

[The section of Colrain]

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The section of Colrain between the largest manufacturing part of the town, which is in Griswoldville, and the town line of Shelburne and

Colrain, was once known as "The Gap". The reason for this can easily be seen when one notes the steep cut the North River has made in one part

of the little valley. Old timers say it was even much steeper than it is now before there were so many terrific floods that ripped and tore

away the banks and widened the river bed. "The Gap" remained the name of this place for some time. Then as has seemed customary in the town

of Colrain, the different sections chose to name their little settlements after one of their well known persons. Thus "The Gap" took the name

of Shattuckville from one of its best known but odd characters, Calvin W. Shattuck.

The Shattucks were an old English family. They came from their native England in the year 1849. It was not long before they settled in

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Colrain. They chose "The Gap" as their place of residence because like many of the English who settled these sections, their interest and

business was in the manufacturing field. There was already a box factory on the left bank of the North River and so the Shattucks purchased

the site and rights and proceeded to build up a new cotton print factory. They were doing a fine business when the famous freshet of 1869 came

along. This was one of the most disastrous spring floods this section has ever known. "The Gap" was of course damaged heavily because the

narrow gorge from which the place had taken its name was the only outlet for the raging stream. Rocky ledges rise high on either side. Thus the great torrent of water was forced thru this narrow space at a terrific rate of speed and the depth

was alarming. It washed away everything in its path - bridge, houses and factory - right to the foundations. After experiencing a loss such

as this, the Shattucks deemed it wise to forestall any further trouble with the vagaries of New England weather and the streams they harnessed

for power. A new factory was built high up on the right bank of the river above the narrow Gap. This flourished in the hands of Calvin W.

Shattuck whose name the settlement finally took as their own as has been mentioned.

It is small wonder that the people chose to name their section for him. Mr. Shattuck, always energetic, put a large amount of money and

gave his time to running the large mill. He had several large houses built to give his mill workers homes. He has his own very spacious home

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built in the town. For a great many years Calvin Shattuck was the town's justice of peace and its town clerk. One old time resident said of

him. "He was quite a bright, smart man. Everybody went to him for advice". He occupied a large space in the town's peoples social and

political life as well as their personal affairs. With most of the families, he was their landlord, their employer and advisor. While he built

no beautiful mansions (not even his own home) he did have sturdy, practical houses made, which were able to house five or six families at once.

The proof of their sturdiness lies in the fact that they have long outlived the old cotton mill 3 and for more than sixty or seventy years have housed large families, receiving in that time little care or repairing, for this section has been

very poor since the mill stopped running. The name of the town was formerly Shattucksville but the possessive "(s)" was finally left out and

the section has remained Shattuckville. Mr. Shattuck was a distinguished looking man and chose to give that definite impression. All of the

old folks speak of him as "Old Gentleman Shattuck" or just "Old Gentleman" whenever they mention his name. Being somewhat on the alert for

impressions and opinions given freely by residents, I have been surprised by the certain reticence I find whenever questions are asked about

Mr. Shattuck. Among a people who love to talk, especially of anyone or anything about which they could boast a little, this quietness seems

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to hold somewhat of a mystery. On numerous occasions I have casually diverted the stream of conversation to embrace Mr. Shattucks life and

characteristics. With only one exception, I have met a protective wall of silence. If they are asked a deliberate question requiring a definite

answer, they think carefully and answer with a certain sober respect. If one seeks to pursue the subject they are met with a shrewd, deliberate,

yet frankly disarming manner as the topic is changed definitely.

I tried to understand this reticence but could only surmise what might be keeping them silent and then one day in the quest for information,

I met an old German fellow. He came to Shattuckville as a young man of thirty-seven and has been a resident here for more than forty-three

years. He has a frank, open mind and admits that he is inquisitive and likes to talk.

Armed with the fact that Mr. Finck was a watchman at the old Shattuck mill for quite a few [?]

years and under the pretext of looking for local ghost stories, I found a fine source of information. Here were no compunctions, no unusual

respect for the name of the dead and no sense of indebtedness to the man. Since learning what I could from this informant, it has been much

easier to talk with others on the subject because when one seems to know all the "facts" already there seems to be little reason to be secretive.

It is still evident that people would rather confine their discussions of Mr. Shattuck to the intimacy of their own families however. This

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remains a strange fact since any slight scandal receives much attention and is discussed freely and often. Mr. Finck, without mincing words,

gave several reasons why this should be. Many of the families were in debt to Mr. Shattuck. Thus they harbored a sense of guilt and fear where

he was concerned. They felt a little inferior to him too. He seemed to be so rich and powerful and they had so many responsibilities and so

few material benefits. Then too many a person was quiet for moral reasons. Mr. Shattuck remained unmarried but there were many attempts, by

the local feminine population, made on his single state. He was a good one "to land" because of his position, wealth and name. Altho Mr.

Shattuck was never "Taken in" he did not lack female companions. Mr. Finck said "He always be drunnin' aroon vid da veemin. Dots why he hang

himself by der neck in hizh mill. No diffunce be do him if day be mah reet oo mebbly don' be. Dots why he be always dress oop zo he can zee

da 5 veemin all da day on nitez h alzo." This may provide a reason why so many women refused to discuss him as a character and why many of the men

preferred not to bring into the open, scandals that might involve their families.

"Mr. Shattuck was a nice lookin' ol' man." A sweet old lady almost eighty years old now, volunteered this information. She worked in the

mills when she was young. "I cen jest see how he looks - all dress up like he was always goin' away." Another said of him, "Someone was always

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diggin' him but then some folks are born gruntin'." The "Old Gentleman's" physical characteristics as the natives express them are "short and

thick set and pretty snotty lookin'." "Snotty" seems to mean in the local "dialect", conceited or "stuck up". From various sources we gather

that he was extremely natty dresser. He wore, striped trousers, and a black "cut-away" coat. He completed his outfit with a high beaver hat,

"gaiters" and a beautiful gold headed cane. This was no special outfit but his every day, work and dress suit. They proved to be his funeral

clothes too. It is evident that this is where his nickname of "Old Gentleman" found its origin. His hair was as "white as snow" and it became

white early in his life so that he seemed older than he was. He had no bad habits neither given to smoking or drinking. His only pleasure and

vice seemed to be his extreme fondness for the opposite sex. It is that this proved to be the cause of his downfall. He spent his personal

funds and those of the company - or rather those that should have gone into the running of the mill with equal abandon. Girls and women and

the men who worked for him in the mill could do little against this evil because it meant their homes and jobs. Work was not to be had everywhere and they were

treated well with Mr. Shattuck. Then too it pleased the women to be singled out for their boss' attention. It could not go on however. The

hypocritical and strenuous life he set for himself was too much for the human mind and body. He tried so desperately to be or rather to seem

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what he was not, that it finally drove him insane. One day he was missed. No one saw for three or four days. Then one morning the the

watchman, making a thorough inspection of the old mill, found his well dressed body hanging in the "garret." This was to the town, an open

declaration of the low extent of his personal state and his finances. It has never ceased being a common topic in this section but oddly enough

there seems to be little bitterness or censor in the discussion of the man. They are loyal to the name of a great family. Mr. Shattuck gave

them a great deal in material things in fact the whole settlement owes its growth and continuance to him. They know that even tho his faults

were great he did something for them which no one else would or could have done.

They have kept his name alive in another manner. At least they spoke of it as long as the old mill was standing in Shattuckville, a great

gray hulk of neglect. It was common knowledge that Mr. Shattuck's unhappy ghost wandered about his mill bewailing the fact that he hadn't done

more to keep the mill running while he was on earth. The ghost legend probably served the purpose of keeping children from playing around the

old boilers and decaying floors of the old building until 7 it could be sold and removed.

Old Mr. Finck, who continued his nite watching after Mr. Shattuck hung himself does not seem to have had the dubious pleasure of meeting

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Mr. Shattuck's ghost. Mr. Finck's own words were, "I vatch in da mill frume midnite to mornin', vich iss mos' goot dime for ghos' und I nefer

zee da ghos' of Zhatick. He hang himzelf in da garret and I go dere sbecial (special) to look but he not coom outd for me."

Another incident which occurred at the mill but for which the management was not responsible was on the gruesome side. It seems that the

cotton came to the mill in enormous bales. The cotton was raw and came as directly as possible from the South. Inspection could not have been

as rigid in those days as it is now or what happened could not have occurred. For days after a new delivery of raw cotton, those in the mill

noticed a putrid odor about the place. Men were given the job of finding whether or nor an animal had crawled into some place and died. They

looked every where conceivable and went to a great deal of trouble stopping the machinery to search it. Then one day a new bale of cotton was

opened for use. As they unbound it the odor became amazing and they were not surprised to make the gruesome find they did. Inside was the

decayed body and skeleton of a tiny negro child. It had crawled onto the cotton bale presumably to sleep and had not been notices noticed when the great bale was bound together. This occurrence had an unwholesome effect on the mill's

production altho the story was kept as quiet as possible. Everyone in the mill knew of it however 8 and so the story had numerous roads to travel. It may have been only coincidence but the business of the mill failed steadily from then on.

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Only the foundations and a few old timbers and boilers, rusted and useless are left to show where the old mill was. Their dams which furnished them excellent water power have gone out with other spring floods and Shattuckville is no longer a town of business and industry. Most of the houses in the place are occupied but the workers all go out to the surrounding places such as Griswoldville, Lyonsville, (in Colrain), Shelburne Falls and Greenfield. They are mostly mill workers yet but Shattuckville almost died when its mill closed for good. If the ghost of Calvin Shattuck still haunts the town of his birth it must have a mingled sense of pride and shame - of good done and wrongs which all but destroyed the worthiness of the efforts.