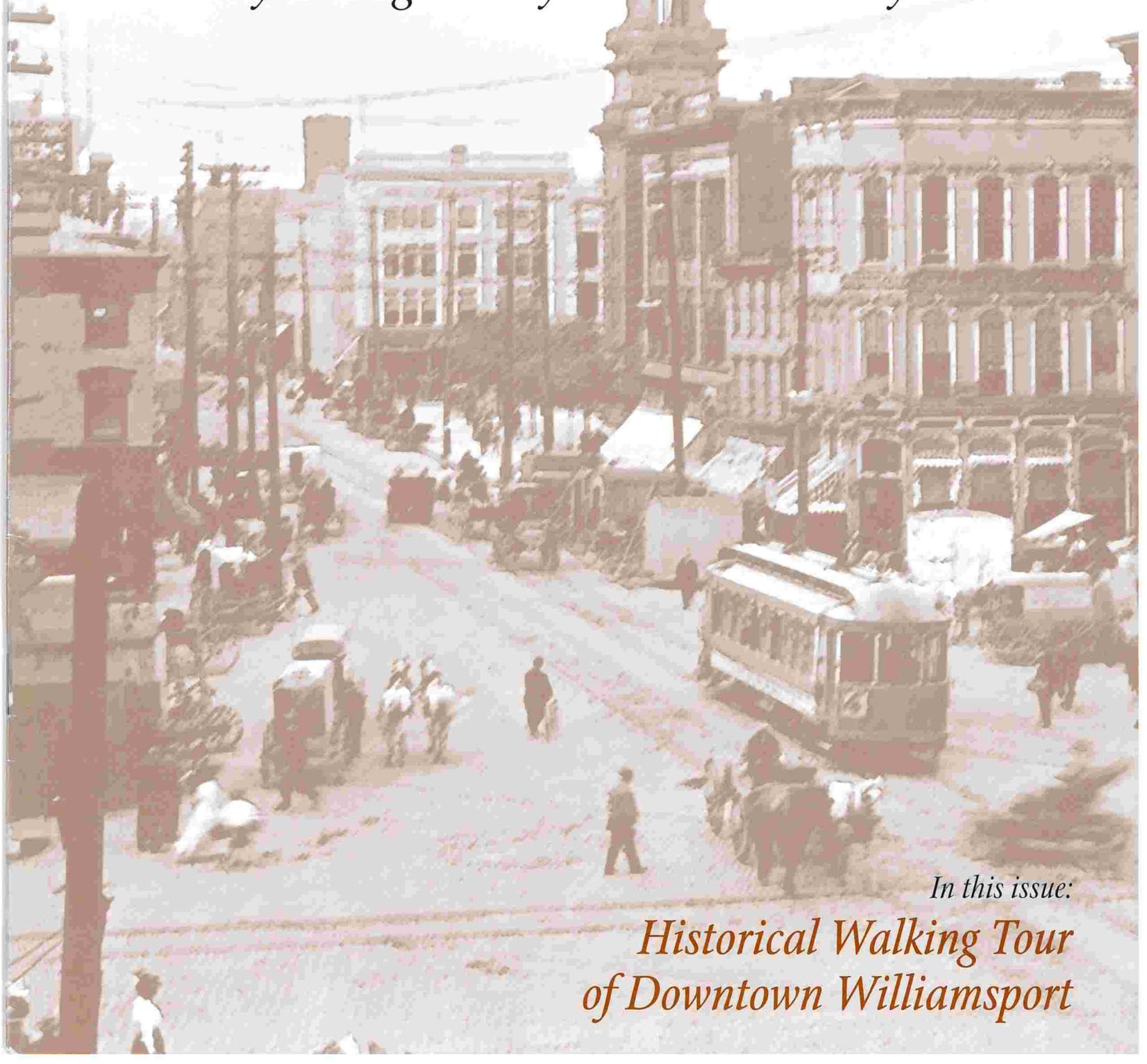


The
JOURNAL
of the
Lycoming County Historical Society



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*Historical Walking Tour
of Downtown Williamsport*

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*Cover Photo
Market Square looking west on
3rd St., c. 1909. The scene shows
the changing modes of urban
transportation: horse-drawn
carriages alongside a trolley. The
blur near the trolley and carriage
is the newest innovation — an
automobile (D. Vincent Smith
#8962).*

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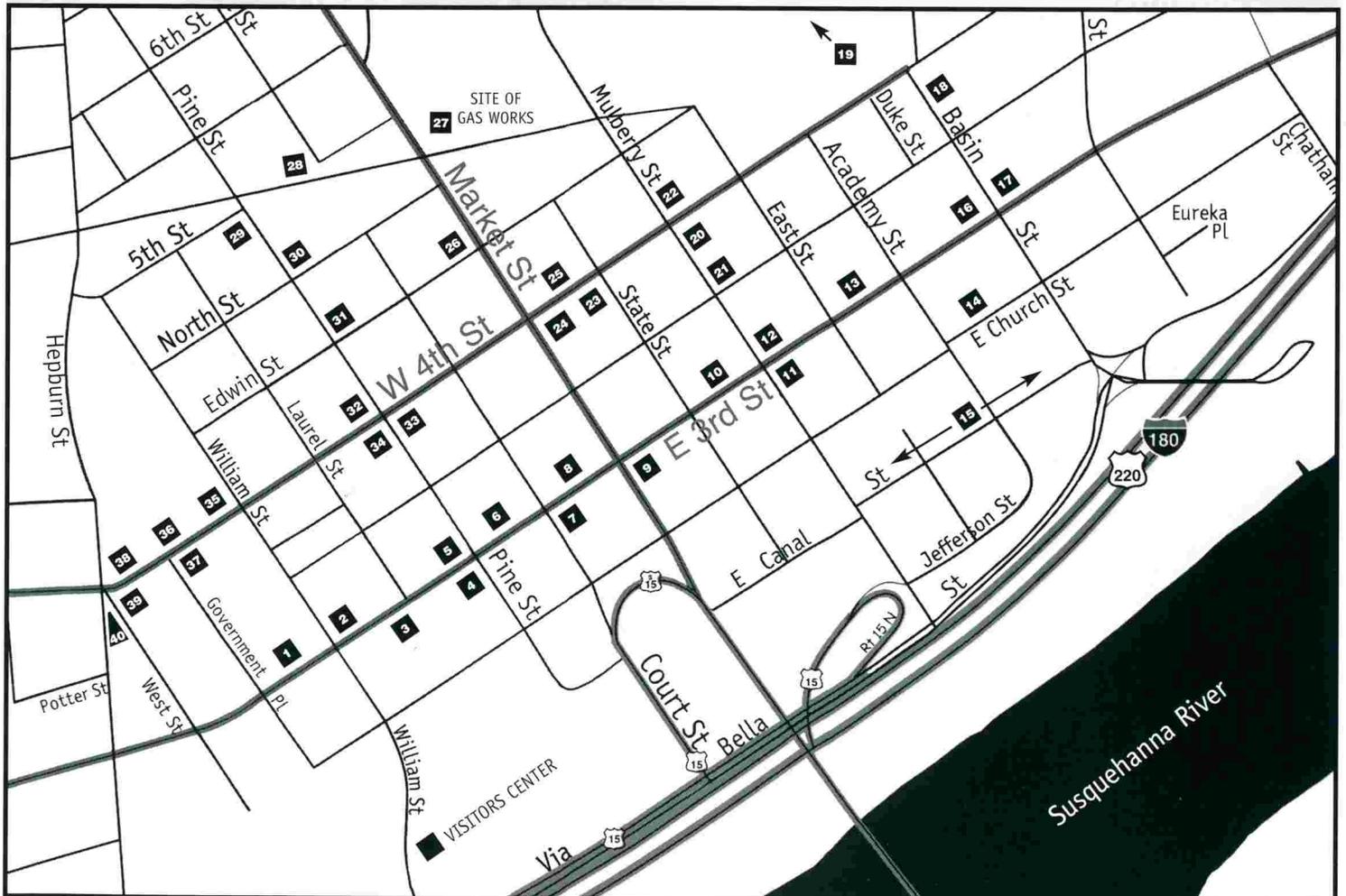
Historical Walking Tour of Downtown Williamsport

By Penelope Austin, Alison Hirsch and Michele Miller

Downtown Williamsport is a treasure trove of historical architecture, with buildings that evoke the political, social, and economic history of every era in Williamsport's history. Of course, the city's heyday in the lumber era is well represented here, with the Victorian public buildings, churches, clubs, businesses, theaters, stores, and houses. But the downtown streets also reflect the early years of the city, in the few houses and structures that predate the Civil War. They also demonstrate the city's vitality over the span of the twentieth century, with bank buildings from the early 1900s, grand movie theaters of the 1920s and 1930s, the so-called urban renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, and the historic preservation movement of more recent years.

Long before historic preservationists advocated creative re-use and adaptation of older buildings,

Williamsport residents were doing just that. Theaters became office buildings and missions, clubs became churches and auto supply stores, jewelry stores became beauty salons, and hotels became law offices and apartment buildings. After the city's landmark courthouse was demolished in 1969 in the name of progress, residents mobilized to save other historic buildings. City Hall moved into the old Federal Building, and the old City Hall became offices. The Old Jail served a variety of functions, including a school and art gallery, until finally becoming a restaurant and club. The dilapidated Capitol Theatre became a magnificent new Community Arts Center. The rebuilding of historic downtown Williamsport continues with the efforts of private individuals and businesses to renovate and restore one building at a time.



The full tour covers 1.6 miles and takes about 1 1/2 hours. To take an abbreviated tour, go east on Third St. from William St., go north on Basin and west on Fourth to Government Pl., then back one short block to return to William St. This skips sites # 14-15, 21, 26-31, 40; some of those sites are visible by looking down the side streets.

The date given after the name of each structure is the year the building was first in use. When inclusive dates are given, the second date is the year the building was destroyed.

Begin at the Visitors Information Center off William St. west of the Radisson Hotel. Until urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s, the area to the east was known as Little Italy because most of its inhabitants and storekeepers were Italian immigrants and their descendants. Go north on William St. to the intersection of William and Third Sts. On the northwest corner is site # 1.

1. The Grit Building, 200-222 W. 3rd St. (1892). The *Grit* began in 1882 as a Saturday afternoon supplement for the *Daily Sun and Banner* and grew to become known as “America’s greatest family newspaper.” Printer Dietrick Lamade bought out his partner in 1884 and turned the *Grit* into an independent Sunday newspaper. Avoiding the “yellow journalism” of post-Civil War newspapers and instead catering to the rising Victorian middle class, the newspaper focused on the goals and values of a family-oriented audience. A national edition



Schoolchildren waiting to cross 3rd St. at the corner of William St. in 1940. The Washington School stood across the street from the Grit Building (D. Vincent Smith # 31833).

went out to every state, and circulation reached 1,500,000 readers at its height. The paper remained in the Lamade family until it was sold and relocated to Topeka, Kansas, in 1992. The original building on the corner was renovated for re-use. With its rounded arches, deep window and door reveals, and contrasting bands

of colors, the building’s façade reflects the uniquely American Romanesque Revival style of architect H.H. Richardson (1838-86). The owls and griffins that adorn the top floor are restrained reminders of the fantastic gargoyles popular with the earlier Gothic Revival style.

2. The Old Jail, 154 W. 3rd St. (1868). On the northeast corner stands the second Lycoming County Jail, built after fire destroyed the original structure that had served the county since 1799. Impressive for its day, the 1868 jail—designed by York, Pa., architect Edward

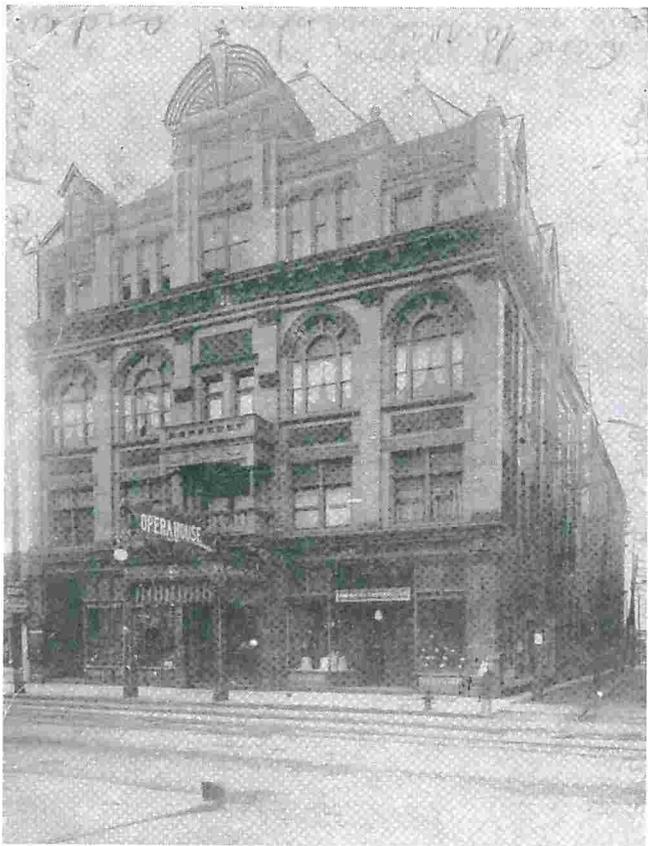


The Old Jail, with its original tower, was the backdrop for a bicyclist c. 1905 (Smith #7375).

Haviland—boasted 68 single-occupancy cells measuring 8 x 15 feet and could, if need be, hold as many as 138 prisoners. Hangings took place in the prison courtyard until 1914, when the sheriff had the gallows removed and burned; by state law, electrocution had become the new method of execution. The Old Jail shows the nineteenth-century fondness for medieval architectural styles, though its original Norman-inspired battlements and keep (tower) have been removed. According to local legend, an unusual “traffic accident” in the late nineteenth century destroyed parts of the iron fence with its fleur-de-lis pickets. During one of that era’s great floods, when the water ran as high as six feet through downtown, a steamboat cruising the new “waterways” supposedly crashed into the building. The Old Jail closed in 1986, when a modern prison facility opened a few blocks west on Third Street. In 2001, the Old Jail was converted into The Cell Block, a club and restaurant with live music in “The Gallows.”

Walk east on Third St.

3. D. S. Andrus Music Store, 135 W. 3rd St. (1875), and Lycoming Opera House (1892-1917). Treble clefs carved at the corners of this building indi-



The Lycoming Opera House c. 1906 (postcard published by the Dean Book Store, c. 1906).

cate its origins as a music store, selling pianos, sheet music, and, in its early years, sewing machines. The building was originally built for the A.H. Heilman Furniture Company, located here for thirty-eight years until it moved to its new home down the street (see site # 4). In the early morning hours of November 30, 1923, a concert grand piano was rolled down the street and around the corner to the Majestic Theatre, in preparation for that night's concert by Russian composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff. In the 1990s the Heavenly Pasteria opened in the renovated building. The parking structure across the walkway from the restaurant was built on the former site of the Lycoming Opera House. The city's largest theater when it opened in 1892, the Opera House was destroyed by fire in 1917.

4. A.H. Heilman Company, 101 W. 3rd St. (1912).

In the 1990s, the removal of corrugated siding covering the front and sides of this building, including the windows, revealed this attractive building designed by T. J. Litzelman. The store was erected on the site of the Eagle Hotel (1815-1907), an elegant establishment that had been home to many gentlemen before they established themselves and built homes worthy of their status as physicians, attorneys, and entrepreneurs. Heilman specialized in fine rugs and carpets and, before its 1929 closing, outfitted some of the grandest homes and hotels in the Northeast, including the nearby Lycoming Hotel (now the Genetti). The building subsequently housed a

furniture company, then a dry goods firm, and then the Carroll House, a department store, which closed in 1977, following the movement of many downtown businesses



Lycoming Dry Goods occupied the Heilman building in the 1930s and 1940s (Smith #33812, 1944).

to suburban malls. The building's restoration in the 1990s was a sign of hope for the revival of downtown Williamsport; it has served as a bank since then.

5. L. L. Stearns & Sons, 100 W. 3rd St. (1889-

1998). The Trade and Transit Center, completed in fall 1999, was built on the site of Stearns department store,



L. L. Stearns expanded into the old West Branch Bank building, the building with the peaked roofline seen here in the center (postcard, c. 1915).

which stood here from 1889 to 1998. The store first opened in the former City Hotel on the corner of Pine

and West Third and grew to incorporate other adjoining structures, including the building still standing around the corner on Pine Street. Offering quality merchandise, L. L. Stearns and other fine shops in its vicinity established downtown Williamsport as a commercial center during the boom days of the lumber era and for many years afterward. The current center houses the Chamber of Commerce and the Community Theatre League, a state-of-the-art pocket theater, and serves as the launching pad for city bus transportation. The Stearns Café and the open plaza around the corner on Pine Street commemorate the grand department store, though coffee now costs a bit more than the nickel a cup shoppers once enjoyed.

6. Lycoming County Courthouse, 48 W. 3rd St. (1804, 1860, 1970). The present building is the third courthouse built on this site. During the late 1700s, court sessions were held at various inns, taverns, and public buildings. In 1804, Williamsport built its first



The Sloan Courthouse, the highest point in the Williamsport skyline, c. 1906 (Smith #6280).

official courthouse on this site. By 1858, the first courthouse was no longer able to meet the needs of the growing population, and it was demolished. A new courthouse, designed by Samuel Sloan of Philadelphia and resembling the town halls of northern Italy was erected. The bell from the 1804 courthouse also hung in the 1860 building and now hangs in a modern campanile on the terrace. Nearby stands a replica of an original iron figure of "Lady Justice" made in Philadelphia in 1803; the original statue, which stood atop the 1804 courthouse, is in the Thomas T. Taber Museum of the Lycoming County Historical Society.

7. First National Bank Building, 21-25 W. 3rd St. (1913). This was Williamsport's tallest commercial building when it was erected in honor of the bank's fiftieth anniversary, replacing the bank's original home which had first housed the United States Hotel. On opening day of Williamsport's first "skyscraper," citizens had an opportunity to ride up the elevator for their first aerial views of the city.



The First National Bank façade displayed appeals to the public to buy Liberty Bonds to support the military effort in World War I (Smith #13940, c. 1917).

8. The Mussina Building, 18 W. 3rd St. (1873). Jacob Mussina (1807-1888), born in Aronsburg, Pa., to a Polish immigrant father and Pennsylvania-born mother, had a jewelry store in Williamsport beginning in 1830. He and his wife, Williamsport native Jerusha Bailey, had eight children; she became a leader in the temperance movement. Trained as a watchmaker, Jacob Mussina was responsible for keeping the courthouse clock in working order and was the first leader of the group later known as the Repasz Band. Mussina also became adept with new technologies, opening a daguerreotype gallery at his store in 1842 and becoming Williamsport's first telegraph operator in 1851, with machinery he installed in his store. In 1858, he built a three-story brick building on the north-east-corner of Market Square, the center of Victorian



In 1873, Charles C. Mussina opened his jewelry store across the street from his brother's jewelry and watch shop (Smith # 8962, c. 1909).

Williamsport at the intersection of Third Street and Market. After he retired in the 1870s, his son Sylvester took over the store and another son, Charles, built his own store on the northwest corner of the square. The exterior of the Charles C. Mussina building, now a cosmetics salon, was restored in 2003. The Mussina family has remained in the area over the generations; today, the best-known member of the family, Mike Mussina, is a pitcher for the New York Yankees.

9. The Ulman Opera House, 2 E. 3rd St. (1867).

This cultural landmark was built in the imposing Second Empire style popular during the second half of the nineteenth century. On New Year's Eve of 1869, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), appeared here to promote his most recent book, *The Innocents Abroad*. Among other popular entertainments presented here was Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Competition from the larger Elliot's Academy of Music, which opened in 1872, forced the opera house to close in 1874. Still-life artist Severin



The Ulman Opera House dominated Market Square when it was first built, before the streets were even paved (A.75.54, c. 1870).

Roesen (1815-c.1872) had a studio in this building, and artist George Luks, one of the Ashcan Eight, was born in a building across the street.

10. Moose Lodge, 33 E. 3rd St. (1940). The first Moose Lodge on this site was a former doctor's office purchased by the group in 1917 and destroyed by fire in 1939. Longtime residents recall coming to this building in 1959 to receive Dr. Jonas Salk's new polio vaccine; the lines stretched in both directions around the corner as adults sought to avoid this terrible disease that had struck so many Americans, including President Franklin Roosevelt. After the Moose Lodge moved to South Williamsport in the 1990s, three partners purchased the building, renovated it to emphasize its Art Deco features, and turned it into an upscale restaurant. The "33" medallion on the façade covers the original bas-relief sculpture of a moose.

11. First Presbyterian Church, 102 E. 3rd St. (1884). The First Presbyterian Church houses what may

be one of the unluckiest congregations in the area. The original structure, built in 1842 on the northwest corner of Market and Willow Streets, was destroyed by fire in 1849. A second church, built in 1849, burned down in 1859 and was replaced by a third structure that parishioners used until 1884 when the congregation decided to build the present church, which has remained intact at this location. Built for a congregation of prominent Victorians, the church's polychromatic exterior and pointed arches show their taste for the Victorian Gothic.

12. The Russell Inn, E. 3rd St. (1796-1871). When Irish immigrant James Russell built his log tavern on the corner of Third and Mulberry Street in 1796, it was the first permanent structure within what became the town



The Russell Inn was a popular scene of Williamsport's "pioneer days" (photograph, late 1860s, reproduced on a postcard, c. 1895).

of Williamsport. Since there was no courthouse yet, court sessions for the county were held here in 1797 and 1798. After Russell died in 1804, his widow married a man named Joseph Dumm, and their daughter Eva ("Affie") was born here in 1806. She lived in the building, which became known as the Affie Dumm House, until it was destroyed, along with more than forty other buildings, in the great fire of 1871.

13. The Tinsman-Ryan Residences, 139-151 E. 3rd St. (c. 1852, c. 1870). These houses are reminders of a time when this block of East Third Street was the original "Millionaires' Row" of Williamsport. After working in the lumber business in New Jersey and Lebanon, Pennsylvania, Garrett Tinsman (1808-1888) came to the small village of Williamsport and became a successful lumber baron while the industry was still in its infancy. He and his wife, Margaret Saylor, moved to the city in 1852 and built the house at number 139 in the fashionable district east of Market Street. In 1866, their only daughter, Lina, married John Ryan, who joined his father-in-law's business and helped found the Lycoming County Historical Society. In the 1870s, the young Ryans built their new home beside the Tinsmans; later, a second-story passageway was built to connect the two houses so that Lina could care for her ailing mother.

The Tinsman residence reflects a simplified version of the late Classical Revival style and is one of the few remaining examples of pre-Civil War homes in the city. The Ryan Residence with its sloping mansard roof is a good example of a French Second Empire mansion. Across the street is the home built by another lumber baron, George Lentz, and his wife, Jane Wood, in 1870. The Tinsmans, Ryans, and Lentzes were all leading members of First Presbyterian Church, just down the street.

Turn right (south, toward the river) on Academy St. Stop at the corner of Church St. and look to your left (east). Church St. was named not for a house of worship but for Jeremiah Church, a nineteenth-century landowner who later moved to Lock Haven.

14. First Public School, 219 E. Church St. (c. 1835-1900s). On the north side of Church Street (formerly Black Horse Alley) between Academy and Basin Streets stood the small one-story, two-room brick building that served as the first “common,” or public, school in Williamsport. In 1835, the city voted to support public education through taxes (in accord with a state law passed the previous year). Before that, education had been the province solely of parents and churches. The city probably acquired or rented an existing house rather



Williamsport's first public school was another reminder of early Williamsport (Wmpt.Sc.1).

than erecting a new building: in 1854, teacher Wesley Miles described the building as “old.” The building later was converted to a private home, in use into the 1900s. In

the 1890s, the next block of Church Street to the west was the site of the Girls’ Training School and the Industrial Home (which later moved and became the Home for the Friendless). These institutions were among many founded across the nation in the wake of the depression of 1893.

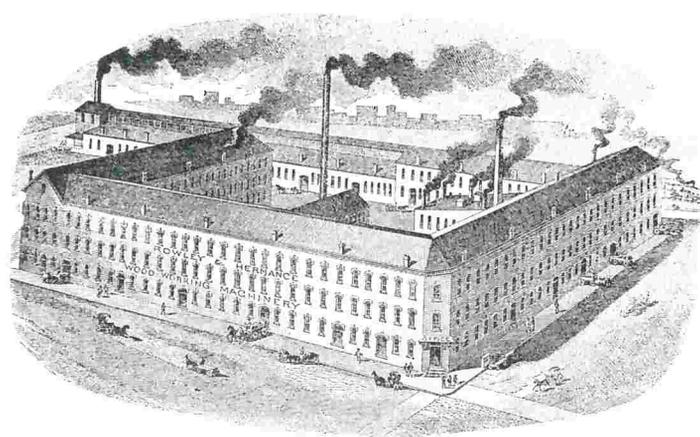
Today, the streetscape of the block east of Academy Street hints at what it might have looked like in the early decades of the twentieth century, when zoning laws were non-existent and factories, shops, and houses existed side by side. The large brick building on the corner began as a Coca-Cola Bottling Works before 1920; by 1950 it had been converted into Plankenhorn Braid Works, one of several local factories producing a variety of trim for use on clothing or home furnishings. In 1930, other inhabitants of the block included a dress-

maker, an Italian grocer, a veterinarian, a garage, and two widows who probably operated boarding houses.

Continue south on Academy, then turn left (east) on Canal St., which runs over where the West Branch Canal flowed for more than fifty years.

15. The West Branch Canal (1834-1889).

Celebrated by many in the community, the West Branch Canal opened with great fanfare at the foot of Basin Street in Williamsport on October 15, 1834. It closed in 1889, when the worst flood in the city’s history destroyed much of the canal along with most of downtown Williamsport. The demise of the canal here, and throughout the country, had already been made inevitable by the coming of the railroad. About twenty feet across and running parallel to the Susquehanna River, the canal allowed passage for boats carrying goods and passengers to and from the region, enabling



Rowley and Hermance Machinery Company (engraving, c. 1875, reproduced in Larson, Williamsport, p. 49).

Williamsport to expand and grow into a regional commercial and manufacturing center. The canal basin that served as the docking area was located at the foot of the appropriately named Basin Street. William Packer (1807-1870), governor of Pennsylvania 1858-1861 and one of Williamsport’s leading citizens, served as superintendent of the canal from Sunbury to Lock Haven for a number of years.

Turn left (north) on Basin St. The brick building on the corner of Church and Basin, now a textile trim factory, is what remains of the Rowley and Hermance Company (1875 and later), the woodworking machinery firm that once filled the entire block and stood three-and-a-half stories tall, with a sloped, multi-chimney roof. The top floors have been removed, and the windows with their distinctive arched heads have been partly bricked over, but portions of the original building remain as a reminder of the once vibrant lumber and related industries that flourished along the canal and riverfront.

16. Site of Michael Ross Residence (1803-1875) and James V. Brown Residence, 239 E. 3rd St. (1875-1919).

Williamsport's founder, Michael Ross (1759-1819), learned the surveying business in Muncy as an indentured servant for land speculator Samuel Wallis.

Like that more famous eighteenth-century surveyor George Washington, his work led to the acquisition of prime land. Ross purchased the land that became Williamsport from William



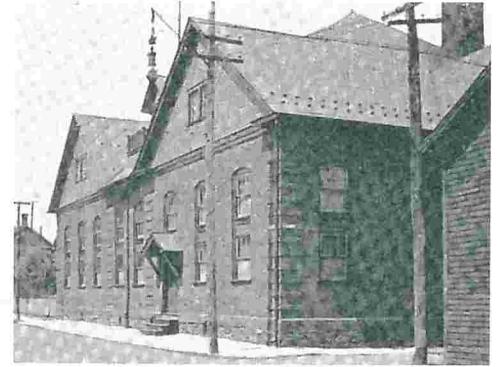
Episcopal Bishop Darlington occupied the former residence of James V. Brown in the early twentieth century (postcard, c. 1907).

Winter in 1794; soon afterward, Williamsport became the county seat. In 1803 Ross built a spacious home at this location, a sharp contrast to the rough cabins and thick forest that still characterized much of the region. Later, lumber entrepreneur James V. Brown purchased the house; he and his family lived in it until 1875 when they had it torn down to build a stylish new mansion. A native New Yorker descended from the founders of the prestigious Brown University, Brown first invested in a hotel and flour mill in Williamsport and then went into the lumber business like every other man looking to make a fortune. Encouraged in his philanthropic endeavors by his wife, Carile Higgins Brown, J. V. Brown granted appropriations for a free public library in his will as well as books, sculpture, and other artwork from his personal collection. After his death, the residence was an Episcopal bishopric 1906-8 and then a private hospital until it burned down in 1919.

17. The Henry White-Evenden-Eagles Building, 307 E. 3rd St. (c. 1820). Originally built as a girls' academy, this building became the residence of the Henry White family. White was trained as a lawyer but amassed his sizable estate from ventures in the lumber industry. The Evendens were the next family to live here. The original residence featured Victorian details in a basic Italianate style with features of other styles. As the home of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, it has since been significantly altered.

18. Turn Verein Social Club, 334 Basin St. (1884). Sometimes called Turner Hall, this building housed the first social club for the German community of Williamsport. Williamsport's leading citizens were invited to the opening ceremonies on December 30, 1884,

which included a concert by the members' orchestra and chorus, followed by a ball. In 1926, the club moved its headquarters around the corner to East Third Street, just east of the Eagles Building; that structure was demolished in 1978. The original Turner Hall became an upholstery shop and, by the 1950s, an auto parts store. Its classic Federal-style symmetry must have made it seem old-fashioned in 1880s Williamsport, but its fine workmanship has preserved it intact.



The Turn Verein was the first social club for Williamsport's German population ("Homes of the Clubs," Williamsport Illustrated, 1910).

Walk north on Basin St. to East Fourth St., then west on Fourth St. to Mulberry St..



The Eagles Lodge, seen here with its nineteenth-century double portico, was just one of Williamsport's many fraternal clubs (Smith 2001.182: UNN134).

19. Clarke Building and Chapel (1939), Lycoming College. North of Fourth Street is Lycoming College, founded in 1812 as the Williamsport Academy. Later re-established under the auspices of the Methodist Church as the Dickinson Seminary, the private school provided education for male and female students from grade school through junior college. The

school continued to grow, spreading across what had been known as “Dutch Hill,” a predominantly German neighborhood. Then as Dickinson Junior College, the school had an enrollment of 230 students. In 1947, the school reorganized once again as Lycoming College and has been a four-year liberal arts college since. Looking



Most of Lycoming College's early buildings have been replaced, though Clarke Chapel's architectural style harks back to an earlier time (Vanucci #86363).

up the hill from Basin and Fourth Street, you will see the Clarke Building and Chapel, named in honor of a college benefactor, Martha B. Clarke, and notable for its steeple. None of the college's nineteenth-century buildings have survived the growth of the institution.

20. Judge James Gamble House, 106 E. 4th St. (1869). This Greek Revival residence built by prominent Williamsport resident Judge Gamble displays later additions of Victorian trim. Born on a homestead farm near Jersey Shore, Judge Gamble enjoyed a successful career as a Congressman (1850-55) and as an attorney, moving to Williamsport in 1868 to serve as president



The Gamble House in 1971 (Steven T. Smith, Wmpt.R.32).

judge of Lycoming County (1868-78). He was also an active member of the nearby Presbyterian Church. Judge Gamble presided over the controversial “Sawdust War” trial that followed a 22-day lumber mill strike during the

summer of 1872. Striking workers hoped to reduce their workday from more than twelve hours to ten for the same amount of pay. Twenty-seven men were arrested during strike-related riots. Judge Gamble convicted 21 men to terms in the county jail and 4 leaders to one-year terms in the federal penitentiary. In response to a petition signed by community citizens, the Governor pardoned the men two days later and none served time. Judge Gamble remained a popular resident and died on February 22, 1883.

Turn south on Mulberry and walk to the northeast corner of Mulberry and Willow Sts.

21. The Gamble-Reighard Residence, 330

Mulberry St. (c. 1875). This was the first of Mary White's wedding-gift houses; when she remarried after the death of her first husband, her new spouse built her a home on Millionaire's Row (835 West Fourth Street). Mary's first husband was Judge Gamble's son, James M. Gamble, Jr., who also went into the law. During his short life—he died at age 44—he served as president of the Williamsport Water Company, director of the Bald Eagle Valley Railroad Co., and director of the Lycoming National Bank. In 1889, another of Judge Gamble's children, Elizabeth, moved into the house with her husband, Oliver H. Reighard, a Williamsport native and lawyer. With its slender proportions and flat, gently pitched roof with wide eaves and brackets, the house is an example of the Italian Villa style. The porches and cupola of the original house have been removed, and the house has undergone many changes since its “unwrapping” as a young bride's wedding gift.

Return to the intersection of Mulberry and Fourth Sts. and cross Fourth St.

22. Christ Episcopal Church, 48 Mulberry St.

(1869). Founded in 1840, the Christ Church congregation held its first service in this building in 1869. Both the interior and the exterior of the church are excellently crafted with handcarved woodwork and stained glass windows by Tiffany and Lamb. The church's Reverend Dr. John Henry Hopkins, Jr., who served as rector from 1876 to 1887, penned the words and music of the famous Christmas carol, “We Three Kings of Orient Are.” The stumpy—but interesting—church steeple may not be a peaked European-style Gothic steeple, but the polychromatic exterior and interior details mark this magnificent edifice as a fine example of Victorian Gothic architecture.

23. Elks Lodge, 36 E. 4th St. (1927). The Williamsport Chapter of the Elks moved from their Victorian home on West Third Street to this building, which they occupied until 1971. It seems to have been

Williamsport's last major building project to be completed before the beginning of the Great Depression. With the conversion or destruction of the major theaters in town, the Elks auditorium providing the city's largest space dedicated to live performances in the 1930s.

24. The William Howard Memorial Masonic Temple and Acacia Club, 348 Market St. (1898, 1901, 1910). Further down East Fourth Street begins this group of interconnected structures extending across a quarter of the block south of the Brown Library. The Masonic Temple, which faces Market Street, was built in 1898. Local citizens were suspicious of the members' vow of secrecy, and working and middle class people



The façade of the Acacia Club is an eclectic mix of architectural styles (Vanucci #31694-2).

feared that the group, comprised of Williamsport's elite, would use the organization to control all factions of society. A prominent Mason, William Howard, born in Yorkshire, England on August 13, 1831, moved to Williamsport in August 1854 and became a successful lumberman. His will provided for the Howard Memorial Cathedral, facing East Fourth Street,

which was built in 1901. The Acacia Club, built in 1910, offers lunch and dinner and is frequently booked for weddings and other receptions.

25. James V. Brown Library, 19 E. 4th St. (1907) Still a much-beloved cultural center of Williamsport, the James V. Brown Library was named after its donor, James Vanduzee Brown. Built on the site of James's brother Henry's residence, thanks in large part to the efforts of Mrs. James V. Brown, the library opened its doors to the public on June 21, 1907. After graduating from M.I.T., Philadelphia architect Edgar V. Seeler (1867-1929) studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the library's smooth stone finish and classical detail reflect the popular Beaux-Arts style. Seeler later became best known for his office buildings, tall for their time, such as the Curtis Publishing Company (1912) in Philadelphia.

Turn right (north) on Market St. Look across the street to the three buildings at the corner of Edwin St.



The James V. Brown Library, c. 1931 (D. Vincent Smith #24575).

26. 433-445 Market St. These structures may have been among the earliest brick buildings to be built in Williamsport. Their symmetrical design, with matching chimneys at either end, smooth brick façades, and lintel-type window heads are typical features of the Federal style. Whatever the exact dates of the buildings, these sites have been occupied at least since 1866, when the first city directories were published. In the 1880s, several doctors had their offices here, including one of the region's first women physicians, Dr. Phoebe H. F. Hagenbuch. On the east side of Market was the home and office of Dr. August Richter, Williamsport's pioneer in public health. In the early twentieth century, the largest of the buildings was the Eagle Hotel, named after the grander, more famous Eagle Hotel near the courthouse that had been torn down (see site # 4). Number 445, which has modern brick facing, housed a German-owned bakery from about 1910 into the 1930s. After a hiatus when it served as a real estate office and barber shop, it became Joanna's Italian Bakery.

27. High Water Mark of the 1889 Flood and Williamsport Gas Works Disaster. Inside the entrance gate to Lycoming College on the corner of Market Street and Little League Boulevard, a plaque indicates the height the Susquehanna River's waters reached during the 1889 flood. The field is the site of the former



Market Square during the 1889 flood (LCHS slide).

Williamsport Gas Works, which exploded in August 1889 two months after the flood. Up Market Street, past the campus, is the "Dutch Hill" neighborhood, where the city's German population was once concentrated.

Turn left (west) and follow Little League Bl.

28. Pennsylvania Railroad and Williamsport Station House. The first railroad in Williamsport was chartered in 1839, and by 1872 there were several lines, including one whose tracks followed the route where



The station house, still standing, is visible behind a train passing Market Street Station in 1971 (ESu.Tr.Rr.91).

Little League Boulevard now runs. The main passenger station was behind Peter Herdic's grand hotel on West Fourth Street, but this Market Street Station remained open for freight and passengers headed downtown. The station itself was on the south side of the tracks, but the station house on the north side remains as a reminder of the railroad era.

Turn left (south) onto Pine St.

29. Centennial Hall (1895); Pine Street Methodist Church and Peace Tower (1826; 1844, renovated 1872; 1908; 1977). The Peace Tower at the northeast corner of the parking lot is in memory of the parents of Williamsport resident Dr. Robert Yasui, whose entire family was interned during World War II as "enemy aliens" simply because they were Japanese-



Centennial Exhibition Hall (Smith #390, 1895).

Americans. The tower stands on the site of the Lycoming County Centennial Exhibition Building (1895-1985), in which nearly 15,000 items were on display in July 1895. The building later housed a furniture store. The first three churches on the adjoining site fell victims to progress, as the congregation rebuilt, enlarged, and modernized its structure. In 1977, fire destroyed the fourth church, in spite of the red asbestos roof that covered its white Pennsylvania marble exterior.

30. Rialto Theatre, 470 Pine St. (1927). The Rialto was the most expensive movie theater in town and boasted the city's largest outdoor sign on its southern side. The architecture is a pastiche of neo-classical



The Rialto Theatre, c. 1927 (Wmpt.Th.5).

revival, art nouveau, and early art deco styles. In the late nineteenth century, Miss Wilson's Private School for Young Ladies and Children stood on the site.

31. Old City Hall, 454 Pine St. (1894). A signature piece of the remarkable Eber Culver, the Old City Hall is located on the former site of the Ross Park Cemetery that was sadly neglected on the northwestern edge of the Victorian business district. During a tour promoting his new book, Mark Twain spotted it, and, disgusted by its neglect, wrote a newspaper article entitled, "Remarkable Dream," which records the thoughts of a



Old City Hall, soon after it opened (Smith #380, c. 1895).

disgruntled resident of the cemetery, though Twain omitted Williamsport's name. The remains in the cemetery were later moved and interred in the Williamsport Cemetery. This beautiful Victorian Romanesque building is a fine example of nineteenth-century taste. The statue in front is the Sailors and Soldiers monument erected in 1894 as a tribute to the men who served in the Civil War.

32. West Branch Bank Building, 102 W. 4th St. (1917). With its Corinthian columns, monumental arched windows and entrances, and marble facade, this building is a fine local example of Beaux-Arts classicism. The building's original dome is gone, and the demolition



The tower of the fourth Pine Street Methodist Church is visible behind the original dome of the West Branch Bank building. (Smith #17918, 1925).

of the J.C. Penney store to make room for a parking lot left the brick wall exposed on the western side of the building. The bank's president, Abraham Updegraff, was a prominent abolitionist active in the Underground Railroad.



The Updegraff Hotel fire of 1925 (Smith #17021).

33. Updegraff Hotel, W. 4th St. (1892).

Daniel Updegraff (brother of abolitionist Abraham) built this hotel, the largest of its day in the city, on the site of the old Hepburn Inn (formerly the Doeblner House), where abolitionist Frederick Douglass spoke when he came to Williamsport in the 1870s. The old structure may have provided temporary shelter to run-

away slaves before the Civil War. The Updegraff family eventually sold the building, which became the Ross Hotel. In the 1920s, the Ross Hotel became an annex of the Lycoming Hotel to handle its considerable overflow of as many as 150 tourists a night. The hotel is now the Center City building, but its distinctively Second Empire-style façade and gabled roof remain.

34. Elliot's Academy of Music, 355 Pine St. (1872).

Opened just a few years after Ulman's Opera House, William G. Elliot's Italianate theater eclipsed Ulman's in size—it occupied all of Fourth Street between Pine and Laurel and seated 1,165 comfortably—and in modern conveniences like steam heat and electric lights. In 1882, the Pennsylvania Democratic Party held its state convention here. Soon after the larger Lycoming Opera House opened in 1892, Elliot closed his theater and converted it into an office building. Occupants of the undistinguished modern building on the site include



Elliot's Academy of Music, c. 1880 (Wmpt.Th.1).

Otto's Books, the oldest family-owned business in Williamsport, which dates to 1877 when John Dean began selling books from his insurance office on Market Square.

Turn right on W. 4th St. and proceed west.

35. The Genetti Hotel, 200 W. 4th St. (1922). The Lycoming Hotel, as it was originally known, held an opening ball for invited dignitaries, including a Pullman car full of guests from New York City, on June 21, 1922, just one of a three-day slate of activities to celebrate the completion of the most modern hotel in Pennsylvania. The hotel was built as a community project through the efforts of the Williamsport Board of Trade, which hired New York architect William Lee Stoddart, who went on to design hotels in North Carolina and Virginia that are on the National Register of Historic Places. A campaign led by local businessmen to make Williamsport a thriv-

ing metropolis convinced many people that the city needed a hotel to entice prominent businessmen and salesmen passing through the area to stay overnight. Advertisements in local newspapers encouraged citizens to buy stock in the prospective hotel; by the time the



In the foreground of the Lycoming Hotel is the Ross Club, with its Victorian Italianate roofline, before later restoration (Smith #31762, 1940).

campaign ended, pledges totaled \$750,000. The hotel used specially made Shope brick popular on the West Coast; a local brick-making company was created to produce it. At ten stories, the hotel is still the tallest building in town. When it opened, the Lycoming Hotel offered a variety of services comparable to New York City hotels, such as a barber shop, babysitting services, telegraph facilities, beauty shop, stenographic services, valet services, laundry services, self-drive car service, guided tours, shoeshine, French pastry shop, and a newspaper, magazine, and tobacco counter. On June 23, 1975, Scranton hotelier Gus Genetti, Jr. purchased the hotel and renamed it the Genetti Lycoming Hotel, later shortened to the Genetti Hotel. The facility has hosted a variety of prominent guests: pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff; actors Gene Kelly, Rita Hayworth, and Paulette Godard; singers Gene Autry, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, and Joan Osborne; lawyer Clarence Darrow; writers Ogden Nash, Carl Sandberg, and Pearl S. Buck; basketball great Wilt Chamberlain; and politicians such as Robert F. Kennedy. On October 20, 1923, the "human fly," Harry M. Gardiner, scaled the face of the hotel to raise money for charity.

36. Community Arts Center, 220 W. 4th St. (1928; façade, 1992). The Capitol Theatre, the grandest movie theatre of its day, was built on the site of the historic Sterling Hotel, damaged by a 1924 fire. The first local theater to be equipped for "talkies," it opened with *The Singing Fool*, starring Al Jolson, accompanied by a visiting organist. The first floor and stage were submerged in water during the flood of 1936, which destroyed the magnificent organ, but the theater recovered and continued as a family operation until 1963, when it became part of a chain. It went through several owners and closings for the next few decades and finally closed for good as a movie theater in 1990. By that time, dust and grime had almost completely obscured the murals and gilt and painted plaster interior ornament with their Moorish decorative elements. In the early 1990s, Dr. Robert Breuder, president of the



Pennsylvania Firemen's Convention of 1965 (Grit photograph, published in Genetti Hotel Anniversary).

Pennsylvania College of Technology, led a campaign to raise \$11 million to restore the theater to its previous elegance as a performing arts center. Hayes Large, Architects, of Altoona designed a new five-story structure to replace the outer lobby, which had used the nineteenth-century structure built for the Sterling Hotel. The new post-modern, two-toned brick façade blends in with the older buildings on the street, while the bold marquee is a modern interpretation of the streamlined Art Deco style of the theater's original era. Evergreene Painting Studios of New York uncovered the original stenciling

and murals and re-created the magnificent interior. The result was the 1992 opening of a spectacular community arts center for film and live performances, with seats for nearly 2,200 people.



The Grit newsboys posed for a photograph in front of the Capitol Theatre (Smith #29064, 1937).

37. Insurance Building and Bullfrog Brewery, 229-231 W. 4th St. (c. 1912; renovation, 1996).

This brick building was touted as a “modern office building” when it was first proposed in 1908 for the site called “Kast Corner.” Here Jacob E. Kast and his sons Walter and Howard operated the Sherman House, a hotel and bar in an old tavern, until the entire family moved its operations to Newberry, where another son had been operating a hotel since 1887. (Newberry’s Kast Hotel is the oldest family-owned business in that section of the city.) Insurance companies took most of the offices in the new building, and the street level was occupied by a succession of tenants: Pennsylvania Power and Light Company, Dolly Varden’s Beauty Parlor, and Heylmun’s Tea Room. The Bullfrog Brewery opened here in 1996.

38. Williamsport Sun-Gazette Building, 252 W. 4th St. (c. 1912, 1926).

Originally built for the *Williamsport Sun*, an afternoon daily established in 1870 by Levi Tate, the corner building was erected in the early 1900s and the old press building at the rear in 1926. Another paper, started by William F. Buyers in 1801, was the *Lycoming Gazette*, a morning paper that was decidedly Democratic in its politics. (Most nineteenth-century newspapers openly favored one political party or another, with no pretense of impartiality.) In the 1860s, the *Gazette* merged with the *West Branch Bulletin* to become the *Gazette and Bulletin*, an afternoon daily aligned with the Republican Party. In 1955 the *Sun* merged with the *Gazette and Bulletin*, creating the *Sun-Gazette*. Based on this lineage, the *Sun-Gazette* is the twelfth oldest newspaper in the nation and the fourth oldest in Pennsylvania.

The newspaper was modernized in 1967 when it switched from metal type to photocomposition, offset



The Sun Building soon after it was built in 1912. The squat building on the right is the Sherman House (see site #37; Wmpt. BU. 114).

printing, and an electronic newsroom. Art Deco terracotta sculptures add color and interest to the facade.

39. City Hall, 245 W. 4th St. (1891). Opposite the *Sun-Gazette* is Williamsport’s City Hall. Originally built as a U.S. Post Office and Federal Building, construction began in 1888 according to the design by William A. Ferret in the Richardsonian Romanesque style with semi-



The Federal Building, c. 1950 (Wmpt. PB. 117).

circular windows and entryways, squat stone columns, and gargoyles. Ferret also designed at least two other public buildings now on the National Historic Register: another U.S. Post Office and Federal Building in Jefferson, Texas, and the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Williamsport’s federal building was nearly torn down in the 1970s in the name of progress, when the U.S. government built its modern structure on

West Third Street. The rescue and conversion of the old federal center into a new city hall was one of the first of many successful preservation efforts by local citizens, led by the Lycoming County Historical Society and the Williamsport Community Arts Council.

Walk past City Hall and turn left (south) onto West St.

40. Williamsport Municipal Water Authority Business Office, 253 W. 4th St. (c. 1915). This is one of several flatiron buildings built in Williamsport to make full use of wedge-shaped tracts of land, all squat emulations of New York City's twenty-story Flatiron Building (1902). The blocked-off garage doors and large plate-glass windows betray the building's origins as an auto dealership. The previous building on the site was the Socialist Hall, in use by 1912, when the Socialist candidate for president won more votes in the city than the Republican candidate. The city's water supply began as a privately owned venture, the Williamsport Water Company, which moved into this building in 1924. The city purchased the enterprise, including this building, for more than \$5 million in 1947, forty years after the company first offered to sell to the city.

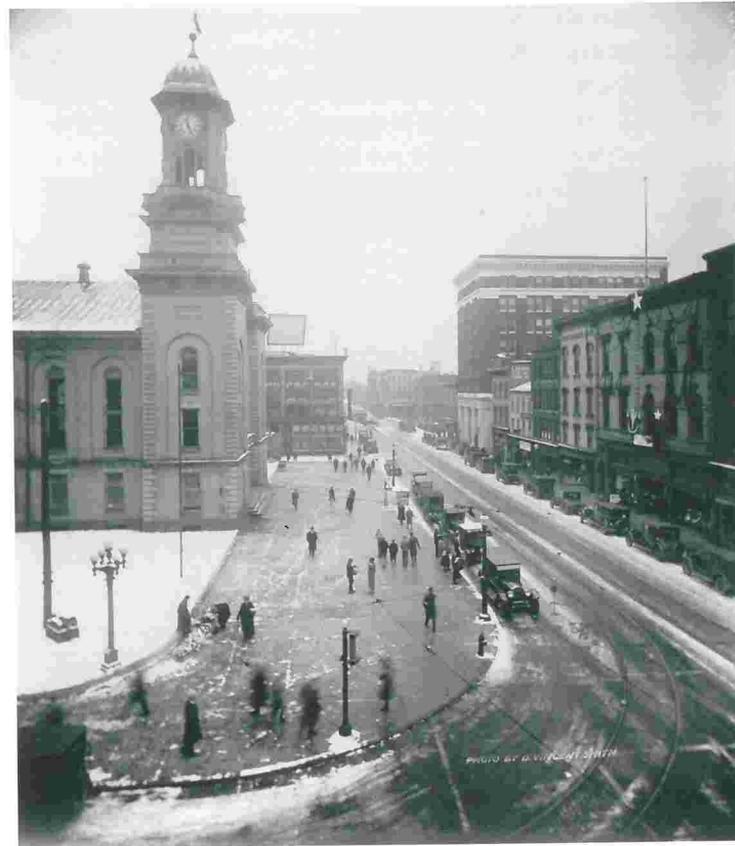
Turn left on W. 3rd St., go one full block to William St., turn right, and head south to return to the Visitors Center. Before leaving downtown, consider dining in one of the restaurants mentioned above or exploring the city's architectural heritage further on your own.

Primary Sources

The J.V. Brown Library has wonderful resources for researching the history of Williamsport's buildings and streets. City directories, dating back to 1866, include both alphabetical listings like modern telephone books and "reverse directories," or listings by street number. Other print resources are available in the Pennsylvania Collection in the Reference Room. The online catalog found on the Brown Library website (www.jvbrown.edu) includes headlines from the *Grit* and the *Sun-Gazette* (including its predecessors). Also available from the website is the *Paper of Record* database, which provides searchable access to reproductions of pages of nineteenth-century newspapers; issues not online are available on microfilm at the library.

The earliest Sanborn Maps of Williamsport are from 1888 and 1898; they show not only the locations of buildings but also their approximate shape. The photography collection of the Lycoming County Historical Society is a priceless visual history of the county, including the city, particularly in the work of D. Vincent Smith and Putsee Vannucci, who, between them, covered the changing city streetscape from the 1890s to the present.

A handy book for architectural styles is the National Trust's *What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture*.



Downtown Williamsport, from Pine St. looking east on 3rd St. 1925 (Smith #18260).

Further Reading

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The 1872 Sawdust War

As Seen Through the Pages of the *Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*

Excerpted from an essay by Nathan Gilbert

Nathan Gilbert wrote his essay on the so-called Sawdust War while he was a student at Lycoming College. Histories of Williamsport have summarized the Sawdust War, Williamsport's one major episode of labor unrest, but this article represents the first attempt to provide a detailed history, based on the almost daily coverage of events by Williamsport's major paper of the era, the Daily Gazette and Bulletin.

Labor historians have written about the coal, steel, and railroad industries of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania; they have also analyzed workers' efforts to unionize in coal and steel towns and on the railroad. But historians have largely ignored the state's lumber industry, perhaps in part because it was so short-lived; by the end of the century, Pennsylvania's forests had been depleted and the industry had moved on to Michigan, Oregon, and Washington. In the early twentieth century, lumber workers in those states organized and staged strikes; little did they know that their predecessors had organized the first lumber strike decades earlier along the West Branch of the Susquehanna.

Lumber was big business for Williamsport in the second half of the nineteenth century. The lumber industry fueled Williamsport's prosperity and growth from a community of 5,664 people in 1860 to a city of 28,757 in 1900.¹ The sawmills of the area provided not simply a source of work but an entire way of life. In summer 1872, a sawmill workers' strike that came to be known as the Sawdust War challenged Williamsport's way of life. The laboring men of the sawmills, supported by their families and others in the community, organized and demanded a shorter workday with no reduction in pay. When the lumber mill owners refused, the workers called a strike. Theirs was just one campaign in the labor movement that spread throughout the United States in the decades after the Civil War. The labor movement was particularly strong in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania, and Williamsport's leading citizens, who all had ties to the lumber business, feared that they would lose control if unions came to town. The stirrings of activism among sawmill workers signaled to the lumber mill owners that their entire way of life was suddenly at risk.

The mill owners epitomized the American ideal of self-made men, but their industry exemplified the classic nineteenth-century dilemma. While the mill owners had become wealthy by establishing themselves as powerful lumber barons, the men who worked for them did

not share in the American ideal, even though they inhabited the same city. The sawmill men worked long hours at physically demanding and extremely dangerous jobs; their pay was barely adequate to support their families, and working conditions were far from ideal. In these circumstances, they shared a common bond with other laborers in the United States. On May 7, 1872, the mill workers had an opportunity to hear firsthand from their fellow workers when the National Labor Union held its state convention at the Lycoming County Courthouse.²

The National Labor Union was the first successful attempt to organize workers from a wide variety of trades. Representatives of the bricklayers, carpenters, coachmakers, machinists, and other trade unions gathered in Baltimore in August 1866 to discuss their common concerns. Their first president was William Sylvius of Pennsylvania. High on the union's agenda was the idea of a shorter workday, specifically, eight hours. Earlier in the century, the labor movement had campaigned for the ten-hour day, which employers argued would be bad for workingmen because it would give them too much free time and "expose" them "to many improvident temptations." In 1840 President Van Buren responded to the growing political power of labor by issuing an executive order establishing the ten-hour day for federal employees working on the canals and other public construction projects. In June 1868, lobbying by the National Labor Union and other organizations persuaded Congress to pass an eight-hour day for laborers employed by the federal government. Pennsylvania had already passed an act declaring eight hours to be a legal day's work; compensation for overtime was to be agreed upon by worker and employer. In 1869, the state passed another law giving workers the right to organize. Unfortunately, neither of these state laws provided for any enforcement mechanism or penalties for employers who ignored them.³ As a result, in 1872, the mill men of Williamsport were still working eleven and a half to thirteen hours a day, for a daily wage of \$1.50. Inspired by the National Labor Union convention, workers formed Labor Union Number 10 of Williamsport in order to demand a ten-hour day – a longer day than unions elsewhere were asking, but nonetheless radical for Williamsport.

At the same time, the sawmill owners had also begun to organize. On April 24, 1872, just two weeks before the labor convention, many of Williamsport's leading

lumber businessmen met with others from Lock Haven and Clearfield to form a chapter of the new national Lumberman's Exchange. Their goal was to represent "the great lumber interests of the West Branch," which employed "an army of laborers."⁴ One notable holdout was Peter Herdic, who never joined the group. He may have been behind the anonymous letter to the *Gazette and Bulletin* criticizing the new organization. The unnamed "Lumber Dealer" wrote that the inaugural

smiling upon their just cause, now that the timing was right: the river was high and there were many logs waiting to be milled, which put the union in an opportune position to negotiate. A second speaker, John Hasson, told of a group of laborers who had met with the mill owners, who treated them, and their demands, with contempt. The mill owners claimed that the movement had been sprung upon them because of the large amount of logs in the boom. Another speaker, William Falls,



Employees of the Brown, Clark, and Howe Lumber Co., located east of Park St. where it met the West Branch Canal. Note the youth of some of the workers, as well as their racial diversity. Black workers could not easily get work at the sawmills; when they did, it was often the most menial labor at much lower wages than the white men (ESU.LL.M.6A, 1890s).

meeting "filled my mind with grave doubts and surmisings as to the ultimate design and object of their organization." He saw in the Exchange "the germs of a stupendous monopoly."⁵

At a local union meeting of June 26, 1872, in Bender's Hall, the sawmill workers decided to make their demands public. In a letter to the *Gazette and Bulletin* entitled "To the Mill Owners," the union requested that the mill owners "recognize the laws of the state" and employ the ten-hour workday beginning July 1, 1872, "at the same wages we are now receiving." The letter requested a written reply by the evening of Saturday, June 29, in time for the next meeting of the laborers, to be held at the courthouse. The lumbermen's initial answer was silence.⁶

Saturday night's meeting established the leaders of the movement: Andrew J. Whitten, a sawmill worker, was elected president, and Thomas H. Greevy, a law student, became the secretary. (Greevy had been the union's first choice as leader, but he insisted that a worker should head the group.) Other leaders soon emerged: James S. Birmingham, a former Williamsport police officer who had been fired because of his union activities, and Thomas Blake, another sawmill worker. A series of speakers at the meeting urged the men to vote for a strike. President Whitten told the crowd that God was

relayed how he had been part of a successful workers' movement in St. Johns, New Brunswick, Canada, where they had won a nine-hour workday. Thomas Greevy made the final speech. He pointed to the palatial residences of the mill owners as evidence of the exploitation of the workers, and said that the owners had achieved their great wealth through the benefit of the laborers' extra hours. How was it, he asked, "that these mill owners occupied palatial residences on Fourth Street, while the men who worked for them lived in hovels?" Greevy went on to read from the *Gazette and Bulletin*, which had published the state laws about the eight-hour day and the workers' right to organize. The fact that the newspaper published these laws at this critical time indicates that the editors' sympathies lay with the workers, at least for the time being.⁷

The speakers achieved the desired result. Together, they presented all of the things the men needed to hear in order for them to agree to strike: their cause was just and had divine support; the mill owners looked down on them and treated them with contempt; workers elsewhere were organizing and winning their demands; the owners were getting rich through the exploitation of the men; and the laws of the state were fully behind them. For all of these reasons, the men could feel justified in the action they were about to take. The sawmill strike taking form in Williamsport shared many characteristics with other strikes across the nation in the decades following the Civil War. Many strikes arose in isolated, semi-rural regions where small numbers of workers could marshal surprising strength. The social structure and mindset of the population often worked to the advantage of the strikers, since many non-strikers in the community sided with them.⁸

The strike itself began on Monday morning, the first of July, with a meeting in front of the courthouse, followed by a march through the city. John Croup of Danville told the strikers to "stand firm" like the coal miners of Schuylkill County, who had staged a yearlong strike. Andrew Whitten suggested that the meeting move to Market Square, in front of Garman's jewelry store—perhaps to put more distance between the strikers and government officials opposed to the strike. Whitten

stressed that the workers should keep the peace and refrain from drunkenness. After a speech by Mr. Sylvis, president of the state labor union, the leaders selected twenty-two strikers to be “police,” to keep order among the rank and file. At their head was James Bermingham, the former city policeman, who spoke next. He noted that the crowd was racially mixed: “He saw a colored man in the assemblage before him, and as slavery was abolished, he proposed that the colored men lead the van” as a symbol of the status of workingmen, who were slaves to their employers and were seeking freedom from bondage. The final speaker was Mr. Morrison, who told the crowd that he had known Mayor Starkweather when the mayor was just a poor schoolteacher, that he had risen to prominence because of “accidental wealth,” and that it had been a mistake to elect him. “The community favored the working man,” Morrison assured the crowd, and this indeed proved to be true.⁹

The procession formed, with black participants assembled at the front, followed by the union “police.” The march proceeded first, not to the sawmills to the east and west of town, but to the woolen mills in town, where workers toiled sixty-five hours a week. Although the sawmills were the primary target of the strike, clearly the organizers hoped to gain the support of workers, including women, in other industries. They then proceeded to the lumber mills, where some of the men working there fell in with the strikers. They

marched all day long, accompanied by music and carrying banners with slogans like “Ten Hours at the Present Wages,” “Working Men Should Rule,” and “Our Demands are Reasonable—Our Cause is Just.” This all-day march was just the first of many in the weeks to come.¹⁰

People in Williamsport had one of two reactions to the strike. Those who had a vested interest in the industrial order—the lumber company owners and other wealthy business people—reacted antagonistically and refused to acknowledge the men or their rights. The community at large—other working men and women, as well as farm families—reacted by extending support; they found common cause with the strikers because they

too faced uncertainty and hardship in the new industrial order. The lumbermen had managed to elect one of their own as mayor. Mayor Starkweather, a sawmill owner, issued an order on the first day of the strike to close all places where liquor was sold until after July 4. Starkweather also warned the strikers against “riotous demonstrations.” In contrast, the general community offered support to the strikers in a variety of ways. On July 6, the leaders of the strike announced that “the community had agreed to support them for one month,” with the farmers offering to contribute food. To raise money, the strikers sold tickets for a Labor Reform Dance at Liederkrantz Hall on the evening of July 12. The next day, the *Gazette and Bulletin* reported that the dance was an overwhelming success, and “far exceeded the anticipations of the most hopeful [organizers].”¹¹

The Lumbermen’s Exchange represented the majority of the area mill owners, and so the strikers aimed their



Williamsport's largest log pond, which ran from Park to Walnut St. just south of the canal. In the background is the Brick Mill, probably the mill owned by Stephen Brown, Timothy S. Clark, and David A. Howe (ESU. LL.M2, 1890s).

demands to this body, either directly or indirectly. The reaction of the Lumbermen’s Exchange to the strike was clear: its leaders simply refused to negotiate with the strikers, since “We do not recognize [the striker’s] right to interfere with our rules in any manner whatever, for the reason that we pay and always will pay such compensation for labor as is considered just and adequate.” The sawmill owners claimed that the unskilled workers of the lumber industry were the highest paid of any workers in manufacturing. According to the Exchange, the long hours were justified because all work in the mills was done in approximately a seven-month time frame, “causing the capital invested in them to lie idle for the remaining five months.” On July 10, the newspa-

per published the Lumber Exchange's resolve that all mills would open the next day. Those men who were "willing to work would work eleven and one-half hours, at an advance of twenty five cents." The Exchange hoped to placate the workers with this small raise but refused to consider the workers' actual demand, which involved hours, not wages. To the strikers, working longer than eight hours a day denied them their basic rights under the law.¹²

Peter Herdic, a mill owner who did not belong to the Lumbermen's Exchange, responded to the strikers with a public letter that seemed to promise them the terms they wanted: "I fully recognize ten hours . . . as a day's work," and each man, "should be paid by the hour . . . for all the hours . . . that he works over the ten." The workers were elated at this news, and with the announcement that another mill, Thompson, Harper, & Co., "had adopted the ten-hour system, and was running." The elation of the strikers turned to disappointment when employees showed up at the Herdic and Krouse mill ready to work on Friday, July 12. The letter had omitted the fact that the reduction in hours would be accompanied by a twenty-five cent deduction in pay per day. A few days later, Herdic agreed to the ten-hour system with no reduction in wages, and his mill then started with a full crew.¹³

The lumber strike went beyond Williamsport to affect other West Branch communities. By Saturday, July 6, as many as three hundred men of Lock Haven were on strike too. Lock Haven strikers joined with the Williamsport strikers that morning for a parade through Williamsport. Two mills there had begun running on the ten-hour system; the other mills were operating with only a quarter of their usual crew.¹⁴

In the first few weeks of the strike in Williamsport, a day-to-day pattern developed. The strikers met almost every day except Sundays; their leaders and others spoke at regular meetings in front of the courthouse; they marched through the city except when on days when the summer heat was excessive. There seemed to be no end in sight for the strike. Then, beginning July 18, the tide began to turn against the workers. That day, the West Branch Lumbermen's Exchange held a special meeting and reaffirmed its resolve not to negotiate with the strikers. On Friday, July 19, the *Gazette and Bulletin* announced that the Lock Haven mills were "all running on eleven and a half hours at an advance of twenty-five cents"; the Lock Haven strikers had settled for less than a ten-hour day. The final blow came on July 20 when the *Gazette and Bulletin* printed a short statement: "It is rumored that the mills will start on Monday, a sufficient number of men having been secured to run them." At a meeting that evening, Sylvis announced that, "carpet-baggers were arriving in Williamsport, and that the intention was that they were to fill the places of the ten-hour men."¹⁵

At five o'clock Monday morning, July 22, the strikers came out to stop the men on their way into the mills and to ask them to join the strike. By nine or ten o'clock, a march began. A reporter noted that, "it was apparent that a deeper feeling existed than at any time since the strike commenced." The procession of strikers advanced to Filbert and Otto's lumber mill, where it halted and the men began shouting, "Ten Hours!" There was "considerable conversation of an exciting nature" between the marchers and the local police who were guarding the entrance to the mill, until "a yell was given, and the men moved in a solid body toward . . . the mill." The police "drew their revolvers," but were "met by a shower of brickbats." The men at work in the mill fled, pursued by strikers. As the strikers proceeded to visit most of the mills in Williamsport, groups of women cheered them on. The strikers closed down each mill; according to reports, they threatened and injured the men they found working. The police sustained some injuries as they attempted to protect persons and mill property.¹⁶

Local authorities now believed that the situation was beyond their control. Lycoming County Sheriff Samuel Van Buskirk telegraphed Pennsylvania Governor John W. Geary asking for assistance from the National Guard. Governor Geary replied by ordering out the local units of the National Guard. As the crowd continued to move from mill to mill, General Jordan of Williamsport responded that "all the troops at this point refuse to serve, and sympathize with the mob." Mayor Starkweather and the sheriff sent another telegram to the governor to ask that guardsmen be sent by special train from other parts of the state, "not less than five hundred troops with sufficient ammunition."¹⁷

As the strikers escalated their actions, the *Gazette and Bulletin* declared that the "strikers have made a mistake, and pursued a course which law-abiding citizens cannot approve." But many in the community seem to have continued to support the strike, including the local women who were clapping and cheering on the men, and the national guardsmen who refused to help quell the protest.¹⁸

Early Tuesday morning, July 23, a little more than two hundred troops from Middletown, Lebanon, and Harrisburg arrived in Williamsport by train. They went directly to the courthouse where they joined a hundred state militia from Williamsport, about evenly divided between the City Gray, an all-white unit, and the Taylor Guard, an all-black unit organized just the previous year. In the aftermath of the strike, the *Gazette and Bulletin* commended the Taylor Guard for being the first unit on the ground during the strike, as well as one of the bravest and best-drilled companies in the state. All troops present were placed under the command of Major General Jesse Merrill of Lock Haven.¹⁹

The mere presence of military force was apparently



D. Vincent Smith labeled this photograph "The View from Fisher Tank." *The Reading, Fisher & Co. sawmill, west of Park St. on the canal, had its own log basin (Smith #4082, c. 1900).*

enough to end the violence. The troops set up camp in Herdic Park, temporarily designated "Camp Merrill." Warrants were issued for the arrest of Thomas H. Greevy, James S. Bermingham, Andrew J. Whitten, Thomas R. Blake, and fifty-four other men; they were charged with "riotously and tumultuously entering the mills," as well as assault and battery on the police chief and others. The four leaders turned themselves in almost immediately; others were gradually brought in. Over the next few days, troops continued to stream into the city until there were more than four hundred.²⁰

The duties of the military were fairly light during their ten-day stay in Williamsport. They paraded through the city and were detailed to bridges, mills, and patrols, to ensure the safety of the mills and the men who chose to work in them. The *Gazette and Bulletin* narrated the military's biggest encounter under the headline, "Charge of the Colored Brigade" which began when troops marching down Third Street encountered a young man shouting "Ten Hours!" and waving his hands. Four Taylor Guardsmen immediately dashed after him. The *Gazette and Bulletin* reported: "As soon as the shouter observed the advancing line, he beat a hasty retreat, followed by the fleet skirmishers.... The pursued finally took refuge in a pig sty [sic], and awaited the onset of the enemy. They came, surrounded the rude shelter and in the name of the 'Great Keystone' demanded an instant and unconditional surrender. . . . The white flag

was hoisted, and [they] marched off with their prisoner, proud that the glorious old Commonwealth had been saved from dishonor, and that victory again perched upon the battle-flag of the West Branch host. Thus ended the combat of 'Hog Alley,' and Saturday, July 27, will be referred to as an eventful day in the history of 'The Williamsport Conflict.'"²¹

A few days later, the newspaper described the departure of "Our Little Army" with no little sarcasm: "The West Branch Army, with its sweeping lines of glittering steel, has retired from the carnage fields of the

Susquehanna, and by a wave of the military baton ceases to exist." The military had begun to pull out of Williamsport on July 26 and was completely gone by August 2. There had been no loss of life and no serious damage to property in connection with the strike and its suppression.²²

In the meantime, the authorities began to stretch the limits of the law themselves by setting excessive bail. On the very day he was jailed, Greevy managed to post his \$5,000 bail, but he was immediately re-arrested under the new charge of inciting a riot. Bermingham, whose bail was set at \$10,000, also managed to raise that sum the day of his arrest. After posting bail, he was immediately re-arrested and bail set at \$20,000. The defendants' lawyers charged that the bail was "excessive and arbitrary, and not sanctioned by law or common humanity," and petitioned Judge James Gamble for a writ of habeas corpus for Greevy, Bermingham, Whitten, and Blake in order to reduce their bail. The court ruled that bail was not excessive, in spite of the defense's argument that, in a recent case, bail had been set at just \$3,000 for a murderer.²³

The strike was effectively over. By July 26, about half of the mills were running, albeit with partial crews. At a meeting of the Labor Reform Union on July 29, union lawyer John O'Byrne of Philadelphia addressed the mill workers. He stressed that if they wanted rights, "they must act within the limits of the law, and command the

respect of the masses." He denounced the decision of bringing in the military but also advised the men to seek work on any terms they could with their employers.²⁴

The trial was scheduled to begin September 2, 1872, when the fall court session began. Twenty-seven of the original fifty-eight men indicted were brought to trial. As of August 2, ten strikers still languished in the county jail; the rest had made bail. In early August, as the community waited for the trial to start, the *Gazette and Bulletin* threw its support behind the "poor men" in jail and sympathized with their needy families. The newspaper was highly critical of the prosecution for insisting on "excessive bail." Later in the month, editors published a letter from "a laborer" who claimed that the wealthy lumbermen were lining up local businessmen to sign a letter against pardoning the strikers.²⁵

On Monday, September 2, the case of *Commonwealth v. James S. Bermingham, Thomas S. Greevy, Andrew J. Whitten, Thomas R. Blake, et. al.* came before Judge Gamble. The charges encompassed seventeen counts, from assault to aggravated riot. Because of local sympathy for the strikers, the jury came from outside Williamsport and included men from Jersey Shore, Hepburn Township, Muncy Borough, Loyalsock Township, and Woodward Township, to ensure that the jury was not sympathetic to the rioters.²⁶

The first witness called was Williamsport Chief of Police Samuel B. Coder. He estimated that 180-190 men participated in the riot on July 22. He testified that the strikers threatened workers before the riot, and that the rioters probably would have killed him if it had not been for the intervention of James Bermingham. Coder claimed to have heard threats made against Mayor Starkweather at one of the union's meeting, but on cross-examination, he also admitted that the city was very peaceable and quiet up until July 22.²⁷

Other prosecution witnesses included Mayor Starkweather and Sheriff Van Buskirk. Elijah Yonkin, a special police officer at Starkweather and Munson's mill, testified that the strikers physically shut down the mill and told him not to show his face on the street unless he joined the strike. Jacob Heivy testified that he heard Greevy say that he would hang Mayor Starkweather. Several policemen testified that they had been struck while in uniform and displaying their badges. The defense offered numerous witnesses who claimed that the strike leaders, Bermingham, Greevy, and Whitten, had tried to restrain the rioters—evidence that they had not condoned violence. P. D. Bricker, who assisted in the arrest of the strike leaders, claimed that Bermingham and Whitten were armed with revolvers, and Blake was armed with a billy club. This testimony could be interpreted to mean that they were prepared to either suppress violence or foment it. To counter evidence that strikers had threatened workers and even the mayor, F. S. Watson, a *Gazette and Bulletin* reporter who had written

about the union's meetings, testified that he heard no such threats.²⁸

A key element of the trial involved the apparent presence of out-of-towners among the strikers on July 22. These were men brought to Williamsport on "corporation drives," efforts by the lumber mill owners to import workers from out of the area—in other words, strike-breakers, or scabs. Cornelius Duffey, a corporation drive cook, claimed that some drive men had asked him where they could get pistols, billy clubs, and blackjacks. Another witness testified that the corporation drive men were boisterous and the most active men in the riot.²⁹

The trial lasted five days, and the case went to the jury on Saturday, September 7. In his instructions to the jury, Judge Gamble advised that the sole question was the defendants' innocence or guilt, "not the great controversy between labor and capital." The jury met at 1:00 p.m. and delivered a verdict thirty minutes later. Except for six men, four of whom had been discharged earlier because of lack of evidence, the jury found all the defendants guilty. Bermingham, Whitten, Blake, and Greevy were each sentenced to one year of solitary confinement at hard labor in Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. The other men convicted were committed to the county jail to serve sentences of up to three months. All those convicted had to pay a fine of one dollar to the Commonwealth for the costs of prosecution.³⁰

The sentencing of the strikers was not quite the end of the story. Just a few days later, Governor Geary granted all those convicted a pardon, conditional on their good behavior. If, during the period of their original sentence, they participated in or incited a riot, they would be rearrested. The governor's pardon, he said, was in response to a petition from some 2,000 "respectable citizens" of Lycoming County. The *Gazette and Bulletin* called the pardon a "humane, generous, and consistent action." The newspaper probably reflected the opinion of the majority in the community when it attacked the effort by the sheriff and the Lumbermen's Exchange to convince the Governor not to pardon the strikers. Almost immediately after the violence of July 22 had passed, the *Gazette and Bulletin* once again endorsed the strikers and became an advocate for their rights.³¹

The events of the Sawdust War had come to an end. Though the workers won a small raise in pay, higher wages had not been their demand; the ten-hour day remained an elusive goal. But the workers of Williamsport, struggling to establish their place in the new industrial order, had at least made their voices heard.

NOTES

¹ Robert H. Larson, Richard J. Morris, and John F. Piper, *Williamsport: Frontier Village to Regional Center* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984), pp. 48, 64.

² "The Labor Reform Convention," *Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin* (hereafter, *G & B*), 7 May 1872, p. 4.

³ Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 163, 377; "Labor Circular Issued," *G & B*, 25 June 1872, p. 4; "Labor Reform Movement," *G & B*, 29 June 1872, p. 4.

⁴ "The Lumbermen's Exchange," *G & B*, 24 April 1872, p. 4.

⁵ "The Lumbermen's Exchange," *G & B*, 25 May 1872, p. 4.

⁶ "To the Mill Owners," 28 June 1872, *G & B*, p. 4. (Bender's Hall was probably at the home and factory of Levi, David, and Maria Bender at 22 Bennett St., near Mulberry. Bender and his partners sold bottled sarsaparilla, mineral water, beer, and other beverages. *Boyd's City Directory, 1871-72*. The Benders' support for the strike may reflect wider support among the city's small businessmen. *Ed.*)

⁷ "Mill Men in Council," 1 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4. (Ironically, in the twentieth century, a distant relative of Thomas Greevy became a Lycoming County judge. *Ed.*)

⁸ Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 95-96.

⁹ "Mill Men in Council," 1 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4. (Newspapers of the era often give only the last names of individuals; I have supplied first names whenever they could be identified with certainty. Mr. Sylvis was probably James, the brother of William Sylvis, first president of the National Labor Union, who died young, in 1870. Mr. Morrison was probably Samuel Morrison in whose law office Thomas Greevy was studying. Samuel Garman had a jewelry store at 2 West Third Street. *Ed.*)

¹⁰ "Mill Men in Council," 1 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹¹ "Mill Men in Council," 1 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Labor Reformers," 6 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Labor Reform Dance," 12 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Ten Hour Ball," 13 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4. (Liederkrantz Hall does not appear on maps or in city directories, but *Boyd's Directory for 1871-72* lists "Liederkrantz" among the city's "musical and military organizations." The group met twice weekly in the "Armstrong's Building." *Ed.*)

¹² "The Lumbermen's Exchange," 10 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹³ "Doings of the Mill Men," 2 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Labor Reformers," 15 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹⁴ "The Labor Reformers," 6 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Lock Haven Strike," 8 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹⁵ "West Branch Lumber Exchange," 18 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "City and Country," 19 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "City and Country," 20 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Labor Reformers," 22 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹⁶ "The Labor Reformers," 22 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Labor Strike," 23 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4. A brickbat is a piece of broken brick, especially one used as a missile. Samuel Filbert and Bodo Otto's sawmill was located west of Maynard St. and north of the canal. The mill had been rebuilt after an 1871 fire; it was not rebuilt after a fire in 1874. Thomas T. Taber, III, *Williamsport Lumber Capital* (Muncy, PA, 1995), p. 66.

¹⁷ "The Labor Strike," 23 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹⁸ "The Labor Strike," 22 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Court of Quarter Sessions," 4 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

¹⁹ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 4 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Taylor Guard," 26 August 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Labor Strike," 23 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁰ "The Military Situation," 26 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Labor Strike," 23 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²¹ "The Charge of the Colored Brigade," 29 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²² "Our Little Army," 1 August 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²³ "The Labor Strike," 23 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Habeas Corpus," 27 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Hearing Yesterday," 30 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁴ "The Habeas Corpus Cases," 30 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Laborers Mass Meeting," 30 July 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁵ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 9 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "City and Country," 2 August 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Gratifying No Doubt," 9 August 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "A Plea for Labor," 24 August 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁶ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 3 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁷ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 3 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁸ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 4 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Court of Quarter Sessions," 5 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Court of Quarter Sessions," 6 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

²⁹ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 6 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

³⁰ "Court of Quarter Sessions," 9 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Pardoned," 16 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

³¹ "Pardoned," 16 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "The Release," 17 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4; "Vindictive," 16 September 1872, *G & B*, p. 4.

The Diary of Jane Watkins

Age 15, 1930

This excerpt from a diary by a fifteen-year-old girl in 1930 contains much that will be familiar to teenage girls today. Jane Watkins worries about passing her exams and losing weight so that she can wear an evening dress for the school play. She complains about household chores and her older brother, who always seems to get away with things that she would not even try. She daydreams about princes and movie stars and tries to decide how she feels about one boy or another, and to guess how they feel about her.

Jane Watkins' world is also unfamiliar in interesting ways. The variety of entertainment Jane found in or near downtown Williamsport is remarkable: a large ice skating rink in South Williamsport; four downtown movie theaters, with matinees so affordable that a teenager could see a favorite movie four or five

times; live performances at the Elks Lodge and the schools; numerous ice cream parlors all over town. All of this was within easy walking distance or a short trolley ride for Jane and her many friends.

Seventy-three years later, Jane Watkins Ingersoll is the volunteer textiles curator at the Lycoming County Historical Society. For many years, she worked first with her mother and later as sole proprietor of Watkins Costumes, where several generations of Williamsport children and adults went to find their Halloween, Santa Claus, and theatrical outfits.

Editor's note: The original spelling in the diary has been retained, with missing letters added in [brackets] where the meaning would otherwise be unclear. The diary has many run-on sentences, so punctuation has been added to make it easier to read.



Jane Watkins spent every summer at Camp Cedar Pines from age five until the summer before she married. Run by the Jersey Shore YMCA, the camp had two six-week sessions, the first for boys and the second for girls; each cabin was named for a different American Indian tribe. The girls' uniform was black bloomers (later, shorts) and Kelly green jerseys or blouses, with ties of different colors. In this photograph, Jane has lost her tie, her shirt has a hole in it, and one sock is up and one down—neatness was never her strong point. From left to right: Jane Krouse, Ellen Gillan, Ruth Barbara Bruckerhoff, Jane Watkins, Jane Witt, Jane Mervine, Susan Shack, Agnes Brant, Ida Bickley, Mary Ann Housel, Ann Marson, Hannah Mervine, Alice Fredericks, and Rea Louise Schultz (private collection).

Jan 25, 1930

I am starting another diary. I know it won't last but I wish it would. Jane Witt¹ started one that's why I am.

Nothing happened to day, it never does for me. I got up at 11 and made my bed cleaned up those black rugs and the black sofa and chair took a music lesson and had to make up a ly cause he was suppose to.² Went to see "Pointed Heels"³ with Jane Witt in afternoon and went over to grandma's cause Dorothy was there. Came home at eleven. Isn't that a terrible hour for a kid only 8 years old?⁴ Found this picture while I was over there. Isn't it darling? I would love to have a room like that or else an old fashioned room.

I wonder if anyone has a room that is kept neat. I know they do but how do they do it?

I saw "Sunny Side Up"⁵ last night with Peggy Smith and Caroline W.⁶ got home at 11 and the house was locked—I got cold

Miss Jack⁷ said I had the best memory she had ever seen started with 7 points and ended with 20 on Thur. I only need one more! This is extra long cause it is the first night it wont be after this.

Rick brought a new record for his Vick.⁸ Today it is "Turn on the Heat" from "Sunny Side Up" and "the Woman in the Shoe" on the other.

Jan 26, 1930

Got up about 12:30. Went Iceskating with Peggy Smith this after noon—was terrible crowded, came home early.⁹ Stopped at Caroline's to get money really but we said to get warm but I found 15 cents in my coat pocket while we were there. Stayed at Peggies for supper—did our Algebra and read and talked and sang this evening—came home about 10! Read "Seckatary Hawkins,"

looked at Brown Section and came to bed.¹⁰ There is an awful lot of Pictures of Princess Marie Jose and Prince Humbert getting married!¹¹

I have a new story about 3 boys. They had no mother and their father just died. They had an uncle who owned a large Island out of the 3 mile line around England and he was very imaginative and he pretended he was king. He dressed like this and so did everybody else. He lived in a castle and everything. They went to live with him and that is all the farther I am.¹²

Jan 27, 1930

I'm beginning to think this is a bother all ready and I just started it—oh, well.

I went to see "General Crack"¹³ tonight and I am going to see it again if I can. It's great!

Made a thing a mer ing¹⁴ in Science today org for Jeanette—don't know what to make next time. I am sick of springs.

Caroline's mother wont let her come here for lunch's during the exams. Mother's going to call her up.¹⁵

We have English and History tomorrow and I didn't study at all—I am scared stiff (wish it were skinny).¹⁶

Guess I'll read now. I am reading the "Case Book of Sherlock Holmes" and boy, its good.¹⁷

Jan 28, 1930

The exams were not so bad. English was awful easy but history, gosh, she asked the dummmest questions but it wasn't hard, it was awful long.

I want to see "General Crack" again but Jane W. don't want to go—she is sure missing something.

Got out at 10:30 this morning. Caroline came home with me for lunch



Richter Watkins with the family dog, Rags; Jane, with the kewpie doll her grandmother had won at a carnival; and Cecilia Steuben Richter, on the porch of the Watkins home (private collection).

Jane's parents, Gley and Vera Watkins (private collection).



Got out at 2 this afternoon and read all after noon.
Read this evening and studied sum—should have more.

We have Science and Latin tomorrow and I am sorta scared. Only I am sure I will pass cause I don't have to make anything.¹⁸

Jan 29, 1930

We had Science and Latin and I left some latin out cause I was in a hurry. Caroline came home to lunch with me. Daddy is away.¹⁹ I will sleep with mother. I saw "General Crack" two and 1/2 times today. His real name is Prince Christian Rudolph Augustus Christophur Ketlah. Some name. Tomorrow is the last day for exams and we don't have school on Friday but we have to practice for that darnd old opperetta at two in the afternoon.

Jan 30, 1930

This isn't Thur—it's Fri. I didn't write last night cause I went out to Witt's²⁰ all night.

Our Algebra was awful easy but that cooking ugh!!! Left out almost two and lots of parts! Saw "Sally" at the rialto²¹—it was darling and all in technicolor. Went to see the fachalty play after supper with Jane Witt it was great—"Third Floor Front."²² We both wore our new shoes and got a couple blisters—ha ha. We sat with Peggy, Caroline, and their mothers and walked home with them (Peg & C.).²³ Their mothers got lost coming through the park and Gib Logue²⁴ found them and brought them home.

I went out to Witts then. I love their beds all except the casters—they slide to[o] much.

Jan 31, 1930

We got up at ten thirty, and kept thinking it was Sat. Jane C²⁵ called up Mrs. Lower to see if she could take Betty to the movies.

Came home 12:30. Went to school at 1:30 for Operetta practise and while there a boiler broke or something cause we heard water running down in the cellar and the stair ways got so full of steam you could hardly see. It was sort of scary for a while. They quick closed the steel doors and made us go on quick

Got home at 4 to find Jane—couldn't wait. Washed dishes (ugh), read.

Mother is decorating auto show now. Rick and some of the boys are helping.²⁶ Mother got a darling new dress and hat yesterday but it was just sent out today.²⁷

Cleaned out my closet (you can close the door now) and went to bed 9: 15.

My story is progressing fine.

Feb 1, 1930

Got up about 10:30. Jessie Spicer²⁸ was here.

I was playing with matches and the one side of my hair caught on fire. I was sitting on the sofa and I

grabbed my head and ducked into a sofa pillow. I almost lost my head and perti near jumped up which proves I am a coward. Darn it—wish I were a boy. Went to see "Sally" again this after noon with Jane Witt. Saw it twice. 3 cinamon buns for supper²⁹ took a quick bath and went to see the Allied Arts Play "What Every Woman Knows"—it was darling. I met the leading lady—she was awful cute.³⁰ Gosh I'm glad mother is local representative—I will meet all the people. Hot dog.

Gosh, all I been doing this week is go to the movies. I'll tell you what I am going to do next month—go with out food. Our opperetta is the 18-19-20 of Feb—18 days to get skinny on.

Feb 2, 1930

I got up at two o'clock P.M. I was thinking about my story the whole time. Made my bed, read a short story and thought about my story some more. Bob³¹ was here for supper again or rather yet he has been here for three days straight, all night, breakfast, lunch, and supper. Guess he wont stay any more though cause they finished the auto show.

Went up to Peg's tonight—Bob Mosser, Caroline, Peg, Slats, Pret,³² and myself were there. We didn't do much. Bob made some fudge.

Feb 3, 1930

School today, ugh. We got most of our marks.
Algebra—98 (good for me)
Latin—88
Science—94
English—89
History—95

But cooking is yet to come, whew. Thought about my story in Science. Boy it's marvelous.

After school I went downtown and bought a new gater belt.³³ Peggy Smith went with me and afterwards we went to Danley's³⁴ and got sundaes.

Jane Witt is all glad cause she made 78, eight points above passing which means she can go to Philadelphia alone. I wish I were her and had a sister in Phila.

Cleaned up my room some tonight. Rick went to Danville last night. I know he did cause I can hear him talking about it right now—the liar, he said he went to Sealingsgrove to mother.³⁵ He can't even trust her, he ought to be shot.

Feb 4, 1930

Nothing happened today. Jane Witt got sent to the office. Peg told me. I didn't see her long enough to find out why. Practiced opperetta till six oclock. Snowed all after noon and still snowing 20 of 10 o' clock.

Hurrah!!!! I wanted Aunt Ruby's white party dress but I don't think I could get in it anyway and Aunt Olga has a light green one just like it and I can wear it hurrah hurah hurrah!!!!³⁶

Feb 5, 1930

Nothing happened today. Got nominated for Vice President (of our home room) but declined.³⁷ Have to go early tomorrow for operetta Practice. Didn't take those dam English book's again—can't find 'em at all—now found one to night. She collected them Monday and she doesn't care at all, but she has made the others that didn't have them there bring them. Miss Jack's a dear.

Grandma is going to teach me German, real German not Pennsylvania Dutch. I was over to see her today and she told me lots of stories.³⁸

Peggy came down this evening and did our algebra and then we got all the old songs that mother has saved and sang them. Some are pretty and some are not.

My story is great.

Have two new ones.

Feb 6, 1930

We got our card reports to day and I am on the Mid Year Honor Roll. Mr Pepperman³⁹ says it is the greatest honor you can get during the year. Also I got a in Cooking and behavior.

Peggy came down after school and we made baked butter crackers and sang some more. Went down to Harer's⁴⁰ and read tonight.

I am vice president of club⁴¹ which means absolutely nothing.

We got our new things today in club. I ordered a Diana Lamp. It is darling.⁴²

That is supposed to be a fawn and a new moon—The bottom is of brass, the shade is light green (shaded) parchment with gold stars and laced with brown leather.

Feb 7, 1930

Went to school of course, Gipsies came down after school to try on costumes.⁴³ Went skating—had loads of fun. Peggy, Caroline, Nat Stuart, Rollin Scheffer, Helena Hill, Cap Brown, Madge Jopson Lib Lofck [?] were there.⁴⁴ Got my legs all chapped and boy did they hurt.

Got 80 in cooking, an a.

HOW DID I DO IT

Feb 8, 1930

Got up at 11:00, cleaned rugs, made bed (Rick took the Music Lesson). Caroline came at 1:00, so I didn't eat any lunch. Went out to school for operetta practise till 5:30. Boy was I tired where I am sick of it. Read, read, Read, and read some more all short stories this evening. The Allied Arts put on a lecture here tonight—mother and daddy went. The lecture was given by Dr. Pearson and he had an assistant Mr Bounty.⁴⁵ Mother has a case⁴⁶ on him, says he is dreadfully interesting. Rick says he is awful handsome, a little mustache and everything.

Tomorrow's Sunday. Sigh, do I hate Sundays—o no not at all!

Feb 9, 1930

Got up about 10, went out to Aunt Olga's. She gave me the two dresses for the Operetta. The evening dress is not an evening dress but it almost is. It is longer in back than front. I love it. The ensemble is dear to, but I have brighter prospects for the other. I might get it. Dorothy⁴⁷ and I broke into the vacant house next door and explored it (nothing exciting), came home about 7. Peggy came down this evening, we did our lessons, tried on the dresses and, oh, I forgot Miss Wies⁴⁸ gave us an operetta book to learn a piece, she said, but we didn't look at that piece—we sang all the rest though. Peggy left it here—hope I don't forget it tomorrow. I have to go early.

Feb 10, 1930

Went to school early for operetta practis and we do have a sort of dance in the last act. Nat Steurt is my pardner. Stayed after school for practice to. Terrible windy out. I was going to the movies, went to daddies office⁴⁹ for money, but he had just left came home again. The wind was awful I couldn't keep my skirt down at all,

Went to see "Love Parade"⁵⁰ tonight—it was great—with mother and daddy.⁵¹

I think I must be the dumbest girl there is I never think what I am saying till after I've said what I don't want to. damm it,

Miss Heller⁵² says I'm good in A. History. Hurrah

Feb 11, 1930

JaneWitt is an usher. Gosh but I am glad.

Dorothy Bennett and I had a fight. I think she is about the meanest girl in school, telling Jane an usher is the last thing she'd be. I'd a damm sight rather be an usher than what she is. Special dances with the 7th graders.

Buerrel Troxel⁵³ got sent home from practice tonight because Lee Stall⁵⁴ kept turning the lights of[f] and Berrel got up to turn them on and Mr. Pepperman saw him and blamed him for the whole thing. Lee Stall is awful mean I think.

I told Mr. Pepperman it was B but he knew it all. I wish Lee would tell the truth.

Jigo⁵⁵ talked to me a little today but he doesn't know my name yet.

I wonder if anyone will ask to take me home from operetta????????????????????????????????????

Feb 12, 1930

Lincoln's Birthday—had to tell a story about him in Home room. Am appointed Blackboard Comittee again darn it.⁵⁶ Got good seats for Mother for the Operetta, Row A Section B Seats 1 and 2. Practiced after School and supper. Just got home 11 now. Nat. let me wear watch tonight. Buerrel let me look at a book with him. I like Buerrel best. He wasn't kicked out of the operetta.

Peg told him I told Mr Pepperman while we were on the stage. Gosh but I got hot all over. He kept looking at me and me at him, then we had to dance, thank goddness.

I wish he or Bud Evenden would ask to come home from the O with me don't suppose either will though.

Jigo didn't say a word darn it. Bessie⁵⁷ ironed my green dress (evening! its darling.

Peggy come down for supper.

Feb 13, 1930

But it isn't Fri. It's Thursday. I am going to have my hair water waved⁵⁸ tomorrow for the O. You ought to know what that means by now. Practiced before school and after school. Bought some Valentines tonight for—Mother, Jane Witt, You,⁵⁹ Nat Steuart, Bob Mosser, Buerrel Troxel, and Slats. Peg came down tonight—we painted her Science Project cover (silver) and tried on all the hats in my cubbart. We have to take the dress that we are going to wear in the first 2 acts tomorrow and we get out of a class. Bob Mosser is in bed again with his foot he walked on it too soon (it was infected). I am going to wash my hair and also take a bath right now.

No invitations for company home yet but then nobody else has either except from street lads.

Feb 14, 1930

Got a Valentine from Burrel. Peggy didn't ask anyone else.

Boy we had big excitement in school today for once. We went on a strike in gym Class. We said we wouldn't take a shower until they were cleaned. (I couldn't any way⁶⁰) and boy Mr Pepperman Bauled us out and said we were a disgrace to the school and everything and Miss Heller said she had the opinion of us from the very beginning of the year that we were selfish and stuck-up. Though[t] we knew it all and needed no authority and just yesterday she told me I was a lady—Mr P. said we couldn't be in anything except the O because that was so near and we will get an awful conduct mark. But you should see the showers they are terribly dirty and smell just like a chicken coop. Ugh. The kids in it were Caroline Whitehead, Ruth Barbara, Dorothy Bennett, Madge Jopson, Jean Harer, Jeanette Hunter, Martha Bailey, Ellen Harding, Christene Heller, Anna Foulke and myself and Jane Evenden. And Carmon Larson, the dirty gip⁶¹—she was in it, in fact she started it, and as long as Miss Jack didn't do anything neither did she (Miss Jack didn't care) (at least she didn't seem to but by what Mr P. knows she did). But when Miss J. put a ring around our names, she wrote an excuse and told Miss J she couldn't anyhow and that her mother wrote the note and she got out scot free, and she said the very same thing we did. Excused. Until showers are cleaned. Wasn't that a dirty trick?

We won't (maybe) be allowed to be in the gym exhibiton or the commencement Pagent and carmon

will be in both.

Jane Witt went to Phila. alone today—she got excused at 1:36.

I scipped practice tonight after supper, cause I just had my hair fixed and I wouldn't go out with it flat down to my head.

Sat. Feb 15, 1930

Went downtown with Peg twice this morning. At Peg's for lunch, went to school for Practice afterwards. Buerrell walked home with me. Did nothing in the evening. Lois⁶² came up put on my evening dress and acted out songs on the Vic. Hunted a metal⁶³ for mother in her jewlery boxes, found an old fashioned locket of mine— am going to wear it, put Rick Picture in it.

Snowed nearly all day, only about 2 in. though awful windy.

Sun. Feb 16, 1930

Went skating—something happened to Nat. Guess it's Buerrell.⁶⁴ Loads of kids were there Mr. Skaif⁶⁵ was there. did not have much fun and it was very cold and windy had much luck got a ride both up and down. Dorothy was here for supper and we (I) made fudge afterwards.

Dress rehearsal tomorrow night and first show next night. O gosh!

Feb 17, 1930

We went to the Office today. Mr Pep. excuses us and Caroline saw him bauling Miss Jack out. But Miss Heller doesn't excuse us—she raised a big rumpus, bawled me out for showing the kids my locket something terrible, said my attitude was misable and she wanted to cry and a lot more bunk.. She bauled Caroline, Christine, Ruth Barbara, Jane Evenden out one by one and Caroline cried, the fool.⁶⁶

We had gym class and Miss Heller had to come and see how we were acting (ugh). (I didn't take a shower.)

Had Dress rehearsal tonight, had fun. Also came home with Mr Smith he came for her.

(Burrel waited for me)

Jane Witt spent all Sat. in the museum⁶⁷ and saw lots of awful interesting stuff.

A girl came to our school from Hollywood she says she is from Beverly Hills and that she played with our gang⁶⁸ and knew Mary Pickford,⁶⁹ and a lot more bunk.⁷⁰ I don't believe her cause she takes commercial course.⁷¹ She doesn't know a thing about Algebra and when Mr. Skaif asked her why she said "why don't a fish fly"!⁷²

Feb 18, 1930

First night of O. Only about a million mistakes, but altogether it went off pretty good. Jiggo was marvelous. Buerrell's mother and Caroline's arranged it for them to go home together (and Caroline wont speak to him).

Had to come home with Peg and Lee. Mother was there and Daddy. The boys are being awful nice to me all of a sudden but just the same I am going to take tap.

Slats made an awful mistake he was way back stage playing cards at his one.⁷³

“O My God where am I” almost knocked over some people and got there only a little late.

Feb 19, 1930

Second night over. I had lots of fun came home with Lee Stall and Peg. It was affully crowded a great many had to stand.

Mother says I can have a whole box at the Elks for the “Merrymakers”⁷⁴ that is eight people I have asked Peg Jane Caroline and Myself and we will each ask a boy won’t that be fun.

Only who shall I ask??????????????????

Caroline will ask Bob Mosser.

Peg will ask?

Jane will ask Slats (mabe)?

Me will ask ? Beurrel (mabe) ???

Burrell took Joe (Ilona) Neice home tonight.⁷⁵

Feb 20, 1930

Burrell brought me home I am going to ask him to the Merrymakers. I asked Bob for Caroline. Jiggo talked to me tonight and made eyes at me. It was the last

night—wish it weren’t. Gosh, we had fun. And Ciminye⁷⁶ was awful nice to me tonight.

Nat Steurt told Jane Witt I gave him a pain in the neck cause I thought he liked me ugh! He can go to hell he knows I know it too he treated me awful nice toooo I cut him cold he feels awful. Ha ha.

Jane Witt is going with Jane Stieger⁷⁷ and she shouldn’t she isn’t so popular as I thought she was the boys don’t even know her except Bob, Slats, Pret, and those kids.

I guess you are getting sick of all the stuff about boys aren’t you? Too bad cause it’s all I have to say.

Feb 21, 1930

Miss Heller was not there thank goodness—we had a Sub, Mrs. Drick.⁷⁸

Mother and Dad are going to Wilkesbarro⁷⁹ Sat (tomorrow) and Sun the kids are coming including Jane Witt (goody) I haven’t been with her for a long. Guess I will ask Burrell too, hope he will work. I was over to whiteheads for supper (Macaroni and cheese) and we read after words.⁸⁰ It was wonderful out today and I got the dickens every two minutes in school, that is why I walked all the way over with Caroline cause it was so nice. The O is over and I miss it. It was a lot of fun.



Jane and Richter Watkins, dressed in costumes made by their mother, posed in a “living picture,” a popular pastime of the day. Even Rags wore a huge bow for the occasion. Rags became a member of the family after she followed them home one Thanksgiving night. After they cleaned her up, Gleyn named her O. Cedar Mop, after the new mop being sold in stores, but everyone usually just called her Rags. At age twenty-one, shortly before her death, she rated a newspaper notice as the oldest dog in Lycoming County to get a license (private collection).

¹ Jane Watkins, now Ingersoll, started a diary every year but often stopped after a few months. Jane Witt was her best friend in Williamsport. Unless otherwise noted, information is from “Jane Watkins Ingersoll, Personal History” compiled by Penelope Austin (typescript, LCHS, 2002) and Alison Hirsch’s personal conversations with Jane Watkins Ingersoll in August and October 2003. The “Personal History” contains a complete transcription of this and a later diary. Annotations are by Alison Hirsch.

² Jane lied for her brother, Richter (Rick), and took the music lesson he was scheduled for. She remembers the black rugs, sofa, and chair that stood in her family’s living room, which had black and white tile flooring. Their house, which is still standing, was at 718 Hepburn St. Richter Watkins (1912-1965) married Jane’s friend Cappy Brown and managed the Sherwin Williams paint store in Williamsport.

³ *Pointed Heels* (dir. A. Edward Sutherland, 1929), starring William Powell and Fay Wray, was playing at the Rialto Theatre on Pine St. Advertisement, *The Grit*, 19 January 1930, sec. 1, p. 3. Unless otherwise noted, information about movies is from the Internet Movie Database (<http://us.imdb.com>).

⁴ Jane’s maternal grandmother was Cecilia Steuben Richter (1860 or 1861-1936), the widow of Dr. August Richter (1822-1911), Williamsport’s pioneering public health physician. The Richters had three children who survived to adulthood: Jane’s mother, Vera, and her two younger sisters, Olga and Ruby. Olga’s daughter, Dorothy Musser, often came to stay with their grandmother; she was several years younger than Jane.

⁵ *Sunny Side Up* (dir. David Butler, Fox, 1929), a musical comedy, stars Janet Gaynor and Marjorie White as young working girls trying to make it in New York. Gaynor falls for a wealthy young man from Long Island (Charles Farrell), who is using her to make his fiancée jealous. But in the end, of course, he realizes that she’s the one he really loves. The movie had a return engagement in Williamsport at the Park Theatre in March. Advertisement, *The Grit*, 3 March 1930, sec. 1, p. 3.

⁶ Peggy Smith and Caroline Whitehead were friends from Curtin Junior High School. Peggy Smith’s father later lost his job because of the Depression and went to work for the CCC; Peggy stayed with the Watkins family for a whole school year or more.

⁷ Louise C. Jack was Jane’s home room teacher at Curtin. She had been Class 9-B’s home room teacher since at least 1926. *The Curtin Junior Citizen*, vol. 1 (December 1926), Ephemera, Education, LCHS.

⁸ “Vick, or “vic,” was slang for “Victrola,” the dominant manufacturer of record players, but came to be used for any brand of record player.

⁹ Hundreds of local residents flocked to afternoon and evening sessions at the Mountain Beach outdoor ice skating pond in South Williamsport. “Skating Is Popular,” *The Grit*, 26 January 1930, sec 4, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Seckatary Hawkins* was a book for young readers; the Brown section probably referred to a newspaper serial story.

¹¹ Princess Marie-José (1906-2001) of Belgium married Prince Humbert, or Umberto (1904-1983), of Piemonte, Italy, in Rome on January 8, 1930. The marriage had attracted international attention when Humbert had escaped an assassination attempt when he went to Belgium for betrothal ceremonies—an event captured on film by Hearst Metronome News for a newsreel shown in theaters across the U.S. He became Humbert II of Italy in May 1946 but stepped down in June after a referendum in favor of a republic. “Rome in Gay Attire Awaiting Arrival of Belgian Princess,” *The Grit*, 5 January 1930, sec. 1, p. 1; www.cinema.ucla.edu/Prelude/1929.html; www.wikipedia.org.

¹² Jane began writing many short stories, but she rarely finished them. According to international law, a nation has jurisdiction up to three miles offshore; ships beyond that are in international waters. Jane had a postcard of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII), which she must

have pasted here. Later on, she put it in a photo album next to a formal photograph of her father, and she liked to joke that she had “photos of her father with the Prince of Wales.”

¹³ *General Crack* (dir., Alan Crosland, 1930) starred John Barrymore as a European prince named Christian Rudolf Augustus Christopher Ketler who combines his initials and adopts the name “General Crack” when he goes off to war. He first marries a gypsy, who betrays him, and then marries an archduchess, played by Marian Nixon. Jane saw it a total of four and a half times during the one week that it played at the Capitol Theatre. Advertisement, *The Grit*, 26 January 1930, sec. 4, p. 7.

¹⁴ A thingamajig.

¹⁵ Jane’s mother was Vera Adelaide Richter Watkins (1889-1977), the oldest surviving child of August and Cecilia Richter. Vera married Gleyne Watkins in 1911 and began the business that became Watkins Costumes in 1922. They had three children: Richter, Jane, and Nancy Eleanor, who died as an infant. “Personal History,” 20, 26-27.

¹⁶ Jane and her friends were always dieting. She remembers that she weighed 136 pounds, while Peggy Smith weighed 132 and Cappy Brown, who was 2 inches shorter, weighed 130.

¹⁷ *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* was the final collection of short stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle in the 1920s.

¹⁸ Jane dreaded making displays and projects for school.

¹⁹ Jane’s father was Gleyne Vertrees Watkins, the son of John Strawn and Letitia Vertrees Watkins of Kentucky. In 1910, Gleyne moved to Williamsport, where he worked as an insurance agent and soon met Vera Richter.

²⁰ Jane Witt and her family lived at 1319 Walnut St. Like Gleyne Watkins, Jane Witt’s father, Ira, worked in insurance. *Boyd’s Directory*, 1933.

²¹ *Sally* (dir. John Francis Dillon, 1929) featured Ziegfeld Follies stage star Marilyn Miller as Sally, an orphan who discovers dancing while still in the orphanage. While waiting tables and dancing at a restaurant, she meets Blair (Alexander Gray). They fall in love, but there’s just one complication: he’s already engaged. For the Rialto Theatre, see site 30 in the downtown walking tour in this issue.

²² The Curtin faculty regularly put on plays. In March 1933, they put on the play *Hurricane House*. “Keystone: A Record of the School and Homeroom Activities on 9-6, Miss J. Heller,” Ephemera, Education, LCHS.

²³ Peggy Smith’s and Caroline Whitehead’s mothers were friends of Vera Richter’s.

²⁴ Gibson Logue, a classmate and neighbor, lived nearby. He was often on the school’s honor roll and went on to become a doctor in Philadelphia. *The Curtin Junior Citizen*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Jan. 1929); “Class of 1933 60th Reunion Program,” Ephemera, Education, LCHS.

²⁵ Jane Cheney was Jane’s childhood friend from the age of three. The Cheneys moved to California when the girls were in third grade (1923); they moved back to Pennsylvania, to Danville, in about 1929. Jane often went to Danville for the weekend; in this instance, Jane Cheney seems to have spent the night in Williamsport.

²⁶ The twentieth annual automobile show took place at the Susquehanna Trail Garage, at W. 3rd St. and Hepburn St., February 3-8, 1930. *The Grit’s* special Automobile Section (February 2, 1930) noted: “The decorating committee has engaged Mrs. Vera Richter Watkins to take charge of preparing a colorful setting for the exhibits.” The walls were covered with fabric in black, silver, and “Spanish yellow” and lit with a hundred lamps with shades resembling daisies. The building’s pillars were decorated to look like trees.

²⁷ Jane’s mother always had her clothing purchases delivered; it was the classy thing to do.

²⁸ Jessie Spicer was probably the daughter of Vera's business partner, Lillias Spicer and her artist husband, Clayton, who lived in a big old house on Third St. Vera and Lillias began as decorators, but after their own costumes won prizes in local contests, they decided to go into costume sales and rentals. "Personal History," p. 45.

²⁹ Jane's dinner of cinnamon buns was not atypical for her. She loved sweets and to save money she often bought an 8¢ package of Tastycake cupcakes and a half pint of milk for school lunch. Then she could use her leftover lunch money for movies and the ice cream parlor.

³⁰ The touring company of J. M. Barrie's play *What Every Woman Knows* featured Broadway actors Nell Burt and Earl McDonald. Tickets were \$1.00-1.50 for the Allied Arts Association presentation at the YWCA on W. 4th St. The original 1926 Broadway production starred Helen Hayes, who also starred in the 1934 movie. Barrie's most famous play is *Peter Pan*.

³¹ Bob Bullock was a family friend whom Jane did not particularly like.

³² Friends from Curtin included Peggy Smith; Caroline Whitehead; James (Slats) Slattery, who later had a gas station on the corner of 7th St. and Rural Ave.; and Preston (Pret) Smith, who lived in a big red house on Market St. Bob Mosser was a good friend who lived just a block away from Jane; he fought in World War II and died in the Battle of the Bulge.

³³ Jane needed a garter belt to hold up her stockings for the operetta.

³⁴ Burrows B. Danley had a candy and ice cream store at 135 W. 4th St; two other Danley's stores were among the fifty businesses listed under "Confectionary and Ice Cream—Retail" in *Boyd's Directory* for 1930.

³⁵ Jane was probably upset that operetta practice kept her from going with Rick to Danville, where she could have stayed with Jane Cheney. Then a junior in high school, Rick may have told his mother that he was going to Selinsgrove to visit Susquehanna University.

³⁶ Aunt Olga and Aunt Ruby were Vera's younger sisters, who both lived nearby.

³⁷ Jane was not interested in being a class officer because it was too much work.

³⁸ Cecilia Richter's parents were immigrants from Germany who had a house on "Dutch Hill," so she grew up speaking High German at home and with the neighbors. Jane spent time nearly every day with her grandmother, who had moved in with her daughter Ruby after the deaths of her husband and her father. Some of Cecilia's "stories" are in Jane's "Personal History," pp. 4-19.

³⁹ Arthur L. Pepperman served as principal of Curtin Junior High School until 1942. F. Catherine Fisher, "History of Andrew G. Curtin Junior High School," in Williamsport Educational Association, Williamsport Schools Through the Years (Williamsport, 1958); *Sun-Gazette*, 16 September 1960.

⁴⁰ The home of Jean Harer, Jane's friend and classmate who was regularly at the top of her class. *Curtin Junior Citizen*, vol. 3, no. 2 (December 1927): 8; vol. 4, no. 3 (January 1929):12.

⁴¹ Jane belonged to Curtin's Handcrafts Club, which was directed by Ethel Plotts, an eighth grade math teacher at Curtin. *The Curtin Junior Citizen*, vol. 2, no. 3 (June 1927), Ephemera, Education, LCHS.

⁴² Here Jane drew a drawing of the lamp she was going to put together. Diana lamps in the Art Deco style were popular at the time. They usually consisted of a base that was a statue of the Roman goddess Diana (Artemis the Huntress), with arms raised to hold a globe meant to resemble the moon, her symbol.

⁴³ Jane remembers that a group of gypsies were encamped on the outskirts of town, along Bloomingrove Rd., where they sold trinkets and told fortunes. Vera Watkins herself sometimes dressed as a gypsy and told fortunes for local fundraisers.

⁴⁴ Jane's skating friends included Peggy Smith, Caroline Whitehead, Nathan Stuart, Rollin Scheffer, Helena Hill, Cappy Brown, Madge Jopson, and Libby Lofck. Nathan Smith lived across the street from school, and his mother sometimes gave Jane breakfast when she had

left home without it. Rollin Scheffer went on to become a Lutheran minister. Helena Hill moved away from Williamsport and did not graduate from high school with Jane and the others. Cappy (Catherine E.) Brown was a year younger than Jane; she lived at Poco Farm and later married Jane's brother, Rick. Madge Jopson had moved to Williamsport from England.

⁴⁵ Ralph Pearson's presentation was sponsored by the Allied Arts Alliance. *Gazette and Bulletin*, 18 February 1930.

⁴⁶ A crush.

⁴⁷ Probably Jane's friend Dorothy Bennett.

⁴⁸ Mollie Weis was the music teacher at Curtin. Every year she directed the students in an operetta or musical comedy.

⁴⁹ Gleyn Watkins's office was in room 205 of the Housel Insurance Building, 143 W. Fourth St. at the corner of William St.

⁵⁰ *Love Parade* (dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 107 min., Paramount, 1929) was an early "singie" starring Maurice Chevalier in his second Hollywood musical and his first opposite Jeanette MacDonald, who was making her film debut. Nominated for Academy Awards in Best Picture and Best Actor categories, it also featured Virginia Bruce and Jean Harlow. MacDonald played Queen Louise of the Kingdom of Sylvania who marries a Parisian emissary in order to get a loan for her small nation.

⁵¹ Jane's father often traveled, so it was unusual for her to be able to do something with both her parents.

⁵² Jeanette M. Heller was a ninth grade homeroom teacher at Curtin. "Keystone," LCHS.

⁵³ Burrell Troxell soon became Jane's boyfriend. Their mothers were friends, and his mother chaperoned them on dates, which were often to play miniature golf. He lived in South Williamsport but attended Williamsport schools. The next year, when they went to high school, Jane went through a period of being embarrassed to talk to him at school because he was in the vocational program, and she was on the academic track.

⁵⁴ Lee Stull graduated from Williamsport High School with Jane and later moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

⁵⁵ Jigo was a nickname for classmate Edgar Myers.

⁵⁶ Students were all assigned to committees, such as Attendance and Bulletin Board; the Blackboard Committee was probably one of students' least favorite assignments because it required staying a few minutes after school to clean the board.

⁵⁷ "Bessie" was one in a series of maids, usually black women, employed by Vera to take care of household chores while she was working at her "studio." Jane remembers that her father often drove the maid home at night.

⁵⁸ In water waving, or finger waving, the hair was twirled while wet and then held in place with hairpins flat against the head until dry. *The Grit* advised women that, "Most women...need to have the hair waved in some fashion or other to make them look well" (5 January 1930, sec. 2, p. 3).

⁵⁹ "You" refers to Jane Cheney.

⁶⁰ Jane had her period.

⁶¹ Gyp, slang (from gypsy) for cheat or trickster. Jane usually counted Carmen Larson as one of her friends.

⁶² Lois was a younger neighbor who was often with Jane and her friends.

⁶³ Probably meaning "medal."

⁶⁴ Jane guessed that Nathan stayed away because she was spending time with Burrell.

⁶⁵ Mr. Skaif, Jane's math teacher, lived on a farm out in Loyalsock. Math was one of her favorite classes, and she thought that Mr. Skaif was one of the nicest teachers.

⁶⁶ Jane did not have much patience for anyone who was cowed by

authority figures.

⁶⁷ Probably the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

⁶⁸ *Our Gang* was the original name of *The Little Rascals*, created by Hal Roach in 1922, who were the protagonists in numerous short films that were regularly shown in theaters before the feature film.

⁶⁹ Mary Pickford (1892-1979), known as "America's Sweetheart," was the silent era's most popular movie star.

⁷⁰ Bunk, slang for nonsense.

⁷¹ Like other students in the academic program, Jane had begun to look down on students in the business program at school. "Personal History," p. 89.

⁷² She probably meant "why don't pigs fly?"

⁷³ Slats (James Slattery) had the lead in the play.

⁷⁴ For the Elks Lodge, see site 21 in the downtown walking tour. "Merrymakers" was a name often used for performing groups associated with the Elks. Their performance of "Dramatic Moments," sponsored by the Allied Arts Alliance, was originally scheduled for March 3 but was postponed to March 28. *The Grit*, 2 March 1930.

⁷⁵ Josephine Neece was a classmate who went on to marry Dick Eisenbeis. "Class of 1933 60th Reunion Program," Ephemera, Education, LCHS.

⁷⁶ Anthony (Tony) Cimini went on to become a state representative. Jane was in love with him for a while at about this time. "Personal History," p. 50.

⁷⁷ Classmate Jane Steiger, later Delaney, continued to live in Williamsport.

⁷⁸ Eleanor Drick was a substitute teacher for the Williamsport School District. *Boyd's Directory*, 1930.

⁷⁹ Jane's mother sometimes went with her father on his business trips, such as this one to Wilkes-Barre.

⁸⁰ Macaroni and cheese at Caroline Whitehead's house was one of Jane's favorite meals.



Jane Witt, Jane Watkins Ingersoll and Jane Cheney dressed as a king, queen and maid-in-waiting.

In Memory...

A Poem by Penelope Austin



LCCHS's dear friend Penny Austin passed away June 14, 2003. Penny volunteered for the Museum from 1996 through 2000. As Society News editor, she entertained and informed the membership about everything related to LCCHS in a style that was witty and engaging. As an LCCHS volunteer, she edited the newsletter and the Annual Journal including issues about the John Sloan Art Collection, Williamsport Historical Walking Tours, and floods of the West Branch Valley. She curated the John Sloan Art Collection exhibit and researched and wrote a book on the history of the Lycoming Hotel for the anniversary celebration of that city landmark.

Penny gave lecture programs, read her poetry, held workshops, led discussion groups and participated on the education committee at the Museum. She energized our community as well by initiating the Billtown Blues Festival, beginning the monthly poetry slams at Franco's (that still continue) and forming organizations such as the Coalition of Independent Artists and Artisans.

Penny received her doctorate in Creative Writing from the University of Utah and directed the writing program at Lycoming College for several years. She retired from Lycoming in the 1990s, disabled by breast cancer.

A published and widely acclaimed poet, Penny received various grants and awards for her work including Honorable Mentions from the Academy of American Poets and a Fellowship in Poetry from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Her poetry appeared in the periodicals American Poetry Review, New Republic, Orion, and Kenyon Review. A collection entitled Waiting for a Hero was published in 1988.

Big Beauty

You cannot miss her big beauty as she
leans forward from the silver gelatin print.
My daughter is the lightest thing, pinpointed

like the sunbleached city radiating
at the vee of sloping goldenrod-
and paintbrush-dotted mountains of the canyon.

Bare arms folded across her jeans she sits
amid the ragamuffin kids of West
Branch School for peace and love. I don't say this

because I am her mother. This is what
the photograph tells me. Today my doctor
tells me: "You will die from this." She says

my daughter should be with me when I pass
away. I have been imagining
that day, its bigness in my daughter's life.

I will say: "Oh, love, what you have been
to me. Mountains, sun, and flowers. I've loved
you as the silver road, as the glimpse

of farmland from a plane, as cobalt cliffs
emerging from the bluish mist beyond
the coast of Borneo. I have loved you

as noon light on the stucco walls of lost
and renamed cities, as the brazen flash
of bougainvilleas, the copper in your hair,

as the prayer of bullfrogs sung at midnight
in Singapore, as rusty fantasies
of rock against a purple Utah sky,

as bracing water tumbling over moss
at World's End, as sun disappearing
behind the Endless Mountains, and as all

these children gathered in the picture, smiling
into their futures. I have loved you as you
appear in this memento: radiant,

centered." How can I not take that with me?

— Penelope Austin

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