

# **The Susquehannocks**

**By**

**David J. Minderhout**

In 1608, in his exploration of the Chesapeake Bay, Captain John Smith reached the point where the Susquehanna River meets the Bay. Unable to take his boat farther because of the falls at the point where the river entered the Bay, Smith stopped among the native people called the Tockwoghs to rest and replace provisions. While there, a contingent of sixty warriors visited the Tockwoghs to trade. According to Smith, these warriors “seemed like Giants to the English...the calfe [of the greatest of them] measured 3 quarters of a yard [27 inches] about.” Dressed in the skins of bears and wolves, some with the heads or paws of the animals still attached, these people very much impressed Smith, who learned that they came from up the river, perhaps a two-day journey from the Bay, and that their town housed “near 600” such warriors. The Tockwoghs called them Sasquesahanocks, a name somewhat Anglicized in later years to become Susquehannocks, and the river on which they lived came to be named after them - the Susquehanna.

Seven years later, a Frenchman in the service of Samuel de Champlain, Etienne Brule, led an delegation of Hurons into an area on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River to seek an alliance with the Susquehannocks against the Onondagas. Brule’s mission came too late; the Onondagas had already defeated Champlain’s forces by the time Brule reached the Susquehannock villages, which according to a map he later produced were located around the large earthen mound called Spanish Hill near what would later become Athens, Pennsylvania. Brule spent perhaps as long as two years among these people, and during that time he added to his earlier exploits of becoming the first European to see the Great Lakes with his journey from the Spanish Hill area to the Chesapeake Bay, becoming the first European to traverse the length of the Susquehanna River.

For the next 100 years, the Susquehannocks dominated the Susquehanna River Valley, establishing a series of large towns in Lancaster County, the most important of

which was at Washington Boro, a town that is believed to have housed 2000 people. They traveled east to engage in trade with the Dutch and Swedish settlements in Delaware. They traveled south to engage in trade with the English in Maryland, eventually signing a treaty of alliance with the Maryland colony in 1661; as part of this arrangement, the Maryland colonial government posted fifty English soldiers and cannons at the Susquehannocks' "fort." Throughout this period of the early and mid 17th century, the Susquehannocks controlled the trade between Europeans and their allies in Western Pennsylvania - the Eries and, in Ontario, the Hurons - while they engaged in war with the Senecas, Cayugas, and other members of the Iroquois Five Nations. William Penn visited their town on the Conestoga Creek in Lancaster County in 1700 and offered them his assurances of peace with "Penn's Woods." Eventually, however, warfare and smallpox took its toll on these Native Americans, with the first records of a smallpox outbreak among them coming in 1661. Continuing hostilities with the Seneca; the destruction of their native allies, the Eries, in 1655; the defeat of the Hurons by the Five Nations; and a change in policy in Maryland leading to an all-out attack on them by a combined English militia from Maryland and Virginia in 1675; brought this once influential people to near annihilation. On Christmas Eve, 1763, a vigilante band of settlers from Dauphin County, called the Paxton Boys, massacred a community of Susquehannocks in Lancaster in retaliation for native atrocities in the French & Indian War of 1755-1763 (a war in which the Susquehannocks did not participate) leading historians to conclude that the Susquehannock nation had been done away with.

The point of this brief history is two-fold: first, to note the widespread influence of the Susquehannocks in the Susquehanna River Valley during the 16th and 17th centuries and second, to point to how many different native and European nations had contact with them over that period. One might conclude that the Susquehannocks would be among the best known of the native peoples of Pennsylvania and perhaps the Northeast, and yet very little is known about them today except through occasional excerpts from explorers' or missionaries' accounts and modern-day archaeological excavations of their towns and villages. This is especially true compared to their co-residents of the region of that time, the Lenape or Delawares. Researchers have debated

who the Susquehannocks were and how they lived for decades, going back, in fact, to the 19th century, and yet significant questions remain unanswered.

For example, it is not clear what these people called themselves. John Smith called them by the name used by his hosts, the Tockwoghs, and generally English colonial figures used the name “Susquehannock” for them. But the French knew them as Andastes (alternatively Andastogues or Andastogueronons), and the Dutch called them Minquas. In the 19th century, General John S. Clark (1823-1912), a Civil War military officer and then a researcher/antiquarian, became fascinated with the Iroquoian peoples and their history, including the Susquehannocks, and he collected as much correspondence and historical evidence as he could find, dating back into the 17th century, to try and illuminate Iroquois traditions and cultures. He found that in addition to the labels already mentioned for the Susquehannocks that those people were also known by many other names. He suggested that the label John Smith originally used in his text, Sasquesahanough, was from a Seneca reference to the Susquehannocks, the name being derived from Seneca roots meaning “great falls,” presumably the falls of the Susquehanna River near Conewago. Brule called the principal North Branch town of the people he was recruiting for Champlain, “Carantouan,” and the Susquehannocks were known as the Carantouans to some. Another name for them that appears in early literature is Gandastogues, which supposedly means “people of the blackened ridge pole,” a reference to the aftermath of a Susquehannock attack - a burned structure. Gandastogue is thought to have evolved into Conestoga, the name by which they were known in Lancaster County in the 18th century and which would give their name to a waterway as well as the covered wagons built in Lancaster County for settlers pressing into the western frontier.

There may be two main reasons for the confusing array of labels and the questions about the Susquehannocks and their history. The first is that they were a tribal society, in the sense that anthropologists use the term “tribe.” As a reference to a kind of social organization, a tribe refers to a widely distributed group of people who generally share a common history, language and customs (though with local variations) but not a common or centralized political structure. Each tribal community is typically autonomous and often individually named, though many tribal societies around the world do have the potential to come together in a united purpose, such as a common

ritual or an outside threat. In those situations, a loose kind of political structure may emerge built around respected individuals, or what anthropologists call pan-tribal sodalities, organizations that have members from many different locations, cutting across local autonomy. The warrior societies of the Plains Indians served in this fashion, as they would draw communities together for a common purpose such as a bison hunt; the sodality would organize and police the hunt. However, once the common purpose is removed, the autonomous segments will go back to their home territories and have little contact with other like communities. In these autonomous communities, local kin ties and marriage are more important on a daily basis than



Strickler Cord Marked

Susquehannock Pottery ca. 1600

From Frey 2008, used by permission.

membership in a common ethnicity, and it is not at all unusual for each community to have its own name or identity. What we now think of as the Susquehannock nation, or for that matter, the Lenapes or the Lakotas or other Native American “tribes,” is often an artifact of conquest; Europeans tended to ignore the local identities and treat all of them as one nation. Thus, for example, research suggests that what is now called the Lenape Nation in Pennsylvania probably only emerged after contact as European diseases decimated native communities and resettlement measures forced survivors into a common identity and place. (Or as in the case of the alternative label for the Lenapes, “Delaware,” a label was imposed on them by outsiders, in this case, English colonial authorities. The English tended to label native people in the Americas for the waterways on which they first contacted them.) The second reason has to do with the 16th and

17th century history of the Susquehannocks, that they seemed to be at war with their neighbors for much of their history. As General Clark pointed out from his studies, the one common label that everyone seemed to agree upon was “hostile.” This passage from a 1648 account by a Frenchman named Ragueneau seems typical: “They are nations of the Huron language, and of all times allies of our Hurons. They are very warlike and number in a single town thirteen hundred men bearing arms.” (see Murray 1931:58). Clark, in fact, says that the Iroquois referred to the Susquehannocks as demons and suggests that the Iroquois name for the West Branch of the Susquehanna, Otzinachson, means “place of the demons” in reference to the Susquehannocks living there (in Murray 1931: 5). Given the history of conflict, it is not unexpected that misunderstandings exist about a people so many were at war with. A commonly reported encounter between a raiding band of Senecas and Cayugas and the Susquehannocks in 1671 is often taken as an example of their prowess in battle. By this point, according to multiple sources, the Susquehannocks had been reduced in numbers by smallpox and war to only 300 warriors, and the combined Seneca/Cayuga force chose to take advantage of this by attacking a Susquehannock town on the river near the Maryland border, only to be beaten back by a group of sixty Susquehannock teenagers, sixteen years of age or younger. The Seneca/Cayugas suffered severe losses in this battle, according to a French Jesuit priest, “while the battlefield remained in possession of the Andastogue boys with a loss of fifteen or sixteen of them” (in Benson n.d.: 27).

Were the Susquehannocks exceptional in their fierceness and skill in war? This seems unlikely, especially given the old assertion that the victors write the histories. There are also multiple accounts of the Iroquois’ warlike tendencies, and it is clear that all parties to these conflicts in the 17th century were quick to attack their enemies with the goal of inflicting as much damage as possible and that they tortured prisoners. Note, too, that the surviving accounts are all by Europeans who were quick to both use native warriors as allies when needed and to turn on those allies when convenient. It was, after all, the fur trade, introduced by Europeans, that intensified native conflicts. Once European metal and glass goods began to flow into native hands in the 17th century in exchange for beaver pelts, Native Americans quickly became dependent on them, replacing stone tipped arrows with muskets and clay pots with metal ones; in some areas, native crafts disappeared within a generation, and burials become filled with clay

pipes, glass beads, mirrors, steel knives and swords. A prime example of the intensified conflict is the extermination of the Eries by the Seneca in 1655. The Iroquois nations, in the rush to obtain pelts for trade, had killed all the beaver within their traditional territories. They turned then to their neighbors, making war on them in order to obtain a continuing supply of pelts. Jennings (1968:30) records an example of the dependence the natives in the Northeast on European goods with a telling anecdote: “In 1670 a Susquehannock sachem dinned this into the heads of some stubborn Lenape ‘and showed them, here live Christians and there live Christians; declaring to them that as they were surrounded by Christians, if they went to war, where would they get powder and ball?’”



“Shultz Incised”



“Washington Boro Incised”

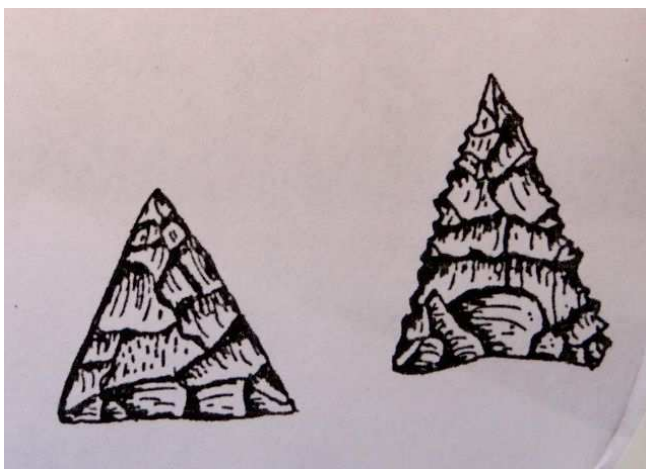
Susquehannock Pottery From Frey 2008, used with permission.

### **Susquehannock Culture**

It is generally agreed that the Susquehannocks were culturally related to the Iroquois and that they spoke an Iroquoian family language, rather than the Algonquin languages spoken by the Lenape, Mahicans and others in the Northeast. Brule reported that after having lived with the Hurons, who also spoke an Iroquoian language, he could easily converse with the Susquehannocks he spent time with on the North Branch. Archaeological excavations reveal that most Susquehannock villages were surrounded with tree trunk palisades or fortresses like those of the Five Nation Iroquois of New York State (Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas; the Tuscaroras, originally

from the Carolinas, joined the five in 1722 to become the modern Six Nations.) Also, like the Iroquois, Susquehannocks lived in longhouses within these fortresses - structures 40 to 100 feet long constructed of branches anchored in the ground and covered with bark. (The Six Nations call themselves the Haudenosaunee, or “People of the Longhouse.”) Presumably then, like the Iroquois, the Susquehannocks were matrilineal, i.e., they traced descent through the female line, and the people living within a longhouse would have been an extended family of related women with their children and husbands. Men would have married into these households (i.e., they were matrilocal), and women would have chosen their husbands, being people of great influence and respect.

There would likely have been complementary gender roles within their social organization, as is the case among the Iroquois. Men would have cleared the forest for planting; women would have tended the gardens (built around the Iroquois’ Three Sisters: maize or corn, beans and squash) and prepared the food for storage or consumption. Men would have hunted wild game and taken advantage of the



Susquehannock projectile points. Taken from Fogelman 1992, used with permission

abundance of fish on the river; women prepared the game to eat. Among the Iroquois, villages were periodically abandoned and/or relocated. After a period of time, the wooden palisades would rot in the moist, acidic soil; local game animals would have been over-hunted, and the fields, which were not fertilized except by the remains of last season’s vegetation left behind to serve as a sort of compost, would become less

productive. At the time of European contact, it was noted with regard to the Iroquois that these relocations occurred approximately every fifteen years, though because of the conflicts in which they were involved Susquehannock villages may have moved more often. They buried their dead outside the palisade walls, usually with a variety of grave goods.

Communities could be quite large; as noted above, the Washington Boro site is thought to have housed as many as two thousand people, pointing to their ability to successfully provision large numbers of people for a decade or more, while other outlying communities in Lancaster County were smaller and housed only a few hundred people (see Kent 1984). The Hershey site, for example, was composed of perhaps forty longhouses, each approximately 15 feet wide and 45 to 50 feet in length. An estimated 500 to 600 people lived at this site, which was occupied for perhaps only ten years. The Hershey site is unusual in that it was unfortified (no palisades) and unlike the other Lancaster County sites which sit right on the river, is located a mile away from the Susquehanna (Schulenberg, Weets and Van Rossum 2003).

Having said all this, however, it must be noted that the actual Susquehannock culture - the way people lived day to day - is based on surmises and analogies to the much better known and still extant Iroquois nations. No European wrote about the everyday existence of these people or recorded much of their history, except to the extent that it conflicted with European motives or needs. A good example is the Susquehannock language. In the mid-17th century, a European named John Campanius recorded some Susquehannock words and phrases (in Kent 1984: 30-31). It is not known how accurate Campanius' accounts are (i.e., if they are phonetic transcriptions or whether they were obtained directly from Susquehannock informants), but what there is of them seems to support Brule's account that the people he lived among understood his Huron speech, that is, Susquehannock seems similar to the northwestern varieties of the Iroquois language family. In the 19th century, Clark attempted to obtain derivations of Susquehannock words from the journals and letters he collected by showing them to Iroquois informants; these informants agreed that the words were Iroquois, but disagreed on what they meant.



## **The Susquehannocks on the West Branch**

As noted earlier, the Susquehannocks were a dominant force on the Susquehanna River during the 17th century, with towns stretching from what is today the New York/Pennsylvania border on the North Branch of the river to falls of the Main Branch of the river as it enters the Chesapeake Bay. This includes the West Branch of the river as well. It appears that the motivating factor behind the Susquehannock presence in the river valley as a whole and their specific interest in the West Branch was the fur trade.

Jennings (1968:21-22) writes of this, noting:

To outward appearances...the Susquehannocks were the Great Powers in their part of the world, but Susquehannock power was illusory because the mechanism for generating it was beyond Susquehannock control. That mechanism was the fur trade. To maintain their glory, the Susquehannocks had to get the weaponry that only Europeans could supply and that only peltry could buy. To get the peltry, the Susquehannocks had to hunt and fight under rules of competition set by conditions of geography and communication. Great distances lay between hunting grounds and markets. The cycle of the trade could not be completed without secure access to both a source of peltry and a source of trade goods.”

In other words, the Susquehannocks were striving to make themselves the middlemen, the key link between European powers and the sources of beaver pelts, which by the 17th century lay primarily to the north and west in the Great Lakes region, an area dominated by the Hurons. There were insufficient numbers of beaver in the river valley itself to maintain the trade the Susquehannocks desired, and, as pointed out earlier, the Iroquois in New York State had wiped out their native population of beaver in the same headlong rush to obtain European goods. The Susquehannocks demonstrated time and again their willingness to travel great distances to secure trading partners. In 1626, Isaack de Rasiere wrote that the Susquehannocks had come to Manhattan offering to serve as middlemen in the fur trade. From the main branch of the Susquehanna River, the Susquehannocks traveled overland through what is now southeastern Pennsylvania to the Delaware and then down that river to the Dutch and Swedish settlements on the coast (defeating the Lenape in 1636 to win this privilege, and then offering themselves to the Europeans as their defense against the Lenape), opening up a trade link to that source of goods. As seen before, they traveled to the Chesapeake Bay and the Maryland colony to trade with the English.

But to make their role as middlemen work they needed to establish a link with the Hurons, and the way to do that was to secure the West Branch of the river for access to the Great Lakes region and the Hurons. In retrospect, this appears to be a grand scheme, but in reality it is unlikely that the Susquehannocks were acting out a plan created by some centralized power; tribal societies simply do not act in that fashion. Rather, the motivator was self-interest, and the geographical reality was the Susquehanna River and its tributaries. In this sense, the Susquehannocks were acting more like 21<sup>st</sup>-Century commodities traders than what is conventionally thought of as 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Native Americans. In the short run, this made the Susquehannocks a force to be reckoned with; in the long run, it made them the enemies of everyone, European or native, who wanted the same thing the Susquehannocks managed to maintain for several decades: direct access to wealth. When disease and war weakened their position, the Susquehannocks succumbed and disappeared from the history books.

Because the Susquehannocks were not looking at the West Branch of the river as an area in which to settle, there are no remains of stockaded towns, as in Lancaster County, but their impact was felt nonetheless. In the spring issue of this journal (Vol. 4, No. 1: pp 11-22), I wrote about the Susquehannocks' immediate predecessors on the West Branch, the archaeological culture called the Shenks Ferry Culture, which was located there and on the main branch of the river into Lancaster County in the period from approximately 1350 A.D. to about 1500 A.D. It is now generally believed that the Shenks Ferry people were themselves a conquest society, having moved into the valley from the Potomac region, eventually displacing the earlier Clemson Island Culture, which may have moved north in response, to become the Senecas. In their early history, the Shenks Ferry people lived in small, open villages along the river, hunting, fishing, and growing corn, beans and squash like other Native American cultures in the Northeast. But around 1450 A.D., Shenks Ferry communities began to change. They became larger and surrounded themselves with palisades. The standard explanation is that the Shenks Ferry people were now being threatened in turn by another outside source. That is generally thought to be the Susquehannocks. By 1500, the Shenks Ferry Culture had ceased to exist.

## **Were the Susquehannocks Driven to Extinction?**

As mentioned earlier, in December 1763, the Paxton Boys killed six Susquehannocks in their community on Conestoga Creek in Lancaster County. Fourteen survivors - women, children, and old men - fled into Lancaster town where they were given shelter in the town jail. However, when the Paxton Boys arrived in Lancaster two weeks later, the town authorities withdrew and the vigilantes murdered the surviving Susquehannocks in their “safe” house. According to standard accounts, that was the last of the Susquehannocks; the people who dominated life in the river valley in the 17th century had ceased to exist.

However, today in Pennsylvania it is possible to find people who insist they are descendants of the Susquehannocks, generally through intermarriage in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Could this be possible? That there were individual Susquehannocks who were not in Lancaster in December 1763 is a possibility, again because of the nature of tribal society. The argument for this presumption lies within a debate over why the Susquehannocks moved south from their original home area in southern New York State in the early 16th century. Experts on the Susquehannocks believe that prior to European contact they lived on the North Branch of the Susquehanna at the point where it enters what is now Pennsylvania, and that they spread very rapidly down the North Branch into the Lancaster County area between 1500 and 1550 A.D. In the early 19th century, the historian Francis Parkman argued that the Five Nations Iroquois made war on the Susquehannocks at this time and drove them south. Jennings disputed this in his 1968 article, arguing that there was no concrete evidence of any war between the Iroquois and the Susquehannocks. Rather, he argued, as has been seen earlier in this article, that the Susquehannocks moved south to get closer to European settlements in order to trade for European-made goods. In a rebuttal to Jennings, the anthropologist Elizabeth Tooker noted in an article in *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* in 1984 that the reason there was no concrete evidence of Iroquois/Susquehannock warfare was that tribal warfare leaves nothing concrete behind to find. Rather, a defeated tribal society, if given the chance, simply disperses. Thus, with no literate observer around to record an event of that type, it would appear that a tribal society simply ceased to be. Tooker suggests a likely scenario: “These Indians

were not assimilated as subject peoples as would be customary after a defeat today, but were adopted as full members of various Iroquois tribes.” (1984: 5)

With that argument in mind, what I am suggesting here is that the Susquehannock Nation ceased to exist as a concrete recognizable entity in 1763, but individual Susquehannocks survived. In his important book, *Susquehanna's Indians*, former state archaeologist Barry Kent raises the possibility that not every Susquehannock was at home in Conestoga in December 1763, and he presents possible evidence that surviving Susquehannocks were elsewhere at that time. An expert on the Iroquois culture, Dean Snow, notes that Susquehannocks were living with the Cayugas in the 16th century, and anthropologist William Englebrecht points out that by 1650, individual Susquehannocks were living among both the Onondagas and the Senecas and that “In Pennsylvania, multiethnic communities containing Seneca, Susquehannocks and other Iroquoians were established at Conestoga, Logstown and Shamokin [modern Sunbury] while similar such communities in Ohio came to be known as Mingos” (2003:168).

As a last note, the archaeologist Jay Custer records an interesting discovery he made in the 1990's among legal documents in Lancaster County. This was a claim against the City of Lancaster in 1845 by natives claiming Susquehannock ancestry. The claimants were living among the Oneida in New York State at the time, but were requesting compensation from Lancaster for land that was lost at the time of the Paxton Boys' massacre in 1763. Each claimed descent from Susquehannocks living at Conestoga when the murders occurred. There was no record of a response from Lancaster.

### **Were the Susquehannocks Giants?**

At the beginning of this article, John Smith was quoted as saying in 1608 that the Susquehannocks he met were “like giants to the English,” and because of that statement, the idea continues to circulate that the Susquehannocks were extraordinarily large human beings. In my work, interviewing Pennsylvanians who claim descent from Native Americans, I have been told often that a sign of Susquehannock heritage in the modern era is exceptional height, over seven feet tall, one informant told me. This, like Smith's original statement, is undoubtedly an exaggeration; those I have actually met

who claim Susquehannock ancestry are all less than six feet tall. A large number – dozens - of Susquehannock burials have been discovered, especially in Lancaster County where housing developments have been built in areas where Susquehannock towns were known to be located in the 17th century. Forensic research on the skeletal remains suggests that the Susquehannocks were, in fact, short by modern standards. Jennings says “The skeletal remains unearthed at one site show a height ranging from 4 feet, 10.9 inches, to 5 feet, 7.7 inches, with a mean stature of 5 feet, 3.7 inches” (1968:17). Paul A. Wallace probably puts it best when he says, “Like the great Elizabethans, of which he was a belated member, Captain John Smith was intoxicated with words. We must not expect his measurements to tally exactly with those of science” (2005: 11).

### **Summary**

It may seem ironic that the Susquehanna River, the longest non-navigable river in the United States and a key location in the early colonial history of the United States, came to be named for a native people about which we today know relatively little, including whether those people called themselves Susquehannocks or some other version of the river’s current name. But then, as noted in my article in the spring issue of this journal, Native Americans have lived in the Susquehanna River Valley for at least 10,000 years, and uncounted numbers of native cultures have come and gone in that time without being known to us today except through some stone tools, hearths and broken pottery. And as this article notes, there remain significant questions about who the Susquehannocks were and why they did what they did, despite the fact that they dominated European interactions with native peoples from New York State through Pennsylvania into Maryland throughout the 17th century. Historians and archaeologists contend that the Susquehannock culture came to a sad end at the hands of the Paxtons on Christmas Eve in 1763. But modern Pennsylvanians and New Yorkers who claim descent from native ancestors insist that some have Susquehannock blood still flowing in their veins. Perhaps further archaeological investigation or archival research will one day resolve some of these questions.

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The author expresses thanks to Gary Fogelman and Paul Frey for permission to use their photos, which appeared first in their publications in the listings below.

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## A Seminary in New Berlin

By

Sidney Dreese

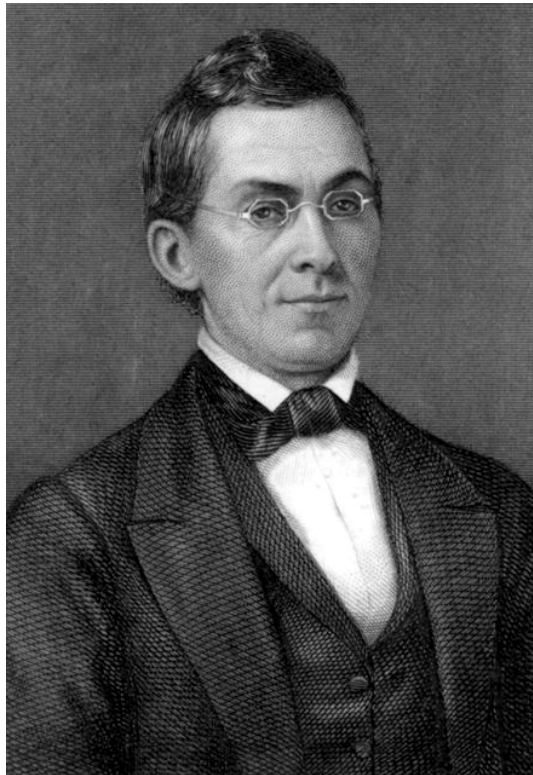
“We want the children to go forth prepared to labor with hand, head, and heart for God and man. We wish for our students to aim for a life of usefulness, and to be a credit to themselves and their friends.” – The officials of the Union Seminary expressed these expectations for the students in the seminary catalog. Accountability to both God and friends was important. Although the school was non-sectarian, it strongly adhered to Christian ideals. (It was established under the auspices of the Evangelical Association, founded by Jacob Albright, born in 1759; died in 1808). The Union Seminary got its name because it was located in Union County, and the school opened its doors on January 3, 1856. (It was located at the site of the New Berlin Elementary School. The seminary building had fallen into disrepair, and was razed.)



Depiction of the Union Seminary, New Berlin, 1856  
Source: First annual catalog of Union Seminary, 1856

Rev. Wilhelm W. Orwig is credited as the founder of the school, ably assisted by two assistants, Rev. Charles Koch and Simon Wolf. Reverend Orwig was a forward thinker and he thought young women should be educated. In addition he pushed for the

establishment of Sunday schools, a missionary society, and was a key founder of a mission to Germany. Rev. Orwig was an itinerant minister in York, the Baltimore area and the Erie area. He was later elected a bishop of the church and served from 1859 until 1863. (The Evangelical Association merged with the United Evangelical Church to become the Evangelical Church in 1922. There were further mergers with the United Brethern Church and the United Methodist Church. A notable landmark is the Albright



Rev. Wilhelm W. Orwig, founder of Union Seminary  
Source: Albright College Archives

Memorial Church, located at Kleinfeltersville, Pennsylvania, where Jacob Albright is buried.) and editor of the Evangelical Association's periodical, *Christliche Botschafter*, holding that position three times, 1836-1843, 1850-1855, 1863-1867, a prolific author including writing a volume of sermons, a catechism used over 25 years, and a history of the Evangelical Association. Upon leaving the Union Seminary in 1859 he moved to Cleveland where the Association's publishing house had moved, after having been located in New Berlin. Orwig was born in Orwigsburg, Schuylkill County, in 1810, and when a young boy came with his parents to Union County.



In 1854 Orwig suggested a school be established in New Berlin, a proposal received with much enthusiasm by the residents of New Berlin. At the time the Evangelical Association had two conferences: the West Pennsylvania Conference and the East Pennsylvania Conference with the Susquehanna River as the boundary between the two. Orwig and Koch presented the proposal for a seminary in New Berlin at conference sessions for each Conference. The West Pennsylvania Conference was immediately favorable. The East Pennsylvania Conference was hesitant at first, but later agreed with the proposal. The one who raised the most money was Simon Wolf, secretary of the board of trustees, and the building was completed in the fall of 1855.

The chapel held 350 persons and was nearly filled to capacity on opening day in the winter of 1856. It was the beginning of a 46-year presence of private education in



The Chapel

Source: Albright College Archives

New Berlin. Union Seminary existed from 1856 until 1887. The school was then renamed Central Pennsylvania College and existed until 1902.

The first faculty were Rev. Wilhelm Orwig, who served both as the principal of the school and professor of moral science and the German language, together with Rev. Francis Hendricks, professor of mental science and mathematics, Jacob Whitman, professor of natural sciences, Augustus Sassaman, professor of ancient languages and literature, and Francis Hoffman, professor of the English branches and bookkeeping.



Augustus Sassaman  
Professor of Ancient Languages  
And Literature  
Photo courtesy of Albright College  
Archives



Jacob Whitman  
Professor of Natural Sciences  
Photo courtesy of Penn State  
University Archives

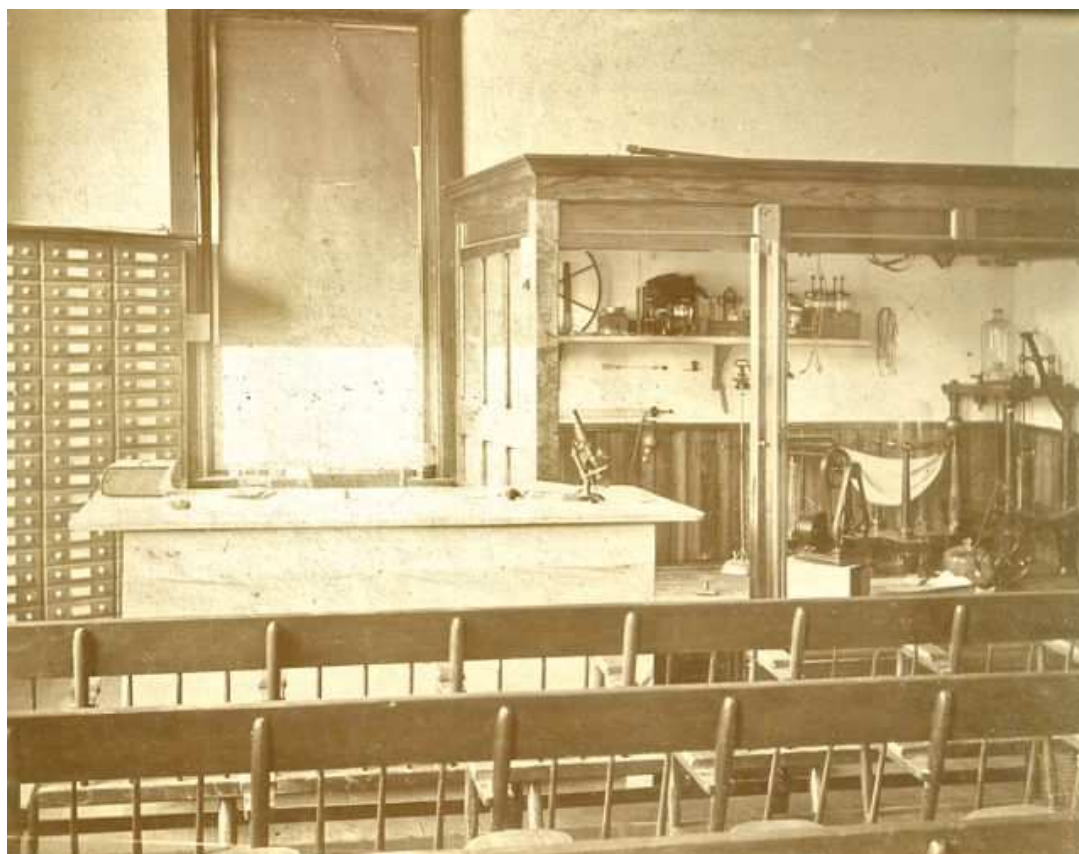
The school had both a primary school and a secondary school. The majority of the younger children were from New Berlin, and those attending the higher grades came largely from Union, Snyder and Northumberland counties. Others, though, came from such states as Maryland, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and California. Applicants to the school were to be of good moral character and were expected to observe all rules and regulations. Before attending the school, tuition was required to be paid in advance.

Traveling a distance to New Berlin was a difficult journey as there was no railroad serving New Berlin; students coming from far away went to Lewisburg, Northumberland or Lewistown by train. From there the trek would continue by stage coach to New Berlin. It was not until 1883 that the railroad came into Winfield, yet there would still be an eight-mile ride on the stage coach.

Some of the boys lived in private homes in New Berlin. Also, two or three of them could room together at the seminary and form a “boarding club” where a woman in a

private home would prepare meals for them. Girls boarded at the school and were under the watchful eye of the preceptress.

Students attended classes from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. with 90 minutes for lunch beginning at noon. Students also were expected to attend chapel ten minutes before classes and ten minutes after classes for personal devotions, i.e., reading the



Science Room, Union Seminary

Source: Albright College Archives

Bible and prayer. This practice continued until 1896 after which only morning chapel was observed. They were also expected to attend public worship on Sundays at one of the churches in New Berlin.

At the outset there were no formal courses of study and only the girls, after three years of work (equivalent to high-school studies), could earn a diploma. Barth states in *Discovery and Promise*, “By charter, Union Seminary was allowed at its beginning to graduate young women only.” The boys’ preparation was

geared to college preparation where they could earn a degree. Their academic work - equal to college prep studies - was rigorous and they were expected to go to college. Girls took courses on the 3Rs and could choose from two of four languages: German, French, Latin or Greek. They could also choose from several sciences, such as botany, astronomy, geology, or chemistry. The sexes never mixed except in the classroom.



Museum, Union Seminary

Source: Albright College Archives

The girls had fewer activities than the boys. The latter could play baseball or football on the school's athletic field. For intellectual development outside of the classroom, the seminary had two literary societies, both of which were emphatically "no girls allowed" clubs. The Excelsior Literary Society was formed in 1856 and the Neocosmian Literary Society in 1858. The seminary also had a teachers' association. The purpose of these organizations was to improve public speaking and composition. A

frequent activity was holding debates. Both of the literary societies had their own libraries, and the seminary had a library consisting of some books and newspapers. The first graduates, Class of 1859, were: Louisa Aurand, Lizzie German, Kate Swineford and sisters, Annie and Mary Lotz.

With an increased demand for teachers for both the primary and secondary grades the seminary in 1857 added a course for a "Normal Class" which prepared teachers. In time other courses were added to the curriculum: classical, scientific, English, and collegiate.

The Seminary continued to attract students, but enrollment dropped and finances were not robust, relying solely on tuition payments. In contrast to Bucknell University and Susquehanna University, both of which had larger student bodies and more diverse sources of income, the Union Seminary was on fragile financial ground and the school struggled to stay open. During the first two years of the War Between the States the seminary was able to continue; however, the trustees decided to close the doors in 1863 until the war ended. On August 18, 1865 the seminary began operating again.

The war had its effect on the seminary, going deeper into debt and the state's charter had been suspended. As noted in Barth's *Discovery and Promise*, "The most pressing problem was to secure a charter for the school....Union Seminary had been operating without official state certification from the time it was reopened after its suspension during the last two years of the Civil War." Unfortunately, restoring the institution's charter would not be realized until 1880, and there were two others issued in 1883 and 1887. Legal technicalities were always the obstacle for charters.

Better days were ahead, though, with Rev. Martin Carothers and his leadership as president of the seminary's board of trustees. Carothers was determined not to allow Union Seminary to die. Shortly after the war he established (after conference approval) the Education Society of the Central Pennsylvania Conference. The Society then took absolute control of the seminary and through the work of an all-new board of trustees they sold stock at \$25 per share. Through this action sufficient money was raised and all debts were paid. For the school year 1872-1873 there were 94 boys and 13 girls enrolled. The cost was \$44 which included tuition, room and board.



Martin Carothers, President of Board of Trustees, 1865-1893  
 Source: Annual catalog of Central Pennsylvania College, 1897-1898

The nation endured a depression in 1876. Enrollment at the Seminary decreased and the church conferences would not commit to financial support towards an endowment. By 1879 there were only 18 students; these were discouraging times for both students and faculty. At the end of the school year, June, 1879, *The Evangelical Messenger* could only report, "Union Seminary is still alive."

During the thirty-one years of the existence of the school as Union Seminary, the school had many ups and downs with financial stability being its chief problem. Enrollment fluctuated, no regular curriculum was in place, faculty came and went, and it had nine presidents. A dark shadow hovered over both the Union Seminary and the small town. Confidence on having a first-rate school had diminished.

Dr. Aaron Gobble came to New Berlin in 1879 and became the principal of the school. His leadership gave the seminary a shot in the arm. One of the first things he did was to institute a two-year theological course by which graduates would be recognized by the Central Pennsylvania Conference with a license to preach. The seminary had been equivalent to an elementary school and high school, but Gobble wanted the school to have collegiate status and be competitive with nearby Bucknell University and Susquehanna University. With much effort by Dr. Gobble, on June 19, 1887, the Court of Common Pleas of Union County finally issued a charter and the

school was named the Central Pennsylvania College. Change was exciting! A new periodical produced by the two literary societies, the *Central Pennsylvania Collegian*, observed in November 1887, “a new order of things” in New Berlin. “It may, therefore, be accepted as the opening of a new epoch in the institution’s history.” In the same issue, Gobble was described as being public spirited, “throws his whole soul into a project,” being genial, gentle, hard-working late into the night, and “is a model college president.” His leadership took the college into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Central Pennsylvania College remained on the same site as the Union Seminary and stayed there until 1902. The college then merged with Albright College which was located in Myerstown, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, and closed the New Berlin campus, ending forty-six years in Union County. After Central Pennsylvania College left New Berlin a second Union Seminary existed in New Berlin on the same site from 1904 until 1911. The school had no ties to the Evangelical Church, and it was nondenominational.

### **Suggested Further Reading**

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# **Massacre and Murder in the Susquehanna Valley: The Lee Massacre and Pine Creek Indian Murders**

**by**

**Kathy K. Swope**

Although difficult to imagine today, two hundred and fifty years ago the busy corridor along Route 15 in Union County was the edge of Pennsylvania's frontier. Local native inhabitants and settlers struggled to live peaceably, members of both groups committing atrocities in the process. One local incident began a chain of events that stretched over nearly a decade, and resulted in the recently elected President of the United States, George Washington, intervening under the newly passed Indian Trade & Intercourse Act of 1790.

During the summer of 1782, although peace talks had begun, the battle for American independence continued. In Northumberland County (Union County would not be formed until 1813), Fort Augusta (Sunbury), under the command of Colonel Samuel Hunter provided protection from attacks by Indian allies of the British Military.

## **John Lee**

Among the local militiamen who volunteered to protect the region, was Major John Lee who had settled in the area now known as Winfield, being among the first settlers following the Treaty of Stanwix (1768). He acquired about 300 acres in April of 1769 from the Penn Proprietors, naming it "Lee's Adventure." The stone house that still stands along the creek in Winfield is believed by many to be the site of Lee's homestead.

In addition to that acreage, records show that in September of 1770 John Lee hired James Wilson to survey a 38-acre tract of land. Wilson states, he "commenced at a white oak at a survey on which Ludwig Derr now lives." This places the 38 acres near Lewisburg, probably in the area of Bucknell University, and raises the question as to whether the white oak referenced is the famous "Witness Tree" that still stands near the entrance to the Lewisburg Cemetery.





The stone house in Winfield believed to be the site of the Lee Massacre

Lee was a respected citizen, as noted in the extant record of his public service. He was appointed Overseer of the Poor of Buffalo Township (which was comprised of all of what is now Union County) in 1773, the first election following the formation of Northumberland County. Also in 1773, Lee was issued a tavern license for the first tavern in what is now Winfield. It is important to recognize that the occupation of tavern keeper was considered a highly respected position in that time period. Taverns were key gathering centers of the community, providing access to the news as travelers would stop to rest their horses and share a meal along with the latest information from other towns gathered along the way.

The 1775 Buffalo Township tax assessment for Lee charges him for 20 acres of cleared land, one cow, ten sheep and one servant. This suggests he amassed some significant wealth, based on the fact that of the 246 heads of households in Northumberland County at the time, only twelve households had servants.

In August of 1776, John Lee along with Charles Gillespie were commissioned as “good and true men,” to produce powder and lead at Harris Landing (now known as Harrisburg) for the newly organized militia. The militia was organized for Northumberland County; Lee was chosen to serve as a 2nd Major of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, and was later promoted to 1st Major. On December 1, 1776, the Committee of Safety, which was rooted in the Sons of Liberty and organized the militia during the Revolution, offered a \$10.00 bounty for each man from Northumberland County who would march with the Associators (members of the Committee of Safety) to join Washington’s army. The volunteers selected Lee to serve as their Captain before leaving and were assigned to the Twelfth Regiment of the Pennsylvania Line, with Colonel James Potter’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.

James Potter (1729-1789) was a veteran of the French & Indian War, who led the construction of three stockade forts in Central Pennsylvania, including one near the present site of Woodward. He would go on to serve as the fourth Vice President of Pennsylvania (1780 & 1781). In 1782 he received a commission as a major general, and that same year lost the election for the Presidency of Pennsylvania (what we know today as Governor) to John Dickenson. Potter served as one of the representatives to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention and Potter County is named for him.

Following his service in the Revolution, Lee and the other members of the militia returned to protect the settlers on the frontier. He continued to be active in public affairs, and was assessed in 1781 for 150 acres in Buffalo Township and 600 acres in Augusta Township. Lee was tax assessor for Buffalo Township at the time of his death in 1782.

### **The Lee Massacre**

There are several accounts of the event that occurred about noon on August 12, 1782, known as the “Lee Massacre,” but the most contemporaneous is from a letter dated August 16, 1782, written by a “Gentleman at Sunbury” that appeared in the September 14, 1782 issue of a Philadelphia newspaper, the *Independent Gazetteer*. It was a warm Monday afternoon, a group of sixty to

seventy native inhabitants entered Major Lee's house while he was dining with his family, friends, and neighbors. According to the letter's account, the natives "took him and his family, and part of two other families to the number of thirteen" people from the house. The gentleman continues, "declaring if they would submit, they should not be hurt; they acquiesced and proceeded as prisoners, walking about a half mile, when the savages, without any hesitation, murdered seven of them, who were tomahawked and scalped in the most shocking manner." The letter ends the recounting of the event by telling us, "a party of volunteer inhabitants upon hearing of the affair, went to their relief...the scene and groans of the dead and dying people, were enough to have melted any heart of flesh."

The writer also provides us with a sense of context from the perspective of the settlers by further explaining, "Since the last spring, no less than sixty two of our people have been butchered by the Indians; and this hath been the practice for several years past." He references the numbers of settlers who have left the area, and the probable need to evacuate the area without some force to protect them. His pleas for protection include a request for financial assistance, and some dried meat and biscuit from the government to support an expedition to attack the native inhabitants, and he suggests a reduction in unnecessary officers and extravagant salaries as a source of funding. The gentleman ends his letter stating that, "the cries of the innocent call up to heaven for vengeance and redress against them." He adds as a final note that, "But we despair of any aid. Our country purposes to put in no fall grain, and many are now awaiting for places to remove." Clearly, settlers were leaving the area due to a fear for their safety, and the Lee massacre appears to have generated a new level of concern.

The seven who were murdered appear from records to be John Lee, his wife, and two young sons, an old gentleman named John Walker, and Mrs. Claudius Boatman and one of her daughters.

Other accounts documented years later offer some additional information and in some cases conflicting reports with regard to some of the details of the event. As with all things, time and oral history have obscured some of the facts, but historian John Meginness wrote in 1857 an account of the incident that told

of a young woman named Katy Stoner, (perhaps the daughter of Gustavus Stoner of Northumberland) who “escaped up the stairs and concealed herself behind the chimney, where she remained undiscovered” in the Lee household that fateful day.

Meginness also adds to the information from an account that was supplied by an A. H. McHenry, whose father, Henry McHenry, was a member of the expedition that followed the native inhabitants after they fled the scene of the Lee massacre. Mrs. Lee, her infant daughter Eliza, two young daughters, Sarah and Rebecca and an older son, Thomas were led away as captives. They were taken on the “Great Path” which roughly followed today’s Route 15 north to Allenwood and there bore left, roughly onto today’s Route 44, then over the Bald Eagle Mountain to Lock Haven.

One of Lee’s sons, Robert, was returning home just as the natives were leaving his home with his family captive. He fled to Fort Augusta (Sunbury) and raised the alarm. Colonel Hunter gathered a party of about 20 men and headed to the area of Lee’s homestead. They arrived to find those still living to be writhing in agony. Lee and Miss Boatman were still alive and were transported to Fort Augusta, where Lee later died. Miss Boatman, although scalped, survived, and lived to an old age.

Colonel Hunter and his party continued in pursuit of those taken captive, coming in sight of them above Lycoming Creek. Mrs. Lee was bitten on the ankle by a rattlesnake while going through the mountains and she was unable to walk any further. One of the native inhabitants, noting Colonel Hunter’s rapidly approaching party, shot her in the head and dashed the small child against a tree, before fleeing hastily with Thomas, Sarah and Rebecca still captive. The small child, believed to be Eliza, was shaken but not injured.

Hunter pursued until they reached Antes’ Gap, where Hunter decided it was unwise to continue due to the possibility of an ambush and the exhaustion of the members of the expedition. They returned to Fort Augusta, burying Mrs. Lee, and stopping to bury the dead at the scene of the massacre along the way.

Lee’s oldest son, Robert, spent several years trying to secure the release of his young brother from the native captivity, eventually succeeding in obtaining

his freedom. His two sisters, Rebecca and Sarah, escaped and returned home within a short time after their capture. In 1797, Robert Lee obtained releases from each of his siblings in order to deed the property in Winfield to Abraham Ire (Eyer).

Among the dead was an old gentleman named John Walker (1706-1782). In an assessment that is dated between 1778 and 1780 he is taxed in Buffalo Township, apparently in the neighborhood of John Lee. According to a 1937 letter written by a Walker descendant, Alice Walker who was born in 1855, John Walker lived in Harrisburg prior to the Revolution. She states that John Walker was a Dutchman who had several sons, three are remembered by history, Benjamin, William and Henry.

### **The Walker Brothers**

The Walker brothers, although young at the time of their father's death, grew up to be respected citizens of the Pine Creek, a few miles above what is now Jersey Shore, Lycoming County, but at that time was part of Northumberland County. On June 27, 1790, eight years after the Lee massacre, the Walker brothers were among a number of men at Stephenson's Tavern that was located near the mouth of Pine Creek. Two Seneca Indian chiefs who were "in the bash a hunting" stopped at the tavern, one was a young man and the other was middle aged. There are various versions of the story, but it is clear from all accounts, that the chiefs became intoxicated.

One version handed down in the Walker family states that one of the chiefs exhibited a stick with notches in it that represented lives of white men he had taken. One of the patrons noted a long notch, and inquired about it. The drunken chief explained that it was for Colonel Walker, a big officer we killed. He went on to provide details of the death of John Walker, entertaining spectators by lying on the ground making grimacing faces that mimicked Walker, gloating how he looked as they tomahawked and scalped him.

Benjamin, William and Henry Walker became incensed with rage at the performance, and set in place a plan to avenge their father's death. They sought the help of Samuel Doyle (1752-1817), a Revolutionary War veteran and

frontiersman. They pursued the two Senecas, and a desperate battle ensued with knives and tomahawks that ended in Pine Creek with the death of both Seneca chiefs, despite the younger man's pleas to be spared, since he had not participated in the death of John Walker. Reports say the bodies were sunk in the creek, but rising waters revealed the murders as the bodies washed onto a gravel bar in the creek.

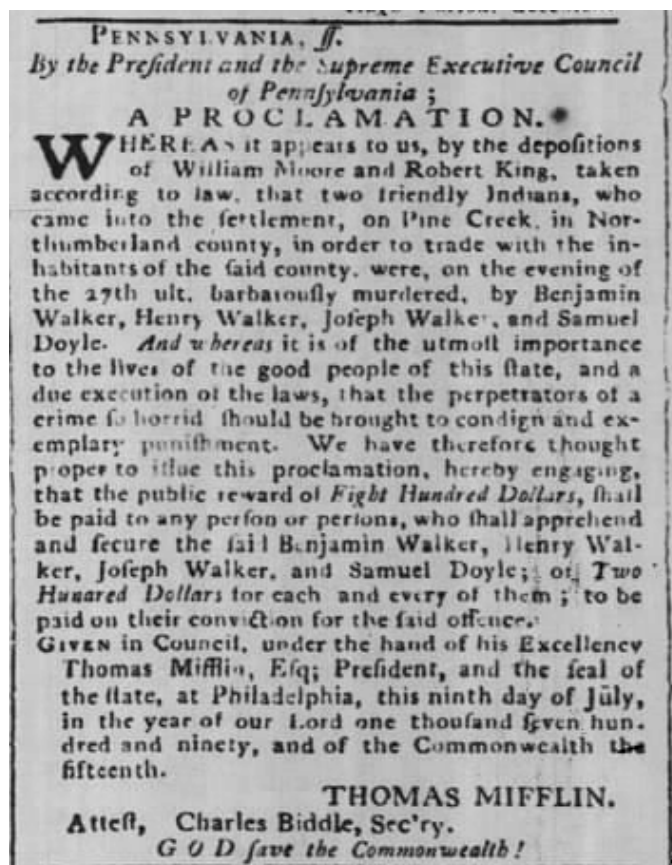
Following the discovery of the murder of the Seneca chiefs the native inhabitants threatened to avenge their deaths. As the native inhabitants became agitated the local settlers became concerned for their own safety. The Walkers were suspected to be the murderers and some of the locals felt their actions were justified, while others believed that such an atrocity committed during a time of peace would renew the violence that had finally subsided in recent years.

Days later a letter was sent by Robert Fleming, and signed by 26 settlers of Pine Creek, to both the Northumberland County Council and Lieutenant Bernard Hubley of Northumberland County requesting arms, ammunition and provisions. Hubley along with Colonel William Wilson and other members of the Northumberland Council sent letters to the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council regarding the incident, and expressing fear of retaliation from the Senecas. Several letters of correspondence were exchanged regarding how to proceed because the hostilities had been perpetrated against "friendly Indians," and any troops sent for protection might be considered to be a sign of additional hostility. It was clearly a political situation for Pennsylvania's government.

The Vice President of Pennsylvania, George Ross, responded on behalf of the Council, explaining that a proclamation had been issued by President Mifflin that included an \$800.00 reward for the apprehension of the perpetrators so they may be brought to justice. He provided copies of the proclamation along with a letter to the native inhabitants decrying the murders, and explaining the action being taken by Pennsylvania's government. The hope was that the actions of the state government would quell any retaliation by the Senecas.

A detailed description of each of the perpetrators was issued that would be the 1790 equivalent of a "wanted poster" for a criminal in the age since photography has existed.

*Benjamin Walker, about 28 years of age, about five feet nine inches high, straight and well made, full faced, a little freckled, large eyes, dark sandy hair, wears it tied, fond of company and strong liquor, very talkative, and very apt to mock the Germans speaking broken English, is left handed, deals in lands and brags much of his property, followed farming and boating.*



Thomas Mifflin, President of Pennsylvania's Proclamation offering an \$800.00 reward for the apprehension and conviction of Benjamin Walker, Henry Walker, Joseph Walker, and Samuel Doyle for the murder of the two Seneca Chiefs on Pine Creek.

*Henry Walker, about 25 years of age, five feet six inches high, straight made, thin visage, pockmarked and freckled, squints a little with both eyes, long, dark, sandy hair, brought up to boating and farming.*

*Joseph Walker, about 23 years of age, five feet ten inches high, slim made and very straight, full faced and much freckled, long dark sandy hair, very proud, a blacksmith by trade but don't follow it, fond of his gun, civil in company, was out with the Commissioners as a hunter and chain bearer when running the New York line.*

*Samuel Doyle, about 27 years of age, five feet seven inches high, smooth, full faced, short, fair hair, fond of company and strong liquor, was a soldier in Captain Robinson's Company of Pennsylvania Rangers, stout and well built, brought up to farming, apt to brag of his abilities in chopping or mauling rails, very peaceable when sober.*

John Robinson of Pine Creek sent a letter to Colonel Proctor on behalf of the Walker brothers and Samuel Doyle, seeking his influence with the Council with a request for a pardon that was submitted. Robinson explains their regret, as well as their reason for killing the native inhabitants being that one of them had vaunted the taking of twenty-three scalps, one of them being their father.

The Supreme Executive Council was notified on September 23, 1790, that Samuel Doyle had been apprehended and was in the Lancaster jail. Doyle was subsequently tried and acquitted in Sunbury. The Walker brothers' oral family history says they hid in a cellar for nine days, and then fled during a noisy and violent storm, traveling deep into the mountains of Western Pennsylvania. In Pittsburgh, where the three rivers come together, they decided it was best to separate and head in different directions.

In Geneseo, a key settlement of the Seneca tribe, the actions of Pennsylvania's Executive Council did little to satisfy their anger at the offensive act of war. The Senecas sent a message to the Council demanding that the Governor come to the "Painted Post" (near modern day Tioga, Pennsylvania) and meet with the tribe of the deceased to "bury the hatchet, and put it out of memory as it is yet sticking in our head." In addition, they demanded the return of "the property of the murdered, and to bring the property of the murderers." President Thomas Mifflin declined to make the trip personally, but commissioned Colonel William Wilson to act as his representative to try to re-establish relations with the Senecas.

### **Washington's Seneca Initiative**

The matter came to the attention of the new President of the United States, George Washington, in early September, while he was in Philadelphia.



Noting that Congress had just passed the federal Indian Trade and Intercourse Act on August 22, 1790, Washington took control of the situation, because under the new act, it was not a state matter, but rather the federal government's duty to regulate Indian affairs.

The Constitution was not even a year and half old, and the federal government had not yet organized or staffed itself fully. Washington supported the plan that was put in motion by the government of Pennsylvania, but in addition saw the meeting as an opportunity to communicate the details of the new Indian Trade and Intercourse Act with the Senecas. Under the act, he took control from Pennsylvania on behalf of the federal government, and appointed an individual to represent the United States.

Washington chose Timothy Pickering, who had served as his Quartermaster General of the Continental Army during the Revolution. Pickering was living in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, at the time and was seeking a position with the federal government. In a meeting between the two men, Washington asked Pickering to serve as his representative to meet with the Seneca chiefs. He directed Pickering to "express the fullest displeasure at the murders committed at Pine Creek," to explain the measures that have been taken, and "to communicate the act of Congress respecting the trade and intercourse with the Indian Tribes." He added that he also wanted Pickering to declare to them the friendly disposition of the federal government towards them, and to extend the government's protection and support to them. Washington was clear in that he wanted the meeting to be a small event with only a handful of witnesses to the offering of condolences and presents to the families of the murdered chiefs.

In November of 1790, following the logistics of moving supplies to accommodate the conference that had swelled to approximately 220 Seneca men, women and children in Tioga, a meeting was convened with chiefs Big Tree, Little Beard, Farmer's Brother, and Red Jacket in attendance. It was Red Jacket who insisted that wampum belts be presented to the families of the deceased, not only presents. Pickering had not brought wampum belts with him, and Red Jacket agreed to sell him the wampum belts.

The Tioga conference was a success and resulted in establishing good relations between the United States and the Geneseo Senecas. However, Pickering would later write to Washington in his report on the Tioga conference the following statement, “I am informed that the only one of the murderers of the Indians at Pine Creek who was apprehended has had his trial...and been acquitted against the clearest evidence and the most pointed application of it by the Chief Justice.” Pickering continues, “It is in the highest degree mortifying to find that the bulk of the frontier inhabitants consider the killing of Indians in time of peace to be no crime and that their murderers are faultless, provided they escape detection.” He complains of giving his word to the Senecas that the murderers would be brought to justice in the same manner as if they had murdered a white man.

### **The Aftermath**

Benjamin ended up in Dearborn County, Indiana, and used his mother’s maiden name, Wilson. His wife and children discretely joined him several years later. Henry traveled to New York, dying in Bath, and Joseph went to Butler County, Ohio. A Walker descendant, Dave Miller, claims a pardon was issued years later, and that he possesses a copy.

There is a gravestone on the side of the southbound lane of Route 15 in Winfield that bears Major John Lee’s name. That stone does not mark the grave of John Lee. In 1938, Pennsylvania State Representative, Charles R. Reagan along with C. M. Steese of the Union County Historical Society applied to the War Department for a headstone for the unmarked grave of Lee. Then in August of 1939 a celebration was held in Winfield to set the marker and remember Major John Lee and the incident that occurred in 1782. The program included an invocation, a speech by the Secretary of the Northumberland County Historical Society, a speech by the Honorable Charles R. Reagan, and another by the President of the Union County Historical Society and the unveiling of the marker, a military salute by the Troop “C” firing squad, and closed with a benediction. The marker reads, JOHN LEE MAJOR 1BATTALION PA MILITIA REVOLUTIONARY WAR AUGUST 12, 1782



John Lee's roadside marker at Winfield

The Lee Massacre and the Pine Creek Indian murders were just one sequence of incidents that highlight the atrocities that were committed by both the native inhabitants and the settlers. It also reflects the tensions and the long harbored feelings of anger and resentment that were infused in the settlement of Pennsylvania's frontier and the founding of our nation.

✧ **ACCOUNTS** ✧

## **The Leroy Incident and Observations**

**by**

**Kim Adair Mattern**

### **Colonial Powers Confront The Iroquois Confederacy**

In the 1600s, as the English started to move in on the French in North America, the French made treaties with the Iroquois. The French sent Jesuits and the English sent missionaries to convert the Iroquois to Christianity, further drawing these Natives away from the old customs. All of this was causing new stresses to the Iroquois Confederacy; at that time a group of five tribes together referred to as the Iroquois, sited primarily in what is now New York State.

Further complicating the situation, in the 1640s the Iroquois started getting guns from some of the Dutch traders. The Dutch authorities discouraged this type of trade and went as far as to make it a capital offence to give guns to the Natives.

The Iroquois were becoming a force to be friendly with by all who were trading goods with them. The Iroquois were trying to stay neutral. Iroquois relations with the French and with the Natives in alliance with the French caused a condition of alternating peace and war as both the French and the Iroquois sought to control the fur trade with the western Natives.

In 1666 the French were at war with the Mohawk (one of the Iroquois tribes) and even invaded, beginning the Jesuit missionary endeavor to all of the five nations. Even with the peace and the missionaries' efforts, the French were unable to control the fur trade to the most Western Native tribes, as the English were making better offers of trade to the Iroquois which the Iroquois managed between the English and Native groups. All the while the Iroquois were trying to stay neutral and stay out of the political bickering and the wars between the French and English.

In the later part of the seventeenth century the French and Indian war was raging. Some of the Iroquois sought refuge from the English and started increasing their alliances with Britain's King William. More raids were made into the Iroquois territory in 1690 and 1696. The year 1697 saw the end of the king's war and the Iroquois could no longer depend on the English to protect them from the French. In 1701 they sought treaties and peace with both sides, and promised to stay neutral in any war between the French and English.

Many land treaties had been made with the French, English and the colonies. And the land west of the Susquehanna River was still in the sole possession of the Iroquois Confederacy. By this time the colonials were really entering the picture and the fierce battles of the American Revolution were just on the horizon. By the mid 1700's the colonies were also vying to make peace and alliances with the now Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. The frontier settlers were also putting great stress on the Iroquois.

### **Braddock's Campaign**

On July 6, 1754 the Albany purchase treaty was signed, the corner of which was one mile north of the mouth of the Karondinhah (Penn's Creek). In 1755 General Edward Braddock's raids into the Western frontier were just beginning. Braddock was, in my opinion, an "Indian Fighter" in that he went to great lengths to kill as many Natives as he and his army could. The Leroy story started with General Braddock's entrance.

History tells us that General Braddock was promoted to Major General in 1754, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's forces in North America. He was a strictly "by the book" tactical fighter. He regarded anyone but the King's Regulars or "Redcoats" with disdain. He was arrogant and ill-tempered, and a stern disciplinarian.

General Braddock's personal objective was to capture Fort Duquesne (near what is now Pittsburgh), which was garrisoned by 600 Canadian Militia and Regulars, as well as about 800 natives, some of which were led by Chief Pontiac.

Braddock's forces included 1400 British regulars and 450 Virginian

Provincials, whose task was to hack a road (more like a path) from Fort Cumberland, Virginia to Fort Duquesne over the Allegheny Mountains.

This march began on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1755. Through the entire march Braddock had flankers on both sides of the column that stretched out for four miles. It was a very slow pace. At a place called Little Meadows Braddock split his forces leaving the sick, and the heavy wagons behind. With him were 1200 of his best troops. It took until July 7<sup>th</sup> to get to within 8 miles of Fort Duquesne. Avoiding ambush they crossed the Monongahela River. Braddock must have had great satisfaction and confidence as he viewed his column.

On the other side of this conflict was Captain Hyacinth de Beaujeu. His orders were to intercept Braddock before he could close in on the Fort. Captain de Beaujeu had persuaded some 650 hesitant Natives to join his intercept. (Probably more than half of these deserted before a single shot was fired.) De Beaujeu took the fight to Braddock and the battle was joined some ten miles south of the fort.

Braddock was incensed by the ineffectiveness of his troops. The enemy column had split in two and vanished into the forest on both sides of the English. Then from behind trees, stumps, boles, and hiding places the French and Natives poured terrific firepower into the scarlet-coated English regulars who maintained their traditional solid red column, some 2000 yards long. They were being cut to shreds by the raking fire with literally no one to aim at.

The Regulars fired blindly in the direction of muzzle flashes and puffs of gun smoke that seemed to come from every direction. The cannons were brought up but made no impact on the invisible, scattered enemy. The Virginians led by Captain Thomas Waggener left the columns and proceeded to the forest, fighting in the style of the enemy. Only they gave as much as they took in musket fire.

When some of the redcoats dared to imitate the French and Native style of warfare, they were driven back into the ranks by Braddock and his officers "by the backs of their swords" as cowards. "Stand and fight" were the orders. "We would fight if we could see someone to fight with." The column broke up after only a ten-minute fight; the bloody Regulars retreated in a disorderly fashion, only to run into the infantrymen of the main force. Confusion turned into panic;

infantry, cavalry, artillerymen all turned to run. All the while terror spread among the rest of the forces, who joined the mad dash to the rear as the enemy continued their incessant fire on the retreating English. There is no doubt that Braddock fought bravely. He had four horses shot from beneath him. He was shot in the arm and the chest.

Lieutenant Colonel George Washington, who himself had two horses shot from under him and his cloths torn by four musket balls, was not even scratched. Washington more or less took charge as Braddock fell from his saddle for the last time, coughing blood from his chest wound. Washington tried to salvage an orderly retreat, but this was by now a demoralizing headlong rout. All the while enemy fire continued unabated from the forest. Washington couldn't even rally the men after they had put the Monongahela between them and most of the enemy. Braddock's shattered command did not stop retreating for some 50 miles when they re-entered the camp at the Meadows. Meanwhile Washington evacuated Braddock from the battlefield by litter, and then transferred him to a wagon.

At the Meadows, four days later, Braddock died. He was still muttering to his aide, "who would have thought it possible? We shall better know how to deal with them another time." Sadly he also died cursing his Redcoat Regulars and praising the once despised Virginian Provincial "Blues."

With his defeat by the French and the anger held by some tribes for the atrocities done to them by Braddock, and at French encouragement, some of the Natives re-occupied the old hunting ground west of the Susquehanna. In seeking retribution for the deeds of Braddock's army, these Natives attacked any whites that had settled on what they probably thought was still their land. In giving them the benefit of the doubt, it is quite probable those and perhaps other Natives had not heard of the Albany Purchase treaty. Or they didn't know where the borderline was. Some didn't recognize the legitimacy of the treaty.

As they entered the area we now call Union County, one of these bands found a settler named Jean Jacques Leroy squatting on their land. This man was henceforth killed. His home was burned with his body lying half inside the cabin door. The rest of the story is now evident.

## **The Leroy Massacre**

Most of this story is from the eyewitness of the Leroy and Leininger children, or oral history. There are many references to this case. All have similarities, though there are some discrepancies. I personally have some doubts on some issues. Some of the writings are misleading or incorrectly referenced, and add to the confusion. It will be up to the readers to draw their own conclusion. I will try to set the events as accurately as I can.

An Amish man named Jean Jacques Leroy (his Swiss name), also called John Jacob King (in English), came from Canton Berne, Switzerland in 1752. With him came his wife, his son John James (some reference him as John Jacob) and daughter Anne Marie. Because of fear of the French, he used his Swiss name Leroy. He and his family settled along Lick Run (now known as Sweitzer's Run) in what is now known as Union County, Limestone Township. There seems to be very little reference to the wife.

According to documents the Leroy family were the first to settle in Buffalo Valley. Here they lived a meager existence clearing land, growing grain, and raising a few head of cattle. By 1755 some other homesteaders had settled the area also, the nearest about a half-mile to the east, the Sebastian Leininger family. This family of five lived a similar life style to the Leroy's.

On the morning of October the 16<sup>th</sup> 1755, while "the hired man was out to fetch the cows. He heard the Indians shooting six times." It was referenced that "while these Indians were undoubtedly incited by the French and encouraged by Braddock's defeat, they at the same time coveted this whole valley as a favorite hunting and fishing country. Because of these reasons they were resolved to drive out all the white settlers."

This band of Natives, either Allegheny, Delaware, or a mixture of braves from different clans, had swept in upon the first squatters they found as the Natives ventured east. Ironically Leroy, being the first inhabitant of this area, was also the first they encountered and killed on this rampage.

Eight of them came to the house and killed Leroy with tomahawks. John fought desperately but was overcome by the Natives. John, Marie and a little girl



who was staying with the family were taken captive. Thereupon the Natives plundered the homestead and set it on fire. Into the fire they laid the body of Leroy, with his feet inside the cabin door. His body half consumed, the upper torso remained with two Tomahawks imbedded in his skull.

After all was done the Natives started a campfire nearby. As they sat there the neighbor, Bastian, rode up on horseback. He had heard the shooting, seen the smoke, and came to see what was going on. He was immediately shot down and scalped.

At this point two braves proceeded to the neighbors Leininger. There they demanded rum. There was no rum to be given. They demanded tobacco, and there filled a pipe and smoked, then announced, "We are Allegheny Indians and your enemies. You must die." They then shot the father and tomahawked the son and captured Barbara and Regina Leininger. Mrs. Leininger was away at a mill and was spared death or capture.

As the story goes on, these natives went on to kill, plunder and capture east of the Leroy homestead. The count of the captives is, one man Peter Lick and his two sons, one woman Hanna Breylinger (wife of Jacob Breylinger) and her two children, Anna Marie and Jacob (John) Leroy, Barbara and Rachel (Regina) Leininger. A total of ten.

### **Interpretation**

At this juncture I will continue with some of my own thoughts. More theory yes, but with good reasoning.

It is referenced that they had killed Leroy with tomahawks. In *The Story of Snyder County* it says he was killed by the spring near his home. Assuming that this is true, they must have dragged his body to the cabin. If the hired hand heard six shots fired, and they still had to kill him with hatchets, then they must have been very poor marksmen. I believe that they had shot Leroy by the spring, and perhaps tomahawked him as well, then carried his body to the cabin, laid him in the doorway and then set the cabin on fire. I doubt that they would have tried to put him into the cabin after it was set on fire, as it seems to read. At some

point they stuck the tomahawks in his head. I assume they did this as a warning to others and to let others know that Indians did this deed.

It says a little girl was staying with the Leroy family, yet there is no other mention of this girl, except the name Marian Wheeler as a captive. I assume the little girl was Marian. However *Union County Heritage*, vol. 15, p.7, names her as Villars, perhaps a misspelling of the name Wheeler, or the other way around.

According to the Snyder County version the prisoner count was ten - one man, five girls, one woman and three boys. John B. Deans wrote for the *Union County Heritage* that the captives were Marie and young Jacob Leroy, Marian Wheeler, Barbara and Regina Leininger, Hanna Breylinger and her two children, and Peter Lick and his sons John and William. A count of eleven.

As for the "hired hand," all the stories agree that he was there and heard the shots, however that is all that's mentioned about him. He had to have told others of the shots or it wouldn't have held true through all the renditions. Now I suggest that he must have saved his own skin and run away from the site. Not that that was a bad thing to do; going back to help would have been very brave, but might have been his last act.

I wondered how he knew that it was Indians who fired the six shots and not perhaps Jean or John Leroy. I pondered this awhile and realized he must have gone back, and gotten close enough to see what was happening, thereby realizing that these were Natives shooting, and he too would be killed if he were caught. I can only imagine the terror and great pain, fear, and agony this man must have had in witnessing all that was happening to his friends.

It is written that a neighbor, Bastian, was shot and scalped at the Leroy home. *Union County Heritage* vol. 15, p.6 lists him as Bostian. I find no other reference to any neighbors with that name. Who he is and where he was from is a mystery.

While the Leroy Massacre was only the beginning of many conflicts to occur in Pennsylvania between the Native population and the settlers, it would become harder for the Natives to live in this area from this point on. The Penn's Creek Massacres were to incite the settlers and the militias that were forming,

leading to more and more incidents that left the Natives with nowhere to go. Most departed to New York, some went south, others went to the West.

Eventually all the Natives were killed or driven out of Pennsylvania. All of their land was taken despite the many treaties and land grants. Even today, they are no longer a part of this Commonwealth. A very proud and peaceful people was destroyed by greed, bigotry, and our inability to live in peace with our Red Brother. Their bones and their stone tools are all that remain. Their land has been transformed from what it once was. We have yet to give anything back to the people who lived here in Harmony and Peace with all.

The Susquehannock were beaten by the Iroquois and assimilated into the Iroquois Confederacy. These people were spread far and wide. Very few Natives today can trace their ancestry back to the Susquehannock. The Delaware and the Lenape today are different tribes. Because of differences they had split into the Western and Eastern Delaware. The Western clans crossed over the Allegheny Mountains.

This explains the two different names listed in the Leroy incident. The Delaware became the Alleganys, who eventually ended up in Oklahoma living on a reservation that is not theirs. I feel very sorry for the Delaware who lived in much of eastern Pennsylvania, inhabiting a vast territory - today they have not a single acre of soil in Pennsylvania to call their home.

All of the Native Americans that lived, hunted or traveled through our beautiful region were killed, driven out or died from European diseases such as small pox, German measles, even the common cold. As said not a single acre of land has ever been set aside in this Commonwealth for Native People to call home. Nothing is left of any of them except their bones, tools, and place names. There are native people living in Pennsylvania today, although few and from many different tribes - perhaps better not to say they are all gone. I personally think that this is an injustice. Our founding father William Penn created this Commonwealth so that all people of all races and religions could live together, side by side, in peace with one another.

## Sources

This is a substantially shortened version of a longer essay. Readers are welcome to contact me at [KMattern@unionco.org](mailto:KMattern@unionco.org) for the longer version.

My intent has been to give a somewhat different view of the events that led up to what are historically called the “Penn’s Creek Massacres.” Some of the information was pulled from *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* by Barbara Greymont, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York 13210; and *North American Indian Wars* by Richard H Dillon, Fact on File, 460 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y.10016.

The Leroy Massacre information is from many sources:

1. Union County PA. p. 9
2. *Annals of Buffalo Valley*. p.12 and p.74
3. John B. Deans, *Story of Snyder County* p. 225 on p. 226 referred to as John James, Union Co. *Heritage* vol.5 p. 66 .
4. *Story of Snyder County* p. 225
5. Union County Pa. p.193
6. *Union Co. Heritage* Vol.15 p. 6
7. Union County Pa. p. 192
8. Union Co. *Heritage* Vol. 15 p 6
9. *Story of Snyder County* p. 225
10. *Juniata and Susquehanna Valleys in Pennsylvania* p. 60
11. *Union Co. Heritage* Vol. 5 p. 67
12. *Juniata and Susquehanna Valleys in Pennsylvania* p .61
13. *Juniata and Susquehanna Valleys in Pennsylvania* p. 61
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15. *Juniata and Susquehanna Valleys in Pennsylvania* p. 61
16. *Story of Snyder County* p. 225

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**Mifflinburg Log House Restoration,  
A labor of love  
By  
Carol Bohn**

The hewed log house on the corner of Market and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets was built on Lot #1 of Elias Youngman's town layout of 1792. Two years after the lots were staked out Christian Brown bought this lot from Elias and Catherine Youngman. The tax records of 1802 list the structure as an "unlined house." After changing hands approximately 25 times, it was purchased in 1982 by my husband, Jim, and me. While the project was a joint effort, Jim basically paid the bills and I did the "grunt" work completely gutting the duplex rental, etc. until it was "logs and air."



Front façade, showing the asymmetry of the window placement

Additions were added to the north and west sides of the house. These additions were carefully designed to replicate the original structure keeping the wall thickness and the size of windows the same. Most of the plumbing was kept in the new additions and low voltage electricity was installed behind

the moldings of the doorways. This was done because modern electrical boxes could not be put in beaded board walls measuring only 1 ¼" thick.

An unusual aspect of the house is the asymmetric placement of the front door. A common feature in this type of log structure is the alignment of the front door with the back door. However, in *this* house the front door is not centered in the façade. Why? There is no known explanation. In keeping with the Georgian/Federal style, the window placement in the front of this house has two windows on each side of the door on ground level, and windows on the second floor align with the ground floor windows on each side, but the center window does not align with the offset front door.



View from the side. The center and left-hand structures are later additions to the original structure.

Six over six window panes are found in the window frames throughout the house, except for the front windows on the ground floor which are 12 panes over 6. These windows may have been elongated at a later date. All window panes throughout the house, including the additions, are old wavy glass taken out of frames of early houses and farm outbuildings. I became an expert at replacing windows in old chicken coops!

Some of the hewed logs (rounded logs that were flattened by an axe on all sides) spanned the entire length of the front of the house as well as the sides and were dovetailed on the corners. The house appears to be the larger type of two log structures built in the area in this time frame: a larger having a

central staircase and a smaller “central chimney continental log house.” ( “central log house” – is a term used to describe a log structure where the fireplace is located close to the center of the building rather than in a corner. Here, it serves as the kitchen and also to heat the house. )

As was common in town log homes, the logs were covered with overlapping clapboards on the exterior as soon as possible. It is my understanding that initially the log frame of the house was built and allowed to settle for a couple of years. Then the windows and doors were cut out from the logs. Next, flooring was then nailed in place on top of the support beams. Lastly beaded board walls were erected to form the various rooms. A substantial tax increase in 1817 from the earlier 1802 records indicates the house was probably finished about this time, including siding on the exterior.



Original hewn logs, left visible here.

The original owner, Christian Brown, was a potter. There is evidence that his shop was in the west section of the house. During renovation, many shards of redware pottery were unearthed. Upon his death in 1826, the house was sold, and survived approximately 25 owners including several Gutelius family members. Sometime in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was converted into a duplex rental property. Many changes were made including an additional staircase, arched doorways and a rear addition to accommodate bathrooms and kitchens. We had the opportunity to purchase the structure in 1982. As avid antique collectors, we were looking for a home built prior to 1850 to accommodate the period antiques we had collected.



“Jim paid the bills and I did the physical work.” It took four years before it was livable. I spent two years gutting it, and carpenters spent over two years completing the additions. I hoped the house would “speak to me”, so I took on the task of gutting it. Any details I may unearth would tell me what was originally there. Old wallboard, lath and plaster, were removed along with the chinking (filler between the logs) until it became “logs and air.” In the process original baseboard was discovered which was black with red dots (in the restoration I omitted the red dots). A large mouse hole along the baseboard in the downstairs hallway was left intact and now sports a tin mouse cookie cutter heading home complete with a free-standing American flag!



“Wavy” glass in downstairs windows.

At some point, narrow strips of fabric, 2” wide, were nailed over the tongue and groove beaded board walls to accommodate “modern” 1890s wallpaper. Thousands of tacks were removed with a kitchen knife, before the holes were tediously filled and then painted over. It was a labor of love, devotion and patience. One wall was left with tack holes to document this feature.

Normally the upstairs moldings around doors and windows in this type of country home were very plain. But in this house they were more elaborate, determining the form and style to be reconstructed downstairs. The corners

of the upstairs window moldings were deteriorated due to the many nail holes from various curtain rods, all which were painstakingly remolded by hand with wood filler and sawdust.

Fortunately the original doors with raised panels on both sides were recycled and used on closet doors upstairs when the house was renovated...perhaps in the 1920s. We knew these “fancier” doors were used



Paneled doors from downstairs were restored to their positions and given painted graining



Wall boards beaded at the edges

downstairs on doorways into the various rooms because the doors on the upstairs rooms had raised panels on only one side.

Heat guns, scrapers and paint remover became the menu of the day. All interior and exterior paint was removed, and three hours were devoted to every spindle of the winding staircase. Patience and endurance!

The floors are all unfinished---no stain, no polyurethane---simply a natural patina (a gloss or sheen on wood produced by age and polishing). Most of the original flooring was yellow pine and replacement was very costly and hard to find. Consequently, the flooring in the additions is white pine and poplar which was easier to obtain and less costly. This flooring, which was removed from old houses, was re-planed to a standard thickness and the tongue and groove feature was cut off. If the replacement boards had originally been painted, the paint was removed after they were re-laid, a laborious, time-consuming task. Although tongue and groove flooring was the original mode of construction, modern costs prohibited this type of

replication and the floors in the additions were butted together. And, no, we don't get splinters when walking barefoot....it is as though these old boards had passed through a planer many times.



Example of original, unfinished floors

A problem developed with the placement of our antique grandfather clock. The ceilings in the old house, as well as the 8-foot ceilings in the additions, were too low to accommodate our 8' 3" clock. Instead of cutting off the feet or the finials, we raised the ceiling in one small section of the beamed keeping room! (A keeping room typically is an area adjacent to the kitchen. Keeping rooms date back to Colonial times when families would sleep in that area when the rest of the house was cold. Since the area could be heated by the kitchen stove it often provided the only heated place in the house.) It solved the problem and no one ever notices the difference in ceiling heights.

The kitchen in the new section resembles an old tavern with large slated panels that can be raised or lowered to produce the tavern effect. The counter tops are old walnut boards sealed with olive oil and showing the patina of years of use. All modern appliances are disguised. The dishwasher, trash compactor, and refrigerator are covered with wood to match the painted cabinets. There are no cabinets above the counter tops but rather shelves to

display redware, tin and pottery. The cabinetry below the counter top consists of many storage drawers rather than the conventional door and shelving. A curtain on an iron rod swings away to reveal the oven; another



Contemporary kitchen appliances are hidden by sliding covers

swings away to access the microwave. A 2" raised walnut box slides apart to reveal the Jenn-air grill and stove top. A large walk-in pantry with an upright freezer is adjacent to the kitchen area. The keeping room with a walk-in fireplace and bake oven adjoins one side of the kitchen.

A small room in the southwest corner of the old section was designed to serve as a country pantry. It is the only room that has exposed logs and chinking. They can easily be seen through a coat of thin white paint done to resemble the old technique of white washing (combination of lime and water) the walls.

The Bohn home today has 5200 livable square feet. The original log part has a formal living room with a corner fireplace that abuts to a corresponding corner fireplace in the library. This was an instance where the house spoke to me. Both fireplaces were gone and only when removing the wallboard, which covered beaded board walls and ceiling, did I discover



A new corner fireplace replaces an absent original

indications of corner fireplaces (there were no beaded boards, simply gaps which had been covered with wallboard). An exciting discovery! The remaining rooms in the log structure include a formal dining room, country pantry, and a small powder room under the stairway.



Cooking fireplace and bread oven in the keeping room

The house would make a fabulous bed and breakfast or easily function for a home-based business. It is unique, and we hope someone will purchase it one day and enjoy it as much as we have.

Finally, I'd like to express gratitude to my good friend, Joannah Skucek, for her endeavors in helping with the composition of this article and for facilitating the photographs. Thank you!

