

ChicoryLane Surroundings:

A History of Changes in the Smiths' Land Relative to the Surrounding Landscape.

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Two mountain runs converge on the property which themselves are each fed by multiple runs above the property. Since the release of the property's pastures and hayfields in the 1980's, significant riparian vegetation marks the run corridors. The confluence is in the middle of the place marked by a massive Black willow. The runs exit the property at the southeastern end as one. A marsh next to the western run appears independent of its flow. A minor run flows from Charles Stover through the marsh and joins the western run. An unorganized, unchanneled ephemeral drainageway occurs east of the marsh, creating a wet meadow, and contributes to the marsh. Throughout the property, relict streambeds exist in their floodplains.

Historically, the alignment of the western mountain run has undergone changes. Some indication of this is given by comparing the straightened representation of this run on Tilden's 1861 map as well as Pomeroy's 1874 atlas with its current meandering channel. It is possible the run was straightened to feed a cider mill (if it wasn't a horse powered one) which may have been located on the property as noted on the 1861 Tilden map. Or, it could have been straightened to increase the gradient for a sawmill just southeast of the property on the previously Philip Musser tract (now Kunes). Tax records document a sawmill there; the 1861 Tilden shows a mill pond. An earlier meets and bounds description for the Smith's property describes 'the road leading from James Duncan's mill to Brush valley' (the two different names are an unexplained discrepancy as of yet). An early deed for the current William Sweeley property describes a 'mill race' and a later one describes it as a 'head race'. Anecdotally, Mr. Auman described the mill race as having flowed behind his house. It is also possible, the western mountain run was simply ditched to 'improve' the property's fields for farming.

The mills might indicate possible vegetation before fields were cleared. The fact that Philip Ertle just to the north of the property ran a sawmill and Philip Musser just to the south did as well means a supply of marketable timber. They likely served the local populace - drawing from its supply of trees and returning lumber - unless it could be demonstrated otherwise that it was feasible to carry logs and/or lumber to Penns Creek and beyond. Tax records can show complete eras for these mills. The cider mill located on the Smith's property or next to it could indicate orchards on the property or its usefulness for the locale's orchards. Perhaps related, there is a legacy of volunteer apple trees throughout the woods on the property.

Tanyards point to previous vegetation, too. On the Jeff Hosterman tract, a Jacob Herring operated a tanyard from around 1809 until his death in 1829. Tax records show that not only did Philip Ertle operate a sawmill just north, but a tanyard as well. Though incidental to sawmills, they indicate local sources of hemlock and oak bark for tannin.

Tax records for the Smith's property list two acres wooded back through the chain of title to the 1880's. Presumably, that is the maturer hemlock/beechness/sweet birch woodland on the north steep slope which divides the property east to west. This association could have extended westward from its current location along the steep north slope. A 1938 aerial shows denser woods than later aerials which could indicate some remnants of this hemlock/beechness/sweet birch association.

Then, of course, there is the conspicuous representation of 'the Pines' on the 1861 Tilden map of Centre County which encroaches on the then Dunmoyer (now Smith's) property.

Evergreen icons are drawn over an area of roughly 100-150 acres, comprising the

southern edge of the Smiths, the Dave Hosterman tract, part of Jeff Hosterman tract, part of the Stitzer tract, and the area around the revival church on State Route 45. The later 1874 Pomeroy map shows the Pine icons over a smaller area.

The only other places on the entire county map Tilden bothered to show any other vegetation references were over the Scotia Barrrens and the Bear Meadows. Artistically speaking, the pines are drawn on the Gregg township spot devoid of lower branches. "In pure stands mature trees usually have no branches on the lower half of the trunk." (Wiki) 'The Pines' could mean anything from white pine to hemlock to spruce, fir, larch or pitch pine.

Looking at the vegetative legacy of the aforementioned owners' tracts reveals to the eye a high concentration of pine and hemlock for the valley floor. In fact, some of these evergreens venture as far up to the southern edge of the Smith's property on the Stitzer tract.

The name of Green Grove for the intersection of Green Grove Rd and Brush Mountain Road could be a reference from the collective memory of the Smiths and the locale from another time. However, 'the Pines' may be more than that. Mid-aged pine populations now grow along the western mountain run just northeast of the Smiths and are conspicuously invading the property from that location. The high concentrations of pine and hemlock on the aforementioned properties can suggest an association which may have existed during the documenting for the 1861 Tilden map. "In mixed forests, this dominant tree towers over all others."(Wiki)

It is just not obvious why this association existed here in 1861. It could hardly have been conservative early forestry practices where farmland was valued. Perhaps steeper slopes and sour soils (shaley alluvium, colluvium, or residuum) delayed logging. Perhaps a fire event occurred and revealed the fact that white pine is "somewhat resistant to fire". (Wiki)

As an introductory look at the history of the Smith's property, this narrative suggests many avenues to pursue in more detail.