

"TOTALLY IN REBELDOM" - Part 1

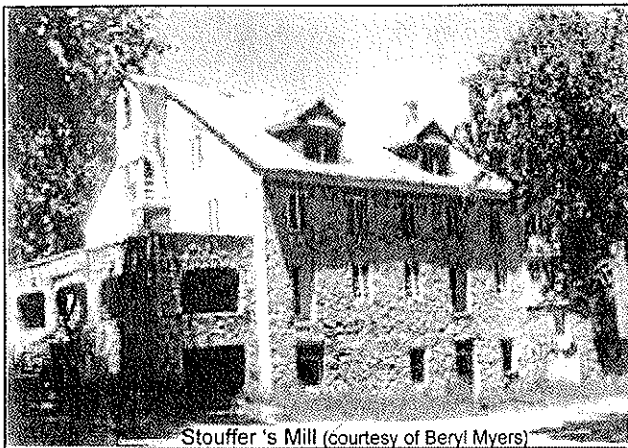
A Franklin County Family's Account of the Summer of 1863

By Paul J. Stouffer

Thank you to Paul Stouffer for providing the following information.

When it comes to Civil War-era stories handed down through generations, the descendants of Jacob and Eliza Stouffer are fortunate. This remarkable couple somehow found time to write more than 50 journals between 1843 and 1880 covering a life with their seven children (five daughters and two sons), their Stoufferstown farm and flour mill, as well as life in Franklin County.

While the journals present a wonderful introspective on life during this unique period, it's hard to beat the lengthy entries Jacob wrote in 1863 when the area was occupied by the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. From the Stouffer's home along Falling Spring east of Chambersburg, Jacob and Eliza wrote about their experiences 150 years ago as reluctant front-row participants in the buildup to one of the most significant events in American History, the Battle of Gettysburg.



Stouffer's Mill (courtesy of Beryl Myers)

In the 1960s and prior to donating the journals to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Jacob and Eliza's great-granddaughter Helen Binkley Green thoughtfully edited, printed and distributed, "*Pages From A Diary*," which features many of the couple's more unique entries for their many descendants. The highlights that follow are

taken from this book, which Jacob and Eliza's great-grandson Jacob B. Stouffer, my grandfather, presented my wife and me on our wedding day with the thoughtful inscription, "hope you find this history of the Stouffer's interesting."

All entries are attributed to Jacob unless otherwise noted. When possible, I have elaborated on the historical and family connection with the entry and have included some writings from their adult sons, Amos and Benjamin.

The year 1862 was a precursor for what the Stouffer's and the rest of Franklin County would experience the following year. In September they wrote of hearing the cannons blasting to the south during the Battle of Antietam, which were soon followed by trips to Chambersburg "to the Academy Hospital to see to the sick and wounded (Union) soldiers."

On October 10 Jacob wrote, "The town has surrendered!" as 1,800 cavalrymen under the command of Major General J.E.B. Stuart took control of the area. The following day the cavalry "fired the railroad buildings, several locomotives, the commissary store, etc." before heading east past the Stouffer's and neighboring properties, taking the best horses as they went through.

With the Confederate departure from the area, the family spent the remainder of the year taking care of Union troops camped on their land while anxiously dealing with repeated rumors of the Rebels' return. Jacob's final entry on New Years Eve simply said, "No sign of peace as yet."

Through May of 1863, the couple's journal entries gave the appearance of life before the war; business transactions, visits to and from friends and

relatives, and even a doctor's visit or two, including the 55-year old Jacob having his teeth extracted.

Life for the Stouffer's and the residents of the Chambersburg area changed dramatically on June 14, 1863, the day Jacob noted, "The Rebels are in town." They were back, this time under the command of Brig. General Albert Jenkins.

"Jenkins Guerilla Brigade is in rule over us," he wrote on the 15th. "Fear and distrust among the people—prominent citizens are hid or absent." As the operator of the flour mill, Jacob and his workers "moved considerable flour to the neighbors for safe keeping" and "the good horses to the mountains. Before noon the Rebels begin to move off southward—all clear by evening."

On June 23, Jacob wrote the "Rebels are back." The following day "they robbed us of our wagon harness... took wagons also where ever to be found, and horses." This time it was "Ewells Corps—perhaps 9000 strong" referring to the 2nd Corps of one-legged Lt. General Richard Ewell who Jacob documented was "encamped near McClures," referring to the land owned by then Pennsylvania Senator Alexander McClure, on what is now the site of Wilson College.

The following day, panic created a run on the Stouffer's Mill.

"The townspeople fearing the supply of flour will be cut off, are hauling it away as fast as they can in barrows, hand wagons, etc. By evening the mill is clear out of flour. Many rebel cavalrymen passing back and forth—one camp at McClure's, one on the Green-castle side of town, and one at Greenwood. Totally in Rebeldom." ☆

