



The Mill at Anselma

Our Story



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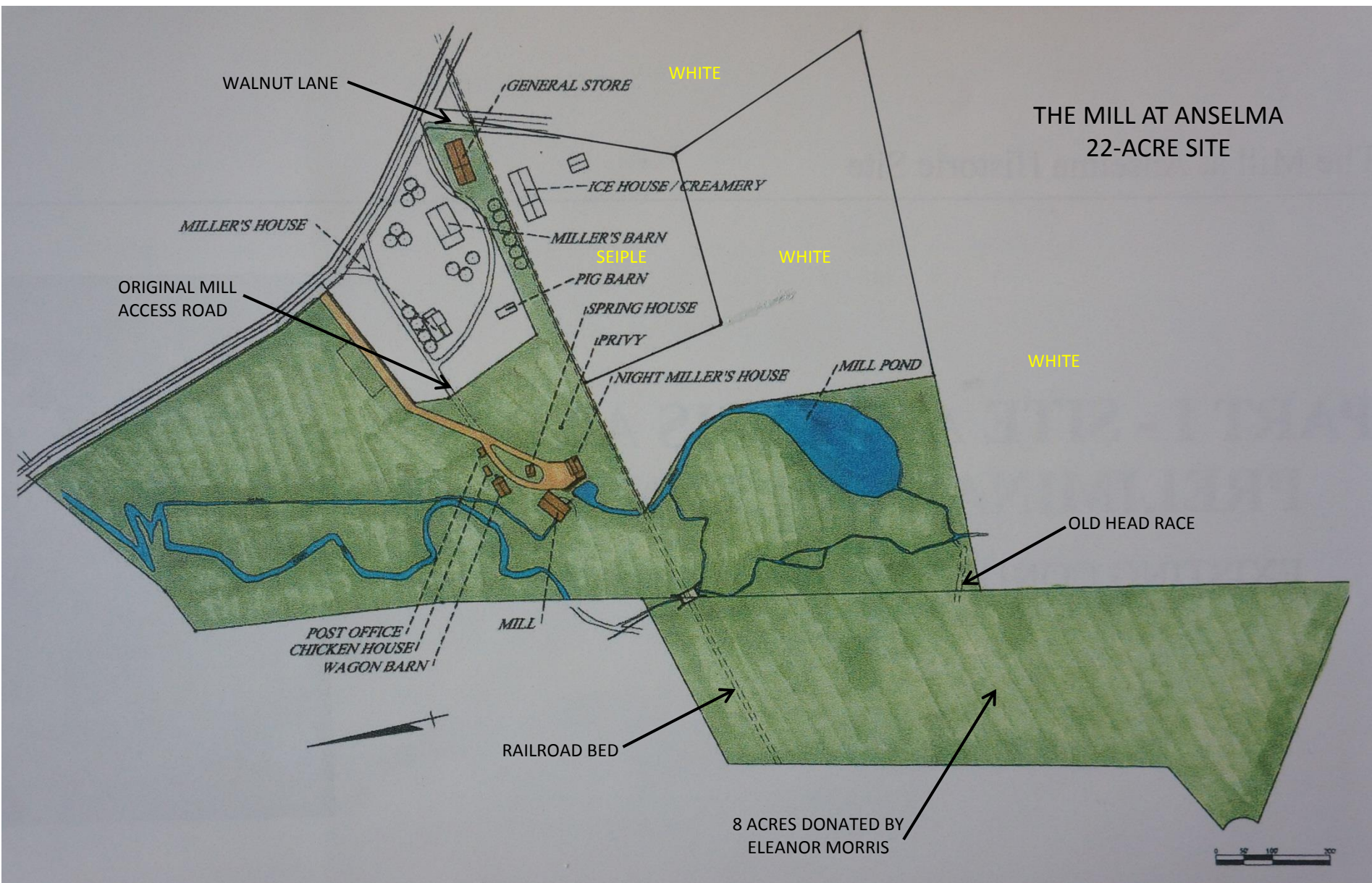
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Miller

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A low-angle photograph of a large, mature tree with a thick, white-barked trunk and numerous branches. The leaves are in various stages of autumn, showing shades of brown, orange, and yellow. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The tree's canopy fills most of the frame, with the trunk and lower branches visible in the foreground.

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Our Site

- 22 acres of fields, woods and wetlands, including two acres of mill pond and head race, and 8 acres of open space.
- Buildings include mill, Simmers-Collins house and post office, spring house, wagon barn, chicken coop, and foundation of general store. All buildings are protected by a preservation easement through the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- Excludes original miller's house and barn, which have been in private ownership since the property was sold by John Oberholtzer.
- Credit to Eleanor Morris and the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust for buying back adjacent properties.
 - Oberholtzer: 38 acres
 - Simmers: 6 acres
 - Collins: 6 acres
 - Mill at Anselma Preservation and Educational Trust: 22 acres

Our Mill

- Built in 1747 by Samuel Lightfoot. The first mill In the Pikeland area.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2005 because “it is a rare example of a colonial-era custom grist mill with a completely intact horizontal countershaft system in its original form”.
- A custom grist mill which served the local community. Families brought wheat or corn to the mill to be ground, then returned home with flour or feed for livestock.
- Originally, our mill was a flour mill. Over time, it became a feed mill.
- Oliver Evans elevator technology installed during 1822-1825.
- Powered by water using a 16-foot overshot steel water wheel manufactured by the Fitz Water Wheel Company. This replaced the original wooden water wheel.
- Three pairs of stones. The stones located in the center and right hand (north) side of the mill are flour stones for grinding wheat. These are french buhr stones. The stones located on the left (south) side of the mill are feed stones for grinding corn. These are granite stones.
- Our mill operated continuously from 1747 to 1934 when mobile mills led to the decline of traditional grist mills. Our mill became a machine shop, while preserving the grist mill machinery.

Our Mill Products

We are licensed by the State of PA, Department of Agriculture, to produce and sell our flour products. These products include pastry flour, bread flour, roasted corn meal, as well as dry mixes and other flour products.

Pastry Flour

- We use soft red winter wheat, grown in the mid-Atlantic states, for our pastry flour.
- Winter wheat is grown in the fall, lies dormant over the winter, resumes growth in the spring, and is harvested in the early summer.
- Soft wheat has less protein (9 per cent) and more starch for better pastry baking qualities.

Bread Flour

- We use hard red spring wheat, grown in Minnesota, for our bread flour.
- Spring wheat is grown in the spring, and harvested in the fall.
- Hard wheat has more protein (13 per cent) which is better for bread. When mixed with water, the protein forms gluten. The higher the protein, the more gluten can be formed.

All-Purpose Flour

- By mixing pastry flour (9 per cent) and bread flour(13 per cent) in equal proportions, the result is an all-purpose flour (11 per cent).

Whole Wheat Flour

- Whole wheat flour can be made by mixing 1 ½ cups of fine bran with 1 pound of flour.

Why Our Flour is Better

In the stone grinding process, there is no way to remove the germ or to completely remove all of the bran. The germ contains almost all of the nutrients in the wheat, and the bran is an important source of fiber. These are preserved in our flour products.

We recommend that our visitors refrigerate or freeze our flour products. While the germ is nutritious, it also contains oils that limit the shelf life of the flour. Flour stored in the freezer will last indefinitely.



Three Generations of
Lightfoots For 65 Years
1747 - 1812

Five Families Shaped the History
of our Mill and Site for over
265 Years



Two Generations of
Shenemans For 39 Years
1820 - 1859

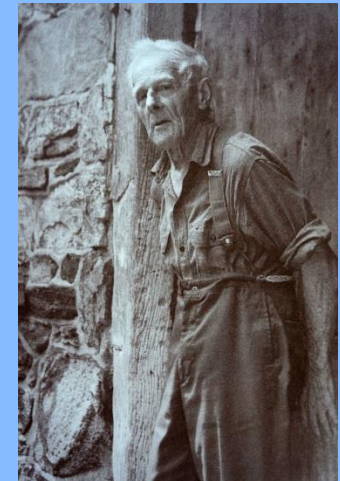


The Oberholtzer Family
For 27 Years
1859 - 1886



The Simmers Family
For 33 Years
1886 - 1919

Our Roots



The Collins Family
For 63 Years
1919 - 1982

Our Roots: The Lightfoot Family Era (1747-1812)

- Samuel Lightfoot was born in northern Ireland in 1701 into a very active Quaker family. He came to this country in 1716, and settled in our area in 1725 with his wife Mary. They had four sons between 1725 and 1732.
 - He built our mill in 1747, and became one of Pikeland's wealthiest land owners, and a very prominent citizen.
 - Occupation: Surveyor. He was hired to help draw the boundary lines between Maryland and Pennsylvania. He worked with surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon.
- In 1767, Samuel divided his 500-acre property between his sons William and Thomas. William operated the grist mill on 250 acres, and Thomas operated a saw mill on 250 acres.
- Samuel died in 1777, and William died in 1797. The mill and property passed on to grandson Samuel. The tax records for 1798 list the mill as in a "bad state".
- Samuel continued to operate the mill until 1812, when he sold the mill and property to James Benson.

Our Roots: The Sheneman Family Era (1820-1859)

- Rees Sheneman purchased the mill and house from Lewis Rees and James Benson in 1820. He and wife Juliann had 13 children between 1815 and 1836!
- The Shenemans installed Oliver Evans technology in the mill during 1822-1825. This included vertical elevators, horizontal augers, and probably the grain cleaner and bolter. As a result of this new technology, the operation of the mill was moved from the first floor to the second floor, and a new access to the second floor from the outside was added.
- Significant improvements were made to the miller's house in 1824, and again in 1833. Its current appearance reflects these improvements, and the size and grandeur of the house indicates the status of its occupants in the community during the nineteenth century.
- In 1838, Rees Sheneman sold two acres of land across the road from the mill to the West Pikeland Township for the construction of a school.
- Son Benjamin Shenemen ran the mill from 1849 to 1857. Son Jones Shenemen ran the mill from 1857 to 1859 when he sold the mill and house to Elias Oberholtzer.

Our Roots: The Oberholtzer Family Era (1859-1886)

- Elias purchased the house and mill from Jones Sheneman in 1859, and put son John in charge of John Oberholtzer Mills, later Willowdale Mill.
- John married Sara Vickers in 1862. They had two sons, Ellis and Vickers.
- John ran a successful milling business for 12 years until 1871, when he had a serious accident while attempting to free the ice-bound water wheel. He never fully regained his strength, and retired from the milling business. After several unsuccessful attempts to sell the mill, he hired Levi King to run the mill, followed by James Laird. A miller's house was built in 1873 for the miller and his family.
- John partnered with Isaac Hartman and built a store and warehouse in 1872. They sold grains, coal, lumber and feed, and operated a mail order business for buckwheat, flour and potatoes.
- In 1872, John and other local businessmen convinced the Reading Railroad Company to build an extension of the line from Phoenixville to Byers. The Pickering Valley Railroad was established, with Cambria Station located in the store. This opened up new markets to farmers, and helped John expand his product line.
- John sold the store in 1884 to Oliver Moses and Horace Latshaw, who turned the business into a general store. He sold the mill to Allen Simmers in 1886. The Oberholtzer family moved to Norristown, and John became a very successful grain merchant.

The Oberholtzer Era (continued)

- John's wife Sara was noteworthy in her own right. She began writing poetry at an early age, and established a lifelong relationship with poet John Greenleaf Whittier. In 1873, Sara published the poem "At the Old Mill" in the book of verse "Violet Lee". Her poetry reflects her life at the mill, her husband the miller, and her childhood recollections of her grandfather and his role in the underground railroad. By the time Sara and her family left Anselma, she had written five books of poetry, and one novel.
- Sara was an avid proponent of the School Savings Bank program, and devoted much of her life to lecturing and expanding the program throughout the United States and Canada. She was a popular lecturer, actively promoting thrift, temperance, and the women's right to vote.

Our Roots: The Simmers Family Era (1886-1919)

- Allen Simmers purchased the six-acre mill property from John Oberholtzer in 1886. He resided in the Simmers-Collins House with his wife Anna Moses, daughter Katie, and son Oliver.
- During 1906-1909, Simmers replaced the wooden sluiceway with a cast iron pipe and steel forebay. He replaced the wooden water wheel with a Fitz Steel Overshoot Wheel.
- Simmers sold oats, corn, cracked corn, chicken feed, sacks of corn meal and four brands of flour in quantities by the barrel. He also sold apples, pears, cider and vinegar.

Our Roots: The Collins Family Era (1919-1882)

- Oliver Ernest Collins purchased the mill and house on six acres from Allen Simmers in 1919. He had already set up a saw mill along the tailrace, and he had intended to go into the lumber business. The local farmers persuaded Collins to recondition the mill and produce animal feed. He also reconditioned the cider press.
- Collins lived in the Simmers-Collins House with wife Ethel, sons Horace and Jack, and daughter Mary. Later, they took in a boarder, who worked at the ice house and creamery.
- Running the mill was often a family affair, particularly during the winter months when farmers needed feed for their livestock. Then, brothers Jack and Horace would work shifts after school to run the mill around the clock with their father. They also assisted in dressing the stones, which took a week and a half, and had to be done twice during the season. Collins ran the mill until 1934, when traditional mills yielded to mobile, truck mounted mills.
- The mill became home to a large array of woodworking and metal working machinery, originally driven by the same water power source that drove the grist mill. Outside the mill, on the north side, stood a large tin roofed building which enclosed the cider press, the saw mill, and other wood working machinery. Collins made a living and supported the community in many different ways:
 - Produced feed in the grist mill.
 - Sawed lumber for farmers to build barns.

The Collins Era (continued)

- Produced cider with the large cider press each fall. This was especially lucrative during the prohibition years, when farmers each wanted two or three barrels to carry them through the winter. The cider business failed after prohibition, and Collins sold the cider press.
 - Repaired farm machinery and sharpened blades, particularly reel lawnmowers. The machine for sharpening lawnmower reels can be seen in the mill today.
 - Cut hair for customers while they waited for their feed corn to be ground.
 - Ran the post office, though his wife Ethel did almost all the work. In 1933, at Ethel's urging, Collins took and passed the civil service examination and was appointed Postmaster for Anselma. The post office closed in 1958.
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- Collins was an entrepreneur of many talents, probably best known as a 'country mechanic'. He died in 1982 at 94 years of age.

Our Recent History

- Recognizing the historical significance of our mill, curators and scholars from the Hagley Museum photo-documented the mill with over six hundred slides in 1972. They documented architectural details, as well as the location and identification of all of Collins' machinery. The mill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.
- After Collins' death in 1982, Samuel and Eleanor Morris and the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust purchased the mill property to preserve the Mill at Anselma for future generations.
 - Work was done to stabilize the mill, including a new roof, masonry repairs, and new floors.
 - The hurst frame was rebuilt.
 - The mill site, the mill building and mill machinery were documented with HAER (Historic American Engineering Record) drawings.
- The Mill at Anselma Preservation and Educational Trust was formed in 1998 to continue restoration efforts. A Site Master Plan was developed to guide this work, most of which was carried out in the 2001-2005 time frame. The restoration work was funded by the Heritage Philadelphia Program of the Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures Program, West Pikeland Township, the William Penn Foundation, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Arcadia Foundation, the Stewart Huston Charitable Trust and private donations. Restoration work included:
 - The mill building and machinery.
 - The water wheel and forebay.

Our Recent History (continued)

- The Simmers-Collins House
- The spring house and chicken coop.
- The wagon barn.

- In 2004, a public opening (1200 attendees) celebrated the mill's return to operation and the beginning of a new era focused on developing the mill property as a public historic site.

- The Mill at Anselma was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark in 2005.

Our Anselma Community

Even before the Civil War, there were signs that the Anselma (then Cambria) community was growing. John Oberholtzer's mill was in full production, as was his father's mill nearby. The ice house and creamery had just been built, and a schoolhouse served the children of local families. The Conestoga Turnpike had been in operation for almost 50 years.

The coming of the Pickering Valley Railroad in 1872 marked the beginning of the most significant growth in Anselma's history. Oberholtzer and Hartman's store, built in the same year, stocked bulk grain, lumber and coal delivered by rail. The railroad opened up new markets for local products as well. Transportation within Philadelphia was provided by horse and wagon, which required feed and hay produced by local farmers. Our Pikeland Creamery was able to ship milk to Philadelphia by rail, and by 1890 it was the second largest creamery in Chester County. Passenger service provided transportation to Phoenixville, then to Philadelphia, three or four times a day. Cambria Station was located in Oberholtzer and Hartman's store, in addition to a post office. Later, John Oberholtzer built a separate train station which became known as the Anselma Station. Other buildings were added to the Anselma complex, including a warehouse next to the train station, and another warehouse across from the store on the other side of the turnpike, built by the Latshaw brothers.

The Anselma community probably reached its peak between the years 1880 and 1920. Several factors contributed to its decline, including the Great Depression. However, gasoline powered cars and trucks hastened the decline. In 1933 the general store went into bankruptcy, though it continued to operate. The mill stopped producing feed in 1933 because mobile mills replaced traditional mills. The creamery closed in the same year, because it was easier to transport milk

Our Anselma Community (continued)

into the city by truck. 1934 marked the end of railroad passenger service, although freight trains continued to operate until 1957. How ironic that the same factor which contributed to Anselma's growth, also greatly contributed to its abrupt decline in the early 1930's, namely, transportation.

Our Organization

- The Mill at Anselma Preservation and Educational Trust (MAAPET)
- Privately owned, non-profit
- Board of Trustees
 - Maximum 18 board members, typically 14
 - Executive Council: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
 - Standing Committees: Governance, Development
- \$1.4 million in total assets, no debt. \$159,000 annual operating Budget.
- Staff: Full time Executive Director, two part-time seasonal employees, part-time contracted bookkeeper, volunteer miller.
- 40 volunteers

Appendix

The Mill at Anselma General Store

Anselma Station

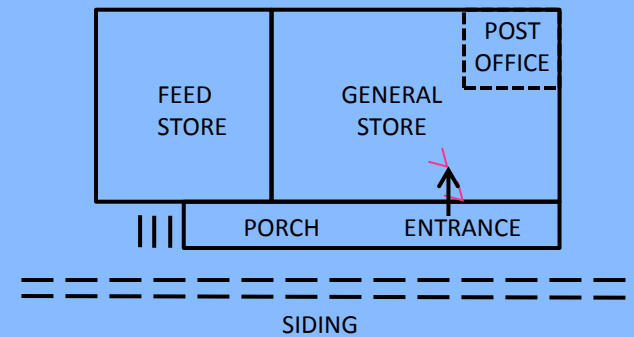
The Mill at Anselma General Store



1937



2001



The Mill at Anselma General Store

<u>Period</u>	<u>Owners</u>	<u>Business</u>
1872-1884	John Oberholtzer and Isaac Hartman	“Dealer in gains, coal, lumber, feed, etc. Cash paid for hides and old iron...” Mail order business for buckwheat, flour and potatoes.
1884-1915	Oliver Moses and Horace Latshaw	Merchandise added. Store becomes general store.
1915-1925	W. Warren Latshaw and Horace Latshaw	Coal, feed and lumber business discontinued. General store line of goods continued.
1925-1928	Charles Bergner	Groceries and produce added.
1928-1934	Charles Caldwell	Great Depression and business decline.
1934-1940	The Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Phoenixville	Charles Caldwell continues to operate the store.
1940-1982	George Dilworth and son Paul Dilworth	Chicken barn.



Anselma Station

Then



Now