

MUCH INTEREST ATTACHES TO NOW DESERTED VILLAGE
WHICH ONCE TEEMED WITH INDUSTRY

Since the appraisal and sale by Sheriff Crawford a few weeks ago of nine lots, in the now practically deserted village of Sprucevale, as a process in the settlement of the estate of the late Fannie Huddleston, much has been said and written concerning the early history of the place. As considerable seems to have been guessed at or garbled, Mr. Philander Gaston, of Clarkson, now 86 years of age and probably the best informed man in the county on the matter, has written the Morning Tribune a sketch of the history of the village, hoping to correct some of the misstatements made by those who are not so well informed.

Mr. Gaston's letter follows:

The first improvements in Sprucevale were made by James Brookes, he having built a small grist mill and flax seed oil mill. Later the Hambleton brothers, who owned two or three hundred acres of land in the neighborhood, took over the Brookes interests and built the stone mill, the walls of which are still standing. The date of this transaction is uncertain, but the stone mill was standing more than eighty years ago. The writer was there and saw it as far back as that and the mill was then in operation. There was quite a volume of business in the village in the early days--a grist mill, saw mill, woolen factory, flax seed oil mill, store, post office and blacksmith shop. The grist mill at one time did the principal business of the surrounding country.

In June 1839 the water from Beaver creek broke over the embankment and washed a channel through the center of the village, also sweeping the store house and the stock of goods away. On August 12, 1861, the water broke the embankment a second time near where it did in 1839, and gave the channel through the village a second washout. The dam and two locks at the place had been built previous to 1839.

There were four of the Hambleton brothers, James, Charles, Benjamin and Isaac. James was proprietor of the grist mill, Charles ran the store and postoffice, Isaac the woolen factory and James was a farmer. The Hambletons were strict Hicksite Quakers and attended the church of the denomination at East Carmel, two miles north of Clarkson. They were not identified with the Longs Run Presbyterian church, of which Rev. Valandingham was pastor, as has been intimated by other correspondents. William Davidson, who died some 30 years ago on a farm near Sprucevale, father of the late J. Harvey Davidson, of this city and grandfather of ex-City Auditor, Willis Davidson, was a partner at one time in the woolen factory. Sampson Risinger was the village blacksmith in the early days and William Supplee ran a shop in the same place later. George West tended the grist mill for a time and was succeeded by William Daugherty.

The Sandy and Beaver canal was completed and the first boat run in October 1846, and from that time until the dry summer of 1854 there was considerable business done on the canal in the way of transportation of freight. After the summer of 1854 no business was done on

this end of the canal. The assertion has often been made that but one boat ever ran through the canal, but such is not the case as operations on it continued for several years.

The Hambletons built a warehouse on the bank of the canal to accommodate the public in the way of receiving and shipping freight. There were at one time some 12 or 15 families living in the village and perhaps 15 or 20 children from the hamlet attended the district school. There was a hum of business about the place and everything had the appearance of industry and thrift.

As to the Hambletons, the founders of the village, not one is now living, and of all the children but two survive. One lives at Smithfield, Harrison county, and another at St. Paul, Minn.

With the passing of the once favored and thriving village we might add that its history is similar to that of all the small hamlets along the creek: Beaver Bridge, Jamestown, Heapes' Factory, Williamsport and Middle Beaver, which have all shared partially the same fate, the building of railroads having caused the centers of industry to gravitate to points along these thoroughfares.