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# SELBYVILLE

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TRACING ROOTS!

KING OF STRAWBERRIES

"GREAT FIRE" OF 1916

75 YEARS FOR VOL. FIRE CO.

MORE PHOTOS TO LOOK BACK ON!

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THE HOME OF CALEB MURRAY SIMPLER AND JULIA ANN EVANS SIMPLER IS PICTURED AT LEFT CIRCA 1899, JUST TWO YEARS BEFORE SELBYVILLE INCORPORATED AS A TOWN. WHEN IT FINALLY BECAME A TOWN IN MARCH OF 1901, THERE WERE ONLY 16 HOMES IN TOWN. THE HOUSE AT TOP RIGHT IS WHERE THE SELBYVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY NOW STANDS. (PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL PEPPER)

## SELBYVILLE TRACES ITS ROOTS TO SANDY BRANCH

JUST HOW DID SELBYVILLE COME ABOUT?

LONG BEFORE SELBYVILLE WAS KNOWN AS SELBYVILLE, THE EARLIEST COMMUNITY WHERE THE TOWN IS NOW WAS KNOWN AS SANDY BRANCH. ACCORDING TO THE LATE HISTORIAN D.J. LONG, SANDY BRANCH WAS SO NAMED BECAUSE IT WAS VERY SANDY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STREAM OF WATER WHICH CROSSES THE NORTH SIDE OF TOWN.

THE PIONEERS OF SANDY BRANCH WERE BENJAMIN LONG, ARTHUR McCABE, JOHN MURRAY, RUBAN STEVENS AND

*ancestors!*

ELIJAH CAMPBELL, WHO SETTLED IN THE AREA AROUND 1780. MANY DESCENDANTS OF THOSE ORIGINAL PIONEERS CONTINUE TO LIVE IN THE AREA.

ACCORDING TO HISTORIAN HAROLD B. HANCOCK'S "HISTORY OF SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE," THE LONG FAMILY DAMMED SANDY BRANCH, A TRIBUTARY OF SINEPUXENT BAY, FOR A MILL POND TO OPERATE A GRIST MILL AND SAWMILL.

THE NAME SANDY BRANCH STUCK UNTIL 1842 WHEN A MAN NAMED SAMSON SELBY (SEE RELATED STORY) OPENED A STORE THERE THAT YEAR. ASKED BY A PHILADELPHIA MERCHANT WHERE TO SEND GOODS FOR HIS STORE, HE REPLIED, "IT WILL BE SHIPPED BY INDIAN RIVER VESSEL AND THEN HAULED TO WHERE I'M OPENING A COUNTRY STORE, SO JUST MARK IT 'SELBYVILLE.'"

SELBYVILLE DIDN'T ACTUALLY BECOME AN OFFICIAL TOWN UNTIL NEARLY 60 YEARS LATER IN MARCH OF 1901. THE TOWN, AT THE TIME, ONLY HAD 16 HOMES WITHIN TOWN LIMITS

PAUL PEPPER, HUSBAND OF THE LATE SELBYVILLE HISTORIAN DOROTHY PEPPER, PRODUCED A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL INCORPORATION PAPERS, WHICH MAKE INTERESTING READING. WHILE SOME OF THE DOCUMENT'S WRITING IS ILLEGIBLE, WE HAVE TRIED TO REPRINT IT AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE:

"IN PURSUANCE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN US BY SECTION NO. [OF DELAWARE LAW], THIS IS AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE TOWN OF SELBYVILLE LOCATED IN BALTIMORE HUNDRED WHICH THE STATE OF DELAWARE PASSED AT DOVER ON MARCH THE EIGHTH, A.D. ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND ONE (1901). WE, ISAIAH J. BRASURE, ISAIAH W. LONG, ASBURY M. MURRAY, ROBERT W. HILL AND CHARLES S. HAMBLIN, THE COMMISSIONERS, THEREIN NAMED AFTER BEING ALL DULY SWORN IN DUE FORM OF LAW AND TAKING TO OUR ASSISTANCE JOHN R. STEELE, A SKILLFUL AND IMPARTIAL SURVEYOR WHO WAS ALSO SWORN ACCORDING TO LAW FOR THAT PURPOSE DID PROCEED TO SURVEY AND LOCATE THE SAID TOWN OF SELBYVILLE BY THE FOLLOWING METES AND BOUNDS, TO WIT:

THE DOCUMENT THEN GOES ON TO OUTLINE SELBYVILLE TOWN LIMITS IN SURVEYING TERMS, AND CONCLUDES:

"I, JOHN R. STEELE, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I HAVE CAREFULLY SURVEYED THE TOWN OF SELBYVILLE IN SUSSEX COUNTY UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS THEREOF AND THE ABOVE PLOT IS A TRUE REPRESENTATION OF THE SAME SURVEYED AND PLOTTED MARCH 20, 1901."

- JOHN R. STEELE

"I, CHARLES S. HAMBLIN, A NOTARY PUBLIC IN AND FOR THE COUNTY AFORESAID, CERTIFY THAT ISAIAH J. BRASURE, ISAIAH W. LONG, ASBURY M. MURRAY AND ROBERT W. HILL, FOUR OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY AN ACT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF SELBYVILLE WERE SWORN IN BY ME IN DUE FORM OF LAW THAT THEY WILL PERFORM SEVERAL DUTIES INCUMBENT ON THEM ACCORDING TO SAID ACT FAITHFULLY AND IMPARTIALLY ACCORDING TO THE BEST OF THEIR SKILL AND JUDGMENT RESPECTIVELY. I WITNESS WHEREOF I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND AND OFFICE SEAL THIS TWENTIETH OF MARCH, 1901.

- CHARLES S. HAMBLIN

I, ISAIAH J. BRASURE, ONE OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY AN ACT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE FOR THE INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF SELBYVILLE DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT CHARLES S. HAMBLIN WAS SWORN BY ME IN DUE FORM OF LAW THAT HE WILL PERFORM SEVERAL DUTIES INCUMBENT ON HIM ACCORDING TO SAID ACT FAITHFULLY AND IMPARTIALLY ACCORDING TO THE BEST OF HIS SKILL AND JUDGMENT.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND THIS TWENTIETH DAY OF MARCH, 1901."

- I.J. BRASURE

"I, ISAIAH J. BRASURE, ONE OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY AN ACT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE FOR THE INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF SELBYVILLE DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT JOHN R.

STEELE WAS THE SURVEYOR CHOSEN TO SURVEY AND MAKE A PLOT OF SAID TOWN OF SELBYVILLE AND WAS SWORN BY ME IN DUE FORM OF LAW THAT HE WILL PERFORM THE SEVERAL DUTIES REQUIRED OF HIM AS SURVEYOR ACCORDING TO SAID ACT FAITHFULLY AND WITH IMPARTIALITY.

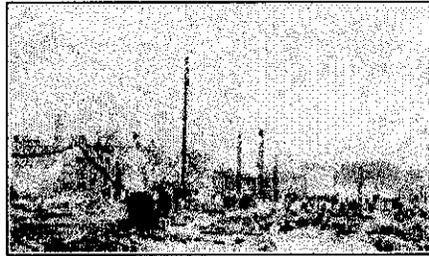
"IN WITNESS WHEREOF I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND THIS TWENTIETH DAY OF MARCH, 1901."

- I. J. BRASURE

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THIS WAS ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE BUSINESSES ALONG CHURCH STREET AFTER THE FIRE OF 1916.

(PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL PEPPER)

## THE "GREAT FIRE" OF 1916

WHEN THE INSURANCE ADJUSTER CAME AFTER THE BIG FIRE OF FEB. 13, 1916, HE RECOMMENDED TO THE TOWN BOARD THAT THEY PURCHASE A CHEMICAL CART WHICH WOULD PUT OUT 75 PERCENT OF THE AVERAGE FIRES.

THE TOWN BOARD DID NOT ACT ON THIS RECOMMENDATION UNTIL MAY 6, 1919 WHEN THEY PURCHASED THE FIRST PIECE OF FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT FOR THE TOWN OF SELBYVILLE. THIS WAS THREE YEARS AFTER THE BUSINESS SECTION AT THE CORNER OF MAIN AND CHURCH STREETS WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY FIRE. THIS PURCHASE CONSISTED OF A TWO-WHEEL CART WITH TWO 45-GALLON CHEMICAL TANKS, HOSE, NOZZLES AND A FIRE BELL. IT HAS A TONGUE AND WAS PULLED TO AND FROM THE FIRES. IT WAS AN INTERESTING SPECTACLE TO WATCH OUR LOCAL MAN PULLING THIS CART UP AND DOWN THE STREETS.

THE TWO CHEMICAL TANKS WERE OPERATED BY TWO INDIVIDUAL HAND PUMPS SOMEWHAT LIKE A WATER PUMP. THIS PIECE OF EQUIPMENT COST APPROXIMATELY \$300 WAS OWNED AND OPERATED BY THE TOWN BOARD. CHARLES J. BAKER WAS IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS UNTIL FEB. 28, 1920 WHEN DAVID HOLLINGSWORTH WAS ELECTED FIRE CHIEF BY THE TOWN BOARD. THIS BOARD HIRED ROBERT HILL AND JOHNNY DAISEY TO BUILD A SMALL FIRE HOUSE ON EAST CHURCH STREET NEAR THE BARN OF W.R. McCABE OR ABOUT WHERE J. CONN SCOTT'S FURNITURE STORE NOW STANDS. THIS EQUIPMENT WAS USED UNTIL 1923, THE YEAR THE TOWN INSTALLED A WATER SYSTEM.

AT THIS TIME, THE YOUNG MEN OF THE TOWN SAW THE NEED FOR BETTER FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT SO A SMALL GROUP OF THEM HAD A MEETING AND ORGANIZED THE FIRST "SELBYVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY." MANY OF THESE MEN WERE WORLD WAR I VETERANS AND HAD PREVIOUS FIRE FIGHTING EXPERIENCE WHILE IN THE ARMY MAINTAINED FIRE DEPARTMENTS.