American Paper Mills, 1690–1832

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Chapter 19

West Virginia

Berkeley County

Bunker Hill

1. Phoenix Mill. On Mill Creek, nine miles from Charles Town.

After working in the Baltimore area, Conrad Kownslaar (also Councellor and Chancellor) moved to Mill Creek, where he bought land in 1807 and petitioned for the right to build a grist mill. In 1808 he was seeking apprentices willing to learn the papermaking trade. The 1810 census for Berkeley County notes a Conrad Comslow as the head of a family including seven free white males below the age of twenty-six, three white males between the ages of twenty-six and forty-five, six free white females, and three slaves. At that time he was making 2,000 reams a year with a total value of $5,000, figures indicating that he had a one-vat mill. He was close enough to Washington, D.C., to do business with Roger Chew Weightman and other government printers, who generally used coarse unwatermarked printings but needed a higher quality sheet for folding tables, where Kownslaar's watermark is often found. His mill burned down in 1818, but he was able to rebuild it on a more substantial basis despite losses estimated at $20,000. In 1820 he employed six men, one woman, and five children in an “Elegant Brick Mill,” which contained two engines and a glazing machine. Since it consumed 20 tons of rags a year, it probably contained only a single vat, although its annual output was valued at $50,000. That figure either indicates the profits to be made by dealing with the federal government or perhaps includes sales of other products made by Kownslaar’s extended family. During the 1820 slump in the paper trade, only one engine was in operation.


RCW [laid] — ms., n.p., n.d. (AAS; lacks half sheet, which might contain a Britannia watermark).


Note: Gravell & Miller attribute to this mill a K & B = eagle watermark occurring in a Peckatone, Virginia, doc-
A m e r i c a n  P a p e r  M i l l s :: 300

by his son Christopher Lambdin, who had learned the traditional techniques in Ohio Mill 13 and mechanized methods in a Massachusetts mill. The Lambdins were either installing or replacing a cylinder in 1831. Their establishment burned down in 1835 and was rebuilt. References: Weeks 1916, 208; Sellers Letter Book, 27 May 1831; AAD 1831, 144; AAD 1832, 260.

The Virginia Mill was still in operation in 1873, making wrappings on two cylinder machines. Reference: Lockwood 1873, 109.

3. Fulton.

After working at an unidentified mill in Lower Merion, Pa., Frederick Treudley obtained the position of mill supervisor in the firm A. Fisher & Co. {Archibald Fisher, Alexander Armstrong, Joseph Morrison, and Frederick Treudley}, which built a mill equipped with a cylinder machine in 1832. The cylinder could produce 1,500 pounds of newsprint per day as well as fine papers, some of which were embossed with A. Fisher & Co.’s steamboat device. References: Weeks 1916, 208–9; Sellers Letter Book, 5 Dec. 1831; Sellers Order Book, 23 Dec. 1835; Nickell 1993, 203.

Ohio County

Wheeling

2. Virginia Mill. On the Ohio River in South Wheeling,

In 1830 the Methodist preacher William Lambdin was manufacturing wrapping grades here in a mill managed by his son Christopher Lambdin, who had learned the traditional techniques in Ohio Mill 13 and mechanized methods in a Massachusetts mill. The Lambdins were either installing or replacing a cylinder in 1831. Their establishment burned down in 1835 and was rebuilt. References: Weeks 1916, 208; Sellers Letter Book, 27 May 1831; AAD 1831, 144; AAD 1832, 260.

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