

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Editor's Note: An anonymous letter, signed "C" appeared in *The Columbia County Republican*, a Bloomsburg newspaper, on December 20, 1895, describing Bloomsburg, Lightstreet, and Orangeville in the mid 1840s, 155 years ago.



A few months ago there appeared an article in your paper, mentioning certain changes that had taken place within the last fifty years.

Thinking that some of your younger readers might be interested in reading of some changes not mentioned in the above named article, I have concluded to point out a few of them.

Fifty years ago there was not a mile of railroad in operation within the limits of Columbia and Montour counties. The Catawissa road had been laid out and partially graded somewhat earlier than that, but it was not completed until several years later.

Fifty years ago Columbia and Montour counties constituted a single county with Danville as the county seat. Bloomsburg contained no court house, no jail and but one lawyer. It was a peaceable village at that time, and one lawyer was sufficient to keep matters straight. The population of Bloomsburg at that time was not much if any over six hundred. I find by statistics that Bloom Township which then included the present limits of Scott Township with the village of Esputown and Light Street polled less than four hundred votes on the question of removing the court house to Bloomsburg. The probability is that a pretty full vote was polled.

The streets of Bloomsburg were not named nor numbered as at present. The different portions of the town were locally known as Bloomsburg, Morgantown and Smoketown. The whole was by some of the older residents of the county (who did not take kindly to modern innovations) called Oyertown.

Scott-town did not then have an existence save the site upon which to build. It was just forty-nine years ago this last summer, that I helped to haul stone for the foundation of the house that was afterward built by Dr. Scott, which gave the name to that portion of the town. The same summer the court house was being built, and as the citizens were getting a little proud of their town, they straightened Main Street from the brow of the hill down through Scott-town. It had formerly circled in toward the creek, I presume to secure an easier grade.

John K. Grotz and William Neal were men doing business in the town of Bloomsburg, when I first knew the place, which is somewhat over fifty years. Just how much I do not care to state, as it might lead some of your readers, to suppose, that I am getting old. If there are any others still living who were doing business at that time I am not aware of it.

About the bears and deer that lurked about the wilds of Bloomsburg fifty years ago all that I have to say is, I did not see them. Being a pretty good boy and not prowling around o' nights may account for my not seeing them.

I shall now leave Bloomsburg and move up the creek.

Light Street comes next in order. It was formerly two hamlets known as Sidel Town and Light Street. By not crowding their buildings too closely, they have succeeded in getting the two pretty well consolidated, and one name has been dispensed with.

Light Street has the advantage of most towns in our county, from the fact that it seems to be pretty nearly finished.

When I get to Orangeville I am pretty nearly home. It has increased both in quality and quantity within the first fifty years.

Fifty years ago it contained two stores, two churches, four hotels and one stillhouse. Whisky seems to have been the most prominent industry. The improvements in quality consist in the demolishing of the stillhouse, the reduction of the number of hotels, the increase of churches and the respectable schoolhouse which has taken the place of the dilapidated one of former years.

The number of dwelling houses has greatly increased, and their appearance betokens thrift and enterprise. The diminution of the whisky traffic and the adoption of useful industries have greatly helped to produce those happy results.

The change in some other localities has been as great as those mentioned, but they have not been so directly within the scope of my observation.