

HISTORIC HESPELER.



The Town of Hespeler has just attained the allotted three score and ten years, for although Joseph Oberholtzer secured a grant of a large tract of land, including the present town site, in 1830, it was not until the following year that his sister, Mrs. Michael Bergey, to whom he had deeded part of the land, came from Pennsylvania with her husband, and started the little settlement of Bergeytown, building and living in the house on Queen street, remodelled in quite recent years by Mr. L. Bock.

Within a couple of years there were a number of settlers here, and Mr. Bergey started a saw mill on the flats, just south of The Forbes Co.'s present mill property. Soon afterwards, Joseph Oberholtzer started another saw mill just south of Forbes' race, and John Beck started a foundry near by. The land was then a number of feet lower than it is at present, as the dam was not built for a number of years after.

The name of the settlement was changed from Bergeytown to New Hope in 1835.

In 1840, John Gingerich opened the first store in the building torn down a few years ago to make room for C. M. Schultz's new block, and in the same year, Abram Clemens built a saw mill on part of the land now occupied by the Brodie Mill, and this he ran until 1844, when Jacob Hespeler arrived on the scene, and purchased the saw mill, as well as a large tract of the surrounding lands.

From the day of Mr. Hespeler's arrival the settlement seems to have gone ahead. His first act was to tear down the old saw mill and remove the machinery to a new one, built on the site now occupied by the Canada Woolen Mills' fine property, and to build a grist mill, which he had in running order early in 1847.

The settlement school was a log building on the site of the present Presbyterian church, and was taught by a Mr. Thompson. This building was later utilized as the first Methodist meeting house.