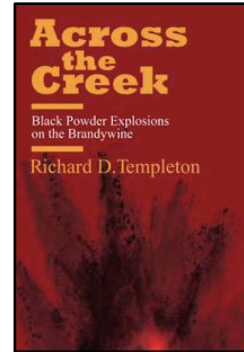


DGS Member Pens Wilmington Local History Book

DGS member Richard D. Templeton has written a book that explores the lives and times of the more than 200 men, women and children who perished in black powder explosions at the DuPont powder works in Wilmington during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The book is entitled *Across the Creek: Black Powder Explosions on the Brandywine*.



According to Templeton, from the opening of the powder mills in the early 1800s to their closing in 1921, the death tally was 232 men, two women and one child. One of the women and the child died during what many Wilmingtonians called *The Big One*, the 1890 blast of close to 50,000 pounds of the volatile stuff the DuPont's were making at what is now the Hagley Museum and Library. The other woman, the wife of a powder man killed in the same explosion in 1818, met her fate as she ran down to the powder yard gates to find out if her husband had been injured, or worse. Neither father nor mother would have known that the other had died, leaving their trio of children as orphans.

The remaining victims died, at an average of two deaths per year, in about 280 gunpowder explosions that occurred over the 120 years of the mills' existence. Some died alone, some died with their coworkers. That 1818 accident took the most lives (34) of any of the explosions.

One of the features of the powdermen's lives on the Brandywine was the kinship that developed among the workers and their families. In part due to the isolation of the powder community, there are many instances of marriages between daughters, sons, and cousins of the members of the black powder contingent. And, as these intermarriages occurred, so did the tragedies. One example is Mary Toy, who lost her father and, a few years later, her husband in explosions. (You may have heard DGS member Reese Robinson mention Mary, as he is related to her. Reese was a major contributor to Templeton's work, as were a number of DGS journal articles).

Templeton is collecting data regarding other DuPont blue-collar workers in anticipation of writing another book about this elite group of people. He would love to hear from present-day descendants of workers who worked at the mills during the period from 1836 to 1921. He is particularly interested in hearing from descendants of the powder workers who signed a 1902 encomium to the DuPont family during the company's 100th anniversary. If you are, or know someone who is, a descendant of one of the 248 powder man who signed the document lauding the DuPonts for their charity and thoughtfulness towards their workers that year, please contact Templeton at dtempleton312@gmail.com.

Signed copies of *Across the Creek* are available from the author's web site, www.bluerockpublishing.com, as well as at Barnes & Noble and the Hagley Museum store, where Templeton is a Hagley tour guide.