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CALICO PRINT WORKS AT COMLYVILLE ²

THESE works are situated five miles from Philadelphia, near Frankford, and exhibit a striking example of the rapid improvements which have been lately made in this country, in that important branch of manufactures, which has advanced-England to her present high and exalted station among the nations of the world. The works were, but a few years since, used for the manufacture of powder, and for grinding grain. About forty years ago, the property was in the possession of Mr. Miller, and by him conveyed to our well remembered and much respected naval hero Commodore Decatur, the elder, by whom the water power was applied to the manufacturing of powder. Upon the death of this proprietor, the place descended to his son, Stephen Decatur, whose valour is well known, and was so eminently displayed in our late contest with Great Britain; and who, unfortunately for his fame, fell in a duel with Commodore Barron. The property afterwards

passed through various hands, until 1827, when it came into the possession of Messrs. Smith & Brother, who converted it into an establishment for the printing of calico. It was subsequently conveyed to the present owners, who have considerably extended the works, until they now print about two thousand pieces per week, affording ample employment to about forty-five hands. The place is considered healthy; and the work people enjoy, in all respects, comfort, happiness, and independence. The building on the eastern side of this view, is a power loom factory, propelled by steam, belonging to Mr. S. Steel, who employs one hundred and fifty hands, with two hundred and sixty-four power looms, in weaving bed-ticking, cords, &c., being the most extensive factory in the neighbourhood of Philadelphia. In the village there are several mills, driven by water, for sawing mahogany, grinding logwood, oil, &c. There are, also, about thirty more stone and wood buildings, neatly erected for the accommodation of the workmen. Bordering on the north view, is the dyeing establishment of Mr. Horrick, where the largest business in this line is carried on, which furnishes employment for fifty hands. There is, also, adjoining the print works, and formerly part of the property, an extensive bleaching establishment, conducted by Bolton & Pilling, employing about thirty hands.

A more general description might have been given; but it was deemed unnecessary to enter minutely into the subject, as the painter has furnished ample testimonials of the beauty and variety of the scenery in the neighbourhood, and the extent and well regulated order of the buildings in which the principal works are conducted.³

Notes:

1. Accessible Archives. 1990. *Accessible archives primary source material from 18th & 19th century periodicals*. Malvern, Pa: Accessible Archives, Inc.
<http://www.accessible.com/>
2. Godey, Louis Antoine, and Sarah Josepha Buell Hale. 1830. *Godey's magazine*. New York [etc.]: The Godey company [etc.], Additional note: To assure the accuracy of the Accessible Archives transcription, on 04/28/2010, I viewed the physical November issue at the Library Company of Philadelphia. It's accurate.
3. Additional note, Bryn Mawr College Cites:

78: "Comly Ville near Frankford : Philadelphia Co."
Location: Asylum Road near Frankford Creek Artist: W. L. Breton; printed by Kennedy & Lucas, 1830. 5 x 8 1/2
Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Library Company of Philadelphia, (I) 7397.0 Published by L. A. Godey in the first volume of his Lady's Book.
<http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/wainwright/wnos.html>

Comments:

While researching the Frankford Powder-Mill of Stephen Decatur [the elder] in 2001, Comly-Ville appeared.

In April of 2007, in this location, Orleans Homebuilders committed to build the "Twins at Powder-Mill" just before the bursting of housing market bubble. Fortunately - All is well today.

I am passing these antiquated articles along to be posted on the Frankford Gazette. In doing so, many interested readers will be able to familiarize themselves and identify with local history.

Be aware! Future "informational explosions" on local history are in the "works" & planned for future publication.

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