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ROSE VALLEY AND ITS PRETTY SCENES – Home of Artists and the Lovers of Nature and Her Many Beauties – Quaint and Pretty Places

Rose Valley today is a place of pilgrimage. Not only does its fine scenery attract the stranger, but there are other things of interest that draw the people by the scores to the pretty little artists' settlement in Nether Providence. One of the foremost artists of the day, Alice Barber Stephens, has built her own home here; a small hotel, quaint in its simplicity, has had a successful season this last year; and several industries that require the most skilled workmanship are slowly but surely gaining a place in this thriving community. Rose Valley is talked about so generally and has brought itself so prominently into public notice that a brief history of the locality may be welcome to its many admirers.

The spot was given its attractive name by Bishop White, who had the distinction of being the first Episcopal Bishop to the state of Pennsylvania. The house where he lived is still standing and has been occupied this last summer by the instructor in wood carving and modeling at the Drexel Institute, Philadelphia.

The ruins of the old mills, now covered with ivy, in all the glory of its autumn tints, bespeak remarkable activity in the past century. Back in 1789 a grist mill was built on the banks of Ridley Creek at this locality and the product carried to Philadelphia and sold there in tobacco stores. Thirty years later we find it the scene of a strange industry. The old wheels are grinding medicine barks, which were eagerly sought for as remedies for man's ills until quinine displaced their use.

In 1896 the factory took its place in the long line of paper mills, so many of which have flourished and have been forgotten in our country in the last hundred years. Not until 1861 do we find the spot in the scene of its greatest activity. In that year Antrim Osborne bought the buildings and rights to the water power, and, repairing the dam and race, built a three-story stone building, 75x56 feet, and started the operation of a textile industry.

In a letter written at that time, a description of the factory speaks of its having 1934 spindles, 60 looms, and three lots of cards. A few years later additions were erected; another decade, and we find the place enlarged to more than double its capacity in 1861. The products were woollen jeans and doeskins.

Keith Lockhart Collection