

# Asked for mementos, Lando turned out with enthusiasm

Lando is a small town on Fishing Creek in Chester County. The community was completely rural until 1882 when Ferguson Barber, a leading farmer, raised enough money among his neighbors to build a small cotton mill they called Fishing Creek Manufacturing Co.

The cotton mill declared bankruptcy in 1894. Barber was able to buy the mill and rename it Lewisville Mills. In 1898 Barber sold the mills to Benjamin Dawson Heath. Heath named his new purchase Manetta Mills (combining the names of his two wives, Mary and Nettie).

From 1898 on, the name of Heath will dominate the town of Lando (a combination of parts of the names of two railroad figures, Captain Lane and Captain Dodson). The railroad, named the Edgemoor and Manetta Railway, was only 4.6 miles.

In the late 1970s there was an oral history program that was part of the Writer in the Community program in Chester and Lancaster county schools. Money to support the program came from Springs Industries, the National Endowment for the Arts and the S.C. Arts Commission.

One of the places visited by the interviewers was the mill town of Lando. They quickly discovered that in the tiny isolated community most people were kin but had little "sense of community." Then one of the project workers got a grant from Polaroid Foundation to teach schoolchildren photography.

They decided to exhibit the photographs made by the schoolchildren and also to develop old pictures of the community for a Fourth of July display.

Immediately there was great interest in the projected show (which was to be displayed in a local pool room). Local citizens "brought in old trinkets, the old train stamper, the ticket puncher, a lot of weapons and old tools, clothes, quilts.

Louise  
Pettus



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HISTORY

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There were 300 people in the town, and 600 showed up to view the exhibit. The State newspaper printed a story about the Lando project. Everybody seemed to have a story to go along with the mementos. And, thus, the Lando Oral History Project was born.

The three project workers, photographer Susan Keller, along with Charles and Judi Inabinet, decided to start a magazine to print the photographs and the stories about them.

The old-timers of Lando recalled major events such as the great flu epidemic of World War I and minor things like the shock of finding out the preacher dipped snuff "on the sly."

The interviewees told what it was like to work in the mill. Manetta Mills produced blankets. There was a dye house, a spinning room and a weave room. "My daddy worked here for 90 cents a day and my mother made about that I guess. I was 12 years old when I went to work in the mill. I've worked many a day down here for 15 cents a day spinnin' "

Some could remember when electricity was generated by a water wheel. Before electricity, kerosene lamps hung from the posts. It was one man's job to look after the lamps and the wood and oil stoves that stood at intervals in the aisles.

The old-timers talked about people who had played an important role in their lives. It seems that Dr. Gaston came up to the mill on Saturday (payday) and "just about everybody would go along and give him a dollar or two dollars. That's the way he collected. . . . He didn't a bit more know what nobody owed him than nothin'. He had no way to know. He didn't take any notes whatsoever whenever they came by and paid him. One thing you never heard Dr. Gaston say anything about: somebody owing him a whole lot of money. I think he was one of the greatest men that Lando knew."

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