



Aquetong Spring and Surrounding Property

Geology:

The geology of the site is relatively straight forward. In laymen's terms it consists of three layers of rock, a layer of limestone and dolomite (Conococheague/Beekmantown), sandwiched between two layers of red (Brunswick) shale. These layers are inclined in relation to the surface and are covered with no more than three feet of red and tan clays that are the result of the degradation of the underlying rock strata. This is the reason for the presence of the spring. The coldwater limestone spring is the largest of its kind in the five-county region surrounding Philadelphia and one of the largest in the state. It flows at rate of about 2,000 gallons per minute and forms the headwaters of the main stem of Aquetong Creek. The temperature of the water released at the spring head is a constant 52 degrees Fahrenheit (11 degrees Centigrade).

When comparing the history of the site with its geology, the statement was made by an investigating geologist that he had never before seen a site where the geology had been the prime mover in the determination of its uses throughout its history.

History

Pre-1682

The Lenni Lenape Native Americans are the earliest known inhabitants of the area surrounding the spring. Their name for it was "Aquetong" meaning "spring (Aque-) in the bushes" (-tong). It has been reported that the Lenni Lenapes blamed the spring for an outbreak of smallpox and abandoned the spring area at some point.

1682

William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, acquires the spring from the Lenni Lenape Native Americans under the terms of the Great Treaty.

1701

Penn gave the property containing the spring to his secretary and trusted friend, James Logan. The 600 acre parcel was referred to as the "Great Spring Tract". Logan created the "Loganian Rights" which held that anyone using the water from the spring for mill purposes would have to pay him a tax. These rights were finally canceled in the 1930s.

1747

Jonas Ingham, an English immigrant who arrived in New England in 1705, bought the spring from Logan in 1747. His son, Jonathon and subsequently, his grandson, Jonathan, inherited the spring. Jonathan Jr., a medical doctor, tended to General Washington's troops on several occasions as the army crossed the Delaware River at Coryell's Ferry. The Ingham estate was the camping ground for the army on their retreat from New Jersey in 1776 and before the Battle of Trenton. The Ingham property was probably also used in 1778 by GW's troops as they waited to cross the river on their way from Valley Forge to Monmouth, New Jersey. Jonathan died in 1793 after helping Philadelphians struck by the yellow fever epidemic. During this time period the spring came to be known as "Ingham Springs."

1801

Jonathan's son Samuel inherited the spring. When Samuel was 21 years old in 1801 he began the Ingham Springs Paper Mill which he operated until his death. He also built limekilns on the premises. Samuel is a prominent person in Solebury's, New Hope's and the nation's history. Besides building the Delaware Canal and the first bridge to cross the Delaware River from Pennsylvania to New Jersey, Samuel was President Andrew Jackson's Secretary of Treasury after serving many terms as a U.S.



Congressman. He resigned from the post in 1831 and turned down an offer to become the minister to Russia to return to Solebury and Ingham Springs. Samuel died in Trenton in 1860.

1860

The Ingham estate began to be sold off upon Samuel's death. Ingham Springs was sold to the Beaumont family. The Ingham Springs property was sold to Horatio Nelson Beaumont and the Deer Park property being sold to his brother, Andrew Jackson Beaumont.

The Loganian Library Company in Philadelphia contracted Samuel Croasdale to survey the Logan tract to collect revenues under the Loganian Rights agreement. I found a map of the survey at The [Library Company of Philadelphia](#). The survey may have been done in part to support a lawsuit by the Library Company versus Beaumont (Library Company of Philadelphia versus Andrew J. Beaumont et al.: decree of the Court of Nisi Prius, 1861). It appears the Library Company attempted to obtain a legal ruling on how to evaluate improvements done by landowners along the creek from the spring to the river during the period from 1753 to 1860. These "ground rents" were established when James Logan sold the property to Jonas Ingham in 1747. According to the librarian at the Philadelphia Library Company, Logan had a number of properties in both PA and NJ and each time he sold one of them he set up something known as "Loganian Rights".

1867

The spring and surrounding property was sold to Dr. V. Mattison. In 1870 the dam was built at the east end of the property which created the Aquetong Lake. In 1871 a fish hatchery was built by two Philadelphia men, James Thompson and H. C. Tagg. The T & T Hatchery, as it was known, eventually contained 100,000 shad, 60,000 brook trout and smaller numbers of salmon and terrapin turtles. The public could view the operation and could fish for a quarter (25¢). In addition to supplying fish, the lake provided drinking water. In order to bottle the water, a dam was created directly below the spring forming a smaller pond. The former spawning facility may have been converted into a bottling house.

1936

Dr. Perry Bond and his wife Helen bought Ingham Springs from the Mattison Estate for a recorded price of \$11,500 in 1936. By this time the property had fallen into disrepair and by all accounts was nothing more than a dumping ground. Over the next 39 years, the Bonds preserved the lake and spring and built the residence that stands today. It is to these two people that we owe the fact that Ingham Springs is a pristine and natural haven for fish and fowl alike.

1975

The Bonds sold Ingham Springs to Helen's brother, Dr. Judy. The Bonds had become too old to take care of the property and retired to Iowa. Dr. Bond lived to 104 years. The Judys made few changes and maintained the property much as it was when they purchased it.

1993

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission acquired Ingham Springs and surrounding property in 1993. It became the office and home of Michael Roush, the Area Boating Programs Specialist for the eastern half of Pennsylvania.

1996

The PFBC completed emergency repairs to the dam by removing approximately six feet of the outlet structure. This took pressure off the aging barrier, but also lowered the water level of the lake, adding about eighty feet of wetlands to the western shoreline.



2009

Solebury Township began negotiating for ownership of the historic Ingham Spring property in the mid-1990s; just a few years after the PFBC acquired the property from its last private owners. It took almost 15 years to achieve, but Solebury acquired the title to the 45 acre property in 2009. Solebury also negotiated a 25-year lease with the PFBC for the approximately 1/4th acre that includes the spring head.

2013

The question of whether the earthen 1870 dam should be restored or removed was on the table throughout this lengthy history, as repairing the dam would be costly (estimates exceeded \$1 million) and might not be the best environmental choice. The Board of Supervisors voted on July 16, 2013 to breach the dam completely.

2015

The Township contracted Flyway Excavation Inc. to breach the earthen dam and drain the lake. In addition, the Township began to seek grants to ecologically restore the property and create a passive recreational park. On March 17, the Township supervisors unanimously agreed to name all future references to this property as “Aquetong”. Therefore, the spring will be referred to as “Aquetong Spring”. The supervisors also named the park “Aquetong Spring Park”.

References

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Ingham Spring, Draft Master Plan, PA Fish and Boat Commission (ca 1995)

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