

BLOOMSBURG AND DANVILLE RIVALRY

Introduction: *Henry Webb, editor of the Columbia Democrat, a Bloomsburg newspaper, published two editorials on January 11 and February 1, 1840, entitled "Come and See" that drew attention to the many advantages of Bloomsburg and the Fishing Creek Valley. In the first editorial he offered a very positive and glowing description of Bloomsburg, as a "beautiful and flourishing village." He drew attention to some of the community's excellent advantages: home to five churches, recently built two storied brick school house on the northwest corner of Third and Jefferson Streets, and a thriving economy that benefited in part from the North Branch Canal, lumber products from the townships of Fishing Creek, Greenwood, Sugarloaf and Jackson that floated down Fishing Creek to be distributed from the town, an emerging iron industry, productive farms, abundant beds of iron, and a reliable source of water power from Fishing Creek. Webb was expressing a kind of "hometown boosterism," and he believed there was indeed a promising future for Bloomsburg to become a manufacturing center. It is also interesting to note that in the first part of the editorial he made the point that Bloomsburg was in the geographic center of the county.*

The second "Come and See" editorial appeared three weeks later as a direct response to the criticism in a Danville newspaper to the first "Come and See." Webb dismissed the Danville writer's charge that his enthusiastic description and optimistic outlook for Bloomsburg's future came from an envious spirit toward Danville. He also denies any intention of trying to discredit the Danville area.

To put this rivalry in a historical perspective it is important to remember the underlining issue between Danville and Bloomsburg was the discord over the location of the county courthouse. Danville became the county seat for Columbia County at the time of its establishment in 1813. For over twenty years the citizens of Bloomsburg and the surrounding area argued that the courthouse should be moved to Bloomsburg since it was more centrally located in the county. Webb is very explicit in saying that having Danville as the country seat was "'very much' to the injury of the public." In a public referendum on October 14, 1845, by a vote of 2913 to 1579, the voters approved the removal of the county seat of government to Bloomsburg.

COME AND SEE

Columbia Democrat, January 11, 1840

Appears to be the watch word among neighbors, and we repeat it, "Come and See," not "our railroad" that is, but not our barren hills and dry streams, but our fertile and beautiful farms or inexhaustible beds of ore, and valuable water powers – and last, though not least our beautiful and flourishing village Bloomsburg. It is situated in the centre of the county, upon the North Branch Canal; near the mouth of fishing creek, a large and never falling

stream, which passed from its source, through an extensive fertile valley, and down which annually floats millions of feet of pine and other lumber, and has sufficient fall for innumerable water powers unsurpassed by any other in the state. Upon its borders, for several miles from its mouth, are inexhaustible beds of iron ore, of a quality inferior to none in the world, and which can be mined with very little comparative expense. Some idea may be formed of the estimation in which it is held by the iron masters of the country from the fact, that upwards of "20,000 tons have been taken from this neighborhood within the past year, and the most of it transported 50 or a 100 miles to furnaces situated in regions abounding with iron ore.

The village is built upon a gentle declivity, laid out into regular streets and squares, continuing upwards of one hundred dwellings; four churches, A Episcopalian, Presbyterian, a Lutheran and German Reform, and a Methodist, all of which are handsome buildings that do credit to the different societies to which they belong. During the past season, there has been erected a large brick school house sufficiently commodious for four schools; also several brick buildings for stores and dwelling houses, besides a number of frame houses and other buildings. In the village is an extensive Iron Foundry for the manufacture of all kinds of castings, at which has lately been put in operation, a four horse power steam engine, made in the foundry under the superintendence of its enterprising manager, Lewis H. Maus. Within a distance of about two miles, there are now in full operation six large Flouring Mills, propelled by water, all of which are doing an expensive business. 'The "Bloomsburg Railroad and Iron Company," that was chartered last winter with a capital of \$500,000, have, within a few weeks, located their race and the site for their buildings; and we learn that arrangements are making to break ground early in the spring. Besides the valuable water power to be occupied by this company on Fishing Creek, there are several others, equally as good, that can now be purchased; and all that is wanting is capital, to give this vicinity an impetus in the tide of Iron Manufacture that would soon waft it far ahead of any other section of Northern Pennsylvania. It will thus be seen that our advantages for manufacturing are great. We have a great water power – Iron Ore of the first quality in abundance – Lumber of any kind or quality can be floated down Fishing Creed – Coal from Wyoming, or any other section, can be brought to the door by the canal, and in addition, our railroad will soon be continued from Catawissa up Fishing Creek to Williamsport, to connect with the Elmira railroad, which will give us a direct communication into the State of New York, either by railroad or canal, as well as with Philadelphia and Baltimore – and an extensive fertile country around, abounding with everything that is necessary to build up and sustain a manufacturing community. All these advantages for the manufacture of iron will not be overlooked by the real capitalists and active business men of the country, and must very soon make Bloomsburg a manufacturing town – not the mushroom of the day, but upon a foundation that will be lasting.

"COME AND SEE"

Columbia Democrat, February 1, 1840

When we penned the article in our paper some two or three weeks since, under the above caption, we little thought of bringing down upon us the ire of our neighbor in Danville, or of being accused of exercising a spirit of "envy," never dreaming but that we had as good a right to set forth the "transcendent advantages" of our town and vicinity, as our friends in neighboring villages; and we have *yet to learn* that it *displays something very much like envy* to do so. Our remarks were made in perfect good feeling, and in perfect *truth*, and we think he who could take exceptions to them must *have corns on his toes*, or at least be a *little gouty*, and possessed of a feeling, not only "very much like," but in fact, of "envy" and jealousy too. For ourselves, we care not how much Danville is extolled by those interested, or how many furnaces are in *anticipation* of being built there, the more the merrier, as it will add to the business of our lumber friends in the townships of Greenwood, Fishing Creek, Sugarloaf and Jackson, boarding on Fishing creek and its tributaries, as from the section, most of their lumber is obtained; but, we are the same time, claim the right of showing the real advantages possessed in the vicinity of Fishing Creek, for manufacturing iron, without being accused of displaying envious feelings. The Danville people succeeded by puffing, in procuring the location of the Courts of the county in that place "very much" to the injury of the public; and if they can now puff and steam their town into a manufacturing village, by making capitalists believe that they are in the centre of the iron region, they will undoubtedly do so; but unless we are much mistaken in the signs of the times the water power of the *real centre*, to wit: of Fishing Creek, and its tributaries, will soon cool their steam, out their fires, and draw the business of the country to its *proper* and *natural* location. *The paper in Danville* is therefore "very much" mistaken in supposing our article was "designed to underrate the advantages of that vicinity." So far from it, they were *calculated* to give them their true value. What are the facts? We spoke of the advantages Bloomsburg and vicinity had over other portions of the iron regions for the manufacture of iron from the abundance and good quality of iron ore – the facility with which materials for building can be obtained – advantages that *we do* and *shall* possess over the other portions for rail road and canal transportation – and last, though not by any means the least, the immense water power available in this section, as giving us advantages possessed but by few. It is true we intended to carry the impression that water power, when it could be used in the neighborhood of rail road or canal transportation, was superior to steam, in every sense of the word, being both safer and cheaper. If this be "undercutting the advantages of that vicinity," so be it. That it is placing Fishing Creek region, if true, far above them, every one will acknowledge. But we contend that it is only placing the true value on all, without "*underrating* the advantages" of any. We shall pursue their subject hereafter and show the *actual advantage* water power has over steam.