of Cott Beverage, Two Men and a Truck, and 98 Sports. This is also the locations of the Oasis Family Fun Center and the Sky Zone Trampoline Park, in juxtaposition with the Crozer Medical Plaza at Brinton Lake and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Specialty Care & Surgery Center.

The southern edge of the industrial park and shopping center is along U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike, and the eastern edge is along Thornton Road. Just before West Branch Chester Creek reaches Thornton Road in the northeastern corner of the Concordville Industrial Park, was the site of Concord Mills, which date from 1695.
Thornton

North on Thornton Road at its intersection with Glen Mills Road is the crossroads village of Thornton, located within Thornbury Township, Delaware County. Thornton served as an overnight rest stop between the port cities of Chester and Philadelphia and the farming regions of western Chester County and Lancaster County. As was typical for such crossroads villages, wheelwright, blacksmith, and livery services were available. Accommodations in Thornton were provided at the “Yellow House,” an inn built around 1750 by George Gray. Both the British forces and members of the Continental Army when the inn was used as a field hospital following the Battle of the Brandywine. One of the longest continuously running post offices in the nation is hosted in the Yellow House. John King served as its first post master after it was opened in 1829. The Yellow House has also served as a cloth factory, village market, antique shop, artist’s studio, and community center.

The barn and stables associated with the Yellow House have been converted to a restaurant. The barn had an extraordinarily large hay mow to accommodate the needs of the many horses, oxen, and cattle that travelers and drovers brought into the village for an overnight stay during their journey.
The barn and stables of the Yellow House, with more recent additions

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

The village of Thornton was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

A view of the historic village of Thornton

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
To the west of the village of Thornton, the Bethlehem United Methodist Church is located at the intersection of Glen Mills and Westtown Roads. The church is built of the local serpentine stone. The Bethlehem Church Woods is a mature beech-dominated woodlot.

About a quarter mile after the West Branch Chester Creek passes under Thornton Road, it is joined from the north by a small tributary called Deborahs Run.
Deborahs Run

Deborahs Run originates in a woodlot in Thornbury Township, Delaware County, located between Glen Mills Road and the George W. Hill Correctional Facility.

George W. Hill Correctional Facility

The George W. Hill Correctional Facility is Pennsylvania’s only privately-run prison, and is under contract with Delaware County. It is located in Concord Township. Deborahs Run flows through its grounds, and is impounded by a dam that conveys a service road to the back of the prison.

The prison is named for George W. Hill, who became its superintendent in 1995 when the Delaware County Prison, also known as Broadmeadows, was privatized. He had been a member of the Springfield Police Department since 1955, and its chief from 1975 until 1988. At that point he was elected sheriff of Delaware County, a post he held until appointed warden at the Delaware County Prison in 1992.

Delaware County council members were preparing to build a new prison at the site in the mid-1990s for $95 million. At that point, Delaware County Prison Board chairman Charles Sexton and Delaware County councilman Wallace Nunn convinced the county council that building a private prison could save millions of dollars. In 1995, Wackenhut Corrections Corporation of Florida was selected as the contractor which built the prison for $55 million. Its large capacity allowed it to take prisoners from Chester and Philadelphia Counties for a fee. In 1999, the new prison was named for its superintendent George W. Hill, who was battling cancer. It was noted with admiration that his illness did not interfere with his ability to oversee the success of the transition to a private prison facility. He retired in 2008 and died in 2010.

The Wackenhut Corrections Corporation became the GEO Group, Inc., but then in 2008 Community Education Centers, Inc. of West Caldwell, New Jersey took over management of the prison.
Deborahs Run flows south into Concord Township and through the residential subdivision of Twin Creeks at Mendenhall, where it flows under Trimble Road.
Deborahs Run enters the West Branch Chester Creek within the Twin Creeks at Mendenhall subdivision just north of U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike.

Just below the confluence of the two streams was once located the sawmill belonging to E.S. Leedom.

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Baltimore Pike

The West Branch Chester Creek flows under U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike.

After passing under U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike, the West Branch Chester Creek enters the Newlin Grist Mill Park.

Concord Creek

At the west end of the Newlin Grist Mill Park, the West Branch Chester Creek is joined by Concord Run. Concord Creek was formerly known as Webb Creek.

The source of Concord Creek is along PA Route 491, Naamans Creek Road, at the boundary between Concord and Bethel Townships, and the divide between the Chester Creek and Naamans Creek watersheds.

As Concord Creek meanders in a northerly direction, it passes under Shavertown Road. About a quarter mile east on Shavertown Road is the Darlington Fine Arts Center.

Elam Woods

Concord Creek flows through Elam Woods, a fragment of mature American beech-dominated forest with some large tulip poplar trees where two source tributaries converge near Smith Bridge Road. To the west of the woods is the Elam subdivision.

Concord Creek flows under Smith Bridge Road. One mile to the east on Smith Bridge Road is the location of the Concord Township Park, the Rachel Kohl Community Library, and the historic Pierce-Willits House (ca. 1744), home to the Concord Township Historical Society.

Pierce-Willits House

Francis P. Willits was born in 1856 and was a graduate of the Maplewood Institute. He purchased the Pierce residence in 1885. He began the commercial mushroom industry in the area by importing spores from England in 192. His brother-in-law Jacob F. Styer incorporated mushrooms in his nursery business which was located on U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike. The house was in the family until 1975, when it was acquired by Concord Township.
1927 concrete bridge carrying Smith Bridge Road over Concord Creek, engineered by George Wright
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Concord Creek at Smith Bridge Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Marrow Tract Subdivision

After passing under Smith Bridge Road, Concord Creek passes through a wooded corridor associated with the Marrow Tract subdivision of single family homes.

Fox Hill Farm Subdivision

To the east is the Fox Hill Farm subdivision of densely clustered townhouses. Concord Creek bends widely and skirts the northern portion of this subdivision and then flows under Temple Road.

Concord Creek at Temple Road

A quarter mile south on Temple Road is a cul-de-sac called John Meyers Circle. There is a small pond in this neighborhood, which could be the remains of an old mill pond. Records indicate that in this vicinity a John Myers had a saw mill and Thomas Marshall had a bark mill.

Garnet Valley School District

East of this neighborhood is located the Concord Elementary School, which has as its immediate neighbors to the south the Garnet Valley Elementary School and the Garnet Valley Middle School. On the other side of Smith Bridge Road and a little farther to the east is the Garnet Valley High School. The offices of the Garnet Valley School District are housed in an addition to the Garnet Valley Elementary School. The Garnet Valley School District educates the public school students of Concord and Bethel Townships and the Borough of Chester Heights. First through fifth graders of Bethel Township attend Bethel Springs Elementary School, but all other public school students in the district attend school within this centrally located education complex along Smith Bridge Road. All kindergarteners attend Concord Elementary School, as well as first and second graders from Concord Township and Chester Heights Borough. Garnet Valley Elementary School educates the third through fifth graders.
Spring Valley Business Park

After it flows under Temple Road, Concord Creek skirts the southern margin of the Spring Valley Business Park. In the first quarter of the twenty-first century, this business park has included a State Farms Insurance operations center, offices of the accounting firm Deloitte, offices of LaFrance Corporation, a Marriott Residence Inn, and the Covenant Fellowship Church. Access to the business park is from its northern and eastern sides along Spring Valley Road and along U.S. Route 322, Conchester Highway by way of Fellowship Drive.

Concord Creek flows under U.S. Route 322, Conchester Highway.

Concord Township Sewer Authority

On the other side of the highway, Concord Creek flows past the sewage treatment plant of the Concord Township Sewer Authority.

Concord Creek is joined by a small tributary that enters from the west and originates in the Concordville Town Centre.

Concordville Town Centre

The Concordville Town Centre is a commercial shopping development that is slightly offset to the west from the original center of Concord Township. Concordville Town Centre, towards the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century included a Home Depot, PetSmart, Target, Acme Market, Staples, Five Below, Marshalls, DSW Designer Shoe Warehouse, and the restaurants Outback Steakhouse, Bertucci’s, and Shere-e-Punjab.

A few hundred feet after its confluence with the unnamed tributary, Concord Creek flows under Concord Road. A half mile to the northeast along Concord Road, at the triangle where it converges with Baltimore Pike and Thornton Road, is the original crossroads village of Concordville and town center for Concord Township. The old Concord Friends Meeting House is located here along Concord Road. It is next to the Concord Community Center, and the Concord Township Offices are nearby and accessible from Thornton Road.

Concord Friends Meeting House

The Concord Monthly Meeting was organized in 1686, and included Friends from Concord, Bethel, Aston, Chichester, and Birmingham Townships. A site was leased from John Mendenhall starting in 1697 for the building of a meeting house at Concord and Thornton Roads. His perpetual lease was for one peppercorn a year. A log structure was built in 1710, and replaced by one of stone in 1728. Classes for children were held beginning in 1717, but a separate schoolhouse wasn’t built until 1779. The meeting house was a sanctuary for wounded soldiers after the Battle of Brandywine. After a fire in 1788, the meeting house was rebuilt and enlarged.
The congregation split during the Hicksite controversy in 1827. By 1837, the Orthodox Friends built a separate meeting house nearby on the same plot of land. When the members resolved their differences, everyone moved back into the original meeting house. In 1920, the former Orthodox Friends Meeting House was rented by the Concord Grange #1141, who purchased the building in 1945. The Grange served as a cooperative purchasing and retail sales agent for the local farmers who were members. The last meeting took place in 1978, as the nature of the township made its final transition from rural to suburban. The building was sold to the township to become the Concord Township Senior Center.

Concord Community Center

The Concord Community Center was originally the gymnasium of the Maplewood Institute, which was a co-ed boarding school founded by Joseph Shortlidge in 1862. The gymnasium building was built in 1898. Starting in 1909 the institute only accepted boys and young men. The buildings subsequently came into the possession of Church of Our Savior, but were sold to Concord Township in 2005.

Concord Township Offices

The Concord Township Offices are visible from U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike, but are accessible from Thornton Road. The offices are in the former buildings of the Dante Orphanage. The orphanage was started in 1920 by the Sons of Italy to care for Italian World War I orphans. It later became a home for single parent families run by the Immaculate Heart of Mary order of nuns until it closed in 1968. That was when it was purchased by the Church of Our Savior.
Less than a mile to the southeast along Concord Road is St. John’s Episcopal Church. The original log church was built in 1702 on land donated by John and Margery Hannum. In the 1690s, George Keith led a movement to return Quakers to some of the Church of England’s practices, such as baptism. The Hannums of Concord were influenced by this movement and were baptized. John Hannum was the township constable and also operated the Buck Tavern out of his home. Queen Anne donated the pewter Holy Communion service in 1707. The congregation also received donations from the Concord Friends Meeting and from the Catholic mission station at Ivy Mills. Concord was living up to its name as a center of religious toleration in what came to be referred to as the “Toleration Triangle.” The original log structure received a brick addition in 1769, and was replaced in 1790. The current Greek revival building was built in 1844.
Bridge over Concord Creek on Concord Road
Il Grinaio Italian Restaurant is the large green building on the right side of the road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Concord Creek at Concord Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Shortly after it passes under Concord Road, Concord Creek enters the Newlin Grist Mill Park where it joins West Branch Chester Creek.

![Dam on Concord Creek in Newlin Grist Mill Park](image1)

*Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012*

![Confluence of Concord Creek with West Branch Chester Creek](image2)

*Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012*

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Newlin Grist Mill Park

The Newlin Grist Mill is a fully operational 18th century grist mill that is open for tours. The surrounding park has other historic buildings and amenities for picnicking and hiking and other recreational activities.

Nathaniel Newlin built the original mill at this location in 1704. He and his wife Mary Mendenhall came to Pennsylvania from Liverpool in 1683. Nathaniel was the son of Nicholas Newlin, a prominent landowner of the Mount Mellick Meeting in Queen’s County, Ireland who...
also had emigrated. Nathaniel Newlin established his grist mill on West Branch Chester Creek downstream from two mills established by his father in 1683 and another mill owned by his wife’s brother. Nathaniel became a representative in the Pennsylvania Provincial Council from 1685 until 1687, and also served as a judge in the Chester County courts.

Nathaniel Newlin had a grandson, also named Nathaniel, who in the 1730s doubled the size and grinding capacity of the mill. He added a second waterwheel and had two sets of millstones operating simultaneously. At that time, the mill was called the Concord Flour Mill. The mill ground wheat, corn, oats, buckwheat, and rye.

The grist mill continued to be operated by the Newlin family until 1764. In that year it was leased to William Trimble, who bought it outright in 1817. The mill was then sold to Samuel Newlin Hill in 1860, and so came back into the possession of a Newlin descendant. The Hill family owned it until 1941. After some successional squabbling, commercial mill operations were finally abandoned and the property was sold to a Daniel Conlan. The mill languished. In 1958, though, the mill and surrounding land was sold to Earl Mortimer Newlin, an eighth generation descendant of the original mill founder Nathaniel Newlin. He created a non-profit foundation and historic park in 1962. After a restoration of the interior structure, gears and other machinery, the mill was back as the only original water-powered grist mill from the colonial era still in operation.
The central feature of the park is the timber and stone grist mill, of course. There is also the miller’s house, a typical stone structure of its era. It was built in 1739 by the grandson of Nathaniel Newlin. It has two bedrooms upstairs, and a “keeping room” and a kitchen downstairs. There is a beehive oven outside the kitchen fireplace.
A small old bank barn behind the miller’s house and mill was moved from its original location onto a former barn site in 1986. It’s also referred to as the granary and library.

A small stone springhouse was built in 1710. For a brief period it was inhabited by Thomas Marshall and his wife Edith Newlin, a daughter of Nathaniel and Mary Newlin. The springhouse was donated to the Newlin Grist Mill Park in 1977 by John and Marianne Wolf at which time it was rebuilt.
A log cabin was built in 1965 to accommodate many uses for visitors over the years, including receptions, meetings, dances, and other events. Its logs are hand hewn, and it has a ten-foot fireplace.
A replica of an 18th century blacksmith shop was built of local stone. Its period tools were donated by the McKinley Forge of the nearby village of Chelsea, where the family business has been in operation for over 300 years.

Newlin Grist Mill Park also includes the Trimble House, a fieldstone manor house begun in 1739 by William Trimble. The date stone over the entrance reads 1742, which must have been
the date it was completed. William Trimble operated a saw mill downstream as well as other mill operations at different times. He operated the Newlin grist mill starting in 1764 and became its owner in 1817. It belonged to his heirs until 1860.
Sluice gate on head race below dam on Concord Creek, Newlin Grist Mill Park
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Head race from Cheyney Road with fish hut on right
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Within the Newlin Grist Mill Park is a portion of the defunct Octoraro Branch of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad. The Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad was chartered in 1854 to connect Wawa Station to a junction of the North Central Railway north of Baltimore. The railroad line was only completed to the bank of the Susquehanna River at Rowlandsville near Port Deposit. Construction started in Concordville in 1855. By 1859 the section from Wawa to Chadds Ford was complete. The railroad extended to Oxford in 1860, to Rising Sun, Maryland in 1865, and finally to Octoraro Junction in Rowlandsville in 1868. In 1881, the rail line was consolidated with the West Chester & Philadelphia Railroad, which was controlled by the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad. This entity was succeeded by the Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington Railroad in 1916, but by then, everything was really controlled by the Pennsylvania Railroad. Passenger service ended on Octoraro Branch in 1935. The rail line was abandoned south of Catora,
Maryland in 1961 and became unusable north of the Brandywine River from being washed out during the flooding of 1971 and 1972.
After leaving Newlin Grist Mill Park, the West Branch Chester Creek continues to flow to the southeast. Polecat Road closely follows its route until the road ends at Ivy Mills Road.

Trimble Mills

In addition to a saw mill, William Trimble operated a paper mill on West Branch Chester Creek from 1799 to 1820. Trimble also had the farthest upstream cotton mill in the Chester Creek watershed, but it failed in 1816 due to the British flooding the textile market. John D. Carter was managing the mill at the time, and afterwards moved on to operate a more successful venture at Knowlton. After the cotton mill failure, William Trimble went back to operating a saw mill and grist mill at Trimble Mills. The grist mill of course is better known as the Newlin Grist Mill. It also appears that on some maps the Trimble Mills are called the Felton Mills, perhaps after a subsequent owner.

Along Polecat Road is preserved a two-family tenant house for workers at the nearby Trimble Mills. The house was built sometime prior to 1750. It is known as the Polecat Road House, and was donated to Concord Township in 1967.

Ivy Mills

Along the West Branch Chester Creek where Polecat Road meets Ivy Mills Road was located an important early paper mill. Thomas Willcox established Ivy Mills in 1729. It was the second paper mill built in British North America, following the establishment of the Rittenhouse paper mill on the Wissahickon Creek in 1690. Ivy Mills supplied paper for Benjamin Franklin’s publications, for the production of Continental currency, and for official Congressional and State documents.
Thomas Wilcox had come from Ivy Bridge in Devonshire. According to legend he brought with him a sprig of vine that suggested the name Ivy Mills. Thomas and Elizabeth Willcox were Roman Catholics. Their home was a regular stop for Jesuit priests travelling from Maryland to Philadelphia. Masses were held at their house from 1729 until 1852, when St. Thomas’s Church was built nearby. A resident priest dwelt in a small house on their property until a parish house was added on the church property. Their parish was the first in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.
England prohibited the colonies from printing paper money in 1764. When the War of Independence came, they attempted to flood the colonies with counterfeit bills. To have captured the Ivy Mills paper molds would have been very advantageous. Mark Willcox had promised to throw them in the mill pond if the enemy came, but in 1778 the Pennsylvania council of safety had issued an order to Colonel Boyd to seize a mold that had the word Pennsylvania marked on it in 24 places.

In 1836 the Willcox family expanded their paper mill operations to the site of the old Sarum Forge farther north on the main stem of Chester Creek, and renamed the location Glen Mills. At that site they produced paper with innovative anti-counterfeiting measures for the national currency. The paper mill at Ivy Mills remained in operation until 1866.
St. Thomas the Apostle Church

The St. Thomas the Apostle Church developed from the services that were held at St. Mary’s Chapel in the mansion of the Willcox family at Ivy Mills. The ground was purchased in 1852 and the church completed in 1856. The first pastor was Reverend Joseph Maugin. St. Thomas the Apostle Church is along Valley Brook Road in Chester Heights Borough, just a little more than half a mile to the northeast from Ivy Mills at the end of Ivy Mills Road.
After West Branch Chester Creek flows under Ivy Mills Road, it continues to flow towards the southeast.

A little less than three-quarters of a mile downstream, West Branch Chester Creek passes under Smith Bridge Road. The concrete bridge at this point is called Hibbard Bridge No. 21, and looks like many of the other county bridges that were built in the 1920s. Smith Bridge Road actually leads to Smith Bridge over the Brandywine Creek about ten miles to the southwest.
Hibbard Bridge No. 21 on Smith Bridge Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

West Branch Chester Creek from Hibbard Bridge No. 21 on Smith Bridge Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
A quarter mile downstream from Smith Bridge Road, the West Branch Chester Creek enters the Borough of Chester Heights. In about another quarter mile it takes an abrupt turn south along Valley Brook Road and passes under Mattson Road, where that road comes to a T at Valley Brook Road. The concrete county bridge that carries Mattson Road over West Branch Chester Creek was built in 1930, engineered by George Wright. One of the two bronze plaques on the bridge refers to it as “Matson Bridge No. 12 on Matson Road over West Branch Chester Creek.”
Downstream from Mattson Road, West Branch Chester Creek continues to follow beside Valley Brook Road for about another quarter mile. Green Creek enters from the southwest.
Green Creek

Green Creek’s water quality classification was upgraded from Trout Stocking Fisheries to Cold Water Fisheries-Migratory Fisheries in 1995 as the result of a request by the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association to the PA Department of Environmental Protection.

Bethel Township

Green Creek’s source is in Bethel Township, Delaware County at a pond in the center of patch of woodland next to the Pond View residential subdivision. The two opposite sides of the woodland are surrounded by a petroleum tank farm. The ball fields of Bethel Community Park are situated between the petroleum tanks and the housing development. On the other side of Foulk Road, PA Route 261, is Bethel Springs Elementary School.
Green Creek flows towards the northeast and flows beneath Bethel Road near the Bethel Township Building.

Garnet Mine Road Woods

Green Creek flows through the Garnet Mine Road Woods, a mixed mesophytic woods dominated by American beech and tulip poplar. The woods are bordered by the residential subdivisions of Long Meadow and Northbrook. Just south of Garnet Mine Road, Green Creek is joined by an unnamed tributary that flows into it from the northwest.
The unnamed tributary originates in the Concord Hunt subdivision in Concord Township.
The unnamed tributary of Green Creek passes just south of Garnet Valley High School at Bethel Road. It is joined by another small unnamed tributary which joins it from a woodland to the southwest. The combined waters flow beneath the intersection of Bethel and Featherbed Roads and enter Clayton Park.

Clayton Park is the largest of Delaware County’s parks and comprises 170 acres of Concord and Bethel Townships. It includes nature trails, picnic pavilions, four ball fields, and a
nine-hole golf course. The park is named for Nelson D. Clayton, whose widow donated the initial 59-acre parcel of farmland to the county in 1957. In subsequent years, the county acquired adjacent properties to obtain the full 170 acres of the park. The woods in the park consist of mature American beech and sugar maple. In addition to all its amenities, a high-voltage transmission line bisects the park from west to east.
After the unnamed tributary flows through the length of Clayton Park, it joins Green Creek just south of Garnet Mine Road, back across the border in Bethel Township. Their combined waters flow under Garnet Mine Road and then under U.S. Route 322, Concheater Highway in rapid succession. Green Creek then flows into Concord Township. It continues to
flow towards the northeast and passes under Concord Road. The concrete county bridge dates from 1921. To the west is the densely built Riviera at Concord subdivision.

Damaged bridge over Green Creek at Concord Road looking towards west and east
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Green Creek at Concord Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Green Creek is joined by another small unnamed tributary that originates from the northwest at a pond just to the north of Mattson Road.

Green Creek enters the southern tip of Chester Heights Borough just west of Valley Brook Road and joins the West Branch Chester Creek.

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The West Branch Chester Creek flows beneath Valley Brook Road. The name of the bridge at this location is the Johnson Mill Bridge No. 11.

Along the West Branch Chester Creek at Valley Brook Road was the location of the grist and saw mills of Samuel F. Peters. The fact that the bridge is called the Johnson Mill Bridge
probably indicates that someone named Johnson owned the mills here at some point. There are some stone ruins, evidently of former buildings associated with the mills.

Ruins at the site of Peters Mills  Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Chelsea

About a half mile south on Valley Brook Road, where it meets Concord Road, Chelsea Road, and Foulk Road (PA Route 261), is the crossroads village of Chelsea in Bethel Township. It lies right at the divide between the Chester Creek and Naamans Creek watersheds. Green Creek flows through Concord Township just to the northwest of Chelsea.

Chelsea was known as Corner Ketch until the year 1856. It is the location of McKinley Blacksmith and SiteOne Landscape Supply.

Vintage buildings in the center of Chelsea  Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012
The West Branch Chester Creek enters Aston Township at the Johnsons Mill Bridge on Valley Brook Road.

**Aston Township**

Aston was first settled by English Quakers in 1682, but was known as Northley until 1687. Aston Township was incorporated in 1688. Its name had been changed by the township constable, Edward Carter, to hearken back to the town of his origin in Oxfordshire, England.

**Rolling Hills Industrial Park**

As it enters Aston Township, West Branch Chester Creek skirts the southern edge of the Rolling Hills Industrial Park. As it does so, it makes a wide bend as it turns from flowing in a southeasterly direction to a northeasterly direction. As it rounds the bend West Branch Chester Creek flows past such establishments as Russo’s Collision, Mulch Works Recycling, Inc., Philadelphia Electrical Equipment Company, and Folsom Tool and Mold Corporation. A variety of other similar businesses line the winding drives of the Rolling Hills Industrial Park, which has as its central thoroughfare Crozerville Road.

**Aston Mills**

At the edge of the Rolling Hills Industrial Park, West Branch Chester Creek flows under Birney Highway just north of the end of Mount Road. At the corner of Birney Highway and Mount Road is the Loyal Order of Moose Hall. South of Mount Road, Birney Highway changes its name to Aston Mills Road.

West Branch Chester Creek enters a wide floodplain at this location, which is known as Aston Mills. Aston Mills has also been called Tyson’s Mill, Llewelyn Mills, and Rhodes Mills as its ownership has changed through time.
West Branch Chester Creek continues to flow towards the northeast and passes between the Delaware County Technical High School towards the north and the Obdenaker trash truck depot to the south. Next to the Obdenaker facility is the small Lewis H. Fisher Memorial Park.

Lewis H. Fisher Memorial Park
The Lewis H. Fisher Memorial Park is named for an Aston Township commissioner who died in 2005. The park was dedicated in 2007, and was formerly called Eagle Field. There is a trail through the woods and fields, and benches along the creek.

![Restful place for contemplation, Lewis H. Fisher Memorial Park](image)

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Crozerville Woods

West Branch Chester Creek enters the Crozerville Woods, dominated by tulip poplar and red oak, with a ground cover of many Christmas Ferns.

West Branch Mill

The aptly named West Branch Mill was located along the West Branch Chester Creek. It was the first cotton mill owned and operated by John P. Crozer. Crozer was the son of a farmer and a devout Baptist. He got his start in milling on Crum Creek, where he rented a mill from Thomas Leiper. John P. Crozer purchased an abandoned paper mill on the West Branch of Chester Creek at a sheriff’s sale in 1824. It had been operated from 1790 until 1795 by Aaron Mattson. Crozer installed second hand cotton spinning equipment. He later expanded to mills at Crozerville and Knowlton, and then massively expanded his operations to Upland and Chester with the advent of viable steam power for large-scale manufacturing. His son Samuel managed the mills at West Branch and Crozerville while John P. Crozer lived in Upland during the latter part of his life.

John P. Crozer was a devout Baptist. He built the West Branch Chapel in 1836. It housed an active Sunday school. The building later became a public school. When Crozer moved to a house near his new factory nearby in Crozerville in 1839, he took the Sunday school with him.
The West Branch Mill burned during labor unrest in 1836. During the Great Flood of 1843, Chester Creek was 23 feet above its normal level at the West Branch Mill. A lot of the mill’s structure was destroyed. Following the flood, a new road was built past the mill. At some point, the West Branch Mill was one of the manufacturing sites for the Aldon Rug Company, which lasted until the flood from Hurricane Agnes in 1972.

The West Branch Mill in the early twenty-first century is called the Rockdale Industrial Center and is the location of businesses such as Carmen’s Auto Body and artist spaces belonging to Heron Studios (downstairs) and Heron Crest Studios (upstairs).
The twelve-foot high mill dam at the former West Branch Mill was removed in August 2010 through a cooperative effort among the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association, Aston Township, and the PA Fish & Boat Commission. Engineers from the URS Corporation were hired to conduct the dam removal. As of that date, the West Branch Chester Creek was restored to a free flowing stream for the first time since the colonial era.
Past the West Branch Mill, the West Branch Chester Creek continues to flow alongside Mount Road.

Poore Park

Along the shore of West Branch Chester Creek is Poore Park, just before the creek flows under New Road. The mill dam at this location on the creek was breached in December 2009. At the junction of New Road and Mount Road is the Aston Township World War I Memorial.
West Branch Chester Creek then flows between Flextron Industries on its right bank and the old Crozerville Mills on its left bank, which is now called the Riddle Valley Industrial Center.

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At the confluence of the West Branch and the main branch of Chester Creeks are located the Crozerville Mills on the Aston side and Parkmount Mills on the Middletown side.

After the confluence of the two streams, their combined waters flow towards the northeast past Parkmount and then bend towards the southeast to flow parallel with Mount Road. Chester Creek flows beneath an old railroad bridge that is now part of the Chester Creek Rail Trail. Immediately downstream from the bridge, Chester Creek passes the Glen Riddle Mills on its west bank.

Glen Riddle

Where Chester Creek flows under PA Route 452, Pennell Road is the location of Glen Riddle, which was originally named Pennsgrove. Samuel W. Riddle moved his operations from Parkmount and expanded them at Glen Riddle which he purchased in 1843. In 1854, a store and post office were built on the northeast corner of what are now Glen Riddle and Pennell Roads. That’s the year Riddle changed the location’s name from Pennsgrove to Glen Riddle to avoid confusion with the Pennsgrove, New Jersey post office. Riddle was nominally a Presbyterian, and a member of the Hibernian Society. Among all the cotton mill owners along Chester Creek, he could identify with his workers the most, since he shared the same origins in Northern Ireland with many of them. By 1850, the cotton mills at Glen Riddle were spinning on 4,980 spindles and weaving on 160 looms. It was Samuel W. Riddle’s son Samuel D. Riddle (born in 1861) who became the owner of famous Thoroughbred race horses Man O’War and War Admiral.
Pennsgrove had originally been the site of saw and grist mills owned by William Pennell. Pennell had purchased a 417 acre tract from Henry Grubb in 1753 to expand his holdings. Around that time, Pennell built a house on the north side of what is now Glen Riddle Road, just east of Palmer’s Lane. Upon his death in 1783, William Pennell was the highest taxpayer in Middletown Township. The property was bought by Nathan Sharpless in 1785. By 1815, Sharpless added a cotton mill to the woolen factory and fulling mill he had already established there.

By 1831, the land at Pennsgrove was owned by George W. Hill. At that point, there was already a cotton weaving mill run with power looms there, as well as a manufactory of the power looms themselves. They were operated by James Houghton and John Garsed. Richard Garsed, the son of John, would go on to become one of the principal manufacturers of textile machinery in the United States.

During the Great Flood of 1843, six people died as the floodwaters hit the workers’ tenement buildings. Among them were John Rhodes, his daughters Hannah and Jane, and his granddaughter MaryAnn Collingsworth.

Starting in 1843, Samuel W. Riddle owned and operated the mills for many decades. Riddle built the Glen Riddle Presbyterian Church on the north side of Parkmount Road in 1879. Services stopped in 1901. The church later burned, and is commemorated by a residential cul-de-sac called Burnt Church Court at its former site. There was a big fire in the mill in 1896, and around 1901 Riddle went bankrupt. In 1904 the estate of Daniel Lees purchased the property. It was the site of the R.E. Fernando Binz Carpet Corporation and the Glen Riddle Manufacturing Company, a producer of wadding.

In 1943, Glen Riddle was purchased by the Sunroc Corporation. It had been declared an essential industry during World War II and expanded to this location. Sunroc was founded as a bottled water company by Samuel Oliver Morrison in the Pine Ridge neighborhood of Nether
Providence Township in 1922. By 1935, water coolers were being manufactured there. The company began its government contract in 1936, but to the general public the name was synonymous with water fountains. The Sunroc Corporation left its facilities at Glen Riddle in 1993.

Above old Glen Riddle Mill – Creative Design & Manufacturing Ltd in former Sunroc building
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

At Glen Riddle, Chester Creek passes under PA Route 452, Pennell Road. Shortly after the bridge, the creek abruptly turns to the south and flows past an Aqua Pennsylvania drinking water outtake.

Bridge over Chester Creek at Pennell Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Chester Creek upstream from Pennell Road
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Sharp bend in Chester Creek downstream from Pennell Road; Aqua PA drinking water outtake on right
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
After Chester Creek turns towards the south after Glen Riddle, it flows parallel to Pennell Road, continuing to form the boundary between Aston Township to the west and Middletown Township to the east. Where Mount Road in Aston ends at Pennell Road is the location of the Novotni Brothers Paving Company.

Novotni Brothers Paving Company

The old quarry at the Novotni Brothers Paving Company on Mount Road in Aston is an exposure of rock that started out as magma within the chamber of an ancient volcano. It was part of a chain of volcanic islands that formed about 476 million years ago during the Ordovician Period and collided with ancient North America approximately 428 million years ago during the Silurian Period. The rock unit represented at the quarry has been named the Confluence Gneiss by West Chester University geologist Hal Bosbyshell. It is named for the nearby confluence of Chester Creek with its West Branch. Gneiss is a metamorphic rock that typically exhibits light and dark minerals in alternating bands. Much of the Confluence Gneiss does not show such banding, though, but there are banded layers in this unit that can be seen at other localities. The light and dark minerals at the Novotni Brothers quarry are distributed evenly and consist of hornblende and biotite mica and quartz and plagioclase feldspar. Other localities where the Confluence Gneiss is exposed also include large bodies of amphibolite, which represent ancient lava flows. Most of the Confluence Gneiss derived from magma that had never erupted. The Confluence Gneiss is part of a much larger rock unit called the Wilmington Complex, which as the name implies reaches all the way down to Delaware. The rocks of the Wilmington Complex are what remain of the ancient volcanic island chain that was somewhat similar to Japan, but is now fused to the Mid-Atlantic region of North America. The Confluence Gneiss is contiguous
with another unit within the Wilmington Complex, the Brandywine Blue Gneiss, which inspired the name of Wilmington’s minor league baseball team, the Blue Rocks.

Rockdale

A bit farther downstream is the site of Rockdale, when as a cotton mill hamlet had as its major owner Richard Somers Smith, a man of Swedish ancestry. He was the U.S. vice-consul to Sweden during the War of 1812. While in Gothenburg, he warned the U.S. merchant marine of the war having broken out before the British captains knew about it.

Rockdale included a nail factory owned by Henry Moore that had been part of Abraham Pennell’s Old Sable Forge. Moore acquired the nail factory in 1815 and built a cotton factory on the site in 1825. Richard S. Smith was a sales agent for Henry Moore’s nails. Moore got into a situation where he owed Smith a lot of money but couldn’t pay, except to grant Smith full ownership of the mills. The Smith family became summer residents in Rockdale following the cholera epidemic of 1832 in order to spend the more unhealthy months of the year outside of Philadelphia. They rented a mansion formerly owned by John P. Crozer. They were related by marriage, friendship, and business association to the du Ponts. After the War of 1812, Smith had been a commission agent for them.

By 1831, Henry Moore’s weaving mill in Rockdale was operated by John S. Phillips. When ownership passed to Richard S. Smith, Phillips continued to rent the cotton weaving mill and the associated stone farmhouse and greenhouse. John S. Phillips was a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences and one of the founding members of the Franklin Institute when it was established in 1824. He cultivated rare and exotic flowers in the greenhouse at Rockdale. He also was an inventor. As an older man he prepared the lighting and machinery for the 1864 Sanitary Fair in Philadelphia. He also donated his collection of 65,000 original European engravings to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The collection included works by Cranach, Dürer, Fragonard, and Hogarth. His grandfather, John Phillips, had made a fortune selling a cargo of slaves in the West Indies. He built a large mansion on Front Street in Philadelphia.
When the British occupied Philadelphia following the defeat of the Continental Army at the Battle of Brandywine in 1777, General William Howe requisitioned the Phillips mansion as his own residence. Young John S. Phillips watched his father William drub the son of General Howe during the occupation, which became a point of great family pride. The family lost its fortune during the war. John attempted to recover the family fortune through numerous enterprises through his life, including weaving cotton at Rockdale, through sugar refining with partner Joseph Lavering, and weaving cotton in Holmesburg with partner David Lewis, Jr.

Richard S. Smith and his family were evangelical Episcopalians. The established the Calvary Episcopal Church located along Mount Road in Rockdale. It was organized in 1834 and in 1836 held its first services. The name was suggested by Pennsylvania’s Episcopal Bishop Henry Ustick Onderdonk. The architect was John Henry Hopkins, who is credited with introducing Gothic architecture to the United States.

Rockdale Calvary Episcopal Church

After losing the mill after the financial Panic of 1837, Richard S. Smith became president of the Union Insurance Company.

In 1845, the mills at Rockdale were bought by an absentee manufacturer by the name of Bernard McCready. He added a spinning mill to the weaving mill that Phillips had operated. Thomas Blackburn managed the mills on McCready’s behalf.
The property was sold to Samuel W. Riddle in 1875. He manufactured tablecloths and other products there, but went out of business in 1901. In 1903, it was back in operation again as Penn Tapestry, owned by Joseph S. McElroy. He manufactured tapestry stripes and other upholstery novelties, as well as piece goods, couch covers, curtains, lap robes, and pillow slips. This operation closed in 1944.

The buildings were put to a new purpose in 1948, when it was opened by Ahrens, a lumber and mill work. The nail factory was destroyed in a flood in 1971. In 1983, the Centennial Home Center opened on the site of the Old Sable Forge. It is now King’s Mill, a banquet center, wedding venue, and catering business.

Prior to its ownership by Henry Moore and Richard S. Smith, Rockdale and the Old Sable Forge was originally owned by Abraham Pennell who built it in 1785. It consisted of a rolling and slitting mill and the nail factory which was built in 1809. There were structures on both banks of Chester Creek. There was also a grist mill associated with the property.

Thomas Odiorne bought the forge from the Pennell family. He belonged to a family related to the Willcoxes and the Moores, but was raised and educated in New Hampshire. He was a member of the Dartmouth College class of 1791. He also had industrial interests in New England as well as along French Creek in northern Chester County, Pennsylvania. To supply the nail factory, he probably obtained bar iron from Old Sarum Forge farther upstream along Chester Creek, or from an ironworks along French Creek.

Nathan Sellers then acquired Old Sable Forge. Before the War of Independence, he was the first American in the business of wire drawing and wire working. He based this work at the Old Sable Forge. He used fine brass wire to make flat paper molds for paper currency and other
paper products. His molds were used at Ivy Mills along West Branch Chester Creek and the Gilpin paper mills along Brandywine Creek.

The Sellers Family

Nathan Sellers was a member of the fourth generation of a major manufacturing family that emerged in southeastern Pennsylvania and had a major impact on the nation and the world. The primary focus of the family’s operations was in the Darby Creek watershed, but they also had early connections to the industrial operations in the Chester Creek watershed through Nathan Sellers.

Descended from the original settler of Upper Darby, the weaver Samuel Sellers of Derbyshire, for several generations the family’s innovations had major impacts on the course of industrialization. Samuel Sellers’ son Samuel Sellers, Jr. built the family seat of Sellers Hall. He invented a machine for twisting worsted, the combination of wool and cotton. Samuel, Jr.’s son John developed water power at the family estate to run a grist mill, a saw mill, and a tilt mill. He also developed a method of weaving wire to make sieves for grain. John was a friend of Benjamin Franklin, and was one of the original members of the American Philosophical Society.

In the fourth generation, Nathan Sellers and his brother David were the first to build a cotton mill in Delaware County, which was located in the Darby Creek watershed. Nathan then purchased for his daughter Hannah the mills at Lenni and Parkmount along Chester Creek that she and her husband Peter Hill leased to Daniel Lammot. Nathan Sellers used Old Sable Forge along Chester Creek for his pioneering work with wire.

Hannah’s cousin John, a son of John Sellers who was brother of Nathan and David, established Millbourne along Cobbs Creek, which during its existence was one of the most productive merchant flour mills. Hannah’s brother Coleman went into business with his sons, George Escol and Coleman, Jr. at Cardington at the confluence of Naylor’s Run and Cobbs Creek in Upper Darby in 1828, and developed carding, papermaking, and the manufacture of locomotives and other machinery. Coleman Sellers, Jr. gained fame for inventing the first stereoscopic movie camera in 1860 and going on in the 1890s to engineering the Niagara Falls hydroelectric plant. The Sellers family member with the biggest impact perhaps, was William Sellers, a son of the John Sellers who had established Millbourne. William Sellers built a machine tool factory and took out 90 U.S. patents. He was very influential in the implementation of industrial standardization. He established the U.S. standard for screw threads and promoted general industrial standardization through his presidency of the Franklin Institute. His standards and production efficiencies were adopted by the Pennsylvania Railroad, which went on to become the first modern corporation. He also organized the plant that provided structural steel for the Brooklyn Bridge.

Aston-Middletown Little League

Immediately downstream from Kings Mill, Chester Creek flows past the ball fields of the Aston-Middletown Little League, which are also on the west bank. Up until 1993, the Sunroc Corporation owned the Aston-Middletown Little League fields. When the company left the area that year, there were concerns about the fate of local baseball, but it persisted.
Pennell Road continues to run parallel to Chester Creek. On the west side of Pennell Road just south of the ball fields is an old farmstead up on the hillside that has been converted into offices for a variety of businesses.
Hillwood Farm

The Hillwood Farm dates from about 1785. In the first quarter of the 21st century, its buildings have housed the offices and classrooms of Makin’ Music and Rockdale Music, as well as the offices of Advanced Engineering, Inc.
Barnaby’s of America

A few hundred feet south on Pennell Road is located a Barnaby’s of America restaurant. The building appears to be an old mill built of local field stone. A simulated waterwheel on the north side of the building is a tribute to the mill heritage of the local Chester Creek valley, in any case. The waterwheel was built over a small stream. The stream is an unnamed tributary of Chester Creek which enters a culvert beneath Pennell Road at the edge of the restaurant parking lot and enters Chester Creek on the other side of the road. There is a large outcrop of banded gneiss on the north side of the parking lot.
Gneiss outcrop at Barnaby’s of America parking lot

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Chrome Run

A short distance downstream, Chrome Run joins Chester Creek from the northeast. Chrome Run drains a large part of central Middletown Township. It is named for the commercial deposits of chromium that were once mined along its valley. It was once known as Clark’s Run.

Penncrest High School

The source of Chrome Run is near Penncrest High School, the public high school of the Rose Tree-Media School District. The high school is named for Penncrest Farm. It was built on former fields of the Smedley family farm of that name.

Honeycomb Union AME Church

Across Barren Road and a bit southwest from the high school at Van Leer Avenue is the historic Honeycomb Union AME Church. It was founded in 1852 by James and Mary White, among others. James White had a dream of a gathering of sheep, which inspired him to start the congregation. Luke Smith was the first pastor. During the Civil War, three fugitive slaves took refuge there, and became members of the congregation. They had been scouts forced to serve the Confederate army as it approached Gettysburg. They took advantage of being on their own north of the Mason-Dixon Line and fled. Their names were George Smith, John Peters, and William Spradley. The latter served as secretary of the congregation for 60 years.

Services at the church were very intense at times. Members inspired with the Holy Spirit would hug the hot potbelly stove and step away unharmed. For many years songs were sung in Common Meter and rhymes were invented as the improvised songs were sung. Later the
congregation adopted Long Meter. They added an organ, but it was put in the back of the church. Many in the congregation considered it an instrument of the devil at the time, so the members of the choir sang with their backs to the altar and the congregation.

The Honeycomb Union AME Church was made from “honeycomb rock” which is a type of weathered serpentinite local to the area. The church underwent complete renovations in 1971, which may have been the time that the honeycomb rock was covered over with a layer of plaster.

Chrome Run flows south and passes under PA Route 352, Middletown Road. Just to the west on Middletown Road is located another historic house of worship, the Lima United Methodist Church.

Lima United Methodist Church

The first sanctuary of the Lima Methodist Church was built in 1835 on the north side of Middletown Road just west of what is now Oriole Avenue. Not long after the itinerant English minister James Caughey inspired a Methodist revival in the area, the local Methodist Society was formed in 1832 and met in the home of William Fox at the intersection of Middletown and Pennell Roads. James Riddle, the brother of Samuel W. Riddle, was a lay minister to the congregation in its early years. The sanctuary was enlarged in 1873, and then again in 1905. In 1908 a Sunday school wing was added on the east side. In 1960 a new sanctuary was added on the west side. In 1966, the old sanctuary was dedicated as the Merion Habbersett Memorial.

The Promenade at Granite Run

After passing under PA Route 352, Middletown Road, Chrome Run is forced underground beneath the Promenade at Granite Run, a town center development at the former site of the Granite Run Mall.

As early as 1875, the west side of this site was occupied by a quarry. By the early 1900s, the owner of the Lima Granite Quarry was Ben Fields. He had a house that he called “Idle Moments” at a location that was later occupied by the J.C. Penny store.

In 1929, Casper Nullen built extensive greenhouses and raised up to 17,000 cut roses at a time at the eastern end of this area. The greenhouses were located just north of the place where the Sears store was later built. By 1943, the business was called Nullen & Rolf. Later, Fred Muller took over the greenhouse business and raised cut roses exclusively for the Penn Fruit chain of supermarkets.

The Sears store was opened in 1973. It was one of the three anchor stores for the Granite Run Mall, which opened in its entirety during the following year. The other anchor stores were J.C. Penney and Gimbels. There was also an Acme Market and a Clover store, which had their own satellite buildings.

By the early 21st century, the indoor mall became a less and less popular and viable retail option here in the heart of Middletown Township. New owners demolished all but the anchor stores in order to build a town center design emphasizing walkability and mixed residential, retail, and office space. They called it The Promenade at Granite Run.
Baltimore Pike

Chrome Run flows under U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike.

Lima

A half mile from Chrome Run to the southwest on U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike is the crossroads village of Lima. It lies at the intersection of Baltimore Pike and Pennell Road, PA Route 452. In 1806, Philip Yarnall opened the Pineapple Tavern at this location. Its clientele was so rowdy that Lima acquired the nickname of “Wrangletown.” In an attempt to counteract this influence, the Sons of Temperance opened a Temperance Hall nearby on North Pennell Road in 1848. It was built by the congregants of the Lima Methodist Church. Later in the 19th century, the Temperance Hall was converted into a residence.

The Pineapple Tavern was purchased in 1908 by James J. Weathers, who opened a grocery store in the building. Larry Weathers used the adjacent barn as an auto repair shop starting in 1920. Two years later a building especially built for the repair shop was erected. Starting in 1933, Larry Weathers operated a Dodge dealership from his shop. In 1939, he had a showroom built. That was the same year that Baltimore Pike was widened to accommodate all the new automobile traffic that Larry Weathers was benefiting from. But, the road widening resulted in the demolition of the original Pineapple Tavern building. A new grocery store was built, which remained in operation until 1975. Meanwhile, in 1961 Larry Weathers, Jr. had taken over the Dodge dealership. He ran it until his son Larry Weathers III took over in 2007. Two years later, in 2009, Chrysler went bankrupt and closed 789 dealerships nationwide, including one of its oldest ones, Weathers Dodge. Larry Weathers III adapted to the situation, and reopened as a used car dealership called Weathers Motors.

The village of Lima is concentrated between the intersection of Pennell Road with Baltimore Pike, north to where Pennell Road ends at Middletown Road, PA Route 352. The last
house on the west side of Pennell Road where it meets Middletown Road is the former home of Dr. Samuel Trimble. He was a beloved country doctor who operated his private practice out of his house. He was born in 1843, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1866. He was also interested in natural history, and had the reputation for knowing Delaware County better than anyone else of his time.

The veterinarian Raymond Connelly lived nearby, in a house that has been since demolished. He lived from 1901 until 1959, and was an associate of Samuel D. Riddle. He was the owner of the Man o’War Remedy Company.

Riddle Hospital

After passing under U.S. Route 1, Baltimore Pike, Chrome Run emerges behind the Riddle Hospital. The hospital was founded at the bequest of Samuel D. Riddle. The property had previously belonged to the Hibberd family. Samuel Hibberd built a farmhouse here in 1784. Samuel D. Riddle bought the farm in 1909. He raised work horses at the site of the hospital. When he died in 1951 he left $2.5 million of his estate to found the hospital and the 72-acre former Hibberd property for its location. The hospital received its charter in 1956, broke ground in 1960, and finally opened in 1963. A southern wing was added in 1971 and a new west wing was added in 1982.

The hidden Chrome Run valley – the west entrance of Riddle Hospital with view towards Granite Run Mall
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Granite Drive

Downstream from the Riddle Memorial Hospital, Chrome Run flows along Granite Drive and passes under it on its way into a wooded portion of the property owned by the Williamson Free School for Mechanical Trades. Granite Drive goes past Toys R’Us and the offices of Physicians Weight Control to a quiet set of cul-de-sacs lined by condominiums built in the 1908s.
Chrome Run flows through the grounds of the Williamson Free School for Mechanical Trades, which was the site of a former chrome mine, hence the name of the stream. On the grounds of the school is the remains of a serpentine barrens. The serpentine bedrock is the source of the chromium ore. The chrome mine was on Jesse Hibberd’s farm, which he settled in 1836. The mine was active from 1856 until 1876. Afterwards, the mining of chrome became more commercially viable elsewhere. The source of chromium along Chrome Run was a placer deposit. In other words, the chromium was washed and sieved out of the sand and gravel.
The school was founded in 1888 by Isaiah Williamson, a Philadelphia merchant, philanthropist, and pioneer in vocational education. He wanted to provide financially disadvantaged young men the opportunity to become productive members of society. The 220-acre campus was purchased in 1889, the year that he died. The school opened in 1891, after the completion of the buildings which were designed by Frank Furness. The school offered three year programs in carpentry, bricklaying, patternmaking, and machine shop skills. The first graduates went into the workforce in 1894. In 1957, a fire destroyed all the shop buildings but one. The school’s future was in doubt, but it was saved when an agreement was made with the trustees of the Rodman Wanamaker estate. The John Wanamaker Free School of Artisans was created, which became an integral part of the Williamson Free School. The school became a post-secondary institution starting in 1961, and in 1972 began awarding Associates Degrees in Specialized Technology.
At the south edge of the Williamson Free School property, Chrome Run flows under the tracks of the former West Chester Railroad. There was once a Williamson School Station, and a railroad spur transported coal to the school’s power plant.

Samuel D. Riddle

Chrome Run flows under Glen Riddle Road through the midst of the former holdings of Samuel D. Riddle, the son of industrialist Samuel W. Riddle. Samuel D. Riddle was born in 1861. He expanded the family’s farm holdings in Middletown Township. By the time of his death in 1951, Samuel D. Riddle owned most of the land between Baltimore Pike and Mt. Alverno Road to the north and south, and between Pennell Road and Middletown Road to the west and east. He was most known for being the owner of the famous Thoroughbred race horses Man o’War and War Admiral, but also raised lots of other livestock. Work horses were raised on a farm of his at the site of the Riddle Memorial Hospital. A mule barn was on Howarth Road near Chrome Run. A dairy farm was at Glenloch. In 1918, Samuel D. Riddle purchased Man o’War as a yearling from August Belmont at Saratoga. From 1919 to 1920 the horse only lost one out of twenty-one races. He went out to stud in Kentucky from 1921 until he died in 1943. His most famous son was War Admiral, also owned by Riddle. War Admiral was the Triple Crown winner in 1937 and competed in the “Match Race of the Century” with Seabiscuit in 1938.
To the north of Glen Riddle Road and the railroad tracks is the residential subdivision of Riddlewood. Almost all the streets are named after Thoroughbred race horses. Riddlewood is located east of Pennell Road, south of Baltimore Pike, and along the western edge of Chrome Run.

On the south side of Glen Riddle Road at the site of the Turnbridge Apartments was the location of the Glen Riddle Casino, a popular spot for banquets and annual farmer’s banquets.

![Chrome Run in a wooded neighborhood in the middle of Middletown Township](image)

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Downstream from Glen Riddle Road, Chrome Run flows through a wooded area in the heart of Middletown Township. To the west is Howarth Road and to the east is Mystic Lane. Single family homes on large lots back up to the Chrome Run valley along both of these residential streets. Chrome Run makes a slight bend towards the southwest and flows under Howarth Road. A ford over the stream existed here until the late 1970s. Now there is a one-lane bridge.
At Howarth Road, a small unnamed tributary enters Chrome Run. It enters from the northeast after flowing past Olde House Lane. The other side of this street is where Chrome Run made a bend towards the southwest. The Olde House was built on the high ground above these two streams.

Chrome Run continues to flow towards the southwest parallel to Mt. Alverno Road. It reaches a large pond that results from a dam on Chrome Run at St. Andrews Drive. The pond is an attractive water feature in the Glenloch residential subdivision of Middletown Township. It might be related to one or more historic mills that existed in this vicinity. Morris Truman had a saw mill, which was erected sometime prior to 1777. By 1812 it was owned by Samuel Levis, but went out of use after this date.
Downstream from the saw mill was the Bottomley Woolen Mill. It was operated from 1810 until 1832 by James and John Bottomley. In 1832 it was taken over by James Miller and Robert Boyd, who made edge tools, bobbins, and paper at the mill. The building burned and went out of business in 1848.

Chrome Run continues to flow towards the southwest parallel to Mt. Alverno Road. It passes under the Chester Creek Rail Trail and enters Chester Creek on the other side from MGN Automotive along Pennell Road.

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Several hundred feet downstream from its confluence with Chrome Run, Chester Creek reaches Mt. Alverno Road after flowing behind Glen Mills Sand & Gravel and Snyder’s Ace Hardware & Home Center.

Snyder’s Ace Hardware & Home Center

Mt. Alverno Road

The covered bridge Mt. Alverno Road was replaced by a concrete bridge around the year 1920. In the early 18th century, before any kind of bridge was constructed here, the spot was known as Presbyterian Ford. This was the route that was taken by members of the Chester Creek mill communities to the Middletown Presbyterian Church, the first of its denomination in the area. It was established in 1729.

Chester Creek downstream from Mt. Alverno Road
On the east side of Chester Creek below Mt. Alverno Road was once a starch works. It was built around 1856 by William Barnett and ended production in 1921. The building burned down in 1933.

Chester Creek continues to flow towards the southeast. Towards the southwest is a hill formed by the valleys of Chester Creek to the east and north, West Branch Chester Creek to the west and the headwaters of Marcus Hook Creek to the south of Concord Road. The hill is traversed by Red Hill Road. On the hilltop are several landmark institutions, such as Neumann University and Mt. Hope Methodist Church.

Fisher’s Corners

Fisher’s Corners is a section of Aston Township where Aston Mills Road and Convent Road converge on Concord Road at a point where Concord Road bends towards both the southwest and the southeast. Aston Mills Road enters from the northwest and Convent Road enters from the northeast.

Neumann University

Neumann University was founded by the Sisters of St. Francis. It opened as the Our Lady of Angels College in the fall of 1965. It changed its name to Neumann College in 1980 when it became co-ed and in the early twenty-first century it became Neumann University when it added additional programs.

Neumann University and Sisters of St. Francis Convent
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
The university sits on land that was once part of the Dutton tract. In 1845, the land was purchased by an Episcopal clergyman named Benjamin S. Hethrington who established the Aston Ridge Seminary for Young Ladies. This institution went bankrupt in the following decade. The buildings and surrounding property was purchased by William Moroney in 1859, who then conveyed it to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. St. John Neumann was presiding as the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia at the time. The former Episcopal seminary became the Philadelphia Preparatory Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo until a new Catholic seminary was built in Overbrook and completed in 1871. The old seminary in Aston then came up for sale, and was purchased by the Sisters of St. Francis along with the surrounding 300 acres. The Sisters erected a new building for the Our Lady of Angels Convent in 1873 because the old seminary was too small. In 1965 they began educating girls after opening the Our Lady of Angels College next to the convent.

Mt. Hope Methodist Church

Aaron Mattson, the paper manufacturer who had a mill at what became John P. Crozer’s West Branch Mill, donated the land for the Mt. Hope Methodist Church in 1807. It was the first church building on record for Aston Township. Mt. Hope Methodist Church was enlarged in 1838 following the revivalist preaching of the itinerant Englishman James Caughey. The church was incorporated in 1860 and the parsonage constructed in 1877.

Near the Mt. Hope Methodist Church, Tryens Road goes off to the left from Concord Road. The first house on the left side of Tryens Road was built in 1684 and is the oldest house in Aston Township. It served as a station on the Underground Railroad. One of the escaped slaves who stopped here was a woman named Kitty who disguised herself as a servant. There was a trap door in the kitchen for hiding.
Crum Run

About a half mile downstream from its confluence with Chrome Run, Chester Creek is joined by another tributary that drains Middletown Township from the northeast, Crum Run.

Crum Run originates on the west side of PA Route 352, Middletown Road and flows towards the southwest under Copes Lane. It passes through a wooded area and skirts the edge of Indian Orchards to its south.

After flowing under Cricket Lane, it goes past the Hidden Hollow Swim Club, where it expands into a pond just before reaching Spring Valley Road. After flowing under Linville Road, Crum Run bends around the single family home along Clover Circle and then wends its way through Linvilla Orchards.

Crum Run at Linville Road

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Linvilla Orchards

Crum Run flows through Linvilla Orchards, one of the last working farms in Delaware County. On over 300 acres, an enormous variety of activities take place. The farm market and home center are surrounded by row upon row of fruit trees and berry bushes that are the site of seasonal “pick your own” forays. Over 40,000 Douglas fir and Canaan fir are available for “cut your own tree” visits during the Christmas season. Membership in swim clubs is an attractive option, where both casual fun and swim and dive team practice and competitions take place at the Knowlton and Hidden Hollow swimming pools. There are hayrides, a playground, ponds for fishing, barnyard animals to visit, indoor mini golf, and classes on a variety of topics such as gardening and cooking. Seasonal events have become favorite family traditions, especially Pumpkinland and various festivals when the fruit become ripe.
Linvilla Orchards once featured an 80-foot octagonal barn. It was a major landmark until it burned down in 2002. It was originally built in 189 as a cattle barn. Arthur Linville bought the barn and the surrounding farm in 1914. He began the business that grew to the grand enterprise that it is today by selling peaches from the porch of his house starting in 1918.

At the edge of the Linvilla Christmas tree farm, Crum Run passes under the Chester Creek Rail Trail and then enters Chester Creek.

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Pyramid Materials Quarry

Opposite the confluence with Crum Run is located the Aston Industrial Park, which Chester Creek embraces within a northeastern pointing meander bend. The industrial park is dominated by a quarry belonging to Pyramid Materials, a source of road aggregate. This quarry is geologically notable as the only place where the two rock formations of Baltimore Gneiss and Wissahickon Schist can be seen in contact with each other.

Knowlton

At the southeast corner of the industrial park, where Chester Creek meanders back towards the south and flows under Knowlton Road, is the former site of the Knowlton Mills. This is the farthest south of the seven historic water-powered cotton mill hamlets of the Chester Creek valley. John P. Crozer was the owner after he added the mills to his growing enterprises, expanding them from the West Branch Mill and Crozerville farther upstream. Knowlton was named after his wife, Sally Knowles. Prior to that, it was known as Moggy’s Ford. Moggy’s grave was next to Chester Creek.

During the Great Flood of 1843, the wall of water reached a height of 33 feet at Knowlton. Crozer’s new factory was swept away by the water, and as it did so, the bell in its tower kept tolling. He rebuilt the mill in 1844.

By 1850, it was both spinning and weaving cotton. There were 1,548 spindles, and 160 looms. The mills were operated by Abraham Blakely and a partner at that time.

Prior to the arrival of John P. Crozer, the site of Knowlton Mills was occupied by a series of other enterprises. Elijah Tyson was assessed in the tax rolls as operating a saw mill there in 1807. The mill was bought in 1813 by Judah Dobson, who changed it into a copper-rolling mill. At that time, the road to Village Green in Aston was called Copper Mill Road. Now it is known as Knowlton Road.

In 1825, John D. Carter changed the mill into a cotton factory. It was a cotton spinning mill that was owned from 1829 to 1832 by Edward Darlington and Chester merchant Thomas Clyde. John D. Carter managed it for them. He had earlier operated Trimble’s Mill on the West Branch Chester Creek until it failed in 1816 due to cheaper British textile goods.

Edward Darlington (1795-1884) was a cousin of William Darlington, the physician, banker, botanist, and founder of many institutions in West Chester. Edward was born in West Chester, and attended the West Chester Academy, which was founded by his cousin William. He was an attorney who played a significant role in Delaware County, where he moved with his family at a young age. He read law with Samuel Edwards in Chester, and passed the bar in 1821.
From 1833 until 1839 he was an Anti-Masonic and then a Whig member of the U.S. Congress for Pennsylvania’s 4th district, and advocated for manufacturing interests. He opposed Andrew Jackson’s veto of the charter for the Second Bank of the United States. He supported a tariff to protect the cotton industry. He opposed the expansion of slavery into new states and Washington, D.C. and opposed prohibiting the introduction of anti-slavery petitions in the House of Representatives. He supported the American Colonization Society. He was friend of fellow congressman James Buchanan. They had been on a committee together to receive the Marquis de Lafayette on his return visit to the U.S. in 1824. He was a director for both the Bank of Delaware County and the Delaware County Mutual Insurance Company. He moved to Media in 1851 in the year after it was founded as the new county seat, and served as the district attorney of Delaware County from 1851 until 1854.

In 1832, Robert Beatty and John O’Neil began manufacturing edge tools at the mill, until a fire in 1834. In the following year, the tilt mill and saw mill were purchased by John P. Crozer, along with a complex that included one brick and seven stone houses. Crozer built a new stone cotton mill in 1843, which was destroyed in that year’s big flood and rebuilt the following year.

Towards the southwest, Knowlton Road meets Concord Road and Pennell Road at Five Points in Aston Township at the edge of the Chester Creek watershed. Five Points was once known as Village Green.

Seven Stars Hotel

The Seven Stars Hotel was erected at the intersection of Concord and Pennell Roads in 1738. It played a central role in the early life of the community. Thomas Vernon failed in his petition to the court to establish a tavern there in 1740, having lamented that there wasn’t such an establishment within easy reach of his house. Finally, James Johnson received a license to keep a “public house” at the Village Green in 1762, which is believed to have been at the hotel. The Seven Stars Hotel was a stage coach stop and watering place for horses and people for many years. It was also an election polling place.

The Seven Stars Hotel is believed to be where General Cornwallis spent the night of September 13th, 1777 after the Battle of Brandywine. According to Ashmead, Cornwallis had warned his troops not to rob the local residents, but three Hessian mercenaries were accused of robbing two families. Teenage girls from each family were able to identify the soldiers who then were found to be in possession of the stolen property. General Howe had them court-marshalled. For their punishment, they drew lots and the “winner” had the grim task of hanging the other two in the middle of Village Green.

In 1836, the Chester Creek Trade Association was formed at the Seven Stars Hotel. They organized strikes at the cotton mills along Chester Creek in 1836 and 1842. They put forth demands for more pay or for fewer hours at the same pay. This was during a time when there was a higher demand for yarn and cloth. National attention began to be focused on conditions in the factories. In 1837, in the wake of a Senate investigation, William Shaw denounced child labor and the denial of education that resulted for the children. For their part, local mill owners John P. Crozer and Samuel W. Riddle wanted to see national limits on child labor. During the following years the industry muddled along during a prolonged recession following the Panic of 1837, but by 1842 the manufacturers had imposed their third 15% pay reduction since 1840. Workers went on strike again that year. They wanted a reversal of the pay reduction and an end
to the practice of paying wages in the form of company store orders. The organizers of the strike went on trial on charges of riot and conspiracy. The jurors found them innocent of riot but guilty of conspiracy. Thomas S. Bell, the judge of the Delaware County Court of Sessions in Chester, in defining conspiracy said it was legal for workers in a combination to peacefully turn out on a wages and working conditions issue and to peacefully persuade their fellow workers and employers to their just cause. It just wasn’t legal to use force. There wasn’t enough evidence to convict anyone of riot pertaining to an alleged incident in which a “nobstick” or scab worker was knocked off the dam on Chester Creek and dunked in the millpond at Burt & Kerlin’s weaving mill. Finally, the mills reopened on the owner’s terms. At that time, products of the mills were selling at a low price.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows was chartered at the Seven Stars Hotel in 1831. In 1847, mill workers met in the Odd Fellows Hall to draw up a resolution to urge state legislators to pass a law limiting the workday to ten hours. The bill was finally presented by a sympathetic senator from Lehigh County, and the law was passed in 1848. It called for a maximum ten-hour day, a sixty-hour week, and prohibited children below age twelve from working. There were two major flaws in the law. Violations had to be brought about by suit in order for the mandated $50 fine to be collected, and minors from age 14 to 21 could work any number of hours by consent of their parents or guardians. The law was ignored for five years in Delaware County, where it was claimed that it amounted to unconstitutional interference and led to an unfavorable competitive position in relation to other states. The manufacturers were feeling increasingly uncomfortable, though, because they expected their workers to be law-abiding and they were breaking the law themselves. They went so far as to travel to the industrial centers of Waltham and Lowell, Massachusetts to urge them to voluntarily adopt a ten-hour workday law in their state, so that they would be more comfortable with complying with the Pennsylvania law. Finally, led by John P. Crozer, the mill owners along Chester Creek complied with the law. Consequently, they found that the productivity in their mills went up.

South of Knowlton Road, Chester Creek is paralleled by Chester Creek Road on its northeastern bank.

An unnamed tributary flows out of the northeast, having originated at a fishing pond on Linvilla Orchards next to the Knowlton Swim Club. It flows parallel to Knowlton Road, passing under it twice near the southern terminus of the Chester Creek Rail Trail. The stream passes under Creek Road before entering Chester Creek.

Delaware County Field and Stream Association

About a quarter mile downstream from Knowlton Road, Chester Creek flows past the property of Delaware County Field and Stream Association, which is accessible from Creek Road.
About another quarter mile downstream, Chester Creek and Chester Creek Road intersect with Duttons Mill Road. Another small unnamed tributary flows into Chester Creek from the northeast, having originated in the woods behind Christ United Methodist Church. In 1966, the congregation moved to this location from 3rd & Jeffery Streets in Chester where it was known as South Chester Methodist Church.

Duttons Mill

The former site of Duttons Mill is along Chester Creek at Duttons Mill Road. It was also known as Forest Dale Mills. Thomas Dutton operated a tannery from 1790 until 1808. He supplied leather belts to the factories along Chester Creek that were so vital to the operation of their machinery. Thomas Dutton had witnessed the actions of General Cornwallis and the British army at Valley Green in Aston following the Battle of Brandywine. From 1808 until 1813 he joined a Quaker mission among the Seneca at Tunessassa and was involved with Handsome Lake and Cornplanter as they revitalized Seneca culture. For the following four years, Thomas Dutton was the director of the Delaware County Poorhouse. He returned to Aston after the death of his first wife. He is supposed to have introduced the first steam engine to Delaware County, which was built by William Parrish of Philadelphia.

In the 1830s, Jonathan Dutton operated the grist and saw mills at this site. They were washed away in the Great Flood of 1843, and rebuilt the following year. The mills were on the
west bank of the creek and the owner’s mansion was on the right bank. The mansion was built after 1843.

The covered bridge at this location was replaced by a concrete bridge in 1923.
Before this mill site was owned by the Dutton family, Thomas Cobourne built the second grist mill in the colony of Pennsylvania at this location in 1687. After petitioning the court, he was able to break the monopoly on milling held by Caleb Pusey, who was William Penn’s official miller. This happened the same year the Edgmont Great Road was laid out, providing ready access between the grist mill and the surrounding farms that were being established. The Edgmont Great Road, now known as PA Route 352, is just a mile to the northwest along Dutton Mill Road from the site of the mill. The wooden mill was replaced with a building built of stone in 1750.

In 1775 the mill was bought by Nicholas Fairlamb. A boulting mill for sifting flour and a saw mill were added. One source says that the mills were sold to Jonathan Dutton in 1792.

On the west bank of Chester Creek in Aston Township, just downstream from Dutton Mill Road, is a current industrial structure – the Endless Pools Factory Showroom.
Once Chester Creek passes under Dutton Mill Road, it forms the boundary between Brookhaven Borough to the northeast and Aston Township to the southwest. Less than a half mile downstream, a very small unnamed tributary enters Chester Creek from the north. Its source is behind the Brookhaven Swim Club which is located along Chester Creek Road.

In 1902, the newly formed Chester Water Company built a filtration and water storage facility on Harrison’s Hill on the south side of Dutton Mill Road where it meets Edgmont Avenue (PA Route 352). The facility was designed to supply water to Chester Township and the City of Chester during the days before the Borough of Brookhaven was incorporated from Chester Township in 1945.

Bridgewater Mill

A bit farther downstream, Chester Creek flows under Bridgewater Road, at the former site of the Bridgewater Paper Company Mills. Joseph Willcox and Company had a paper mill at Bridgewater on Chester Creek from 1866 until 1872. It was also the Pennellton Mill, and later the American Rendering Plant. The location is now the home of Giant Constructors, Inc.

The Bridgewater Farms subdivision of Aston Township which extends south of Bridgewater Road to Baldwin Run was part of Chester Township until 1960, when residents seceded from Chester Township and joined Aston Township. Children from the neighborhood
continued to attend Chester Township schools for the next ten years until the Penn-Delco School District board was ordered to accept students from the Bridgewater Farms neighborhood.

After merging with Chester Creek Road at the base of the bridge, Bridgewater Road continues to follow the course of Chester Creek on its east bank. Where Brookhaven Road merges with Bridgewater Road is the location of the Brookhaven Borough wastewater treatment plant.

Shepard Run

A tributary called Shepard Run flows into Chester Creek at this location. It originates a short distance to the north within a woodlot near the Thomas Cobourn Elementary School.

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Trimble Run

Historically, another small tributary entered Chester Creek near here. It was called Trimble Run, and is memorialized through the name of the Trimble Run neighborhood of Brookhaven.

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Toby Farms

At this southern end of Aston Township, Chester Creek forms the boundary between Aston and Chester Township to the east. The small portion of Chester Township to the east of the creek comprises the Toby Farms subdivision and includes Toby Farms Elementary School. After Hurricane Floyd struck in 1999, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Authority
(PEMA) bought fifteen damaged homes that were located in the floodplain at Toby Farms and in the City of Chester.

**Baldwin Run**

Baldwin Run flows into Chester Creek from the west at a point opposite Worrilow Park, which is located within the Toby Farms neighborhood.

Baldwin Run originates in Aston Borough, where its source behind the Dutton Mill Village Shopping Center along PA Route 452, Pennell Road. Towards the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, the shopping center mostly consisted of restaurants – Elliott’s, Pizza Hut, Lucky Wok Chinese, and Applebee’s Neighborhood Grill & Bar. There was also a Retro Fitness in the back in case diners needed to work off their meals.

After Baldwin Run flows under PA Route 452, Pennell Road, it enters Upper Chichester Township.

**Dutton Run**

Baldwin Run is joined from the north by a very small tributary called Dutton Run. It originates behind some large commercial and industrial structures that line Dutton Mill Road that are at the southern edge of the Aston Industrial Park.
To the south of Baldwin Run in the vicinity of its confluence with Dutton Run, is a petroleum tank farm of the Sun Oil Company. Baldwin Run continues to flow towards the east and into Chester Township.

Bridgewater Industrial Park

On the north bank of Baldwin Run is the Bridgewater Industrial Park. There are many industries represented there. Baldwin Run skirts the edge of Burman’s Medical Supplies, 3M-Dyneon, and AEX Group.

Sun Center Studios

On the south bank of Baldwin Run is the I-95 Industrial Campus Park, which also includes many industries. Baldwin Run flows right along the edge of Sun Center Studios.

At the east end of the studio lot, Baldwin Run flows under Concord Road. On the other side of the road, Baldwin Run forms the boundary between Chester Township on the south and Aston Township on the north. Along Concord Road and just south of Baldwin Run on the Chester Township side is the 2SP Brewing Company. The stream then turns towards the southeast past Independent Container Line.

Southwest Delaware County Sewer Authority

Baldwin Run then flows past the Southwest Delaware County Sewer Authority treatment plant on its north shore in Aston Township. The plant is accessible by way of a road called Catania Way that runs down the west bank of Chester Creek from Bridgewater Road.

Baldwin Run joins Chester Creek across from Worrilow Park.

Below its confluence with Baldwin Run, Chester Creek flows entirely within Chester Township as it bends towards the southeast and then towards the east around Toby Farms.

Caleb Pusey Historical Site
Chester Mills

As Chester Creek turns sharply to the east, it flows past the Caleb Pusey Historical Site in the Borough of Upland. Here the creek forms the boundary between Chester Township and Upland Borough to the north. With the establishment of Pennsylvania in 1681, Caleb Pusey (1651-1727) was the official miller of William Penn’s new colony. He purchased 250 acres of land from William Penn in the lower Chester Creek valley. He had exclusive rights to operate the Chester Mills, a grist mill and saw mill on Chester Creek here where his 1683 house still stands. It is the only extant building in North America within which William Penn is known to have entered.
The Chester Mills were the first grist mill and saw mill built in Penn’s new colony. They were an investment made by a stock company that came to be known as the Free Society of Traders. The mills were located at the head of tide on Chester Creek. Caleb Pusey was Penn’s mill manager and agent. His training had been as a last maker, that is, a maker of shoe molds, but he must have had good business sense to have been chosen as Penn’s mill manager. He had come in 1682 with Penn aboard the Welcome. The carpenter Richard Townsend and several other investors were among the 100 people also on board. It was Townshend’s responsibility to erect the mill. The millstones, gears, and pre-cut timbers were shipped aboard the Welcome. Back in London, the prefabricated mill had been built, tested, and disassembled for its journey. Within a year of assembling the mill in Chester, Townsend left for Germantown to build his own mill.

In 1686 at the first Court held in Chester, Caleb Pusey petitioned against a water mill being set up farther upstream on Chester Creek by Thomas Cobourne. This was an important test case against Penn’s manorial privilege of monopolizing mill construction in the colony. In Penn’s absence, his deputy governor William Markham also ordered Thomas Cobourne to desist. Cobourne’s neighbors supported him in their need for a new mill. The will of the people was heeded and Penn’s monopoly was broken. Thomas Cobourne was able to establish another grist mill on Chester Creek at what is now Duttons Mill Road in the Borough of Brookhaven. Afterwards, mills proliferated throughout the stream valleys at the points where the power of falling water could be tapped. By 1694-1695 the tax records show levies on five mills. In
addition to Pusey’s Chester Mills and Cobourn’s mill, there were mills in Darby, Haverford, and Concord Townships by this time.

Before the end of the century, floods destroyed the Chester Mills twice. They were rebuilt, but they were not making a very good return on the initial investment. By 1699, Samuel Carpenter was the only remaining partner with Penn and Pusey in the milling venture. By then they had started making a profit. A weathervane with the initials of the three men marked the occasion of Penn’s celebratory visit to the Caleb Pusey house that year. It is a famous colonial icon. It was put on the roof of the mill manager’s house, but it “squeaked and groaned so noisily” that it was removed. It now resides peacefully at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Before he retired, Caleb Pusey added a fulling mill and a dyeing mill to the operations at Chester Mills. In 1845, John P. Crozer purchased the mills, and the land and other buildings associated with them. In 1848 the original grist mill burned. The community still thrived. John P. Crozer built a schoolhouse in 1849, which still stands at the Schoolhouse Museum. The building was purchased in 1966 by the Pusey and Worley families and restored by The Friends of the Caleb Pusey House in 1975 and 1976.
Another historic building at the Caleb Pusey Historical Site is the Pennock Log House, which was relocated there in 1965. It was originally built in 1790 in Springfield Township by Caleb Pusey’s great great granddaughter Lydia Jackson Pennock and her husband William Pennock.

Pennock Log House, Caleb Pusey Historical Site

Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Many stories reveal the character of Caleb Pusey. For example, in 1688, there were rumors of Lenape outrages along the Brandywine Creek. It was reported that three families had been massacred and 500 warriors were encamped along the banks of the creek. Caleb Pusey led a delegation from his home along Chester Creek to investigate. They carried no weapons. What they found at the Lenape village was the chief suffering from a lame foot. He was lying on the ground with his head on a pillow as the women worked and the children played around him. When Caleb Pusey told him about the rumors that were circulating, the chief was quite dismayed.
Chester Creek at the Caleb Pusey Historical Site Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Entrance to Caleb Pusey Historical Site past contemporary houses in the Borough of Upland Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Delaware County Incinerator

Downstream from the Caleb Pusey house, Chester Creek flows under Upland Road. On the south side of the creek, the road continues to the southwest into Chester Township with the name Incinerator Road. Along this road is found the incinerator of the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority.

Borough of Upland

Downstream from the bridge for Upland Road, Chester Creek forms the boundary between Upland Borough to the north and the City of Chester to the south.

John P. Crozer established the Borough of Upland around the original house and mill seat of Caleb Pusey during the last major expansion of his business and philanthropic endeavors. He built his mansion on the hill and named the town Upland after the colonial Swedish community that William Penn had renamed Chester upon his arrival.

By the early 1840s, John P. Crozer and other mill owners along Chester Creek had entered a period of prosperity after recovering from the economic depression that followed the Panic of 1837. A protective tariff was restored, which also benefited manufacturers. John P. Crozer had profits from his enterprises at West Branch, Crozerville, and Knowlton. He invested his money in factories in Upland that were much bigger than anything he had previously built. In 1844, John P. Crozer purchased the 66-acre Flower estate, which included the Caleb Pusey house and Chester Mills, for $13,000. Technology had changed, and it was finally economically viable to use coal-generated steam to power mills rather than water. John P. Crozer built three factories
along Chester Creek in Upland that still stand and are now used by other businesses. Even though industry in the age of steam power no longer needed to be located directly along the creeks, they required space for the larger factories that steam power allowed, and access to the newly developing railroad network to be supplied with coal and raw materials and access to greater markets. The Chester Creek valley on the flat coastal plain nearer to the Delaware River provided these conditions. John P. Crozer built his first five-story cotton factory and tenement houses just downstream from the colonial Chester Mills. After he built his mansion on the hillside he moved into it in 1847. By then, the town of Upland had 46 tenement houses for the growing work force. At first, an 80-horsepower steam engine supplemented water power that was provided by a long head race to the dam one mile upstream. Two more large factories were added downstream closer to Kerlin Street. Before long, all the factories were entirely steam powered.
The Borough of Upland was incorporated in 1849. The first commissioners were George Leiper, Edward Darlington, Samuel Edwards, Daniel Lammot, and John M. Broomall.
John P. Crozer had the Upland Baptist Church built in 1852 as a center of worship for the community. It was one of many widely ranging philanthropic projects that John P. Crozer embarked upon after establishing Upland. These included the University of Lewisburg in central Pennsylvania, which later was named Bucknell University after Crozer’s son-in-law William Bucknell. The co-educational normal school in Upland became the Crozer Theological Seminary after his death. He also established the Pennsylvania Baptist Education Society to support the education of Baptist ministers. He was president of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society and on the board of the American Colonization Society. He was instrumental in getting the United States to recognize the nation of Liberia in 1862 and was involved in introducing coffee as a cash crop there. During the Civil War, John P. Crozer worked along with John Wanamaker as members of the United States Christian Association, which performed a similar combined function as the modern Red Cross and USO as well as a chaplain’s office. He also served terms as president of various charitable institutions, such as the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children in Elwyn, and the Home for Friendless Children and Women’s Hospital, both in Philadelphia.
Crozer Run

Crozer Run is a very small tributary of Chester Creek which flows south out of the Borough of Upland and into Chester Creek near Kerlin Street and the 19th century factory buildings built by John P. Crozer.

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Crozer Park

In the City of Chester opposite the first of John P. Crozer’s former Upland factories is Crozer Park. As Chester Creek flows past this factory, it bends from southeast to northeast and flows in that direction along the edge of the rest of the park to Kerlin Street.
Within Crozer Park, along Finland Drive, is the Finland Memorial. It was dedicated in 1938 on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the arrival of Finns to the Delaware Valley as settlers in the colony of New Sweden. The historical marker says that this particular tract “along Delaware River from Marcus Hook to Chester River” was called Finland, and was given to Captain Hans Ammundson Besk by Queen Christina in 1653.

At the east end of the Crozer Park, Chester Creek flows under Kerlin Street. The concrete county bridge over the creek at Kerlin Street dates from 1922.
Chester Creek from Kerlin Street between Chester and Upland
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

Bronze plaque on county bridge that carries Kerlin Street over Chester Creek
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Downstream from Kerlin Street, Chester Creek bends once again towards the southeast. The Crozer Chester Medical Center occupies the east bank of the creek in Upland. The former Crozer Theological Seminary is now used as offices of the Crozer Chester Medical Center. The seminary was originally established as a co-educational normal school by John P. Crozer, but after his death his heirs developed it into a Baptist seminary in 1867. It was a center for the teaching of the Social Gospel. Henry Vedder was its most vocal proponent at the seminary. In 1925, advocates of the more conservative and traditional approach to theology within the Baptist establishment started the Eastern Baptist Seminary in St. David’s, Pennsylvania in response to the teachings at Crozer. Martin Luther King, Jr. learned about the Social Gospel at the Crozer Theological Seminary and graduated from there in 1951. In 1970, the seminary merged with the Colgate Rochester Divinity School and moved to New York.
Next to the seminary building along the north side of the parking lot is a building constructed of green serpentinite stone. It looks like a chapel. It is Pearl Hall, the former library of the Crozer Theological Seminary. Its construction, book collections, and an endowment fund were provided by William Bucknell, who was also the benefactor of Bucknell University. It opened in 1871 in honor of his late wife Margaret Crozer, the daughter of John P. Crozer. The name Margaret is derived from the Greek word “margaron”, which means “pearl.”
At the southern end of the Crozer Chester Medical Center, Chester Creek flows under bridge for the Conrail freight line which runs closely parallel to the bridge for Interstate 95. This particular rail line was originally laid down by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1886 after they lost their bidding war with the Pennsylvania Railroad to acquire the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, which crosses further downstream.

Interstate 95

Chester Creek passes under the bridge which carries Interstate 95 over it.
City of Chester

Past the Crozer Chester Medical Center in the Borough of Upland, and downstream from the bridges for Conrail and Interstate 95, Chester Creek meanders for the rest of its length through the City of Chester on its way to the Delaware River.

The four square miles comprising the City of Chester are home to close to 34,000 people as of the 2010 census. Chester was the county seat of Chester County until Delaware County was formed in 1789, upon which Chester became the seat of Delaware County until the county government moved to Media in 1851. Chester was a borough from 1795 until it was incorporated as a city in 1866. Chester was a center for manufacturing from the 1840s until as late as the 1960s. During the Civil War and during subsequent wars, Chester had a major ship-building industry, reaching its height during World War II. As manufacturing declined later in the 20th century, massive disinvestment resulted in population loss, increased joblessness and increased crime. Major developments along the waterfront in the 21st century, such as Harrah’s Casino and a professional soccer stadium were meant to jump start new investment in the City of Chester. Many grassroots efforts of the community reinvigorate the economy are showing signs of greater success than the big projects alone.

Chester had been down before. By the middle of the 19th century, the borough of Chester was little more than a small fishing and boat-building village that happened to also be home of the Delaware County courthouse, which most of the population of the county complained was too far away. The seat of Delaware County government then moved to Media in 1851, which would have left Chester as a dying fishing town. But Chester and its neighboring Delaware River townships were ripe for economic development. Inspired by the success of John P. Crozer in establishing the mills and community of Upland in the 1840s, other industrialists invested in land and capital purchases of equipment in and around Chester. They, too, took advantage of the favorable post-depression national economic conditions, the technological breakthroughs in large-scale steam power, and the favorable geographic location along the coastal plain flats near the Delaware River.

John M. Broomall, who was an influential defense attorney at the time, invested in riverfront property between Chester and Marcus Hook. In 1849, with John P. Crozer as a partner and Edward Darlington as their legal counsel, he purchased a 55-acre farm on the west side of Chester Creek. After buying additional neighboring farms, they planned out the development of Chester’s South Ward. On the map of the City of Chester in the Hopkins 1870 atlas of Delaware County, the South Ward is shown extending from Chester Creek to Lamokin Run, which is shown running towards the river just west of Tilghman Street. Lamokin Run has long since been routed through pipes beneath the paved surface of the city. Near its headwaters was the Lamokin Station of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad. The station is now a triangular lot at the head of Broomall Street, next to an electric substation along Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor. When Broomall and Crozer had the streets for the South Ward laid out, they also built the houses and factories and sold them at cost, but taking up to 75% on the mortgages for the land. In 1853, Broomall bought out his partner Crozer. Broomall used his profits to restore the old Market Square in the historical center of Chester, which became part of the Middle Ward. The Middle Ward extended from Chester Creek to Ridley Creek south of the railroad, which still
parallels 6th Street. John M. Broomall bought the burned out home and store of Preston Eyre, who was Edward Darlington’s father-in-law.

Another person who invested in the old center of Chester early on was James Campbell. He started out as a loom boss for John S. Phillips at Rockdale Mills. He then became the manager of James Houghton’s factory at Pennsgrove. When that enterprise failed in the Panic of 1837, Campbell stayed in the Chester Creek valley. He had married the daughter of John Garsed, who had set him up at Pennsgrove. George Leiper took an interest in him, and built a cotton factory for him to rent in Leiperville where he became very successful. With his profits, he invested in the central part of Chester by refurbishing its old buildings. He bought the old jail, the workhouse, and an adjacent bowling alley and renovated them. He also brought to town a steam engine and a hundred power looms and soon expanded his enterprises, at the center of which was Pioneer Mills. He was recognized as a pioneer in bringing modern industry to Chester, but he lost it all in the Panic of 1857.

John M. Broomall’s future father-in-law, John Larkin, Jr., purchased an 83-acre farm in 1850 and developed what became the North Ward of Chester. The North Ward lay between Chester and Ridley Creeks north of the railroad and 6th Street. The 1870 Hopkins map shows the northern extent of the city ending around 16th Street near the Pennsylvania Military Academy, which is now Widener University. John Larkin, Jr. was the first mayor of the City of Chester after it was incorporated as a city in 1866. He continued to profit from his real estate investments in the North Ward, selling his last lot in 1881.

One of the most successful purchasers of Larkin’s investments was Abraham Blakeley, a Lancashire weaver who emigrated to the United States in 1828 at the age of 22. At first he was a weaver in Germantown and Pottsville, but first arrived in the Chester Creek valley as John P. Crozer’s weaving foreman at the West Branch Mill in 1833. His first wife was an Irish woman he married in 1836 who died within a year, leaving him a son. In 1838 he married Maria Miles, a protégé of Sophia du Pont. He went into partnership with Phineas Lownes at the Knowlton Mills in 1846, leasing a factory from John P. Crozer. In 1853, he sold his interest at Knowlton, and moved to a three-story brick mill in the North Ward of Chester built for him by John Larkin, Jr. Four years later he bought out Larkin’s interest and continued to prosper. Before long, the Arasapha Mills of Abraham Blakeley and Sons comprised a dozen buildings in which 200 workers ran 8500 spindles and 270 looms powered by Corliss engines. They manufactured work cloth, tickings, denim and striped cloth. The main Arasapha Mills complex was on the northeast corner of Tenth and Walnut Streets, at the headwaters of what was then called Mundy’s Run. The stream ran to a canal along Canal Street that opened upon a navigable portion Ridley Creek next to Algodon Mills. The canal is now largely filled in and occupies a wooded portion of Ridley Creek’s west bank between Hinkson Street, East 8th Street, and Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor rail line.

To live in a home suited to a man of his stature in the community, Abraham Blakeley bought Bishop Alonzo Potter’s mansion. He served for many years on Chester City Council and was leader of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He died in 1886. Abraham Blakeley was the great grandfather of Mrs. Bates, who named her farm along Middletown Road in Middletown Township after his mills. Arasapha Farm is one of the last working farms in Delaware County, which also operates as a seasonal attraction such as the Haunted Hayride and Bates Motel around Halloween.
Meanwhile, by the beginning of the Civil War, Chester had been transformed into a major manufacturing center. It was the home of a substantial cotton industry, and there were shipyards, machine shops, iron foundries, and furniture factories.

After flowing past Christopher Columbus Elementary School, Chester Creek forms a sharp northeastern-pointing meander bend which takes it around Chester High School and its associated ball fields and grounds.

Deshong Park

On the eastern shore of this bend in Chester Creek is Deshong Park, which once included the mansion of industrialist and quarry owner Albert Deshong and his surrounding estate. He bequeathed his property to the City of Chester. An art museum he built to house his art collection is on the grounds. The art is now in the possession of Widener University, and the building has since been used for receptions and other events.
On Earth Day in 2017, several groups from the community converged on Deshong Park to help revitalize it as a public space. The event coincided with the annual stream clean-up organized by the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association and also included people from the Chester City branch of the Salvation Army, the Cambodian Association, Harrah’s Casino, Penn State’s Pennsylvania Sea Grant, and Widener University.

Ann Foulds of the Pennsylvania Sea Grant describing the life cycle of the American Eel and its relationship with freshwater mussels; Chester mayor Thaddeus Kirkland is on far right

Young American eel in the elver stage of life
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2017
Chester Creek is on the southwestern flowing leg of the meander bend when it passes under U.S. Route 13, which is 9th Street in this part of Chester. Where the creek bends back to a southeasterly flow, it flows between two ends of a broken portion of 8th Street.

Chester Creek then flows under 7th Street. Just to the east of the bridge over Chester Creek are New Life Ministries on the north side of the street and Cityteam on the south side. The services these two organizations provide are vital to the city’s well-being.
View to the east from the bridge over Chester Creek at 7th Street, Chester
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Chester Creek downstream from 7th Street
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
One block downstream, Chester Creek passes under the bridges for 6th Street and the railway for both the SEPTA commuter line to Wilmington and Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor. This was the right-of-way that originally belonged to the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad as part of its Darby Improvement project.

1724 Old Chester Courthouse

As Chester Creek makes another meander bend towards the southwest, it flows under the bridge for 5th Street. Just to the east of the creek is the original Chester town center, which includes the 1724 Old Chester Courthouse. This is the oldest public building in continuous use in the country. It served as the Chester County courthouse from 1724 until 1786. It was used as the Delaware County courthouse from the year Delaware County was formed in 1789 until 1851 when the county seat moved to Media. It was Chester Borough Hall from that year until 1866 when Chester was incorporated as a city, and then served as Chester City Hall for many years.

When England declared war against Spain at the outset of Queen Anne’s War, soldiers were enlisted at the courthouse for an expedition to Cuba. Anthony Wayne rallied and drilled his troops here in January, 1776. Nearly fifty years later, when Marquis de Lafayette returned to the
United States to be honored for his role in the American War for Independence, he was entertained in this building.

Across the Avenue of the States, the former Market Street, from the Old Chester Courthouse is the prior location of the Pennsylvania Arms, a noted stopping place on the Post Road that was built in 1747 and demolished in 1952. George Washington stopped there following the Battle of the Brandywine in September, 1777.

The headquarters of the Delaware County Historical Society is right next door to the Old Chester Courthouse, to its south.

Delaware County Historical Society
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

The current Chester City Hall and the offices of the Chester Water Authority and DELCOR (the Delaware County Regional Water Authority) are also just east of Chester Creek in the neighborhood between 5th Street and PA Route 291, the Industrial Highway.
Downstream from 5th Street, Chester Creek bends once again towards the southeast and flows under PA Route 291, Industrial Highway. West of the creek, PA Route 291 merges with the old Chester City grid and becomes West 2nd Street. East 2nd Street on the east side of the creek follows its original layout, but East 3rd Street is obliterated for four blocks by PA Route 291. The obliteration includes the original Market Square, which was at 3rd and Market Streets. Market Street is now called Avenue of the States.
Ethel Waters Park

On the east bank of Chester Creek just downstream from the bridge for PA Route 291 is Ethel Waters Park. It is a city park named in honor of the singer and actress who was born in Chester in 1896. She began her career by singing the blues, and went on to perform in jazz and big band concerts, and on Broadway. As an actress she appeared in movies and television. She was the second African American to be nominated for an Academy Award, as a supporting actress in the 1949 movie “Pinky” directed by Elia Kazan. She died in 1977.

Downstream from Ethel Waters Park, Chester Creek flows under the bridge for 2nd Street. On the west side of the creek below 2nd Street is the William Penn Landing Site.
William Penn Landing Site

Chester Creek flows past the William Penn Landing Site, where William Penn first set foot in his new colony October 28, 1682. He promptly changed the name of the local community from Upland to Chester, after the place in England where most of his Quaker shipmates aboard the Welcome were from. He stayed nearby at the home of Robert Wade before embarking up the river to oversee the laying out of Philadelphia.

The stone that marks the spot where William Penn landed
Photos: Walt Cressler, 2012

The first Quakers arrived in 1675 on both sides of the Delaware River. Among them was Robert Wade, who built the Essex House in Upland. It was located on what became the northwest corner of 2nd and Penn Streets in Chester. Its southeast gabled end faced the Chester Creek, not far from where William Penn arrived for the first time in his colony. On March 4, 1681, William Penn was granted a charter by Charles II to pay a debt to his father Admiral William Penn. Admiral Penn had helped Charles II come to power during the Restoration and had served in the wars against the Dutch. As a Quaker, or a member of the Society of Friends, the younger William Penn was a member of one of many dissenting sects that emerged in seventeenth century Britain. Penn was fortunate in having the influence with royal power that enabled him to establish a refuge for his fellow Quakers and others who sought freedom of religious conscience. The first ship of purchasers in Penn’s new colony arrived in New Castle, Delaware in December, 1681. Among these was Penn’s cousin William Markham who acted as deputy governor. A second ship, the Samuel, arrived in September 1682. Penn was among the third group to arrive aboard the Welcome, and first set foot in his new colony on October 28, 1682 in Upland, whose name he changed to Chester. Robert Wade was on Penn’s newly established council for his colony. Penn’s cousin and deputy governor William Markham had taken up residence in the Essex House. William Penn was Robert Wade’s guest at the Essex House when he first arrived.
Prior to the arrival of William Penn, the Delaware Valley was the scene of exploration and settlement by the powers of Protestant Europe since close to the beginning of the 17th century. They were seeking to claim New World territory to compete with the large holdings of Catholic Spain and Portugal farther south. The first to sail up the Delaware River was Henry Hudson in 1609. He was an Englishman who was exploring on behalf of the Dutch, whose claims to the area date from this voyage. Then in 1610, the Englishman Sir Samuel Argall entered the bay and named it for Thomas West, Lord De La War, who was governor of the English colony of Virginia at the time. The Dutch continued their explorations in competition with the English. Among them was Captain Cornelius Mey for whom Cape May is named. Three years after the Dutch West India Company was incorporated in 1621, it established Fort Nassau at the mouth of Timber Creek in what is now Gloucester County, New Jersey. This outpost did not last very long. Neither did Swanendale at the mouth of Lewes Creek on the other side of the bay. It dissolved in a bloody misunderstanding with the Lenape in 1631.

Meanwhile, the Swedes had done well during the Thirty Years War and were looking to expand their world influence. Their settlement in the Delaware Valley was their only attempt at establishing a New World empire. In 1638 they established Fort Christina at the mouth of the Christina River in what is now Wilmington, Delaware. In that year, the Swedish West India Company had hired the Dutch Peter Minuit to lead the colonists aboard the Kalmar Nyckel and the Gripe. The second expedition of 1640 consisted primarily of soldiers who had evaded service or committed other offenses. The third expedition consisted of Finnish tree poachers. This unpromising start began to turn around in 1643, when more Swedes arrived aboard the
Fama and the Swan. This fourth expedition established the first permanent European settlement in what is now Pennsylvania, under Governor Johan Printz at Tinicum Island near the mouth of Darby Creek. They built Ft. Gottenburg and the governor’s mansion Printz Hall at Tinicum and built Fort Elsenburgh to command the other side of the Delaware River at the mouth of Salem Creek. They established settlements along the Delaware River from Fort Christina to Upland at the mouth of Chester Creek, and in Kingsessing, Passyunk, and Wiccaco (now Southwark).

The Swedes continued to compete with the Dutch, who were becoming a great maritime power. The year that Johan Printz firmly established the capital of New Sweden at Tinicum, the Dutch built Ft. Casimir at what is now New Castle, Delaware. In 1653, Johan Printz returned to Sweden and left the running of New Sweden to his son-in-law John Papegoya, who had married his daughter Armigart. All went well until the arrival of the new governor Risingh, who in 1654 commanded the Swedes to attack the Dutch at Ft. Casimir. As a result of this misadventure, in 1655, Peter Stuyvesant came down from New Amsterdam and captured all of New Sweden for the Dutch. They established their new seat of government on the foundation of Ft. Casimir and called it New Amstel.

The Dutch venture came to an end in North America when the English defeated them at New Amsterdam in the Hudson Valley in 1664 during one of the Anglo-Dutch Wars. Charles II was firmly on the throne after the restoration of royal rule following the end of Oliver Cromwell’s Commonwealth. Following the capture of New Amsterdam, the new governor Col. Richard Nicolls sent Sir Robert Carr to the Delaware River with the frigates Guinea, William, and Nicholas. Thus equipped he captured New Amstel. Charles II then granted the colonies of New York (former New Amsterdam), New Jersey, and Delaware to his brother James, the Duke of York. The succeeding governor, Col. Francis Lovelace, brought the Delaware Valley into conformity with English law in 1667. The English enterprises in the Mid-Atlantic suffered a setback in 1673, however. After England and France declared war on the Netherlands in 1672, the Dutch recaptured the New York and Delaware Valley settlements. The treaty of 1674 returned them to the Duke of York, however. Edmund Andros was the new governor of the Duke’s lands, with Edmund Carr the commander on the Delaware River. The Duke of York’s laws were proclaimed that year at the court in Upland on Chester Creek. They prevailed until the Pennsylvania colony was granted to William Penn in 1681 to pay the royal debt to his father Admiral William Penn for his service during the Anglo-Dutch Wars.

CSX Freight Rail Line

William Penn’s Landing Site is adjacent to the railway for the CSX freight rail line which supplies the power plant for the Kimberly-Clark factory here. The CSX freight rail right-of-way was originally built in 1837 by the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad. A bridge carries it over Chester Creek.

Kimberly-Clark

Looming over William Penn’s Landing Site is the coal chute of the Kimberly-Clark Chester Cogeneration Plant that supplies power to the paper mills of Kimberly-Clark, which are all located on the east bank.
Chester Creek approaching CSX freight line bridge, the Kimberly-Clark power plant, and the Delaware River
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012

Kimberly-Clark, the former Scott Paper Company
Photo: Walt Cressler, 2012
Kimberly-Clark bought out the Scott Paper Company in 1995. Scott Paper had pioneered the manufacture of modern toilet paper rolls at this location. Scott Paper was founded by two brothers named Irvin and Clarence Scott. They had moved to Philadelphia in 1867 from Saratoga, New York to join their brother Thomas Seymour Scott who started a paper wholesale business there two years previously. The company was called T. Seymour Scott & Brothers. They cut paper that they had purchased from a variety of manufacturers into various sizes and shapes and sold it. The paper was mainly used to wrap meat and produce. Thomas withdrew from the business and Irvin and Clarence founded Scott Paper in 1879. They were pioneers in the marketing of toilet paper. At first it was sold in drug stores among the medical supplies. Irvin’s son Arthur moved the company away from creating custom labelled products for retailers such as Wanamaker’s. Arthur Scott also improved the company’s success through his advertising methods. In 1910 the company bought a former soap factory in Chester along the Delaware River close to the mouth of Chester Creek. It was at this location that they began manufacturing their own brand paper. The started selling it in their innovative rolls in 1915. In the 1920s they expanded their operations into the former Swarthmore Paper Mill. By 1939, the Scott Paper Company was the largest manufacturer and exporter of toilet paper in the world. Their corporate headquarters was at Scott Plaza in Tinicum Township, at the mouth of Darby Creek. One of the CEOs of Scott Paper, Thomas McCabe, also had a stint as president of the Federal Reserve.

As Chester Creek flows beneath the coal chute, its waters enter the Delaware River. They are joined by the outfall of the Delaware County Regional Water Quality Control Authority (DELCORA) just below the mouth of Chester Creek.


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