

## ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE

Pat Parker

When I first moved to Fernville, my street was simply a part of Bloomsburg R.D. 1, but when the name was changed to **Drinker Street** it behooved me to check into the history of my area to discover whether this moniker was a person's name – or someone's "occupation" that I might be expected to live up to. It turned out Mr. Drinker was, indeed, an individual prominent in the settling of Fernville.

If you've lived in, or even casually passed through, a town like Bloomsburg, with interesting and sometimes odd-sounding street names, perhaps you've wondered when, why or for whom they were so-called. The following is an attempt to attach local history to names of the founding fathers or important persons in Bloomsburg that historians felt should be preserved. Admittedly, when this research turned up nothing tangible, my imagination took over, so should you be in possession of proof that I'm wrong, I welcome your input and update to my efforts.

As in most towns, boroughs and villages settled in the 1700s-1800s, Bloomsburg started with First Street and used succeeding numbers as far as those parallel streets had been created. Here the original town was only from 1<sup>st</sup> Street to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street running east-west, and north-south from West Street to Iron, which was originally called East Street. Later, in the 1840s as the town expanded, and iron forges became prominent, a new street was added and named East Street while the original "East", which was the road from the iron works in town to "Irondale," a settlement of workers located along what is now Millville Road, was re-named Iron Street. Most young towns had a Market Street where farm fresh produce was sold, as did Bloomsburg. This was the heart of the town in its early days, going north and south one block east of Jefferson Street. Originally, one block east of Market the roadway running north and south between Market and Iron was called Chamberlain Alley after John Chamberlain who had a hotel on the corner where that alley crossed Main Street, but once the hotel was gone, it became the street nearest the middle of town and was renamed Centre Street.

As towns grew, names of trees and fruits were always popular and Bloomsburg acquired Maple, Oak, Spruce, Poplar, Chestnut, Walnut, Cherry, Sassafras, Locust, Pine and Hemlock. The town fathers also named Peach Street and Strawberry and Blackberry Avenues. But in the early days streets and alleyways were often called by the name of someone who was highly respected for his contribution to the local economy, original ownership of the land or his connection to local or state government. The six original north-south alleys were Oyer, Jefferson, Moomy, Whiteman, Chamberlain and Miller. Four of these were named for adjacent residents, but Jefferson is the unknown. Possibly he was a resident at some time, but since other streets were, I believe, named for famous Americans – Washington, Lincoln and Franklin, which all run S/N from Glenn Ave. to Wirt Ave. – Jefferson may have been in honor of that early President. On the 1948 map there is also another Washington Street located just west of Orchard Street, both of which were short roadways between Main St. and the Fairground. It's strange to me that Fair Street, one block above First, should be so far from the Bloomsburg Fair – but maybe it was named for some other reason.

Fort McClure Boulevard was originally just River Road, and Ferry Rd., now an extension of Poplar St., was so-called because it originally led to a ferry that crossed the Susquehanna before the bridge was there. Port Noble and Canal Streets were alongside the canal which ran through the town between what eventually became 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets. Canal Street is now

considered an “unopened alley” meaning not paved or maintained by the town. Berwick Road naturally went to Berwick. (It became “Old” Berwick Rd. after the newer modern U. S. Route 11 was constructed and later named Columbia Boulevard.)

On the original town plat the narrow roadways halfway between streets were all called avenues, then later they were termed alleys, but out of respect or pride later still the more formal “avenue” came back into use. In 1941 Ed Schuyler, editor of *The Morning Press*, in his column titled *The Passing Throng*, listed 42 streets and 13 alleys in Bloomsburg back in 1902. The only one called Avenue was Magee Avenue, a row of employee houses next to the Carpet Mill, undoubtedly named for the Magee Carpet Works founded by James Magee II. This was familiarly referred to as “Magee Row.”

This 1902 list shows a great expansion from the time the town was laid out, but if it is correct, there are also some street names missing in Schuyler’s account that can be found in the 1898 Bloomsburg Street Directory. Examples are Clinton Alley going south from Anthony to the Pennsylvania canal, between Iron and Catherine, and Chrisman, the name once given to the short half-block on the west side of Old Rosemont Cemetery which stopped at William St. Chrisman has since become a part of Murray Alley, which goes south from there to W. Fifth between Jefferson and Market.

Today there are many more roadways within the town limits and some of the early ones, such as 6½ Street, have been dropped. Just exactly when and why each street and alley got its name I don’t pretend to know. Some names may have been adopted by those using them simply by custom; others were no doubt officially named by Town Council, but I am sure many of these roadways were named for individuals who in one way or another added greatly to the development of Pennsylvania’s only incorporated town.

Since Schuyler listed the streets and alleys of Early Bloomsburg alphabetically, we’ll start with today’s roads in the same way. The key N/S indicates the roadway runs North and South; E/W would be East and West. Some are very short streets that terminate at a particular point and others are interrupted by a building, park, school etc. and resume in the same direction.

**Anthony** - This runs east and west between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, from the first Washington St. to Locust. Most likely it was named for the Honorable Joseph B. Anthony, the first President Judge of Court when Columbia was established as a county. He was also both a former senator and congressman of Pennsylvania.

**Barton Street** is divided, running North and South between First and Anthony where it stops at the Fairground and then resumes much farther south below 9<sup>th</sup> St. It was probably named after Caleb Barton, who owned the farmland west of that area all the way to Fishing Creek and who donated a portion of it for the Bloomsburg Fairgrounds. His farmhouse is now an historic attraction open to Fair goers.

**Barton Ave.** is not shown on maps after the 1940s, but earlier it appeared to be a very short alley that was dropped due to construction in that site.

**Brugler Avenue**, E/W, connects Blackberry Ave. and Catherine St. Peter Brugler had come to Bloomsburg from Hemlock Township, where he had inherited 200 acres of land from his father. He lived in what is described as a large commodious house on West Third Street and was known as a money lender. He was a member of the Methodist Church, where one stained glass window can be seen in memory of his daughter “Lizzie” who died as a child.

**Catharine Street**, (the original spelling) N/S between Iron and East, may well have been so named in honor of Catharine Kenny who married Philip Eyer, a descendant of Ludwig Eyer. (See Eyer Street) In early records of births, deaths etc. when the name Catharine started with a “C” it was nearly always spelled with two “As”. The spelling of the street name was changed to Catherine in the 1930s.

**Chrisman Ave.** (on 1948 map) N/S is just a half block between 1<sup>st</sup> & William St. at the west end of Old Rosemont Cemetery. A large area of land in that vicinity was owned by William Chrisman, whose house faced 1<sup>st</sup> Street. It is possible both Chrisman and William, which intersect, were named for this landowner.

**Chuck Daly Way**, a Bloomsburg University street between Lightstreet Road and E. Second Street, was named for a famous alumnus of Bloomsburg State Teachers College who played basketball, graduated and went on to have an outstanding coaching career that included winning NBA titles for the Detroit Pistons in 1989 and 1990. He was named to the BU Hall of Fame in 1983 and the street was given his name in 1993.

**Clinton Ave.**, N/S from Main to 6<sup>th</sup> between Catherine & Iron, could possibly have been named in honor of Clinton Herring, a much-respected barrister who later became a Columbia County judge.

**Creasy Ave.**, one block E/W between Barton & Railroad, was most likely named after Samuel C. Creasy, who with his partner, Edward Wells, were well-known wholesale and retail lumber dealers with a building located on the corner of Catharine and E. 6<sup>th</sup> Sts.

**Eyer Sreet**, one block N/S from Summit to Glenn Ave., was undoubtedly named for Ludwig Eyer, the pioneer who laid out the early town and its first streets, thereby indicating the direction of its future growth.

**Fetterman Ave.** is a crooked dead-end lane off Lightstreet Road between North and Penn Streets. Joshua Fetterman came to Bloomsburg in 1884 to superintend the construction of the Irondale furnaces. He remained here and in 1882 was elected county commissioner. He owned a portion of the Exchange Block in town and also about four acres just east of the town which included the present Fetterman Ave.

**Glenn Ave.** E/W Summit to Franklin. No individual named Glenn discovered; possibly the name was meant to be spelled **Glen** since the street runs down a glen between two hills.

**Green Ave.** is between Chestnut and Rose Ave., from E. 2<sup>nd</sup> to E. 3<sup>rd</sup>. The only early “Green” my research turned up was John, who lived on W. 4<sup>th</sup> St. in 1889, and was the steward of the very popular Bloomsburg Bicycle Club.

**Gundon Ave.** is found only on the 1948 map, going from Railroad St. to W. 5<sup>th</sup>. The closest name to Gundon found in the 1889 directory was Clarence Gunton, a marble cutter who lived at 408 Market Street and was known as “The Monument Man.” He had two sons living at the same

address who were in the same trade, so it's likely the sign-painter or his boss used a spelling that represented how the name sounded to him.

**Harriet Street** is W. of Ferry Road between Ft. McClure Boulevard and 13<sup>th</sup> St. It is my belief this street name is a misspelling of Harriot, who in the 1800s was the town's civil engineer.

**Hartman Ave.**, N/S between W. 3<sup>rd</sup> & W. 4<sup>th</sup>, from W. Anthony to Strawberry Ave., was likely named for brothers H.C. and I.W. Hartman who operated a general store in the old Arcade Building from 1848 until 1887. I.W. (Isaiah Willits), who later purchased his brother's share of the business, was considered the merchant longest in business at that time in the history of the town. He served several years on Town Council, as school director, and as superintendent and treasurer of (Old) Rosemont Cemetery for 25 years. He wrote frequent letters to newspapers in an effort to preserve local history.

**Jefferson Street** runs N/S between Market & W., from 1<sup>st</sup> St. to 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Kent Road**, 1 block off Country Club Drive above Maguire Road, was named by Sam Everett who developed that portion of land into streets and homes. Although he lived primarily in Bloomsburg, he also had created an apartment complex near his second home in Richmond, VA, using the names Kent and Maguire Place. When he put in the roads partway up Country Club Drive, he said he "just liked those names and decided to use them again."

**Knapp Ave.** N/S, a half-block East of Iron St. between Glenn Ave. & 1<sup>st</sup> St. One of the early directories listed a C.F. Knapp who lived on Millville Road, and it's possible his property at one time extended eastward to an alley that was used to connect Glenn and First.

**Laura Ave.** N/S between Reservoir and Eyer St. Although not proven, I'd like to think this alley could possibly have been named for a prominent and well-respected piano and voice teacher, Miss Laura Herring, a sister of Lawyer Herring (see Clinton Ave.). She lived and taught in the large brick house next to the Housenick Garage on East St. during the 30s, 40s and early 50s.

**Leonard Street** N/S from W. 1<sup>st</sup> St. to Anthony Ave. Since no family was found with the surname of "Leonard," it seems probable that the street was so-called in honor of Leonard Rupert, who was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1804 where he served for 11 years. He was first appointed an associate judge in 1815 and elected in 1851. He helped in the creation of Bloomsburg's "Institute" (later known as Bloomsburg University) and served many years as president of its board of trustees. His family owned land now in Montour Township and was active in the establishment of the village of Rupert.

**Lockard Ave.**, E/W between Franklin & Pine Streets, was no doubt named for George M. Lockard who, along with John K. Lockard (possibly a cousin) was known as a car builder, general machinist and foundryman. Their foundry was bought by the Columbia County Iron and Manufacturing Co. in 1871, but two years later the business was purchased by M.W. Jackson of the Berwick Firm of Jackson & Woodin. The Lockards both went to work in Berwick but retained their sumptuous residences in town, George at 221 E. First St., and John K. at 115 E. Fifth.

**Magee Ave.**, formerly 1 block E/W next to Magee Carpet Co., no longer exists,

**Maguire Rd.** E/W below Kent Rd., off Country Club Dr. Named by Sam Everett (see Kent Rd.)

**Miller Ave.** N/S from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> between Center and Iron. This alley was already named Miller on the 1810 Eyer map in the county Deed Book; no adjacent landowner named Miller is known, however.

**Murray Ave.** N/S from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> between Jefferson & Market. Since one of the original N/S alleys was called Moomy, or as the family spelled it, Mummy, it's a guess that when signs were posted someone decided Mummy was distasteful and changed mm to rr.

**Oyer Ave.** N/S from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> between Jefferson & West. Eyer represented the German-origin pronunciation, which in English became Oyer. The family used Oyer on their documents and tombstones and thus Bloomsburg has streets with both spellings.

**Patterson Dr.** is a half-block street southward from Old Berwick Rd. to Bloomsburg's Recycling Center. The Center was started as a volunteer effort in 1977 and due in large part to the late Clark Patterson moved to its present facility in 1982, where its access road was named Patterson Drive.

**Pursell Ave.** ('48 map) E/W from Millville Rd. to Penn St. There were a number of Pursells in the early days and later a number of Pursels, but the spelling distinction between one and two "ls" was not kept in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that the avenue was so named in honor of the family of Jonathan Pursel whose descendants, according to Beers' *Historical and Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties* (1915), included Daniel, farmer and blacksmith, his son Dennis and grandson Norman who was the sheriff at the time of the Mollie Maguires trial, and one of the first members of the Bloomsburg Band, and Frank P. Pursel, who with his brother Charles was proprietor of what was once known as Pursel's Store, the large brick building on the northeast corner of Main and Market Sts.

**Reichart Ave.** E/W between W. 12<sup>th</sup> St. & Zehner Ave. James E. Reichard lived in Light Street and conducted a store selling hay, grain, flour, feed and seeds from a store on the NW corner of Main and Centre. As happened frequently over the years, the same name could be found with different spellings, and the prominent Lightstreet family of today is known as Reichart, so we vote for James Reichard as the one for whom Reichart Ave. was named.

**Sands Street** is a short roadway connecting 12<sup>th</sup> street with Ft. McClure Blvd. on the west side of the sewer plant. It only appears on maps after the 1920s, and was named for Myron Sands, a well-known garage operator on Main Street next to the Double Track Bridge. He was active in many town events and served on Bloomsburg Council for several years in the 1930s. According to his daughter, a plaque in his memory was erected at Town Park at the time park lights were installed, but it somehow mysteriously disappeared.

**Scotts Ave.** (later changed to Scott) N/S from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> between Railroad and Leonard. This avenue was undoubtedly named for Dr. David Scott, who in 1859 was the first resident to live west of West Street, and whose property extended below the hill that became known as Scottown Hill.

**Sterner Ave.**, E/W between 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> from Railroad to East, has the same name as the man responsible for the Forks Hotel, one of the town's earliest and most popular stop-overs located at the intersection of East Street, E. Second Street and Light Street Road. Daniel Sterner was a tanner who came to the area from Easton after learning of the nearby stream that would be available for his business. He soon acquired considerable town property and five or six large

farms. He was elected to several terms in the state legislature and directed all his energies to secure Bloomsburg as the county seat.

**Thornton Ave.** N/S from E. 7<sup>th</sup> to E. 9<sup>th</sup>. The only surname of Thornton in the 1889 directory was that of James P. Thornton, sexton of St Paul's Episcopal Church, listed at that time as being at 317 Catherine St.

**Waller Ave.** 1 block E/W between Wirt & Glenn Ave. There were a number of Wallers who contributed enormously to the growth and development of Bloomsburg. Least known in the history books was Attorney L. E. Waller, who was admitted to the bar in 1876. He had studied with the Hon. C. B. Buckalew and married his daughter Alice. He served two years as the town solicitor and a member of Council. A father and son, both named David Jewett Waller, the former born in 1815 and the latter in 1846, together are credited with the creation of the North and West Branch Railroad, its depot at the corner of Market and 7<sup>th</sup>, and across from it, the Bloomsburg Sanitarium. Both were Presbyterian ministers prominent in securing church property, and David Sr. is credited with being the chief hand in the creation of a classical school, to which he contributed a considerable sum of money and named his brother C. P. Waller principal. He developed the land from just above 5<sup>th</sup> St. to the Canal from Catharine St. to the Irondale Railroad and, had he lived, would probably have developed also the 150 acres he owned south of the canal. He donated the land on which the first silk mill was built and also that of the jail. His son attended the Literary Institute established by his father and after also attending a Theological Seminary, returned to Bloomsburg and became principal of the State Normal School. (One would think they deserved more than a short alley on Reservoir Hill!)

**William Street** E/W one-half block above E. First St. (See Crisman)

**Whiteman Ave.** E/W from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> between Market and Center. This roadway was named for Abraham Whiteman who owned property described in a deed as "running from Market Street along Second Street to Whiteman's Alley on the east." The name stuck for at least a century, included on both an 1872 and an 1896 map. At some unknown point the "e" was dropped and the alley was called Whitman. (According to Town Engineer Bryce James, the town at one point had appointed a sign painter who, for many years, made a number of similar spelling errors). It remained that way until an heir pointed out the error in 2005 and Town Council agreed to a sign change that has since been made.

**Wirt Ave.** E/W from Franklin to Eyer. Paul E. Wirt was not only an inventor of the fountain pen, but also an active and much respected member of early Bloomsburg society. Although in addition to his pen factory at the corner of Iron and 8<sup>th</sup> St, there were two other Wirt buildings during his lifetime, 30-32 W. Main and 11 W. Main, the avenue bearing his name came many years later. His wife was a Funston and that family owned much of the land associated with Reservoir Hill. It is believed they were the progenitors of the alley bearing his name in that area.

**York Road**, running N/S between Lightstreet Rd. (Rt. 487) and Country Club Drive, received its title in 1947 when a residential development was laid out on a four-acre property formerly owned by the family of Frederick York, superintendent of the Bloomsburg Silk Mills, and Milton York, who built the mansion on Market St. across from the former Elks.

**Zehner Street**, E/W just off Railroad between W. 12<sup>th</sup> & Creasy Ave., had not been designated in 1902 but was no doubt named for W.P. Zehner who had a large farm supply business and was sheriff of the county in 1910.

There are ten streets/avenues whose names I could find no information on. I admit to both curiosity and stubbornness and in the interest of finality I ask for help from our readers who may know (or even surmise) the persons for whom the following were named:

**Dewey, Giger and Schley Streets** appear on a 1948 map as running between W. 6<sup>th</sup> and W. 9<sup>th</sup> but were never opened because of the erection of the Alumax Building in that location. Also on that map is a **Sterling St.**, no longer in use, shown on the '48 map as N/S between Olive St. & E. 6<sup>th</sup>.

Both research and imagination fail me when it comes to **Edgar Ave., Hazel St., James Ave., Kessler Ave., Mary Ave. and Olive St.** I know where they are, or were, but not WHY. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please call the Historical Society (570-784-1600) or drop a line to it at 110 Market Street, Bloomsburg, PA 17815, attention Pat Parker – who truly resents an unfinished task!