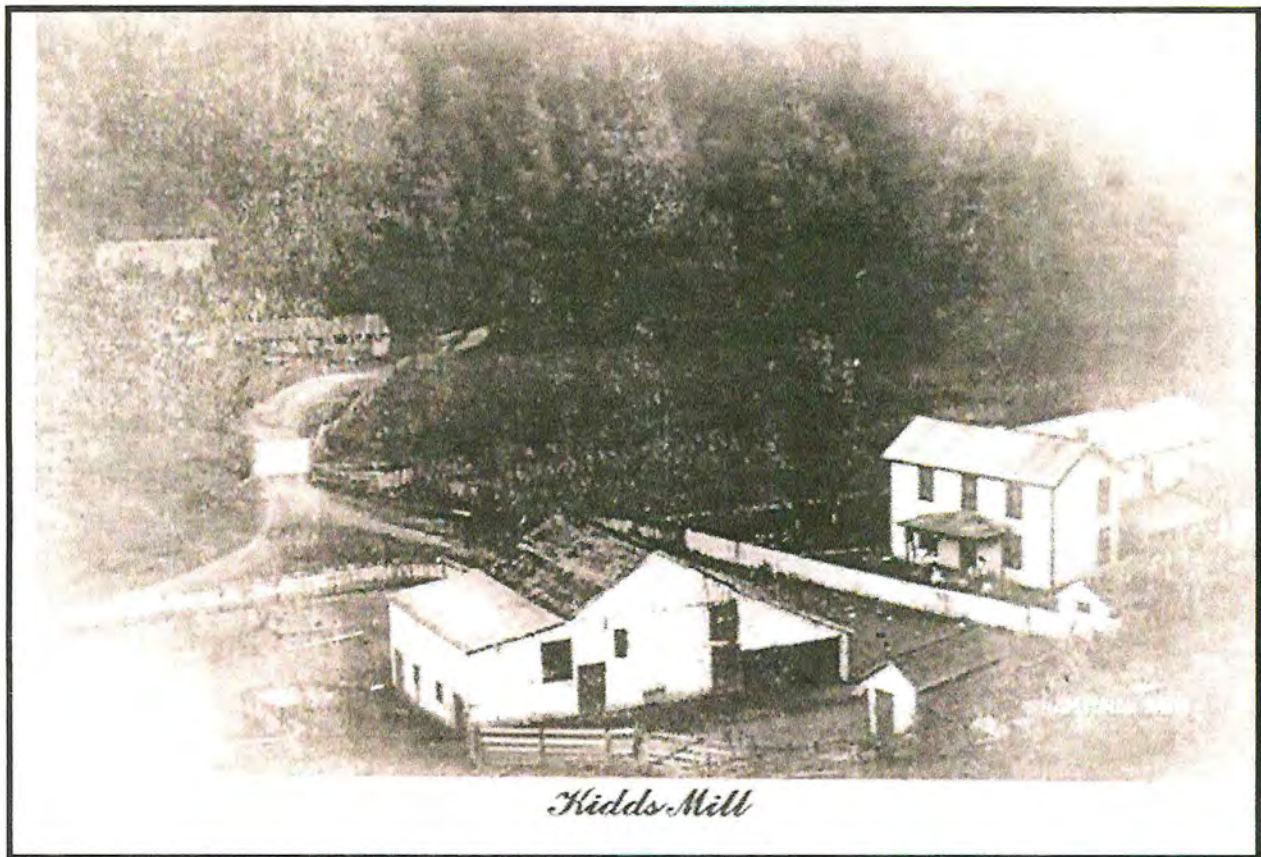


**The Saga  
of  
Kidds Mill  
by  
A.D. White**

*Courtesy of Fort Vance Historical Society*



*A panoramic view of the entire Kidd's Mill area.  
The gristmill with its sawmill extension is seen in  
the upper left corner.*

*Bridges and fences are intact, therefore the picture was taken  
before The Flood of 1912 washed them away.*

*It is uncertain, but possible, that Emma Cresswell was the  
photographer*



## *The Saga of KIDD'S MILL*

BY A. D. WHITE

AMONG THE WILD, SECLUDED SPOTS OF JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP OF THE PRESENT DAY, NONE IS MORE SECLUDED OR MORE WILD AND BEAUTIFUL THAN THE SITE OF THE OLD GRIST AND SAWMILL KNOWN FOR YEARS AS KIDD'S MILL. THE LOCATION IS NEAR THE JUNCTION OF THE TWO BRANCHES OF SCOTT'S RUN IN SOUTHWESTERN JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP AND NEAR THE WEST VIRGINIA LINE. NEAR HERE ONCE COULD HAVE BEEN SEEN A DECLIVITY KNOWN AS *HISKUS JUMP*, THE STORY OF WHICH COMES TO US FROM PIONEER TIMES THAT A MAN BY THE NAME OF HISKUS WAS BEING CLOSELY PRESSED IN A CHASE BY INDIANS. WHEN THE RED MEN WERE SO CLOSE ON HIM THAT HE FELT THAT CAPTURE WAS CERTAIN, HE DECIDED THAT HE WOULD RATHER LEAP OVER THE CLIFF AND RISK DEATH IN THAT MANNER THAN TO BE CAPTURED BY THE INDIANS. HE MADE HIS ESCAPE BY JUMPING OVER THE CLIFF, WHICH HE DID SAFELY, THEN CONCEALED HIMSELF IN A SMALL CAVE WHICH HE FOUND IN A LARGE ROCK ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CREEK.

WHEN ONE VISITS THE SPOT TODAY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT HERE AT ONE TIME WAS A CENTER OF MUCH ACTIVITY. ALL THAT ONE SEES TODAY IS SCOTT'S RUN FLOWING SWIFTLY AT THIS POINT, THROUGH A STEEP-WALLED VALLEY WHOSE SIDES ON AN EARLY SPRING DAY, ARE COVERED WITH WHITE FLOWERED TRILLIUM AND OTHER WILD FLOWERS IN ABUNDANCE, AND OVER-HANGING FROM THE STEEP BANKS OF THE STREAM ARE MANY PINE TREES. THE ONLY SIGN OF HUMAN PROGRESS IN EVIDENCE IS A VERY IDLE RAILROAD TRESTLE SPANNING THE CREEK AND A LITTLE FARTHER UPSTREAM THE RUINS OF THE OLD MILL. WHILE THIS WAS ONCE A FLOURISHING CROSSROADS COMMUNITY, TODAY ONE SEES ONLY THE SCARS OF THE ROADS WHICH ONCE CONVERGED HERE, THERE BEING NO ROADS ON WHICH ONE MIGHT USE A WHEELED VEHICLE WITHIN A HALF MILE OR MORE OF THE OLD MILL SITE.

A MILL WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED AT THIS POINT BY CHARLES SCOTT, AN IRISHMAN, WHO WAS AN EARLY SETTLER HERE. THIS MAN, KNOWN AS CHARLEY AT THE MILL, TO DISTINGUISH HIM FROM ANOTHER CHARLES SCOTT, CHARLEY ON THE HILL, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ASSISTING MANY OF HIS FRIENDS IN LOCATING NEAR HIM. WHEN AN IRISH ACQUAINTANCE OF "CHARLEY AT THE MILL" ARRIVED, HE ALWAYS LOOKED UP CHARLEY SCOTT WHO HELPED HIM GET HIS BEARINGS IN THE LOCATION OF A GOOD TRACT OF LAND.

THE MILL WAS MAINTAINED HERE BY THIS CHARLES SCOTT AND HIS SON, WHO SOLD THE TRACT TO SAMUEL CRESSWELL, WHO BUILT A LARGER MILL IN 1852 AND CONDUCTED ITS OPERATION UNTIL HE SOLD IT IN 1855 TO THOMAS WEAVER WHO APPEARS TO HAVE CONTINUED AS OWNER AND OPERATOR UNTIL 1865 WHEN HE DEEDED THE PROPERTY TO DAVID A. BENJAMIN WHO WAS TRUSTEE FOR AN EASTERN SYNDICATE WHO DRILLED A WELL TO A DEPTH OF EIGHT HUNDRED FEET. THIS PROVED UNSUCCESSFUL AND THE MILL WAS SOLD ON MARCH 30, 1868 TO NATHANIEL GILLESPIE WHO, WITH HIS SON, JAMES, CONDUCTED THE MILL UNTIL MARCH 1, 1878 WHEN IT WAS TRANSFERRED TO G. CHALMERS MILLER. AT THIS TIME THE MILL WAS KNOWN AS THE PINE GROVE GRIST AND SAWMILL, THIS NAME BELONGING ALSO TO THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WHICH STOOD ON THE HILLSIDE JUST A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE MILL.

IN 1885, CHALMERS MILLER DEEDED THE MILL PROPERTY TO ELIZA KIDD, AND THENCEFORTH THE MILL WAS KNOWN AS KIDD'S MILL. ELIZA JANE STEWART KIDD WAS THE DAUGHTER OF ROBERT STEWART, OF JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP. SHE WAS MARRIED PRIOR TO 1850 TO DAVID KIDD, A NATIVE OF IRELAND. AFTER THEIR MARRIAGE THIS COUPLE MOVED TO GUERNSEY COUNTY, OHIO, WHERE KIDD'S DEATH OCCURRED IN 1868. THE WIDOW AND HER SIX CHILDREN RETURNED TO JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP AND SHE SOON UNDERTOOK WITH THE HELP OF HER FIFTEEN YEAR OLD SON, ROBERT, THE PURCHASE OF A FARM OF 108 ACRES NEAR ELDERSVILLE. IN ADDITION TO PURCHASING THE FARM AT ELDERSVILLE, THE KIDD FAMILY PURCHASED THE MILL AS ABOVE STATED, AND ROBERT KIDD MANAGED THE OPERATION OF THE MILL DURING THE REST OF ITS PERIOD OF EXISTENCE.

IN ITS EARLY DAYS THIS WAS A WATER MILL, BUT STEAM WAS EVENTUALLY INTRODUCED. SOMETIME AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF THE USE OF STEAM, A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY OCCURRED AT THE MILL ON AUGUST 8, 1882, WHEN THE BOILER EXPLODED, TEARING A GAPING HOLE IN THE SIDE OF THE MILL AS IT BLEW UP THEN FLYING OUT THROUGH THE AIR, STRUCK THE STEEP BANK ACROSS THE CREEK AND ROLLED BACK ONTO THE LEVEL GROUND. IN THIS ACCIDENT, THE MILLER, TOM BAVINGTON, WAS KILLED, AND HIS HELPER, JAMES PHILLIPS, WAS CRITICALLY INJURED AND DIED SOON AFTERWARDS. MR. ELZA SCOTT, THEN A SMALL BOY, WAS OUT WITH HIS MOTHER PICKING BERRIES NEARBY ON THAT FATEFUL DAY. SUDDENLY A HORSEMAN APPEARED RIDING UP THE "RUN" TOWARD ELDERSVILLE. THIS MAN, JOHN H. MURCHLAND, SAW



THE SCOTT'S AND CALLED OUT, "THE MILL'S BLOWN UP AND KILLED TOM BAVINGTON," AND THEN ROAD ON FURIOUSLY TO ELDERSVILLE TO SECURE MEDICAL HELP FROM THE VILLAGE PHYSICIAN, DR. J. F. MCCARRELL. ELZA SCOTT AND HIS MOTHER RUSHED HOME AND THE BOY WAS DISPATCHED TO THE HOMES OF NEIGHBORS TO TELL THEM OF THE TRAGEDY.

KIDD'S MILL CONTINUED TO OPERATE UNTIL SHORTLY AFTER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY WHEN IT WAS CLOSED DOWN. AT THIS PLACE, MRS. AGNES MURCHLAND, SISTER OF ROBERT KIDD, SERVED AS POSTMISTRESS AT THE BANCROFT POST OFFICE AND ALSO, FOR A PERIOD OF TEN OR TWELVE YEARS, CONDUCTED A SUMMER RESORT HOTEL FOR WORKING GIRLS FROM PITTSBURGH WHO CAME HERE FOR TWO-WEEKS VACATIONS. THE POST OFFICE HERE WAS DISCONTINUED UPON THE INSTALLATION OF THE RURAL FREE DELIVERY OF MAIL

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### A POSTSCRIPT BY KATHRYN SLASOR

THE ABOVE ACCOUNT OF KIDD'S MILL WAS WRITTEN IN 1953 BY A. D. WHITE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN TODAY, 1999, AS IN THE 46-YEAR SPAN SINCE MR. WHITE COMPILED THE LOCAL HISTORY IN JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP'S CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION, LITTLE HAS CHANGED AT KIDD'S MILL.

THE "STEEP-WALLED VALLEY" BLOSSOMS EACH SPRING, DISPLAYING A CARPET OF WILD FLOWERS SUCH AS IS SEEN IN FEW PLACES IN TODAY'S COMMERCIAL WORLD. FIELDS OF WHITE, YELLOW AND PURPLE VIOLETS GROW IN PROFUSION ALONG THE SWIFT-FLOWING SCOTT'S RUN, AND ACRES OF WHITE AND RED TRILLIUM BRIGHTENS THE HILLSIDES THAT IN SOME SPOTS ARE TOO STEEP FOR HUMAN ACCENT. THE STAINED WHITE LEAVES OF THE DOGWOOD, THE HIDDEN WAXY BLOSSOMS OF THE MAY-APPLE PLANTS, THE DELICATE ORCHID SWEET WILLIAM, AND THE ENDANGERED SPECIES OF TRAILING ARBUTUS – ALL GROW IN ABUNDANCE IN THE ALL-BUT-FORGOTTEN VALLEY AREA THAT WILL BE KNOWN TO THOSE WHOSE LIVES IT HAS TOUCHED AS KIDD'S MILL.

OTHER FLOWERS THAT FLOURISH IN THE VALLEY AND ON THE ROCK-STUDDED HILLSIDES INCLUDE JACK-IN-THE PULPIT, CROWFOOT, HEPATICA, VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS, DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES, AND THE EVER-LOVELY SPRING BEAUTIES.

THE SCARS OF THE ROADS ARE LESS PROMINENT AS THE YEARS GO BY. TREES HAVE FALLEN ACROSS THEM, AND UNDERBRUSH HAS THEM NEARLY OBSCURED. THE LAYER OF FLAT STONES THAT MAKE UP THE FOUNDATION OF THE MILL AND THE LARGE HOUSE THAT SERVED AS A RESIDENCE, A HOTEL AND A POST OFFICE, BECOME LESS VISIBLE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO LOCATE AS THE STREAM CONTINUES TO DEPOSIT ITS CARGO OF TWIGS, BRANCHES, STONES AND DEBRIS OF VARIOUS NATURE, IN ITS ENDLESS SEARCH TO SEEK ITS OWN LEVEL.

THE "WILD" ATMOSPHERE OF KIDD'S MILL CANNOT BE TOLD WITH MERE WORDS. IT MUST BE "EXPERIENCED."

MANY HUNDREDS OF ADVENTUROUS VISITORS OF ALL AGES HAVE COME TO KIDD'S MILL THROUGHOUT THE YEARS SINCE THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE CEASED. THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF THE VALLEY HAS IMPRESSED BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, SO THAT AN URGENCY EXISTS TO RE-VISIT THIS NOSTALGIC SPOT THAT CONSTITUTES A WORLD OF ITS OWN.

LEADERS SUCH AS ALBERT MILLER, A. D. WHITE, BOB KIDD, BOB IRWIN, CARL PATSCHE, AND OTHER ENTHUSIASTIC HISTORIANS SUCH AS PAUL CHILENSKY AND MARION BUTLER, HAVE CONTRIBUTED ENORMOUSLY TO THE SPREADING OF HISTORY OF THIS BELOVED AREA TO ALL WHO WOULD LISTEN. MR. WHITE ACCOMPANIED GROUPS INTO THE VALLEY WHEN HE WAS FAR PAST THE THEE OF 90, SO GREAT WAS HIS LOVE FOR IT.

MARION BUTLER INSTILLED THE LEGENDS OF THE AREA INTO HIS SCHOOL PUPILS DURING HIS FORTY YEARS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR SCHOOL. HE LED HIS CLASSES INTO THE WILDERNESS SO THAT THEY COULD SEE HISTORY FIRST-HANDED.

THE SITE OF THE PINE GROVE CHURCH IS HERE, WHERE STAUNCH PRESBYTERIANS MET NEARLY A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO. THE GROUP THAT VISITED THE AREA IN 1986 HELD A BRIEF SERVICE AT THE SITE, LED BY MARIAN SCOTT MESTER, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ONE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLOSING OF PINE GROVE. MARIAN, WHO HAS SINCE PASSED AWAY, WAS A DESCENDANT OF THE SCOTT FAMILY PROMINENT IN THE EARLY DAYS OF KIDD'S MILL.

THE HOTEL, OR BOARDING HOUSE, THE RUINS OF WHICH ARE OBSERVED WITH IMAGINATIVE  
NOST