



Article Reprint from

Cooks Current

Newsletter

Back to the Past: A column highlighting the natural history of the Watershed

Tobacco and Its Culture

Excerpt from: Full text of “A collection of papers read before the Bucks County Historical Society”

REMARKS BY DR. B. F. FACKENTHAL, JR. page 621

Transcribed by: Jim Walter

My elder brother advises me that he recollects very well that in 1863, Peter L. Nicholas of Kintnersville, Bucks County, planted a large field of tobacco; the field lying on the north side of Gallows Run, partly in Durham and partly in Nockamixon Townships. He employed an old Negro (whose only name was Henry), an experienced tobacco grower, who came up from Virginia during the war. Henry took entire charge of both the cultivation and curing of the crop. The tobacco was hung up in the old factory building which had been erected by Abraham and Henry Houpt in 1848, for the manufacturing of starch, and known as the “Starch Factory,” where the manufacture of starch was carried on successfully for a number of years; later the building was used as a carriage factory and still later by Alonzo Nicholas as a hay pressing plant. The culture and curing of the tobacco was much the same as that described by Mr. Scheetz, except that it was seasoned but a few months, for in the spring of 1864 they began to manufacture it into cigars. Henry Souders and his two sons, practical cigar makers, were employed regularly at this work; William Lind, a Dane, was also employed there part of the time, as was also Philip Overpeck, who carried the cigars around in large clothes baskets to find a market for them. The price, as my brother recollects, was 31 cents per 100 cigars, of course there was no excise duty at that time. The experiment was doubtless not profitable, at any rate Mr. Nicholas did not repeat it a second year.

The Bucks County Intelligencer of fifty years ago (1876) records that:

Four carloads of leaf tobacco grown in the Penn’s Manor vicinity were shipped from Tullytown to be sold in New York. This tobacco was grown on the farms of Daniel Lauderback, John Brooks, John Green and Onias Mershon, and was sold from 14 to 20 cents a pound, making a total of \$12,000. I remember at later periods, when small crops of tobacco were grown in upper Bucks County, but not on a commercial scale. When quite a lad the boys of our neighborhood had a small tobacco patch of their own, planted in a field belonging to my father. We planted, housed and cured it in the approved way and during the following” winter rolled it into cigars. We continued this planting for several years. In the year 1887, Cooper & Hewitt, owners of the Durham iron works, which included five large farms, planted about ten acres of tobacco, getting the seed from Lancaster. A special shed was erected in which to house it. The manner of cultivation and treating was about the same as that described by Mr. Scheetz, though it was allowed but one year to cure, when it was stripped and put in cases. Lancaster dealers came to Durham to inspect it; they opened up the cases and selected a hand at random from each case, and relied on that for the quality of the entire case and classified it accordingly.

This crop was sold to a Lancaster dealer in 1888, and we were told that it was of especially good quality. I had 1,000 cigars made up by the Lancaster purchaser to distribute among the workmen at the furnace, and, of course, sent a box to the New York office of Cooper & Hewitt, which was polite enough to say that the cigars were of good quality. The experiment was not a financial success, and was not repeated, and the tobacco shed was put to other uses, principally for storing farm implements and machinery, bricks, etc., for the iron works.