

MOUNT PLEASANT SKUNK FARM

By George Holdren

Skunk farms came to the attention of readers of the *Columbian* (Bloomsburg, PA) on August 19, 1892. An article from the *Monroe Democrat* described a skunk farm “with about 800 of these varments” in a 15-acre enclosure. The harvest will commence in four years when the estimated crop is 40,000.

The *Columbian* reported on January 18, 1900 that a skunk farm is the latest notion of a certain Bloomsburg resident, who in the near future will make a trip to South Jersey to consult a breeder concerning this enterprise. The fur was valued for fancy fur coats. Skunks for ladies’ pets were discussed in another article on December 20, 1900.

Henry Hassert, son of immigrant George Hassert of the Bloomsburg firm Harman & Hassert, was named as the local skunk farmer on October 17, 1901. His tract was described as containing about three acres and was located in what is known as Sands Hollow in Mount Pleasant Township. (This author has tried to locate Sands Hollow, which probably was at Mordansville or Welliversville, where the two Sands families lived.) Henry was reported to be quite enthusiastic about his venture.

The Montour American wrote the epitaph on the skunk-farming industry on May 8, 1902, when it reported “skunk farms are a failure, the two or three which were started in this country [i.e., region] having been abandoned for the rather curious reason that when these animals are raised in captivity the quality of their fur degenerates as to become almost worthless.

This problem did not deter others from attempting to make their fortune in skunk farming. An article in the *Columbian* of October 5, 1905 describes the possibility of cross-breeding “pole cats” until they evolve into one color, either black or white.

In the early 1900s, the Eastern Spotted Skunk was erroneously believed to be a civet or a civet cat. It was also wrongly believed that cross-breeding a skunk and a civet would remove the odor. It would appear, however, that surgical removal of the scent gland is the one proven way to de-scent a skunk.