



ON 22 SEPTEMBER 1769 THE GROUND BENEATH our feet again changed ownership. David Hoopes purchased 205 acres plus 56 perches from Isaac Allen. Part of this land lie in Chester County and part in New Castle County.

Before we go any further — yes David is related distantly to Edgar M. Hoopes, for whom Hoopes Dam is named. (Edgar was Chief Engineer of the Wilmington Water Department from 1913 through 1918.)

David was one of five children born to Thomas Hoopes and Susannah Davies in Westtown, Chester County on 29 September 1743. David married Esther Townsend 17 April 1766 at the Goshen Meeting House. The couple had five children, Thomas, Susanna, Joseph, Jesse and Lydia.

David was a tanner like his father. It is no surprise that he purchased land which included on the south side of Southwood Road a tan-yard. David and his family lived in the Freed, Hoopes, Wilson, Brown House at Southwood and Limestone Road. (The home on the south side of Southwood was not built until around 1814.) During Isaac Allen's and David's occupancy (likely c. 1765-1775) the house was dramatically changed through the addition of a two-story stone wing on the west gable and the reworking of doors and windows. This phase also likely resulted in the demolition of the "first" house that the Freeds had converted into a kitchen.

In the 18th century, making leather from animal skins was a major part of life. It was not unusual for farms to prepare its own leather from slaughtered domestic or wild animals. As society became more specialized leather tanning developed into its own industry.

After the hide was stripped from the animal, it was covered with salt for preservation. The hide was soaked in water until it was soft and any last pieces of flesh and fat were removed before soaking in lime for several days. The lime solution dissolved the hair and caused the hide to swell. After swelling, the hides were scraped and neutralized with vinegar.

Now the hides were ready for tanning, a process that involved soaking the hides in vats of tannic acid, a colorless — though not odorless — astringent made from plant tannins. Hemlock bark was the preferred source of tannins in the

Northeast because of its high tannin content of 10-12 percent. Tannins bind the collagen proteins in the leather, making them less water-soluble and more resistant to decomposition. Hemlock tannins give leather a distinctive, deep reddish-brown color. A hide spent about six months curing in the bark solution. We do not know if David used hemlock. I will assume he used whatever bark was locally available.

Tanning requires lots of water. There is a natural spring on the property and today the very small stream that runs there is called Tannery Run. Tanning is also smelly and toxic.

David was a Quaker. Unlike Isaac Allen he was a confirmed pacifist. As we have seen in previous parts of this history, during the American Revolutionary War the Quakers, being pacifists, were unable to participate in any way in the war efforts, and because of this they suffered physically and economically from the actions of both sides. An organization was created to aid those "under trial and suffering", and the members met in an open meeting once a month, for 8 years, to "encourage and sustain their members to withhold their aid and support of the war", and for visiting, by committee, many of the military and civil officers for a redress of their wrongs! In the New Garden Monthly Meeting, David was among those who served on the Committee.

We also find him as the executor in Thomas Milhous's will in February 1785. Thomas Milhous was a direct ancestor of Richard Milhous Nixon and served with David on the Committee mentioned above.

I think we can assume that David was very financially comfortable. In the 1770 census, it is recorded that he owned 100 acres, 2 Horses, 3 heads of Cattle, and 10 Sheep but owned or hired no servants. It is interesting to note that on the 1784 and 1786 tax roles, his carriage is discounted from being taxed.

County commissioners were authorized to grant discounts, commonly referred to as abatements, to individual taxpayers. Based on what was considered "just and reasonable" the reasons for discounts vary, ranging from individuals who were overcharged to one individual who had a "broken thigh". The most common discounts were granted to the poor and individuals who had left the township. Reasons for a discount were normally the following:

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- Unseated land – Land owned but not occupied or being utilized for any purpose and thus subject to a lower tax rate.
- Chair Old/Carriage Broke – During the mid 1780s there was a luxury tax on “pleasure” carriages.
- Insolvent – Bankrupt
- A Flood
- Under age – A taxable had to be a male over the age of 21
- Married – The taxable had recently married which would subject him to the inmate (married without property) tax which was lower than the freeman (single without property) tax.
- In prison

For a brief time in 1794, David and Esther lived in Kent County, MD. William, the son of his cousin Joshua, was a tanner in Kent County. Perhaps they were in business together. But what I do know is William died in 1797 in Chester County (very likely NGT as he was married to Rebekkah Wilkinson.) How those names circulate!

Over the years, David purchased additional tracts of land from Moses Rowan and Elizabeth Bell, who inherited land from her grandfather William Roe. I believe these pieces of land are adjacent to his existing property but I am not sure exactly where.

Moses Rowan was on the other end of the Revolutionary War spectrum from David Hoopes. He was the son of William and Elizabeth Rowan. He married Hannah Jackson, sister of NGT clockmaker Isaac Jackson on 17 Oct. 1770. They had 7 children. One of whom married into the famous Philadelphia Biddle family.

On 1 April 1780 there is a complaint registered against him in the NG Monthly Meeting records for “deviating from our peaceable principles”. And on 2 August 1777 a complaint for assisting the military with wagons. In 1781 he paid a tax for furnishing military supplies.

Moses was living in Philadelphia working as a ship joiner, when his brother, James Rowan enlisted him to build a stone house to either adjoin or replace the “square log house” on the property he intended to buy. However, before James could conclude the purchase, he died, making Moses his heir. Apparently, Moses completed the house, placing a date stone with “M R” and “1770” on the north side. Moses Rowan married Hannah Jackson in this year. The house today is in very bad condition. It is just south of Route 41 on the east side of Sunny Dell Road.



Moses Rowan House April 2014

In August 1801, General Broadhead sold to David Hoopes two 400-acre tracts along the Beaver River in what is now New Brighton in Beaver County, PA (28 miles west of Pittsburgh) for \$3000 (\$45,872 today accounting for inflation) for the use of the firm of Hoopes, Townsend & Co. who intended to utilize the superior waterpower afforded by the site. At this time, there were three general divisions of the falls of the Beaver River. David owned The Middle Falls.

When David arrived, several settlers were on the land claiming it under a 1792 law through which they could secure title by “settlement and improvement”. General Broadhead had through lawsuits acquired judgments in his favor. David had no such luck and had to buy some of the property from the settlers.

He erected a sawmill. Not long afterward, the sawmill burned down and a new one was constructed in addition to a flour mill, the second of the kind in the valley. Not long thereafter the company began the building of a forge on the river a short distance above the mills; but before the work was completed, the whole property came into the possession of Isaac Wilson, a Chester County resident and his son-in-law, in 1805.

In 1803 David and his wife sold 190 acres (40 of which were in New Castle County), the tan-yard, and his home to Thomas Wilson. Earlier he had sold 23 acres to Samuel Walker. By this time he and Esther had moved to New Brighton. In 1811, he accidentally drowned in the Beaver River while crossing it in a skiff. He and his wife, Esther, are buried in Grove Cemetery in New Brighton.

Next month, Thomas Wilson of Kennett.