

Leaves of History



Historic Area: **Kidd's Mill**

KIDD'S MILL

Historical Tour

TEXT AND LAYOUT - KATHRYN CAMPBELL SLASOR
MECHANICAL PRODUCTION - MAX GROSSMAN

Jefferson Twp.

Washington County

Pennsylvania



Panoramic view of Kidd's Mill. Mill in upper left of picture.
Boarding House lower right. Picket fence washed put in 1912 flood.
Stables and outbuildings in foreground. Bridges shown also washed out in 1912.

WILDLIFE AT KIDD'S MILL

Many animals and plants may be seen along the abandoned railroad spur to the site of the Pine Grove Church and along Scott's Run at Kidd's Mill. Their growth and location is no doubt influenced by the moisture around the run and the dry, rocky sandstone outcrops.

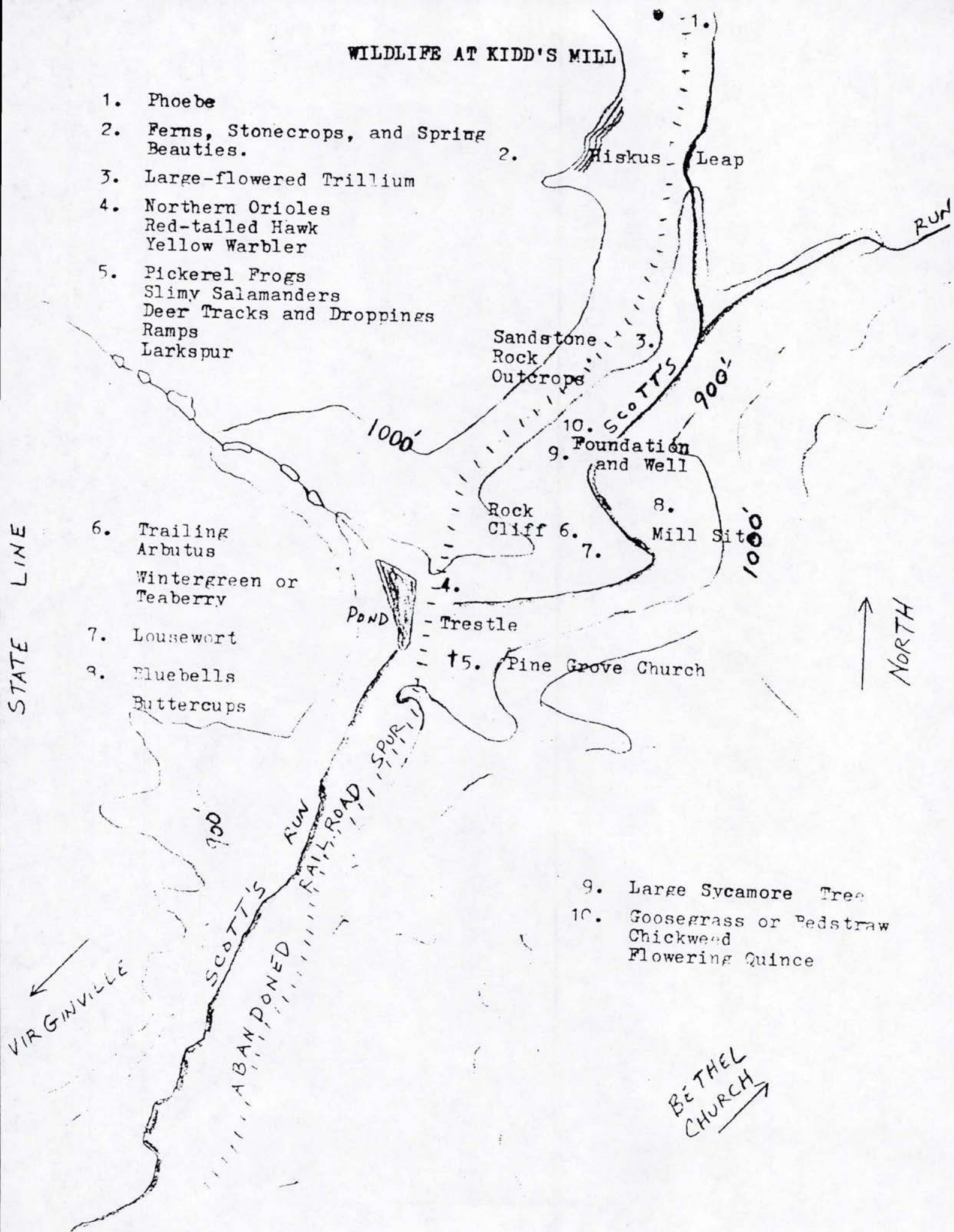
1. Phoebe, a small, sparrow-like bird of the flycatcher family, may be seen under the tipple at the beginning or end of your walk to Kidd's Mill. Notice its gray color & active disposition.
2. Ferns, such as polypody, and stonecrop are seen growing among the broken rocks and talus of Hiskus Leap. Spring beauties are seen covering ever rich bit of topsoil like a pinkish blanket.
3. Large-flowered trilliums are outstanding along the railroad spur. Some scholars say they were the so-called "lilies of the field" mentioned in the Bible. The careful observer will see other types of trilliums, also. Some are dull yellow, and some are dark red.
4. Directly overhead at the railroad trestle may be seen northern orioles nesting in the tall sycamores and aspens. Listen for their rich calls. This valley provides uplifting currents of air for sailing hawks high overhead. The little, noisy yellow warbler prefers to build its nest over water; look for it near the pond on the right of the trestle.
5. If there is wet mud near the site of the Pine Grove Church, the keen observer may find pickerel frogs, slimy salamanders and many types of animal tracks. Don't miss seeing the blue larkspur just off the path. Ramps, those smelly relatives of onions, grow in the valley behind the old church site.
6. Heading back up the railroad spur we come to a path going down and off to the right. Above and to its left is a large, rocky bluff and cliff. Here may be found the tiny but beautiful trailing arbutus. Notice, also, the teaberry or wintergreen from which we get the flavoring.
7. Before crossing the stream, we see the ~~strange~~ leaves and flowers of lousewort. It seems to grow nowhere else near here.
8. The buttercups and bluebells are outstanding near the site of the mill. No doubt because of the wet soil.
9. Sycamores are among are largest trees in girth. Travelers have been known to take shelter in them. These travelers include blacksnakes, chipmunks, raccoons, and, of course, humans.
10. At our feet may be found the tiny, star-like flowers of chickweed. Bedstraw, or goosegrass, may cling to our socks and shoestrings.

WILDLIFE AT KIDD'S MILL

1. Phoebe
2. Ferns, Stonecrops, and Spring Beauties.
3. Large-flowered Trillium
4. Northern Orioles
Red-tailed Hawk
Yellow Warbler
5. Pickerel Frogs
Slimy Salamanders
Deer Tracks and Droppings
Ramps
Larkspur

6. Trailing Arbutus
Wintergreen or Teaberry
7. Lousewort
8. Bluebells
Buttercups

9. Large Sycamore Tree
10. Goosegrass or Redstraw
Chickweed
Flowering Quince



STATE LINE

NORTH ↑

BETHEL CHURCH ↘

← VIRGINVILLE

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 road 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 Mill, 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 property 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 a 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. Some time 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" Road 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 rode

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.

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, as in the 42-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" will again soon blossom with a carpet of wildflowers 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 brighten the hillsides that in some spots are too steep for human ascent. 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 always 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 layers of flat stones that made 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, Bob Kidd, Bob Irwin, Carl Patsche, Paul Chilensky, and, in the past, A.D. White, have contributed much to spreading the history of this beloved area to all who would listen. Mr. White accompanied groups into the valley when he was far beyond the age of ninety, so great was his love for it.

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 hundredth 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 nostalgia, at one time held life and love, especially for the young and the young at heart. The mill itself, having been operated by the ancestors of Bob and Bill Kidd, Bob Irwin and Albert and Delvin Miller, performed a most valuable service to the entire neighborhood.

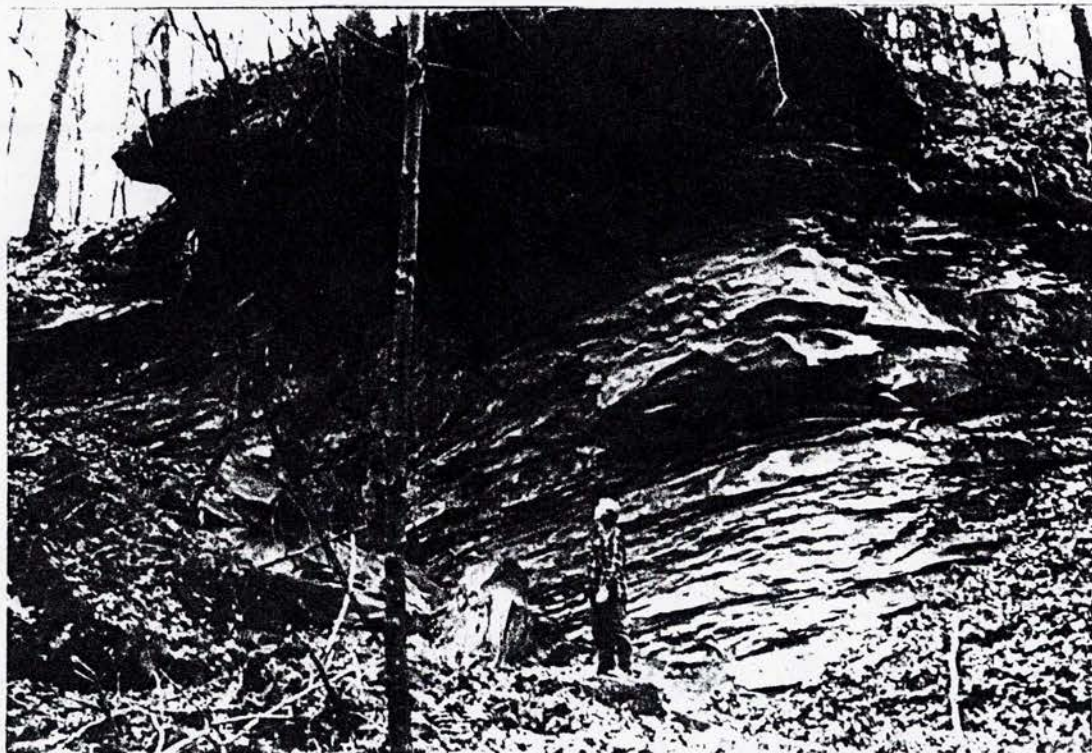
Yes, the old mill, the house of worship, the Post Office, the summer resort in the wilds - all are gone. Only ruins - and memories, remain.



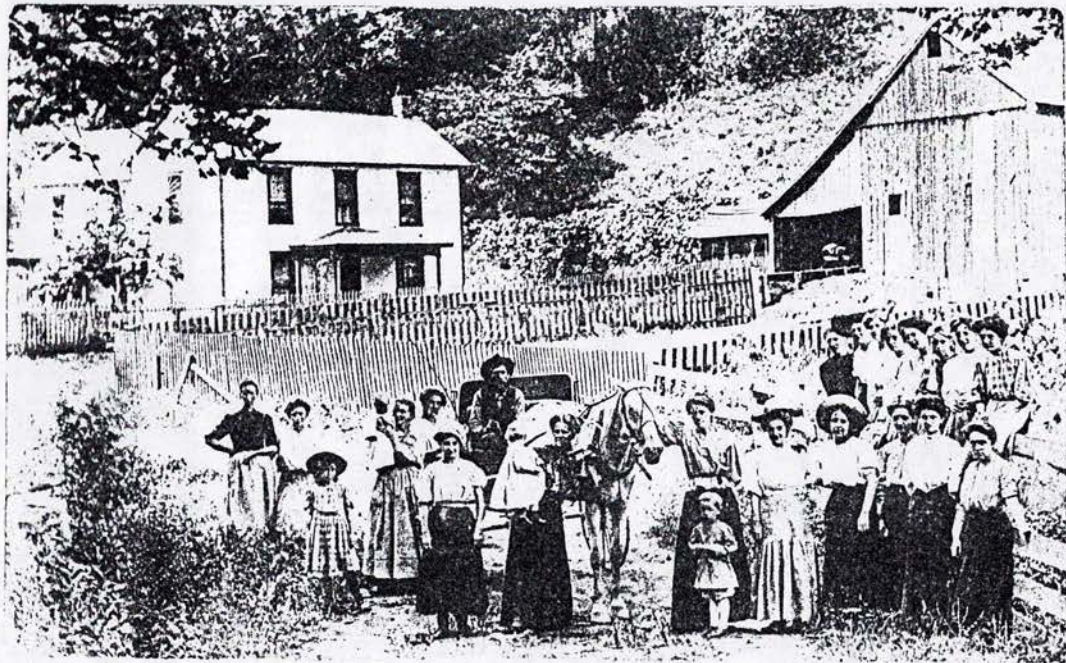
1986. The "Dry Run" crew - Albert Miller, Carl Patsche, A.D. White, Kathryn Siasor, Delvin Miller



1989. Blazing the trail. Albert Miller, Carl Patsche, Bob Irwin



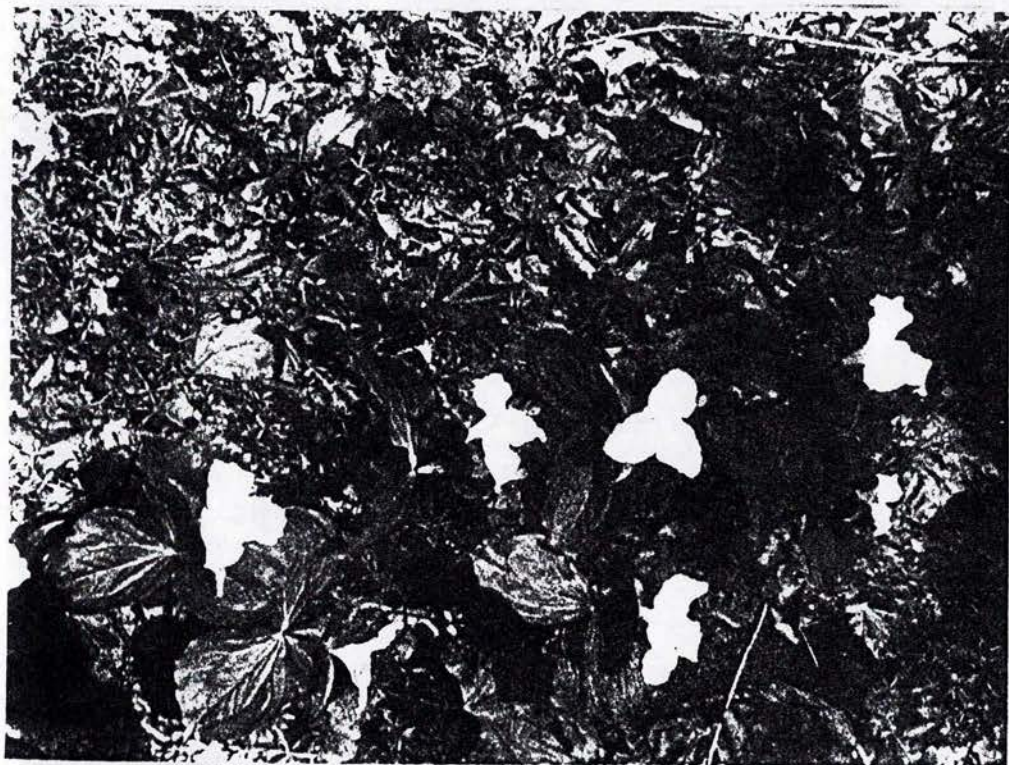
1986. Carl Patsche gazes at "Hiskus Jump"



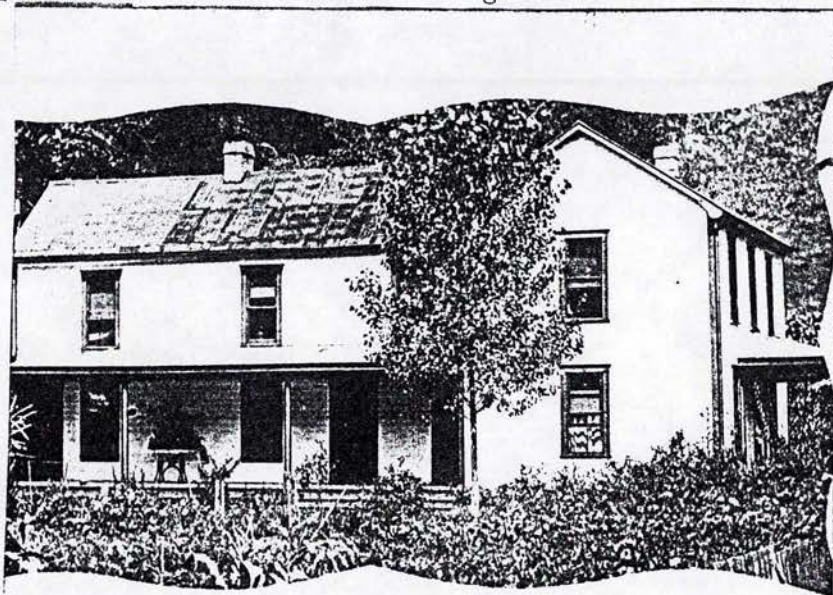
Hotel where girls from Pittsburgh boarded for two-week periods during summers at Kidd's Mill. Picket fence washed out in 1912 flood.



1983. The "hole in the ground" was once the boarding house.

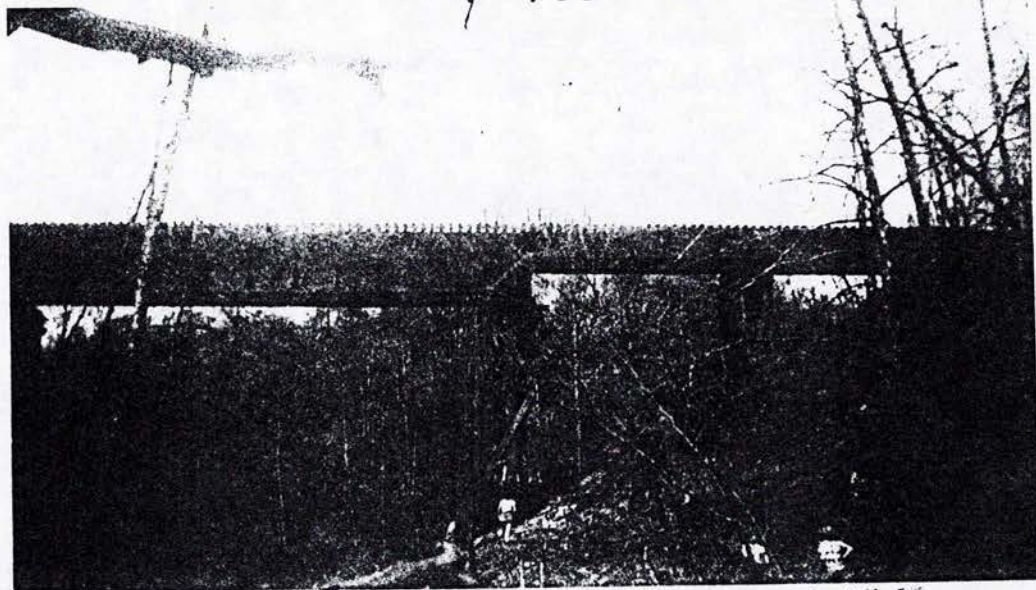


1983. Trillium blooms at Kidd's Mill.



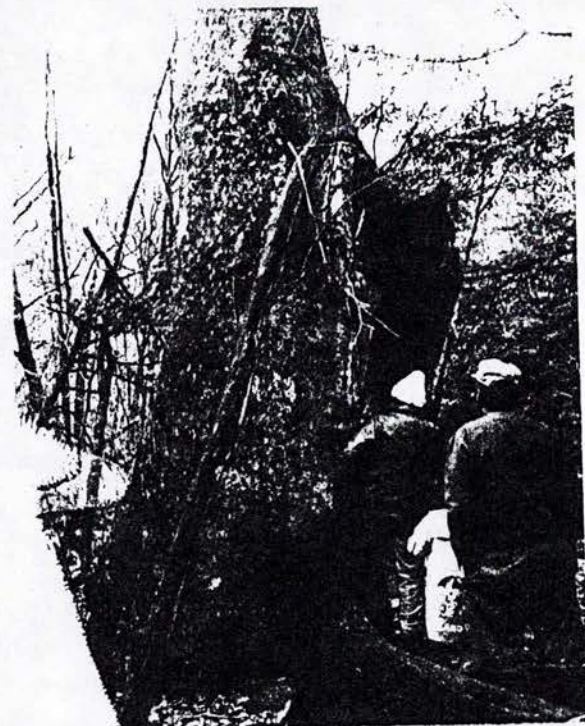
Side view of boarding house. Bancroft Post Office was in lower right window.

MAY 1953



Trestle at Kidd's Mill 1953.

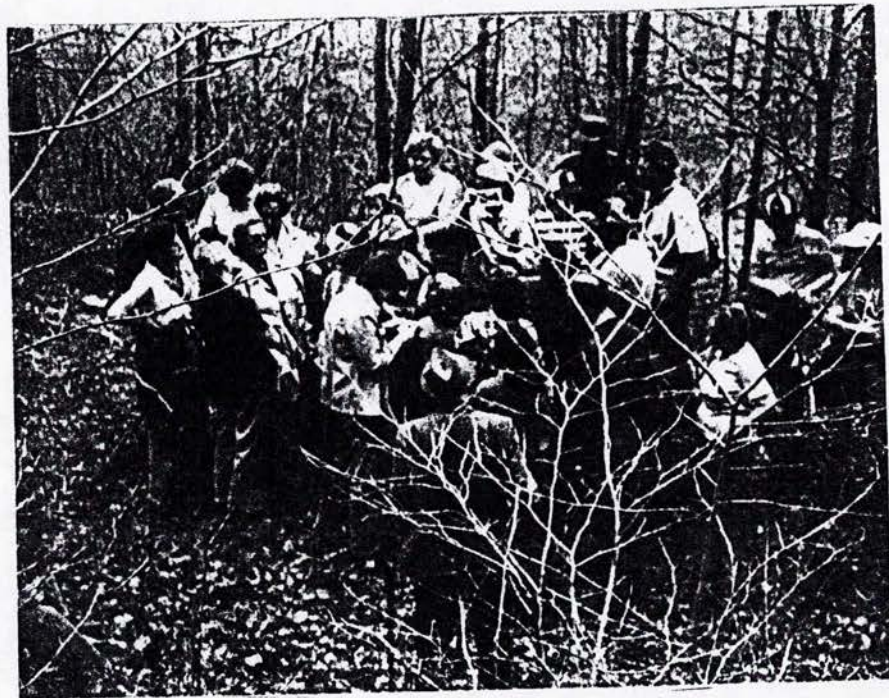
1953. The open trestle



1981. The hollow Sycamore



1970. Trestle has been filled in



1982. Site of Pine Grove Church
A.D. White, foreground, speaker
Back to camera



1987. The pool



1982. "Watch your step!"



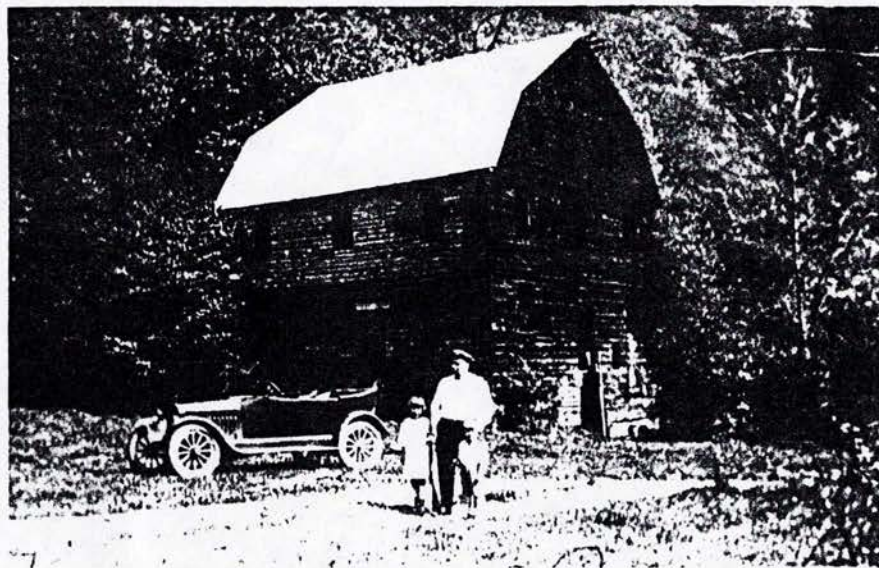
1982. Crossing Scott's Run



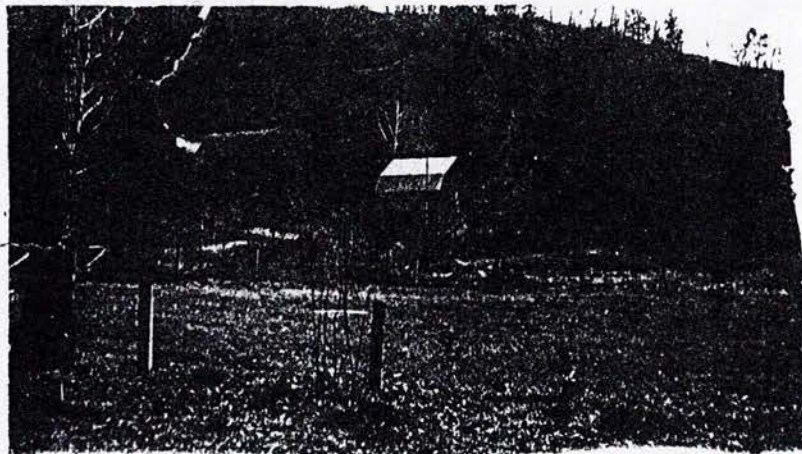
1983. Marion Butler, left



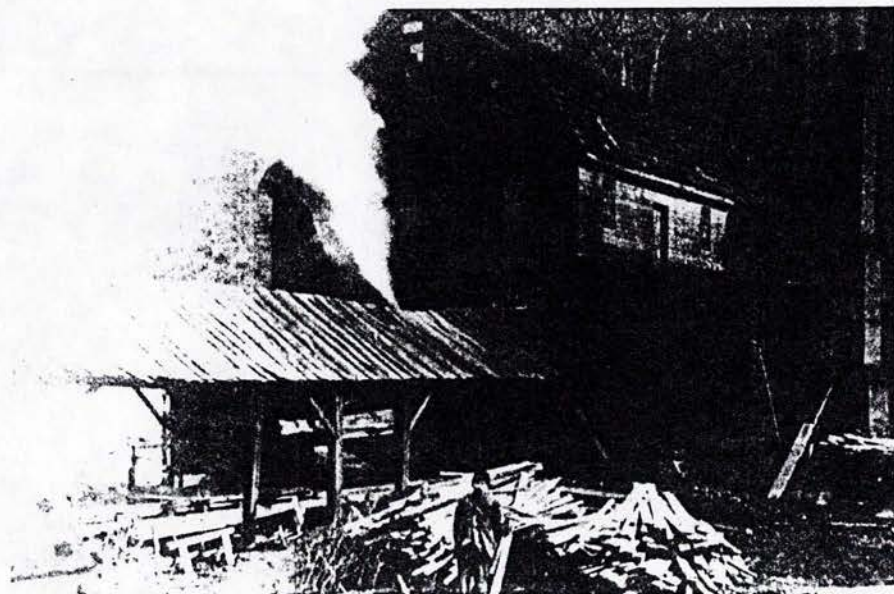
Eliza Murchland, left



1925. Frank Pollack, Frank, Jr., Clarice



Kidd's Mill at a distance



1906. It was a sawmill also



1970. Harry W. Campbell, David W. Slasor
David E. Slasor



1970. Bill and Bob Kidd
Grandsons of the mill



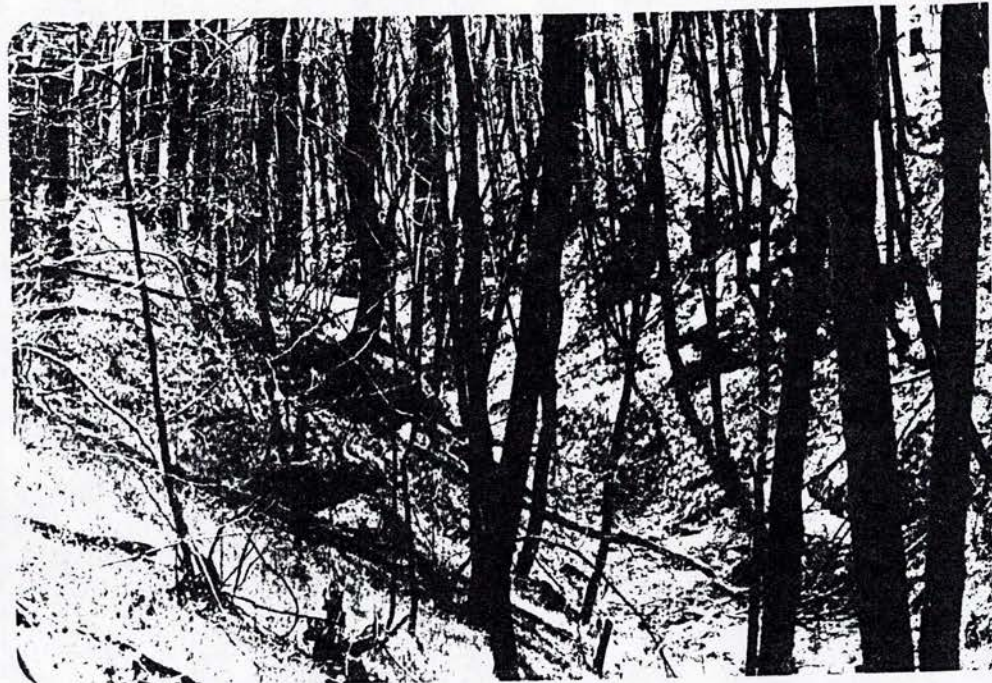
1970. Charles Lawson, Lawrence Bailey
Remains of Kidd's Mill



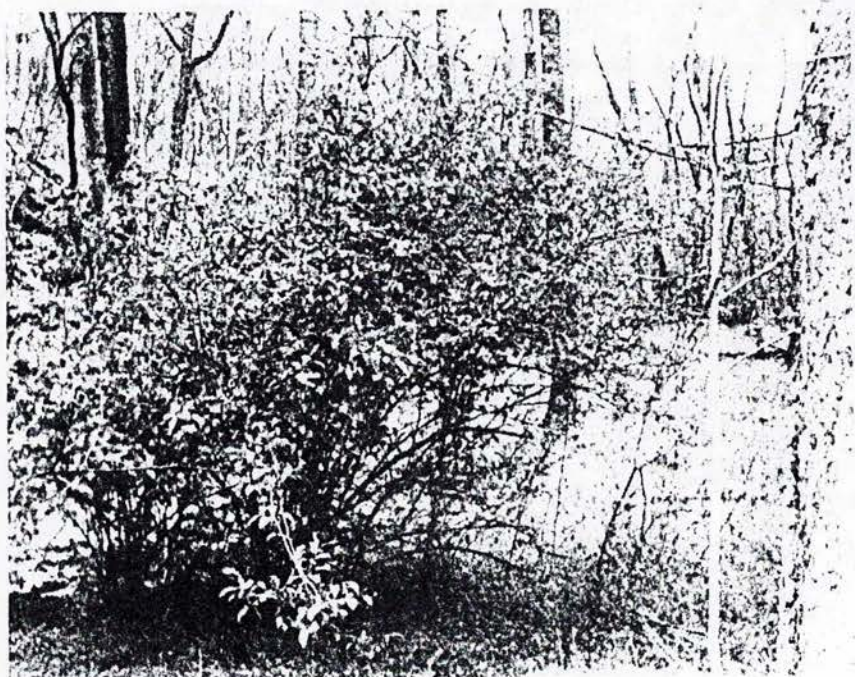
1970. Descending the "Bluff"



1991. Mallard on Scott's Run



1988. Ravine, possibly mill race



1989. Flowering Quince near old boarding house



1991. 10" Morel mushroom



1988. Removing fallen tree from railroad bed



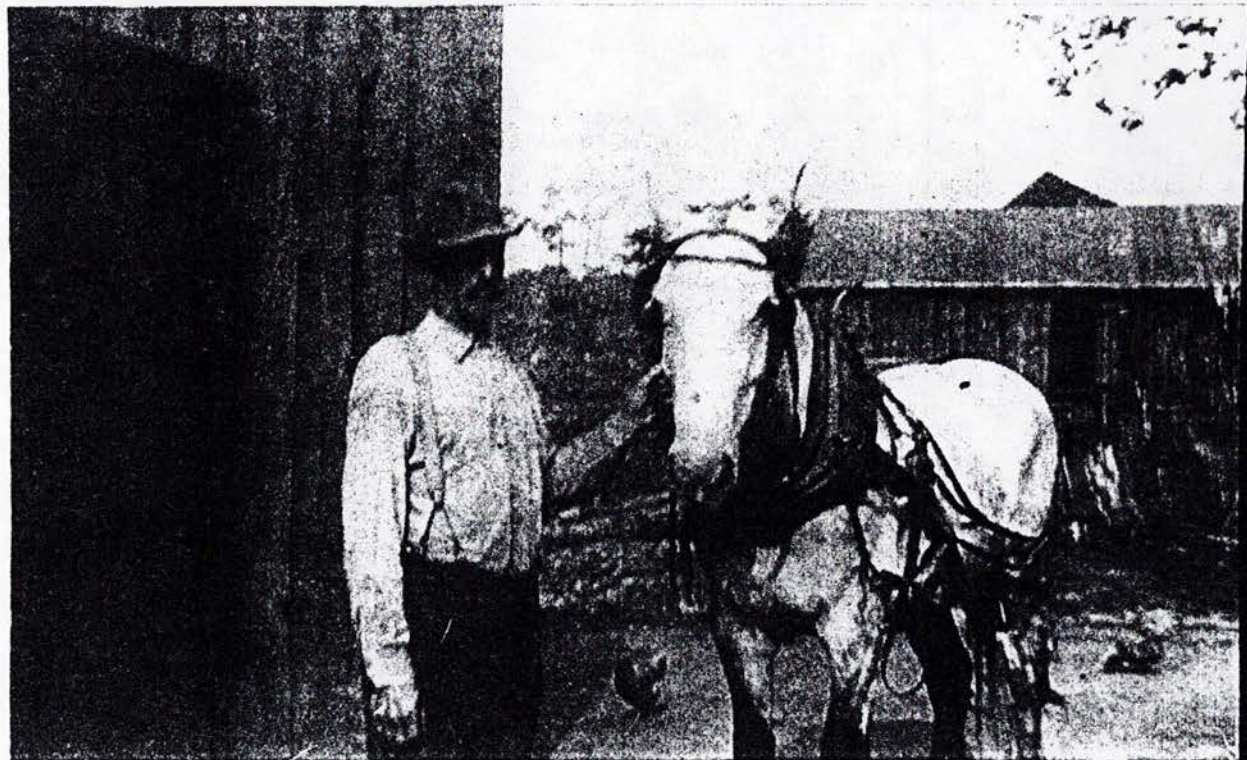
The McCreight children and friend



Virginia Cox Wise, Bob Irwin, Paul Wiegmann



1989 Carl Patsche, left. Thelma Hopwood, right.
Joe Nolan, Edith Creps, center.



Robert Kidd, last owner of Kidd's Mill



1987. Albert Miller, favorite haunt



1988. A.D. White, age 94. Virginia Cox Wise, right