

(Note: to read, click on title or page number of your chosen article.)

ACCOUNTS

Journal of the Union County Historical Society Union County, Pennsylvania

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Table of Contents	1
In this issue	2
Seeking history	3
Growing Up in Vicksburg, 1938-1954 by Carl R. Catherman	4
Burrey's Store in Vicksburg by Anna K. (Burrey) Walter	19
Guided by the "Bare Spot:" Trees and the Logging Industry of Union County by Deborah Wehr	23
The Lewisburg Cemetery Chapel: A Community Treasure by Nancy M. Neuman	35
Lewisburg's Nineteenth Century Newspapers by Richard Sauers	46
About this issue's authors	71
Writing for ACCOUNTS	
Guidelines	
Advice to Contributors	
Index to Vol. 6, No. 1	73

Five-Year Cumulative Index, Volumes 1-5, 2011-2015 by Tom Greaves, Compiler	78

Page 2 and Page 3 are below

On Line: www.unioncountyhistoricalsociety.org

In This Issue:

With this issue ACCOUNTS of Union County History begins its 6th year recording historical information and ideas about our local history. Herein you will find a pleasurable assortment of topics, testimonies, and ideas, shared by your Union County neighbors.

In his essay, “Growing up in Vicksburg,” **Carl Catherman** gives us his personal account of life and youth in one of our county’s myriad small communities connecting people with local lands and life. As the essay shows, these smaller towns play a powerful role in molding a great many of us. You will also see how life in the small community, by the 1950s, had growing linkages to the goods and entertainments provided in nearby larger towns.

Anna Burrey Walter, in “Burrey’s Store in Vicksburg,” describes a family-run, store that is a hub of local exchange, supply, and social relationships in a small community. Such stores, together with local churches, anchor the very existence of local life. As a daughter of the owner-operator family, she recounts how the store was founded, how it grew, who its customers were, what was stocked, how the store was arranged, and the winds of economic change in the Valley that eventually assailed the store’s viability.

Deborah Wehr shares with us her research on the rise and abrupt decline of Buffalo Valley logging, an era of “wood hicks,” rafts and arks, narrow-gauge railroads, sawmills, lumber and mine prop sales. This pervasive industry transformed much of Union County’s economy, while literally supporting the regional coal industry and the construction needs of growing eastern cities, while permanently denuding our uplands of vast old-growth forests.

Nancy Newman, president of the Lewisburg Cemetery Association, recounts the history of the iconic, Gothic-inspired, stone chapel from its construction in 1898 (fifty years after the establishment of the cemetery), to the present day. Along the way she fills in details of the founding and growth of the Lewisburg cemetery, our county’s largest, and the construction and use of its other buildings and installations.

Richard Sauers distills the essentials of his intensive study of the more than 30 newspapers that have been published in Lewisburg the first appeared in 1824. Many were new, often short-lived papers, while others were descended from previously published papers, renamed and re-oriented. Sauers introduces us to their publishers, writers, and editors, and shows how the content and role of Lewisburg’s earlier newspapers contrasts with what we read in newspapers today.

Five years of ACCOUNTS have been completed, an appropriate point for editor **Tom Greaves** to assemble a comprehensive index of those issues. The index lists and locates the names of every person associated with our county who has been mentioned in the pages of ACCOUNTS, plus the localities, businesses, institutions, activities, and topics that featured in their lives. The cumulative index will serve and assist the reader, the researcher, the student, and all who are historically curious as they mine the rich content of ACCOUNTS.

Be an ACCOUNTS Author!

I invite you to write a piece for a forthcoming issue of ACCOUNTS. All that's required is a story to tell, illuminating some corner of Union County history. You don't need to know all the history about the subject, just share what you already know. I can work with you to move it from an idea to an essay, and together we can add what you know to the historical record of Union County and its people. Got a relative or neighbor who also has a story? Let me know and I'll extend an invitation.

There is still space in the next issue. Don't confine your topics to the following, but here are some topics to get you thinking:

1. A bridge, a road, a building, or a monument's story
2. Growing up in a long-gone way of life
3. Enoch Miller, mid-county builder and architect
4. The generations of a family long associated with our county
5. The logging railroad at White Deer
6. Billmeyer's sawmill and boat-building business on Buffalo Creek
7. History of "Fiddler's Tract" property on Rt. 192
8. Hotel Shikellamy, on Blue Hill
9. Troutman's Pharmacy, Lewisburg
10. A local foundry or commercial furnace
11. The general goods store at the heart of any one of Union County's small communities
12. A event, a festival, a happening of the past we need to remember

Do let me hear from you!

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Growing Up in Vicksburg, 1938-1954

By

Carl R. Catherman

Harold T. Catherman and Sula S. Seebold were married on June 2, 1937 in Mifflinburg. They set up housekeeping in the front half of the house at 6529 Old Turnpike Road in Vicksburg and lived in the same house their entire lives. They had two children. I was born on August 4, 1938 at Geisinger Hospital and my sister Pat was born in 1943. After my paternal grandfather died in 1945 my father's mother came to live with us. After my maternal grandmother died in 1949 my father's mother went to live with her daughter and my mother's father moved into our home.

Going back to the 1700s my father's ancestry was roughly 60% of German extraction but every one of my mother's ancestors was German. My maternal grandparents routinely conversed in both English and Pennsylvania Dutch. During the period when my maternal grandfather was living with us he would often sit outside in nice weather and talk with neighbors. I was always amazed at their ability to switch from one language to another, often right in the middle of a sentence. Some of my mother's people were superstitious, believing in hexes (spells) and the healing powers of *braucherei* (powwow). I recall a visit to one of my maternal grandmother's relatives when part of the conversation revolved around the fact that their cows were not producing milk. They were thoroughly convinced that the cows had been "hexed" by one of their neighbors.

Since Vicksburg is unincorporated with no defined boundaries I define it as lying between the two signs along Route 45 at the east and west ends of the village announcing its presence and extending roughly one tenth of a mile to the north and south of the highway. At the time of my birth there were thirteen houses, a church, a general store and a gas station on the north side of the highway and eleven houses, one of them connected to a store with a small coal yard, on the south side. One house on the south side was the

former Great Western Hotel, most of which served as an antique store operated by the occupants. In addition, there was one farmhouse set back from the highway on the north side and three on the south, one of them



Great Western Hotel, Vicksburg

UCHS collection

along Beaver Run Road and finally, there were three houses and a feed mill on the north side of Beaver Run Road. The railroad station was situated on the south side of the tracks just east of Beaver Run Road and there was a grain storage building on the south side of the tracks on Cook Lane. Newton Benner was the postmaster and the post office was in his house at 6422 Old Turnpike Road. According to census records the population of Vicksburg in 1940 was 94.

Every one of those 94 souls was white and Protestant. Until I was 12 years old I had seen only one black person. He was one of the homeless men (we called them "hoboes") who would occasionally pass through the village and stop at our house for something to eat and drink. Good Christian woman that she was, my mother never turned anybody away.

The house into which my parents moved after their marriage was owned by Solomon Benner's widow, Mary. It had been built about 1860 by John Benner, Solomon Benner's father. When my parents moved in there was no indoor plumbing. To obtain water for drinking or cooking they had to knock

on the door separating the front rooms from the back and use the hand pump at the sink in Mrs. Benner's kitchen. Water for bathing had to be pumped from a cistern that collected rain water that then had to be heated on the kitchen stove. When my sister and I were young we bathed in a large galvanized tub. There was a workshop and wood shed behind the house and behind that a privy. My parent's purchased the house after Mrs. Benner's death in 1942 and at about the same time my father was appointed postmaster. The post office boxes and attending paraphernalia were installed in the wide hallway just inside the large front door of the house. Later my father installed a partial partition in the largest room of the house, creating an alcove into which the post office was moved. This also involved installing a door on the east side of the house. From the time I was about ten years old I was allowed to sort incoming mail, cancel the stamps on outgoing mail and sell stamps except when a visit from the postal inspector was scheduled.



Vicksburg Railroad Station

UCHS collection

Initially the mail was carried by train. My father would go to the railroad station with a bag of outgoing mail. This was hung on the mail crane, a tall pole with an extension attached at a right angle. When the train came by a postal employee in one of the cars would reach out and grab the mail bag with a

specially designed hook (he never missed) and threw out a bag of incoming mail as the train whizzed by. That was always exciting to see. Beginning on July 25, 1949, delivery by train was replaced by the HPO (Highway Post Office), a bus-type vehicle that traveled from Williamsport to Altoona and back each business day. Either by train or HPO a letter sent from a post office at one end of the county could be picked up by the addressee at the other end within an hour.

There were two things in the post office that were especially interesting to me. One was the variety of stamps that were supplied and I became a stamp collector. The other was the Wanted posters supplied by the FBI that were required to be displayed. The only name I remember from these posters was the infamous bank robber Willie Sutton, but I also recall there were posters for a number of leaders of the American Communist Party. Every time one of the offenders was apprehended the FBI would send a notice and his poster came down. I collected these too but eventually trashed them. I wish I hadn't. The Band Box (later the Pix) Theater in Mifflinburg brought a poster every week that was tacked outside at the entrance to the post office. I wish I had saved them too.

My parents made many improvements to the house, the first of which was the installation of indoor plumbing and not long after that the installation of a bathroom on the second floor. No more awful privy visits or galvanized washtubs! He built new kitchen cabinets. The icebox was replaced by an electric refrigerator. The coal-fired furnace was converted into an oil burner and a huge hole was dug in the west part of the yard for a thousand-gallon tank. A large balcony on the southeast corner was converted into a bedroom with many windows. This became my sleeping quarters and the open windows made sleeping in the summertime a pleasure but there was one disadvantage: no provision was made for pumping heat into the room, and getting out of bed on cold winter mornings was not great fun.

Outside, my father built a pig stable next to the fire pit in the southwest corner of the property and a smokehouse at the south end of the garden path. I can assure you that cleaning a pig stable is definitely the most disagreeable work I've ever done.

We raised two pigs every year and the work involved was richly rewarded when butchering day arrived. It was the only day of the year when we could dip bite-size pieces of pork liver from the scalding kettle, shake on a little salt and down a real treat. It was a long, hard day for men, women and children but one with great rewards. Except for the bristles, bones, kidneys, brains and tongues nothing was wasted. The stomachs were saved and used to make *seimawe* (stuffed pig stomach). Hearts, livers and some rib meat were used to make *panhaas* (scapple) and the rind was used to make cracklings. Some meat was ground to make sausage. Ham hocks would be used later to combine with dried apples and dumplings to make *schnitz un gnepp*. Pork chops were cut and packaged. Hams and shoulders would be sugar-cured and smoked along with bacon slabs that were hung by hooks in the cellar when the smoking process was completed.

We had a large garden in which we planted sweet corn, three kinds of beans, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, radishes, etc. There were raspberry bushes in one corner, rhubarb in another and a parsley patch. My father erected an arbor for Concord grapes. At one corner there was a shrub bush and after all these years I still can conjure up the smell of those shrubs. My mother did a lot of canning, not only some vegetables from the garden but also grape juice and peaches that were bought in the fall. When my maternal grandfather was living with us we went out every summer and picked wild elderberries to make pies. There were apple trees in our farm neighbor's field that were taken freely, as were walnuts from two trees on his property. We bought milk, unpasteurized, from the same farmer every day.

I started attending the Vicksburg one-room school in 1944. The school was located east of the village where Young Road meets Route 45. We really did walk uphill both ways to get to and from school and, unlike today, school was almost never closed or delayed because of bad weather. I remember walking to school sometimes when the work of the plows had deposited snow along the side of the highway that was well above the top of my head. We carried our lunches in paper bags or lunch boxes.

The school building had no plumbing and there was no well on the grounds so older students went every day to a nearby farm or house to carry drinking water for the pupils. There was a large wood-burning stove in the back of the room and in cold weather a new fire had to be built every morning. Wood was stored in a shed on the grounds. By mid-day those who sat close to the stove were roasting.

School opened with the roll call, a Bible reading, and the pledge of allegiance, followed by a few songs. Then the lessons began. With eight grades to instruct, each in several subjects, the teacher had a busy day and there was no time for individual attention. Pupils worked on their own initiative while the teacher was occupied with other grades. Nevertheless, we learned, most likely because our parents expected us to and sometimes I think it was in part because the blackboard was always filled with information that the classes ahead of us were learning.

I liked everything about school, the lessons, the access to books in the closet, the friendships and of course, recess and lunch time. I especially liked the geography books with the maps and pictures of landscapes, buildings and people that didn't look like us wearing strange looking clothing. At recess and lunchtime some of the younger boys played with toy tractors on the bank along Young Road. In nice weather we played softball and tag. When there was snow on the ground we threw snowballs and made tracks to play fox and goose. In the fall we built "huts" out of chicken wire at corners along the fence row and covered them with the fallen leaves.

All of this came to an abrupt end in 1948. During a violent August storm the entire roof of our schoolhouse was blown off. With only a few weeks left before the school term was to begin the directors made a decision to bus the pupils to Mifflinburg instead of making the necessary repairs. I was placed in the old academy building along with the other fourth, fifth and sixth graders. This building was located on Green Street where the Visitor's Center for the Mifflinburg Buggy Museum now stands. In seventh grade we entered the junior-senior high school, then located at the southeast corner of 3rd Street and Maple Street.

The Vicksburg school building was purchased by a family who put on a new roof. It still stands there with additional renovations. The elementary school at Buffalo Cross Roads was erected to replace it and other one-room schoolhouses.

In our little village there weren't many children. There were a few boys of my age but they lived on farms and had little time to play. My sister was a bit of a tomboy and we enjoyed climbing trees, as well as climbing around in a neighbor's barn. Our mother would have been horrified at some of the dangerous things we did but fortunately we never got hurt badly. In hot weather we often walked down to Beaver Run and played in the cool water. In the winter we threw snowballs and went sledding, usually down the long hill on Beaver Run Road south of the village. We had board games to play and some of my earliest memories are of our mother reading Bible stories to us. In the fall we enjoyed raking leaves and rolling around in the huge piles. There were a lot of trees on the property - several maples, a cedar, a catalpa with a trumpet vine climbing up its trunk, a very tall ginkgo, a hemlock and two horse chestnuts. We burned the leaves along the lane leading back to the farm south of our place and listened to the horse chestnuts popping in the fire. Being a hunter, my father always had guns in the house. Under his supervision my sister and I would shoot at targets in the fire pit with a .22 caliber rifle. She eventually became a better shot than I.

Like many boys in those days working to earn money I started with mowing lawns and paper routes. My first paper route was delivering the *Williamsport Sun* to a grand total of six customers who probably subscribed out of pity since there was virtually no news of local interest in it. That didn't last long and was replaced by delivering the *Grit* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on Sundays, which was more successful, but riding a bicycle on a two-mile long route in the snow was not a lot of fun. I also worked on local farms during haymaking and grain harvesting seasons. When I was 13 I spent the summer working on a cousin's farm in Snyder County for room and board and a dollar a day. I also worked for several years at H. A. Cook & Sons, the general store across Route 45 from our place. It was a part-time job unpacking boxes and

stocking shelves after the store closed.

The store was operated by J. Paul "Pauley" Cook and it was an interesting place. While the store maintained a stock of some groceries it was primarily a dry goods store, selling work clothes, yard goods of material for making clothing, curtains, etc. and all of the sewing supplies needed to make them. The store was widely known and the clientele came from as far away as sixty miles. Closing time was six o'clock and that's when Pauley and I would start to work. One evening he had not locked the door more than a minute earlier when somebody knocked. Pauley went to the door and said in a loud voice, "We're closed." I could hear a voice from outside saying, "But we came all the way from State College." Pauley's response was, "Well, you'll have to come back another time because we close at six." That was the end of the conversation. During the day Pauley would frequently be playing checkers



H. A. Cook's store, Vicksburg

UCHS collection

at the grocery counter with one of the other older men in the community. If customers came in he would often tell them they had to wait until the game was finished. Nevertheless, he ran a profitable business. Pauley was a big fan of the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team and in those days many of the games were played in the daytime. He had a radio in the store and it was always on so he could listen to the broadcast if the Phillies were playing.

Pauley's son Gene lived near Philadelphia and several times during the year he would close the store and drive in his Packard to his son's house and stay for several days. On several occasions he took me along. He would schedule these trips when the Phillies were playing home games.

Every morning we would go to the dry goods wholesalers and he would look through their stock and place orders. Then we'd go to the Horn & Hardart Automat for lunch. If the Phillies were playing in the afternoon we'd go to the game. If they were playing at night we'd go to one of the big theaters to take in a movie, then go back to Gene's house for supper and then go to the ball game. In those days it was possible to sneak down to the locker room area and wait for the players to come out and ask for autographs. We did that on one occasion and I still have the program with several autographs.

Pauley was the first person in Vicksburg to own a television set. At that time the only two stations he could receive broadcast from Binghamton and Altoona. Reception wasn't always great but I would often visit in the evenings to watch. On nights when boxing matches were broadcast there were often a couple older men in the community who came to watch. There was a group of four men, two or more of whom would gather at Pauley's house to play *hasenpfeffer*, a trick-taking card game played with a pinochle deck. I watched long enough to learn the game and then joined the group - an unusual combination of one kid and men in their sixties.

My parents did not buy a television set until after I entered college. Nevertheless, we did on occasion watch TV in an unusual place. Paul Gearhart, a Vicksburg native, was an early television dealer. He built a little food stand on the top of New Berlin Mountain and installed a TV set. People flocked there to see this new invention and no doubt he induced a lot of people to purchase their own from him.

Radio was our source of entertainment in the 1940s. My mother listened to soap operas in the afternoon and after school I listened to Sky King and Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders which were adventure programs

geared toward young boys. In the evening there was a wide variety of comedies, crime shows, westerns, etc. to choose from. In terms of music there was a vast difference between radio in those days and now. Instead of limiting their programming to one type of music there was a wide variety of genres played in blocks of time. In the early 1940s WKOK in Sunbury was the closest station and most listened to. They played pop, hillbilly (as country music was commonly called in those days), polka bands and even the Metropolitan Opera broadcast on Saturday afternoons. The only other stations nearby were WLYC and WRAK in Williamsport. Later WMLP started broadcasting from Milton and WHLM and WCNR from Bloomsburg.

Bill Malone, a professor at Tulane University and expert on country music, wrote that after World War II there were more country music fans in Pennsylvania than any other state. There certainly were lots of them in the Central Susquehanna Valley and we were among them. Every radio station had live bands performing country music on Saturday mornings. These bands had a ready audience for personal appearances and plenty of venues at which to play, at least in the summertime. Not a weekend went by without a carnival or festival being held somewhere and country music bands were what drew the crowds. Even the tiniest hamlets, including Vicksburg, would host festivals as fundraisers, often sponsored by the local church. In addition, there were two country music parks that had nationally known artists performing on Sundays, Radio Corral near Montgomery and Summit Park at the foot of Shade Mountain south of Middleburg. Radio Corral was owned by the McNett brothers from Lycoming County who also had the most popular band in Central Pennsylvania. Bob McNett had been a member of the Drifting Cowboys, the band of superstar Hank Williams, and he had the connections in Nashville to bring Grand Ole Opry stars to their park. On many occasions I hitchhiked to Radio Corral for the afternoon show and then went to Summit Park for the evening show.

In addition to carnivals and festivals our family went to the Bloomsburg Fair every year on Saturday to watch the ARCD midget auto races. After driver Bert Brooks was killed in an accident right in front of our

grandstand seats my mother said she didn't ever want to see that again so from then on we went to the fair but not to the races. We also attended the Union County West End Fair every year, enjoying the rides, the food, the exhibits and the stage entertainment.

If there was a festival or carnival on Saturday night we went to Mifflinburg in the afternoon to do some shopping. Otherwise we went on Saturday night. In the 1940s Mifflinburg had a thriving business district and the streets were crowded with people on Saturday nights. We would buy beef and lunchmeats at Shively Brothers Meat Market and other groceries in the A & P store.

My sister and I would buy penny candy at either Steans Drug Store or O. R. Laney's 5 & 10¢ Store. Our mother would buy a variety of needed items at Laney's. I bought comic books and bubble gum packs containing baseball cards at the book store. Sometimes my father would go to the movies but my mother almost never did. The first movie that my father took me to see was a Laurel and Hardy comedy. Before going home we would go to either Denius's or Abby Scholl's Soda Fountain in the Mifflinburg Hotel for an ice cream treat. For some of our Christmas shopping we would go to the department stores in Sunbury.

My father had only one sister but my mother had two sisters and two brothers. Family gatherings were a common occurrence. On Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas my mother's people gathered at either our house (always on Easter) or at the house of one of her siblings. By the time I was 12 there were twenty people in the extended family. The men and children would eat first, at noon, and then the cooks ate. The amount of food was always more than was needed and in the afternoon the adults spent their time talking, when they were not dozing off. The children were playing outside. In the summer my mother's side of the family would gather to make ice cream. We always made three freezers, one chocolate, one vanilla and one flavored by whatever berry or fruit was in season. Of course the freezers were cranked by hand. My uncles and my father consumed prodigious amounts of ice cream. Their portions were often brought to them in serving bowls.

It was at one of these gatherings at my father's sister's house that I became a baseball fan, purely by accident. I was nine years old and while we were outside my three cousins said it was time to go inside and listen to the game on the radio. They were fans of the Philadelphia Athletics who on that day were playing the Detroit Tigers. I had no interest in listening to a baseball game but I had no choice. Out of spite I rooted for the Tigers and today I am still a Tigers fan.

When I was 11 a couple of close friends from Mifflinburg talked me into going out for Little League baseball. At first I was afraid of the hard-thrown pitches and would back up when I saw the ball coming. After a couple games I mustered up enough courage to stand in there and I got my first hit. I was hooked. The next year I was on the all-star team and we beat several local teams before we traveled to Williamsport to play against the Original Little League all-stars. We were leading 5-3 with two outs in the bottom of the last inning when an opposing player hit a home run with two men on base, sending us home as 6-5 losers. As mentioned earlier I spent the following summer working on my cousin's farm in Snyder County. Baseball lured me back after that and the next two years I played for Mifflinburg teams in both the Pony League and for the American Legion team, continuing to play for the latter until I was 18. That was followed by one summer playing in the Mifflinburg Church Softball League and one for the Fremont Bombers in the Tri-County League, the last at the invitation of a college friend. My baseball career ended when I was offered a teaching job in Salem, New Jersey.

My parents struggled financially during the early years of their marriage, coming in the final years of the Great Depression. My mother had a small jar of old coins, Indian Head pennies, V nickels and Barber dimes and quarters. On occasion she would dip into that jar to get enough money to pay for a loaf of bread. I've often wondered whether one or more of those coins might have considerable value today to a collector. Nevertheless, my parents were both hard workers and the financial difficulties vanished. In addition to serving as postmaster my father's main job was working second shift at the

Philco plant in Watsonstown. Since it was a defense contractor during World War II he was not subject to the draft.

In 1947 my main Christmas present was a bicycle. This might have been a consequence of an incident that happened the previous summer. I was visiting a school friend who had a bicycle and I quickly learned how to keep my balance but not much else. I started going down a hill and ran right into a parked pickup truck belonging to my friend's father. I didn't know how to apply the brake! On my birthday in 1950 I won the grand prize of a \$50 Schwinn at the opening of Rube Zimmerman's new gas station in Mifflinburg. Those two bikes were my transportation on pleasure rides and trips to Mifflinburg to the movies and to Little League baseball practice and games. On one occasion I rode and pushed my Schwinn all the way to the top of New Berlin Mountain. The bike had a speedometer and my intention was to see how fast I would be going when I reached New Berlin. Within a hundred yards I was pushing 40 mph. Fortunately, I had learned how to apply the brake.

By 1952 my father had purchased a new car. I'll never forget the day he told us that we were going on a trip when he had his vacation time in the summer. "Where?" my sister and I both asked. "To the Great Smoky Mountains." It was unbelievable! Knowing how much I loved maps my father got some Esso road maps and gave me the responsibility to plan the route. That was the first of annual vacation trips that continued for a number of years until my sister and I were both married. The love of travel is just one of many great gifts that our parents gave to me and my sister and fortunately we both married spouses who shared that passion.

As mentioned earlier, there were always guns in our house. My sister and I did not get anything near to the number of Christmas presents that many parents give their children today but when I was 8 years old my main present was a Daisy Red Ryder BB gun. I was thrilled to have my own gun. BB guns aren't very accurate but I did a lot of target shooting and during the next several years there were quite a few barn pigeons that ended up on my plate at suppertime. There isn't a lot of meat on a pigeon but it was tasty.

It was also about this time when my father started to take me along,

unarmed, when he hunted for rabbits and pheasants around Vicksburg. In those days rabbits and wild pheasants were abundant throughout Buffalo Valley. On the first day of small game season the fields around Vicksburg were filled with hunters and the sound of gunfire was almost constant. (Heavy rain and the subsequent flooding in 1972 decimated the wild pheasant population and the removal of fencerows by farmers took away the most important cover for rabbits. The old days will never return.) My main Christmas present when I was 13 was a shotgun. The next hunting season was my first for small game. My sister and I had been taught gun safety since we were very young and my performance in the field in 1952 was rewarded when my father said he would take me to camp for deer hunting, a year earlier than he had originally said. I'll never forget that first day of deer hunting. I didn't get much sleep the night before, both because of the anticipation and the sound of loud snoring from every corner of the sleeping quarters. It was a cold day and I had only a pair of wool socks and old rubber boots to keep my feet warm. They didn't. Nevertheless, it was a memorable day.

My father had not fished since he was still living with his parents. I wanted to go fishing so he bought two rods and we started to fish around 1948. For several years we only went trout fishing in small mountain streams that were not stocked with hatchery fish. Most of the fish we caught had to be released because they were under the then legal limit of six inches. We also fished for warm water fish (bass, panfish and carp) in Penns Creek between Switzer Run and New Berlin and Buffalo Creek between Beaver Run Road and Wolfland. After school I would often walk down to Beaver Run to fish. It was still stocked with trout in those days and I caught my first legal trout out of that little meadow stream. Later we started fishing in the larger stocked trout streams and sometimes my sister would go along. On one occasion when my father, a neighbor and I were fishing in Buffalo Creek I reeled in the strangest creature I had ever seen. The two adults told me it was a hellbender, which is a giant salamander.

My parents were devout Christians and we attended St. Paul's Evangelical United Brethren Church in Mifflinburg every Sunday. My sister

and I had idyllic childhoods and we will both be forever grateful for their loving care and for the life lessons we learned from them and our Vicksburg neighbors.

I thank Elwood and Anna (Burrey) Walter for refreshing my memory and relating to me some things about Vicksburg that I did not know. Elwood grew up on a farm just west of the village and Anna's parents owned and operated Burrey's store where I spent a lot of money on candy bars, ice cream and soft drinks. Both attended the Vicksburg School.

✧ **ACCOUNTS** ✧

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Union County Historical Society

Guided by the “Bare Spot:” Trees and the Logging Industry of Union County

**By
Deborah Wehr**

Growing up in Swengel the 1950s, I often ran out our back door and looked up at the north side of Penns Creek Mountain. My eyes always landed on a patch of rocks nearly at the top of the mountain, totally devoid of any trees. The whole mountain was covered in lush blue-green foliage so that the light brown rocky patch stood out and became, for me, a landmark. No matter where I was in the “West End”, I could usually eye the “bare spot” and know where I was in relation to my home. For 20 years that treeless area helped me orienteer to adventures around the county and faithfully guided me back again.

It is the stark treelessness in comparison to the rest of the mountain that makes the “spot” so visible for miles around. Had there been no trees on the mountain, the rocky pile would have gone unnoticed. In my lifetime I have never experienced the mountains that border Union County without trees. But recently, while doing research for a summer exhibit on logging in Union County, I discovered that about 120 years ago most of our mountain trees, as well as forests throughout the state, were starkly clear cut.

Pioneer Era (1680 – about 1870)

Logging in Union County began with the arrival of the first German, Scotch-Irish and English settlers. The trees of Pennsylvania were a primary natural resource. They were used to fashion everything from baskets, household furniture, hand tools and farm implements to structures for shelter. In addition, trees were harvested so that charcoal could be created for the smelting of iron ore, and tannin extracted from bark for preserving animal skins.

The first homes of settlers were log structures, for which our forests provided abundantly. Axes and froes were the tools used to harvest local trees and

fashion them into simple structures: round logs laid horizontally, notched at the corners and roofing made with long slices of log split by the froe.

The Samuel Dale family moved into a log cabin whose foundation lies under the Ell of the Dale/Engle/Walker house. The limestone main structure of the home was built onto the east side of the cabin around 1793. The cabin was replaced with the Ell about 40 years later.



Dale/Engle/Walker House showing the Ell extending to the left behind the Main structure. *Photo: Jim Walter*

The first permanent structures in Union County were grist mills for the processing of grains into flour and chop for domestic animal feed. Preceding the construction of the first grist mills was the setup of water-powered sawmills. Locally harvested timber was cut at the sawmill, and provided the necessary beams and boards by which the grist mills were constructed. Following completion of a grist mill, the sawmill could continue to be used on site for production of lumber for other uses, such as better homes and barns for livestock. Or, often, the sawmill was moved to another, more convenient site near other construction.



Few photos exist of water powered sawmills. This one was taken circa 1890 in Potter County of the remains of a typical early, family-operated small mill. Photo: Public Domain.

Water Transportation Era (1800 - about 1910)

Soon the industrious settlers were harvesting lumber for saleable products. The grist mills provided opportunities for early residents to turn their excess grain into marketable flour; alternatively, homemade whisky was another saleable way to utilize extra grain. These products were packed into sturdy wooden barrels, and loaded onto rafts or arks, all made from local wood. The rafts and arks were floated downstream during the “Spring Freshet” when creeks and rivers were flowing fast and full. Not only were the flour and spirits floated downstream to markets; the rafts and arks used to carry them were dismantled and sold for lumber as well. Only the people returned back upstream.

Small, local sawmills continued to operate through the early half of the Nineteenth Century, supplying lumber to build towns and industries within the county, with enough excess to continue the Spring flotilla of arks to Columbia, Lancaster Co. (and then overland to Philadelphia) or downstream to Baltimore. Baltimore, a shipbuilding center since the Revolutionary War, continued to need supplies of lumber. So each Spring, until 1909, Union County arks and logs, floating down White Deer, Buffalo and Penns Creeks, would join and mingle with thousands of other logs and numerous vessels on the Susquehanna from Williamsport and beyond, all heading to large sawmills downstream.



Three Arks for a log drive on Pine Creek, in Lycoming or Tioga County, Pennsylvania, USA. The left ark was for cooking and dining, the middle ark was the sleeping quarters, and the right ark was for the horses. The arks were built for just one log drive and then sold for their lumber. The line of the Jersey Shore, Pine Creek and Buffalo Railway can be seen on the eastern shore, and the mountainside behind it is nearly bare of trees from clearcutting. Photo: UCHS

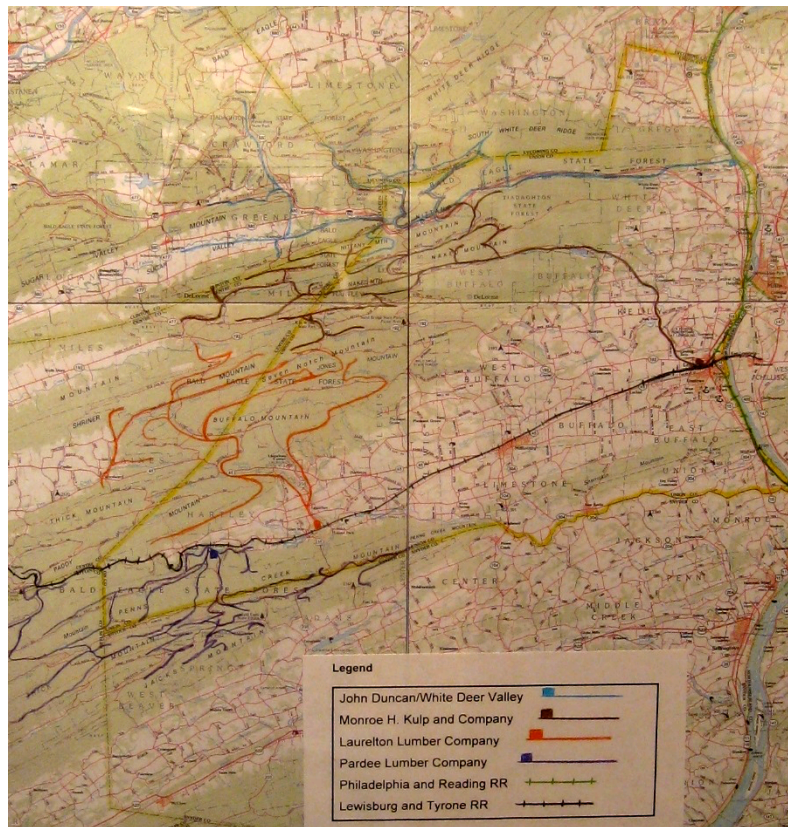


This undated view of a log “spar” raft on the Susquehanna River was taken from either the Market Street or Camelback Bridge. The raft is more than 100 feet long with at least eight distinct sections visible. A half-dozen men maneuver it downstream with huge sweeps. The logs likely originated from the robust logging industry in North Central Pennsylvania. Photo: Public Domain.

Railroad Era (1864 - about 1948)

With the coming of rail roads to Union County in 1864, the pace of logging picked up. Pennsylvania logging continued strong and grew to a peak in 1900. This was the era of logging railroads, which supplied timbers to sawmills that were no longer tied to waterways. The supply was year-round, no longer dependent on the swollen streams and rivers of spring time.

The floor of Buffalo Valley had been cleared in previous years and was being actively farmed. Most of the remaining timber was on the mountains forming the northern and southern borders of the county. Tracts of northern timberland were purchased by John Duncan and the Kulp family, and the southern mountain land was purchased by Arlo Pardee. Both the Kuls and Pardee needed props for their coal mining operations elsewhere. During this period, lumbering and lumbering-related jobs were a mainstay of the local economy and were closely tied to the coal mining industry.



Logging tram roads of the four major logging companies are contrasted against Union County's border which is shown in yellow.
Author's Map and Photo

Duncan's mill was located at White Deer and connected via the White Deer and Loganton line to the Philadelphia and Reading Rail Road. His woodland tracts were directly west of White Deer on Nittany Mountain and extended north into Lycoming County and west into Sugar Valley and as far north as current Ravensburg State Park in Clinton County.

The Kulp family built a mill on the west edge of Lewisburg and constructed spurs to both the P&R and the Lewisburg and Tyrone Rail Roads. They cut wood from tracts on Nittany Mountain from the Spruce Run Reservoir westward well into Center County.

Another very active sawmill was built just south of Laurelton. Timber was cut on Paddy, Buffalo and Jones Mountains, then crossed south over the western tip of Buffalo Valley to the mill at Laurel Park. It was said that a log truck could coast from the “Hook” (Natural Area, on Jones Mountain) down tram roads to the mill.

Pardee constructed his mill about a mile east of Weikert and cut from Penns Creek and Jack’s Mountains to the south and west, into Snyder and Mifflin Counties. Both the Pardee and Laurelton mills were serviced by the Lewisburg and Tyrone Rail Road.



Laurelton Mill at Laurel Park. Logs were delivered by narrow gauge rail (left and right) to the mill pond to await sawing. They were individually pulled up the ramp (center) into the mill. Sawn lumber was collected in huge stacks to the right of the mill; the Lewisburg and Tyrone Rail Road hauled the lumber to destinations beyond. Photo: Public Domain

These sawmills, for the most part, were far away from the standing timber, and lumbering jobs became specialized.

“Wood hicks” worked in the forest cutting trees with double bit axes and

with the assistance of a mule, and loaded them on a narrow gauge log truck. Teamsters or, later, “wildcats” controlled the narrow-gauge trucks as they coasted downhill from the cutting site on a mountain to a station in the valley where logs were either unloaded into a mill pond to await sawing, or directly onto standard gauge cars for transport to their final destination. A crew consisting of the engineer, fireman and switchman was needed to drive each of the trains.



The entire camp crew of the Walker Tract of the Laurelton Lumber Company posed for documentation. Although some accidents happened, and they did practice “wild catting”, Laurelton did not share the high-risk reputation of the Pardee Company. Photo: Public Domain

Then of course there were the very necessary track crews, which laid the narrow gauge track further and further up the mountains as the lumbering progressed. Cooks were needed to keep everyone fed at mountain logging camps built to house the crews near their work. Blacksmiths found fulltime work near the logging operations, constantly making repairs as well as forming new spikes, bracing and mule shoes. In addition, a crew was needed to run the local saw mill. All these people worked for their “company” and logging was subsidiary to coal mining.



Intrepid wood hicks and their sharp double-bitted axes. Photo UCHS

Union County trees became props and ceilings for coal mines in other parts of the state. Two wood hicks could cut, trim and load 15 tons of prop logs per day



Taken in 1900 at the Lackawanna Colliery in Lackawanna, PA, this photo shows the use of props to hold up the rock ceiling as miners work to remove the narrow vein of coal. Photo: Public Domain

(one car load). Prop timber was sold to coal mines for \$1.50 to \$2.25 per ton, or \$22.50 to \$33.25 per carload. Thick-cut slab wood was used to line mine ceilings. Wood was needed for ties under the standard gauge rails that ran between the

landing and the mine (example: 75 miles from Laurelton to Hazelton). Coal cars were fashioned from lumber and miscellaneous buildings were needed to shelter equipment, bosses and miners.

In 1905 the Pennsylvania coal mining industry required 52+ million cubic feet of prop timber and 100+ million board feet of sawn timber, mostly hemlock and yellow pine plus some hardwood. Supplying the demands of the coal industry and a rapidly growing nation stripped our mountains, and eventually mountains throughout the state, of their trees. The smaller-diameter logs were sold as mine props and everything larger went to sawmills for dimension wood.

The beauty of our county and our state, to large extent, is in our forests. Remembering that Tall Timbers in the Snyder Middleswarth Natural Area, south of Weikert, is one of the few pockets of virgin timber untouched by the logging industry in Pennsylvania is a sobering thought.



Cutting virgin timber.

Photo: UCHS

120 years ago, a trip in any direction from Union County would have been a totally different experience than it is today. A recent drive north on Route 15 to New York State, on four smooth lanes gliding along near the tops of mountains, provided vast vistas of green forest in every direction. The industry that stripped our county eventually clearcut the rest of the state, as well.



Five men working in difficult terrain. Photo: UCHS

Realizing that it was all done log-by-log in difficult terrain with hand tools is a tribute to the grit and tenacity of our logging forebears. Daily they performed unimaginably hard work with incomprehensible thoroughness.

Community Era (1910 - Present)

Most of the land now comprising Pennsylvania State Forests and the Allegheny National Forest were formerly owned by “lumber barons” of the Railroad Era. Once all the trees had been cut from their lands, it was no longer useful to them, so they sold hundreds of thousands of acres of cut-over mountain land to the state and national governments, (often in exchange for unpaid taxes). The lumbering industry moved on to other, uncut areas further west in Pennsylvania and then to states even further west.

With the aid of the Pennsylvania Forestry Department, notably forester Raymond B. Winter, and after 1933, Civilian Conservation Camp workers, many Union County acres of overcut mountain land were replanted; the rest gradually grew back into forests naturally.

For a short time, the abandoned lumber grounds were rich in huckleberry bushes, and train excursions brought berry pickers to the mountains for outings. Eventually trees overtook the bushes and the mountains bordering Union County were once again forested.



Berry Excursion.

Photo: UCHS

Logging continues to this day within the county, much on the scale that it began more than 250 years ago, during the Pioneer Era. Most sawmills are small and family owned. The exception is Log Cabin Homes, formerly Kuhns Brothers Lumber Company.

The family mills cut, in part, from local forests for local markets. The energy source nowadays is electricity. The work is less labor intensive and much safer. Today, 5% of industry in Union County is related to wood products.

My bare spot is made a landmark because of the surrounding lush greenery of the mountain forest. Our forest is not eternal, but it is renewable. Most valley residents have had the bare spot as part of their normal view for most of their lives. But there were some residents, around the turn of the Twentieth Century, who could not find their way using the bare spot for their homing marker; the entire mountain was treeless.



The “Bare Spot” on the north side of Penns Creek Mt., south of Swengel. Photo: the author.

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✧ **ACCOUNTS** ✧

**The Lewisburg Cemetery Chapel: A Community
Treasure**
by
Nancy M. Neuman

On April 10, 1848, the Lewisburg Cemetery Association was incorporated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The cemetery began with six acres in East Buffalo Township, purchased from John Chamberlin. It is nonprofit and nonsectarian, governed by a seven member volunteer Board of Managers and a President.

The Lewisburg Cemetery provides a range of services, including traditional casket and mausoleum burial, in-ground placement of ashes, and above ground interment of ashes in columbarium niches. Families often purchase perpetual



Lewisburg Cemetery chapel with columbarium and vault. Nancy Neuman photo

funds for placement of flowers on graves. Those funds are held in restricted investments. Income from these services is not sufficient to support complete grounds maintenance, modern machinery, and improvements in the cemetery.

As a result, the Association relies upon financial contributions from friends of the cemetery to supplement its income.

In the mid 19th century when the Lewisburg Cemetery was founded, a rural cemetery movement spread around the nation during a time of significant urban development. The rural cemetery movement in America was influenced by a romantic style of landscaping that was fashionable among English garden designers. As rural cemeteries came into existence, they served as public parks before municipal parks were common. They offered a tranquil space where ordinary people could enjoy art and sculpture in a pastoral outdoor setting. The Lewisburg Cemetery, once on the outskirts of town, exemplifies the rural cemetery movement. With gentle hills and trees, magnificent monuments, beautiful artwork and carvings, it is intended to be a refreshing place of quiet contemplation for members of the community.

Prior to the establishment of the Lewisburg Cemetery, town plots, family farms, and churchyards typically were used for burials. Church cemeteries began to reach their limits, creating health concerns, and churches wanted the land for new construction.

When the Lewisburg Cemetery opened in autumn 1848, townspeople began disinterring graves, moving remains and headstones to the new cemetery.



McClure monument (ca. 1833) removed to Lewisburg Cemetery from Presbyterian Church graveyard. Nancy Neuman photo

Many of the removals came from the Presbyterian Church on Market Street and the Lutheran Church on South Third Street. Other removals came from small cemeteries located at the corners of Third and Market and Fifth and Market Streets. As a result, burials in the cemetery predate 1848. The remains of early settlers in Union County rest there, including veterans of the Revolutionary War.

Burial plots were laid out in sections, with paths and avenues. The original six acres of the Lewisburg Cemetery include three family burial circles arranged along a winding road that is wide enough to accommodate horse drawn hearses..



Miller Circle, Lewisburg Cemetery. Nancy Neuman photo.

At the main entrance near St. Catherine Street stood a two story arched gatehouse where the sexton lived. Hearses entered the cemetery through the arch. The gatehouse was completed on October 13, 1849. Its location typified the rural cemetery movement because it separated the cemetery from the noisy life of the town into a winding, ascending road that led people toward a quiet, natural landscape. In 1892 the cemetery moved the house to a lot it owned across from the cemetery on the southeast corner of South Seventh and St. George Streets. The annexes did not fit the new lot, but the main part of the gatehouse remains

intact with the arch filled in. In 1963 the cemetery sold the house to Bucknell University.



Lewisburg Cemetery Gatehouse built 1849. Union County Historical Society photo

A small white building with a belfry inside the cemetery grounds became the office and gatehouse. In 2000 a new maintenance building and office was completed in the middle of the cemetery. It is named for William R. James to honor his many years of volunteer service to the Lewisburg Cemetery.

The iron fence along South Seventh Street was erected in 1886, paid for by donations from the second president of the cemetery, Thomas Beaver of Danville, who built Beaver Memorial Church, and D. Bright Miller, son of the Hon. George F. Miller, the cemetery's first president.

As the cemetery ran out of space, it gradually acquired more land until it reached its current size of 38 acres. At its October 3, 1898 meeting when the cemetery was 50 years old and comprised 12 acres, the Board of Managers voted to build a chapel and a vault. The structures were to be located on part of six additional acres purchased in 1878 from Paul Geddes. The land is adjacent to and south of the original six acres. In 1897 the cemetery association set aside 32 by 32 square feet of land near the site of the chapel for the Grand Army of the Republic Post 52 to bury Civil War veterans.

Building the Cemetery Chapel

The Board of Managers agreed to use stone for the chapel and chose red sandstone located in Centre Hall to construct both buildings. The cemetery hired stone mason Chancey Foster for \$1575 to build the outside of the chapel and the adjacent vault. William E. Yoder was awarded \$478 as the contractor for a slate roof, plastering, painting, and woodwork.

In March 1899 the Board decided for practical reasons to put a cellar under the chapel, which Mr. Foster agreed to construct for \$180, not including the woodwork. Additional funds paid to Mr. Foster amounted to \$1178 by April 1899. Monuments built by Chancey Foster in the cemetery exemplify his talent as a stone mason and artist.



Foster grave. Monument carved by Chancey Foster for his wife Enna.
Nancy Neuman photo

The site for the vault was to be directly behind the chapel to the west. Plans included a flat cement roof and an iron door on the front. The vault, or holding crypt, was used to store the remains of deceased persons in winter because graves were dug by hand, an impossible task when the ground was frozen.

In May 1899 the cemetery association paid \$40 for a circular stained glass window with a portrait of Jesus. It bought 124 chairs at \$1 each and \$2 for a table from the chair factory (later Pennsylvania House), paid \$2 for a turned

wood coffin stand and \$4.25 for a stove. In addition, the cemetery bought a Bible, a dozen hymnals, and an umbrella rack. A fountain and garden were placed in front of the chapel. As part of the project, about 100 shade trees were planted around the cemetery grounds.



Chapel interior with original chairs, table, and coffin stand. Greaves photo

The Board placed a time capsule in a box inside the keystone above the front door of the chapel, which bears the date 1899. The box contains three copies of the cemetery charter, bylaws, rules and regulations. Also included are copies of the *Lewisburg Saturday News*, the *Lewisburg Chronicle*, the *Lewisburg Journal* and the *Philadelphia Press* as well as bank statements from the First National Bank and Union National Bank, both of Lewisburg.

With changes in township and borough boundaries, the Lewisburg Cemetery is now entirely within the Borough of Lewisburg. The stone chapel is included in Lewisburg's Historic District as a contributing structure that should be preserved. It is an example of the late Gothic or Gothic revival style of architecture.

The chapel is approximately 25 feet wide and 36 feet long with a 12 foot pitched roof. The sides are 12 feet high and the gable ends are 24 feet high. On each side are four stone buttresses with stone caps that are lighter in color than

the walls. The outside of the stained glass window is also surrounded by light stone accents. Pediments on the ends of the roof each have a different symbol.



Lewisburg Cemetery Chapel, Memorial Day 2012. Paul R. Mauger photo

The vault is built into a hill. It is approximately 14 feet wide, 19 feet long, 11 feet high at the front, and 7 feet high at the back. Its flat roof has a stone



Lewisburg Cemetery vault built 1899. Greaves photo

cornice around the perimeter. A roman style arch made of light colored stone

surrounds the iron door. A decorative stone cross is above the entrance. The stone in both buildings is laid in an ashlar pattern with tooled, extruded rose color mortar joints. Now that graves are dug mechanically, the vault is no longer in use.

Maintenance Issues, Chapel and Vault

The chapel eventually fell into disrepair. For about 25 years it was used as a storage shed for mowers and other equipment. The stained glass window was broken by vandals, probably by rocks thrown from the outside.

Like other nonprofit private cemeteries, the Lewisburg Cemetery did not have sufficient financial resources above what is needed for regular care of the cemetery to provide costly maintenance of the building. As funeral homes began to offer comfortable space for services, the chapel, with neither heat nor electricity, was no longer an attractive place to rent for funerals.

In 1985, thanks to a \$10,000 bequest from Brown R. Dunkle, and funds from cemetery reserves, the chapel was completely renovated by CVC Contractors. The bequest was the catalyst to begin restoration. It was left in memory of Dunkle's wife Anlyn and his parents Charles F. and Laura M. Dunkle. CVC contractors and William and Carol Metzger were instrumental in ensuring that sufficient additional funds and the necessary labor were available to complete the project.

William Metzger found the interior of the chapel a shambles when he started the project in 1985. The old chairs were stacked up and the caning ruined. Oil stains and smells permeated the space. Glass shards from the stained glass window were scattered on the floor. The walls were damaged from water that had seeped in from the outside.

The exterior stone was re-pointed and contractors installed a new ceiling and carpeting. Wainscoting, the altar table, and casket stand were restored, and the original chairs were re-caned.

Rick Wolfe, owner of Watsonstown Glass, agreed to repair the stained glass window. Metzger had saved what he could find of the broken glass. It took 10 months to restore the window. Wolfe had to create matching pieces of glass,

some painted, and some stained, to replace missing pieces. Frank Weidman of Lebanon Stained Glass assisted Wolfe in this delicate endeavor. A transparent cover now protects the window on the outside of the chapel.



Cemetery chapel stained-glass window damaged by vandals (left) and restored in 1985 (right).
Rick Wolfe photo Paul R. Mauger photo

The cemetery contracted for a new roof in 1997. The original stove was discarded and replaced in 1998 by a black cast parlor stove manufactured by the Central Foundry of Lewisburg and patented in 1875. The stove is on permanent loan from the Slifer House Museum, once the home of Eli Slifer who served on the cemetery Board of Managers from 1858 to 1886.

Burial customs are always evolving. Many families now choose cremation over traditional casket burials; the Lewisburg Cemetery expanded its services to accommodate people's needs. In 1995 the Lewisburg Cemetery completed its first columbarium with niches for urns in front of the chapel. The area was completely enhanced and improved in 2012, thanks to the vision and generosity of DeOnne and Robert Gronlund. The original columbarium was incorporated with additional columbaria into a stone circular structure surrounding a new fountain. The area, including the chapel, was landscaped with new plants and trees. Overgrown trees around the chapel entrance were removed because they were forcing rainwater into the roof and chapel walls. Benches were installed for visitors to enjoy the peaceful surroundings and the restful sound of water. The

Gronlunds also contributed to renovations on the outside of the chapel with repairs to the chimney, roof and gutters.

Today people rent the chapel for funerals, weddings, memorial and worship services. Recently it was used as a staging area for a film about a cemetery caretaker. It seats about 90 people, is heated, well lit, and has a working pump organ. For many years, David Arndt has donated his services by painting the chapel woodwork and maintaining the white gatehouse.

A topic of fascination during cemetery tours is the spelling of “resurrection” in the stained glass window. It is spelled “resurection.” Was it always spelled with one “r”? Rick Wolfe’s photograph of the window before it was restored tells us that it was---a second “r” was not lost on the chapel floor.

Time is never kind to the old stone chapel. Money and vigilance are necessary to prevent it from again falling into disrepair. The Lewisburg Cemetery Association depends upon the financial support of the community and the generosity of families like the Gronlunds, Dunkles, Metzgers and those who came before them to supplement what the cemetery can provide in financing major improvements.

The red sandstone on the chapel exterior requires special grouting and expertise; several areas are cracked and deteriorating. When water freezes in the cracks it damages the mortar joints. The gravel walkway in front of the chapel and columbarium could be upgraded. The vault, or holding crypt, needs a complete overhaul. With money, imagination, and expertise, the vault could be reconfigured as an indoor columbarium or as a learning space for students of genealogy, local history, and cemetery art.

When the chapel was obscured by overgrown trees, it was almost invisible, even to pedestrians. With improvements to South Seventh Street, the new columbarium, fountain and gardens, the chapel has become a focal point for the town and university. The columbarium is now the centerpiece of the cemetery with the chapel gracing its grounds. Each day visitors rediscover the Lewisburg Cemetery as it was originally envisioned: a beautifully serene location for quiet reflection in an outdoor setting.



Lewisburg Cemetery columbarium, fountain, and gardens as dedicated in 2012
Paul R. Mauger photo

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Lewisburg's Nineteenth Century Newspapers

by

Richard Sauers

Introduction

In the modern age of rapidly-changing technology, we often forget that newspapers are an important part of everyday life for millions of Americans. It wasn't until the early twentieth century that radio news began to make inroads into the monopoly held by newspapers large and small. Television news did not become important until the later 1950s, and internet-aided news only surfaced in the past fifteen years. And even today newspapers have taken to the internet to survive the continued decline in print subscriptions.

This article surveys the nineteenth-century newspapers that brought the outside world to Lewisburg and vicinity and enabled local readers to find out what was happening in central Pennsylvania. Keep in mind that these papers were vastly different from the ones most people reading this article have been accustomed to. While many of today's papers try to beat a neutral path in politics, printing both conservative and liberal editorials, most older papers were virulently partisan in their approach to politics. Editors supported one political party and printed news and rumors of news that denigrated the opposition.

All of the newspapers included in this article were published once a week. Daily papers in places like rural central Pennsylvania were virtually unknown; only larger cities were able to support daily sheets. Most papers had four pages printed on one large sheet of paper folded in half and printed on both sides. Unlike today's papers, smaller papers were unable to afford correspondents and thus relied on gathering local news by the editor (who decided what to print) and perhaps one or two employees. Small papers unashamedly borrowed from larger city papers when they excerpted state, national, and international news; the sources of much of this news was at least identified after each article. State laws allowed newspaper publishers to exchange their papers at no cost with other publishers within a certain mileage, which facilitated the spread of

news from the big city papers to smaller ones like those in Lewisburg. Newspapers employed typesetters who laboriously assembled each word letter by letter, picking the font size from cabinets with drawers that separated each letter bin by bin.

Most of these early papers contained numerous advertisements to offset costs and supply income to owners; some ads were on the front page with the last page entirely composed of advertisements. These ads were the lifeblood of many papers. Because many people did not make large salaries, newspaper owners had to keep their prices low so that they could sell their papers. Annual subscriptions generally were \$1.00, \$1.50, or \$2.00 for most of the nineteenth century. Thus, ads were vitally important, not only for the newspaper owners, but also for the businesses placing the ads. In addition to newspaper advertisements, business owners could only inform their potential customers by using handbills or word of mouth. Because of the laborious process that was used to compose the paper, editors were generally very slow to change advertisements (some ads for businesses ran an entire year, especially if an illustration was part of the ad), also in part owing to the fact that many advertisements were paid to run for months and thus many were outdated by the time they were dropped to make room for new ads.

A typical early to mid-nineteenth century paper would have some ads and fiction or the text of speeches on page one. Page two often was kept for national and international news, with local and state news on page three, which also included ads. Page four usually was composed entirely of advertisements. To help their readers, many editors inserted brief notes about new ads on page three at the head of their local news material.

What else was in these newspapers? Local militia musters, court news, real estate sales, borough council meetings, historical articles, occasional fiction series, liquor license application notices, letters from local folks traveling abroad or elsewhere in the United States, editorials, business news, and the state-mandated mercantile appraisals. During the Civil War and later conflicts the papers included letters written by soldiers who sent them home for publication.

The Early Democratic Papers

There are no extant copies of Lewisburg's first paper, a Jacksonian Democrat

paper entitled *The News Letter*, which appeared for about eighteen months in 1824-1825. William Carothers was the publisher.¹ In February 1829, Carothers issued another Jacksonian paper called the *Union Hickory* from a New Berlin office. After ten issues, Carothers moved the *Union Hickory* to Lewisburg, where he continued the paper until April 1830. Like other papers that followed, the *Union Hickory* struggled to survive in a small town in which the majority of the residents were not subscribers. Carothers did not print four issues in January and February 1830, a sure sign that the paper was financially unstable. Its last issue was April 9, 1830, when its new owner, Daniel Gotshall, made the announcement that he was taking over from Carothers.²

Gotshall changed the title of his new paper to the *Lewisburg Journal* and launched it from a Market Street office on May 1, 1830. In his introductory editorial,

Gotshall mentioned improvements over the *Union Hickory* and stated that his new paper would include news about domestic and agricultural manufacturing. He told his readers that the paper would be democratic-republican and would be friendly to both the state and national governments. This first *Lewisburg Journal* is a good research tool for the Crosscut Canal, changes in local businesses indicated in the numerous advertisements throughout the paper, and a multi-part series about Captain John Brady that Gotshall reprinted from a newspaper in Blairsville.³ Even though there is no

¹ "Lewisburg Newspapers," *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch Farmer*, September 11, 1850. The author of this article has not located any information about Carothers. The same is true for most of the newspaper owners/editors mentioned throughout this article. A search of census records may yield some brief material about the backgrounds and ages of these men.

² The *Union Hickory* was in print from February 17, 1829 to April 9, 1830.

³ The Brady series, originally in eleven parts, appeared in the *Journal* issues of May 12, 19, 26, June 2,

indication that the *Journal* was having financial issues, the paper abruptly ceased with the October 30, 1832, issue.

On February 18, 1833, a new paper entitled the *Lewisburg Journal and Union County Advocate* made its appearance. Publishers George M. Miller and Edward S. Bowen stated that they had purchased the press of the *Lewisburg Journal* and would continue the same principles, “supporting the men and measures of the great Democratic party, which has raised our country, and particularly the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to that unexampled state of prosperity and happiness which we at present enjoy and being strict adherence to it, depends in a great measure, the permanence of our Republican government.”⁴

Former owner Gotshall wrote a letter that appeared in this first issue of the *Journal and Advocate*, apologizing for the abrupt suspension of the *Journal* last October, citing “circumstances beyond my control.” The new owners also noted in their first issue that the *Mirror* had been joined to the *Journal* and its literature contents would always be found on page four of the new paper. The new owners also promised to continue the *Mirror’s* support of equal rights for working men and mechanics.⁵ The author has conducted a search for the *Mirror* but has found nothing to indicate where and when this paper was published.

The *Journal and Advocate*, like other contemporary papers, is good for research into the changing nature of businesses in Lewisburg. The paper covered the argument over whether or not to lay gravel on Market Street, proposals for the new town of Churchville across the Susquehanna River, stories on the Crosscut, and temperance issues. In the issue of February 1, 1834, readers learned that editors Miller and Bowen were parting ways and any outstanding debts must be settled before March 1. The partnership was formally dissolved on February 15 and the paper ceased publication on February 22, 1834.

Lewisburg was without a newspaper until June 20, 1835, when attorney George R. Barrett began publication of the *Lewisburg Democrat* from an office on Market

July 14, 28, 1832.

⁴ “To the Public,” *Lewisburg Journal and Union County Advocate*, February 18, 1833.

⁵ David Gotshall, “To My Patrons,” *Journal and Advocate*, February 18, 1833; “To the Patrons of the *Mirror*,” *ibid.*

between Water and Front. This paper continued until March 3, 1836, when it went out of business without any formal notice in the paper.



The *Democrat* was not replaced until December 7, 1837, when D. G. Fitch issued the first number of the *Lewisburg Standard*. Fitch professed that his paper would be neutral in politics because it seemed that the local folks were generally evenly divided in sentiment. But six months later, Fitch's *Standard* was in trouble. In an editorial, Fitch stated that he had a good number of subscriptions within the borough, but very few outside. Puzzled, Fitch called a public meeting to get feedback about how he could improve the paper. To his surprise, people told him they preferred a political sheet, so in June 1838 Fitch announced that the *Standard* would favor the Democratic Party.⁶

In addition to the usual business advertisements and stories Fitch was very interested in the local education issue that surrounded the Lewisburg Academy. In the 1833-1834 legislative session, the state enacted a public education law that Governor George Wolf had been pushing for years. The bill allowed local entities to opt out of tax-supported, free public education; in Union County, only Lewisburg and White Deer Township voted for the new system. Plans were laid for an academy, but the opposition, led in part by General Abbott Green, accused backers of the academy of elitism because the academy intended to charge its students to attend. In spite of such opposition, the Academy opened in 1839. Fitch's paper carried numerous stories about the plans for the academy and its subsequent opening.⁷

⁶ "To the Patrons of the Standard," *Lewisburg Standard*, June 28, 1838. An untitled editorial in the July 5, 1838, issue also spoke about the change in politics.

⁷ The following issues of the *Standard* include stories related to the education issue: in 1838, March 1, 8,

The *Standard* also ran a column entitled “Port of Lewisburg” that chronicled the arrivals and departures of canal boats at the wharves along South Water Street, thus allowing today’s researchers to gain an understanding of the volume of traffic that the canal brought to Lewisburg. The paper also covered the activities of the Lewisburg Lyceum, the newly-formed Lewisburg Thespian Society, the borough council’s meetings, the problems with the borough’s graveyards, military companies,, and the occasional fires that plagued the area.

Fitch transferred ownership of the paper to H. L. Dieffenbach on September 1, 1839. In the September 5 issue of the paper, now entitled the *Lewisburg Standard and Buffalo Democratic Farmer*, Fitch wrote that he was leaving “with a view of engaging in a business more congenial to our health and inclinations.” New owner Dieffenbach stated in the same issue that he would reduce the number of ads in favor of more reading material. The title changed to *Lewisburg Standard and Buffalo Democratic Farmer* on December 4, 1839. The new title only lasted two issues; the December 11 issue was the last. Dieffenbach wrote that he was leaving, having purchased a newspaper in “another place,” not for lack of support.

The Three Whig Newspapers

The rise of the Whig Party in the 1830s in opposition to Andrew Jackson, occasioned the advent of Whig newspapers in Lewisburg. The first, and longest-lived, was the *People’s Advocate*, which began publication in August 1837. Launched by Jonas Kelchner, who owned the Milton-based *States’ Advocate*, the paper supported the re-election of Pennsylvania Governor Joseph Ritner and opposed the re-election of President Martin Van Buren. Instead, the paper advocated that war hero William Henry Harrison should be the Whig candidate in the next presidential election. Kelchner wrote that his paper would have something for everyone in all classes.⁸

In addition to the usual advertisements and other local news, the *People’s Advocate* included a column on the canal trade in Lewisburg. However, the occasional

15, 29, April 5, 12, 19, 26, May 3. June 7, 14, September 13, 20; and in 1839, March 28, August 15. For the local response to the education bill, see Charles M. Snyder, et al., *Union County Pennsylvania: A Celebration of History* (Lewisburg: Union County Historical Society, 2000), 248-49.

⁸ “To the Public,” *People’s Advocate*, August 7, 1838. Kelchner ended the *States’ Advocate* in February 1839 (*People’s Advocate*, February 16, 1839).

missed issue hints at financial struggles, and the paper ceased on October 24, 1840. Three weeks later, new owner William Fisher issued the first number of a new series with the same title. In the following week's issue, Fisher wrote that "Our columns shall always be open for the free discussion of Moral, Political, Literary and Scientific subjects; but personal abuse shall in no case and under no circumstances be admitted into our columns." Fisher continued the failing paper until April 9, 1841, when, he wrote, "for reasons best known to ourself," the paper ceased. Fisher transferred his subscribers to the *Union Star*, then published in Mifflinburg.⁹

On September 4, 1841, the *Independent Press* made its appearance. Edited by S. K. Sweetman, the *Independent Press* survived until December 16, 1842. The author has not examined the two or three surviving copies to ascertain their contents.¹⁰ The third Whig paper, entitled the *Union Weekly Whig*, was in print from July 1851 to July 1852. It was owned and edited by R. I. Nesbit & Company, and is an average nineteenth century paper espousing the Whig political philosophy of a one-term presidency, a better-regulated currency, protective tariffs, repeal of the sub-treasury bill, and economy in spending.¹¹

German Language Newspapers

Ludwig Derr came to Pennsylvania from the German states. Many of the early settlers who came to the Susquehanna Valley were also of German ancestry and it was only natural that they wanted to read the news in their native language. There were approximately a dozen German language newspapers in New Berlin, but only two in Lewisburg. One was entitled the *Lewisburg Journal und Union Advokat*, which was simply a German edition of the *Lewisburg Journal*. This edition was in print in 1832.¹²

⁹ "Editor's Address," *People's Advocate*, November 28, 1840.

¹⁰ "Lewisburg Newspapers," *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch Farmer*, September 11, 1850. For the surviving copies and their locations, see The Library of Congress "Chronicling America" series, at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>. This same website applies for all the other newspapers included in this article.

¹¹ *Union Weekly Whig*, July 3, 1851.

¹² The *Lewisburg Journal* issue of July 14, 1832, noted the German version. In Ruth Salisbury (editor), *Pennsylvania Newspapers: A Bibliography and Union List* (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania Library Association, 1969), 67, indicated that the paper was issued in 1832-1833, with no surviving issues noted. However, since the *Lewisburg Journal* ceased publication later in 1832, it would seem logical that the German version also went out of print.

The second German paper issued in Lewisburg was the *Susquehanna Zeitung*, which was published from 1862-1864. Its publisher, Karl Volkmar, is one of Lewisburg's forgotten men of letters. Volkmar was one of the Germans who fled their homeland after the failed 1848 revolution. He came to Lewisburg by 1852 and advertised himself as a teacher of the German and French languages, drawing, painting, and architecture. He was also a lithographer and produced views of Lewisburg, the Union County courthouse, and the county itself. The *Susquehanna Zeitung* was a Republican paper and supported the war effort. In January, 1864, Volkmar moved the paper to Williamsport and continued as publisher until his death in 1886. I have failed to locate any surviving issues of this paper.¹³

Lewisburg's First Successful Paper—The Lewisburg Chronicle

On September 23, 1843, the *Lewisburg Chronicle* made its debut. Owners William B. Shriner and S. A. Burkenbine wrote that their paper would support “Democratic men and measures,” but would also be a family newspaper, not a “violent and abusive party paper.” In March 1844, Burkenbine left the paper “for my own welfare,” remarking further that Lewisburg was used to its newspaper owners leaving their jobs.¹⁴



¹³ On the paper, see John F. Meginness (editor), *History of Lycoming County* (Chicago: Brown, Runk, 1892), in Chapter 22, found online at www.usgenet.org/usa/pa/county/lycoming/history/Chapter22.html. Notices of Volkmar's activities while in Lewisburg can be found in various issues of newspapers during this period. His obituary is in the *Lewisburg Chronicle*, January 21, 1886.

¹⁴ “To the Public,” *Lewisburg Chronicle*, September 23, 1843; “To the Public,” *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 16, 1844.

Indeed, the newspaper's office and title tells the story of the early years of the *Chronicle*. It was first published from a second story office on Market Street over the post office between Third and Fourth. In March 1845, the paper moved to the Armory, then two weeks later could be found on the second floor of a frame house near the Washington House. Two years later, the paper was located on Market between Second and Third. In July 1847, the paper's title changed to the *Lewisburg Chronicle and Union County General Advertiser*. On January 1, 1848, the title became the *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch General Advertiser*, followed a year later by the *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch Farmer*, before reverting to its original simple title in April 1850. In March 1853, the paper moved to the Beaver block on North Third for six months while its building was torn down and rebuilt.¹⁵

In the midst of the name changes and office moves, Oliver N. Worden arrived at the *Chronicle* and became its editor in 1848. Born in New York State, Worden began his newspaper career with a Utica paper before coming to Lewisburg. Worden, along with John R. Cornelius, became owner of the paper in 1854 and ran the paper until he sold his interest to Cornelius in December 1864.¹⁶

Long after Worden had retired, a former employee described his boss: Mr. Worden's convictions were the rule of his life; when he espoused a cause he did so from principle, and not from selfish motives. He was, emphatically, a positive man, and could always give a reason for 'the hope that was within him.' He always took an active part in the questions of the day, and his pen was ever ready to do its part. Controversy he did not incite, but when it was thrust upon him he was always ready to meet it, and generally came out best at the end.

As a writer, in his day, he had but few equals—and no superiors—among the country press. That there is some show for this claim, we need only refer to the fact that he was often called 'the Horace Greeley of the West Branch.'

He was conscientiously opposed to all manner of secret societies, and spoke and wrote against them—believing that they were detrimental to the best interests of the community.

Those who are acquainted with him know that he is a deep thinker; outspoken in his views; good writer (we do not refer to the legibility (!) of

¹⁵ See the following issues of the *Chronicle* for the information contained in this paragraph: September 23, 1843; March 29, April 12, 1845; July 17, 1847; January 1, 1848; January 3, 1849; April 3, 1850; March 25, September 30, 1853.

¹⁶ H. C. Ammon, "Our 'Remembrance Gallery,'" *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 15, 1877; *Chronicle*, December 29, 1854; December 30, 1864.

his manuscript); a staunch friend, and just, though strict, teacher.¹⁷

Worden's arrival at the paper signaled a change in politics. Originally a newspaper supportive of the Democratic Party, Worden initially steered it to an independent course. Promoting also the idea of a family paper, Worden printed fictional stories by local authors, a series on various botany topics, stories about early history of the region, and letters from locals who were traveling both abroad and around the United States. All of this was in addition to the usual business notices and advertisements, militia notes, borough council meetings, the canal trade, and the formation and use of the new town cemetery. After gold was discovered in California, Worden covered the migration west of Lewisburgers in search of fame and fortune. In 1851, after William H. Chamberlin had returned from his California excursion, the *Chronicle* printed his "Notes of a Seven Months' Journey to California."¹⁸



Oliver N. Worden, owner/editor of the Lewisburg Chronicle, 1848-1864
Credit: Harry Ammon

The December 29, 1854, issue noted that Worden had taken John R. Cornelius into partnership as co-owner of the *Chronicle*. Cornelius would remain with the paper until his death in 1891. He bought out Worden's interest in the paper in December 1864

¹⁷ Ammon, March 15, 1877.

¹⁸ The December 11, 1847, issue of the *Chronicle* noted that Shrinier was leaving the paper and that Worden would take an independent course with it. The Chamberlin series can be found in the issues of January 1-April 16, 1851.

and controlled the paper for the next twenty-six years. A native of Lewisburg, Cornelius was sent to his grandfather's Ohio farm after his own father was killed in a mill accident. After an apprenticeship in the printing business, Cornelius came back home and became an employee of the *Chronicle*. In a tribute to the man who taught him the newspaper business, Benjamin K. Focht wrote that Cornelius was "the brightest editor we have ever known. He was not only possessed of rare native ability, but he had an acquired store of knowledge rarely possessed by any man, much less a country editor. He wrote English perfectly and spoke four different languages. He was also a Christian gentleman and of good heart and family devotion. . . . As a humorist paragraphist few humorists of his day surpassed him."¹⁹

Worden and Cornelius brought in Henry C. Hickok as editor of the *Chronicle*, but Hickok was on the job only six months. A lawyer by profession, Hickok moved to Harrisburg in June, becoming Deputy Superintendent of Public Schools, then State Superintendent of Public Instruction, among his important positions during his career.²⁰ After Hickok's departure, Worden seems to have resumed the editorial position and began to move the paper into the ranks of the Whig Party, and after that party's demise, into the new Republican Party. I have not seen any specific editorial announcing the change in party loyalty, but a general reading of the *Chronicle* reveals that Worden's choice of articles and news coverage suggests this change. He reprinted articles critical of the slave trade, covered the increasing number of Republican meetings in the area, touched on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and the problems in the Kansas Territory (made all the more immediate because of the migration of several families from Union County to neighboring Missouri. Worden printed letters from these county emigrants), and, beginning regularly in 1858, letters from John A. Grier.

A former employee of the *Chronicle*, Grier had come to the University at Lewisburg, then worked at the newspaper before joining the United States Navy in 1855. Initially assigned to a vessel in the Mediterranean Squadron, Grier experienced the attempts to intercept filibustering (private military) expeditions in Central America,

¹⁹ Cornelius obituary, *Lewisburg Chronicle*, August 20, 1891; B. K. Focht, "Chronicle Office Passes on Rollers," *Lewisburgh Saturday News*, June 27, 1935.

²⁰ Henry C. Hickok seems to be one of those Pennsylvanians forgotten over time. The author of this article has been doing some research in an attempt to uncover more information about him. He seems to have been born in New York around 1818 and died in Philadelphia in 1898.

where his ship's crew was decimated by yellow fever. After participating in the failed attempt to lay the first transatlantic cable, Grier, rising in the ranks as an engineer, was part of the 1858-1859 Paraguay Expedition. Reassigned to the USS *Crusader*, which was based at Key West, Grier chronicled his vessel's interception of the slave trade off Cuba. His letters, published by Worden in the *Chronicle*, provide a glimpse into the navy's role in gunboat diplomacy and the demise of the slave trade.²¹

In May 1859, the *Chronicle* absorbed the *Union County Star*, which had been published in Mifflinburg. The paper's new title, which lasted through the end of 1864, was now the *Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle*. Worden and Cornelius were



strong supporters of President Abraham Lincoln and the paper reflected their patriotism during the war years. From the April 26, 1861, issue to that of December 30, 1864, the *Star and Chronicle* was published twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Fridays, as an abbreviated two-page issue, so that the local folks could keep up with the fast pace of war news. As a supporter of the war effort, the *Star and Chronicle* represented the soldiers in the field by printing their letters that were sent home to publish. Prominent correspondents included Captain James M. Linn of the 51st Pennsylvania, William Reed of the 8th Missouri (Reed was from Hartley Township originally), Captain Thomas G. Orwig of the 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery, and Surgeon Theodore Christ of the 45th Pennsylvania. There were dozens of units represented, including several non-Pennsylvania regiments where former Union Countians were serving.²²

²¹ Grier was born in West Chester and came to Lewisburg in the early 1850s. He served in the United States Navy from 1855-1865, leaving the service as chief engineer. After the Civil War, he was engineer at the United States Mint in Philadelphia, then moved to Chicago where he died in 1902. The author of this article is preparing a monograph on Grier.

²² The title change to *Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle* took place on May 6, 1859.

The *Lewisburg Chronicle* reverted to its old name and went back to a weekly publication (Fridays) on January 6, 1865. The firm of Worden & Cornelius was dissolved effective December 30, 1864, in preparation for the change in ownership. Cornelius continued the paper as a Republican-affiliated sheet as well as providing the usual coverage that Worden had in the paper—local business changes, letters from travelers reporting what they saw, the 1865 flood and the new bridge, the arrival of the railroad in town, fires that destroyed businesses, the opening of the Music Hall, local and state politics, the role of veterans in the post-war society, and much more.

In the spring of 1877, Cornelius moved the office to a two-story frame house that he designed specifically for the *Chronicle's* office. It was located on South Second Street opposite the courthouse, where the paper remained until July 1887. At that time, Cornelius moved the building, rolling it from the South Second location to a new one on South Front (#22), where the old Buffalo Valley Telephone Company building now stands. Cornelius died in August 1891, having run the paper for twenty-six years. His widow Hannah arranged to sell the paper, which took place on April 30, 1892. The *Chronicle* reported that a new firm, the Lewisburg Chronicle Publishing Company Limited, purchased the paper, but a week later, the paper went into the hands of George W. Schoch of Mifflinburg.²³

After publication was suspended for a month to upgrade the facilities, the *Chronicle* resumed in mid-June 1892. Schoch continued the paper's varied approach to the local area with the usual news. In August 1892, war veteran and attorney James M. Linn began to serialize the history of the 4th Pennsylvania, in which he served for three months at the beginning of the Civil War. Linn then came home and recruited Company H, 51st Pennsylvania, and after finishing the history of the 4th, he continued with the 51st, detailing the regiment's formation, training, and campaign in North Carolina. Linn also wrote about the Pennsylvania Reserves and especially the role of the local Slifer Guards, officially Company D, 5th Pennsylvania Reserves. His recollections continued

²³ *Chronicle*, March 15, 1877; July 7, 1887; August 20, 1891; April 14, May 5, 12, 1892. The *Lewisburg Journal*, in its issue of May 5, 1892, reported that the new owners of the *Chronicle* were Charles H. Hassenplug, W. C. Gretzinger, and A. M. S. Potter. See Benjamin K. Focht, " 'Chronicle' Office Passes on Rollers," *Lewisburgh Saturday News*, June 27, 1935, for details on the *Chronicle* office and J. R. Cornelius.

in the *Chronicle* until his death in February 1897.²⁴

George W. Schoch continued as owner of the *Chronicle* until August 1907, when he sold the paper to L. K. Derr, a local businessman who at the time owned a confectionary. Throughout this time, the paper continued to be a very readable and informative sheet. Special interest material included a series of letters from Bucknell professor Lincoln Hulley, who chronicled his trip to Europe in 1897, and letters from Miss Esther Shields, who went as a missionary to Korea in 1897, sending numerous letters home that detailed her experiences a world away from Lewisburg. During the Spanish-American War, letters from the officers and men of Company A, 12th Pennsylvania, appeared in the paper. This regiment went to Camp Alger in Northern Virginia and never had the opportunity to go overseas. In 1905, the *Chronicle* printed a series of articles that presented the history of the Brown family, occupants of Union County since 1804.²⁵

L. K. Derr's first issue of the *Chronicle* was September 14, 1907, with A. D. Miller as editor. In addition to the usual material, the paper included letters from Mary Derr, who left town in the fall of 1907 on a tour that took her to Japan, Korea, Ceylon, India, Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, Italy, Germany, France, and Great Britain. Looking back, it is apparent that the *Chronicle* was in trouble, but I have seen nothing in the columns that indicated any problems. Yet the *Chronicle's* last issue came on June 29, 1912, without any explanation from either owner or editor. The *Chronicle* was Lewisburg's first successful paper and an indispensable source of information about Lewisburg during the years it was published.

The Second Lewisburg Democrat

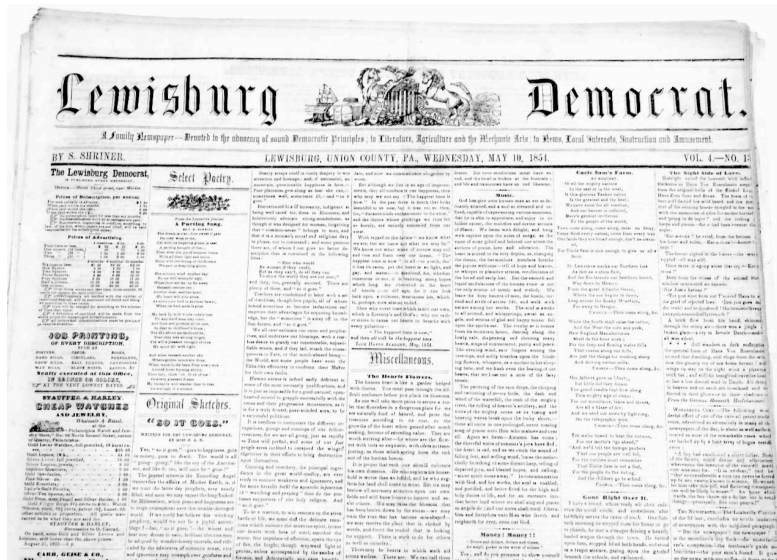
Samuel Shriner began a new *Lewisburg Democrat* on October 1, 1850. The new *Democrat* was another typical nineteenth century newspaper, full of advertisements,

²⁴ Linn's articles can be found in most issues of the *Chronicle* from August 20, 1892-February 20, 1897. The paper also published the reminiscences of Joseph E. Orwig, Company A, 131st Pennsylvania, in most issues from March 9, 1895-May 9, 1896, as well as various other accounts from veterans. A thirteen-part series in the *Chronicle* from October 16, 1897-March 26, 1898, detailed the history of Andrew Gregg Tucker Post 58, Grand Army of the Republic, located in Lewisburg.

²⁵ *Chronicle*, August 30, 1907. The articles about the Brown family, written by A. W. and William W. Brown, appeared in the issues of October 21, 28, November 18, 25, December 2, 9, 16, 30, 1905, and in the 1906 issues of January 6, 13, 20, and February 17.

business news, politics, news of the canal and railroads, the impending division of Union County, and other local issues.

Like many other newspapers, the *Democrat* was unable to entice enough subscribers to keep it afloat. The paper suspended publication in 1854 until its issue of March 29. In that issue, Samuel Shriner briefly recounted the history of his newspaper, which had started “with but small capital” . . . “in a county in which the Whig Party is largely in the majority, and *division* in the Democratic ranks.” Shriner complained that too many people were reading his paper without paying for it. Since he had spent the last two months personally calling upon all the delinquent accounts and not getting very good results, Shriner announced that he was purging them all from his subscription list.²⁶



Thereafter, the *Democrat* occasionally missed an issue because of its deteriorating subscriber base. In the August 30, 1854, issue, Shriner remarked that newspapers were subject to more loss than any other business because of the credit system that many subscribers used to defer their small subscription payments. Starting with the September 13 issue, Shriner declared that he would accept only \$1.50 cash for subscriptions. This final appeal to his readers failed to work and the *Democrat* ceased publication with the December 27 issue.²⁷

²⁶ “To Our Readers,” *Lewisburg Democrat*, March 29, 1854.
²⁷ “Editorial Edict,” *Lewisburg Democrat*, August 30, 1854.

The Troubled Union Argus

On the last day of July, 1855, the *Union Argus* made its appearance as the latest newspaper in Lewisburg. Issued on Tuesdays from an office on the North Third Street side of William Frick’s building, the *Argus* was owned by F. M. Ziebach and Peter Stout. They dedicated their paper “to the principles of democracy—free from all factional disaffection and wild scheme of factionalism.” The introductory editorial went on to state that “A courteous and manly opposition, appealing to the good sense and judgment of men, is more effectual than traduction, falsehood and invidious comparison.” Ziebach and Stout declared that they had a local interest at heart and would sacrifice all party loyalties to support men who “are avowedly allied to our local welfare.”

The *Union Argus* was another typical nineteenth-century newspaper, containing the usual business news, advertisements, political news from around the country and world, and full coverage of the competition between Lewisburg and Mifflinburg over the location of the county seat. Although a Democratic newspaper, the *Argus’* editors



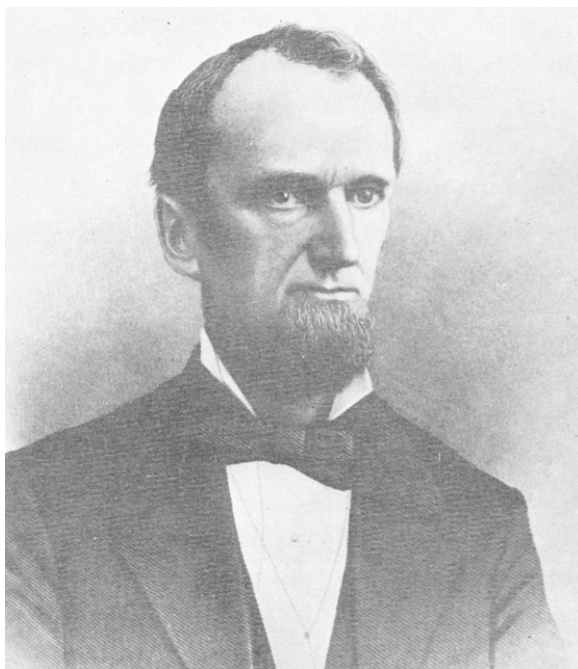
seemed to favor the Whig idea of forbidding the spread of slavery to the territories. In the October 16, 1855, issue, the editors published “Our Position,” an editorial confirming support of the Democratic Party, an editorial seemingly designed to end any confusion about what the readers felt about the newspaper.

Later that same month, Peter Stout sold his interest in the *Argus* to attorney James M. Linn, who, in a flowery Victorian prose editorial, welcomed his chance to help keep the interests of the Democratic Party alive. Linn worked as one of the

owner/editors only until March 1856, when he left the paper, citing the increasing pressures from his busy law practice. Henry W. Crotzer purchased Linn's half interest. In March 1857, Ziebach sold his interest, leaving Crotzer to continue the paper.²⁸

Because there are few surviving issues of the *Argus* after early 1857, it is difficult to piece together the subsequent ownership of the paper. I. H. Mauser, in his *Centennial History of Lewisburg*, noted that Ziebach and Crotzer continued publication until April 1856, obviously an error; he should have written the year 1857, but even then Mauser's information was wrong. The *Argus* noted that Ziebach sold out in March 1857 without mentioning Crotzer leaving as well. Mauser wrote that the paper was sold, the buyers taking the press and moving west to found a new paper.²⁹

We do know that the new owner was Truman H. Purdy, who changed the format of the paper and began a new volume 1, issue 1, on July 29, 1857. Born in Wayne County



Truman H. Purdy, owner/editor of the *Union Argus*, 1857-1860
Credit: *Sunbury Pennsylvania, Two Hundred Years 1772 to 1972*, page 199

²⁸ *Union Argus*, October 23, 1855; March 18, 1856; March 31, 1857. When the *Lewisburg Democrat* ceased publication in late 1855, the editors transferred the subscription list to the *Argus*. See the *Argus* issue of December 11, 1855, for this information.

²⁹ I. H. Mauser, *Centennial History of Lewisburg* (Lewisburg: The author, 1886), 119. Surviving issues (or at least those located by the author of this article) include only four issues for 1857 after Purdy started the new series, none for 1858, only two 1859 issues, and forty 1860 issues. For the period 1861-1864, this author has not seen any issues, although the Library of Congress located four issues. See the Library of Congress's Chronicling America section for their lists of repositories with *Union Argus* issues.

in 1830, Purdy had attended at the University at Lewisburg and was studying law, when, according to Mauser, he formed a new company and reissued the *Argus* as an essentially new paper. One of the new editors was J. G. Winegarden; his 1878 obituary stated that he was an editor of the paper from 1857 to its demise in 1864.³⁰

The lack of surviving copies of the *Argus* renders it difficult to determine how the paper fared during the last years preceding the Civil War. The paper vigorously defended the Democratic Party principles and lashed out at the new Republican Party and its presidential nominee, Abraham Lincoln. In its December 14, 1860, edition, the *Lewisburg Chronicle* reported that Purdy had been ousted from the *Argus*. “Considering his youth and inexperience,” wrote O. N. Worden, “and that he is not a printer by trade, we judge Mr. Purdy has developed talents, industry, and perseverance worthy of a better cause and greater rewards. We wish him well.” Worden went on to write that the *Argus* had been established by a “company of politicians and office hunters.” These unidentified men were not satisfied with their editor, who was “not sufficiently flexible to suit the personal and local design of some.” In spite of fiery anti-Lincoln stories that Purdy used to lash out at the Republicans, the paper had not grown fast enough to suit the company, and so Purdy was let go.³¹

After Purdy was ousted from the *Argus*, J. M. Baum became the new publisher with A. H. Dill as associate editor. Dill left the paper after a few months and Baum died in June 1862. Mauser indicated that the paper’s stockholders then elected J. G. Winegarden and Jacob Wolfe as editors. Wolfe remained with the *Argus* only a short time, leaving Winegarden as the editor until December, 1864, when the paper went out of business. The *Argus* was anti-war and anti-Republican. A Lewisburg soldier home on furlough in May 1864 complained about the “Copperhead paper” in a letter to the

³⁰ On Purdy, see Herbert C. Bell, *History of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk & Company, Publishers, 1891), 818-819. Other information taken from Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 119; with Winegarden obituary in the *Chronicle*, January 10, 1878.

³¹ After Purdy left the *Argus*, he established the *Northumberland County Democrat* in Sunbury, which he owned from 1861 until 1867. Under Purdy’s leadership, the *Democrat* became known as one of the worst of the Pennsylvania Democratic newspapers, attacking Lincoln, the Republicans, the war effort, blacks, abolitionists, and anyone else who opposed the peace Democrats. In spite of such sentiment, Purdy was elected to the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1864-1865. After the war, he was one of the founders of Steelton, wrote two books of poetry and one novel, was president of the Lewisburg Planing and Siding Mill, treasurer of the Lewisburg Nail Works, and a director of the Lewisburg Steam Forge Company. Purdy died in 1898. See Bell, *Northumberland County*, 818-819.

Chronicle, noting that the copy he was handed by a young boy was designed to discourage soldiers and inflame the public. The *Mifflinburg Telegraph*, excerpting from the *Bloomsburg Republican*, let its readers know that the *Argus* “has gone dead.”³²

The Lewisburg Journal

Mauser indicated in his *Centennial History of Lewisburg* that the *Lewisburg Journal* was essentially a continuation of the *Union Argus*, but there clearly was a break between these papers. The *Lewisburg Chronicle* noted that the first issue of the *Journal* appeared on July 19, 1865, “on the ashes of the Argus.” J. Ely Eicholtz was the initial publisher, but after only six months Eicholtz left and the paper languished until July 1866, when the *Chronicle* noted that Levi Sterner had just restarted the *Journal*. In November 1867, Sterner departed and turned the paper over to G. B. McGinley, who managed the paper until April 1871, when F. O. Whitman became the new owner. The frequent change in ownership and occasional lapses in issues indicate that the *Journal*, like its predecessor, had a rocky beginning.³³

Whitman seems to have stabilized the paper and remained its owner until 1895, when he sold the *Journal* to William L. Kurtz, who owned the paper until his death in August 1900. Kurtz had grown up in Aaronsburg, then moved to Centre Hall, where his father owned the *Reporter*. Kurtz graduated from Bucknell, then worked in the milling and hardware businesses before he purchased the *Journal*. In April 1901, J. Fred Kurtz (William’s brother) purchased the *Journal* from his brother’s widow and kept it until 1918, when he retired and sold it to Jacob P. S. Strickler. In July 1925, Strickler sold the paper to Charles Smith. The *Journal* continued as one of Lewisburg’s two newspapers until August 29, 1946, the date of its last issue. The *Journal* then merged with the *Lewisburgh Saturday News* to become a paper with the unwieldy title of *The Lewisburg*

³² Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 119-120; *Lewisburg Chronicle*, May 17, 1864; *Mifflinburg Telegraph*, December 22, 1864. Baum’s obituary is in the *Lewisburg Chronicle*, July 1, 1862. The paper was entitled the *Semi-Weekly Argus* for a few months in 1861-1862, based on the July 17, 1861, issue as noted in the Library of Congress Chronicling America series.

³³ Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 120; *Lewisburg Chronicle*, July 21, 1865; May 13, July 13, 1866; May 30, November 15, 1867. There seem to be no surviving issues of the *Journal* prior to the issue of June 24, 1885. Mauser, page 120, wrote that Eicholtz turned the paper over to Francis Graves, who remained the publisher until he gave the paper to Levi Sterner in May 1867. However, Mauser’s history of the paper contravenes what was printed in the *Chronicle*; the difference in facts indicates the convoluted early history of the *Journal*.

*Journal and the Lewisburgh Saturday News.*³⁴

In addition to covering activities of the Grand Army of the Republic and printing obituaries of Civil War veterans, the *Journal* later included letters from members of Troop M while they served on active duty along the Mexican border in 1916, then printed letters from various local men and women in service during World War I. During the latter half of the 1890s, the paper included travel letters from local residents Cyrus Hoffa, C. F. Lindig, Reverend Henry Gerhart, missionary Esther Shields, and Robert Slifer. In 1910, the paper ran a lengthy series on Union County real estate values, a Dreisbach family genealogy in the November 28, 1913, issue, a “Notables of Lewisburg” (and later Mifflinburg) in 1930, Mary W. Massey’s “Early History of Lewisburg in 1935, and a valuable “Survey of Leisure Time” series, also in 1935.³⁵

During the period from the late 1880s through the years before World War I, the *Journal* transformed from a typical nineteenth century newspaper to a more modern sheet. The *Journal* was always known as a Democratic paper, but as the Twentieth Century went on it became a more inclusive paper, especially after the *Journal* and *Saturday News* merged. In addition to the special coverage noted above, the paper included the usual business news, local, state, national, and international news, sports, Bucknell news, and other news of interest to local readers. The *Journal* is valuable for learning about the paving of Market and other streets, the water company issues, the development of Lewisburg High School and its band, the creation of the memorial field behind the high school, the creation of a community house, and other major events in town. The paper extensively covered the “Dollar Days” (many businesses offered discount sales) that ran in late February from 1924 until 1941, as well as the annual community chest drives, and the many activities and fundraisers of the Civic Club after its start in 1907. The paper is also a good source for its coverage of the Depression and its effects, as well as the multiple drives in support of the war effort from 1942-1946.

³⁴ Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 120; *Lewisburg Journal*, May 17, 1895; August 31, 1900; April 12, 1901; July 17, 1925; September 13, 1928 (J. Fred Kurtz obituary); *Lewisburg Journal and the Lewisburgh Saturday News*, December 20, 1946 (Strickler obituary). The spelling of Lewisburg with a final ‘h’ is explained in a previous article in *Accounts* by Roger Curran, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 39.

³⁵ The Cyrus Hoffa travel letters are in various issues in 1896-1897, C. F. Lindig in 1897, Reverend Gerhart in 1897-1900, Esther Shields in 1897 and 1904-5, and Robert Shafer in 1899-1900. The real estate series is in the issues of February 4-August 26, 1910, the “Notables” can be found in the June 12-August 7, 1930, issues, and Massey’s history is found in the February 21-May 30, 1935, issues. The “Survey of Leisure Time” is in the May 30-June 20, 1935, issues.

The Lewisburgh Saturday News

The founding of Lewisburg's last nineteenth century newspaper is shrouded in some mystery. Local printer James Shamp started a newspaper in his South Seventh Street home in January 1881. In August, Shamp partnered with 18-year-old Benjamin K. Focht, whose family had moved to Lewisburg from New Bloomfield in 1864. After attending local schools, Focht apprenticed with J. R. Cornelius, owner of the *Lewisburg Chronicle*. In a letter of recommendation for Focht, Cornelius wrote that Focht was “. . . the best compositor, taking into consideration the short time he served at the business, that I ever knew.”³⁶



³⁶ Snyder et al., *Union County Pennsylvania: A Celebration of History* 87; Justice, "A False Statement," *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 27, 1890. Justice may have gotten the year wrong; he wrote that the *Local News* began in 1881, but the Library of Congress indicates a start date of January 15, 1882.

Benjamin K. Focht (third from left) and other men pose in front of the *Saturday News* Office, probably in 1918.

Photo: Owen Mahon, The Open Door

The new partnership of Shamp and Focht moved to the North Third Street side of the Beaver block and in January 1883 introduced the *Local News* to local readers. T. C. Johnson and Truman P. Reitmeyer also seem to have been instrumental in perhaps financially backing this new endeavor. Physician Wilfred Gerhart was one of the editors. After five months, the paper became the *Lewisburgh Local News*, and on March 31, 1883, became the *Lewisburgh Saturday News*. Shamp left the paper in July after he purchased a confectionary business, leaving Focht as the principal owner.³⁷

Focht remained the owner and principal editor of the *Saturday News* until his death on March 27, 1937. A staunch Republican throughout his life, Focht admired small town America and reveled in pride for his adopted hometown of Lewisburg. Focht entered politics and was a member of the Pennsylvania House (1893-1897) and Senate



Postcard view of the Saturday News Building, 217-223 Market Street

Author's Collection

(1901-1905), and a Representative in Congress (1907-1913, 1915-1923, 1933-1937). In

³⁷ "Justice" in *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 27, 1890; Library of Congress Chronicling America series for the titles. The Library of Congress also lists a *Lewisburg Local Noose*, together with question marks regarding the dates of existence for this title. Snyder, *Union County*, 87, wrote that Focht borrowed \$500 from his mother to start the paper. The "Justice" article in the *Chronicle* objected to Focht's claim that he started the paper and insisted that Shamp was the original founder. The *Chronicle* issue of August 11, 1881, noted the new partnership of Shamp and Focht, and in the July 12, 1883, issue, noted the Shamp confectionary purchase, as did the *Saturday News* in its July 7, 1883, issue.

between these stints, Focht was deputy secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1928-1929). He championed the common man and opposed extremism on both sides. Although his bill that would have introduced America to the first old-age pension was defeated, it was later incorporated into the Social Security law in the 1930s.³⁸

Focht's *Saturday News*, in addition to reflecting the party platform of the Republicans, was another typical paper, reporting on local business moves, printed soldier letters during conflicts, contained numerous obituaries and property sales, as well as the usual editorials, local news, and advertisements. Focht also liked local



history and printed numerous stories and series about Lewisburg and Union County. As time went on, the paper began a series that looked back at the old files of the *Saturday News* and printed excerpts of stories from 23 and 43 years ago. Eventually, the *Saturday News* ran Harold Musser's history of Lewisburg (October 31-December 19, 1925), Mrs. W. C. Bartol's research on local Revolutionary War soldiers (July 3-August 21, 1926), C. M. Steese's history of Mifflinburg (October 15, 1927-March 3, 1928), a list of Lewisburg High School graduates since 1866 (July 12-October 4, 1930), Reverend Morris Derr's History of Lewisburg Churches (intermittently from February 14, 1935-November 24, 1938), and a valuable series that reprinted the minutes of the Civic Club (July 13, 1944-August 16, 1945). After Benjamin Focht died in March, 1937, his son Brown took over the paper until it merged with the *Lewisburg Journal* in August, 1946.

³⁸ On Focht, see his brief political biography in *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, available on-line at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. See also Donald J. Baumgartner, "Benjamin K. Focht: Union County Politician," D.Ed. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1975; Baumgartner, "Benjamin K. Focht, Defender of Rural Conservatism," *Union County Heritage* 6 (1978): 15-24; and Snyder, *Union County Pennsylvania*, 87-88, 90.

The combined *Journal and Saturday News* ended the era of partisan political newspapers in Lewisburg. The initial editorial in the September 5, 1946, issue of the new paper looked back on the proud achievements of both papers, but also looked forward to presenting a combined paper:

It is with a feeling of real pride, tinged with considerable awe, that we take it upon ourselves to publish a single newspaper which will be subject to the criticism that was once split, but is now combined. We undertake this most difficult task because we believe that the future will prove the advisability of one newspaper for the community. A greater circulation, a “oneness” of purpose, and a combination of features from each paper should, following a period of adjustment so necessary at a time like this, provide the residents of Lewisburg and Union County with a newspaper that we hope will soon become “their” newspaper; a home product pledged to uphold, improve and serve the interests far better than publications “foreign” to Union County.

On March 13, 1947, the title changed to the *Lewisburg Journal-News*, and remained as such until January 29, 1953, when the paper became the *Union County Standard and Lewisburg Journal-News* for only this single issue. The name changed to the *Union County Standard-Journal* on February 5, 1953, and continued until yet another name change to the *Union County Journal* on June 29, 1961. On March 23, 1987, the name changed to the *Lewisburg Daily Journal*. In 2003, the *Daily Journal* merged with the *Milton Standard* to become today’s *Standard Journal*.³⁹

In tracing the history of Lewisburg’s nineteenth century newspapers, it is readily apparent that the townsfolk relied heavily on these papers to keep them informed about local events and businesses as well as state, national, and international news. Without the preservation of these valuable papers, researchers today would have difficulty locating detailed and accurate material about the history of Lewisburg, Union County, and vicinity. We have the Linn family to thank for preserving them. The Linn family has included prominent attorneys and historians—James Fleming, John Blair, James Merrill, and Merrill W. Linn. In 1951, noting the absence of a functioning county historical society, Bucknell University issued a call for local historical material that the university would collect and place in the new Ellen Clarke Bertrand Library. Chaired by

³⁹ The dates for all the name changes are taken from the Library of Congress Chronicling America series under each title.

Dr. J. Orin Oliphant, a committee began to speak with local people to identify materials of interest. Merrill Linn, a member of this committee, made a generous donation of old Lewisburg newspapers kept by his family through the years. The university microfilmed these newspapers and they are available for research in the university library.⁴⁰

In addition to the newspaper microfilm at Bucknell (which continues to collect and film local newspapers), Packwood House Museum has bound volumes of the *Chronicle*, *Union Argus*, *Saturday News*, and the second *Lewisburg Democrat*. Some of the museum's bound volumes contain issues not in the Bucknell collection. The Union County Historical Society has microfilm copies of many Lewisburg newspapers. The Library of Congress, as part of its "Chronicling America" series, has some Lewisburg titles available to read on-line.

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⁴⁰ "Name Unit to Collect Local Historical Data," *Journal-News*, May 10, 1951; "Collection of Area Newspapers Given to New Bucknell University Library," *Ibid.*, May 24, 1951.

ACCOUNTS

Published by the Union County Historical Society, Lewisburg PA

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The Purpose and Scope of ACCOUNTS

ACCOUNTS is not your usual journal of local history. It isn't the preserve of trained historians and scholarly writers. Not that their contributions aren't welcome, but ACCOUNTS is a *community* resource, available to anyone who knows something about the history of Union County and wants to share. Our geographic focus is not only present-day Union County, but the county before the separation of Snyder County in 1855, and the County's neighboring areas to the north, east and west.

Guidelines

- ACCOUNTS is not primarily a journal of formal scholarship. Bibliography and footnotes need not accompany an essay, but are welcome if you provide them.

- Items will be fairly short: usually 1000 – 2500 words (a double-spaced page has about 250 words; so 4 to 10 pages of text).
- A variety of items are being sought, such as:
 - Accounts of events in Union County's history
 - Accounts from family history
 - Accounts of the lives of persons associated with the County
 - Accounts of businesses, churches, communities and places
 - Descriptions of objects and their makers (furniture, buggies, etc.)
 - Accounts of buildings (homes, barns, churches, commercial buildings, bridges, etc.), monuments, public works

A "Letters Received" column may appear in forthcoming issues for those who wish to respond to or amplify a previously appearing item. To be published, such letters must be phrased collegially, in a collaborative spirit of improving what is known. The editor retains the right to decide whether to publish a letter received.

Advice to Contributors:

- Accuracy is paramount.
- Focus on what is relevant to Union County history.
- Write about what you know best.
- Accompanying images (photos, maps, illustrations) are encouraged.
- The editors are happy to work with an author to prepare the essay.

Technical Stipulations:

- Get consent of people and families mentioned; author bears sole responsibility if objections are raised.
- Photographs and other images are welcome provided author has clear permission to use them.
- Original material please; previously published work is usually not accepted.
- Existing documents and lists can be included, but need to be explained and discussed in the author's own words.
- Technical excavation reports of specific pre-contact archaeological sites and artifacts are usually not accepted.
- Copyright is held by the Union County Historical Society; the author may re-publish or reuse his/her item without restriction. We ask that a subsequently re-published item that has previously appeared in ACCOUNTS cite its prior publication by the Society.

Editorial Decisions:

- The Union County Historical Society does not take a position on the content of any item appearing in ACCOUNTS.
- Editor may seek advice from an editorial board regarding any submission.
- Decisions by the Editor will be final.

Issue index for Vol 6, No. 1 begins on page 73

Index, Issue # 6-1, February, 2016

This index of ACCOUNTS articles includes place names and geographic features in Union County, the names of individuals associated with Union County, activities, institutions, and industries in the county, and events that transpired in the county.

- alcoholic spirits production (see whiskey)
 arks for river transport 6-1:25, 26
 Arndt, David 6-1:44
 Aaronsburg 6-1:64
 Band Box Theater (Mifflinburg) 6-1:7
 Barrett, George R. (newspaper publisher, atty) 6-1:49
 Blair, John 6-1:69
 Brady, Capt. John 6-1:48
 Brown family 6-1:59
 Beaver Run 6-1:17
 Beaver, Thomas (Danville) 6-1:38
 Benner, Mary 6-1:5, 6
 Benner, Newton (postmaster) 6-1:5
 Bowen, Edward S. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:49
 braucherei (pow wow) 6-1:4
 Buffalo Creek 6-1:17, 25
 Buffalo Cross Roads school 6-1:10
 Buffalo Mountain 6-1:28
 Buffalo Valley 6-1:27
 Burkenbine, S. A. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:53
 Burrey, Hazel 6-1:19
 Burrey, Jeremiah (Jerry) 6-1:19
 Burrey, Luther 6-1:19
 Burrey Walter, Anna (article author) 6-1:18, 19-22
 Burrey's Store, Vicksburg 6-1:19-22
 Canal 6-1:49
 Carothers, William (newspaper publisher) 6-1:48
 Catherman, Carl R. (article author) 6-1:4-18
 Catherman, Harold T. 6-2:4, 6
 Catherman, Pat 6-1:4, 6
 Centre Hall 6-1:64
 Chamberlin, John 6-1:35
 Chamberlin, William H. 6-1:55
 charcoal production 6-1:23
 Christ, Theodore (surgeon) 6-1:57
 Churchville (proposed town) 6-1:49
 Civil War veterans, Lewisburg 6-1:38
 Civilian Conservation Corps 6-1:32
 coal mining, need for props 6-1:27, 29, 30, 31
 Cook, Gene 6-1:12
 Cook, J. Paul (Pauley) 6-1:11
 Cornelius, Hannah 6-1:58
 Cornelius, John R. (newspaper Crosscut
 Crotzer, Henry W. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:62
 Dale, Samuel, family and house 6-1:24
 Derr, L. K. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:59
 Derr, Ludwig 60-1:52
 Derr, Mary 6-1:59
 Derr, Rev. Morris 6-1:68
 Dieffenbach, H. L. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:51
 Dill, A. H. (newspaper editor) 6-1:63
 Dreisbach family genealogy 6-1:65
 Duncan, John 6-1:27
 Duncan's Mill 6-1:27
 Dunkle, Anlyn 6-1:42
 Dunkle, Brown R. 6-1:42
 Dunkle, Charles F. 6-1:42
 Dunkle, Laurda M. 6-1:42
 Eicholtz, J. Ely (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Fisher, William 6-1:52
 Fitch, D. G. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:50
 Fleming, James 6-1:69
 flour production 6-1:25
 Focht, Benjamin K. 6-1:56, 66, 67, 68
 precursor to Social Security
 Focht, Brown 6-1:68
 Foster, Chancey 6-1:39
 Frick, William 6-1:61
 Gearhart, Paul 6-1:12
 Geddes, Paul 6-1:38
 Gerhart, Rev. Henry 6-1:65
 Gerhart, Wilfred 6-1:67
 Gotshall, Daniel (newspaper publisher) 6-1:48, 49
 Great Western Hotel (Vicksburg) 6-1:5
 Green, Gen. Abbott 6-1:50
 Grier, John A. 6-1:56, 57
 grist mills 6-1:24, 25
 Gronlund, DeOnne 6-1:43, 44
 Gronlund, Robert 6-1:43, 44
 hasenpfeffer (card game) 6-1:12
 hexes 6-1:4
 Hickok, Henry C. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:56
 Hoffa, Cyrus 6-1:65

Hulley, Prof. Lincoln (Bucknell) 6-1:59
Index, Cumulative, ACCOUNTS, Vols.
1-5, 2011-2015

James, William R. 6-1:38
 Johnson, T. C. 6-1:67
 Kelchner, Jonas (newspaper publisher)
 6-1:51
 Kulp family 6-1:27
 Kulp mill 6-1:28
 Kurtz, William L. (newspaper publisher)
 6-1:64
 Laurel Park 6-1:28
 Laurelton 6-1:28, 31
 Laurelton mill 6-1:28
 Lewisburg
 Barrett, George R. (newspaper
 publisher, atty) 6-1:49
 Bartol, Mrs. W. C. 6-1:68
 Baum, J. M. (newspaper publisher)
 6-1:63
 Blair, John 6-1:69
 Brady, Capt. John 6-1:48
 Brown family 6-1:59
 Beaver Memorial United Methodist
 Church 6-1:38
 Bucknell University 6-1:38, 64, 65,
 69
 Burkenbine, S. A. (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:53
 canal boat traffic 6-1:51
 Carothers, William (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:48
 Cemetery 6-1:35-46
 chapel 6-1:35-46
 columbarium 6-1:43, 44, 45
 chapel construction 6-1:39
 chapel stove 6-1:43
 gatehouse/office 6-1:37, 38
 Grand Army of the Republic
 (GAR) 6-1:38
 grave removals, 1848 6-
 1:36, 37
 closed cemeteries 6-1:37, 51
 McClure monument 6-1:36
 Miller Circle, monument
 6-1:37
 stained glass, chapel 6-1:41,
 42
 time capsule, chapel 6-1:40
 vault 6-1:38, 39, 41, 42
 William R. James
 Chair Factory 6-1:39
 Chamberlin, William H. 6-1:55
 Christ, Theodore (surgeon) 6-1:57
 Christ's Evangelical Lutheran
 Church 6-1:37
 Civic Club 6-1:65, 68

[Lewisburg continued]

Civil War regiments 6-1:57
 Cornelius, Hannah 6-1:58
 Cornelius, John R. (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:54, 55, 56, 58, 66
 county seat competition with
 Mifflinburg 6-1:61
 Crotzer, Henry W. (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:62
 CVC Contractors 6-1:42
 Democratic Party 6-1:49, 50, 61, 62,
 63, 65
 Derr, L. K. (newspaper publisher)
 6-1:59
 Derr, Ludwig 6-1:52
 Derr, Mary 6-1:59
 Derr, Rev. Morris 6-1:68
 Dieffenbach, H. L. (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:51
 Dill, A. H. (newspaper editor) 6-1:63
 early history articles, newspaper
 6-1:55
 Eicholtz, J. Ely (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:64
 First National Bank 6-1:40
 First Presbyterian Church 6-1:37
 fires 6-1:51
 Fisher, William 6-1:52
 Fitch, D. G. (newspaper publisher)
 6-1:50
 Fleming, James 6-1:69
 flood, 1856 6-1:58
 Focht, Benjamin K. 6-1:56, 66, 67,
 68
 precursor to Social Security
 Focht, Brown 6-1:68
 Frick, William 6-1:61
 Gerhart, Rev. Henry 6-1:65
 Gerhart, Wilfred 6-1:67
 German language newspapers
 6-1:52, 53
 gold rush, local participation 6-1:55
 Gotshall, Daniel (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:48, 49
 Grand Army of the Republic (GAR),
 Post 52 6-1:38, 65
 Great Depression news coverage
 6-1:65
 Green, Gen. Abbott 6-1:50
 Grier, John A. 6-1:56, 57
 Hickok, Henry C. (newspaper
 publisher) 6-1:56
 Historic District 6-1:40
 Hoffa, Cyrus 6-1:65
 Hulley, Prof. Lincoln (Bucknell)
 6-1:59

[Lewisburg continued]

Independent Press 6-1:52
 Johnson, T. C. 6-1:67
 Kelchner, Jonas (newspaper publisher) 6-1:51
 Kulp mill 6-1:28
 Kurtz, William L. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Lewisburg Academy 6-1:50
 Lewisburg Cemetery Association 6-1:35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 44
Lewisburg Chronicle 6-1:40, 53, 58, 59, 63, 66
Lewisburg Chronicle and Union County General Advertiser 6-1:54
Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch General Advertiser 6-1:54
 Lewisburg Chronicle Publishing Company Ltd 6-1:58
Lewisburg Journal and West Branch Farmer 6-1:54
Lewisburg Journal-News 6-1:69
Lewisburg Daily Journal 6-1:69
Lewisburg Democrat 6-1:49, 50, 59
 Lewisburg High School graduates from 1866-1930 6-1:68
Lewisburg Journal 6-1:40, 48, 49, 64, 68
Lewisburg Journal and Union County Advocate 6-1:49
Lewisburg Journal and the Lewisburgh Saturday News 6-1:64, 65, 66, 68
Lewisburg Journal and Union Advokat 6-1:52
 Lewisburg Lyceum 6-1:51
Lewisburg Saturday News 6-1:40
 Advertisements 6-1:68
 local business news 6-1:68
 local history 6-1:68
 local news 6-1:68
 Musser's Lewisburg history 6-1:68
 obituaries 6-1:68
 property sales 6-1:68
 Republican Party news 6-1:68
 soldier letters 6-1:68
Lewisburg Standard 6-1:50, 51
Lewisburg Standard and Buffalo Democratic Farmer 6-1:51
 Lewisburg Thespian Society 6-1:51
Lewisburgh Saturday News 6-1:64, 67
Lewisburgh Local News 6-1:67
 Lindig, C. F. 6-1:65

[Lewisburg continued]

Linn, Capt. James M. 6-1:57, 58, 59, 61, 62
 Linn family 6-1:69
 Linn, Merrill W. 6-1:69, 70
Local News 6-1:67
 Market Street paving 6-1:65
 Massey, Mary W. 6-1:65
 McGinley, G. B. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Merrill James 6-1:69
 Miller, A. D. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:59
Mirror 6-1:49
 Missouri, migration to 6-1:56
 Music Hall 6-1:58
News Letter, The 6-1:48
 New Bloomfield 6-1:66
 newspapers, 19th Century 6-1:46-70
 Oliphant, Dr. J. Orin 6-1:70
 Orwig, Capt. Thomas G. 6-1:57
 Packwood House Museum 6-1:70
People's Advocate 6-1:51
 Pennsylvania, 5th Reserves 6-1:58
 Pennsylvania, 12th, Company A 6-1:59
 Pennsylvania, 51st regiment 6-1:58
 Purdy, Truman H. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:62
 post office 6-1:54
 railroad's arrival 6-1:58
 R. I. Nesbit & Company 6-1:52
 Reed, William 6-1:57
 Reitmeyer, Truman P. 6-1:67
 Republican Party 6-1:56, 63
 Newspapers affiliated 6-1:58
 Schoch, George W. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:58, 59
 Shamp, James (printer) 6-1:66
 Shields, Esther 6-1:59, 65
 Shriner, Samuel (newspaper publisher) 6-1:59, 60
 Shriner, William B. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:53
 Slifer, Eli 6-1:43
 Slifer Guards 6-1:58
 Slifer House Museum 6-1:43
 Slifer, Robert 6-1:65
 Smith, Charles (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
Standard Journal 6-1:69
 Steese, C. M. 6-1:68
 Sterner, Levi (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64

[Lewisburg continued]

Stout, Peter (newspaper publisher) 6-1:61
 Strickler, Jacob P. S. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
Susquehanna Zeitung 6-1:53
 Sweetman, S. K. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:52
 Troop M, Mexican War 6-1:65
Union Argus 6-1:61, 62, 63
 Union County Historical Society 6-1:70
Union County Journal 6-1:69
Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle 6-1:57
Union County Standard and Lewisburg Journal-News 6-1:69
Union County Standard-Journal 6-1:69
Union Hickory, The 6-1:48
 Union National Bank 6-1:40
Union Weekly Whig 6-1:52
 University of Lewisburg 6-1:63
 Volkmar, Karl (newspaper publisher) 6-1:53
 Whitman, F. O. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 World War I letters 6-1:65
 World War II support 6-1:65
 Wolfe, Jacob (newspaper editor) 6-1:63
 Worden, Oliver N. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:54, 55, 58, 63
 Whig Party 6-1:51, 52, 60, 61
 Winegarden, J. G. (newspaper editor) 6-1:63
 Whig newspapers 6-1:51, 56
 Ziebach, F. M. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:61, 62
 Lewisburg and Tyrone RR 6-1:28
 Lindig, C. F. 6-1:65
 Linn, Capt. James M. 6-1:57, 58, 59, 61, 62
 Linn family 6-1:69
 Linn, Merrill W. 6-1:69, 70
 logging, 19th Century 6-1:23-34
 lumber production 6-1:24, 25, 26
 Massey, Mary W. 6-1:65
 Mauser, I. M. 6-1:62, 63, 64
 McGinley, G. B. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Merrill James 6-1:69
 Metzger, Carol 6-1:42
 Metzger, William 6-1:42
 Mifflinburg
 A & P grocery store 6-1:14
 Abby Scholl's Soda Fountain 6-1:14

[Mifflinburg continued]

American Legion baseball 6-1:15
 county seat competition with Lewisburg 6-1:61
 Denius's Soda Fountain 6-1:14
 junior-senior high school 6-1:9
 Little League baseball 6-1:15, 16
 Mifflinburg Church Softball League 6-1:15
 O. R. Laney's 5&10-cent Store 6-1:14
 Pony League baseball 6-1:15
 primary school 6-1:9
 Saturday night festivities 6-1:14
 Schoch, George W. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:58, 59
 Shively Brothers Meat Market 6-1:14
 St. Paul's Evangelical United Brethren Church 6-1:17
 Steese, C. M. 6-1:68
Union County Star 6-1:57
Union Hickory 6-1:48
Union Star 6-1:52
 Zimmerman, Rube's gas station 6-1:16
 Miller, A. D. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:59
 Miller, D. Bright 6-1:38
 Miller, Hon. George F. 6-1:38,m 49
 New Berlin, *Union Hickory, The* 6-1:48
 Neuman, Nancy M. (article author) 6-1:35-46
 Newspapers, county, 19th C.
 Advertising income 6-1:47
 Circulation and fees 6-1:46, 47
 Content patterns 6-1:47
 News sources 6-1:46
 Partisanship 6-1:46
 Solier's letters 6-1:47
 Nittany Mountain 6-1:27, 28
 Oliphant, Dr. J. Orin 6-1:70
 Orwig, Capt. Thomas G. 6-1:57
 Paddy Mountain 6-1:28
panhaas (scrapple) 6-1:8
 Pardee, Arlo 6-1:27
 Pardee mill 6-1:28
 Penns Creek 6-1:17, 25
 Penns Creek Mountain 6-1:23
 Pix Theater (Mifflinburg) 6-1:7
 Purdy, Truman H. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:62
 raft transport of goods 6-1:25
 Railroads 6-1:26
 Raymond B Winter 6-1:32
 Reading Rail Road 6-1:27
 real estate values, county 6-1:65
 Reed, William 6-1:57
 Reitmeyer, Truman P. 6-1:67

Reporter (Centre Hall newspaper) 6-1:64
 rural cemetery movement 6-1:36
 Sauers, Richard (article author) 6-1:46-70
 sawmills 6-1:24-30
schnitz un gnepp (ham hocks, apples, dumplings) 6-1:8
 Schoch, George W. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:58, 59
 Seebold, Sula S. 6-2:4
 Seimawe (stuffed pig stomach) 6-1:8
 Shade Mountain, Middleburg 6-1:13
 Shamp, James (printer) 6-1:66
 Shields, Esther 6-1:59, 65
 Shriner, Samuel (newspaper publisher) 6-1:59, 60
 Shriner, William B. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:53
 slab wood for mines 6-1:30
 Slifer, Eli 6-1:43
 Slifer Guards 6-1:58
 Slifer House Museum 6-1:43
 Slifer, Robert 6-1:65
 Smith, Charles (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Smucker, David 6-1:19
 "spar" raft for log transport 6-1:26
 Spruce Run Reservoir 6-1:28
 Starook, Sammy 6-1:20
 Steese, C. M. 6-1:68
 Sterner, Levi (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Stout, Peter (newspaper publisher) 6-1:61
 Strickler, Jacob P. S. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
 Sugar Valley 6-1:27
 Sweetman, S. K. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:52
 Swengle 6-1:23
 tannin production 6-1:23
 teamsters ("Wildcats") 6-1:29
 temperance debate 6-1:49
 track crews, narrow gauge 6-1:29
 train excursions, berry picking 6-1:33
 Union County West End Fair 6-1:14
 Vicksburg 6-2:4-18, 19-22

- Burrey's Store 6-1:19-22
 - closing 6-1:22
 - merchandise 6-1:20, 21
- H. A. Cook and Sons 6-1:10, 11
- "hoboes" 6-1:5
- home canning 6-1:8
- HPO Post Office 6-1:7
- hunting and fishing 6-1:17
- kitchen garden 6-1:8
- music festival church fund-raisers 6-1:13
- paper routes 6-1:10
- pig raising 6-1:7, 8
- Post Office 6-1:5, 6, 15

[Vicksburg continued]

- radio programs 6-1:12
- rail road station 6-1:5, 6
- school, one-room 6-1:8, 9, 10
- television 6-1:11, 12
- Volkmar, Karl (newspaper publisher) 6-1:53
- Whitman, F. O. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:64
- Walter, Elwood 6-1:18
- Wehr, Deborah (article author) 6-1:23-34
- Weidman, Frank (Lebanon Stained Glass) 6-1:43
- Weikert 6-1:31
- whiskey production 6-1:25
- White Deer Creek 6-1:25
- White Deer and Loganton rr line 6-1:27
- Winegarden, J. G. (newspaper editor) 6-1:63
- Wolfe, Jacob (newspaper editor) 6-1:63
- Wolfe, Rick (Watson town Glass) 6-1:42, 43, 44
- "wood hicks" 6-1:28
- Worden, Oliver N. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:54, 55, 58, 63
- Yoder, William E.
- Ziebach, F. M. (newspaper publisher) 6-1:61, 62