

A Glimpse Of The Mansfield That Was

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By PAUL L. WHITE

The gushing "big springs" north of East Fourth St. across from the Post Office Annex, and high rise of land which is now Central Park, were the two features which determined that the present site of Mansfield — not the Jacob Newman settlement three miles east along the Rocky Fork — was to be the county seat of the area surveyed by General James Hedges in 1807-08.

The Rocky Fork settlement where the Chatlain Nursery farm is now located along State Route 39 at the intersection of the Mt. Zion Rd., was the site of the first cabin and grist mill in the Mansfield area.

This settlement started to grow before Gen. Hedges and Jacob Newman decided to develop a settlement farther upstream (Mansfield) on what they determined to be a more suitable site because of the topography of the land and springs which flowed in great volume.

A town plat was drawn up for the Rocky Fork settlement but was discarded when Mansfield was platted. The Rocky Fork settlement prospered to some extent through the early 1800s and became a milling center. The power for the milling came from the Rocky Fork through a system of mill races which propelled the water wheel and the grist buhrs.

Jacob Newman, a kinsman of Gen. Hedges, became the first white settler in Richland County when he erected his log cabin on the

Rocky Fork in the spring of 1807. He erected a crude sawmill on three quarter sections of land with the help of his nephews—Isaac, Jacob, and John Brubaker. Gen. Hedges also provided help by loaning some of his surveying crew in return for the use of the cabin as headquarters.

The first little cabin was later replaced by a larger cabin in 1809. A water propelled sawmill processed lumber for other cabins in the area.

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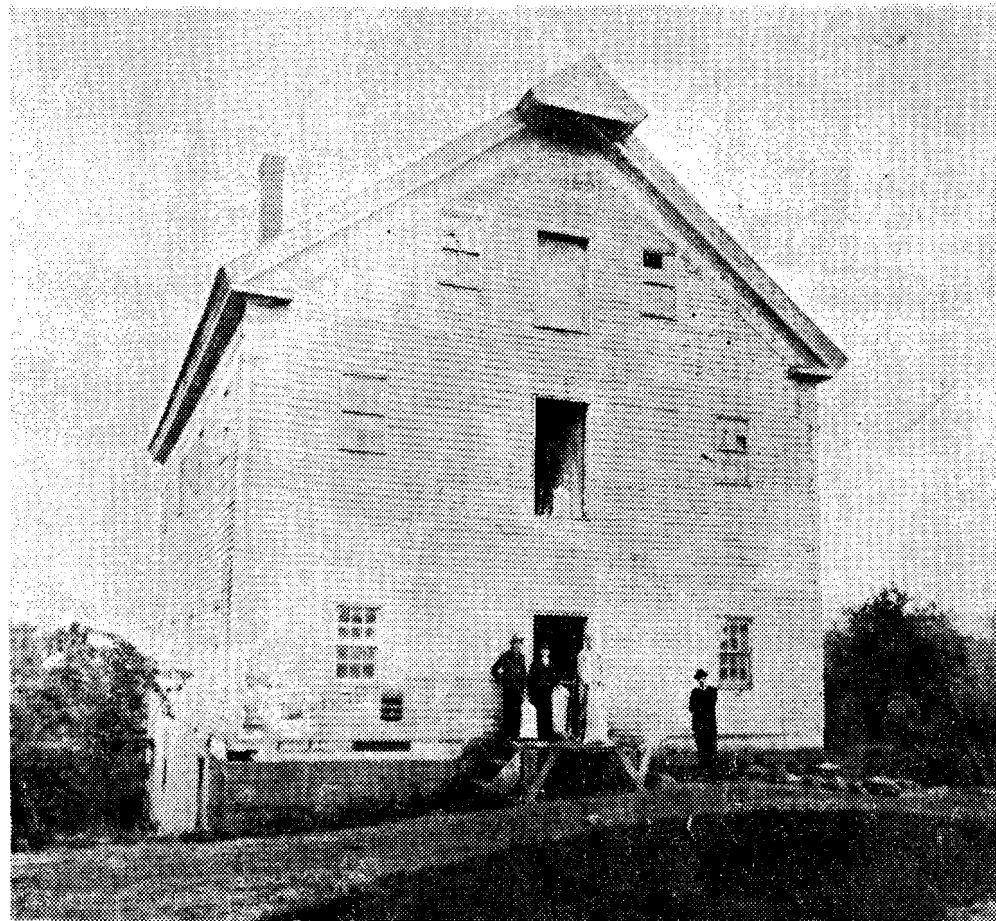
By 1808, six settlers were in the Rocky Fork settlement. The Fountaine family and Jacob Newman's brother Michael and his family were among these.

The need for a grist mill in the area prompted the construction of a dam, millrace and a crude mill. The grinding buhrs were also very crude being segments of native boulders.

Settlers of the area brought their grain for grinding to the Newman mill. The mill was an asset in bringing other settlers to the Rocky Fork community.

Jacob Newman sold his holdings on the Rocky Fork to his brother Michael in 1811 and joined Gen. Hedges in promoting the town of Mansfield upstream.

The new settlement of Mansfield caught on as James Larwill held land sales at a tent pitched by the Big Spring. The Rocky Fork settlement's future dimmed and finally flickered out.



The Campbell Mill once stood on the site of the present Chatlain Nursery at the intersection of State Route 39 and Mt. Zion Rd. The original mill was erected by Jacob Newman in 1809. The mill in this picture was built in the 1840s on the original foundation.

Jacob Newman joined Gen. Crook's expedition as guide from Mansfield to Gen. William Henry Harrison's army in northwestern Ohio during the winter of 1812. He became ill through exposure during the extreme winter weather and died. He is buried in the Mansfield Cemetery on lot number 100.

Michael Beam acquired the Rocky Fork mill and it became widely known throughout the rapidly growing pioneer area. Settlers came in from surrounding counties hauling their grain on wagons and horseback. Many had to be lodged at the Beam cabin overnight because of the

great distances and difficult forest trails.

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In 1812 Beam erected a staunch blockhouse to protect the Rocky Fork settlement. Soldiers from Mt. Vernon were stationed there to protect the settlement and outlying Cabins from Indian attack. Sol-

diers were dispatched from Beam's blockhouse to the scene of the Copus Massacre on the Black Fork. Approximately 12 soldiers are buried in unmarked and unlocated graves in the vicinity of present State Route 39 and Mt. Zion Rd. These men died of disease while stationed at Beam's blockhouse.

In the 1840s a new large frame mill was built on the site using part of the foundation of the Beam's mill. This mill passed to several different owners during its history. At one time H. L. Goundy owned it but it became better known as Campbell's mill during the long tenure of the Campbell family in the milling business.

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In the 1920s the mill fell into disuse and by the early 1930s it was razed. When the bricks were removed from the old State Route 39 roadbed (1934-35) the rubble was dumped in the upper part of the millrace for fill.

Traces of the lower part of the millrace which carried the water back into the Rocky Fork after it turned the millwheel are still visible near the creek bank at the bridge.

The Rocky Fork settlement was not chosen to be the county seat of Richland County but its existence is an important chapter in the early history of Mansfield.

(Photo loaned by Lawrence Schmahel to the Richland County Historical Society.)