

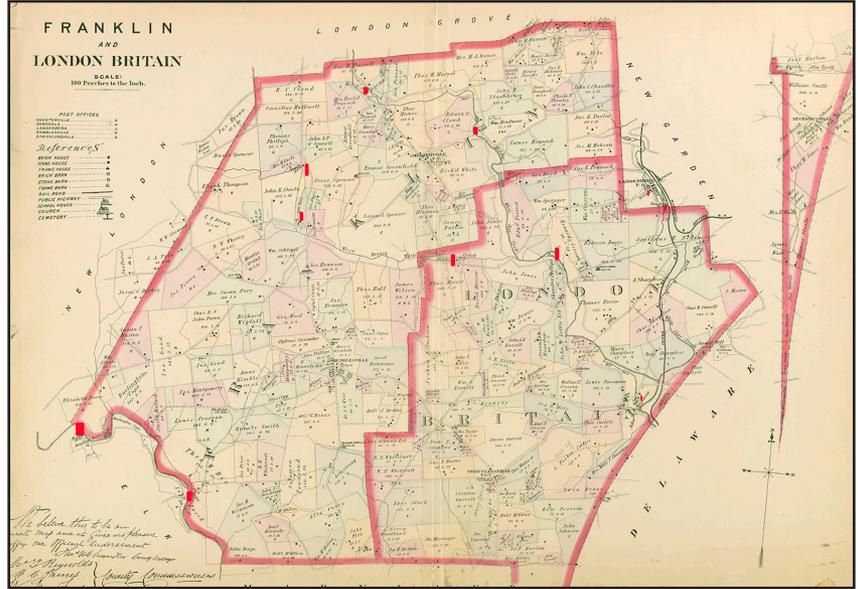
Franklin Township's Mill Heritage

Early mills only required small streams as a power source, which are plentiful in our area. With the overhead shoot turning a wheel, the grist mills processed the corn, wheat and other grains grown locally for food and to sell to others. Saw mills processed logs for building homes. Paper mills created a valuable commodity and cider mills crushed apples for turning into cider.

Various maps, from 1792 to 1883 recorded mills along the banks of the Big Elk Creek, the Middle Branch of the White Clay Creek and the West Branch of the White Clay Creek. In 1792 there were three mills in what is now Franklin Township. An 1860 map marks 12 mills within Franklin Township's borders. A map of 1873 shows five mills and the Breou Farm Atlas of 1883 records six mills.

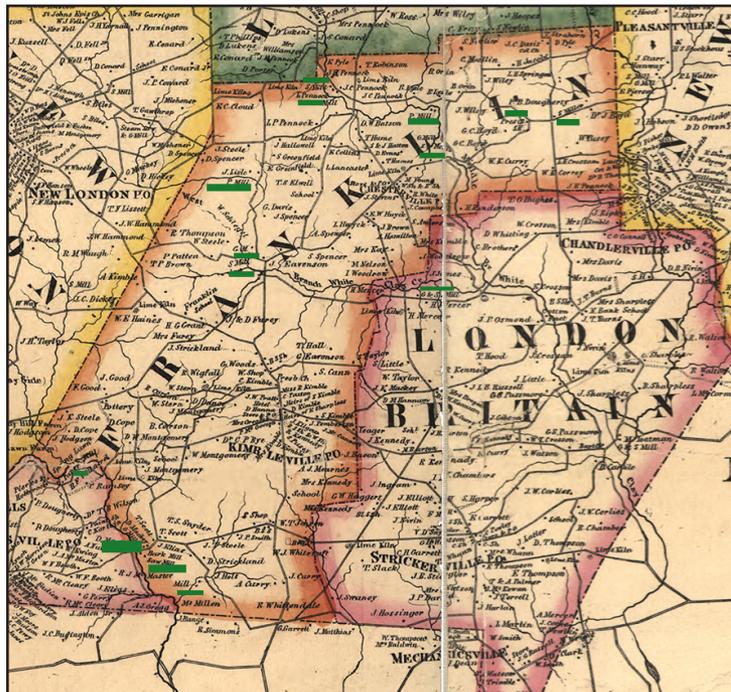
Interesting facts about Franklin Township Mills:

- Tweed's or Emmitt's Mill on Big Elk Creek is one of the oldest in Franklin Township, built by Abraham Emmitt in 1724. John Tweed operated the mill in the 1890s. On the property was a grist mill, saw mill and bark mill. One of the maps references a clover mill, too.
- There was a wooden grist mill near the London Grove Township border that was first owned by an Edward Conard/Cloud (depending upon which references you use). It was bought by Pennell Thompson and last operated by John Bush. This grist mill operated until 1940 to grind corn and feed. The building no longer exists.
- The Phillips family had a grist mill and greenhouses along the Middle Branch of White Clay Creek.



The 1883 Breou's Chester County Farm Atlas's map of Franklin and London Britain Township shows six mills in Franklin Township (red dots).

- William Schlegle had a grist, cider, and saw mill. It was purchased by Samuel and Harold (son) Martin in the 1890s. They ground flour here that was sent on westward bound Conestoga wagon trains. The last family to mill on this site was Ezreal and Chester (son) Hess. The barn/mill was turned into a square dance hall in the 1960s.
- One of the other mills still remaining in the Township was originally built in 1749 and commonly referred to as the John K. Steele Mill.
- Street names in the area reflect the names of the nearby mills: Hess Mill Road, Mercer Mill Road, Chandler Mill Road, etc.
- Various maps identify at least two paper mills operated in Franklin Township at any one time. There was Hufnal Paper Mill, Fuey's Paper Mill, and Lysle's Auburn Paper Mill.
- Auburn Paper Mill was started by Robert Lysle in 1827. In the 1850s Auburn Paper Mill had 5 employees and was selling 400 reams of paper for \$18,000 in a year. His sons, Robert Jr. and James, dissolved their partnership in 1861 and sold the paper mill; it was destroyed by fire in 1874. James and his son, Wilson, opened another mill along the Western Branch of the White Clay Creek. Here, Wilson invented and patented a chemical filter paper. In the 1920s it was producing over 2,000 pounds of filter paper a day. Over the first half of the 20th century Wilson's four daughters and their cousin ran the mill until it was no longer profitable in the early 1950s.



Over a dozen mills are marked (green dots) on the 1860 Chester County map by TJ Kennedy.

Sources:

- *Avon Grove: 300 Years in the Making* by the Avon Grove School District Continuing Education Committee, 1982
- FT's Comprehensive Plan, adopted February 2006
- 1792 Chester County map by Howell
- 1856 Chester County map by TJ Kennedy
- 1860 Chester County map by TJ Kennedy
- 1873 Franklin Township map by Whitmer
- 1883 Breou's Chester County Farm Atlas