THE FORKS OF THE SUSQUEHANNA

The following essay is reprinted from the Columbia Democrat, *a Bloomsburg newspaper, which in turn had reprinted the article from the* New York Argus *(probably the paper of that name issued at Albany, NY.) The author, who writes in a florid Romantic style, seems to have lived in or near Bloomsburg. He sets out to sketch "a skeleton of a history" of the region, focusing on lore of Native Americans. Thanks to previous* Newsletter *editor George Turner, who provided this article.*

   Following the essay you'll find a list of origins for some of the Indian place names mentioned by the author.

Within the region drained by the two branches of the Susquehanna, whose waters unite at Northumberland, lie some of the most beautiful, most romantic and most celebrated spots in the local history of Pennsylvania—comprising many rich and now populous counties, to which years ago, the hardy settlers flocked for cheap land, the pleasure of the chase and fishing rod. Within its borders occurred some of the most terrible and bloody battles in which the white and the red man contended for life and subsistence. Fierce and protracted were the struggles; and we find marks of them, not only on their very sites, but the Indians have indelibly stamped their own nomenclature upon the streams, the mountains, the passes and the valleys; and it should ever be a source of gratification that our noble and majestic rivers were permitted to retain their beautiful aboriginal names, instead of being be-Rhined and be-Rhoned and be-Tibered from the Old World.

Born within the forks of the Susquehanna, on the very bank and directly at the mouth of one of its most romantic tributaries, with the tempest roar and sunny sparkle of both streams the most familiar sounds and sights of my childhood, and the peculiar sweet sounding Indian name of both in my young ears, it is no wonder that the region watered by "the rivers of the winding shore," should be to me the loveliest spot of earth and from which God grant that war, pestilence and famine be ever absent.—And there is no valley in the world which for beauty of scenery, fertility of soil, salubrity of climate and facility of access—for the mineral wealth of its hills, the moral health, hospitality and intelligence of its inhabitants—surpasses that lying in the forks of the Susquehanna, in the good old commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

But it is not only for the things mentioned that this valley is celebrated. Its historical associations and recollections are fully worthy of its high character in other respects. Within that territory lies the beautiful Valley of Wyoming, the plain tale of the massacre of whose citizens brings tears to the eyes of the most careless reader, and whose charms and horrors have been painted, but not heightened by the magic pen of Campbell.—Here, too, the celebrated Van Campen followed the trail of the Indians, or suffered as a prisoner in their cruel hands, a narrative of whose adventures, some of them occurring almost in sight of where I write, would be more exciting than a romance. In this charmed region, Capt. Samuel Brady performed many of his famous exploits, and made his hair-breadth escapes; and numberless places are pointed out as the spots where the white and the red man met in deadly conflict.

The celebrated Montour family, which has left its name indelibly on one of our most beautiful mountains, lived, acted and died, and are believed to be buried in the valley of the Susquehanna. Here dwelt the Lenni Lenape, "the original people"; and the council fires of

Tamanend, their most illustrious chieftain, were kindled in its forests. For many years annually on the first of May, throughout Pennsylvania, his festival was celebrated. In Philadelphia, the members of the "Tammany" society walked the streets in procession, their hats decorated with bucks' tails, and upon reaching the wigwam, had a talk, smoked the "peace pipe," and performed Indian dances.

The valley must have been very thickly populated, for many remains of Indian towns are pointed out. Very extensive burial grounds are known to exist at several places within the forks. Curiosities of various kinds—mounds, excavations and fortifications of undoubted Indian workmanship—are found in large numbers. Through this valley run some of the most important and frequently-traveled "war paths" known in the history of the race.—Shall I trace them out for you by existing roads and villages! The writer has been over most of them, and you can put your finger on the "paths" on almost any map (see map, page 5).

"The Shamokin Path" began at the place now known as Sunbury, and continued up the West Branch by the mouth of Warrior Run and an Indian town there located; thence through the gap in Muncy hills to the town of Muncy, where the public road now passes.

"The Wyoming Path" left Muncy on the West Branch, ran up Glade run, then through a gap on the hills to Fishing creek, which empties into the North Branch at Bloomsburg, twenty miles above the junction; crossed the creek, passed into (now) Luzerne county through the Nescopeck gap, and up the North Branch to Wyoming.

"The Wyalusing Path" was traced up the Muncy creek to its head, then crossed Loyal Sock creek, near where the Berwick turnpike crosses, then to Dushore thence to Wyalusing creek and to the flats above.

"The Sheshequin Path" ran up Bouser's run, thence to Lycoming creek, near the mouth of Mill creek, thence up Lycoming to the Beaver Dams, thence down Towanda creek to the Sheshequin flats.

"The Fishing creek Path" started on the flats near Bloomsburg, on the North Branch; up Fishing creek by Orangeville, to near Long Pond, thence across to Tunkhannock creek. It was on this very path that Van Campen, the most prominent Indian fighter on the North Branch, was captured, and within three miles of where I write.

Several other less important paths led into those great thoroughfares, and are well known in their neighborhoods.

What an interesting story would be that of the country lying in the forks of the Susquehanna! Every creek and mountain pass has its history and with that history you generally find associated the Indian name. Where will you find so many names, somewhat corrupted, perhaps, but still easily traceable to their Indian origin as here?

Hark to the music of a few of them: We have Wyalusing, Tuckhannock, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Nanticoke, Cattawissa, Mahoning, Shamokin, Chillisquaque, Muncy, Loyal Sock, Lycoming, Towanda, Kittanning, Sheshequin, and many others.

The Indians seem to have called what is now Towanda, 'Awandae'; and perhaps what is known as Pine Creek is a little easier of pronunciation than the aboriginal 'Tiadaghton.' So, also, what is now known as Muncy Creek was, in the native dialect, 'Occohpoeheny,' and by

some of the tribes was called 'Longe-serango.'—The name Muncy was doubtless given by the whites as easier of pronunciation, or because the tribes inhabiting the region were called the 'Monseys,' or Wolf tribes.

Lycoming was, in Indian, 'Locomick'; and 'Stonehauge,' is by some given as the Indian name of Loyal Sock. It, as well as Muncy, may have been known to different tribes by different names; for Loyal Sock is undoubtedly Indian, and signifies 'Middle Fork'—the explanation being that it enters the Susquehanna about midway between Muncy creek and Lycoming creek. There is reason in this; and the authority for it, though mislaid, satisfied my mind.

Chillisquaque, 'The frozen Duck,' is named from the legend of a beautiful squaw having met an untimely death upon the banks of that quiet stream.

Nanticoke and Lackawanna are most certainly Indian, and I am informed by a Welshman that the roots of both words are certainly Welsh. He explains them to have reference to streams of water, in his own language, and their peculiarities answer exactly to those of the streams which they designate. It is impossible to say if the meaning of the words in both languages is the same; but it is a little remarkable, if the Welshman was not quizzing [i.e., teasing] me, that in both, the words should have reference to water, rather than woods, fields or mountains.

Such is a skeleton of a history of the forks of the Susquehanna, a history that has been attempted in detached pieces by several writers, but without in a single instance making such a book as the facts and materials would warrant.—That history yet remains to be written.—When done, may it be done wisely and well!

SOME EARLY MARRIAGES
AND PARENTINGS

Family-history researchers often trace back a family line for several generations but then hit a "brick wall" when they reach the period of early settlement in a region. In the decades before churches were well established—with no pastor or clerk to keep careful records of marriages, christenings, and burials—there may be no record at all of vital events except, if a researcher is lucky, an old family Bible.

Hence, any source of vital records for the region of Columbia and Montour counties—Northumberland County before 1813—can be an especially valuable find. One such often-neglected source is early court records, especially the docket of the Justice of the Peace in each township. Not many of these books survive, but those that do can provide information not available in any other way.

One local J.P. docket book still intact is the one kept by William Montgomery, Jr. [that is, the Younger], son of Daniel Montgomery the Elder and cousin of Daniel Montgomery Jr. [the Younger]. The son was appointed Justice of the Peace for Mahoning Township—then much larger than today—in 1794 while he was still a young man, age 32. The book records the disposition of over 1500 cases he heard between May 30, 1796 and July 1, 1805.

During that period he performed and recorded twenty-four marriages, many of which are not otherwise known from extant records. Some of the entries include information about the couple's parentage and/or place of residence. The data are listed below.

The docket book also includes a few cases of alleged fathering of children out of wedlock. At the time, such liaisons were brought to court not on moral grounds but to "keepe the Township from the Charge of Maintaining a … Child." (In those years, there was no public program such as Aid to Dependent Children.) The township in effect sued the alleged father or his family for funds to support the child. The cases were technically listed as "Common-wealth versus ____," naming the man who had been identified as the father by the woman involved, who had to depose under oath. Some family member or friend of the accused had to post a large "security" or bond to guarantee support money for the child. The five such cases from Montgomery's docket book are tabulated below; in four of these cases it isn't clear whether a live birth resulted from the pregnancy.

Perhaps one of the listings below will help you extend a family line. If so, the editor would be pleased to hear of it (contact him through the Society). In the future, we may be able to provide similar listings for other townships in the local region.

DATE	BRIDE GROOM	RESIDENCE	PARENT
9 Feb 1797	Polly Huntington Daniel Moore	Danville	
[no date; ca. 16 Mar 1797]	Loranah Gulick Tunis Gerhart	Mahoning Twp. Shamokin Twp.	Mine Gulick
16 Mar 1797	Polly Gerhart John Gulick	Shamokin Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Jacob Gerhart
6 Dec 1797	William Boon Jenny Daugherty	Berks Co. Shamokin Town	George Daugherty
23 May 1798	Widow Jean Vorhas Christian Courson		

27 Sep 1798	Abby Parker Jacob Budman	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	
1 Nov 1798	Nancy Barton George McCully	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Daniel Barton
12 Dec 1798	William Blue Margaret Blue	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Frederick Blue Michael Blue
26 Mar 1800	Elizabeth Young George Budman	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Philip Young
1 May 1800	Mary Roberts Michael Ressel	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Daniel Roberts
2 Sep 1800	Catharine Neville Michael Kisler	Mahoning Twp. Augusta Twp.	Frederick Neville
5 Feb 1801	Mary Gordon John Caldwell	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	
5 Feb 1801	Sally Egbert John Ressel	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	John Egbert Martin Ressel
18 Sep 1801	Polly Young John Lenger	Mahoning Twp. Chillisquaque Twp.	
10 May 1803	Joseph Hughes Elizabeth Clark		
11 Aug 1803	Catharine Saunders Evan Hughes	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	
28 Oct 1803	Hannah Harford [? Hervieot] John Sechler Jr.		?William Hervieot
24 Nov 1803	Elisabeth Strawbridge James Roberts	Mahoning Twp.	
1 Dec 1803	Sally Egbert Martin Bogart	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	
29 Dec 1803	Latiticia Williams Owen Roberts	Mahoning Twp. Hemlock Twp.	
22 Feb 1804	Jenny Irwin Daniel Barton Jr.	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Sam Irwin Daniel Barton
23 Feb 1804	Nancy Cox George Sechler	Hemlock Twp. Mahoning Twp.	
10 Apr 1804	Elizabeth Bell Jonathan Phillips	Hemlock Twp. Hemlock Twp.	
20 Aug 1804	Charlotte Young Samuel Blue	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	
25 Sep 1804	Susanna Lilly Harry Moader		
10 Jan 1804	Mary Caldwell John Flemming	Mahoning Twp. Mahoning Twp.	Hugh Caldwell
22 Jan 1805	Mahlon Huff	Mahoning Twp.	

	Elizabeth Cox	Hemlock Twp.
7 Feb 1805	Elizabeth Egbert	Mahoning Twp.
	Aaron Kinney	Derry Twp.

PARENTAGE CASES

DATE	MOTHER	NAMED FATHER
26 Mar 1797	Elinor Gibson	Thomas Taylor
1 Nov 1798	Mary Fulmor	Christian Farrey
20 July 1799	Polly Egbert (3 months pregnant)	Justas Strawbridge
26 Nov 1803	Elenor Linn (male child born 23 Nov 1801)	Elijah Ayres
24 Feb 1804	Margaret Cox	Jacob Kessel

We thank the docket book's custodian, the office of the Montour County Prothonotary, for access and assistance.

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHERS IN
COLUMBIA AND MONTOUR COUNTIES

Volunteers at CCHGS have begun a long-term effort to establish a catalog of Nineteenth-century professional photographers in Columbia and Montour counties. This listing may be useful in identifying and/or dating old photographs in which the identities of the person(s) shown are unknown or uncertain.

Most studio portraits on paper (not metal or glass), beginning around the time of the Civil War, were mounted on cardboard frames or pasted to cardboard mounts. The frames or mounts usually identify the photographer, and the styles of these printed studio IDs changed fairly often and thus can be used as a means of roughly dating the photos.

Early studio portraits generally were produced in two sizes: **carte de visite** (CDV) and **cabinet**. The CDV or "calling card" size portraits (2½" X 4¼") began to appear in 1859, were very popular during the Civil War and just after, and continued to be produced until after 1880. The larger cabinet photos (about 4¼" X 6½") appeared just after the Civil War, peaked in popularity around 1888, and continued to about 1900. In the 1890's simple snapshot cameras made photography practicable in every home and led to the decline of studio portraiture.

The Society's collection of over 8,000 photos includes hundreds of Nineteenth-century studio portraits, and from these we have begun a listing of early local photographers. The aim is to provide a brief career biography for each artist and, when feasible, a listing of his mounting styles with dates of usage for each mount. Following is a preliminary listing of local professional photographers.

EARLY LOCAL
PHOTOGRAPHERS

BLOOMSBURG
Willits K. Beagle /
  Beagle's Studio
John E. Bolig
J. F. Broadt
William S. Capwell /
  Market Square
    Gallery
James Duffey /
  Market Square
    Gallery
Robert B. Grotz
Hempstead & Leonard
Herbert A. Kemp
Harvey A. McKillip /
  McKillip & Choate /
  McKillip Bros.

A. G. Nesbit
Ralph G. Phillips
Henry Rosenstock
Ralph F. Snyder
C. B. Tinker
C. C. Wirt

BENTON
Herbert A. Kemp

BERWICK
Frank B. Bredbenner
James B. Fenstemaker
William J. Hertz
I. W. Kunkel
J. M. Snyder /
  J. M. Snyder & Son

CATAWISSA
S. F. Deibert

DANVILLE
 J. M. Irland
I. C. Lee
J. P. Leisenring
T. McMahan /
   McMahan & Irland

GREENWOOD
 Elmer E. Parker

MILLVILLE
Wilmer Kester

ORANGEVILLE
 Elwood W. Coleman
Stebbins /
   Stebbins & Russell

Sports and Entertainment
at the Bloomsburg Fair

Robert Dunkelberger

A special thanks to Dave Millard and the Fair Board for allowing me access to the Fair Association minute books, which told the role the Board played and helped to make the story of sports and entertainment at the Bloomsburg Fair more complete.

In 1855 Bloomsburg staged its first agricultural fair, a brief exposition whose purpose was to promote agriculture in Columbia County. Although the one-day affair only featured exhibits of crops, fruits and vegetables, as the years went on the fair came to represent much more than an exhibition for farmers and the results of their labor.

During the 1800s the purpose of agricultural fairs in the United States was to promote commerce, education and recreation, although the emphasis on each varied over time. The fair was a major event in the life of people in rural areas each year. After 1850 the primary attraction at many fairs was horse racing, which grew in popularity to such an extent that some feared it would ruin the fair because there would no longer be any interest in the other attractions, especially the agricultural exhibits. Amusements, including the Midway with side shows and games of chance, were also seen as taking the fair's focus away from agriculture and education, even though fair associations needed the Midway for the profits it generated.

The Columbia County Agricultural, Horticultural and Mechanical Association was formed at a time when hundreds of similar agricultural societies were established around the country, with 71 in Pennsylvania alone by 1858. Although land in Bloomsburg was rented at first, when permanent grounds for the Fair were purchased on the west edge of town in 1859 a race track was graded to permit horse racing, which meant primarily harness racing. Horse racing has always been the dominant sport and major attraction at traditional agricultural fairs, although unlike commercial race tracks authorized gambling was strictly prohibited.

By the 1890s horse racing was still the only major competitive event being staged, and its popularity was shown by the resources the Fair spent in providing ever better facilities. In 1892 a 2000-seat wooden grandstand was built and later enlarged, to be replaced 30 years later by a 6000-seat concrete and steel structure. Even with this construction there were so many horse enthusiasts that they continued to ring the track to get a glimpse of their favorite horse. Despite the popularity of the horses the Fair left nothing to chance, and advertised the races in two or three national publications each year, including *American Horse Breeder*, *Turf, Field & Farm*, and *Horse Review*.

In addition to the horses the Fair Board of Directors tried to increase the entertainment factor and keep the customers coming. They decided to provide an expanded program of athletic competition, principally other types of racing. Foot races were held as far back as 1860 and continued off and on until 1892, usually a half-mile jaunt once around the track. But the following year the Fair tied into the bicycling craze that was sweeping the country in the 1890s by holding its initial bicycle race. That first year a single race was held with the winners receiving medals and by 1895 a total of $200 was allocated for prizes. Although the money itself would have been appreciated the Fair decided instead to give out award items which included onyx lamps, diamond rings and studs, watches and chains, mantle clocks, and even searchlight lanterns. Competition for the prizes was fierce, with contestants from all over eastern Pennsylvania coming to Bloomsburg, many of them members of bicycle clubs and wheelmen

groups. So fierce in fact that in 1896 the winner of a one mile race that featured nearly 20 riders suffered a broken collar bone in a collision at the finish line. This extreme competitiveness probably played no small part in the Board's decision in May, 1897 to end bicycle racing after only four years.

Races weren't the only athletic features at the fair during the 1890s, however. Athletes at the Bloomsburg State Normal School were secured in 1895 for $12.50 to provide one day of demonstrations of gymnastics, parallel bar exercises, Indian club swinging, and dumbbell drills. The Fair also hoped to have the Normal School football team and one from Berwick play a game on the race track, but in the end the game was canceled because the track was too narrow a place in which to play.

Additional noncompetitive events were put on between the horse races primarily to keep the crowds entertained. Even over a hundred years ago it was felt necessary to keep people constantly occupied for fear they would lose interest. Other fairs did not feel the need to do this, however, and their audiences were often subjected to long, weary waits between heats that tested the spectators' endurance. The entertainment acts Bloomsburg offered included tightrope walkers, high wire and trapeze acts, contortionists, and roller skating acrobats, but also attractions featuring equestrian skills. Several shows gave exhibitions of standing and bareback riding, plus driving and racing with skeleton wagons.

As the Fair moved into the early years of the 1900s it continued to grow in size and attendance, but not with athletic competition as a draw except for the ever-dependable horse racing. Even though athletics at the Fair were not as pervasive during this time that did not mean they were ignored. Americans craved the national pastime of baseball, and since the Fair then was held in early October the *Morning Press* took the opportunity to keep fairgoers abreast of what was going on at the World Series. The newspaper had the results of each inning transmitted to its booth at the Fair, and the results were then posted on a bulletin board, placed at convenient points around the grounds, and megaphoned from both the booth and the grandstand.

One thing the Pennsylvania General Assembly did in order to keep the staging of fairs financially viable was to pass an Act in 1907 to provide up to $1000 a year for assisting county agricultural exhibitions in paying the premiums awarded to people who exhibited crops, vegetables, livestock and crafts. Pennsylvania was not unique in this as most states provided some sort of subsidy for county fairs. When first awarded, this payment by the state was the only thing that kept the Bloomsburg Fair in the black some years, such as 1910 when their ending balance was only $210. By 1940 however the state money did little to augment what was then an already extremely healthy surplus of over $28,000. Other fairs in the state continued to need and depend on outside support, but not Bloomsburg's.

The scope of the entertainment the Fair offered gradually increased in scale during the early part of the century, with a total of just over $500 being spent on music and attractions in 1900 to nearly $1100 by 1910. One constant with the Fair Board was that they sought to provide entertainment that people of the county and central Pennsylvania wanted to see, and what the Board members themselves thought would have the highest value. This was demonstrated in 1912 when the Fair contracted with the Pennsylvania Aviation Company for three days of aerial flights and stunts over the fairgrounds, just nine years after the first flight by the Wright Brothers.

During the next three years the Fair provided additional special features including another airplane show, a balloonist whose act almost ended prematurely when he barely missed hitting high-tension power lines, and finally in 1915 a complete reversal from the more modern

technology-based entertainment when chariot races were staged on the track. These were a choreographed act and not real competition, but still just as thrilling. The greatest change at the Fair during the period from the turn of the century through World War I actually had nothing to do with the Fair itself, but involved instead advancements in transportation that allowed ever-increasing numbers of people an easier means of reaching the fairgrounds. During the early years horse travel was the way to go for closer fairgoers, with others coming by train from cities as far afield as Williamsport, Pottsville, Wilkes-Barre, Reading and Philadelphia. Once the electric railroad began operating in 1901 people within 10 miles left their horses at home and came by trolley car from Berwick, Danville and Catawissa, and finally after 1910 ever-growing numbers traveled by automobile. The family car more than anything else helped drive the Fair as it grew and expanded.

It was during the 1920s, more so than at any time since the 1890s, that the Fair Board took advantage of the local and indeed national fascination with sports to provide additional attractions to draw people to the fairgrounds. In April of 1922 the Board met with groups who planned to stage polo matches and races with automobiles, so that the dominant form of transportation to reach the Fair would now provide exciting entertainment. The auto polo matches were daily events in front of the grandstand, publicized as "a death-defying exhibition with dare-devil riders," while the auto races on Saturday were the first professional ones ever held in central Pennsylvania. Drivers were attracted from as far away as Kansas City and Great Britain, and even though held in a sea of mud the races did not disappoint a capacity crowd. The track was designed for horse racing and not autos so the speeds would never be as great as at real race courses, but the thrills provided in maneuvering the smaller space proved exciting enough.

The next idea to promote the Bloomsburg Fair via athletics was the most ambitious. In August of 1925 the Board approved a motion to create a ball diamond in the oval of the race track in order to attract two major league teams to play exhibition games during the Fair. This was not a new idea, since as early as 1908 it had been suggested that the interior of the track be used for hosting major league teams. Who would be playing could not be decided until near the end of the season, since it had to be seen who would make the World Series. By late September it was hoped that two regional teams, the Philadelphia Athletics and the New York Giants, would be squaring off at the Fair. The two that did end up coming to Bloomsburg were the New York Yankees and Detroit Tigers, although each squad only consisted of ten or eleven men. Rain limited play to two games, starting at 10:00 in the morning to avoid a conflict with the afternoon of horse racing. (*See* "Play Ball!" in December, 2006 *Newsletter*.)

The Fair hoped to eventually match the second place team in both leagues as a companion series to the World Series, although these dreams had little hope of coming to pass. In 1926 the attraction consisted of a team of American League All-Stars against a black professional team, the Hilldale Giants of the Eastern Colored League, and the following year fans saw the Fair host two black teams, the Hilldale Giants and the Harrisburg Giants. It was promoted as the best baseball attraction the Fair had ever had, complete with an acknowledgment that these highly talented players were kept out of the major leagues solely because of their race. As an added incentive the Fair promised a $100 bonus to the winning team of each game. Although the turnout was decent and the fans saw some great exhibitions of the national pastime, after initially approving a fourth year of baseball the Fair decided in July of 1928 to discontinue sponsoring the event due to the increasing expense of securing good teams.

A third sport that enjoyed great popularity on a national basis during the 1920s was boxing, thanks primarily to the exploits of Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. A local promoter

tried to tap into this enthusiasm for the sport in 1929 by bringing a proposal to the Fair Board to use the main exhibition building as a boxing venue. The matches would be staged during the spring and summer and not during fairtime, but it was an indication that the fairgrounds were thought of as a place suitable for sport which could attract large numbers of people.

One type of competition the Fair tried that really spoke of the culture of the era was an old-time fiddlers contest held in 1931. Members of the Board had seen similar contests and felt this was a type of entertainment the Fair could also offer, which featured "old" fiddlers over the age of 45. A crowd of several hundred turned out to hear the contestants, with the winner, a youngster of 46, taking first place and a $25 prize. It was another novel way in which the Fair kept in touch with local interests and forms of entertainment.

By this time the Depression was deepening and in many areas of the country the number of county fairs being held was only one half or even a third the number just 15 years earlier; low attendance continued to be a problem into the war years of the 1940s. But the Bloomsburg Fair continued on as always, with no changes to its operation or the entertainment that was offered. The Fair actually prospered to a greater degree than ever before, and became more aggressive in its attempts to bring as many visitors as possible from not only the surrounding area but also from around Pennsylvania and neighboring states. By 1935 the Fair Association advertised in more than 70 newspapers across the Commonwealth, and whereas previously most fairgoers would come from no more than 50 miles away they were now willing to drive up to 150 miles to see the attractions the Fair had to offer. The advertising appeared not only in newspapers but also on radio and roadside billboards.

More money was actually being made during the Depression than beforehand, as shown by the fact that the Association ended 1930 with a surplus of $1300, which by 1938 had grown to over $38,000. The Fair was able to direct these profits back into the grounds to improve the site's physical appearance, and so the large surpluses of the 1930s led to new buildings being constructed, including exhibit halls and ticket offices. The auto races continued unabated during these years and the entertainment grew in size and scope, with $3300 in total expenditures for grandstand attractions and music in 1924 increasing by 1940 to over $14,600. An additional draw to bring in larger crowds was the introduction of "Thrill Days," where automobile stuntmen made death-defying jumps and other tricks with their cars, a modern successor to the old horse and wagon stunts of 40 years before. The 1920s and 1930s saw a gradual evolution in the entertainment brought to the Fair away from acrobatics and animal acts to big Broadway-type musical extravaganzas held at night that increased the overall level of sheer spectacle.

Over the years, though, trained animal acts were a popular staple of fair entertainment, with dogs, horses, elephants, bears, and monkeys being the primary ones, but also acts featuring lions and tigers. The 1940 fair marked the first appearance of Bloomsburg's native son George Keller, an art professor at the Bloomsburg State Teachers College whose hobby of training animals led him to bring together a number of different varieties of big cats into one act. His

first time at the Fair he was part of the Midway amusements, but in 1943 and 1947 he made it to the grandstand as one of the featured attractions.

The war years finally did change the Fair, as restrictions, especially on gasoline, caused it to alter the schedule of events. No auto races were held in 1942, and so that year a rodeo was hired to serve as the main attraction during the final two days. Another kind of competition was arranged for 1942 that did not require gasoline and also brought the Fair much closer in touch with its agricultural roots. This was a horse-pulling contest, which consisted of teams of horses in two classes, those above or below 3000 pounds, competing for a total of $230 by pulling weighted sleds. That first year ten teams were entered and it was such a hit, drawing thousands of spectators to the grandstand and fence around the track, that Fair officials announced it would be an annual event. It also became increasingly lucrative, with total prize money reaching nearly $1000 by 1950.

The role of the Fair during the war years showed the impact it could make locally in promoting the spirit needed to win World War II. For four years beginning in 1942 each Fair was promoted as an event to aid the war effort, with slogans such as "The Fair with a Progressive War Message" and "Dedicated to Greater Home Front Support of our Fighting Men." The war spirit also included exhibitions of not only American armament but also captured enemy aircraft, including a Japanese Zero and a German Messerschmitt. Finally in 1945 it was the Victory Fair, with a musical review called "Freedom Song," in order to celebrate the end of the war. During the conflict the Fair served as a means to increase support and patriotism for the global struggle, but once victory had been achieved it was looking ahead to the reconstruction era of the post-war world.

With gasoline rationing now gone the auto races returned in 1945, and for the first time in its history the Fair sold over 100,000 tickets, with the record amount of over 128,000 more than 30,000 above the previous best set in 1941. The record was shattered once more the following year, when over 165,000 came to see the Fair in 1946, the most of any year up through 1950. The final change in sporting events during the decade of the '40s happened in 1947, when it was decided to stop racing larger cars on the track and switch instead to the fastest growing sport in America, midget auto racing. This change again demonstrated that the Fair did not sit still and gave the public what they wanted to see. Besides their popularity the Board also felt the smaller cars, called doodle bugs, would lead to better competition and more thrills on the relatively small track. That first year over 6000 fans watched from the grandstand, plus 5000 more from the fence, as 60 cars competed for prize money. In spite of this success the King of Racing at the Fair was still harness racing, and by 1950 nearly $60,000 in purses was being awarded to the winners.

As of 2008 the Bloomsburg Fair has thrilled millions of fairgoers for over 150 years, and even though auto racing ended in 1985 the harness racing and horse pulling contests live on, along with other more recent competitive attractions including the demolition derby since 1973 and the tractor pulls since 2001. The many exhibits of crops, animals and giant pumpkins remain as well, showcasing each year the agricultural output of central Pennsylvania. But as has been seen over the years the Fair has always reflected the culture of the region and the times in which it was held, and entertainment and athletics, whether horse, foot, bicycle or automobile racing, baseball, or boxing, has played as much a part in this grand spectacle as anything else.

A Tombstone With A Story:
A Revolutionary War Soldier

By W. M. Baillie

A single piece of rough slate can have quite a story to tell. Recently the Society received a call from a Columbia County farmer who spoke of an unrecorded tombstone on his farm. We went to visit the site on Katy's Church Road in Madison Township; the farm extends into Montour County and is within hailing distance of Lycoming County.

The tombstone is on a wooded hillside in a little-frequented area of Columbia County—across the road lies the edge of 4,338-acre State Game Lands. Near the gravesite are two springs, and the present owner speculated that a settler's cabin once stood nearby, though there is now no trace of a structure.

The stone is a flat slate, rough on the edges. It was crudely inscribed with the point of a knife or a nail:

PETER SORTor
DE^c June 1 1837

The photo, taken in shadow, doesn't do justice to the inscriber; the inscription still is quite legible despite standing in the weather for 170 years. The inscriber was evidently an amateur, as shown both by the rough edges of the slate and by the crowding of the deceased's surname at the right edge of the stone.

The current landowner, himself a history buff, was curious about the deceased, of whom he knew nothing apart from the gravestone. Fortunately, an internet search turned up quite a bit of information about Peter Sortor. He was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, previously unrecorded in Columbia County.

Peter Sortor was born 15 April 1751 in Somerset County, New Jersey. He was the son of Hendrick Sortore (born c. 1721, died between 3 August 1793 and 5 May 1794) and Dinah Blew (c. 1717—c.1755), and grandson of Jacob Sortore (c. 1695—6 September 1751), all of Somerset County. Peter married around 1777 Esther Stout, daughter of Joseph Stout. In 1794 Peter inherited from his father the "house and land where he now lives" in Somerset County; within a few years, however, Peter sold that farm and moved to Pennsylvania.

During the Revolutionary War Peter served in the New Jersey militia. According to his later Pension Application, he served three separate terms. He first enlisted in the New Jersey Regiment on 7 June 1776 and served for six weeks with Capt. William Baird's company under Col. Quick. After a short break, he enlisted on 10 September 1776 at Fort Lee as a substitute for his brother Henry; this time he remained for 8½ months of a nine-month enlistment. He enlisted again on 1 July 1777 and served until sometime after June 1778. He was present at the skirmish of Millstone River (20 January 1777) and at the Battle of Monmouth (28 June 1778). When he applied for his pension on 8 November 1832 (National Archives #S23933), he was residing in Madison Township, Columbia County, PA.

On 13 July 1816 the Commonwealth granted to "Peter Sorter" a Patent for a tract of 100 acres 40 perches in then-Derry Township, Columbia County (Patent Book H-13-594). The tract had been surveyed on a warrant to brothers Gershom and Israel Biddle dated 4 January 1793; they later signed over their rights in the warrant to John Coxe, who on 10 April 1816 conveyed

his right to Peter Sorter. It is apparent from other records that Peter and his family had been living on or near this tract since about 1799. He also acquired an adjacent tract of 120 acres, but the records of that transaction have not been found.

On 17 March 1826, Peter sold both tracts, totaling 220 acres (plus the usual 6% allowance for roads) to Henry Crawford, mason, of Columbia County. Peter probably retained some rights in the homestead land, since he was buried there eleven years afterward.

Peter and his wife Esther Stout had six children—five girls and a boy—whose births are recorded in Somerset County between about 1778 and 1797. Curiously, no trace of these children seems to have survived in Columbia County, although presumably several or all of them came here with their father when they were aged from two to about twenty-one. Peter's wife Esther may have moved away from the county, but Peter himself was still a resident in 1816. Esther evidently died by 1826, since she was not mentioned in the deed of sale, as was normally required.

Columbia County, then, can claim one additional Revolutionary War soldier. A single gravestone, although isolated in a remote area, can tell us a lot about the early settlers in our region.

[First printed in CCHGS *Newsletter*, September 2008, pages 8-9.

An Old School House
By May McHenry

[The Works Progress Administration series of make-work programs during the Great Depression included the compiling of volumes in the American Guide Series, 1935-1941 *by the Pennsylvania Writers Project. This project employed local amateur and professional historians to record aspects of local history around the Commonwealth. The projects included Job 166,* A Picture of Columbia County 1940-1942*, and among the essays in that collection is this charming recollection of the earliest school in upper Fishing Creek Valley. The author, May McHenry, listed among her sources an Old Note Book in her possession and an Old Spelling Book owned by A. B. McHenry. This essay is reprinted, lightly edited, from the original in the Pennsylvania State Archives (Harrisburg), Record Group 13; a few explanatory notes are added.]*

The first school in the village of Stillwater, which was also the first school north of Knob Mountain in the long, lovely Fishing Creek Valley, was taught in the log cabin of the first settler of the region. It was in 1794 that a young man, Henry Heister, came to this part of the frontier of the Forks of the Susquehanna on business connected with a land grant. Being a "good young man with some book learning," he was persuaded to stay for three months to teach the many children of the few settlers. Other brief spells of schooling were given the pioneers' youngsters in other homes or out under trees whenever anyone who could and would impart rudiments of the "Three R's" came up the creek through the woods. About 1800 at least one term was taught in the weave shop of an eccentric, but literate, German who made his pupils carry water from a distant spring to wash his feet and their own at the end of each day's session.

Shortly after the turn of the century, probably in 1803, a log schoolhouse was built on the East side of Fishing Creek where the present Stillwater schoolhouse now stands. Land was donated as the site of a schoolhouse at that time and has been used for that purpose ever since.

That old log schoolhouse was put up in a three days' "Frolic" at which all the men and boys of the scattered settlement gathered together to build the fireplace, to bring in the logs and cut and square and place them and chink them up with clay. It was a joyous, hearty interval of work in common for the common good. The women and girls did their part in cooking food over open fires and in serving it under the big maple and buttonwood trees—corn bread baked in the coals, big iron kettles of fat, tender "saddle" venison, long-handled skillets of the delicious speckled trout from the nearby creek.

As was the custom at the old time "Frolics," the co-operatives worked hard and fast under a chosen leader and lightened their work with intervals of sport. The sturdy pioneers did not play croquet, lawn tennis or even baseball. They rested from their labors by wrestling, foot racing and "Jumping the Wand." Jumping the Wand, was a game copied from the Indians. The wand was a light, straight stick or pole placed, breast high, in the shallow crotches of two uprights. Tradition does not say whose breast, but the height to be jumped probably varied with the size and ambition of the contestant. Girls took part in these sports for it is set down in an old note book that Mary Ann jumped the wand "pretty as a dog chased doe."

When the building was finished everyone who had taken part in putting it up was expected to throw a stone over the roof for luck and to scare away trouble. That old custom may have been the origin of the game "Ante Over the Schoolhouse" played for over a hundred years by scholars at this school. The meaning and orthography of the name of the game is questionable. Each generation went ahead and played it lustily as their parents and grandparents had played, without caring whether it was "ante," "anti," or "aunty" they were sending over the schoolhouse.

It was a game that gave opportunity for argument, hence its long-continued popularity in a Scotch-Irish community. The players divided into equal teams, with or without leaders, by chance or choice, and lined up on the north and south sides of the schoolhouse. Someone on the side that had the first play would throw the ball of tightly wound homespun over the roof to the other side. The ball might land on the roof and roll down or a strong thrower might send it soaring and far back among the trees. If

the receiving side failed to make a catch one of their players went to the other side; if the ball was caught, the catcher was privileged to run around to his opponents and "sock" the player he wanted to come over and play on his side. The side with the most players in the end, won. Usually there was a "teller" who ran back and forth from side to side to tell that the ball had been actually and fairly caught, and by whom. Sometimes the schoolmaster served in this determinative capacity. Then the game was likely to be fair and peaceful and dull. A shrill-voiced girl could liven things up and be almost as vociferous and dramatic as a radio announcer of a Big League game.

A description of the log schoolhouse and of some of the happenings and experiences for which it formed the background has been handed down by one who received his early education in the old building and who at the age of seventeen took a turn at teaching therein. The one-room cabin was of good size and square, with the door facing the road and the creek, but with no windows on that side to permit the distraction of rare horsemen or ox-teams going by. The big fireplace faced the door, in each of the other two sides there were three windows. The windows were small and high up and they had in them glass brought up from Harrisburg by boat and ox cart. On one side of the door there was a slab shelf for the wooden water bucket and its gourd dipper that would throw today's sanitation experts into fits; on the other side of the door there were rows of wooden pegs for hanging the caps, mufflers, and shawls of the scholars.

The seats were long slab benches. There were no desks in the center of the room. In fact, there were no desks at all; but along the two sides under the high windows were slab shelves with holes bored to hold the bottles of pokeberry ink. These shelves were fastened on a slant to be convenient for the practice of writing, and were of different heights to accommodate different sized scholars.

It may be interposed here that they were always scholars in those days, not students or pupils. As soon as a privileged child started in to learn his letters he was given the proud title of scholar, and his progress up the culture hill was watched and admired by a prideful family. Every night he had a chance to show off before an affectionately cheering home circle. The schooling of the children was a paramount anxiety as well as pleasure with the early settlers. Church and school presented the main social activities, and in this particular Scotch-Irish community the school preceded the church in that the schoolhouse was used for a time as a meeting place for worship.

The story of a joke handed down until it has acquired something of the aura of folklore features the slanted slab writing desk. One of the big boys, Peter Golder, in order to be near a girl he liked, squeezed in at the lower desk. Being a big boy and a fat boy, as Peter sprawled, elbows bent, nose close to paper, tongue twisting with each laborious pen stroke, a large and tempting portion of his body protruded into the room.

Without turning her head from her spelling book, demure Polly passed a pin to her brother, Daniel. With equal quiet suggestiveness Daniel passed the weapon to his brother, John, who held the strategic position.

An interested observer whose name is lost to fame, encouraged in a stage whisper – "Stick him hard!" – and John did. Big Peter roared and straightened spasmodically. As he leaped the long slab desk leaped with him. Ink bottles, copy books and leaning writers flew in all directions. It was a beautiful eruption, and a good time was had by all. To add to the poignancy of the enjoyment, Peter, John, Daniel and the unnamed whisperer all received sound threshing. Eve-like suggester Polly escaped. She always protested she did not need a licking: she lost her pin.

In those early days school books were rare and treasured possessions. Beginners learned their ABC's from letters printed on shingles with soft colored stones by the teacher or older scholars. A few copies of Webster's Spelling Book, Testaments for readers, flat stones for slates served our great-grandfathers. Arithmetic was mostly mental arithmetic. The schoolmaster stood in the center of the room or paced back and forth as he kept strict watch over his flock and taught by the Socratic method. As the country opened up and the settlers prospered, the school equipment improved. They had paper copy books, goose quill pens and more books, especially more spelling books.

Spelling was the favored study in this school for a long time. The system of headmarks and the Friday afternoon "Spelling-Downs" introduced the spirit of competition that is the life of education as

well as of trade and politics. Some, even today have recollections of "figgiting" at the foot of the line in spelling class, waiting and hoping for those ahead to miss a word that would give a prepared speller a chance to prance proudly in front of them all to the head of the class. It did sometimes happen. But a good speller might stick at the top for a week; then he was automatically demoted to the foot of the class.

Parents and other visitors attended the Friday afternoon sessions. They were entertained by recitations of poetry pieces and by singing of hymns and old ballads; but the main event was the "Spelling-Down." The class stood and each scholar in turn spelled words pronounced by the teacher until he or she misspelled and had to sit down. Spellers of such proficiency developed that sometimes the schoolmaster would have to turn to his linguistic ingenuity to find an <u>honorificabilitudeatatabusque</u>* as a knockout to floor the champion. This inaccountable conglomeration of syllables is written in the back of one of the old spelling books and, according to the old folks, actually was used by old time schoolmasters to end too long drawn out spelling contests.

Community Spelling Bees brightened long winter nights. One school would challenge another school and go many miles over snow drifted, starlit roads with their best spellers to spell down or to be spelled down before enthusiastic audiences. Keen feeling and competition would be worked up and gay sled loads of parents and rooters would go along to encourage and cheer for the home team.

It must be admitted that the old time methods resulted in a generation that could <u>spell</u>. Also those who studied and frolicked in the little log schoolhouse learned to know and respect words and they used a richer, fuller vocabulary than the clipped "O.K.s," "You bets," "Sures" we hear today.

The early school teachers were men. The job included shoveling snow, splitting wood and licking the big boys. The teacher did not need to bother about tests for IQs (Intelligence Quotients) but it was necessary that he should be able to point a goosequill pen, walk miles through a blizzard, and down all the boys in a rough and tumble fight. Women did not qualify. In those days as soon as a girl could writer her name and labor through a few verses of the Bible she passed on to an advanced course in Domestic Science under the efficient tutelage of a work-driven mother or mother-in-law.

The first schools were subscription schools; the teachers were paid by subscriptions and collected most of their wages in being "boarded around." Unfortunately, many of the names of the able schoolmasters of over a century ago have been forgotten. It is known, however, that John Sutton, poet and preacher, as well as schoolmaster, was the last to teach in the old schoolhouse and the first teacher in the building that replaced it. And John Sutton is the hero of the "Smoking Out" legend.

The last day of school was a day of jubilation and boisterous celebration. It was the custom to lock the teacher out. When the schoolmaster arrived in the morning of the last day he would expect to find the schoolhouse locked against him and would be prepared to sing a song, deliver an oration or dance a jig as the price of admission. Upon one occasion the big boys, feeling their oats overmuch, decided that they would not open the door that was held by a stout wooden bar; they would add to the general gayety by keeping the teacher outside singing and dancing hour after hour, while they ran things inside to please themselves. They resisted appeals, commands, and threats, and had a high old time wrestling, clog dancing and calling out taunts.

Here was mutiny, a flouting of authority that could not be permitted. It was a raw cold day in early March, and the resisters inside made themselves comfortable with a fire of pine knots and corncobs in the big fireplace. In an adjacent field was a straw stack; the shut out master was a strong and agile young man. Before the rebels realized what was happening the schoolmaster was on the roof and the chimney was stopped up with wet straw. The insiders were smoked out and as they belched out of the door, choking and half blinded, the poet, preacher, schoolmaster was there to scatter them with a big stick.

In 1838 the newly founded Christian Church of Stillwater bought the materials of the old log schoolhouse and used it in building a house for their first pastor. The same year a new schoolhouse was put up, a frame building that, repaired and remodeled, is the old wing of the schoolhouse that stands at the end of the old covered bridge in Stillwater today.

[First printed in CCHGS *Newsletter*, September 2008, pages 15-17]

150 Twenty-Dollar Gold Pieces:
Buried Treasure In Bloomsburg

By André Dominguez

In 1938 the dwelling located at 141 Market Street in Bloomsburg was newly owned by Elmer R. Beers, proprietor of the E. R. Beers Electric Company and Treasurer of the Bloomsburg Water Company at the time. The house (see photo) was located across the alley from St. Matthew's Lutheran Church and beside the I.W. McKelvy general store on the north-east corner of Market Square that later become the Pursel Store. Mr. Beers lived there with his wife Margaret and two adult children, Ruth and Robert.

Mr. Beers had hired Harry Erwine to remodel the basement, a job which included excavating the dirt cellar in preparation for concreting. On the Friday morning of the 25th of February, 1938, John Johnson and George Hill, workers for Harry Erwine, were excavating the dirt floor. Johnson was digging and Hill was loading the dirt into a truck. At about ten o'clock, Johnson dug up something that looked like a tag on a plug of tobacco. Hill picked it up and discovered that it was a $20 gold piece. When Johnson dug a little further, he uncovered more coins. In all the two men found 150 gold coins. They agreed not to say anything and put all the coins in Johnson's jacket. Hill left to unload the truck and when he returned, Johnson was showing the coins to the other employees. After Johnson had shown the coins, only a few minutes passed before every pick and shovel in the place was pressed into service. With the thought that there might be additional gold in the dirt, the excavation operations in that immediate section of the cellar were carried down about two feet. But no more gold coins were found. Johnson then took the coins to his car. Hill told Johnson that Erwine should be told, but Johnson said they should keep quiet.

At noon Johnson took the coins home, with the intention of placing them in the bank at the first opportunity. When he returned to work at 12:30 the contractor, Harry Erwine, was in the building and told Johnson that the coins were to be brought back. Johnson drove home and after arriving back at the building with fifty-four of the coins, met Mr. Beers. Johnson turned the fifty-four coins over to Beers. Beers then gave Johnson three of the coins, gave one to another laborer, Isaac Zimmerman, and five to Harry Erwine. Beers retained custody of the remaining forty-five gold coins.

The next day as Johnson was meeting with his attorney, Clarence E. Kreisher of Catawissa, Columbia County woke up to read the following headline on the front page of *The Morning Press*.

Over $1,000 in Gold Pieces Is Dug Up in Cellar

Johnson deposited his gold coins in the First National Bank, Catawissa, and retained the three that Beers had given him. The total value of the 150 twenty dollar gold pieces was $5,227.50 in 1938. This is the equivalent of $77,600 in 2008.

No fewer than four front-page newspaper articles were written about the gold cache dug up by Johnson when he started legal action to recover the gold coins he had given to Beers. John

Johnson's attorney Clarence E. Kreisher immediately started action for the recovery of damages against Beers for the wrongful taking of personal property.

But soon the plot thickened. F. Harold Kline, son of the home's original owner, Frank P. Kline, heard of the find and directed his lawyers to seek recovery of the gold as the property of his father. He was fifty-five years old and an only child who worked as a laborer at the American Car and Foundry (AC&F) Company in Berwick. The court had assigned Kline administrator of his father's estate, since part of the estate was still unadministrated, and his mother, the original executor, had since died. Through his counsel, H. Mont. Smith and Hervey B. Smith, Kline sought recovery of all of the gold pieces as the property of his father. And just to make things more interesting, after it was revealed that Johnson did not turn over all the gold pieces to Beers, Johnson's co-worker George Hill claimed he was entitled to a share in the treasure. He retained Pottsville lawyers from the law firm of Hicks, Herzoz and Troutman.

Mr. Beers carefully investigated the claim of title and ownership of the coins. Because of the conflicting claims, Mr. Beers said that he had retained custody of the forty-five gold coins remaining in his hands and had deposited them in a deposit box in the Farmers National Bank to await final determination of ownership. He set forth that he stood ready and willing to deliver the coins to the custody and possession of the proper officers to await the final determination of ownership.

The Court of Common Pleas had a heavy case load at the time and it was not until later in 1938 that the case was heard. One can imagine that the summer of 1938 was alive with much speculation about who deserved all the gold coins in this found treasure. Should John Johnson get all the gold since he found it or F. Harold Kline because it was part of his father's estate? Or should Mr. Elmer Beers get the gold? After all, he bought the property with all its contents. And then there was George Hill, a co-discoverer, who claimed that he should get a portion of the treasure. All but Mr. Beers made a legal claim for the gold. Mr. Beers had filed a disclaimer to the gold coins because he did not want to go through the annoyance of litigation concerning property to which he felt he had no title. Finally on Wednesday, October 12, 1938, the case went to court and a jury of nine men and three women was selected for the gold coins trial.

Members of the jury trying the case were: Bernard I. Curan, retired, Centralia; Mrs. Sarah S. Hidley, housewife, Scott Township; Mrs. Beulah Harman, housewife, Berwick; Charles W. Heiss, laborer, Mifflin; Grover C. Hess, laborer, Orangeville; Glen Keller, truck driver, Benton; John Lynch, laborer, Conyngham; Bruce Moore, laborer, Briar Creek township; Mrs. Leah Patterson, housewife, Greenwood; Harvey I. Sult, laborer, Berwick; Frank St. Clair Sr., retired, Berwick, and Harlan L. Thomas, farmer, Fishing Creek.

During the case it was established that Frank P. Kline had committed suicide while waiting for the Bloomsburg & Sullivan train by Red Rock. Perhaps the most interesting testimony came from seventy-three year old William W. Barrett, Jr., a co-worker of Frank P. Kline. The following comes from *The Morning Press* account of the trial:

Barrett was a native of Montour township but had resided in Bloomsburg most of his life. He started work in the I.W. McKelvy store in 1882 as a boy of seventeen. Prior to that he ran errands at the store. He said the business was operated as a company store for the iron furnace and recalled that Johnny Sterner was the contractor erecting the house in which the money was found and that Frank P. Kline was the first occupant. Barrett said he looked after the warehouse at the store and that Kline's office was near. Barrett had the outside key and Kline the inside one, he related.

Barrett testified that he had known Frank P. Kline more than twenty years, and for eight years was a fellow employee at the I.W. McKelvy store in town. He said that Kline neither smoked nor drank and was a neat dresser and punctual in his work. Barrett told of Kline's connection with Joseph Weaver of Bloomsburg and Charles Nelson of Nanticoke in the operation of sixteen canal boats. During the winter seasons some of the mules used on the canal were kept at Kline's barn in Greenwood. Barrett also remembered Kline getting checks for his interest in the boat line on the old canal and said Kline frequently secured gold when he received the checks. Kline had once remarked to Barrett "that is the type of money you ought to save. It won't burn nor rust" and added "you often get a premium on a gold piece." Barrett said it was a hobby with Kline to get the gold in twenty dollar pieces and that Kline once told him "it is easier to count" when in that size. Kline said he "was afraid of the banks." Barrett testified and once remarked "you can keep it yourself easier than the bank can keep it." The gold was kept in a compartment in the McKelvy vault, Barrett said, and within a week prior to Kline's death the witness said he saw him put gold in a sack and place it in the vault. On the day of Kline's death, Barrett said he saw Kline take something from the vault. He said prior to that time Kline had not been mentally well. He [Kline] would wander away, Barrett continued, and [Barrett] had been ordered by I.W. McKelvy to follow Kline. At times Kline would go to the Rosemont cemetery and upon one occasion to the Normal School and then return. Once Barrett asked if Kline felt well and was told by Kline that "I don't feel as well as I ought to." Barrett said the illness was for about two months but that during that time Kline kept the books correctly. Following Kline's death he said that I.W. McKelvy telephoned for Mord. Drinker, a locksmith, to open the compartment in the vault. No gold was found there.

It was also established that on the morning of September 2, 1890, Frank P. Kline walked out the alley, up Market and out First to the rocks. [The "rocks" referred to are the rocks of the cliff behind the Crag Mansion on First Street. Mr. Kline had walked to the Red Rock Bridge, also called the Fernville Bridge, at Railroad Street.] Near the rocks he inquired of William Lord if the 9 o'clock train had gone up and was answered in the affirmative. In retrospect it was clear that Mr. Kline intended to throw himself in front of that train but arrived too late. Not to be outdone, however, he coolly walked down to the creek for awhile, then back up the rocks and sat down under a tree and waited for nearly three hours. When the train arrived, he threw himself in front of the passenger train, leaving the train to run him over. The fireman, William Geese, being on the side next to the rocks said he saw a man standing there, and when the engine gave a slight lurch he felt that they had run over some one and so informed the engineer Philip Sidler who immediately stopped the train. The body was removed to the undertaking establishment of

Baker and McBride where it was shortly afterward identified as that of Franklin P. Kline, and after proper preparation was taken home in the evening. A Coroner's jury consisting of Justice of the Peace Guy Jacoby, acting as Coroner, and J.C. Brown, Joseph Sharpless, T.C. Harter, G.W. Sterner, W.A. Hartzel and G.G. Baker was quickly convened. After taking testimony from Mrs. Daniel and Mrs. Alexander Stiner, who were the only adult witnesses of the movements of Kline, the jury exonerated the railroad company from any blame.

The testimony for the plaintiff, F. Harold Kline, was concluded Saturday morning. With all the testimony and evidence submitted, the attorneys made their final arguments to the jury who adjourned to determine a verdict. The jury started their deliberations at 5:30 o'clock in the evening, Saturday, October 15, and concluded with a sealed verdict at 2:30 o'clock Sunday afternoon, the next day. Finally the sealed verdict was reported around 9:20 o'clock on Monday, October 17. The jury had taken forty ballots before reaching its decision and at one time had stood eleven to one in favor of making the award to the finders, John Johnson and George Hill. But in the end the verdict gave the twenty dollar gold pieces to Kline's surviving son, F. Harold Kline. A defense motion for a new trial was presented the same day.

Five months would pass before Judge Herring rendered his decision on the motion for a new trial. On March 29, 1939, after reviewing eleven reasons presented for a re-trial, the court handed down an opinion in which Judge Herring refused a new trial to John Johnson and George Hill. Judge Herring stated that although there was no direct evidence as to the ownership of these gold coins (no one saw Frank P. Kline bury the gold) there was sufficient evidence that Frank P. Kline was the owner the gold coins. Shortly afterward one of the defense counsel said an appeal would be taken to an Appellate Court. The appeal was not entered, however, and the time for making the appeal expired. On April 25, 1939, more than a year after the gold coins were discovered, Judge Herring made an order directing that the gold be turned over to counsel for F. Harold Kline.

Postscript

For brief profiles of the main characters—F. Harold Kline, John Johnson, George Hill and E. R. Beer—see the expanded version of this article on the Society's website (click on **Additional Resources**, then on **Historical Essays**, then scroll down to this title).

For the website version:

Postscript

Below are brief profiles of the main characters:

F. Harold Kline – (son of the man who buried the gold)

Frank Harold Kline and his wife Elizabeth, who lived in Bloomsburg when the gold coins were discovered, sold their Brugler Avenue property and moved to a duplex at 209 E. 2nd Street,

Berwick, where he remained until at least 1949. The duplex that was Frank's new home was a large, two-story, brick dwelling, much larger than the Brugler Avenue house in Bloomsburg. His new house was also located approximately six blocks from the AC&F in Berwick, where Frank continued to work until he retired the summer of 1949. Frank Harold Kline also operated a movie show in Bloomsburg in the building occupied by the Wise Jewelry store at 116 W. Main Street. Frank also operated a cigar store at the location of the Jones' tobacco shop at 42 W. Main Street.

Frank Harold Kline was found dead in his apartment home at 209 E. 2nd Street, Berwick, on 26 November 1950. He was sixty-six years old and lying in a hall between the bathroom and kitchen with his left wrist slashed with a razor blade. His wife had been a Danville Hospital patient for some time. Ill health was attributed as the motive for Frank's suicide. Frank's wife, Elizabeth, died five years later in the Danville Hospital on 3 March 1956 at the age of seventy. Frank Harold Kline and his wife Elizabeth were buried in the Old Rosemont Cemetery, in the same plot as Frank's father.

John Johnson – (laborer who dug up the gold coins)

John married Emma Jean "Emogene" "Lurabell" Vietz on March 12, 1938. This was the same month he had declared that if he got all the gold he intended to marry a young woman from Elk Grove and build a home. After the money was given to F. Harold Kline, he and Emma Jean settled in a house on Old Mill Road in Hemlock Township. The house still stands and is immediately north of Larry's Lumber. Later John worked for the WPA and at the AC&F (American Car & Foundry) in Berwick. After these short jobs, John started to work at the Magee Carpet Company in Bloomsburg where he worked for 25 years, retiring in 1973. John and Emma Jean raised a family of four children. According to his brother, Marshall Johnson, and Marshall's wife, Sharlet, John loved coon hunting and would go out for days with his hounds. After he retired, John's interest turned to raising goats, which he did at the rear of his property. John lived until 1998 when he died on February 16 in the Bloomsburg Health Care Center on First Street. John is buried in Lime Ridge, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, in the Elan Memorial Park.

George Hill – (Co-worker of John Johnson)

At the time the gold coins were discovered in February of 1938, George lived on West Street, Bloomsburg. Later that year, George and Ruth lived at 345 E. 8th Street, Bloomsburg, and their only child, Ned L. Hill, was born in November of that year. After the gold coins trial had concluded, George continued to live in the Bloomsburg area and to work for H.R. Erwine as a laborer and truck driver. Around 1950, George moved his family to 2468 Third Street, in Espy. He was last employed by the H.R. Erwine Lumber Company where he had worked for most of his career. George died in the Klingerman Nursing Home, Orangeville, on 4 November 1994 and was buried in the Bethel Hill Cemetery, Luzerne County.

E. R. Beers – (owner of the property where the gold coins were found)

Elmer Rutherford Beers was born on May 19, 1884 in Weatherly, Carbon County. He was later a resident of Shenandoah, Schuylkill County and finally came to Bloomsburg, where in 1918 he established the E. R. Beers Electric Company. Elmer married Margaret around 1911 and they raise a family of two children, E. Ruth Miller and Robert G. Beers.

In addition to his business, he was a long time treasurer and director of the Bloomsburg Water Company, a long time director of the Farmers National Bank and the first president of the Bloomsburg Kiwanis Club. Beers also served as mayor, then called the president of council, of Bloomsburg, 1942-46. He also was very active in other civic activities.

Elmer R. Beers died on May 28, 1967 in the Friends Hospital, Philadelphia, where he had been hospitalized a number of weeks. He was buried in the New Rosemont Cemetery.

SOURCES:

Most of the information for this article came from many articles found in *The Morning Press*. Additional information was found in Columbia County Court records and Census data.

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Bloomsburg's Grand Opera House

By W. M. Baillie

A recent accession to the Society's collections is a playbill (pages 1 and 4 shown below) for a week of dramatic presentations in Bloomsburg in 1912. It has a lot to tell us about local entertainment options in the days before radio or TV, when movies had not yet driven out of business the old tradition of live performances in small towns.

The little four-page handout also piqued my curiosity about the former Grand Opera House in Bloomsburg. The three-story brick building on Center Street is now the home of the widely-famed Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble. But what was its original usage? More of that in a moment.

Myrkle-Harding Stock Company

The playbill touts the visit to Bloomsburg of the Myrkle-Harding theatrical troupe in January, 1912. This traveling company toured American towns and cities annually for over a quarter century beginning about 1898. At each week-long stop, the hard-working company presented two performances a day for six days. On Sunday, their "day of rest," the company would pack up and travel by train to their next tour stop.

In September 1910 the company played a week in Bloomsburg's Opera House, as we learn from another playbill in the Society's collections. Featured among "COMING ATTRACTIONS" to the Opera House, the Myrkle-Harding Stock Company promised to bring to the theater 20 people and a railroad car load of scenery; the group also featured "High Class Vaudeville between acts."

In that respect the troupe was typical of the era: there were many traveling entertainment companies which presented dramas—mostly melodramas—along with vaudeville acts, circus acts, musical numbers and minstrel shows. They were "on the road" for much of the year. The typical melodrama plot is suggested by the 1908 production of "Married for Money, or The Old Wife and the New." A *Morning Press* synopsis told readers that the play is

> one of absorbing heart interest and the presenting cast, one of unusual excellence. The story deals with the life of a millionaire Iron magnate, who upon reaching a position of power and affluence, casts off the wife of his youth and early struggles, and takes on a younger and more beautiful one, who marries him for his great wealth and position. His sudden fall from power and wealth and his subsequent salvation by his forsaken wife, form the basis of a story that is said to be one of the most powerful sermons in favor of the preservation of the sanctity of the home, and the sacredness of the marriage vow, ever written.

The Myrkle-Harding company was led by Emma Myrkle, whose "strong single specialty" was the role of comic *soubrette* (a coquettish and frivolous young woman). Her partner, Will H. Harding, starred as the romantic hero. Ms. Myrkle was also a featured dancer; a signed glossy photo at the New York Public Library shows her dancing in Roma costume with a tambourine. Harding wrote a two-person comic sketch for the pair, titled "The Ballet Girl and the Bill-Poster."

The Myrkle-Harding company traveled extensively. Newspaper notices of their engagements, selected almost at random, list them in Middleboro, MA in January 1908; at Halifax, Nova Scotia in May 1906, April 1910 and March 1912; in Dover, NJ, January 1914; at Oswego, NY 1915 and 1919; and at Easton, PA in November 1924.

For their 1912 tour, the company advertised seven plays in their repertory, all of which had played on Broadway; many of these were based on popular romantic novels. The headline play was "The Barrier," derived from the best-selling novel of that same title (1908) by Rex Beach. Other repertory plays included "Brewster's Millions," "A Bachelor's Romance," and "The Burglar and the Lady."

The Society's newly-acquired 1912 playbill lists (inside) nine males and no fewer than twenty-five females in the Myrkle-Harding troupe. Probably, however, many of these "actors" are simply double stage names for individuals; most likely, the total company including stage hands was about 20 persons.

The Grand Opera House

Bloomsburg's Grand Opera House probably never staged a "grand opera." Instead, it was intended to provide popular entertainment, and that function has continued at the same location for several generations. Built in 1874 by Benjamin H. Vannatta and Edward Rawlings, the Opera House was the first structure in the town dedicated to live performances; earlier, plays and concerts had been given on the upper floors of various store or lodge buildings. The new auditorium, with about 400 seats, offered a curtained stage—also a first in the town. The few interior photos which survive show that the interior was richly decorated in elaborate Rococo sculpture (in plaster, almost certainly) and that the stage scenery was large and fancy.

The 1910-1911 seasonal program includes "Official Information" and "Theatre Rules" which suggest how different was the atmosphere during performances in comparison to today's BTE audiences. Among the items:

- Any persons found spitting on the floor, walls, or whistling, hissing, stamping feet, etc., will be ejected from the Theatre.
- If you eat peanuts, eat shells as well.
- Ladies are requested and obliged to remove their hats in accordance with an Act of the Legislature. [This was the era of gigantic hats adorned with ostrich plumes.]
- We [the management] earnestly solicit home-talent entertainments, either from churches or secret organizations [to fill the theater and provide rental between out-of-town troupes].

Already in 1910 the Opera House was touting its usual Saturday Evening "Picture Show" of "4000 feet of Motion Pictures." Admission was just 5¢ (as contrasted to 25 to 50 cents for live professional productions). At the time, there were several other motion-picture houses in Town, most of them small storefront operations such as the Bijou on West Main Street and the Lyric at 5 East Main. Soon to be opened also were the Arcade in a former furniture store (near the 1950s Moose Lodge), the Starr in a back alley, and the grand Victoria seating 1200 (the later Capitol, its marquee still prominent on Main Street).

At various times, lots of towns in and near Columbia County had an Opera House; the one still surviving by that name in Catawissa is now the best known, but among other towns with an Opera House were Benton, Berwick, Iola, Millville, and Ringtown. All of them presented local talent, touring entertainers, the occasional boxing match and, after 1900, increasingly popular moving pictures.

Bloomsburg's Opera House was valued as a community resource. The hall was hired for amateur theatricals, concerts, political rallies, etc. In 1890 a Democratic rally there produced a near-riot when a guest speaker announced proudly that he had been a soldier in the Union troop sent to Columbia County during the Civil War to quell the so-called Fishingcreek Confederacy. Not to be outdone, the next year the Republicans rented the Opera House to present a series of tableaux from Gen. Lew Wallace's popular novel *Ben Hur*. The Bloomsburg Orchestra gave a concert there in 1893 and Bloomsburg High School's first commencement was held in the building in 1892.

In its long run as Bloomsburg's premier entertainment center, the Opera House has had many owners and some rough times. Local industrialist I. W. McKelvy, who bought the building in 1876 from its original owners, ran the house successfully for twenty years but then fell into bankruptcy and gave up the building to his creditors along with all his other properties. Dr. J. S. John, who came into a half-interest through his wife's inheritance, bought the other half-ownership, enlarged the stage and built a gallery, and changed the name to Columbia Theatre (but the old name of "Bloomsburg Opera House" continued current for decades).

In 1940, with vaudeville and small-town live theater all but dead, the building was refashioned as a movie palace and renamed the New Columbia. It was decorated in the then-popular Art Deco style. The building continued as a movie house into the 1970s, though increasingly shabby and unfrequented, and finally closed for good.

In 1980, however, the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble bought the premises, raised money to gut it and rebuild it, and opened it as their new home in 1983. They retained some of the Art Deco fixtures of the building and reinstalled these to highlight the building's history. The Ensemble happily has celebrated its 25th year at what it has renamed the **Alvina Krause Theatre** in honor of BTE's founding mentor.

The Bloomsburg Opera House building, then, has returned to its original primary function of presenting live drama to regional audiences. It has been a focal point of theatrical experience in the region for 135 years.

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The Centennial of the Columbia County
Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument

Robert Dunkelberger

November 19, 2008 marked the centennial of the dedication ceremony for the Civil War monument on Market Square in Bloomsburg, erected to commemorate the veterans of Columbia County who fought in that terrible conflict. Its dedication also ended a very long process to obtain permission to erect the monument and especially to decide its location—not unlike the current controversy in Bloomsburg over the location and design of the proposed veterans' memorial. What follows is the brief story of the efforts to build the Civil War monument and the story of the son of a prominent Bloomsburg family who wrote a poem 100 years ago about those efforts.

As early as the 1870s there was a movement in Columbia County to erect a monument in honor of the men who had fought for the Union during the Civil War, but it was not until February, 1898 that a petition was first presented to the court asking that a monument be erected. For nearly a decade efforts continued in order to obtain final approval and the authorization of funds, and most contentiously decide exactly where the monument should be located. Although disagreements still continued about the location, in 1907 two successive grand juries finally approved the petition as was required by law; in February of 1908 the design of the monument by Worden Brothers of Batavia, NY was approved by the County Commissioners, and J. U. Kurtz of Berwick won the right to erect it with a bid of just under $7800.

With Market Square at last decided upon as the site, and after delays in getting the carved granite from quarries in Vermont, the monument went up in October and was dedicated in a grand ceremony on November 19, 1908. Following a large parade that began at Town Hall and wound through the town's streets, a crowd of thousands filled Market Square to hear a number of speakers, led by President Judge Charles C. Evans and Congressman John G. McHenry, and music supplied by five brass bands.

To commemorate all of the trials and tribulations the monument proponents endured, George Edward Elwell, Jr. wrote the poem that follows (page 4) in the summer between his junior and senior years at Trinity College. Elwell was the grandson of William Elwell, President Judge in Columbia County from 1862 to 1888, and son of George Elwell, a lawyer and longtime newspaper publisher. He was born in Bloomsburg on April 19, 1886, graduated from the Bloomsburg State Normal School in 1905, and four years later completed studies at Trinity College in Connecticut with a B.A. degree.

Upon returning to Bloomsburg Elwell assisted his father in the family commercial printing business first established in 1837, renamed George E. Elwell & Son. This included the final year of *The Columbian* newspaper which ceased publication in 1910, ending 35 years under the Elwell family. Elwell continued with the business until it was sold in 1950. In addition to publishing, among his many other pursuits were teaching French at the normal school from 1914 to 1920, serving on both the Town Council and Bloomsburg school board, being chairman of the local George Washington Bicentennial Commission, and participating as an active Freemason.

In recognition of the service to the normal school by his father (an 1867 graduate of the Bloomsburg Literary Institute, normal school instructor from 1872 to 1873, and later member of

the Board of Trustees) and grandfather (longtime member and President of the Board of Trustees), and with Elwell himself being an alumnus and former instructor, Bloomsburg State College decided to name one of their dormitories after the Elwell family, the only dormitory on the lower campus not named for a Pennsylvania county. On April 26, 1969 Elwell attended the Alumni Day ceremony dedicating the recently completed Elwell Hall. It proved to be his last public appearance, however, and less than one month later on May 20 he was dead at the age of 83.

Here is the poem by George Edward Elwell, Jr. entitled *The Monument*, which was published in *The Columbian* on July 23, 1908. (Note that the poet's prediction of dedication of the monument by September was a little too optimistic; the actual date was November.)

The Monument

Some forty weary years ago we had a Civil War.
To do the well-earned honors to the fighters, we deplore
That we have waited all this time to make arrangements for
      A monument.

The scheme was talked of many years by citizens and press,
But did not gain much headway, and it seemed to retrogress,
For some who held the pocket book seemed anxious to suppress
      That monument.

The years kept rolling quickly past, and we with fear were filled,
Because, if proper sentiment were not in them instilled
The people of our County would at last decide to build
      No monument.

They realized the fitness of the plan, and soon were moved
To sanction it, and patriotic sentiment improved.
They saw that loyal citizens quite properly behooved
      A monument.

At last Grand Juries twice approved – the Court approved it, too.
The G.A.R. encouraged all the subject to renew
Until the minds of all of us had only this in view –
      The monument.

Appropriations then were made, and soon began the race
Among contractors; then arose a problem hard to face.
'Twas this – Although we've ordered it, we don't know where to place
      The monument.

Quite varied were the spots proposed in ev'ry part of town.
Whatever one suggested new made all the others frown,
And for awhile it looked as though 't would turn things upside down –
      That monument.

Said some, "Let's dig the fountain up. It's really in the way.

What's all this long debate about, and consequent delay,
For Market Square is just the place to properly display
       The monument."

Said others, "Tear the Normal down and set the shaft up there.
The Hill will make it prominent and raise it high in air."
(Now all this time the builder's men were hustling to prepare
       The monument.)

"Let's stand it on the River Hill – that's just the place," some thought.
While recognition for the schemes of many more were sought.
It looked as though to satisfy them all there must be bought
       Ten monuments.

An end of this was brought at last, and all the schemes were wrecked,
For wiser judgment saw that Fate with steady finger becked
To Market Square, the proper place in Bloomsburg to erect
       The monument.

And now the work has been begun; a firm foundation's laid.
Committees to collect a fund have worked and not delayed.
We'll dedicate in fitting style (if cash enough is paid)
       The monument.

In mem'ry of the valiant deeds of those who fought and died
To save the honor of the land and stem rebellion's tide,
We'll, in September next, unveil, with patriotic pride,
       Our monument.

The Nescopeck Path

Andre Dominguez

Many of the early settlers of the Berwick and Bloomsburg areas of Columbia County came from the region of Northampton County along the Delaware River. What was the path they followed through the woods across the mountains? The first clue comes from an old Columbia County history book:

> In 1787, Evan Owen, the founder of Berwick, was commissioned to superintend the construction of a road by the State from Easton to the Nescopeck falls [on the Susquehanna River between Berwick and Nescopeck]. Two years later the Indian trail which was part of the route was improved sufficiently to permit the passage of wheeled vehicles. On March 19, 1804, the Susquehanna & Lehigh Turnpike & Road Company was incorporated, and in the following year graded and completed the road at an enormous expense for those times.[1]

At first glance it might seem that Evan Owen was constructing a road from Easton to Nescopeck. This is not true since a road was already well established from Easton to Bethlehem and from Bethlehem to Fort Allen at Gnadenhutten on the Lehigh River. Evidence of the actual extent of Evan Owen's road construction effort can be found in a letter reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, Series 1. In a 1789 letter to Even [sic] Owen from Executive Council Secretary Charles Biddle, Owen is requested to produce accounts accompanied with their proper vouchers for settlement connected with the opening of a road between the Susquehanna River, at the Falls of Nescopeck, and the Lehigh River.[2] The total length of the Nescopeck Road was approximately 34 miles.

Another interesting fact is that Evan Owen ran out of money for the Nescopeck Road project and the construction was not one hundred percent completed in 1789. In a letter to Governor Mifflin, later directed to the President and Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on December 6, 1789, Owen announces the he has opened the Nescopeck road so that it may be travelled by wagons, etc., except the digging away of a part of Spring Mountain, and that there yet remains about three miles unopened of the said road. Owen continues that he has expended the whole amount "of your Orders" and requests that monies be appropriated by Act of Assembly to open the Nescopeck road.[3]

The course of the Nescopeck Path was identified in a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission magazine (see Illus. 1).[4] The Nescopeck Path originally connected Nescopeck to Bethlehem, but as mentioned the improved road from Bethlehem to Fort Allen had already been established; Evan Owen improved the section between Fort Allen and Berwick. From this map, the sections of the path from Easton to Nescopeck can be identified as follows.

1. Starting at Lechauwekink (Easton), also known as The Delaware Fork.
2. The Path runs southwest to Bethlehem. This is current PA Route 22.
3. From Bethlehem the Path runs northwest to Fort Allen, located at Gnadenhütten (Weissport), a Moravian settlement. Fort Allen lies along the Blue Mountain (Kittatinny) range on the Lehigh River, ten miles above Lehigh Gap.[5] Based on the path on the map it is not clear what current highway route follows the Path from Bethlehem, but it appears that PA Route 248 parallels the Path to Weissport. The improved road from Easton to Bethlehem to Fort Allen is shown clearly on a 1770 Pennsylvania map (see Illus. 2). Note that the watercourse identified on the map as the West Branch of the Delaware River is the Lehigh River.[6]

4. Across the Lehigh River at Fort Allen to the continuation of the Nescopeck Path.
5. On the other side of the Lehigh River, current PA Route 248 merges with PA Route 93 and continues to Nescopeck and the Nescopeck Falls on the Susquehanna River.

A sketch map of the proposed road was submitted by Owen on 5 June 1787 and can be found at the Pennsylvania State Archives.[7] This map identifies the following route, creek crossings and landmarks.
1. Starting at the Lehigh River
2. Quahe Ake Creek (now Quakake Creek, near Hodsondale, Carbon County)
3. Beaver Pond Creek (now Beaver Meadows, Carbon County)
4. Big Black Creek (near West Hazelton, Luzerne County)
5. Little Black Creek
6. Little Nescopeck (near Sybertsville, Luzerne County)
7. John Balliets house (near Sybertsville, Luzerne County)
8. Nescopeck Creek
9. Susquehanna River, falls

NOTES

1. *Historical and Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties Pennsylvania* (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1915), p. 35.
2. *Pennsylvania Archives*, series 1, vol. 11, Instructions To Evan Owen – Nescopec [sic] Road, 1789, p. 585.
3. Letter to Pres. Mifflin from Evan Owen, 1789, *Pennsylvania Archives*, series 1, vol. 11, pp. 643-4.
4. Paul A.W. Wallace, "Historic Indian Paths of Pennsylvania," reprinted from The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, *Quarterly Journal of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania,* Vol. 76, No. 4, October, 1952, for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.
5. Thomas Lynch Montgomery, editor, *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*, second edition (Harrisburg: Wm. Stanley Ray, State Printer, 1919), p. 184.
6. *A Map of Pennsylvania, laid down from actual surveys and chiefly from the late Map of W. Scull*, published in 1770.
7. *Draught of a Road from Union Saw Mill on Lehigh River to falls Nescopeck on Susquehanna*, Testified by Owen on 5 June 1781; Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Record Group 12, State Roads & Turnpike Maps (1706-1873), 12.9.

Clayton and Lottie's Story

Dani Crossley

According to family lore, Clayton died in a construction accident and his wife Lottie died in childbirth about 1921. How very sad for the three little children left behind. I listened closely as Clayton's grandson Bill Hughes filled in the few details he knew. Bill's father, Harold Clayton Hughes, was probably less than 2 years old at the time of the tragedy according to the date on the birth certificate from which Bill read. Harold was the third of three children born to Clayton A. and Lottie Dye Fluker. All Bill could add was that his father Harold was put in the abusive care of foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Hughes near Pittsburgh. He ran away during high school and lived above a store. Anger and bitterness about his childhood kept him from talking about it. He died near his son Bud in Texas in 1985.

Now his other son, Bill, after many unsuccessful attempts to discover the truth himself over the past ten years had contacted me to try to find anything I could about Clayton and if at all possible, locate any of his father's living relatives. Since Bill's mother, Avis Hilliard Hughes, was an only child, Bill and his brothers had never known any aunts, uncles or cousins. The words "family reunion" had no meaning. I told Bill I was used to looking for dead people, but I'd certainly give it a try.

A daunting task with so much at stake. According to census records, the little family of five Flukers was intact in 1920 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Clayton was working in a shipyard – certainly a plausible setting for a construction accident. Harold's two sisters were Helen, born 1911 and Irene, born 1913. Fast forward to 1930: Helen and Irene are living with their maternal aunt, Dora, and her husband, Rev. Herman Pool in S. Dayton, Cattaraugus County, NY. Harold has already been placed with his foster parents. Wouldn't you know it – female siblings! How was I ever going to find them and any descendants not knowing their married names?

I hatched a plan for a road trip to Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties as part of a visit to our son who lives in Erie, PA. My husband could help them with household projects while I scouted out the courthouses in the county seats. I naively figured I could zip in, flip to the index in the marriage dockets and quickly capture the names of the husbands of Harold's two sisters.

I started doing a little research online as to hours, directions and holdings for each courthouse. I know New York State zealously guards the privacy of its residents. Good thing I did! The marriage records are kept in the town where the marriage took place. Just grand. I had no idea if a marriage had even taken place, much less in which town within two likely counties it might have happened. Fortunately, to accompany this bizarre record-keeping scheme, a state-wide index of all marriages exists. BUT, it is only available in the main libraries in five cities: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany and New York City. Luckily for me, my twin nephews live in Buffalo and they agreed to try to find the sisters' marriage records.

After a false start that had my nephew plodding through each individual marriage certificate, he laid his hands on the index and found what we were looking for: Irene Fluker, married May 1, 1937 in Clarence, NY. Oddly enough, the husband's name is not a part of this index. Only slightly fazed, plunged ahead and fearlessly rousted the Clarence town historian. Her first question: "What is the husband's name?" Arrgh! Reining in my frustration, I asked if she would be able to find that out with the information I had given her. She said she probably could and I should call her back in an hour. The clock was racing as we were leaving to go to Erie in a little over that time. I had already listened to the

spiel about privacy and request forms and payment and signatures and "already dead." It would be a miracle if I were able to obtain this name before setting out for southwestern New York.

I needed a backup plan. From scouring cemetery records posted online for Cattaraugus County, I had discovered that Dora Pool had died in that county in 1963. If she raised the two orphan girls, surely she would've remembered them in her will. "Hello, Cattaraugus County courthouse, would you be so kind as to check if you have the will for Mrs. Dora Pool?" "You do? Wonderful! I'll be there on Friday."

In the meanwhile, a follow-up call to Clarence, NY revealed that they did indeed have the marriage record. Could I prove that the woman was deceased? (How could I do that when I didn't know her name, I thought.) I assured her I definitely could and she offered that she was fairly certain the husband was deceased as he was born in 1899. I said I could look it up if I had his name (expectant pause)? "Oh," she said, "it's William Newcomb." Hallelujah! Irene's married name!! Now, if she only had children…

Armed with Wanda (our snappy GPS system), an extensive to-do list and my bottle of diet soda, I was off bright and early Friday morning. The Little Valley courthouse was easy to find in the center of town and I helped them unlock the doors. Since I knew I wasn't going to find any marriage records there, I concentrated on wills. While the kind assistant located Dora's will for me, I searched the indexes for any other pertinent names. Voila! There was Willis G. Fluker, father of our hero, Clayton Fluker. What a find! I already knew that Willis Fluker had died in May of 1921 from falling off a hay bale. Since Clayton didn't appear in the newspaper write-up about the tragic accident and death of Willis, that coincided with (and I thought pinned down) the story of Clayton's early demise around 1921.

Things were falling into place, or so I thought. I was saving the juicy tidbit (Dora's will) for last and quickly skimmed Willis Fluker's will. Imagine my astonishment when he leaves his ADOPTED son Clayton a dollar. Whew! My neat little timeline is blown out of the water and this family history is murkier than ever. Clayton is still alive in 1921 and there's obviously some bad blood here.

Before I leave Willis behind, jolt number two is delivered when I come to the realization that good ol' Aunt Dora was Willis' wife before she became Mrs. Herman Pool. Dora Emma Dye, Lottie's older sister, was married to Lottie's husband's adoptive father. I need an Excedrin… and a score card. I must leave those fascinating revelations and proceed with the people mentioned in Dora's will.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, Dora! There among the antique desks and painted portraits were the names of Dora's many heirs – siblings, nieces and nephews as she never had any children of her own. Jumping off the page immediately were the names of nieces Irene Newcomb and Helen McKeown and… sister Lottie Powers??!! What happened to dying in childbirth? When the will was written in the late 1940's, Lottie was not only alive, but remarried. In the list of nieces and nephews, two unfamiliar names, Margaret Meade of East Aurora, NY (suburb of Buffalo) and Nancy Thurston of Michigan, appeared. From doing extensive research on the Dye family beforehand, I could identify the others in the list, but these two I didn't know. Did Lottie have children from her second marriage? I couldn't wait to find out.

Excited about all sorts of new nuggets on which to chew, I made quick work of my stop in Mayville, Chautauqua's county seat and added nothing new to the file. The rest of Friday evening I used every shoehorn available to try to squeeze Margaret and Nancy into Lottie's new family. Nothing fit. On a hunch, I searched current directories and found an 85-year-old Margaret Meade living in East Aurora. It had to be her.

Nine o'clock Saturday morning, the earliest I could bring myself to make the call, I contacted Margaret. When I explained that I was looking for relatives of Dora Pool, she replied, "You found her." She was

very sympathetic to my quest, offering copies of Dye family pictures and whatever she could to help. Her father, Charles Dye, was Dora and Lottie's brother. I asked her if she knew Irene and Helen.

She had known them. Unfortunately, both were now deceased. Irene never had any children, but Helen had two daughters. In fact, Margaret had corresponded for a time with the one daughter and her name and address were somewhere on an old Christmas card list. With promises to send off copies of photos and look for Helen's daughter's information, she wished me good luck on my search.

I contacted Bill Hughes and told him I was making progress.

In Wednesday's mail after my Saturday morning chat with Margaret there arrived a note from her. It wasn't large enough to contain photos, so I was a little puzzled. When I opened it, she had written to let me know that Helen's daughter's name was Joan Van Dyke and she lived in Mt. Bethel, PA – not even two hours from me! At six that evening, I tracked her down via reverse address lookup and made the call. As soon as I told her who I was and why I was calling, she began crying and laughing all at once. She couldn't believe I was contacting her. Her mother and her aunt had looked their whole lives for their little brother Harold. They had even hired a private detective. Unfortunately, they had been searching for Harold Fluker and he had been given the name of his adoptive family, Harold Hughes. Joan and her husband, Chuck, were still grieving the loss of one of their beloved pets and she said my call was a blessing. When I asked if it was okay for me to pass along her name and phone number to Bill, she said she'd be waiting by her phone for his call.

I realized when I hurried to my computer that I didn't have an address or phone number for Bill. We had communicated solely by email. Since he was probably still at work on the west coast and he didn't always check email regularly, I didn't know when I'd hear from him. Five minutes after I clicked the 'Send' button, the phone rang and Bill was on the line. His excitement and eagerness for Joan's number cut our conversation short. In the emails I received from them later that evening, both claimed it would be a long time before they stopped bouncing on the ceiling.

I am so glad to have been a part of bringing this family together. It is sad that the three siblings had passed before the connection was made, but Joan is sure that they are all watching and glad that the reunion has finally happened. Ten years ago when the sisters were still living, it wouldn't have been possible because the online records that made it all come together weren't available then. Plans are in the works for an actual "family reunion" of the first cousins in Pennsylvania this summer.

Epilogue: Joan was the recipient of her Aunt Irene's treasure trove of family records. I spent an enjoyable and enlightening day in her lovely Mount Bethel home and pieced together some of the remaining pieces of the puzzle.

Through an Indenture Contract binding Clayton to his adoptive father Willis Fluker, we learn that Clayton's birth surname is Abbey – a family that arrived in the United States in the 1600's. Clayton's birth parents abandoned him at about three years of age. Through other photos and family notes, we discover that Clayton was actually the youngest of four Abbey siblings, not an only child as we previously thought. His parents not only abandoned their children, they apparently abandoned their identities as they are not found in any subsequent censuses.

Clayton did not die in a construction accident. There was such an accident at his workplace in Ohio, but an associate of his was the unfortunate victim. A mistake in the original newspaper article about the accident named Clayton as the fatality. Clayton and Lottie divorced in 1923. He moved on, married another woman and had several more children with her, living mostly in Texas. He died in 1960 in Florida. No one in the family had anything to do with Clayton after he left them.

Lottie, now single in Philadelphia, wrote several letters home. From them we understand she is caring for a sick little baby girl, Margaret Eola, who succumbs in January 1921. Lottie, the 'fun one' of the six Dye sisters, married Ray Powers and lived the rest of her life in New Jersey, where she died in 1953. Both Margaret Meade and granddaughter Joan remember her fondly. Daughter Helen mended fences and resumed a relationship with her mother Lottie. Irene never forgave her mother for giving up the children and leaving Harold to be placed in foster care and they remained estranged.

Final note: Bill's maternal grandfather Walter Hilliard worked with my grandfather Thomas Lawson at Westinghouse in Pittsburgh in the early 1930's. It's a small world.

An Escaped Slave's Story

Edited by W. M. Baillie

The Richardson Family Papers in the Society's manuscript collection include several folders relating to John Lyman Richardson, who lived at Grovania near the Columbia/Montour County line. Among these is a single sheet dated April 22nd (probably 1864) in which a onetime slave named W. C. Patterson tells briefly the extraordinary story of his life: born a free man, he traveled just before the Civil War to New Orleans and there was enslaved. He escaped, was recaptured, escaped again and eventually made his way to St. Louis, where during the War thousands of escaped southern slaves gathered under Union Army protection.

John L. Richardson probably knew Patterson and may well have taught him to write and encouraged him to write out his little autobiography. Richardson, a longtime educator, had gone from Pennsylvania to St. Louis to teach freedmen reading and writing.

Richardson's life is treated at some length in the Beers *Historical & Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties*. He was born September 15, 1816 in Jericho, Vermont to an old New England family—both his father and mother were descended from settlers who came from England in the 1630s. At the age of nineteen he began teaching, then studied for four years at Burr Seminary in Vermont. He taught in various places, including Otsego County, New York, and Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.[1]

In 1855, while he was principal of Madison Academy in Waverly, PA, Richardson was appointed superintendent of the public schools of Luzerne County, a newly-enacted position which he filled capably for several years. The idea of a county superintendent was strongly opposed by many people as interference with local control of schools, but Richardson's "enlightened attention to [his] duties" enabled him to establish the superintendent's authority and influence over public schooling.

Beers' *Annals* comments that "It seems but natural that a man of such high character and strong sense of justice should have been active in the Abolition cause and later in the betterment of conditions among the former slaves." In April 1863 Richardson accepted an appointment to organize schools for newly-freed slaves in St. Louis on behalf of the American Missionary Association; his salary was to be just $20 per month plus board—a large reduction from his previous earnings. During his first year there he was busy in organizing schools and employing teachers for them. It is in St. Louis, presumably, that he met W. C. Patterson and received the former slave's brief autobiographical sketch.[2]

There was violent opposition in St. Louis, however, against teaching African-Americans to read and write. After a few years Richardson had to leave because, as a protégé learned in a letter from him, "the Southerners was burning the school houses down and he was coming back."[3]

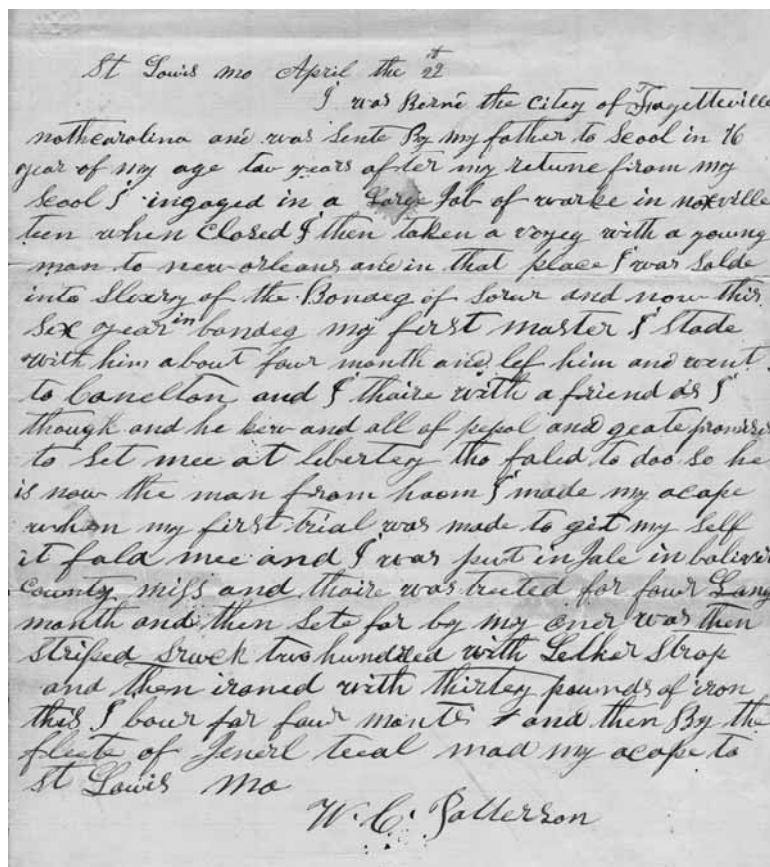He spent some time traveling to ask for contributions to help freedmen; his notebooks record amounts from 25¢ to $5 gathered from individuals in towns such as Tioga and Blossburg in Pennsylvania, Butternut, NY, and North Guilford, CT. In his "Collection Book 1867" we find a section of a speech he gave to ask for money, appealing to his audience's sense of basic fairness:

> In presenting the righteous claims of the freedmen of this country for your sympathy and support it is not important that we discuss the equality or inequality of the races; for if the African is superior to the Anglo-Saxon he needs present aid, if he is only equal he needs aid and if he is an inferior he needs all the more aid. Aid is what the black man now needs in this country unless we admit the assumption that his normal condition is that of slavery. If God really designed the African for this condition then we should not seek to raise him above it. If God designed him for slavery, then we should not seek his freedom. If God made him to be a

slave, then recent proclamation of Emancipation was a great sin. All efforts to educate him should be at once abandoned, and the sooner he shall be remanded back to his former condition the better.[3]

But of course, Richardson expected his hearers to conclude, Emancipation was right and hence the African deserves our support.

In 1879 Richardson retired to a farm he bought in Grovania (Cooper Township, Montour County, on the Columbia County line). He died in March, 1885 and was buried at Danville's Odd Fellows cemetery. His son John L. Richardson became the treasurer of the Richard Manufacturing Company of Bloomsburg, and it was probably through his family that the Richardson papers came to the Society's collections.

Reproduced above is the original life story written by escaped slave W. C. Patterson.[4] Following are two transcriptions, first in a literal reproduction and then regularized. The writer evidently had only very rudimentary training in writing and spelling, but he had an extraordinary story to tell. I have not been able to learn more about him than what he tells here; his last escape "by the fleet of General Teel" possibly refers to a flotilla of Union forces on the Mississippi.

St Louis mo April the 22[t]

I was Borne the citey of Fayetteville northcarolina and was Sente By my father to Scool in 16 year of my age tow years after my retune from my Scool I ingaged in a Large Job of worke in noxville teen [Knoxville, TN] when closed I then taken a voyeg with a young man to new-orleans and in that place I was Solde into Slavery of the Bondeg of Sorur and now this Six year in bondeg my first master I stade with him about four month and lef him and went to Canelton and I thaire with a friend as I though and he kew and all of pepol and geate promises to Set mee at libertey tho faled to doo so he is now

the man from hoom I made my acape when my first trial was made to get my self it fald mee and I was put in Jale in boliver County miss [Mississippi] and thaire was treeted for four Lang month and then Sete for by my oner was then striped srwek two hundred with Lether Strop and then ironed with thirtey pounds of iron this I bour for four monts and then By the fleete of Generl teeal mad my acape to St Lewis mo
<div align="center">W. C. Patterson</div>

St. Louis, MO April 22 [?1864]

I was born in the city of Fayetteville, North Carolina and was sent by my father to school in the 16th year of my age. Two years after my return from school I engaged in a large job of work in Knoxville, Tennessee. When that closed I then took a voyage with a young man to New Orleans, and in that place I was sold into slavery, the Bondage of Sorrow, and now this six years [I spent] in bondage. My first master I stayed with him about four months and left him and went to Canelton [? Canton, MS], and I [stayed] there with a friend, as I thought, and he knew and all of people and got promises to set me at liberty though [he] failed to do so; he is now the man from whom I made my escape. When my first trial was made to get my self [free] it failed me and I was put in jail in Bolivar County, Mississippi and there was treated for four long months and then sent for by my owner. [I] was then stripped, struck two hundred [strokes] with a leather strop, and then ironed [put in irons] with thirty pounds of iron; this I bore for four months and then by the fleet of General Thiel made my escape to St. Louis, Missouri.
<div align="center">W. C. Patterson</div>

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1915, vol. 1, pp. 483-88; most of the biographical information herein is from this work. Richardson was named for his mother's father, Revolutionary War veteran John Lyman (1760-1840), who descended from 1631 immigrant Richard Lyman, a founder of Hartford, CT.
2. S. L. Jocelyn (American Missionary Association, New York City) to J. L. Richardson, 26 Feb 1863; CCHGS, Richardson Papers, MS Box #8, folder #3.
3. Ann Elizabeth Green to Laura A. (Richardson) Miller, 7 Oct. 1921; Richardson Papers, folder #3.
4. Richardson Papers, folder #8.

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