

## **History in West Caln Township – Part 5**

### **Hatfield House**

In a series of articles, The West Caln Township Historical Commission is presenting a brief portrayal of history in the Township. This article is about the Hatfield House located at the intersection of Hatfield Road and Wagontown Road just before passing over the Brandywine Creek. The time frame of this portrayal is during the Revolutionary War period.

Overlooking the Brandywine Creek, the Hatfield House is known to many older West Caln Township residents as a former convalescent home. But its beginnings reach back to the mid- 1700's.

In 1738, the family of Francis Swain arrived in what was then Londonport Town, later known as Wagontown. Francis carried with him a 200-acre land grant that he had received directly from the Proprietors of the Province, John and Richard Penn. The following year Francis and his sons began operation of the first water powered grist mill in America. The oldest section of what is now referred to as the Hatfield House was presumably built in the mid-1740s by the Swain Family. The Swains were apparently strong supporters of the Patriot cause. Despite the threat of reprisals from the Doan Gang and other Tories in the area, during the winter of 1777, the Swain mill sent several wagon loads of corn meal to Washington's troops at Valley Forge. The mill continued to flourish and, in 1806, it was purchased by Benjamin and Samuel Hatfield, hence the current name of the property.

The Hatfield House is now owned by the County and part of Hibernia Park. The grist mill which stood between the House and Creek has since been demolished. In 1843 the mill was enlarged with heating furnaces and iron rolling mills by the Hatfield brothers and operated as the West Brandywine Rolling Mill at Wagontown.

The ancestral estate was entrusted to Lancaster and Chester Counties by Mrs. Florence Hatfield as a convalescent home in 1918. In 1925, the Hatfield Memorial Home was opened. The Home was in operation until the 1960's.