



Grist Mill

Grist mills were operated by community millers who converted a farmers grain, such as wheat and corn, into usable flour. The local millers were highly regarded members of the community, because they were the only people who had the ability to turn dry grain into a usable commodity. The grist mill was powered by flowing water with the use of a wooden counter-wheel. Shafts and gears were used to connect the moving wheel to a stone wheel housed inside the building.

The moving stone wheel was placed on top of a stationary stone. These four to six foot wide wheels were often made of granite or sandstone and weighed up to one ton. As the grain was slowly poured through a hole in the moving stone wheel, the ground flour would be collected into a wooden bin. The miller received payment for his services by keeping between 1/8 and 1/6 of the milled flour. The Newlin Grist Mill, built in 1704, is a present day example of a grist mill located in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania.



Abstract

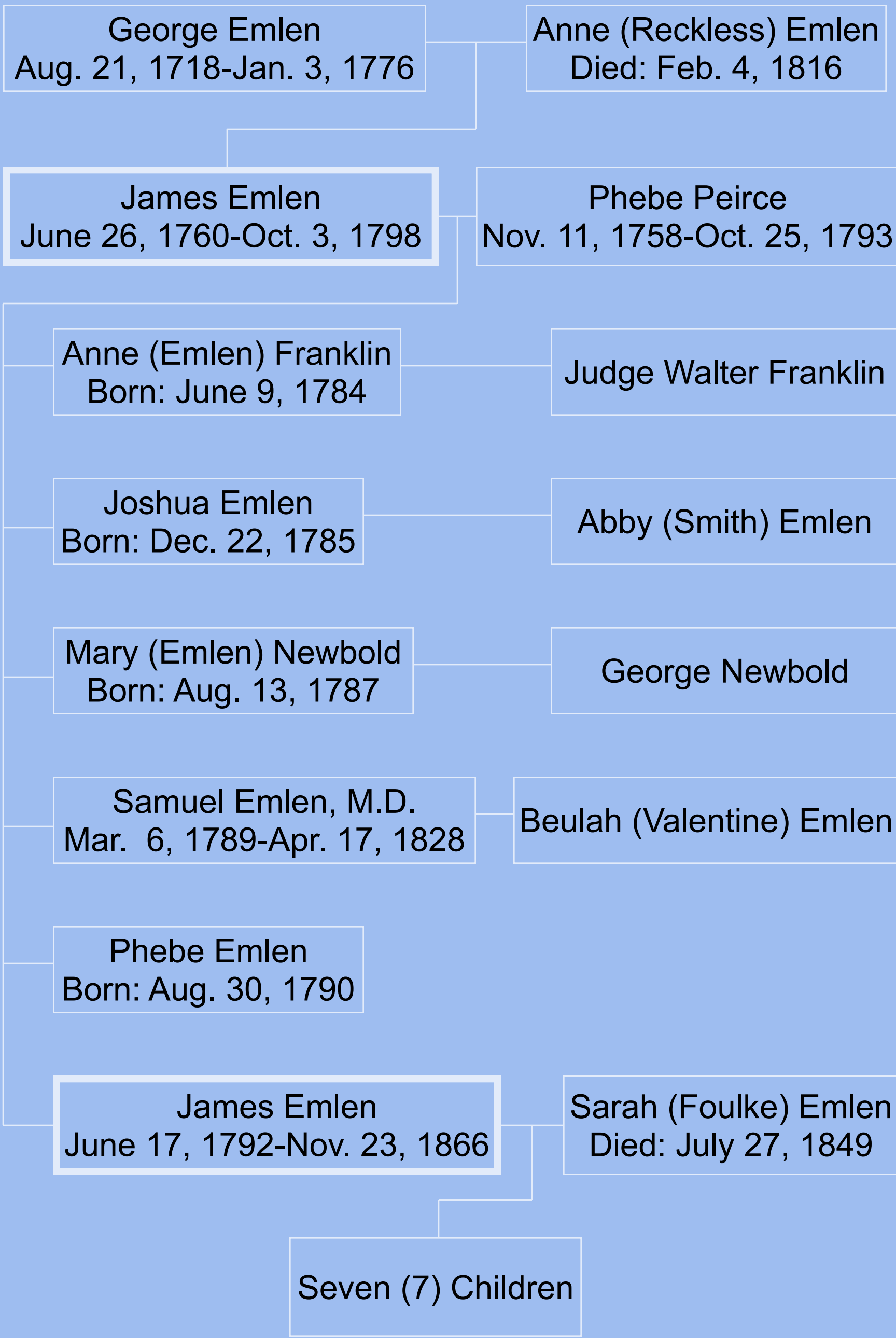
The Emlen Grist Mill was owned by James Emlen, a member of the Quaker Society of Friends, a community miller, and a devoted husband and father. The property located at the corner of Old Forge Road and Yearsley Mill Road in Middletown Township, Delaware County (formerly Chester County until 1789) was used as a grist mill, an all-boys grammar school, and a Quaker meeting house. A portion of this historical property has recently become part of the Pennsylvania State University Brandywine Campus.

James Emlen was a member of a prosperous Philadelphia family who had amassed their fortune through the establishment of breweries. In 1783, James Emlen married Phebe Pierce and in 1784 purchased the grist mill located in Middletown Township. Emlen was called to represent his meeting house at the Philadelphia Quaker Yearly Meeting in 1798. Although yellow fever was still rampant in the city, he felt it was his duty to represent his meeting house. Since Emlen spent his life providing everything for his six children, he penned his will to ensure that they would be cared for if he would die suddenly.

After returning from the Quaker Yearly Meeting, James Emlen suddenly fell ill with yellow fever and died on October 3, 1798. He left each of his six children an equal portion of his estate. Although Emlen died when his children were very young, the foresight he had when writing his will in 1797 provided them with the foundation and resources needed to live successful and prosperous lives.

After a short period of farming the land, his son James Emlen, Jr. had the desire become a school teacher. His goal was “to sow good seed in the hearts of those entrusted to his care.” With the Emlen Grist Mill now sold to Nathan Yearsley, Emlen, Jr. continued to teach school in a frame tenant house along the road near the mill.

Emlen Family Tree



James Emlen’s Son



Aerial View of Penn State Brandywine & Emlen Property



Emlen Property

