

## One of Birmingham's Early Industries

### OLD MILL

"Birmingham may take pride in a lot of progressive development during the past 50 years," remarked an old timer. "But what buzzing factory is there in the village today to compare with the old mill that was down by the creek at the end of Quarton's pond? I remember when the machinery down there was running full tilt, day and night, grinding out flour for farmers living all over the country-side."

And so it was. The romantic old mill is easily recalled by many residents today, for it has not been gone for much more than a decade, but there are none living who can remember the first grist mill built on the same spot, well over a century ago.

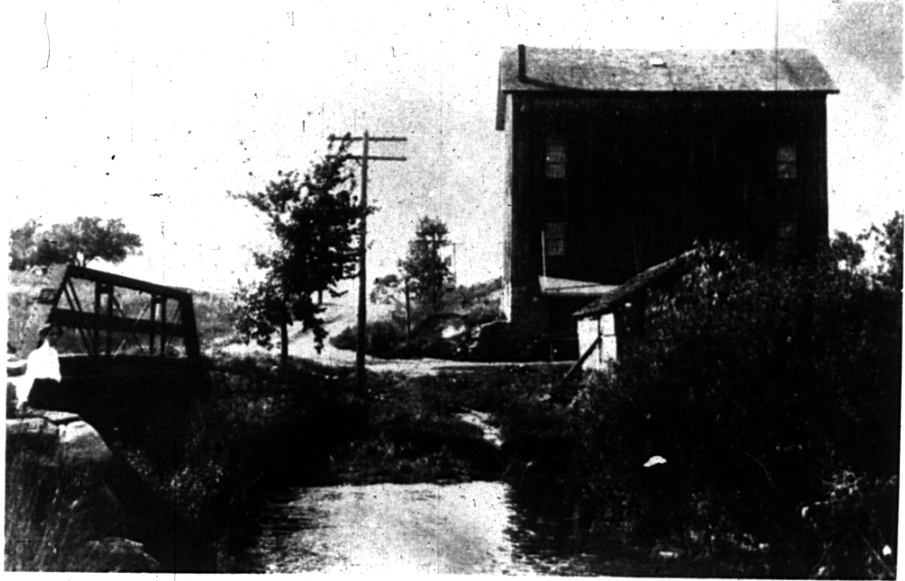
In 1819, while Michigan was still a territory, and only a year after the first settlers elected Birmingham for a permanent home-site, two brothers obtained a land grant from the government. The land described in the deed was an area near the southern end of the body of water now known as Quarton Lake. The identity of the brothers is shrouded in uncertainty, although the consensus of opinion points to the names of John and Rufus Hunter, two of Birmingham's pioneer residents. After a great amount of labor the eastern bank of the diminutive River Rouge was built up some 20 feet, and the narrow waterway blocked at almost the spot where the new concrete dam is located. Then the mill was started. Despite handicaps of primitive frontier life the two brothers' skill and knowledge of building is evident today, for the original old stone foundation, and a portion of the cellar survives, a mute manifest of the success of this first venture is not recorded, and one can only guess at the service rendered the handful of farmer-settlers in the nearby communities.

That the mill was never idle for any great length of time during the next century is practically a certainty. The ownership however, seemed to be subject to frequent changes, and not until the end of the 50's can we be certain of the names of the millers. During the interim however, the original building was often remodeled considerably, but its location remained the same. From the crude water-wheels which furnished power when the two brothers first began to grind their neighbor's wheat about 1820, successive owners built up the east bank of the stump filled pond still higher, reconstructed the dam and were thus enabled to utilize more power for their new machinery.

Farmers brought their grain for many miles to the old mill, left it after weighing it, in the storage sheds, and returned a few days later for their flour. No money changed hands in the transaction. The farmers gave their grain to the miller who ground it into flour. For the service of the miller the farmers allowed him to keep the bran and middlings, husks of the wheat kernels and by-products of the grinding process, all of which the miller eventually sold to feather and hog owners for winter fodder. If we are to believe many of the older residents of the village, today we must surely look upon the mill site as one of the most romantic spots in the days gone by.

"Yes, sir," an elder who knows said, "On warm moonlight nights the old mill stream heard softly spoken words of many a young couple, and they weren't talking much about village politics either."

At the beginning of the present century the mill was owned by McClellan and Saterlee, two well known residents today. About 1905 Saterlee sold his share in Bertrau, and the establishment was modernized until it was cap-



able of serving the needs of the scores of new farmers in the surrounding territory. A man named Mouch is said to have had the next interest in the busy "factory," but in 1910 it was sold to the last of the millers, Niles Hansen, who now lives on West Maple avenue just above the site of his old mill. He tells in graphic detail of the busy years in which he operated it, of its utility to neighboring farmers many of whom are prominent Birmingham citizens today.

"There was Fred Quarton," reminisced Mr. Hansen. "He had 200 acres just west of this house and extending along the banks of the old pond. His brother Bert had 160 acres just north of him. They both brought their grain to the mill as did Lymiah Feabody and many others some of whom lived up near Pontiac. When I was running the mill I fixed up the old dam, put in two good turbines and was able to turn out 50 barrels of flour a day. Of course to do that we had to work all night, but we did this many weeks of the year when the grain was being brought to us in large quantities. I hired Bertrau to help me, and one of us would run the mill during the daytime while the other took the night-shift. During the winter months we got the grain from elevators in Pontiac and elsewhere, so there was no 'back' time in the business. In 1918 I sold the mill and property to a Detroit concern for modern real estate purposes. That was the end of the mill. There, down in the valley, you can still see the original foundation. It's sure a real landmark in Birmingham."

Hansen tells of an incident in which Henry Ford, interested in the old mill site, asked its owner where he got the power to run all of the machinery.

"Why I get it from the head of the Rouge," replied Hansen.

"Well I get mine from the bottom," countered the industrial magnate.

"Then you must get it all" enjoined the sage miller.

### SNAKES!

There was once a rattlesnake scare in Birmingham. The date is immaterial, but it was a long time ago. Paddy Wilson was orating first aid in case of snake bite. Queried Jack Baldwin:

"Isn't there any other cure besides ray whiskey for snake bite?"

"Shure, in a what if there isn't?" parried Paddy.

### REMEMBER?



Canile Jenks and Paddy Wilson were hand in hand in business. While Paddy was the sexton, Canile furnished the coffin, after careful investigations.

No sooner had a resident's death been announced than Jenks was promptly on the scene with a

tape measure. In due time a substantial casket, of exquisite tailoring, was brought around, the deceased placed therein, and submitted to Paddy for interment.

George Shain is apparent on Canile's left in the photograph. He was a carpenter.

### The Village Band

"No Sunday picnic complete without a brass band" was the cry of a half century ago, and in this part of the country only one band was ever considered Birmingham's First and Foremost Brass Band. Veritably every social function of any importance whatsoever demanded the presence of the nine youthful musicians, and they were unfailingly obliging about putting in an appearance, rain or shine, whenever their well filled engagement book had an 'X' on the calendar.

Sometime during the year 1873 the aspiring young musician first conceived the plan for the organization of a brass band in Birmingham. In short time interest in the idea was at high pitch with nine candidates equipped with plenty of enthusiasm but minus the instruments. This minor difficulty was finally surmounted through arrangement with some trustful musical concern, a capable leader and instructor was ob-

tained, and the Birmingham Brass Band became a reality.

Given due time to master the intricate process of blowing the right note at the right time on the beautiful highly polished horns, the boys finally made their first public appearance. Their names, with the exception of two which are uncertain, were: Steve Tucker, Mark Fitzpatrick, George Mitchell, Tertelus Crosby, George Daines, Frank Allen and George Beech. The two whose names must go down as unknown heroes were responsible for the conduct of the bass and snare drums.

That their initial appearances were well received seems certain in view of the fact that the "hat" was passed with great success on several occasions to offset the debt owed the musical concern from which the instruments had been purchased. It is said that many of the original instruments in the village's first brass band have been inherited by the Baldwin High school, and may be viewed there today.