

It remained in possession of the family for 113 years. In some Bucks County deeds and other old documents the spring is referred to as “the Great Spring,” and thus it has shared three names (Aquetong, Ingham, and Great) down through the years to the present, again known by its first name. Samuel D. Ingham, when at home addressed his letters from “Great Spring.” Dr. John Watson, writing I 1804, says: (2)

“A very large spring rises in Solebury, called by the natives Aquetong, and by the white people Inghams, or the Great Spring. The water flows out in a cove or hollow, the stones on the southeast being a solid red shale, while those on the northwest are limestone. It is remarkably clear and cold in summer, and freezes in winter. The quantity is supposed sufficient with 18 or 20 feet fall, to turn two grist mills uniformly throughout the year; and there are five good sites for mill-works on the stream to where it falls in to the Delaware at New Hope, or Coryells Ferry, a distance of about 3 miles. It is employed at the present time for one paper mill, one fulling mill, two merchant mills, four saw mills, and an oil mill.”

Aside from the natural beauty of its environment, the spring has distinction for the great volume of its flow. Amasa Ely, an engineer of the Water Department of Philadelphia, after making careful tests some years ago, estimated the daily discharge at 3,000,000 gallons. The crystal clear water boils up from the bottom of a partly shaded pool, from which it has exit over a spillway into a gully that carries it a short distance into a lake several acres in extent. This lake was formed many years ago by an artificial dyke constructed to impound the spring water for mill power purposes.

A theory has been advanced that the spring is an outlet for a vast subterranean cavern or perhaps a series of connected caverns. Dr. Walter M. Brenner (3) describes it as “a fissure spring flowing from a definite fault in the surrounding Shenandoah limestone and the Brunswick shale near by.” It has often been said that in some way it is connected with the curious natural formation popularly known as Konkey Hole, three miles away in Buckingham Township near Holicong.

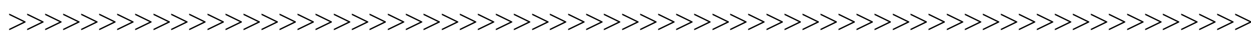
The Indians, who were very fond of the country around the spring, had fantastic legends, relating to it. One was that a party of young hunters, pursuing a deer, drove it into Konkey Hole, and the animal in the course of half an hour emerged at Aquetong Spring, alive and even uninjured - a pretty good tale for young hunters to carry back to the old chief as an excuse for poor marksmanship.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Samuel D. Ingham had the chronic failing of many great men. His handwriting was desperately bad. Rev. Joseph Mathias, in a letter from Hilltown under date of February 7, 1814, to William H. Rowland, a member of the Legislature sitting at Harrisburg, says: “This writing is extremely bad, but I think not worse than a letter I received yesterday from S. D. Ingham. I have attempted to read it and failed - resumed, and failed - resumed, and have at length succeeded at most of it a few words. I shall lay it by till I learn Greek, Chinese, or something else.”

(2) Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1826, Vol. I, Part 2, pages 282, 283.

(3) The Flora of Bucks County, by Walter M. Benner, 1938, page 11.



2b. AQUETONG CREEK

Solebury Township: Ingham's Spring; Auquetong

George MacReynolds, "Place Names in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Alphabetically Arranged in an Historical Narrative," (*published by the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pa., 1942, 1955, 1976*), pages 10-12.

Rises in Auquetong Spring, Solebury Township, and flows eastwardly about two and half miles, emptying into the Delaware River at New Hope. The creek naturally takes its name from the famous spring.

On November 2, 1710, Richard Heat, "of Northern Liberties, Philadelphia, gentleman," received from William Penn a grant of 1,000 acres of land in two contiguous tracts of 500 acres each, fronting a mile on Delaware River and extending back in the woods to the border of "the Great Spring tract," embracing the entire site of the present borough of New Hope.

The "Mill Tract" of this grant covered the lower Auquetong Creek valley. On this creek Robert Heath, the father, and Richard Heath, the son, probably jointly, built a grist mill in 1707. The clatter of the Heath mill was the first industrial sound that broke the wilderness silence of mid-Bucks County. Plumstead pioneers, who had gone horseback twenty-five miles to Pennypack mills, now came by the same means down the bridle trail, afterwards known as Sungan Road, to the nearer Heath mill. It will be noticed that the mill was built three years before the grant of 1710, indicating the Heaths may have moved there and were operating at the earlier date on a lease concession.

After the building of the Heath mill the little valley soon became the scene of much mill activity. A fulling mill was built as early as 1712 by Philip Williams. In the old-time process of making woolen cloth, a fulling mill was the establishment where the fabric was shrunk by means of heat and moisture.

The first saw mill on the stream was built in 1740. Benjamin Canby, operator of the ferry, built a forge along the creek in 1744. Jonathan Ingham, who bought the spring tract from James Logan in 1747, erected a fulling mill some distance below the spring and carried on the business of fuller and farmer. This mill passed to his son, Dr. Jonathan Ingham, and in turn to his son, Samuel D. Ingham, who gained possession upon attaining his majority in 1800.

It is probable that Samuel D. Ingham abandoned the fulling mill. The same year he built a paper mill, which he operated until his death in 1860. He had learned the paper making trade in a mill on Pennypack Creek and also had experience in operating a mill in Bloomfield, New Jersey. In the Library of The Bucks County Historical Society are preserved fine specimens of laid writing papers made in 1805-1810 at the Ingham Springs Paper Mill, bearing the mill's plain watermark, I. S.

Benjamin Parry in 1789 purchased the Dr. John Todd mill in New Hope, believed to have been erected in 1768, and established a flaxseed oil and flour mill in connection with his lumber business. This old building, long abandoned as a mill, has recently been remodeled and converted into a modern playhouse.

In 1870 two Philadelphians, James B. Thompson and H. C. Tagg, leased from A. Jackson Beaumont, then owner of the spring farm, a small piece of ground near the spring spillway for a fish hatchery.

