

## Gideon and Elizabeth Smith of Buffaloe Farm

by

Nancy M. Neuman

Imagine my excitement when I discovered my 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandparents Gideon and Elizabeth Smith once lived in Lewisburg. I had no idea. When I began to research my Smith ancestors I knew almost nothing about them. I did know that my great grandfather Samuel Smith was born in Mill Hall, but was stymied sorting my Sam Smith from all the others. Then I took a new look at a small certificate dated September 9, 1783 that hangs in a frame on my dining room wall. The document, which may be a letter of transfer, is signed by Rev. Robert Cooper, minister of Middle Springs Presbyterian Church, Cumberland County. He writes that Gideon and Elizabeth Smith attended the church from 1781 to 1783 and are of good character. Church minutes show payment to Gideon for carpentry work, but Rev. Cooper's parish records are lost. Otherwise I might have found valuable information about the Smith's marriage and baptisms of their older children.

In a chance conversation with Tom Groninger, I dropped the name Gideon Smith. I knew Tom had published his family genealogy and thought he might help me get started. He gave me much more. Tom said his ancestors sold a farm in Lewisburg to a Gideon Smith in 1795. Off I went to the Northumberland County courthouse basement where old deed books are stored in a former dungeon. I found the deed recorded August 21, 1795. Gideon and Elizabeth Smith bought "Buffaloe Farm" at the confluence of Buffalo and Little Buffalo Creeks from Leonard and Jacob Groninger for £599, five shillings.

The Smiths actually settled on the farm in White Deer Township (now Kelly) about four years earlier. In 1791, Gideon rented pew number 28 with

Robert Fruit at Buffalo Crossroads Church. Tax rolls for White Deer (1793-1811) show him in 1793 with 280 acres, 2 horses, 3 cows, no servants, no slaves,

*That the Bearer Gideon Smith & Elizabeth his wife have been residents in this Congregation for about the space of two years preceding the date, came well recommended, & have in all respects conducted in a regular & Christian manner, have been members in full communion, and are now free from the least imputation of any thing scandalous as certified at Middle Spring, in Cumberland County, this 9<sup>th</sup> Day of Aug. 1783. by Rob<sup>t</sup> Cooper Min.*

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and 1 freeman. In 1796 his property included a log house, double barn and still house; by 1811 the Smiths lived in a stone house on Buffalo Creek.

After two years pursuing Gideon from one county to another and disproving misinformation that took me on exhausting detours, I finally confirmed his identity as my ancestor. That was hard enough, but it took me a decade of investigation until I was confident I had found Elizabeth.

Gideon Smith was born in West Fallowfield (now Highland) Township, Chester County on May 28, 1752, the third son of James Smith (1719-1785) and Sarah Wilson (1724-1812). James emigrated in 1720 from Northern Ireland to Chester County with his parents John and Susannah Smith, who eventually had 15 children. In his will James left two plantations to his older sons James and John, and ordered them to pay their brother Gideon £100.

Gideon left home and really didn't settle down until he brought his family to Lewisburg. His 1833 Revolutionary War pension application shows his active war service in Chester. Then he moved "to follow his trade" as carpenter in Cumberland and Philadelphia, and kept going. He lived in Lancaster, York, Northumberland, and Centre counties. Because of county formation, his records are also in Franklin, Union, and Clinton counties.

In 1778 he bought property in Lurgan Township, Cumberland County (now Franklin). He was married to Susannah Armstrong, his first cousin, daughter of his father's sister Susannah and her husband Thomas Armstrong. She died August 4, 1779 at age 20. Her tombstone at Fagg's Manor Presbyterian Church shows her as "relict" of Gideon Smith. Because "relict" usually means "widow," the authoritative 1906 biography of the Smith family shows Gideon as dead before 1779, leaving his descendants the task of recreating a life they know existed.

Gideon married Elizabeth about 1781. Born in 1758, her story, like his, was unknown. Her maiden name disappeared with her marriage, and Gideon did not mention his family in his pension application. I found several genealogies that misidentify her, requiring me to prove they were wrong before I could prove I was right. Using naming patterns, wills, deeds and other documents, I finally proved my theory that she was the youngest child of William Boyd (1707-1762) of Sadsbury, Chester County and his second wife Elizabeth Cowan of Salisbury, Lancaster County. Elizabeth Cowan's father was David Cowan, who emigrated in 1720 from Northern Ireland to Lancaster. Her mother Mary Fleming was a daughter of William Fleming and Mary Moore of Chester County.

In 1787 when Gideon sold his property in Lurgan Township at a financial loss, the Smiths were living in Salisbury, Lancaster, probably with Elizabeth's mother. The 1790 census shows them in York County with four boys under age 10. Their names and approximate years of birth are: Gideon Wilson (1782), William Boyd (1783), John (1786), Samuel (1788). Four more

children were born in White Deer: Elizabeth (1791), Susannah Sally (1793), my ancestor Thomas Armstrong (1794), and Jane Ann (1798).

Did family and church associations lead the Smiths to Buffalo Valley? Like Gideon and Elizabeth, their neighbors came from Ulster Scot Presbyterian families who originated in Chester County. Ann Futhey, the wife of Samuel Dale, was among them. The Smith and Futhey families lived in West Fallowfield Township. Ann Futhey Dale and Gideon's sister Martha were sisters in law. Martha Smith married Ann's brother Samuel Futhey. The families of John Linn and his wife Ann Fleming migrated from Chester to Cumberland where they belonged to Middle Springs Presbyterian Church. Ann Fleming Linn and Elizabeth Boyd Smith were cousins; their great grandparents were William Fleming and Mary Moore. Ann's grandfather James Fleming was the brother of Elizabeth's grandmother Mary Fleming Cowan.

In 1790 Gideon's maternal uncle Gideon Wilson died, leaving his farm in Chester County to his widow, ordering that it pass to his nephew Gideon Smith upon her death. In 1807 that farm became his, but rather than return to their home county, Gideon and Elizabeth filed a power of attorney giving Gideon's brother John the authority to sell the farm.

In 1810 they sold 101 acres of Buffaloe Farm to John Sterner for £759, and in 1814 they sold 201 acres to William Young for \$8,041. Their mortgage to Leonard Groninger was recorded as fully paid January 23, 1815, and in April they bought 109 acres of the Hays land on the Officer's Tract in Bald Eagle Township, Centre County (now Clinton) for \$2,616.

Why did they leave Union County? In his journal, Flavel Roan mentions good times at "Giddy" Smith's. But when he asked Giddy to sign the petition for a new county, Giddy remarked "there are too many Federalists on the petition." Did politics have anything to do with his decision to move? Or was it a chance to provide a nest egg for his old age by selling his property and buying cheaper land? Perhaps Gideon preferred to keep moving farther into the frontier.

Two sons were now gone. Gideon Wilson died in November 1813, one of the first recorded deaths in Union County. William Boyd (“Boyd Smith”), who died in 1833, moved to Lycoming County about 1812. He married Mary Thompson, daughter of Captain James Thompson, an early settler in White Deer.

The remaining children moved to Bald Eagle. Daughter Elizabeth died in 1823. Her tombstone shows her as “relict” of her husband George Brown, which explains the use of “relict” by Gideon on his first wife’s grave. George Brown outlived Elizabeth for many years. Descendants of their daughter Mary Catherine Brown Bossert still live in Clinton County. Susannah Sally, who died in 1848, married Samuel Hays, a son of Lt. James Hays and Sarah Brown. Lt. Hays was granted land in the Officer’s Tract for his service in Pontiac’s War (1763-1766). Jane Ann married John Elder and moved to Richmond, Virginia where she died in 1855. Samuel was living in 1840 when Gideon wrote his will, but his location and date of death are unknown. John, who died in 1860, married Elizabeth Lusk. The farmhouses of John and his son John David Lusk Smith still stand on Route 150 in Bald Eagle Township.

My 2nd great grandfather Thomas Armstrong married Beulah Templeton, daughter of William Templeton and Beulah Gustine. The first saddler in Mill Hall, “Armstrong Smith” and his family joined an exodus of north central Pennsylvania residents to the Midwest in the late 1840s. He died in Lansing Iowa in 1874. My great grandfather Samuel O. Smith, Lieutenant in Company B, 27<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry, survived “mortal” wounds in the Civil War. He was left for dead on a battlefield in Pleasant Hill Louisiana, taken prisoner, recovered, and exchanged back to his company. At age 18 Samuel adopted the middle name Oscar to make his name less common. He married Sarah Hazeltine, daughter of Edwin and Polly Abbott Hazeltine, who was living in Lansing with her sister Chloe Frothingham. In 1876 Samuel and Sarah moved to the Hazeltine farm in Busti, New York where they raised my grandmother Emma Gertrude Smith.



Samuel O. Smith

(Photo used by permission of the author)

Elizabeth Smith died May 22, 1836; Gideon died March 31, 1841. They are buried where they lived on the Hays tract, now part of the Hays Fearon cemetery, in Beech Creek. A brick ruin adjacent to the cemetery was the home of daughter Susannah and Samuel Hays. The Smiths are buried next to their daughter Elizabeth and close to the Hays family. The land they owned in Lewisburg is now on US Federal Penitentiary property east of the covered bridge at Buffalo and Little Buffalo Creeks.

✧ ACCOUNTS ✧

## **The Nolan Gang Prison Escape** by Dan McDavitt

On September 11, 1952, folks in Union County awoke to startling news. The *Lewisburg Journal* reported that the previous morning, September 10<sup>th</sup>, three desperadoes had escaped from the “Big House.”

Before 6:00 AM, in heavy fog, Joseph Nolan, Ballard Nolan and Elmer Schuer squeezed through the sawed bars of their second floor cell, scaled the 20’ wall and made their way toward Route 15. Near Route 15, the trio broke into a residence terrorizing the three occupants. The wife and daughter were locked in an upstairs bedroom. The husband, in his bedclothes, was forced to drive the trio to Donehower’s Sporting Goods where they intended to procure weapons.

Climbing through a window, the wife notified the prison of the escape. Downtown, the fugitives were entering Donehower’s when their barefooted guide ran across the street yelling for help. Panicked, the gang drove south on 6th Street, and encountered Bucknell employee, Mickey DeWire. Mr. DeWire, less than helpful, was stabbed four times. Wearing a steel support belt, DeWire wasn’t seriously injured. The “Nolan Gang” was last seen in Lewisburg turning south onto Route 15.

A thirteen state alert went out to set up roadblocks.

The Gang re-appeared in Whitemarsh Township, north of Philadelphia, on the 11th. They broke into a home and held the family of seven captive for nineteen hours as they took turns sleeping and eating. Then, in quick succession, they held up a gun shop in West Reading and robbed a diner in Hamburg.

For the next several days, AP stories speculated where the Gang had been, where they were going and described them as “desperate, vicious and gun crazy”. False sightings were reported, one of which resulted in nine railroad cars of PA State Policemen rushing to Wilmington.

Monday the 15th, in the Bronx, NY, the gang robbed a gun shop, on the 16th a bank. Getting away they kidnapped a doctor and had him drive them to Manhattan.

The *New York Daily News* of September 22, 1952, reported that an informant notified New York City Police of his ejection from his girlfriend’s 7th floor, 140th Street apartment. The Police – 31 strong – responded with an early Sunday raid. Squads were placed on the roof, at dumbwaiters, on the first floor, and at the apartment’s two doors. Breaking down the kitchen door, the lead squad proceeded through the apartment. Two naked ladies were cowering behind a shower curtain. The front door was opened for the second squad. A locked bedroom door was discovered. A warning “Come out with your hands up” was given. A second warning (indicating the police had a machine gun and “blowing out brains”) was given. A Kentucky drawl replied, “You need a search warrant.” The door to the 10’ x 15’ room was forcibly opened. Shirtless, Joseph Nolan was standing on a bed, his “left hand extended pleadingly, right arm behind his back yelling, 'don't shoot'.” Joseph Nolan brought his right hand around. Detective LaMonica saw the .45 and leaped between the machine gunner and Joseph, pushing the gun hand aside. The machine gun opened fire, the fugitives began shooting, and soon Joseph Nolan, Ballard Nolan (crouching behind a dresser) and Detective LaMonica were dead. Elmer Schuer, under the bed with a third naked lady, relinquished his weapon and was taken alive. Afterwards, the police found machine guns, shot guns, pistols and revolvers in the apartment.

This story was pieced together from AP articles appearing in various cities during September 1952. Often “Nolan” was “Nolen;” once, “Schuer” was “Smith;” ages varied considerably as did the home of the Nolans, possibly Kentucky. The Lewisburg family was either Heitman or Heilman. The brothers were shot between three and fifty times, and the Gang stole either three, four or five vehicles, although the NYPD indicated they recovered the Pontiac taken during their “first, wild dash for liberty” in Union County, PA.



The Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary



## Warren “Short” Dietrich’s Milk Route

by

Mark Wehr

This is my recollection of my uncle, Warren “Short” Dietrich’s milk route when I was a 10-year-old boy. I only went with Uncle Short a few times. The parts I remember are vivid but there are many gaps in the mornings’ events. These early memories must have had a lasting impression because 50 years later I work for one of the few companies that manufactures and sells milk cooling and storage equipment for dairy farm use. The old saying, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” is really true.

Uncle Short wasn’t actually short. My mother tells me as a kid he was the youngest and shortest of the kids he ran around with and he acquired the nickname “Short”. The nickname stuck and he was always known to me as Uncle Short. I remember him as a robust man fully capable of handling the 100 lb milk cans that he dealt with on a daily basis.

Uncle Short was married to my aunt, Mary Wehr. They lived in Cowan on the corner of Glover and Diefenderfer Roads. Aunt Mary did not enjoy good health, had no children and died at the age of 32 in February of 1961. Uncle Short farmed two farms with his brother G. Earl Dietrich and their mother who was still living and helping on the home farm. My memories may be from the late summer of 1961 because I believe Uncle Short stayed with his mother as much as he did at his home after Aunt Mary passed away earlier that year. Uncle Short and his mother milked the cows on the home farm while G. Earl and his family milked at the other farm. These farms are still in the Dietrich family. Roy Dietrich, Earl’s son, lives on the home farm today (he is our neighbor.) The home farm is on Buffalo Creek Road less than a mile from

Cowan and the other farm adjoins the home farm and is along Snake Hill Road. Both farms are in Buffalo Township.

The day started for me around 6:00 am at the home farm. Milk had to be delivered to the receiving station before a certain time in the morning to maintain as much freshness as possible, so milk hauling was a job for people who got up early. Uncle Short and his mother had already finished milking their cows and were headed to the house for breakfast when I arrived. I remember Uncle Short stirring a can of milk to mix in the cream before taking a pitcher of milk to the house for his cereal. Uncle Short did not haul his own milk. I believe his brother Earl hauled the milk from their two farms to Milton because they were Dairymen's League shippers.

Uncle Short's milk route and truck were owned by Harvey Wetzel. Harvey and his wife Jenny owned and operated Wetzel's country store in Cowan. I don't know the financial end of their arrangement but Uncle Short had to keep an eye on the oil level in the truck and daily additions of oil came from Harvey's supply. The truck was kept in a shed behind the store in Cowan. We started the route from there.

The truck seemed very old to me so I suppose it was made in the 40's. It had a single rear axle with dual wheels and an open flat bed with about 30" sides that hinged down on both sides and the tailgate section hinged down as well. The truck bed held 6 or 7 cans across and about twice that many long. Milk cans hold 10 gallons and milk weighs 8.6 pounds to the gallon. With the weight of the can included each can of milk weighed right around 100 pounds. I recall the average dairyman/producer had about 6 or 8 cans of milk.

The logistics of cooling, storing and hauling milk in cans was partly learned on these early runs and partly from my own experience as a can shipper on my own dairy in the early 70's. Just like milking cows twice a day, 365 days a year, milk was hauled every day as well. The evening milk was cooled by

mechanical refrigeration to a safe storage temperature below 40°F in one of two types of can coolers (in earlier times milk was cooled in the coldest spring water available on the farm.) One type was an insulated top-loading tank of ice water with a cold plate in the water. The other type was a front-loading insulated box with trays for the cans. The reservoir of ice water and cooling coil was in a tank beside the trays for the cans. This type can cooler had a circulation pump that sprayed chilled water over the cans to cool the milk. I remember the can coolers holding 3 or 4 cans of milk each (I had one of each type on my dairy.) The morning milk was not refrigerated until it got to the receiving station.

Can milk hauling was a morning only, part-time job that was done mostly by certain farmers for some extra outside income. The two can haulers that hauled my milk (before I put in a refrigerated bulk tank) were Ben Chambers and Myron Eberhart. Their trucks and routines were much the same as Uncle Short's.

Dairymen owned twice as many cans as the amount of milk they produced in a day, plus a few extras. Extra cans were needed for the variations in production and if a can got a rusty spot in it the milk inspector would require it to be sent away to be re-tinned. Half of the cans were used on the farm and the other half were on the hauler's truck. The producer's number was painted on both sides of the neck of the can and on the lid. Each producer's cans were located together on the truck depending on the loading facilities at each farm. Some stops required dropping one side or the other before pulling along side a loading platform; other stops required lifting the cans from the ground to the truck bed. The cold evening milk was all loaded in the center of the truck to help reduce heat gain and the warm morning milk was loaded on the outside rows of the truck, still keeping each producer's cans together in a group to facilitate unloading at the plant.

Uncle Short's truck was an open truck. As time passed, regulations changed and can receiving stations closed. For a time open trucks had to have a tarp to cover the cans. Then trucks had to be insulated, enclosed vans to travel greater distances to fewer receiving stations (by then both morning and evening milk had to be refrigerated.) Today all milk is cooled on the farm in bulk milk tanks and hauled in insulated bulk tanker trucks that may take the milk distances of several states away.

From Cowan we traveled around Buffalo, Kelly and East Buffalo townships picking up milk from the dairies on Uncle Short's route. We worked our way towards Lewisburg where the Sheffield Farms receiving station was located behind the former Bechtel's Restaurant, just off of the intersection of Routes 15 and 192 (now known as the Creamery Building.)

Our first two stops were at the Weaver brothers' farms on both sides of Beaver Run Road just south of Buffalo Creek. Sam Weaver's farm on the west side of Beaver Run Road is now owned by Eugene Oberholtzer and John Weaver's on the east side by Jim Brubaker. These two farms were the first stops because aside from being close to the starting point in Cowan, the Weavers were reliable early risers and were done milking by the time Uncle Short arrived. I remember Uncle Short's amusement at my confusion the first time I went along on the milk route. The Weaver brothers were identical twins (I am told their wives were twins as well) and I couldn't understand how the same man was at both farms.

Uncle Short's route was set up based on two factors; shortest distance traveled and timeliness of the dairymen's milking. Somewhere along the route Uncle Short would grumble a bit about having to back track to pick up at a dairy that was not too speedy in the morning (remember, Short and his mother were done with their milking by 6:00 am.)

I can remember only a few of the names of the dairymen on Uncle Short's route. I know we picked up milk around Mazeppa and stopped at a dairy along Black Run. I think the Paul Jarrett farm, west of Kelly Point, was on the route.

The most I could help with was getting out of the truck first to drop a side, unloading yesterday's empty cans and maybe rolling full cans of milk if the concrete in the milk house was level with no cracks. Milk cans could be rolled quite handily by tipping them to their balance point, gripping the edge of the lid and using a hand over hand technique.

If the can cooler was a top loader Uncle Short could step up on a cement block, pull the can out with a sweeping motion and set it on the floor without getting wet from the water dripping off of the can. A few dairies had a rolling track with block and tackle above the cooler to load and unload the top loaders but Uncle Short didn't need to use it. Partial cans of milk in a top loader were a little tricky. They had to be taken out first because if left for last they would tip over in the cold water and the milk inside would become contaminated with the cold water. Front loaders were easier to load and unload.

The returned, empty cans were opened and turned upside down on a rack for the next day's use. Milk can lids were a tapered press fit. They were closed by thumping down on the top of the lid with the palm of your hand and opened with a sharp rap on the edge of the lid with a rubber mallet (at the plant) or more commonly on the dairy with the palm of your hand, if you could stand it.

Our last stop was about 9:30 or 10:00 am at Albert Slear's farm along route 45 in East Buffalo Township. His was the closest dairy farm to Lewisburg that Uncle Short had on his route. The farm is presently owned by Allan Burkholder. Albert was the father of Gary Slear, prominent member of the Union County Historical Society. The story goes that Albert said when the can

deck closed at the Lewisburg receiving station he would not modernize by putting in a bulk tank but would sell his cows. That's exactly what he did. When the plant closed he retired and built the brick house along route 45 where Aden Weaver now lives.

At the Sheffield Creamery we got in line and waited our turn at the unloading deck on the west side of the building. Running your route early helped preserve freshness of the milk and it also meant less waiting at the plant. The right hand side of the truck was dropped and we pulled along side the conveyor rack that went into the creamery. Each producer's cans were kept together as they entered the creamery. The warm and cold milk from each producer was dumped into a tank that was mounted on scales. Each producer's milk was weighed (dairyman were paid on weight not volume), then the commingled milk was cooled instantly as it was pumped through a heat exchanger press pack that was connected to a big brine chiller in the creamery. A similar instant cooling process is used on some of today's large commercial dairy farms.

Once, while helping by rolling full cans over to Uncle Short at the edge of the truck I lost the balance of a can and it tipped over. The lid came off and more than half the can was spilled before Uncle Short could snatch it up. I was mortified and disgusted with myself for spilling the milk. Uncle Short said "Don't worry about it," he would talk to the dairyman. I don't know whose milk it was and when asked about it later, Uncle Short said the dairyman said it was okay. I never found out if it was really okay or whether Uncle Short reimbursed the dairyman somehow. A can of milk was a good share of a dairyman's daily production back then.

After unloading we drove around to the north side of the building where the steam cleaned cans rattled down a conveyor with rollers underneath. The cans were really hot! Each producer's cans were loaded in the same spot

where they came off. Milk production varied greatly from dairy to dairy and by time of year so Uncle Short had to always make adjustments to the can placements. Sometimes an empty can was laid on its side (a can was about twice as high as it was wide) to take up an empty space to keep the cans from shifting. Once we were loaded with empties we went back to Cowan and parked the truck in the shed for tomorrow's run. It was around 11:00 am by then and Uncle Short would take me into Wetzel's store. We both had an ice cream bar from their freezer case before he took me home.

At the time, I was just going along with Uncle Short on his milk route. I did not realize I was participating in the endless process of change from a bygone era. Today, most people still know the painted eagle umbrella holder in the front hall is a milk can but they don't know much about how it was used. In the future, even fewer people will know what it is, let alone anything about its daily use.

### ✧ ACCOUNTS ✧

Editor's Note: Readers can learn more about Union County's dairymen in, Hertha Wehr et al., "Cows on the Landscape and a Milkman at your Door; Dairy in Union County, 1900-2005." *Heritage*, Vol. 22. Lewisburg, Union County Historical Society.

## Iron Smelting in Union County

by

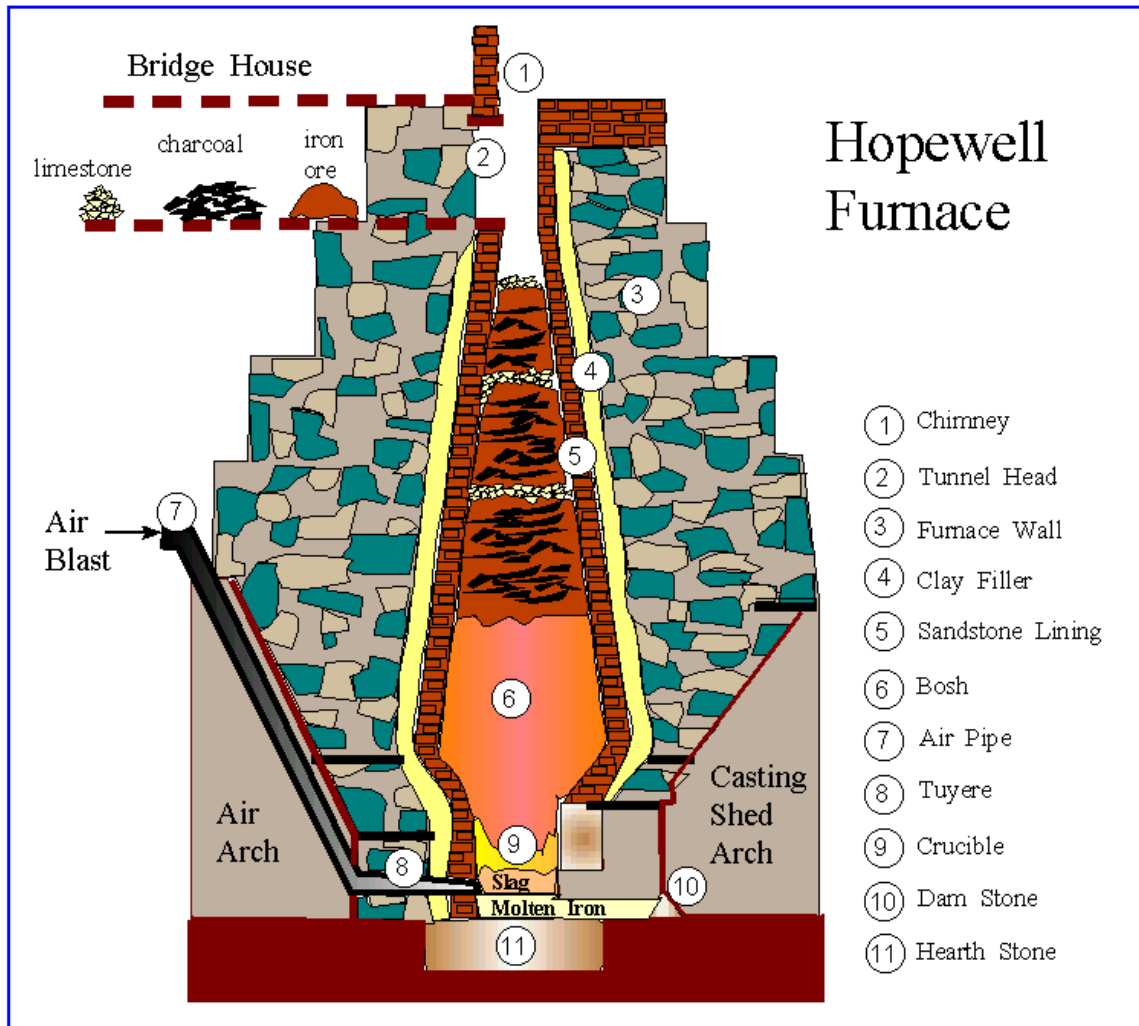
**Tom Rich**

Most people in Central Pennsylvania think of Union County as a mainly rural, agricultural area, and it is. However, through much of the Nineteenth Century there was a significant iron making industry in the county. It centered at three blast furnaces: one in Glen Iron, another in Winfield, and a third in the White Deer area. The establishment of these furnaces was made possible by their close proximity to the three essential ingredients in the iron making process: iron ore, limestone and a source of carbon (charcoal or coal).

### **The Smelting Process**

At furnace temperatures around 3,000 °F iron ore, charcoal or coal, and limestone were loaded in layers through the top of the large stone furnace stacks in Union County similar to the one shown in the following drawing of the Hopewell Furnace. One set of these three ingredients in a layer was called a charge. Air was forced into the furnace to assist in the burning of the coal; this forced air blast gave rise to the name, blast furnace. As the ingredients sank towards the bottom of the furnace, the hot carbon stole the oxygen from the iron oxide in the ore and formed carbon dioxide which rose out through the top of the stack. The remaining iron melted under the intense heat and dripped into the bottom chamber of the furnace called the crucible. Impurities from the ore and coal combined with the calcium in the limestone to form slag which floated on top of the molten iron until skimmed from the crucible and dumped into piles around the outside of the furnace as waste. After about ten to twelve hours in the older furnaces, the crucible was opened by removal of the dam stone and molten iron flowed into channels dug into the





Blast Furnace Components as Typified at the Hopewell Furnace in Berks County

Source: [Building Pennsylvania](#) (See last page here)

sandy floor of an adjoining room called the casting shed. When cooled the molten iron solidified into bars or ingots. This was called pig iron because the shape of the channels were arranged to resemble piglets nursing from their mother sow. This process of making iron from ore under intense heat is called smelting.

All three ingredients for iron making were found in or near to Union County. Iron ore is found in nature as rock containing large amounts of iron oxide, commonly known as rust. A form of iron oxide called hematite is located in narrow veins up to a few feet thick running under the surface of Montour Ridge from around Danville to near Jack's Mountain past New Berlin. These veins were mined

with pick and shovel in the 1800's. Some local mine entrances have been reported near Winfield. Other small mines existed in the hills to the south of White Deer. Once dug from the earth, the iron ore was transported to the furnaces by cargo wagons pulled by teams of horses.

Limestone rock is comprised of large amounts of calcium carbonate, which acts as a flux in the smelting process to remove impurities from the molten iron. A primary source of limestone came from local quarries such as the large one near Winfield. Again manual labor was used to drill and wedge chunks of the stone from outcroppings as seen in the following photograph. And here again, horse-drawn wagons were used, and they took the rocks to the furnaces.

The final ingredient in the process was carbon. The early furnaces used



Limestone Quarry near Winfield

Image from Tom Rich



Charcoal Pit Crew, Camp Laurelton in West End of Union County Image from UCHS

charcoal, which was made through a slow burning of timber under insufficient oxygen. This was carried out in pits dug in the floor of local forests, filled with logs, and covered with earth before igniting. After a few days of smoldering, the logs turned into charred pieces of charcoal similar to that used in modern outdoor grills. Upon uncovering and cooling, the charcoal was hauled by wagons to the furnaces. When hiking in the woods around the county, one may still find bits of charcoal in depressions where charcoal pits once operated.

Towards the latter half of the Nineteenth Century many of the forests of the county were depleted through the making of charcoal along with other formal lumbering operations. Anthracite coal became an alternate source of carbon and was used extensively at the furnace in Winfield. This hard coal was mined in the Wyoming Valley and loaded on barges for shipment on both Susquehanna River branches to the furnace at Winfield. Later the railroad replaced barges for transport of the coal.



## The Union County Furnaces

The three furnaces were located within the county as shown on the 1832 map. The oldest was the Berlin Iron Works which later became the Glen Iron

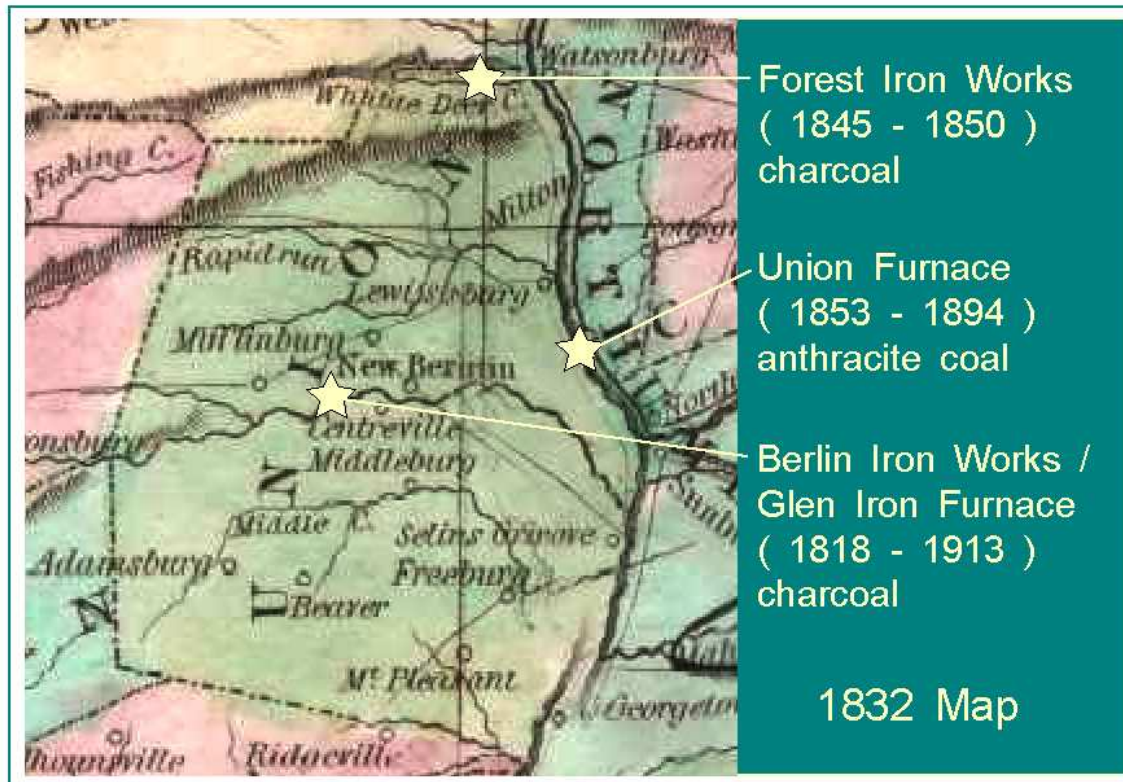
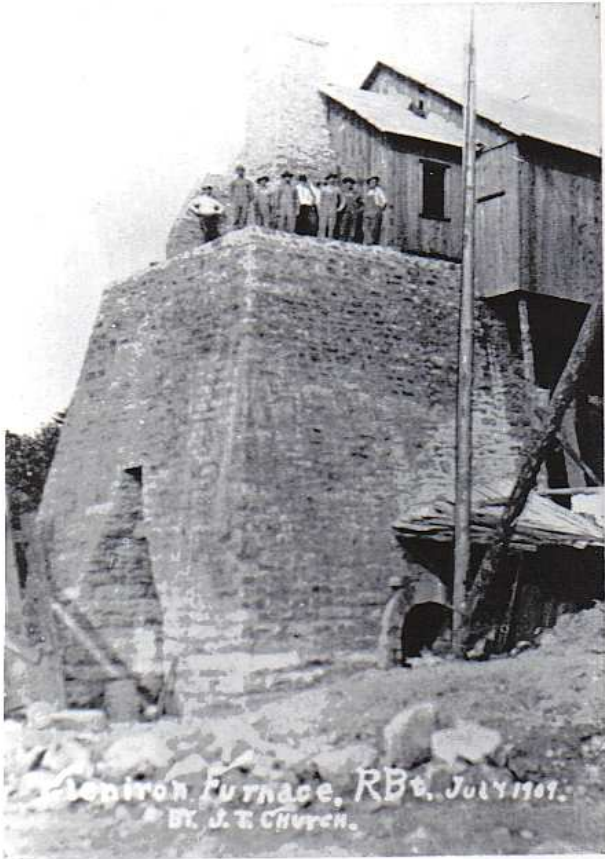


Image by Tom Rich

Furnace. It was a charcoal furnace, and it operated for almost 100 years with some shut-downs in that period due to lagging business in the iron industry. The Forest Iron Works was located west of the town of White Deer and operated for a short period of time. The poor economics at the furnace's location combined with the growth of the anthracite furnaces in the State were primary contributors to its demise.

The newest furnace was the Union Furnace in Winfield. It was built to use anthracite coal. Because the anthracite coal has more compressive strength than charcoal, an anthracite furnace could be built much larger than a charcoal one, and had a larger capacity for daily iron production. The following pages show the people and times associated with each furnace along with historical images of the furnaces.

## The Berlin Iron Works / Glen Iron Furnace

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1818</b></p>	
<p>Berlin Iron Works: Charcoal Furnace erected. Ore from New Berlin Mtn.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1826</b></p>	
<p>Clement Brooke from Hopewell Furnace operated charcoal iron furnace.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1829</b></p>	
<p>Robert Green &amp; Nathan Mitchell of Lewisburg rebuilt furnace stack with hot blast pipes.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1850</b></p>	
<p>John Church, Dr. Levi Rooke &amp; Jonathan Rooke take over operation. (repaired stack, added steam engine)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1880</b></p>	
<p>Jackson Bros. &amp; B.F. Crispen of Berwick bought property. 1883 operations ceased.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1901</b></p>	
<p>John Church, Sr. returned, bought back and renamed it, Glen Iron Furnace ~1913 operations ceased.</p>	

The Glen Iron Furnace

Image from the collection of the Union County Historical Society

From the Ledgers of the Glen Iron Furnace at the Union County Historical Society Office:

Recorded 1908

One Charge: Charcoal – 20 bushels ~150 pounds

Iron Ore – 400 to 600 pounds

Limestone – 75 to 100 pounds

Number of Charges per Day: 35 to 45

Daily Production of Pig Iron: 3 to 5 tons

### Forest Furnace

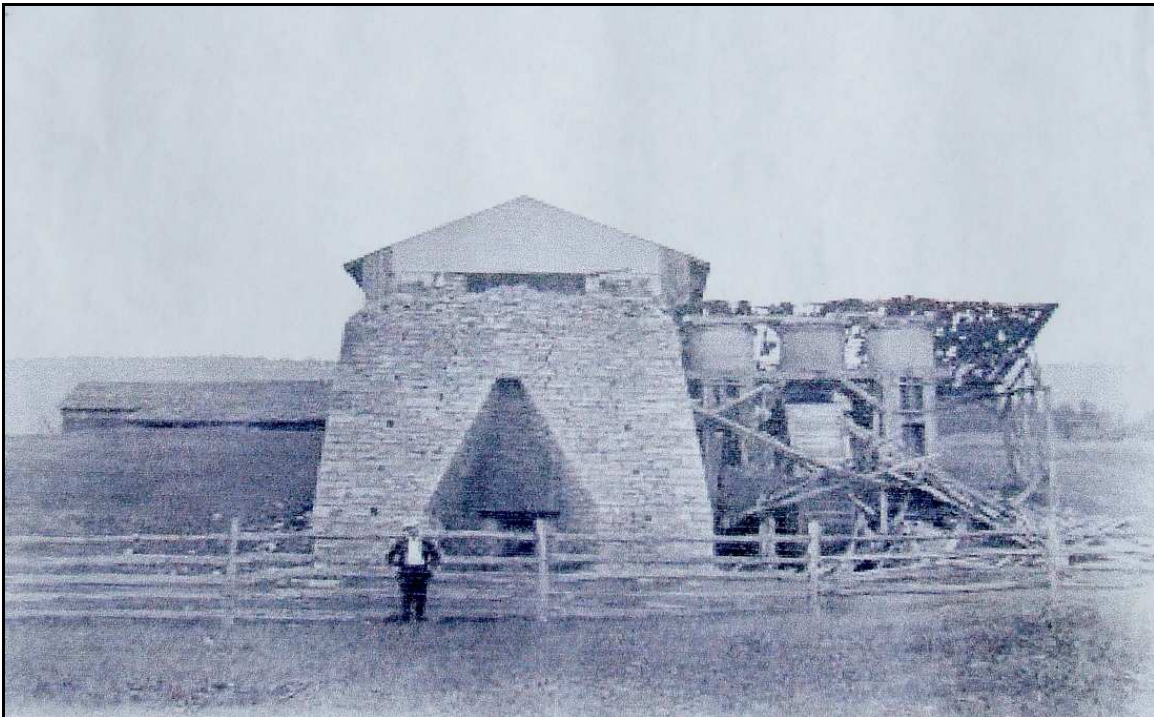


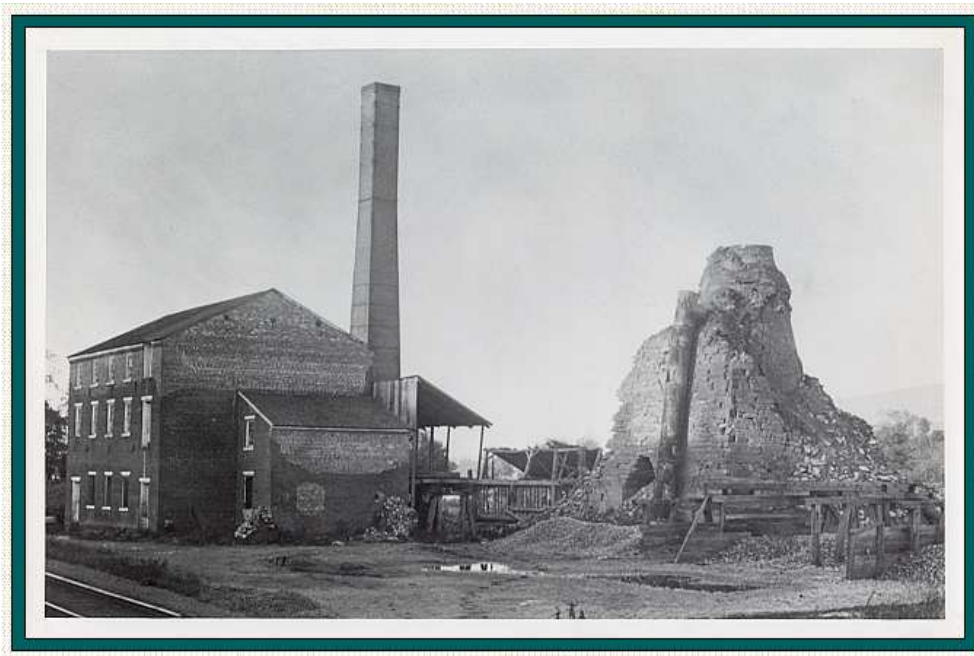
Image courtesy of Jim Wertz, White Deer Township

Little is known about the Forest Iron Works. Linn's Annals of Buffalo Valley, Pennsylvania briefly states, beginning on page 545, In November, [1845] Green, Howard & Green commenced erecting the Forest iron-works, in White Deer Township. ... [1849] The Berlin iron-works were blown out, and Forest iron-works in the hands of the sheriff. ... Kaufman & Reber bought the Forest iron-works for \$7,000.

The rare picture shown of the Forest Iron Works was provided by Jim Wertz. His family ran a gristmill and saw mill adjacent to the Forest Iron-Works along the road running west of the town of White Deer. From the picture one can see a water wheel to the right of the stack. This wheel powered pistons in the wooden tubs above the wheel, which in turn provided the cold blast of air to the stone furnace in the center. The wooden structure above the stack was the bridge house. The iron ore, charcoal and limestone were hauled from the terrace above the furnace across the bridge and dumped down into the furnace.

### **Union Furnace**

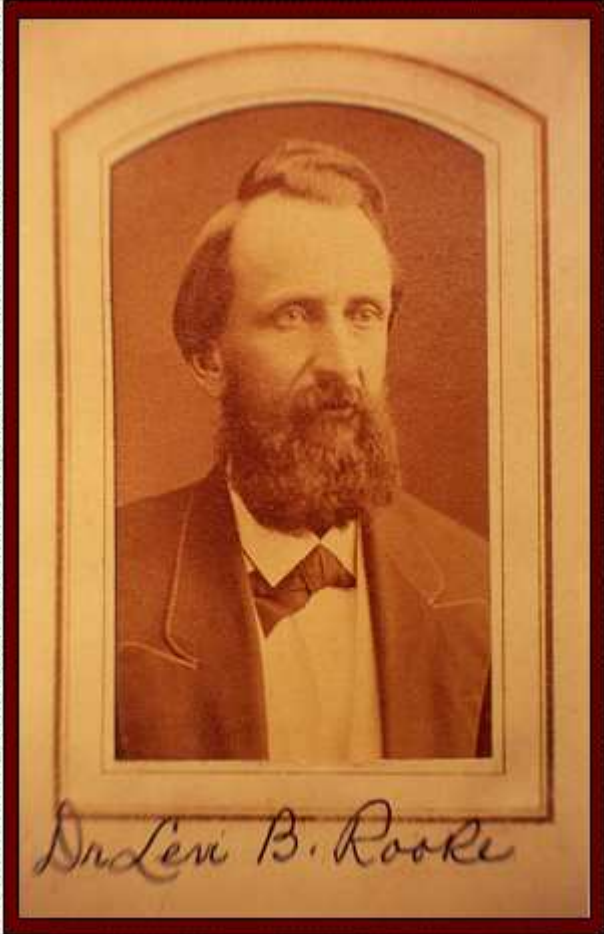
The general manager and eventual owner of the Union Furnace was Dr. Levi Rooke. He was a trained physician and a graduate of Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. From some discussions with charcoal iron makers in Chester County, Dr. Rooke learned of the growing iron industry in the anthracite region. It interested him,



Union Furnace circa 1912 from the collection of the Union County Historical Society

and he moved to Union County and became the manager of some iron ore mines. From this job he took over as manager of the Union Furnace in 1854 and supervised the business for almost 40 years.



<b>1853</b>					
The Union Furnace at Winfield built by Beaver, Geddes and Marsh, Co.					
<b>1854</b>					
Ironmaster: Dr. Levi Rooke First Tap: Oct. 30, 1854.					
<b>During Operation</b>					
<p>Stone Stack: &gt;100 feet high</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">4 Large Boilers</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Stock House</td> </tr> <tr> <td>  Casting Room</td> <td>  Blowing Room</td> </tr> </table> <p>25 to 40 workers at furnace</p> <p>Limestone used as flux was quarried west of village and transported to the furnace upon a horse-drawn narrow-gauge railway. Anthracite coal came by river barge from coal region. After 1882, the Reading Railroad brought coal and iron.</p>	4 Large Boilers	Stock House	Casting Room	Blowing Room	
4 Large Boilers	Stock House				
Casting Room	Blowing Room				
<b>1894</b>					
The Union Furnace ceased operations.					

courtesy of University Archives,  
Ellen Clarke Bertrand Library, Bucknell University

The previous Union Furnace photograph shows some interesting aspects of an anthracite furnace. Because anthracite coal requires a high temperature to ignite it, the air blast had to be preheated before it was forced into the furnace. This was accomplished with a heat exchanger mounted at the top of the stack. The hot exhaust from the stack was used to preheat fresh air pumped through the exchanger and then down to the furnace. The large pipe shown on the remains of the stack served that purpose. The building to the left of the furnace contained a steam engine and air pumping system used to circulate the air through the exchanger and



into the furnace. Legend has it that on warm summer evenings the large pistons of the steam engine and air pumps could be heard all the way to Lewisburg as they hissed and pounded to force the hot blast.

The following table shows data from the original Union Furnace ledger located at the Union County Historical Society office in the Courthouse in Lewisburg. As such it provides a unique glimpse into the life at the furnace.

Some Representative Entries from the First Six Months of 1870						
The Ledger of The Union Furnace at Winfield, Pa.						
Expenditures			Monthly Revenues			
date	item	amount	date	item	amount	
Jan 1	100 lb. flour	\$4.00	Jan 15	67 tons pig iron	\$2,526.81	
Jan 5	89+ bush. oats	\$42.09	Feb 12	114 tons pig iron	\$4,129.97	
Jan 12	15 cords wood	\$10.50	Mar 31	pig iron	\$7,002.24	
Jan 17	135 kegs powder	\$506.25	May 31	pig iron	\$8,632.14	
Jan 18	2 old wagons	\$40.00	Jun 7	394 tons pig iron	13,674.38	
Jan 24	53 tons pea coal	\$79.50	Jun 30	pig iron	\$4,131.44	
Jan 24	241 lbs. beef	\$24.10				
Jan 31	91 cords wood for drifts in mines	\$45.50		Typical Monthly Figures		
Jan 31	sharpen 82 drills	\$4.10	Jun 30	Company Store from 87 men	\$2,486.07	
Jan 31	Limestone: 532 perch quarry / ship	\$340.48	Jun 30	Rent Collected from 29 men @ \$2.00	\$61.68	
Feb 10	193 3/4 bush. corn	\$193.75	Jun 30	Heating Fuel from 28 men @ \$2.50	\$71.75	
Apr 8	Ore: 65 1/2 tons	\$75.00				
Apr 15	2583 ft. rails mines	\$46.49				
Apr 16	1 barrel salt	\$3.75				
Apr 30	48 bush. lime	\$3.84				
May 10	15 tons sand	\$4.25				

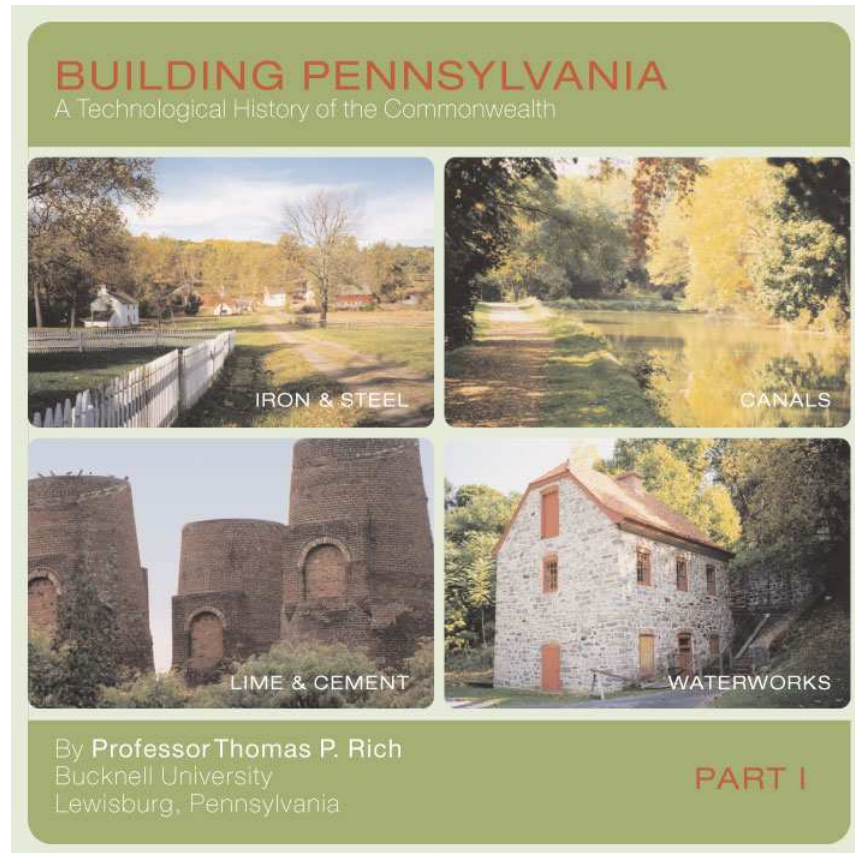
May 15	Ore: 18 tons - hard	\$63.00				
May 27	2 kegs nails	\$9.00			Other Expenditures	
Jun 1	Coal: 711 tons - Kingston Mines	\$783.39			Typical Monthly Payroll	
Jun 1	Ore: 10 tons from Cornwall Ore Co.	\$344.50		Jun 30	37 men at Furnace	\$1,565.12
Jun 18	1650 ft. wire rope	\$300.50		Jun 30	36 men mining & hauling ore	\$3,155.43
Jun 30	Limestone: 490 perch quarry / ship	\$294.30		Jun 30	approx. 52 men at piecemeal labor	\$1,114.75
Jun 30	Quarrying Rts Rights	\$88.29				

### Concluding Remarks

The iron produced at the Union County furnaces provided an important building material in support of local and national development. Pig iron was shipped to secondary manufacturers in towns throughout the county. Foundries (from the verb 'to found' meaning to melt) sprung up in the county to melt the pig iron and recast it into items such as skillets, kettles, pots and stoves. Forges were established to hammer pig iron into stronger 'wrought' iron. The wrought iron was then used to make items such as structural iron bars and rods, nails, hinges, horseshoes, tools and gun barrels. The iron was used in the production of armaments for both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Later it provided a basic material for companies manufacturing tools and machinery for the widespread farming of the county.

As the Twentieth Century ensued, the larger, integrated iron and steel mills of places like Scranton and Pittsburgh made it impossible for the Union County furnaces to compete in the marketplace. The fires went out, the workers left and the furnaces fell into ruin. In the early years of the Twenty-first Century, little remains of the Glen Iron and Forest Furnaces. Local folks can point to their original sites. A mound of earth surrounds a crumbling, circular brick liner inside the stack of the Union Furnace. Some evidence remains of the adjacent building

foundations and walls. And nowhere in the county can anyone still hear the roar of the furnace or the pounding of a steam engine or forge hammer.



More information on the iron & steel making history of Pennsylvania along with histories of the canals, lime & cement industry and waterworks are in the above CD eBook, [Building Pennsylvania](#) available through the Union County Historical Society

✧ ACCOUNTS ✧

ACCOUNTS Vol. 1, No. 1-2, 2011

Union County Historical Society

## **Look Up!**

by

**Deane Clements**

Look Up! That could be the watchword for appreciating architecture in downtown Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. As a matter of fact, those words could work for appreciating the architecture in many of the towns in the Susquehanna Valley where an abundance of houses from the mid-19th century have been preserved. “Looking up” serves observers when they visit charming older sections of towns like New Berlin, Mifflinburg, Muncie, Carlisle and Gettysburg as well as Lewisburg.

As the twentieth century dawned, houses became more or less standardized into forms with pointed gables facing front or square-fronted structures with straight roofs over wide front porches. But the previous century had offered a much wider variety: “vernacular” houses in this area came in many styles and shapes. During the course of the 1900’s, levels of prosperity and the influence of styles in Europe began to influence local architecture, but whatever the style, the distinguishing features usually appeared at second-floor level, or even at the roofline.

Early in the nineteenth century, so-called Federal houses, (sometimes termed Greek Revival houses) were similar to the Georgian style houses that predominated in England as well as in America in the eighteenth century. The pattern for Federal, as well as Georgian houses, was two stories, with five windows under a low-sloping roof on the second level and two pairs of windows downstairs flanking a center doorway. Gradually, carved brackets began to appear to suggest support for that roof. With these houses, gables appeared at each end of the house, allowing the center door to open to the street.

But early builders began to use the space directly under the roof to add another small area above the second floor and to ventilate it with tiny windows that perforated a decorative frieze. Thus in between those sets of brackets, many

houses had what were locally called “lie-on-your-stomach” windows. The imagination of early builders worked some beautiful



“Lie-on-your-Stomach” windows at 60 S.2<sup>nd</sup> st. Photo by Tom Greaves

variations on that theme, providing little windows in a variety of shapes. And, obviously, without looking up, the observer would miss the whole show, even if appreciating it meant peering through branches of trees.

During the middle of the nineteenth century local taste changed to something less austere. Influenced by styles that were beginning to appear in Eastern cities (we were, after all, connected by the canal system and soon by railroads), some homeowners began to want so-called Italianate-style houses; others wanted houses in the newly popular Queen Anne style. Either style had more decoration than did Federal houses. Italianate-style houses had decoratively carved window hoods, ever more heavily ornamental roof brackets, and elaborate entranceways. Queen Anne-style houses were full of fantasy, having turrets and towers, balconies and multiple gables at the roofline. The basic form of these embellished houses was often asymmetric, rather than regular and rectangular. This was the dawn of so-

called Victorian architecture in America. And although in these embellished styles there was plenty of detail to enjoy on each floor of houses, the real action was seen at the upper levels: that's where you saw those turrets, the delightful little balconies, unusual decorative windows, the Italianate roof brackets, roofs with as many as six or seven little gables, fanciful designs in the roof tiles--one surprise after another.

As the century advanced, another style with much embellishment began to appear. Because this style reflected architecture that was admired in France during the reign of Emperor Louis Phillippe, it was often called the "Second Empire" style and one of its distinguishing characteristics was the Mansard roof. This roof was a



Mansard roof at 217 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Photo by Tom Greaves

sort of box-like extension that rose from what would have been an upper-floor roof. The delicately shaped box was pierced with windows within elaborate dormers.

At one point buildings with Mansard roofs could be seen everywhere—on commercial buildings, such as banks and other institutions as well as private residences. This roof came to be another frequent characteristic of the Victorian style of architecture. Some homeowners even renovated their Federal-style houses by adding Mansard roofs, including the dormers, thus completely transforming the original appearance.

A detail not to be missed without a look upwards was the prevalent decorated chimney and/or chimney pot that could be seen above houses in these heavily decorated styles. Originally designed to improve the draft of the chimney, they eventually appeared in pairs or clusters as decorative features, especially for houses in Queen Anne style, which abounded in all sorts of architectural detail.

Consequently, the next time you travel down a charming street of well-maintained homes built in the previous century, enchanted by the fine entrance-ways, handsome brass door-knockers, attractive floral arrangements at the doorway, and carefully groomed hedges, don't permit yourself to ignore the wonders to be seen above.



## **Dining at Bucknell, 1846-1946**

by

**Russell Dennis**

The University at Lewisburg, which was renamed Bucknell University in 1886, consisted of several distinct parts throughout its existence from 1846 to about 1915. During this time there were two male parts, the Academy and the College, and one Female part, the Female Institute. After 1883 females were admitted as students to the College, but they continued to reside in the Female Institute building. By 1917, both the Academy and the Female Institute ceased to exist as parts of the university. The Academy was closed and the Female Institute became the Women's College. Although men and women took classes together and shared academic resources such as the Carnegie Library and the Chemical Laboratory, they lived on separate parts of the campus with women living at the bottom of the college hill, embedded in the town of Lewisburg, and men living in college buildings at the top of the hill, somewhat away from the town. Some men lived in fraternity houses that were located off campus scattered throughout the town while others rented rooms from townspeople. This was the situation from 1915 to 1946, the centennial of the founding of the university.

Throughout these one hundred years, the male and female students in the university had to eat. Interestingly, the university provided different dining opportunities for the women and men. From the very beginning, the university provided dining facilities for the women who were residents of the Female Institute building, which was located on St. George Street between South Fifth and South Sixth streets. Although a dining room was provided in the Academy Building designed by Thomas Ustick Walter and completed in 1848, no dining facilities were provided in the College Building, also designed by Walter, which was completed in 1858. The remainder of this article describes the dining



facilities provided to the university students during this period. We begin with the female students in the Female Institute.

The Female Institute building, designed by Stephen Decatur Button, was completed in 1858 and the South Wing was attached to the back of it in 1869. From the beginning the girls and young women who attended the Institute were a diverse group in terms of age and the type of education pursued. Some females either commuted from their Lewisburg homes or lived with relatives in town, while others lived in the Institute building. From the beginning those women who lived in the



Addition to Institute dining room ca. 1906 (Bucknell University Archives, Digital Collection).  
See source data and use restrictions at endnote No. 1

building were provided with board as well as room. The dining room was located to the rear of the central part of the Institute building. In the 1870s a vegetable garden was located between the building and Loomis Street. This garden probably disappeared later in the century, and meats and groceries were probably purchased from local merchants. In 1904, the dining room was enlarged with the addition of a porch at the rear of the building. At this time, the kitchen was probably located at the rear of the first floor of the South Wing that had been added in 1869. By the late



Women's Dining Hall circa 1944 (Bucknell University Archives, Digital Collection).  
source data and use restrictions at endnote No. 2

See

1920s, the female collegiate population had grown so large that the coeds had to eat in two shifts. In 1928, the Women's Dining Hall was built and it continued to serve the females until the construction of the Roy Grier Bostwick Dining Room in the University Center that opened in the early 1970s. When the Women's Dining Hall was built, the kitchen remained in its former location but was remodeled and modernized. All resident female college students were required to purchase a meal contract and take their meals in the Women's Dining Hall.

Dining for males was quite different. We will begin with the Academy. Some of the boys lived with their families in the town and some of the boys from out of town probably lived with relatives in Lewisburg. These boys probably boarded where they lived. Some of the boys lived in the Academy Building or in the Annex that was attached to it in 1889. Boys who lived in these buildings also boarded in the dining room that was located in the Academy Building. Probably most of these boys were in the course preparing for college rather than in the courses preparing for business or teaching. Older boys and young men attending the Academy lived in the College Building, but could take their meals in the Academy dining room if they paid for board.



Academy Dining Room ca. 1915 (Bucknell University Archives, Digital Collection).  
source data and use restrictions at endnote No. 3

See

Dining for male college students was quite different in several respects. The College did not provide any dining facilities for college students until 1939 when it opened a dining room for sixty freshmen males in Scott House on South Sixth Street across from the Women's College campus. From the 1860s until the demise of the Academy in 1917 college students could board at the Academy dining room while living in the College dormitories. In fact, one of the boarding clubs described in the 1896 *L'Agenda*, the "Compagnie De Academy" with dining times at 7:15, 12:30 and 5:30, was probably composed of college students who dined in the Academy dining room. But, from 1917 when the Academy closed until 1939 when the dining room was opened in Scott House, college students were on their own as far as food was concerned.

In the Nineteenth Century, college males had four means of obtaining meals in addition to the dining room in the Academy, which remained open to them after the Academy closed in 1917. The earliest students ate in boarding clubs, also called eating clubs, which date almost from the founding of the College. They began when a group of students would find some local person to prepare meals for them and would then purchase food supplies in bulk and have their meals prepared for them. By the 1890s such boarding clubs had become rather sophisticated and published ads in the *L'Agenda*, the Bucknell yearbook. The names of the members of the club were published along with a satirical description of the members or of the food provided by the club. By this time, some of the

clubs were commercial enterprises as well as communal organizations. Some of these clubs, which sponsored advertisements in the *L'Agenda*, including the Bon Ton, the Neyhart Club, and the Reitmyer Club, existed for at least a decade from the 1890s to the early 1900s.

Many college students took their meals with private families. For example, John Howard Harris, who later became Bucknell's longest serving President, when a student at the University at Lewisburg right after the Civil War, lived on the second floor of the East Wing of the College Building but took his meals at Derr's, which was a mile and one-half from the College on the road to Cowan, presumably what is now Route 192. Many male students made similar arrangements.

Fraternalities provided another source of boarding for students who chose to become members. Fraternalities had houses where students both roomed and boarded. Until 1931 when Phi Kappa Psi built the first house on the college hill on land purchased from the Strohecker family on what could become known as "Fraternity Row," these houses were located off-campus in the town. Most houses employed someone to cook meals for the brothers and many fraternity men took their meals at the house even if they did not live in the house.

Restaurants were the final choice for college males and they were an important choice for non-fraternity males from 1917 until after the Second World War. Restaurants advertised in the *Orange and Blue* and the *Bucknellian*, the college newspapers, during the first half of the Twentieth Century, especially during the fall semester of the academic year. Many of these restaurants offered weekly meal plans for interested male students at a reasonable price. One of these was actually located on the college campus. The College Inn, operated by Guy Payne '09, became a



College Inn ca. 1934 (Bucknell University Archives, Digital Collection).  
See source data and use restrictions at endnote No. 4

campus legend. Opened as a one-storey brick building in 1916, it grew into a three-storey building by 1925. In addition to a lunch counter and a cafeteria with a small dining room, it came to house other enterprises espoused by Guy, including a tailor shop and a barbershop as well as rooms for male students. It offered weekly meal tickets at a discount for either two or three meals a day, with one plan being all vegetables and the other including meat. Similar plans with similar prices were offered by Lewisburg restaurants off-campus including Wagner's Cafe. For example, in 1933 Wagner's, which was located at the corner of Sixth and Market Streets in downtown Lewisburg, advertised in the *Bucknellian* two meal plans, one for two meals a day for \$5.50 a week and one for three meals a day for \$7.00 a week, as well as .25-.30-.35-and .50 dinners. Just before the Second World War, a snack shop establishment named George's was located on Seventh Street behind what was then the Sigma Chi fraternity house and what is now Seventh Street House. Later, after the war, the original Bison would be constructed at that location. Now the Seventh Street Cafe is housed in that building.

During the Second World War, especially from 1943 to 1945, there were very few civilian men attending Bucknell. All of the male dormitories on the hill were occupied by the Navy V-12 program that prepared naval and marine officers. As a condition for

obtaining this program from the Navy Department, the university had to provide a mess for the cadets. It purchased the former SPE house on University Avenue for this purpose and added a one-storey addition to the house, which housed the mess and the kitchen. At the end of the war, this mess was converted to the Men's Cafeteria where male students could take their meals if they purchased a meal ticket. This building is now Cooley Hall.

By 1946, the centennial of its founding, the university was providing food to both male and female college students in separate facilities: the Women's Dining Hall attached to Larison Hall (the former Female Institute Building) and the University Cafeteria, which was for males only. Females who did not live at home had to purchase meals at the Women's Dining Hall, but males living on or off campus did not have to purchase meals at the cafeteria. Many males continued to take their meals in fraternity houses or at local eating establishments, but as time passed, fewer males ate at local restaurants so that in time most dining off-campus would be for special occasions or for sandwiches or soda fountain treats with dates. By 1946 eating clubs were becoming part of a forgotten past for most students and faculty, and very few, if any, students took meals with private families. With certainty, no students walked a mile and a half from and to campus to take their meals as did John Howard Harris. Those days were gone!

### **Endnotes: Photo Credits**

- 1 Unknown photographer. "Female Institute." 1910. BUH1910. Bucknell University Digital Collections. Lewisburg, PA.
- 2 Unknown photographer. "Larison Hall." 1944. BUH1987. Bucknell University Digital Collections. Lewisburg, PA.
- 3 Unknown photographer. "Academy Dining Room." no date. BUH0025. Bucknell University Digital Collections. Lewisburg, PA.
- 4 Unknown photographer. "College Inn." 1934. BUH1171. Bucknell University Digital Collections. Lewisburg, PA.

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## **William Long and Alcatraz**

by

**Robert K. Lynch**

William Long was a native of Mifflinburg, PA, and one of the principal players in the 1962 movie, “Escape from Alcatraz.” In my recent visit to the famous prison, now a tourist site, Bill’s voice and his description of the event is described on the tour tape given to each visitor as they enter the prison. He describes how he tapped the papier-mâché head lying in the bunk, discovering the most infamous escape in the annals of the United States Prison System. In January, 2008, I interviewed Bill about his experiences on the “Rock.” Here is my account from that interview. Sadly, Bill Long passed away in Mifflinburg on July 17, 2010.

### **William Long and Alcatraz**

On June 11, 1962, one of the most dramatic prison escapes occurred from the Alcatraz Prison, which is built on an island one and one fourth miles offshore from San Francisco, California. The prison was originally built in 1858 as a military fortress, and housed military prisoners and deserters during the Civil War. After the War Alcatraz formally became a military prison. On January 1, 1934, the facility



William Long, ID picture on entering prison service

nicknamed “The Rock,” was transferred to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, with a capacity of 250 men judged to be the most incorrigibly dangerous in America. Al Capone, Robert Stroud (the “Birdman of Alcatraz”), Machine Gun Kelly, Doc Barker, Alvin “Creepy Karpis,” and Mickey Cohen were inmates of Alcatraz, and after the modifications completed by the Federal Bureau, was viewed as an inescapable facility. Prisoners made

numerous attempts to escape over the years, but until June 11, 1962, none was successful. Now, no one is sure.

On this date two brothers, John and Clarence Anglin, along with Frank Morris, made their way from their cell to the island's shoreline, boarded a self-made raft from prison issue raincoats, and were never seen again. The following story leaves it to you to decide if they successfully traversed the 50-degree water against a current traveling into the Pacific Ocean at four to five miles per hour, and reached the mainland a mile and a quarter away.

The movie, titled "Escape from Alcatraz" and starring Clint Eastwood, is not a documentary, but it does reflect the story with a considerable accuracy. It begins by tracing the story of John Anglin, brother Clarence Anglin, and Frank Morris from their time of arrival at Alcatraz to their escape. The following information is a brief recap of the escape that occurred on June 11, 1962.



Bill Long at the desk and on the phone while at Alcatraz

Shortly after their arrival planning for the great escape began. These inmates noticed that the concrete around the air vent in their cells wall was deteriorating. They also recognized that this air vent, close to the floor and covered with a metal grill, connected to a utility corridor which contained a ventilation shaft leading to the roof. After close inspection they concluded that if the cell's air vent grill were removed and the hole beyond enlarged, it could be possible get to the utility corridor, climb up the ventilation shaft, remove the shaft's cover on the roof, and escape. With the use of improvised tools, they worked at removing the concrete surrounding the cell's grill cover



and over a period of months were able to create a passage large enough to squeeze through. To conceal their night work an elaborate scheme was developed with other inmates who protected their activity. They placed fake figures in their beds while they worked at the vent hole and then on obstacles in the vertical shaft beyond. Each inmate would return to his cell before the guards made the next inspection round. At the conclusion of a night's work the inmates concealed the hole with cardboard with a painted depiction of the vent cover, made with art supplies secured from other prisoners, making it appear as if the original grill was in place and undisturbed. Hair from the barbershop was brought to the cell over time and stored in the vent shaft. Papier-mâché heads were made from toilet paper and the hair to simulate the inmates.

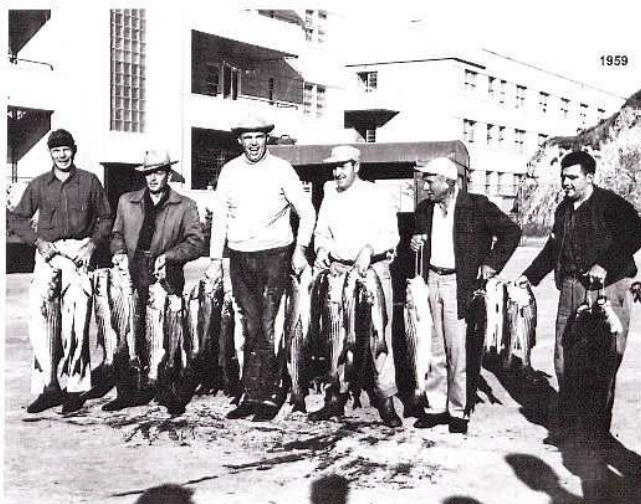
After some six months of work, the escape began. The look-alike heads were taken from the airshaft and with pillows were placed in the beds to appear as if the inmates were in their bunks sleeping. Frank Morris, John Anglin and Clarence Anglin then crawled into the utility corridor, up the shaft, and unto the roof. They carefully descended from the roof, crossed additional barriers, and reached the island's rocky shoreline. The inmates then launched the homemade raft, which had also been hidden in the airshaft, and set out for the mainland one and a quarter miles away. The raft was apparently made from raincoats secured from other prisoners and sewed and glued together with products smuggled from other inmates or perhaps other shops within the prison.

The following morning at the 7:00 am prisoner count, the Clint Eastwood movie depicts a guard approaching the cell of one of the escaped inmates. Seeing he is still asleep, the officer orders the prisoner to get up. The inmate fails to respond and the guard immediately calls the officer in charge. Lieutenant Long approaches the cell, reaches in to tap the pillow of the inmate and the head rolls onto the floor, a startling moment that alerts everyone that an escape has occurred.

As the investigation proceeds, it is quickly determined that the inmates left from the water's edge sometime between lights out the night before and 7:00 am the following morning. To this day, the only evidence of the escape from The Rock was the discovery of parts of the raincoat life raft, a few papers with personal addresses on them, and a few other minor things, such as a homemade oar. Since the frigid water causes hypothermia and the swift current makes it improbable that one could swim for shore without being pulled out into the Pacific Ocean, many believe they did not survive. But no one can be sure.

## Bill Long and Union County

The interesting part of this story is that, in real life, Lieutenant Long, the person who tried to awaken the inmate by tapping his pillow, was none other than



Bill Long fishing, with the Alcatraz employee residence buildings in the background. The people in the photo are employees at the prison. These buildings were destroyed under the Indian occupation of the grounds.

William Long, a 1942 graduate of Mifflinburg High School and a 1948 graduate of Lock Haven State Teachers College. He was a lifelong resident of Mifflinburg. Bill was an employee of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and assigned to Alcatraz at the time, beginning in 1954. His wife, Jean, was also employed on The Rock as its Postmaster while assigned there. Bill Long appeared in several documentaries, including the Fox Network's "America's Most Wanted" program, starring John Walsh, in October 1998, and "Unsolved Mysteries" in 1993.

Mr. Long lived at the top of the hill, 780 Quarry Road, in the stone home overlooking Mifflinburg. Bill's wife, the former Jean Knepshild, Mifflinburg High School "Class of 47", is now deceased.

During the June 11, 1962 escape, Alcatraz was under the leadership of Warden Olin Blackwell. Mr. Blackwell came to the Rock in 1961 and, upon its closing on March 21, 1963 he was transferred to the Lewisburg Federal Prison to assume its leadership during the years 1963-1965. It is also to be noted that Mr. Blackwell's son was married to Miss Barbara Oldt for a brief period of time. She was a 1947 graduate of Mifflinburg High School and its High School Librarian for many years. William Long was eventually

transferred back to Lewisburg and returned to his native Union County for his retired years.

### Sources

1. Fox Network Documentary “America’s Most Wanted” “Alcatraz-The Escape.” October, 1998.
2. NBC Documentary “Unsolved Mysteries”, “Alcatraz-The Rock.” starring Robert Stack 1993.
3. “Escape from Alcatraz.” starring Clint Eastwood. Paramount Pictures. 1979.
4. Personal interview with William Long, January 8, 2008.



# ACCOUNTS

Published by the Union County Historical Society, Lewisburg PA

## This Issue's Authors:

- After moving to Lewisburg in 1984, **Deane Clements** developed and conducted walking tours of the architecture of its historic district.
- A Union County native, **Russell Dennis** taught in the education department in Bucknell for forty-one years and lives in Lewisburg.
- **Bob Lynch** lives in Mifflinburg, retired from the Mifflinburg School District, and is a local history enthusiast.
- **Nancy Neuman** is a long-time resident of Union County and national past-president of the League of Women Voters.
- **Tom Rich** is emeritus professor of mechanical engineering at Bucknell University, and he and his wife, Mary Lou, live in Lewisburg
- **Mark Wehr** lives near Cowan and works for the Paul Mueller Company, a leading manufacturer of milk cooling and storage equipment.

## The Purpose and Scope of ACCOUNTS

How often have you been in a conversation about our local history, and you thought, "Gee, that's worth knowing. Why isn't there a place where things like that can be recorded and saved for the future?" Now there is.

- ACCOUNTS of Union County History is a new on-line publication. It comes out twice a year, in the fall and spring, as part of the Society's web page.
- ACCOUNTS is free. You are earnestly invited not only to read each issue here on the website, but also to contribute items to its pages.
- ACCOUNTS is an opportunity to add to Union County's historical record.

## Guidelines

- ACCOUNTS is not a journal of formal scholarship. No bibliography or footnotes are needed.
- Items will be short: generally 500 – 2000 words (a double-spaced page has about 250 words; so 2 to 8 pages in length).
- 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**

Do you have an item to propose? Please send Tom Greaves an e-mail [greaves@bucknell.edu](mailto:greaves@bucknell.edu) and he'll be in touch. He will also be happy to get your suggestion about a potential author whom he can invite to contribute.

ACCOUNTS is not reserved for those who are polished, experienced writers. It is an expression of ourselves as a community, a community of folks who pay attention to local history and want to help enrich it.

A "Letters Received" column will 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.

**Advice to Contributors:**

- Accuracy is paramount.
- Focus on what is relevant to Union County history.
- Write about what you know best.
- Accompanying images are welcome.
- The editor will be happy to work with an author to strengthen the material.

**Technical Stipulations:**

- Get consent of people and families mentioned; author bears sole responsibility for any objections raised.
- Photographs and other images can be included provided author has clear permission to use them.
- Original material please; previously published work is usually not accepted.
- Lists or documents can be included, but need to be explained and discussed in the author's words.
- Analyses 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.
- A re-published item from ACCOUNTS must 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.
- Editor may seek advice from an editorial board regarding any submission.
- Decisions by the Editor will be final.