

THE  
JOURNAL

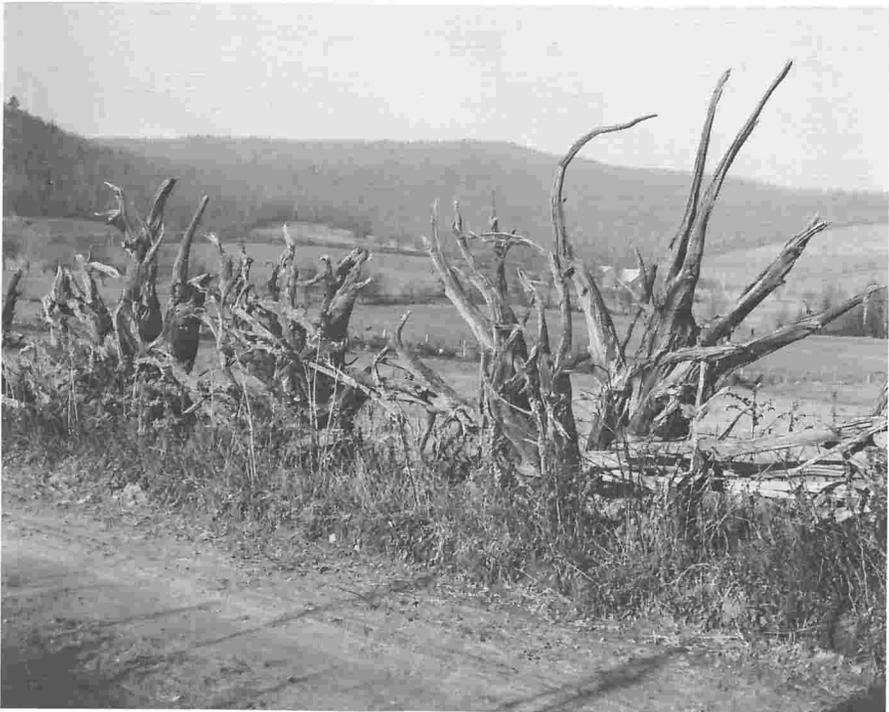
OF THE  
Lycoming County Historical Society

---

VOLUME XXX  
NUMBER TWO

WINTER  
1989

---



*Photo from the D. Vincent Smith Collection.*

JOURNAL  
of the  
LYCOMING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Published Semiannually in Williamsport, Pennsylvania*

Museum Office - 858 West Fourth Street

Telephone (Area Code 717) 326-3326

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

RALPH R. CRANMER  
HARRY H. KING  
JOHN L. BRUCH, JR.  
ANDREW W. STABLER, JR.

WILLIAM E. NICHOLS, JR.  
*Legal Counselor*

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

DR. JOHN PIPER, JR., *President*  
THOMAS SHIVETTS, *First Vice President*  
DR. GEORGE DURRWACHTER, *Second Vice President*  
JOHN M. BEST, *Third Vice President*  
STEVE MOFF, *Treasurer*  
MARY WELCH, *Secretary*

1989-90

DR. JOSEPH ENGLISH  
EMILY REED  
DAVE MCGARVEY  
JACQUELINE MURRAY  
MICHAEL P. CALLAHAN

1989-91

PAMELA L. SHIPMAN  
DIANE ROUSH  
KARL ELY  
CARL CURCHOE  
RICKI MAIETTA

JERSEY SHORE REPRESENTATIVE

DR. ALFRED D. KOHLER

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF WILLIAMSPORT REPRESENTATIVE

MRS. MELINDA YOWELL

VOLUME XXX  
NUMBER TWO

WINTER  
1989

## MUSEUM STAFF

Director	Joseph J. Zebrowski
Assistant to the Director	Everett W. Rubendall
Educator	Julia S. Gano
Gift Shop Manager and Receptionist	Grace E. Callahan
Genealogists	Albert J. Lorsong Nancy P. Lorsong
Secretary	Christine K. Fultz
Green Thumb Program Custodian	George Ertel

## MUSEUM VOLUNTEER STAFF

### Curatorial Departments

Archaeology	James P. Bressler, Curator Karen Rockey Ricki Maietta
Archives	Dorothy Brendt, Curator Grace Fleming May Francis
Firearms and Edged Weapons	William W. Kennedy, Curator
D. Vincent Smith Photograph Collection	Harry L. Rogers, Curator Paul Bennett
Textiles	Jane Ingersoll, Curator Christine Brown Patricia Lockspeiser
Toy Trains	Pastor Robert Logan, Curator Robert Paulhamus Ronald Paulhamus Thomas Paulhamus

### Historians

- Civil War
- World Wars I and II

*JOURNAL* Editor

Registration

A. George Lyon  
David Kristopher Angle  
Stephanie R. Zebrowski  
Elise Knowlden  
Randall Ellis

### Docents

Richard Allen  
Virginia Asplund  
Fred Brass  
Jane Brower  
Bruce Buckle  
Connie Crane  
Joan Decker  
Linda Deljanovan  
Molly Derr  
Randall Ellis

Dorothy Hakes  
Jane Ingersoll  
Elise Knowlden  
Kelly Orso  
Cheri Reagle  
Ken Reagle  
Kim Reighard  
Paul Weaver  
Mary Ulmer

## CONTENTS

President's Message .....	4
Editor's Letter .....	5
Rags to Riches, Myth or Reality? A Study of Williamsport, Pennsylvania by Mark Albright .....	7
The Cyclone of 1892 by Stephanie R. Zebrowski .....	17
Minnie Viola Taylor: Feminine Trailblazer from Cogan House Township by Carl Taylor .....	21
Italian-Americans in Williamsport by John Protasio .....	27
The Penny Dog of Piot's Woods by Henry W. Shoemaker .....	33



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### EVERYMAN HIS OWN HISTORIAN

Some years ago a famous historian by the name of Carl Becker wrote an essay entitled: *Everyman His Own Historian*. His argument went something like this: History is the study of how we got the way we are; Everyman is potentially interested in discovering how he and she got the way they are; Therefore, every person is potentially a historian.

Becker's essay generated a great deal of discussion among professional historians, but his point was to remind them that history was more than a professional field of study, and truly belonged to everyone. Historians come in all sizes and shapes, they are young and old, male and female, and may have enjoyed any number of educational opportunities, or none at all.

One of the larger goals of the Lycoming County Historical Society is to encourage our members and others in our service area to think like Carl Becker. History is neither owned by historians nor is it confined to what is on a printed page somewhere. History is the search for answers to the question of how we got the way we are, personally, in Williamsport or Muncy or Trout Run, in Lycoming and nearby counties, and in this entire region of Pennsylvania. And although we would not want to boast of our influence the search may help us answer some larger questions about how the United States got the way it is. The answers may be found in printed materials, but they may also be found in various kinds of artifacts ranging from those discovered by archeologists to those saved from grandma's living room or kitchen. And one truly important source which most groups have only begun to preserve is the local oral tradition of memories and stories of people. These may have never been written down, but they can be recorded and saved for use in the future.

The Society and its Museum have taken giant steps forward in the past several years to become the best possible resource for the historians in our area and for those who come to visit from other places. If you have questions about how you got the way you are or how your town or county came to be, come visit with us. Your membership in the Society shows your interest in history. We invite you to become a historian.

Sincerely,  
John Piper, Jr.  
*President*

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Have you ever noticed that the more things change the more they stay the same? People the world over are still struggling for their rights, the right to speak the truth, to work for themselves, to worship as they please, to a secure economy and a good life.

Women are still struggling for their equal rights, too. Minnie Viola Taylor was a pioneer, going from a small farm community where most young women saw a future at home on the farm raising kids, to a community leader and educator whose forethought still provides for young women in pursuit of a better future. She took a real interest in her community, saw its problems, rolled up her sleeves and went to work.

That kind of attitude toward the community is the kind of attitude that prompts people to run for public office, to accept positions on the governing boards of public institutions, to go into social work, to vote or to hold public officials accountable for their deeds, to make their views and opinions known by writing and speaking to public officials.

It is this writer's opinion that by supporting our Museum, by looking objectively at our past we are, in part, fulfilling our responsibilities. For it is by looking at the mistakes of the past that we can avoid some of the same pitfalls of the future. What's that cliché, history repeats itself?

But looking back isn't all there is to it. Those that actively contribute to the docent program, for instance, are taking a step toward responsibility. Raising money to keep the Society and the Museum going is also another way to contribute to the community. You can help by contacting Board members to ask what they are doing and how you can help.

The Lycoming region has a rich and varied past and the future promises more of the same. We have different problems, you say? Yes, perhaps on the surface, but the underlying causes for these problems are the same. Not all of us are suited to the kind of work to which Minnie Taylor dedicated herself, this is true. But, we are all suited to something and we can all become functioning citizens. A look inside the Iron Curtain countries should prove to us just how much we have. I have yet to wait in line to buy shoes, have you? I can buy pretty much whatever I want to eat, how about you? I can buy a car without an application to a waiting list, all I need is money! So what? So what about giving something back? Taxes, I pay taxes, I pay dues. I am giving something back, you say. This is true, I say. But, if I do not express my opinions I lose my voice as a citizen. If I do not pitch in I am not functioning. Many of our Society members do pitch in during promenade time, for

Christmas programs, and the like. What have you done?

Read our *JOURNAL* and enjoy the history. We have storms generally thought peculiar to the southern regions of the U.S. We have histories of riches and fortune. We have a story of dedication and community. And, we have a story to read by candlelight when winter winds howl and its so dark outside you can't see your hand in front of your face. Put your feet up and relax and read.

Stephanie Zebrowski  
*Editor*

With the Great Depression of the thirties came many innovative ideas to feed the homeless and the poor, and to increase the employment of those in need in Pennsylvania. Governor Pinchot tried to pass a bond issue through the State Senate covering the unemployed, but Henry Shoemaker had his own ideas as did other Pennsylvanians.

In a letter to the Governor dated October 10, 1931, from Sofia, Bulgaria, where he was serving as the American Minister, Mr. Shoemaker wrote the following:

Dear Governor Pinchot,

I have been following your activities in behalf of the unemployed with considerable interest. I am afraid that by the time "unemployment bonds" become available half of the people of Pennsylvania will have starved to death. I should think that a three day law could be passed, compelling employers to give to each worker no more than three days of employment per week. I have figured it out that even at the present low level of industry it would give a steady job to every unemployed person in the state, carry them over the winter, forestall the dole.

Our mutual friend, Mr. J. Herbert Walker, Montgomery, Pennsylvania, writes that he has suggested to you that the carcasses of surplus doe be turned over to the destitute. I would go our generous young friend one better by suggesting that sportsmen this fall turn over all game to the unemployed poor, and especially the destitute sick in hospitals and state institutions.

If the reports have been correct of hundreds of tons of game killed in Pennsylvania, there would be square meals for many hungry stomachs this fall and winter, and the hunters would have an added zeal to bring in "limit" bags, for such a good purpose, as I know that few of them go out for the sake of the "pot" alone. All game killed could be turned in to district game protectors for distribution.

## RAGS TO RICHES: MYTH OR REALITY? A STUDY OF WILLIAMSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

by Mark Albright, April 10, 1978

An important dispute in historical study in recent years has concerned the nineteenth-century social mobility theory known as the "rags-to-riches" myth. Some modern historians consider the belief in the working class or foreign-born rising to positions of social greatness to be overstated at best. For them, success stories like that of Irish immigrant Andrew Carnegie are the exceptions of the nineteenth-century rather than the rules.

In an attempt to prove this hypothesis, two such historians, William Miller and C. Wright Mills have directed their attentions to collective biographical studies of wealthy industrialists across the nation. Through such studies they hoped to provide conclusive evidence that would deal with the legitimacy of the "rags-to-riches" myth. Miller's analysis shows that 95% of the men studied rose out of upper- or middle-class backgrounds, while Mills found that, "American business elite always drew its membership from men born with high status and sired by well-to-do fathers." These results would nationally disprove the myth<sup>1</sup>.

Although Miller's results have been accepted as valid, there have been attacks on those of Mills for use of biased sources. Thus Miller's work stands alone as a national challenge to the "rags-to-riches" myth; a challenge that was compiled strictly for the years 1900-1910, and involves only, "'career men,' bureaucrats that is . . . all office-holders, many of them having never organized a business of any kind."<sup>2</sup>

Herein lies the need for more in-depth study. Miller's is too restricted by years and national politics to serve the needs of local city researchers. Such localized studies are of import when considering isolated economic and social development that may not reflect national trends.

Herbert G. Gutman demonstrates this import in his analysis of Paterson, New Jersey. Through the study of industrialists involved in locomotive, iron and machinery manufacturing for the years 1830-1880, Gutman found that the "rags-to-riches" myth was applicable in Paterson. Indeed, the great men of industry did rise to positions of power from poor, working class backgrounds, disproving the national conclusions of Miller and Mills<sup>3</sup>.

Clearly Gutman's study demonstrates the need for work in this field. Analysis of other nineteenth-century industrial centers and their social prominence is needed to continue and expand the work started by Gutman and Miller.

Such an industrial center was Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The late nineteenth-century king of lumber throughout the world, Williamsport was reputed as the millionaire capital with more millionaires per person than any other city in the nation. With such a reputation the men who took the city to economic prominence are of particular interest. Through a collective biographical analysis of a wealthy study group we can simulate Gutman's Paterson survey and test the "rags-to-riches" myth for this isolated case<sup>4</sup>.

The process through which the Williamsport study group was arrived at is as follows. City tax records were decided on as the means for finding the wealthy men needed. Since the 1889 flood destroyed the timber boom in the Susquehanna River (marking the decline of economic prosperity in the city) a year prior to 1889 was chosen for the study. That year was 1886, since it contained the most complete collection of property tax records, minus only one of the eight tax wards in existence during that period. Fortunately the absent second ward was an industrial district, the majority of whose entries would not have met the second criteria set for the subject selection listed below.

The following criteria was set for the first subject selection:

- 1) the subject's property assessment must exceed \$3,000.00 (Estimate of a "two-story brick house with lot.") and,
- 2) the assessment must be listed under the subject's surname and not that of a company or organization.

Adhering to the above criteria, the 1886 tax records were reviewed and the first subject sample of 150 taken. This completed, the second selection was conducted. Reviewing the first list, those having the 30 highest property assessments were chosen as the research group. Of this group, two were women whose property was a bequeathal from their husbands, six of the men listed were dead in 1886, while biographical information on six more was unobtainable. Of those six, all were below the group mean of \$36,300.00 with four below \$20,000.00, obviously not representative of a significant money/property group. Thus 18 men were left in the biographical study group.

Alone, these figures have little significance, but compared to the city figures of 1886 they assume an importance relative to this study. Of the estimated 28,000 inhabitants of Williamsport in 1886, only 1,601 were real estate owners. With a total property estimated at \$7,790,831.00, the 150 originally chosen from the tax records represent approximately one-seventh (\$1,799,790.00) of the total estimate. Thus we have 9.4% of the population controlling one-seventh of the property in the city<sup>5</sup>.

Within this group of 150 the 18 men selected for the study represent 8.3% of the real estate owners, but controlled 36% of the money invested in city property. These 18 men are, therefore, important and significant representatives of the community's wealth and property holdings. Thus, biographical studies would serve the interests of the "rags-to-riches" myth and the city of Williamsport alike.

In order to deal effectively with the information contained in the studies, the following questions must be answered. Who were these men? Where did they come from? What were their immediate family and educational backgrounds? And, by what means of employment did they rise to their positions?

Sadly, certain biases and problems have arisen out of this study. Although they have all been dealt with, it is of worth that they be listed for consideration. Primary sources are always difficult to work with, tax records being the epitome. Inconsistency of the recorder, misspelled ethnic names, and misrepresentation of ownership by listing property under the names of deceased relatives are some of the major problems. Likewise, dated secondary source material can prove trying. In this area concentration on "favorite sons," lack of completed biographies, and information on women were but a few of the pitfalls found in materials printed during the late nineteenth-century. Finally, in dealing strictly with property estimates it is difficult to gain a concept of the net worth of the subject, but as previously stated, all these problems have been considered and dealt with so as not to impair the study.

Since the men to be studied were chosen strictly on the basis of property assessments, the businesses mentioned in the following biographies are many and varied. There is a dual advantage to this type of approach. First, in considering the source used for selection, tax records would contain little if any bias, being compiled strictly for the purpose of city revenue. Second, by not making the choice on the grounds of occupation, the researcher eliminates bias early in his study that might be affiliated with the occupation. This bias could take the form of emphasis on particular ethnic groups within the business or the interrelatedness of ownership and influence.

The first biographical study is of Hon. R. L. C. Walker. Regretably, there is little known of Judge Walker prior to his arrival in Williamsport. However, based on his vocational pursuits, certain valid assumptions can be made as to his social status and that of his family.

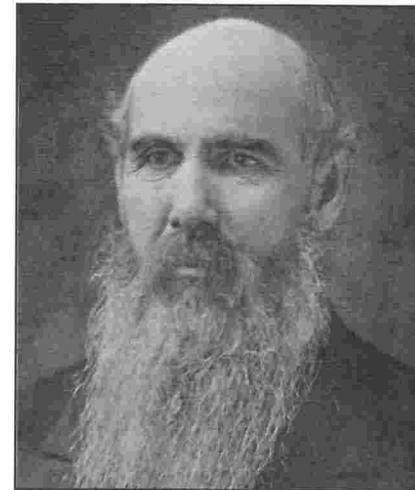
Born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, October 20, 1838, Walker was admitted to the bar in Philadelphia on his 21st birthday. At this point it is necessary to establish Walker's social background. The first consideration is that of economics. Then, as now, the pursuit of law was expensive. Families not only had to provide finances for their son's education and reading period (internship), they also had to give up the child's economic contributions to the family while he prepared for his profession. In order to meet such economic requirements some type of economic security was needed; security that would be found in a middle-class family<sup>6</sup>.

In keeping with this idea is the fact that Walker was admitted to the bar at the age of 21. The age would indicate that he was able to pursue his vocational training unobstructed by financial worries. Paralleling this is the location of his admittance. This key urban center would be the logical choice of a man who recognized its vocational advancement potential. Entering the bar in Philadelphia would mean rapid advancement in the profession, a prospect well understood by an aspiring middle-class young man.

After his admittance to the bar, Walker practiced law in Philadelphia for 19 years. In 1878, he moved his practice to Williamsport where he was well received: as demonstrated by his election to Congress from the Sixteenth District in 1880. Walker, however, declined the honor and remained in the city continuing his lucrative law practice, a practice which afforded him the means of owning \$202,000.00 worth of property in 1886. Considering the circumstances indicating his middle-class background, and his rise from it to success, it is impossible to match Walker's progression to that of the "rags-to-riches" myth<sup>7</sup>.

William G. Elliot was born in Williamsport on July 19, 1840. A middle-class family of means, Ralph and Mary (Gibson) Elliot were able to give their son a thorough education in the city public schools, Dickinson Seminary, and the Philadelphia High School. Completing his education, Elliot temporarily traveled to Canton, Missouri, where he clerked in a store; but, having sown his wild oats, he returned to Williamsport in 1859. With the coming of the war Elliot joined the army and served until 1865, when he returned to the city a second time to establish a mercantile business.

Once the business was under way, Elliot traveled to Oil City, Pennsylvania, making a small fortune in petroleum. It was this fortune that enabled William Elliot to erect the



*Col. Jacob Sallade was involved in six separate business pursuits prior to the Civil War. He was able to provide his son with the means to pursue a lucrative career.*

Opera House in 1870. In 1872, he was appointed express manager for the Philadelphia-Reading Railroad Company. Along with his mercantile business, Opera House and railroad appointment, Elliot established an asphalt-paint manufactory in 1879, which later became known as National Paint Works. Thus William Elliot did not rise into the middle-class, but rather continued in the economic tradition of his family<sup>8</sup>.

The third biography reflects the more typical connotations associated with the nineteenth-century myth. Henry Ulman was born in Banden, Germany on April 17, 1816. Immigrating to the United States at the age of 20, Ulman worked as a pedlar until 1840, when he moved to Williamsport. There he united with his brother Lazerns, who was already established in the clothing business, and the two founded L. and H. Ulman. The new business was met with great success for six years until a panic in

1846, brought total economic collapse. The brothers struggled to rebuild, but Lazerns dissolved the partnership in 1855, leaving all to Henry. Alone, Henry was able to re-establish the store's respectability and his own reputation as the "best clothing merchant in Williamsport."<sup>9</sup>

Henry Ulman's story is the "rags-to-riches" myth, personified. A young man leaves his native country and comes to the land of opportunity where he makes a fortune. Although his brother was already an established merchant in the city when Ulman arrived, it was Henry who rebuilt the business following its collapse. Owning an assessed \$48,850.00 of property in 1886, it would appear that Ulman easily meets the criteria for the "rags-to-riches" social climb.

The story of Henry S. Mosser is simple and straight-forward. The son of J. K. and Maria (Keck) Mosser, Henry was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania on September 13, 1857. His father was one of the pioneer tanners in the county, and at the time of Henry's birth he had gained success and was in the process of expanding his business. In 1876, J. K. Mosser built a tannery in Newberry which he put in Henry's charge. "The Lycoming tannery (was) the largest in this section of the country . . ." Thus Henry S. Mosser is the product of continuing middle-class success<sup>10</sup>.

Godfrey Hess, the son of Godfrey and Rosanna M. Hess, was born in Williamsport on December 23, 1844. Like Ralph Elliot, Godfrey Hess had the economic security through which he could afford his son an education in the city schools. Following his education, Godfrey learned the shoemaker's, carpenter's and photographer's trades; the last of which he pursued for a time and retained as a lifelong interest. After his brief photography career, Hess founded and became director of the Wilkenson Truss Company, Ltd. as well as maintaining managerial positions in the Williamsport Steam Company and the Edison Electric Illumination Company. Hess was also a major stockholder in the Edison Company, Merchant's National Bank and Williamsport Savings Institute of which he was also director. Although Hess's assessment was less than Ulman's in 1886, he nonetheless was firmly established in the middle-class from birth through the study year, refuting the same myth Ulman supports<sup>11</sup>.

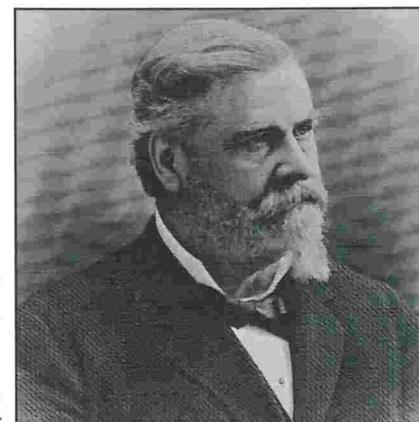
Born in Hamilton, New York on November 28, 1828, Guy W. Maynard and his parents, Luke and Philena (Staples) Maynard migrated to Tioga County, Pennsylvania in 1830. There Guy began his education and, after a move to Williamsport in 1837, completed it by attending Dickinson Seminary. As with the other families, this educational affordability reflects the middle-class statue of the Maynards.

Completing his education, Maynard took a position with the Pennsylvania Railroad and traveled to Philadelphia where he pursued his new occupation. After his "connection" with the railroad ended, he worked in various parts of the nation as a machinery salesman, returning to Williamsport in 1860. It was in this year that Maynard began his career in the lumber business. For two years he worked in John Waite's company, but left his position in 1862, to form a partnership with Peter Herdic and J. W. Maynard (no relation). The partnership lasted until the late 1870's when Herdic went bankrupt and withdrew from the company leaving the ownership to the Maynards<sup>12</sup>.

The only adopted son of a middle-class businessman, H. T. Sallade was born in 1842, and came to Williamsport in 1844. He was adopted by Col. Jacob Sallade, a man of remarkable talents who, prior to the Civil War, was involved in six separate businesses ranging from farming to banking. During the war, Sallade served with his father and was stationed in New Orleans and Washington, D.C. At the end of the war both father and son returned to the city and their business ventures.

In 1867, Sallade began work as a cashier at his father's bank, moving later to a position at the First National. The Colonel purchased the City Hotel in 1885, installing his son as manager, while in 1890 both men jointly purchased the *Williamsport Banner*. To their previous newspaper holding, *The Sun*, they added their new purchase, both of which were run by H. T. Sallade until his untimely death that same year<sup>13</sup>.

"One of the pioneer lumbermen of that (Williamsport) region," Fletcher Coleman was born July 7, 1833, in Chatham Four Corners, New York. The son of The Rev. Symore and Sophia (Thrope) Coleman, a well-known minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Fletcher received his preliminary education in the "common" schools, and was then sent to a Methodist seminary in Putney, Vermont. Completing his education, Coleman taught school for "several years," and later established a lumber mill and grain store in Fort Edward, New York.



Coleman was first sent to Williamsport by the lumber firm of Langdon and Divon of Elmira in 1858. His mission was to superintend the operation of an enormous industrial plant referred to as the "big water mill." But with the outbreak he was called back to Elmira. In 1865, Coleman returned to the city and purchased the Dodge brothers' sawmill which he operated with economic success until his retirement in 1894<sup>14</sup>.

*Fletcher Coleman, one of the pioneer lumbermen of the region bought out the Dodge brothers' sawmill in 1865.*

Although Rev. Coleman's financial status would not have been equal to that of the other middle-class families mentioned, his occupation would place him in the same strata. As in the other studies, Coleman's education would also be a class indicator. Thus, Fletcher Coleman rose to prominence from the middle rather than the working class.

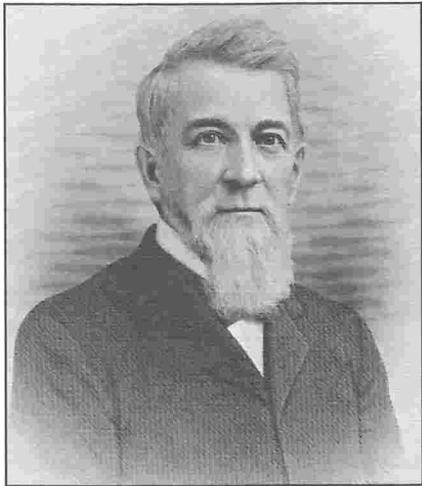
The following study is uniquely abbreviated in its biographical data. Andrew B. Cummings, son of James Cummings a wealthy hotel owner, inherited his 1886 property holdings of \$24,000.00 from his family. An inheritance of this size could have only come from a middle- or upper-class family, annulling the "rags-to-riches" myth<sup>15</sup>.

Unlike Cummings, the biography of Emanuel Andrews is more in keeping with our myth. Born February 11, 1829, in Sheffield, England; Andrews immigrated to New York State in 1833, with his family. At the age of twelve, Andrews quit school and found work in a large jewelry house where he was employed for five years. In 1846, he was apprenticed to the saw manufacturing firm of Hoe and Company. He was employed at the firm for four years at which time he traveled to California.

Unsatisfied with the "new frontier" Andrews returned to Hoe and Company for eight years, moving to Williamsport in 1859. Once there, he took advantage of his years at Hoe and erected the first saw factory in the area. As the business and the town grew, Andrews expanded his interests to include large private real estate holdings (1886: \$22,580.00), considerable stock in the Opera House erected by William Elliot, and the directorship of the First National Bank<sup>16</sup>.

The son of a successful soldier/farmer, John White was born in Lycoming County on November 4, 1818. John's parents, Colonel Hugh and Charlotte (Weitzle) White insured their son's future by sending him to the best school in the area operated by The Rev. John H. Grier and John Austin. There young White learned mathematics and theoretical surveying, and joined the state engineer corps in 1826. White was a member of the corps until 1843, when he moved to Free Port, Pennsylvania, and married.

During his ten year residence in Free Port, White engaged in a successful mercantile and grain business. In 1854, he moved to Williamsport and established a lumber mill in Cogan Valley which he operated independently until 1859. It was in that



*John B. White of the lumber firm of White, Lantz and White enjoyed 23 years of success in the lumber industry.*

year that White joined the lumber firm of Herdic, Lantz and White which became White, Lantz and White in 1867. John White enjoyed 23 years of success in the firm, dying in 1890<sup>17</sup>.

In the education of John White we can find the key to his family's social status. Concerned with their son's future, the Whites had economic means of affording their son a private education. This is also reflected in the fact that Hugh White could spare his son from the farm work. Whatever the explanation, John White was permitted to have a private education and the chance to choose his own vocation, both ideals common in the middle class.

Believed to have been born in 1829, John Hays was the son of John King and Jane (Hays) Hays. A member of the board of directors for the Williamsport Savings Institute, John King Hays sent his son to the city

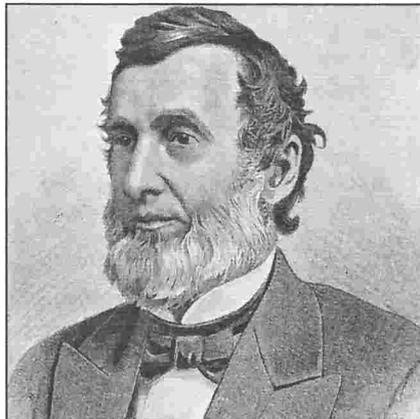
public schools and the Williamsport Academy (later Dickinson Seminary). Following graduation, Hays learned the tanners trade and from 1850 to 1880, engaged in the tin, stove and heating business. Upon the death of his father, Hays also assumed John King's position on the board of directors for the Institute. In light of this brief study Hays was obviously reared in and arose from the middle class<sup>18</sup>.

John W. Maynard, son of Lemuel Maynard, was born in Springfield, Massachusetts on May 18, 1806. John began his education in Springfield, but in 1823, the family relocated to Hamilton, New York, where he spent one year at the Hamilton Academy. At the age of 18 John began reading law in the office of W. G. Angell and G. C. Clyde.

Following a second move in 1830, he was admitted to the bar in Tioga County, Pennsylvania in 1831. Maynard practiced law in Tioga and three adjacent counties until 1840, when he moved to Williamsport.

Following the establishment of his practice in the city, Maynard rose to judicial prominence. In 1859, he was appointed assistant law judge of the fifth judicial district (Allegheny County); a position he occupied for three years. The year 1862, saw him elected presiding judge of the third judicial district composed of Northampton and Lehigh counties. It was also in this year that Maynard, Peter Herdic and Guy Maynard organized their successful lumber partnership<sup>19</sup>.

The social status of the Maynards is easily identified in the type and progression of John's education. First, the family could allow him to begin his education in Springfield and continue it in a private academy in Hamilton. Second, the family move to Tioga County failed to interrupt his vocational training. If the family were moving as a means of finding employment they would have needed



*John W. Maynard was elected presiding Judge of the 3rd Judicial District and formed the Maynard, Herdic, and Maynard lumber partnership in 1862.*

all the economic help possible. If such were the case, John would not have had either the freedom or encouragement to gain the education he did. Therefore, the Maynard family was of the middle class.

Due to the lack of family background information, social status can only be hypothesized for John E. Jones. However, the hypotheses are well documented by factual evidence. Jones was born in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and came to Williamsport in 1853, at the age of 22. From 1853 until 1858, Jones held positions of "clerk" in the firm of Jones and Anthony and the West Branch National Bank. In 1858, he left the bank and organized the city's first public ice wagon. This venture quickly proved profitable, and in 1861, Jones had enough money to open a hardware store which he maintained and expanded throughout his business career. Aside from his ice and hardware businesses, Jones was also a major stockholder in the Valentine Iron Works and director of the Lumberman's National Bank<sup>20</sup>.

In light of Jones' early employment in the city, it is valid to assume that his pre-Williamsport social status was middle-class. Consider the facts. Jones was only 22 when he arrived in the city, yet was able to secure two clerking positions, the latter in a bank. Such positions would require some form of education, possibly through what we would consider the secondary level. Taking into account the date of his arrival, 1853, and the frontier-like conditions of the area from which he originated, such an education would be most easily obtained by a child of a middle-class family.

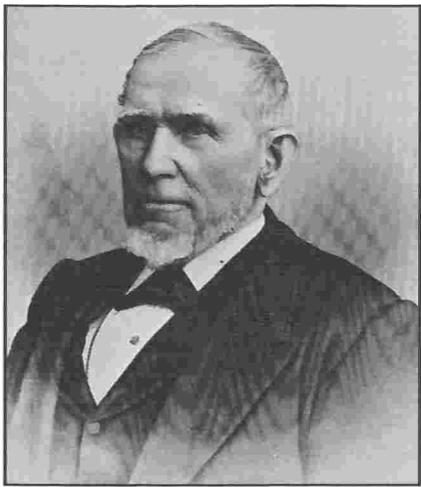
If Jones had been of the working class, the securing of such positions would have been most unlikely, especially so soon after his arrival. A working class child would have taken a job as soon as he was capable of performing the physical labor involved. This being the case, a 22-year-old working class man, upon arriving in a new town, would seek employment in an area most closely aligned with the work he was accustomed to; physical labor. Since the opposite is true in Jones' case, it would seem valid to assume that his family background was middle-class.

A son of the old sod, Patrick McFadden reflects the same myth that has enveloped the biography of his contemporary Andrew Carnegie. Born in the County of Donegal, Ireland, in 1827, young Patrick fled the economic hardships\* of his native land in 1847. Immigrating to America at the age of 20, McFadden was directed by a friend to the small village of Sallidaysburg where he found employment in the Durell and Bodins sawmill. After several years at the mill, McFadden saved enough money to open his own business. He moved to Williamsport and opened a butcher shop, which he operated until 1895. Patrick McFadden came to the United States in 1847, as a young man of little means, and by 1886, owned a butchery and property assessed at \$17,550.00, not Andrew Carnegie, but nevertheless an advancement up the social ladder in keeping with the "rags-to-riches" myth<sup>21</sup>.

John B. Hall (photo on following page) was born in Geneva, New York on June 1, 1804. The son of Moses and Phoebe (Burrows) Hall, John was provided with a "fair" education, and entered into business with his father who operated a prosperous ploughshares business, the J. B. Hall Company. Once the company began to turn a profit, Hall was able to expand his holding to include a foundry, directorate of the First National Bank as well as stock in the West Branch Bank. Thus Hall was born into and rose out of the middle-class<sup>22</sup>.

George W. Youngman was born in Youngmanstown, Union County, Pennsylvania on June 30, 1819. George's parents, Elias and America (Antis) Youngman operated a successful gristmill, and in 1831, relocated the mill in Nippenose Township. Due

*\*1845-49: A period of severe famine and disease due to potato blight and large exports of food by landlords which brought many Irishmen in the already overpopulated nation to the edge of starvation.*



John B. Hall expanded his holdings to include a foundry, directorate of the First National Bank, and stock in the West Branch Bank.

to the success of the mill, Elias was able to accept an appointment to the office of Williamsport register and recorder as well as enroll his son in Rev. J. P. Hudson's Latin School. George began reading law with Hon. A. V. Parsons following his completion of Latin school, and was admitted to the Williamsport bar August 18, 1842.

Although trained as a lawyer, the business world was of equal interest to Youngman. While maintaining a practice, he invested in sizeable tracts of land around the city. In 1864, he constructed a sawmill on his father's land, and organized the Nippenose Woolen Mills of which he was principle stockholder and president until 1873. Thus using the middle-class background of his family as a foundation, George Youngman was able to expand his personal wealth and raise his social status<sup>23</sup>.

Our final study is brief and obvious, in relation to the myth. Samuel Pollock was born on

October 23, 1808, in Milton, Pennsylvania. His father, William Pollock, operated a successful mercantile business. After Samuel's rudimentary education he was able to send him to Dickinson Seminary in Williamsport. Graduating from the seminary in 1828, Samuel began reading medicine with Dr. J. S. Dougal. In 1830, he enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia to complete his education, graduating in 1832. After six years in Philadelphia Dr. Pollock moved his practice to Williamsport where he remained until his death. Samuel Pollock's success was clearly the by-product of his middle-class background<sup>24</sup>.

Completing the individual biographical studies one fact becomes clear, the significant representatives of Williamsport's business elite did not make their way to the top of the socio-economic ladder according to the specifications of the "rags-to-riches" myth. Of the 18 men studied, 15 were of middle-class backgrounds who simply continued the economic progress established by their fathers. All 15 had some type of general education, while 11 went on to seminary or the study of law and medicine. Thus in Williamsport we see well-educated men of middle-class backgrounds obtaining social and economic prominence through the extension of their family's tradition.

This, however, is not the only conclusion to be derived from this study. There are other interesting facts that, though they don't relate directly to the study, are still pertinent in the context of the nineteenth century.

Although there were only three men whose biographies complied with the "rags-to-riches" myth, the correlation is surprising. All three men immigrated to America following Western European trends of the mid-nineteenth-century. All were young, escaping from political or economic turmoil with no recorded education, who came to the states looking for the promised land. And, all of them found it. Ulman, Andrews and McFadden all seem to personify the ideal of the myth this study dealt with.

A national trend of the middle decades of the nineteenth-century that is illustrated in this study is western migration. Of the 18 men studied, only five were born in the city or county. From their respective biographies it is clear that although the majority of the men were of middle-class backgrounds, they nonetheless recognized the economic potential of frontier Williamsport, and moved accordingly. Following parallel lines of

migration, they came "down" from New York and New England as well as inland from Philadelphia.

Through these secondary conclusions as well as through the primary one we are able to discern the importance of such localized studies. Aside from the obvious, challenging myths, either historical or national, enable us to obtain a better understanding of our nation's history by better understanding our local position in the overall context.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources:

- 1886 Tax Records for the City of Williamsport, Lycoming County Court House, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
- Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
  - 17 May 1887, p. 4
  - 8 May 1876, p. 4
  - 5 September 1870, p. 4
  - 2 March 1899, p. 5
  - 7 February 1899, p. 8
  - 5 March 1880, p. 4
  - 28 September 1872, p. 4
  - 22 November 1893, p. 5
  - 15 March 1880, p. 1
  - 15 March 1882, p. 2
  - 9 October 1899, p. 5
  - 26 February 1889, p. 1
  - 30 December 1893, p. 5

### Secondary Sources:

- Collins, Emerson and John W. Jordan II, *Genealogical and Personal History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania*, Vols. I and II, New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1906.
- Lloyd, Col. Thomas W. *History of Lycoming County*, Vol. I, Topeka: Historical Publishing Co., 1929.
- Lycoming County Planning Commission *A Survey of Historical Sites and Landmarks of Lycoming County* Williamsport, 1971.
- Meginnes, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co., 1892.
- Lycoming County: Its Origin and Condensed History* Williamsport: Gazette and Bulletin Printing House, 1895.
- Resources and Industries of the City of Williamsport and Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* Williamsport: Gazette and Bulletin Printing House, 1886.
- The Historical Journal: Local History and Biographies* Williamsport: Gazette and Bulletin Printing House, 1888.
- Polk *Polk's Williamsport City Directory* (Public Library, Williamsport).
- Thernstrom, Steven and Richard Sennett eds. *Nineteenth-Century Cities* New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1969.

## FOOTNOTES

- Thernstrom, Steve and Richard Sennett, eds. *Nineteenth-Century Cities* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1969), p. 99.
- IBID. p. 98-99.
- IBID. p. 120-122.
- Meginnes, John F. *Resources and Industries of the City of Williamsport and Lycoming County* (Williamsport: Gazette 1886).
- Meginnes, John F. *Resources and Industries of the City of Williamsport and Lycoming County* (Williamsport: Gazette, 1886).
- Meginnes, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 297.
- Meginnes, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 197.
- Meginnes, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 820.
- Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, 22 November 1893, p. 5.
- Meginnes, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 822.
- Meginnes, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 818.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

12. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 745-746.
13. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 720-721.
14. Collins, Emerson and John W. Jordan, II, *Genealogical and Personal History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (New York: Lewis Publishing Co. Vol. 1, 1906). p. 404-406.
15. *Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, 26 February 1889, p. 5 and 9, October 1899, p. 5.
16. *Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, 30 December 1893, p. 5.
17. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 729-730.
18. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 719.
19. IBID. p. 751-752.
20. *Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, 5 September 1870, p. 4 and 2, March 1899, p. 5.
21. *Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, 7 February 1899, p. 8.
22. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 803-804.
23. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 756-757.
24. Meginnis, John F. *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk and Co. 1892). p. 787.

Much has been written on the mammals of the Colonial Period by the late Col. Henry W. Shoemaker. Unfortunately, he recorded hunters' tales, along with historical accounts, and it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. The great buffalo migrations and moose herds so vividly described apparently did not exist at all. However, Shoemaker did interview many of the last of the Pennsylvania hunters of the 1800's. These accounts are so interesting that it is unfortunate that they cannot be fully substantiated.

MAMMALS OF PENNSYLVANIA

By J. Kenneth Doult, Caroline A. Heppenstall, and John E. Guilday, published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission in cooperation with the Carnegie Museum, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1967.

## THE CYCLONE OF 1892

by Stephanie Zebrowski

The "greenhouse effect" has been credited recently with some of the violent weather plaguing the United States as the end of the twentieth century nears. Unusual weather phenomena is nothing new and cannot be blamed solely on the chemical pollution responsible for the depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain and the like. Of course, this is not to say that those things haven't had a deleterious effect of their own. Let's face it, they have, along with other forms of pollution accompanying our modern industrialized society. But, unusual weather, violent storms, are nothing new.

On June 27, 1892, just past six o'clock in the evening a furious tornado struck the Lycoming County region wreaking havoc from Jersey Shore to Eagles Mere. Moving from the northwest and gathering force as it moved, the storm burst upon Williamsport unroofing homes, crushing buildings, blowing down chimneys and huge stacks. Trees were picked up and tossed around as if they were parts of a "pick-up-sticks" game. To further complicate matters, a huge cloudburst followed the tornado flooding homes and streets, leaving unroofed homes and businesses in the area inundated with an inch of rainwater.

Cutting a swath 100 feet wide the storm burst upon Jersey Shore. Leveling the barn at John Ferguson's farm just above the quiet community, the ferocious storm was thought to have claimed its first victim, Ferguson's young son. The boy, about 12 or so, was attempting to open the barn doors for his father. John Ferguson had returned home just ahead of the storm and was seeking shelter for his horse and buggy. Before he could get inside the tornado struck collapsing the barn upon the boy and several other horses inside. Initially feared dead, the unconscious boy was finally pulled from the wreckage seriously injured. He remained in an unconscious state for nine hours. The horses were also badly injured and it is believed that they had to be destroyed. Mr. Ferguson and the horse and buggy he had been driving were carried a full 50 feet by the force of the wind and escaped unscathed. The orchards on the neighboring farm to the north were nearly destroyed as the storm ripped the trees up from the ground leaving many twisted into fantastic shapes.

Deep burrows were ploughed through grain fields leaving the stuff scattered and



Employees of the Mankey Decorative Works. Parts of the factory were leveled when the storm burst upon the city of Williamsport. (This photo was taken between 1883 and 1885 and is part of the Museum Collection.)

useless. In this respect crop damage was heavy. The storm moved on toward Williamsport bursting upon the city in the west and leveling parts of the Mankey Decorative Works. Seconds later it picked up the big wooden frame barn at the corner of Third and Park Avenue, carried it for a distance of at least 100 yards before hurling it to the ground in an open field with such force that it was completely destroyed. At Park and Campbell Street the tornado ripped into residences leaving most chimneys down between Park Avenue and Erie Avenue. The Park Avenue area suffered particularly with nearly every tree on the south side of the avenue snapped off or uprooted. Portions of homes were damaged or completely destroyed. One barn on Elmira Street was crushed like an eggshell while structures opposite it were unroofed.

From Centre to Hepburn Streets the damage was most severe with not a single chimney left standing in the area. Out buildings were lifted up and thrown down again left in heaps of rubble while huge trees were uprooted and thrown down against sidewalks and fences causing a great deal of damage.

As in all accounts of tragedy and strife, whether caused by man or nature, there are always stories of miraculous escape or rescue. Williamsport is no exception. It seems that a little girl, daughter of one Frank Levan, had been on her way to complete an errand at Haag's grocery store when the storm hit. Her father, realizing the intensity of the storm, ran from his own home to find his daughter clinging to the fence surrounding the neighbor's yard. Levan grabbed his daughter and attempted to return to his home, not more than 30 yards distant, while debris from the storm flew around them. In one harrowing moment an enormous tree fell behind them catching the little girl's clothing in its branches. Levan was nearly knocked down, but with that superhuman strength born of emergencies and adrenalin, freed himself and the child. They escaped into their home unharmed while the storm's fury continued to throw branches and debris around them.

Just east of the Levan escape, the house on the corner of Hepburn Street was unroofed while the neighboring property on the opposite corner was littered with the debris of uprooted trees and damaged homes. Trees were carried across Hepburn Street and dropped to crush utility poles, pulling down their electric and telephone lines. This area of the city remained blockaded all the next day.

The storm then headed southeast crossing Sixth Street, dismantling chimneys and roofs on its way. The popcorn factory owned by J. Scott Bubbs and located on Court Street was left twisted and in danger of tumbling over. The electric lines on Court Street were knocked down by uprooted trees. A horse, frightened by the furious weather, ran across one of those lines. The shock it received knocked it to its knees whereupon the animal, recoving almost instantly, leaped to its feet and apparently escaped without further injury.

One new home between Court and Sixth Streets lost most of its second story. The bricks, window frames and scaffolding were left piled within the remaining standing walls of the structure.

From Market Street south to Fifth Street the city was swept clear of trees. Taking down wires throughout the area it was a scene of desolation and destruction. The most severe damage levied by the storm was sustained by the Turn Verein Vorwoert's Hall on Bennett Street. The wooden framed single story structure was broadsided with such tremendous force that the structure was completely crushed. It was reported that barely a single whole piece of lumber was to be found about the basement level. Chairs, benches and tables, window frames and the like were crushed beneath the jumbled woodpile that had once been the Hall. The sidewalk in front had been picked up and carried into an adjoining yard while debris from the building was scattered over a two block area. Ironically, the piano on the dance floor remained virtually undamaged.

Four young women were caught by the storm on Bennett Street. Though they were knocked down and literally blown for a distance of 25 feet, tumbling and rolling over one

another as if in a cartoon sequence, they remained unharmed but thoroughly frightened.

A building just 100 feet from the Vorwoert's Hall on State Street was heavily damaged when the brick front was completely blown out and the rear wall parted. The second story of the building, being of frame construction, was twisted from its foundation. Nothing inside the building sustained serious damage.

Homes on Mulberry Street were unroofed or lost their chimneys. Bennett Street, from Penn to Jackson, was blocked by fallen trees. Trees and portions of roofs from East Third Street were thrown across the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks or found blocks away. One home at the corner of Penn and Anthony Streets was severely damaged when the roof was lifted off and deposited on the porch of its neighbor to the west. The force of the wind was so strong at this point that it also drove a two-by-two board several feet long endwise into a slate roof of one residence.



The Williamsport Cemetery lay in the path of destruction, too. A great swath was cut through the quiet resting place displacing trees and tombstones alike, with no respect for either.

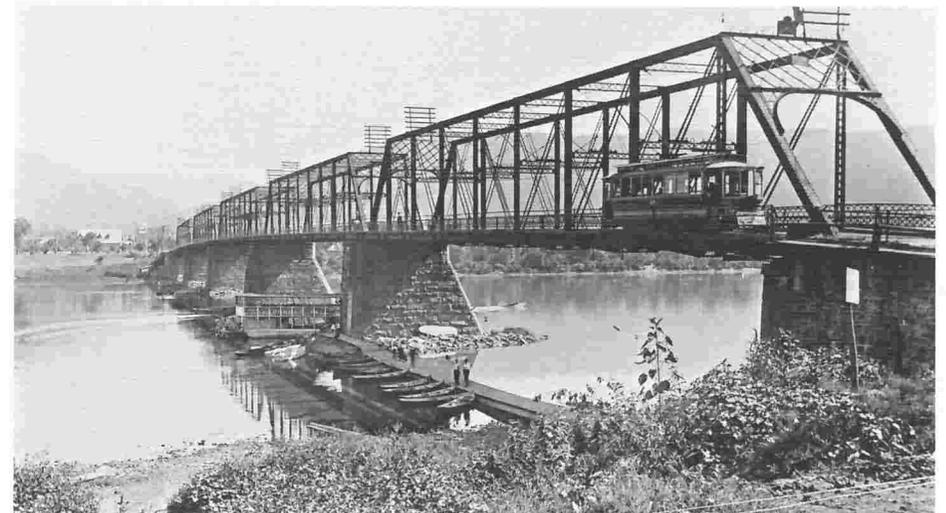
The force of the storm rammed into the large brick smokestack of the Williamsport Woolen Mills on East Third Street dropping it in a heap and crushing the fire room and severely damaging the engine room. The engineer, R. B. Stryker, had just blown the whistle to

shut down operations. As he stepped into the engine room the smokestack came crashing down behind him filling the room at his heels with bricks and debris. As the sides began to bulge out of the storage shed to the rear of the factory, the roof dropped to the ground.

The two towers of the dry kiln at the Coleman Mill blew down onto Railway Street. A part of one of the towers crashed through a window in the house opposite the mill causing considerable damage.

Without letting up the storm continued to reek havoc taking with it a portion of the roof on the R. B. Johnston Building and the front window of Joseph Ulmer's store on East Third Street.

Fortunately for a man driving his horse and wagon on the road between Williamsport and Montoursville the wind only picked them up, carried them 25 feet, and left them



*Caught on the Market Street Bridge, Maggie Hawser clung to the railing of the footwalk as the cyclone's winds ripped through the normally quiet West Branch Valley.*

with a broken wagon shaft. Similarly, a chimney on a house on Park Avenue was lifted up intact and set down on a store goods box in the yard as neatly as if it had been intentionally built there.

The National Hotel didn't fare quite so well, however. The storm twisted the kitchen from the rear of the hotel. When a chimney crashed through the roof, adding insult to injury, the building was left susceptible to the downpour which followed the storm.

Perhaps one of the most harrowing experiences of the day was the experience of a woman caught on the Market Street Bridge between Williamsport and South Williamsport. Maggie Hawser was whirled around and forced against the side of the footwalk overlooking the Susquehanna River. With the strength she summoned up, partly out of fear and partly from personal fortitude, she managed to cling to the railing as the wind tugged and pulled in its attempt to fling her to the tumultuous river below. She sustained only minor injuries.

Leaving Williamsport behind, the storm continued on its mad course crashing into Eagles Mere. It was initially reported that every home and building except one hotel had been blown down. With trees across the rail line and with all telephone lines down, as well, reliable information was scanty. Rumors abounded. In an effort to obtain factual information as to the condition of the resort community, several Williamsport residents left the city on the Reading line. When they reached Halls they transferred to a special engine and proceeded to the end of the line. Making it on foot as best they could they reached Eagles Mere to find the water wheel at Kirk's Hotel blown down and the roofs of several cottages severely damaged. Porches had been blown off their foundations and Van Buskirks "large" store building had been blown over. Though only one was seriously injured, many were considerably frightened. The majority of the damage throughout the community was confined to broken window glass. The reports had been greatly exaggerated.

It seems that Mother Nature did her best. She had tested the West Branch Valley only a few years before by flooding the valley on June 1, 1889. She would try and try, and again and again and again residents would show their mettle. After all it hasn't been that long since Agnes and her younger cousin tried their best. The force of weather is a natural one which man cannot alter just like man cannot alter the sun or the phases of the moon. Nature is a force to be lived with and adjusted to, not changed.

"The winter of 1834-35 was very severe. On Shade Mountain a pack of twenty wolves were found frozen after the melting of the snow. They appeared to have huddled together, perhaps exhausted with a long march, and perished of cold and hunger."

*From: ANNALS OF BUFFALO VALLEY by J.B. Linn*

## MINNIE VIOLA TAYLOR FEMININE TRAILBLAZER FROM COGAN HOUSE TOWNSHIP

*by Carl Taylor*

Although not a trailblazer in the literal sense, Minnie Viola Taylor travelled numerous untrod paths on her way from a childhood at Beech Grove to a career as a social worker in Williamsport and a short time as Dean of Women at Dickinson Seminary, Dickinson Junior College.

Born in Liberty Township between Liberty and Nauvoo on October 29, 1876, she moved with her parents to Cogan House Township at the age of three. After a few years on a small rented farm on Wolf Run Creek, they purchased a 100 acre farm just west of the Beech Grove settlement. While she was growing up there, her father was farming, clearing more of the cutover land, and following his trade as a carpenter.

By 1891, Minnie had completed her "common school" education and so proceeded immediately to "Muncy Normal" to become a teacher. By the end of the summer she had obtained a temporary teaching permit and was hired to teach at the Steuben School on Buck Horn Mountain while still some two months under the age of sixteen. (This log schoolhouse was located a short distance from where the Red Fox Hunting and Fishing Clubhouse now stands.) Her interest in continuing her education is confirmed by her entrance in Williamsport Dickinson Seminary in the fall of 1893. Undoubtedly the local Methodist ministers had some influence in this action, one of which was the Rev. James Patton, husband of her father's next younger sister, Lydia, her favorite aunt.

At that time it was customary for a few of the more academically-oriented young people, both males and females, to attend "Muncy" and become teachers, but it



*In this photo of the Summit School class for 1899-1900, Aunt Minnie was seated third from the right in the back row. Aunt Minnie taught the upper four grades at the school. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Helen Hopkins.)*

was out of the ordinary for a local youth of either sex to attend a diploma-granting high or preparatory school. By the end of three years she was graduated as valedictorian of her class, perhaps the first Cogan House Township native to obtain a high school diploma, and certainly the first female.



Minnie returned home in 1896, to teach again in the area schools, one of which was "Chestnut Grove" just over the Pine Township line, off what is now Route 287, at the top of "Griswold Hill" leading to English Center. In 1899, she was hired to teach the upper grades at the two-room Summit School (later known as the White Pine School). Her next school, her home school, for

the next two years from 1900 to 1902, was at Beech Grove. During her first year she had the somewhat unusual experience of having her own brother, the present writer's father, as one of her eighth grade pupils.

Minnie Viola Taylor was later known to hundreds of Williamsporters as Miss Taylor. To her five nieces and nephews she was known always as "Aunt Minnie Taylor." (We had another "Aunt Minnie" on the maternal side.) We perceived her as a committed maiden lady, and a most caring and intelligent one who had presumably chosen spinsterhood in order to pursue a professional career. She was a very private person, and in spite of our close association with her for a few years, it was not until quite recently that we learned a few of the details of an experience which not only re-routed her own pathway, but had great educational significance for us, her brother's children. We three older children lived in her home for a total of seven years while attending Dickinson Seminary, and none of us has any recollection of her ever having mentioned a single word about this.

By 1900, she was "being courted" seriously by a local young man by the name of Owen Baumgartner. Work was scarce locally at that time, as most of the forestland there had already been cut over, and the farming was primarily a subsistence economy on small acreages of upland soil. Clearing of land for agricultural purposes was going on, but this was done mainly by family members, as time permitted. Owen, at age 25, somewhat against the wishes of his mother, decided to hire out as a "woods-hand" at the large logging operation of the Wood brothers in McDowell County in southern West Virginia. This prominent family of lumbermen had its local beginnings when the grandfather had settled here from England, and, together with his oldest son, had set up a "sawmill" with an "up and down saw" on Buck Horn Mountain. Their large lumbering operation in West Virginia in the late 1890's is mentioned and pictured in Roy Carlson's book, *Tumult on the Mountains*, 1964, (p. 33, and Figures 107 and 109). Before Owen left he had given Aunt Minnie a gold ring, which was viewed in the community as evidence of their engagement. She had given him a gold "tie pin" of the "stick-pin" type worn by the men at that time on "dress-up" occasions. A letter written to him by his mother in December 1900, urging him to return home and seek work locally again, is still in the possession of his oldest niece, Mary Brewer. On January 10, 1901, a logging train ran away and, as the story goes, Owen was one who jumped off on the wrong side and was fatally injured. His body was brought back home for burial in the White Pine Cemetery. Aunt Minnie wore the gold band on her third finger for many years. A lifelong friend of hers said she never took it off. Eventually it became too tight and had to be removed by a jeweler. On January 10, 1907, when a religious education teacher in Santiago, Chile, Aunt Minnie made this entry in her diary. "It was hard to keep from being 'blue' today, this being the anniversary of a sad event . . . I stayed upstairs (at dinnertime) and read my old letters." On January 13 she wrote: ". . . am so glad these anniversary days are over at last."

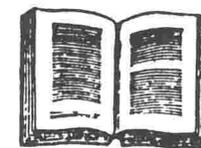
I think it can be concluded with some degree of correctness that Aunt Minnie must have done some "hard thinking" about a new future during the months following the accident. Perhaps her main purpose in continuing to teach another year was to earn

and save money for additional education. At any rate, she entered Syracuse University in the fall of 1902. At that time it was a Methodist institution, and it is likely that she made a commitment to engage in religious work. There must certainly have been some scholarship aid. In 1906, she was awarded the Ph.B. degree (Bachelor of Philosophy), quite likely a *first* for any Cogan House Township native, certainly for any female. Later that year, on October 11, she embarked for a five-year stint as a missionary-teacher at the Santiago College for Girls in Chile, South America. On the way down she sailed along the eastern coast of the United States to Colon, took a train across the Isthmus to the city of Panama, and thence down along the western coast of South America. She varied the return trip by sailing to LeHavre, France, then on to Liverpool, England, February 22, 1912, for a few days of visiting and sightseeing. There are some vague recollections by family members that she had considered spending additional time in England with plans to return in April on the ill-fated Titanic. Speculation has it that in view of her deep concern for helping people in trouble, if she had been on the sinking Titanic, and the occasion had arisen as to her occupying a precious space on the all-too-few lifeboats or giving it up to another woman and/or child, she would probably have chosen the latter. Be that as it may, she sailed earlier, arriving in New York City on March 3. She arrived four days later at the new home of her parents in Trout Run. They had moved during her absence. It was her stated intention to be home by mid-April to help take care of her sister-in-law at the expected time of the birth of her second child.

The 1931 Dickinson Seminary Junior College yearbook lists Aunt Minnie as having been a social worker from 1915-1930. For the first few years after her return from South America she worked for the International Y.W.C.A. in varying capacities that included travel into western Virginia and eastern West Virginia to lay the groundwork for organizing local chapters wherever feasible. She had only cursory notes in her diary covering these years, but references are made to attendance at the annual meetings of the National Conference on Social Work at Atlantic City, Providence, Philadelphia and Denver. She took graduate summer classes in social work at Columbia, Syracuse and Bucknell Universities, and at the Russell Sage Foundation. She liked to travel, but responsibilities at home and at work limited her, though she did manage one pleasure trip to the west coast and back by train.

By 1918, she had become the first Executive Secretary of the Social Service League of Williamsport with an office on the second floor of the old City Hall building on Pine Street. This location was always on the schedule for a brief visit on the occasional trips "to town" made by our family from Cogan House. Since the long 30-mile trip in a Model-T Ford over predominantly dirt roads, until the middle 1920's, was not an easy one and with the accumulation of shopping tasks, visits to the dentist, and other miscellaneous errands, they were infrequent enough to make each visit to the City Hall exciting and somewhat intriguing for small rural children. We usually entered the building from the rear through the basement, past the City Jail amidst the Police Department where many of the policemen came to recognize us as "Miss Taylor's nieces and nephews." Aunt Minnie frequently worked with them on cases. On the office doors on both the first and second floors were many of the names of city officials for whom we had name recognition from political campaign publicity in the daily *Gazette* and *Bulletin* to which the family always subscribed. Many oldsters will recall Mayor Herbert T. Ames, the imposing figure who led a reform movement and captured the office as a third party candidate on the Prohibition ticket. We knew that he and Aunt Minnie were well-acquainted both through their official capacities and their church affiliations at the Pine Street Methodist Church.

An innovation for which she was largely responsible was the hiring by the City of its first policewoman, Mrs. Alta Ling Solley. This was all the more impressive to us



children because we knew that she, too, had grown up in our Township and had attended the Beech Grove School with Aunt Minnie. Together they blazed some trails in the complementary work patterns they set as two young female professionals: social worker and policewoman. Although they were lifelong acquaintances and the only two females holding official positions in the city government, while on the job they maintained a professional relationship which was characterized by their use of "Mrs." and "Miss" both in direct address and in reference to each other. As children from the informal rural culture, we were a bit puzzled by these formalities. After all, they had grown up on practically adjoining farms!

Aunt Minnie never talked about her actual cases to us, and we were only vaguely aware of what a social worker did. We occasionally had a glimpse into the large store-room full of clothing, which one entered through a door at the rear of the main office; thus, we knew that she distributed used clothing to poor and needy people. Since there was no governmental aid in those days, other than that distributed by the Overseers of the Poor, whatever "welfare" she had available would have had to have come through a source like the Community Chest of which her Agency was a member.

Only recently, while working on local history, I came across another illustration of her services which demonstrated how the network of acquaintanceships was used in solving a problem. The teacher at the Oak Grove School in Old Lycoming Township, Milton Landis, had grown up on a farm adjoining the Taylor farm at Beech Grove. One day two of his small pupils, a brother and sister, came to school with clear evidence on their backs of having been severely whipped, as it turned out, by their father and stepmother. He reported this to Aunt Minnie and also found temporary lodging for them in homes there in the local community. Aunt Minnie remembered that the childless couple with whom she had roomed and boarded while a teacher at the Chestnut Grove School on the Pine-Cogan House Township border had wanted a child to raise. By this time she had her own Model-T Ford sedan for transportation, and after a trip or two she placed the little girl with them. They raised her as their own child, or perhaps more accurately as their grandchild. In turn, many years later she cared for them in their old age. She has resided her entire adult life within two miles of her adopted home. Her brother was placed out with another family; hence, whatever legal measures were needed to remove these children from their abusive home had been taken.

The three years at Dickinson Seminary back in the 1890's had a profound effect on Aunt Minnie, producing lifelong sentiments of affection for, and loyalty to her Alma Mater. When the time came in 1924, for the oldest of her brother's children to attend high school, she made it possible for her first niece to attend the Seminary. By that time an alternative to going to Muncy Normal for teacher training was being developed for the youths of the township. For most, the nearest high school was a three-year vocational one in the Borough of Liberty, but tuition would have to be paid and transportation provided. The more feasible alternative for most, and the total was never over a half dozen until the late 1920's, was to find a place "in town" to work for one's room and board, with relatives if possible, but if not, then wherever there was an opportunity. The locations were Jersey Shore, Williamsport and South Williamsport. Up to this time only one boy had followed this path. Housework and child-caring opportunities were much more available for the girls.

Around 1918, Aunt Minnie had bought a "double house" on High Street and had moved her parents down from Trout Run to live with her. Her mother was already a semi-invalid from asthma. Her father, a "cabinetmaker," found work at the L. M. Castner Picture Frame Factory on Rose Street until his retirement in the late 1920's. One side of her house produced a monthly cash rent. Although my parents were much interested in continued education for their five children, they were uninformed and inexperienced with regard to schools beyond the elementary grades; hence, it was that

Aunt Minnie was able to step in and do a considerable amount of the "engineering." She took my older sister to live with her and the grandparents, with an obligation to help with the housework, etc., while attending the Seminary. The next year when my older brother was ready for high school, Aunt Minnie arranged for, and certainly partially financed, our sister as a boarding student at the Seminary where she continued until graduation. I joined my brother the next year in the High Street home where we lived until his senior year, doing housework, running errands, etc. Then he was given a year as a boarding student, an experience which Aunt Minnie wanted each of us to have to further our social development. He then stayed on for two years at the new Junior College. My turn came the following year, although I went back each Saturday morning to do the weekly cleaning at the High Street home. These sequences were broken when our parents moved from the Cogan House area in 1929, to a small New York state city where a good high school was available for our younger brother and sister.

Throughout the 1920's, Aunt Minnie maintained a close relationship with the Seminary, not only through us, as students, but also through her work with the Alumni



*Minnie Viola Taylor  
(This photo was taken between 1920 and 1925,  
courtesy of Nancy Baumgartner.)*

Association. For the years 1920-30, with the establishment of the Junior College, a new Dean of Women (formerly called "preceptress") was hired. Her performance was considered somewhat less than satisfactory, so she was terminated at the end of the year. The budgeting problems became more severe than usual as increasing numbers of families were unable to afford the costs of private schooling at either or both the elementary and secondary levels. Nationwide, it appeared that economic conditions could only get worse as businesses failed, banks closed and unemployment increased. Dickinson President Long asked, and strongly urged, Aunt Minnie to consider taking a two-year leave of absence from her social work job to serve as the Dean of Women. Quite reluctantly, she finally accepted. She had been away from the "college scene" for almost 25 years. Her feeling of responsibility for her aging parents was keen, but there was the likelihood that her new daily work schedule would not be

greatly different. She had always considered herself quite liberal in her thinking, as attested to by her trail-breaking educational achievements as a rural female. She believed strongly in the equality of opportunities for women with men although she never mentioned any actual identification with the "women's rights movement" in her diary. While not much of a "joiner," she was active in a leadership role in the local College Club (for women). She valued the accomplishments of the "women suffragettes" and took her right to vote as a serious obligation. Already in the early twenties she was driving her own car, not exactly customary for women at that time.

I never heard her make an actual evaluation of this two-year experience. The school administration considered it successful with its accomplishment of restoring some dignity to the position she occupied. Casual references to it by her indicated that it was a satisfying experience for her, but she would have been too professional in her

manner and too loyal to her Alma Mater to have ever discussed happenings of a negative nature. In later years I have heard some alumnae from that period indicate that she was somewhat "old-fashioned" in her thinking; but they respected her for her fairness and sincerity. The hiatus between her growing up in a strict Methodist family in the latter Victorian era and the lifestyles of the students in the "post-Roaring Twenties" period was certainly immense; yet at that time the Seminary-Junior College culture was still essentially that which was acceptable to the historic, conservative Methodist Church; thus her beliefs as to proper behavior were reinforced by the administration. She exemplified that for which she was hired.

She returned to her job in the City Hall in 1932, and she continued to make a home for her parents until their deaths in 1934 and 1940. Both died in the home she had provided for them. Not long after the latter, she herself began to have health problems, both physical and mental, so the decision was made for her to move to Canandaigua, New York, to spend her remaining years with her only brother's family. She died in 1944. As requested in her will, she was buried in Hart's Cemetery near Nauvoo village, only a few miles from her birthplace and alongside the graves of her parents and that of her favorite aunt for whom she furnished a joint tombstone. Her legacy to Cogan House Township and Lycoming County, and especially to education for women, lives in accordance with another item in her will, as follows:

Whereas, The College Club of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, has a standing Scholarship Committee, I give and bequeath all the rest, residue and remainder of my personal estate to the Scholarship Committee of the College Club of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, in trust, to be known as the "Minnie V. Taylor Student Loan Fund," for the purpose of assisting, by way of loans, needy girls and boys who are ambitious to secure a higher education and give promise of future usefulness. Loans are to be made to applicants in the following order: First to my relatives; Second to applicants from my native Township of Cogan House, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania; Third to applicants from any school district in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania; in any event, girls are to have preference over boys.

This loan fund, administered for many years by the local chapter of the American Association of University Women, was recently turned over to Lycoming College where it, together with other loan funds, will continue to provide small loans in accordance with Aunt Minnie's stipulations.

The winters of 150 years ago were much more severe than the winters we have experienced in more recent times. During the winter of 1835-36 the "snow was frequently over 12 inches deep and the river was frozen to the depth of two or three feet." It seems that the following winter began with a bang. It was reported that on October 5, 1836, a heavy snow storm left 1½ feet of snow in Penns Valley and on Buffalo and White Deer Mountains.

*From: Annals of Buffalo Valley by J.B. Linn.*

## ITALIAN-AMERICANS IN WILLIAMSPORT

*by John Protasio*

One of the most interesting ethnic groups to settle in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, was the Italians. Although many years have passed since the immigration wave of 1880-1920, many intriguing questions linger to this day. What reasons compelled the Italians to leave Italy? What circumstances drew them to Williamsport? What lifestyles did these people live? What discrimination, if any, did they encounter? The answers to these and other questions not only provide an understanding of the plight of the city's Italian population, but shed light on the history of Williamsport during the early years of this century.

The promise of America as "the land of opportunity" brought millions of Italians to this country in hope of achieving economic security. Most of these newcomers, prior to the 1880's, were from the northern states of Italy. In the years of 1880-1930, however, the vast majority of the Italian immigrants came from the poorer southern regions of the peninsula. According to official Italian figures, over 5,000,000 people from this Mediterranean country migrated to the United States from 1876-1930. About 80% of them came from such southern states as Latium, Campania, Apulia and Abruzzi.

Unquestionably, there must have been strong motivating reasons for these people to leave their native land and venture across the Atlantic Ocean to live in a country with a vastly different culture so very far from home. The primary force that led to this migration was the economic conditions prevalent in Italy at the time. For the most part, the inhabitants of southern Italy were extremely poor. Almost 90% of the population were sharecroppers or farm hands who did not own the soil they tilled. In fact, it has been estimated that 59 out of 60 families "did not own enough land in which to be buried." Most of the farmland was owned by a signori or absentee landlord. Only 15% of the farmers held title to land, and that rarely exceeded more than five acres. Hence, when he finally paid his rent, taxes, debts, medical expenses and other bills, the peasant barely had enough to feed his family.

The Italian peasant was poor in political power as well as in economic wealth. Illiterate and with little wealth to draw upon, he could not exert any significant political pressure to influence government policies. Therefore, there was little he could do in regards to the heavy taxes and government decisions that affected his life.

With this economic poverty and political impotence, it was inevitable that the Italian farmer would have little social status. In a typical village in southern Italy, the top of the social pyramid was occupied by the signori, physicians, lawyers and priests. Next came a small middle class comprising of craftsmen, shopkeepers, minor government officials, and the hated overseer who ran the farm operations for the signori. At the bottom of the social ladder were the sharecroppers and farm hands.

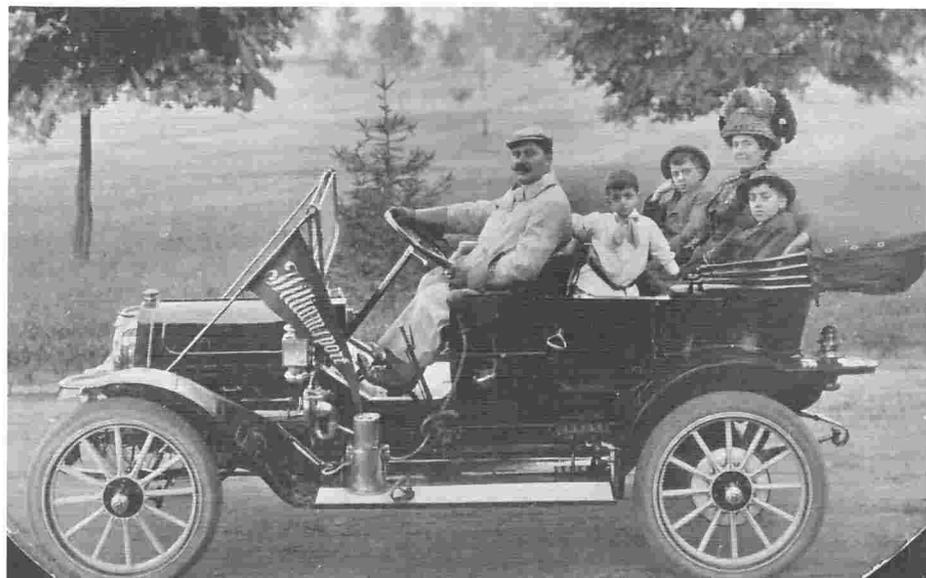
It was these poor living conditions and the promise of America, "the land of opportunity," that encouraged many Italians to seek a new life in this country. During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries millions of these people, 77% of whom were agricultural workers, migrated to the new world. A glance at the United States Census reports, (numbers 12 through 15 for the year 1910 to 1930) of Italians living in this country illustrates the magnitude of the migration:

Year	Born in Italy	Native Americans Born of Italian Parents
1900	483,063	255,450
1910	1,343,070	771,645
1920	1,610,109	1,751,091
1930	1,790,020	2,756,457

As can be seen, there were over 1,600,000 Italian immigrants in the United States by 1920. Compared to the general population of 117,823,000, Italians constituted about 1½% of all the people living in the United States. Furthermore, if the native Americans born of Italian parents are included, Italian-Americans would comprise nearly 2¾% of the total population.

Of course, this percentage was much higher in certain cities. In New York, for instance, Italians made up approximately 14% of the city's population. This is not surprising since this seaport received the bulk of the immigration trade. Yet, other cities, including urban centers located inland, also had relatively large proportions of Italian immigrants. Among these cities was Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

This city had contained Italians before the turn of the century, but their ranks were few. Of a population of 10,920, less than 100 were Italians. Yet many of them, by 1910, had learned enough of the English language to act as middle men between Italian workers and American employers. Among this group was Thomas L. Casale.



*Thomas L. Casale won the 1910 Reo in the Williamsport Popularity Contest. President of the Italian Bank, he came to Williamsport as a labor contractor. Left to Right: Thomas Casale, Michael, Andrio, Mrs. Casale and Charles.*

Born in Cervente, Italy, Casale was fortunate enough to become an officer in the King's guard. From this position he was able to gain both leadership experience and financial resources. Around 1901, he left Italy to seek his fortune in America. He, like other arrivals to this country, was a stranger in a new land. However, Casale's mastery of the English language, confidence, leadership qualities, and relatively large sum of money were vital advantages he had over most of his fellow immigrants. These assets yielded immediate results for him. He established a foreign exchange bank and a hotel in New York to serve the newcomers from Italy. Then, learning of a labor shortage in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, he came to this city and established a labor contracting business. Many Italians in New York were brought to Williamsport to work on the railroad and to work in the lumbering camps by Casale and other labor contractors. It was largely through the efforts of these labor contractors that the Italian population in the city grew.

However, not all Italians came to Williamsport by the direction of a labor contractor.

Giaccinto Protassio, for instance, was advised by his cousin of job openings for railroad construction in Pennsylvania.\* He came to Williamsport, but learned he was too young to work for the railroad. Instead, he moved to Muncy and managed to find a job on a farm. A few years later, he returned to Williamsport and began a career with the Pennsylvania Railroad that was to last for more than 30 years.

Other Italians came to Williamsport in order to join relatives already living in the city. George Girio had been working on a farm in New York state for two months after his arrival in the United States when he was invited by his sister to join her in Williamsport. Girio accepted the offer and moved in with his sister and brother-in-law. He decided to remain in the city after he obtained employment in a steel mill which offered higher pay than he had been receiving in New York.

Through the efforts of labor contractors and other forces, the Italian population in Williamsport grew. The aggregate census for Williamsport (census 13 through 15) reveals the extent of the growth:

Year	Born in Italy	Native Americans Born of Italian Parents
1910	314	140
1920	599	1,066
1930	752	1,214

The Italian-born inhabitants of Williamsport in 1920, comprised 17/10% of the city's population, slightly higher than the national average. Counting the children born in the United States, Italian-Americans constituted nearly 5% of the total population, somewhat higher than the average on the national level. In 1920, 12% of the immigrants in the United States were Italian. In Williamsport, by contract, over 26% of the city's population was Italian.

The Italians of Williamsport came to this country for similar reasons that compelled other people from this Mediterranean nation to migrate to America. Men such as Giaccinto Protassio had faced the same hardships and frustration most people endured in southern Italy. Born in the state of Abruzzi, Protassio and his parents were forced to spend long hours working on farmland they did not own. In 1906, Protassio, then 17 years old, came to the United States to seek a better life. In 1911, he returned to Italy and married Marie La Valla. He then came back to America in 1912, and waited for his wife to join him. Unfortunately, World War I erupted and the passage was closed for the next four years. Finally, in January of 1920, Protassio's wife arrived in Williamsport.

George Girio, also of Abruzzi, experienced a life of drudgery in the "old country." From sunrise to sunset, Girio and his 13 brothers and sisters labored on the small farm his parents owned. In 1903, Girio's father left Italy to seek his fortune in America. Unfortunately, he died during his first year in this country, leaving his family to face grave difficulties. As he recalled, "I don't know if (I) had bread or not. I don't remember. Maybe when we go to bed we have nothing."

The Italians, like other immigrants, were forced to settle in the same general area of the cities. These "Little Italies" were created in part by the unwillingness of the "Wasp" to tolerate the presence of immigrants, especially those who came from eastern and southern Europe. As Joseph Lopreato pointed out, ". . . when Americans discovered that the Italian immigrant bore little or no resemblance to Dante, Columbus, Galileo, Michelangelo or da Vinci, they developed a strong antipathy toward him that made the idea of having him as a neighbor utterly preposterous." Besides this barrier, the Italians also lacked the money to rent high quality housing. Hence, "Little Italies" appeared in the poorest sections of New York City and other cities.

Yet, it is important to remember that these "Little Italies" were created by choice

\*His family later spelled the name Protasio.

as well as by force. After all, these people had departed from their native land to seek new prospects in a land where its inhabitants shared a vastly different culture. Unquestionably, the Italian immigrants wanted to cling together for security. In "Little Italy" one could carry on a conversation with another person in Italian. An individual living there could often seek help from his neighbors, some of whom had been his friends in Italy. Furthermore, these Italian communities also served the function of a gradual training ground for the American way of life. These people could absorb a new culture slowly with the help from those who had already made progress learning American customs.

There are strong indications that such a pattern of settlement occurred in Williamsport. A look at the Boyd's *Williamsport City Directory* for the years 1905, 1910, 1915, 1920 and 1925, reveal the existence of a "Little Italy" from William Street to Chatham Street and from Canal Street to Third Street. A count of Italian names reveal 35 families or single individuals resided here in 1905. According to the 1910 census report about 450 Italians or native Americans born to Italian parents lived in Williamsport. Considering that there were probably fewer than 450 in 1905, and the 35 individuals had wives and children (who were not reported by the directory), it is safe to say that a large percentage of the Italians in Williamsport in 1905, lived in this section of the city.

As the years passed, the Italian population of "Little Hollywood" grew\*. In 1910, some 65 Italian names were listed in the city directory for this area. In 1915, it increased to 75. In 1920, it jumped to 117. By 1925, no fewer than 143 Italians and their families resided in "Little Hollywood." Furthermore, this figure does not include Italians who changed their names to "sound more American."

As time passed the Italians in the city became economically secure and many began to buy their own homes. This was extremely important to them for most Italians from southern Italy had not owned their own farms. According to the property taxes of 1915, no fewer than 23 Italians owned property in "Little Hollywood." By 1925, over 130 of the 143 Italian households were owned by their residents.

The Catholic Church was an important institution for the Italian population. During their early years in Williamsport the people of "Little Hollywood" attended mass at the Church of Annunciation on the corner of West Fourth Street and Walnut Street. As the Italian population grew, it became evident that a new church would have to be built to attend to the religious needs of the Italians in the city. So, in 1907, the Reverend Father Domenico Landro, who was responsible for the building of seven Italian churches in the Scranton Diocese, came to Williamsport to assist the Italians to establish a church in "Little Hollywood."

Father Landro met those concerned with the project at the house of Peter Cillo. A committee was formed with Peter Nardi serving as chairman. After carefully studying the matter the committee decided to hold a ten day fair at Memorial Park.

The fair was a striking success. On the tenth day alone, an estimated 5,000 people attended. (There were about 30,000 people living in the city at the time.) Gifts donated by friends and merchants of Williamsport were auctioned off or given away as contest prizes. The event closed with a fireworks display. When all expenses were paid, a total of \$2,500 was realized.

With this money to draw on, the committee purchased two homes on Market Street. The large brick house underwent remodeling to be converted into a church. The smaller house was intended for Father Landro as a parish house. The church was finally completed and the first services were held in 1908.

As the number of parishioners increased it became evident that a larger church was needed. Thus, a new building was built in 1932. The first mass was held in the new church on December 24, 1932, in celebration of the birth of Christ.

\*The name "Little Hollywood" originated from a description of a few of the Italian boys who were so handsome that it reminded many people of movie stars.

In addition to economic hardships, the Italians in America faced another problem, bigotry. The Italians, like other ethnic minorities in this country, faced hostilities of the "Wasp" population. Throughout the country employers purposely avoided hiring Italians. Those that did hire Italians often paid them lower wages than Anglo-Americans. Many residents did everything in their power to prevent this group of immigrants from moving into their neighborhoods and a great deal of political pressure was exerted on Washington to pass restrictions to check the wave of immigration.

It is difficult to quantitatively compare discrimination and prejudice in Williamsport to the nation. However, this author has explored this area and has discovered overwhelming evidence that Italians in Williamsport also endured segregation and discrimination.

In the schools, the Italian-American children faced resentment, ridicule and even violence. One individual informed this author of a time when she went to school and was unable to carry on a conversation with one of the other students because "she's Italian." Another Italian-American, the author interviewed, related that he had broken the nose of another student who called him a "guinea."

Although most Italians the author interviewed agreed that the wages of Italians were equal to non-Italians, there were still incidents of prejudice. George Girio managed to get a job in a steel mill because the employer mistook him for a Swede. On certain occasions, a few workers would advise an Italian employee to ask for a raise by addressing the foreman as "son of a b----." Needless to say, many naive Italians were fired for following this advice.

This prejudice against Italians cropped up in some of the most unusual places, including the city directory. In its description of Williamsport, the 1928 edition of the city directory stated, "The fact that Williamsport's foreign population is only about 6% of the total at once places it in a most unusual class. Since a very great majority of its people are of the real American type, it is easy to understand why Williamsport has achieved such a reputation for hospitality and why those whom we have once welcomed are always anxious to return."

This discrimination and segregation began to fade in time. The once "odd" group of people who spoke a different language and had different manners from other Americans began to appear less "different" as assimilation occurred. More and more Italians began to learn the English language. Their children, exposed to the classroom environment, behaved more like "American children" than "Italian children."

During the post World War II years, the Italian community began to disappear. With assimilation and the decline of discrimination, "Little Hollywood" was no longer necessary. Many second generation Italians were willing to move out of the neighborhood, and even the city, in order to work at higher paying jobs. Williamsporters, by this time, were willing to accept Italian-Americans as neighbors. Hence, the Italian community was no longer the only area where members of this ethnic group could live.

Nevertheless, the 1947 city directory registered 157 Italian-American households in this section of Williamsport. The major event that dealt "Little Hollywood" its death blow was the city's redevelopment program during the early and mid-1960's. With this area of the city marked for redevelopment, the residents one by one sold their property and moved out. In 1960, there were about 150 Italian-American households. In 1965, when redevelopment was under way, only 63 households were occupied by Italian-Americans. A few years later, "Little Hollywood" had disappeared completely.

What generalizations can be made concerning the story of Italian-Americans in Williamsport, Pennsylvania? It is safe to say that the Italians of Williamsport came to this



country for the same reasons other immigrants came, namely for economic security. The city's Italian population established a "Little Italy" just as the Italians of New York and other cities. These immigrants faced discrimination and prejudice as did Italians throughout the country. Gradually though, the Italians in this city became assimilated along the same patterns of Italians in other parts of the country. In short, it can be concluded that the story of Italian-Americans in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, is, roughly speaking, a parallel to the plight and progress of Italian-Americans in the United States of America.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boyd's Williamsport City Directory*, Volume 1905.  
*Boyd's Williamsport City Directory*, Volume 1928.  
*Boyd's Williamsport City Directory*, Volume 1947.  
*Boyd's Williamsport City Directory*, Volume 1960.  
*Boyd's Williamsport City Directory*, Volume 1965.  
 Casale, Michael, Interview, November 8, 1979.  
 Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. United States Printing Office.  
 Fiftieth Anniversary — Mater Dolorosa Church, 1958.  
 Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, United States Printing Office.  
 Girio, George, Interview, October 1, 1979.  
 Lopreato, Joseph, *Italians — Americans*, Random House, New York, 1970.  
 Mano, Mrs. Anthony, Interview, November 4, 1979.  
 Mano, Reverend, Interview, November 4, 1979.  
 Property Taxes, Williamsport, 1925.  
 Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, United States Printing Office.  
 Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, United States Printing Office.



## THE PENNY DOG OF PIOT'S WOODS

by Henry W. Shoemaker



From the window of my little room under the roof I could see the level black line of the tops of the original white pines in Piot's Woods towering above the other trees a mile away. Still further to the north against the evening sky extended the summits of the Alleghenies. There was going to be a Sunday School picnic in an adjoining grove of hardwoods the next day, and like most small boys I was very much excited. Piot's Woods, judged by groups of original pines I have seen since, was a forest extraordinary. It only covered a space of five or six acres, but the trees were of immense size, all of similar height and girth and free of limbs for a hundred feet. Then there was a small flat umbrella-like patch of dark branches which interlaced, for the trees grew very thick shutting out the sun beneath. The

ground was soft and moist, almost swampy. It was a favorite place to hear the "peepers" or Pickerings frogs in the early spring; much skunk cabbage grew there. Here and there in the grove were high stabs evenly sawed off a dozen feet from the ground. Once or twice I saw owls perched on their flat surfaces. There were many species of bats there, too. I could not understand how they were felled without "notching." But, at length, I was enlightened by old "John Q.," a favorite namesake of my great-grandfather's. A local character, woodsman, hunter, trapper, veterinarian, ballad singer and witch doctor, John Q. told me that those trees, when they blew out a root, were sawed off above the "dozey" or decaying parts, and the earth being so soft the stumps flew back into place once the weight of the bole was removed.

The day of the picnic dawned bright and clear. It was a day reminiscent of the fall, as already a few leaves were crimsoning on the giant original growth maples under which the picnic was to be held, while the coloring garlands of the woodbine lent to the effect. Planks were laid from stump to stump, for this hardwood grove had been lately thinned of its gum trees. All kinds of cakes and pies and cookies were displayed. Placed about on the grass were several wash tubs of lemonade and tin cups within handy reach. The preacher, a tall, slim, black-bearded figure in a long black coat circulated among the older folks and children to see that all were having a good time. There were games before lunch, including "Old Dan Tucker." After the feast, games were attempted again, even baseball, but many laid down on the grass under the trees or strolled about the grove, right up to the dark gloomy edges of Piot's Woods.

At that time I was very much interested in an unusual looking little dark-haired girl named Zora Learmont. Her name was an anagram of Montreal, where it was said her father had been born. He was a French Canadian river driver who came to the West



Branch Valley about 15 years before and married into an ancient Huguenot family. Both had been lost in crossing the river in a pole boat near the Mouth of Ferney during a flood. The child had, in a sense, been adopted by a family near where I lived. She retained her own name. After sitting with her for a while on a bench between two huge white oaks and making every effort in my shy backward way to entertain her, she said that she thought she would go for a walk in Piot's Woods. "There's such a nice little black dog there that plays with all the children," she told me. I asked her if I might go with her, to which she replied, that the dog never appeared unless one went alone. I reminded her that at the present time her friend Zadora Hauntal was lying at "death's door" from what the mountain people called a "diphtheria of the throat" or "a bealed throat" which is said to be the result of walking in the black mud after the strange dog of Piot's Woods. And, had not her other little friend Supera Paragould been in a similar dreadful condition, and George Cowie's little Elmira? I also reminded her that the grove used to be the hiding place and playground of Harry Luks, the local half-wit, who had died the year before, adding with the strange wisdom of an eight-year-old boy, that he had been known to frighten little girls. Harry Luks had been an odd-looking character. He was very sallow, very stoop shouldered and thin. His long hair was jet black and a mustache of scraggy mouse hair was sprouting on his upper lip. There was always much white saliva at the corners of his purple-lipped mouth and when he showed his teeth they were long and pointed and very white. Like a preacher, he always dressed in black. He had many strange mathematical gifts, one of which was that he could tell the numbers on every car of an approaching freight-train, even if there were 90 in a row, which no one understood. That his father was an engine driver was the only explanation the boys could give. Though 19 when he died, he had always associated with much younger boys. I can see him yet emerging, bat-like, from the dark recesses of Piot's Woods, furtively glancing from one side

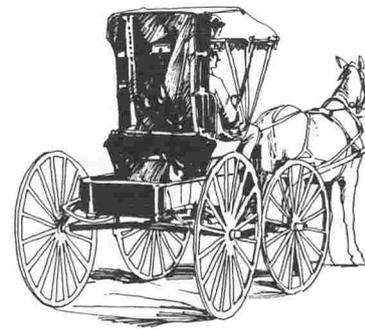


to another, followed by his crowd of little admirers whom he seemed to attract and amuse. People whispered that he sometimes alarmed little girls by his queer behavior. Brain fever carried him off it was claimed. It was after his death that the wonderful little black dog began to be in evidence under the giant pines of Piot's Woods.

Zadora Hauntal, before she took to her bed with her terrible throat, described the animal as the most beautiful "penny dog" she had ever seen. Human-like in intelligence, its jet black hair was as soft and shiny as silk. It was so friendly and affectionate it would even lick your face and neck with its

long red tongue. All of the children wanted to see it. But, a visit to that damp and gloomy swale was generally followed by a bad throat in which infection broke through the flesh like an angry wound seething with corruption. Parents warned their children that they would face the most dire of penalties if they went near that grove, and many were the unmerciful "britchings" administered to unheeding youngsters. I recited all of this to the lovely little Zadora, but I could see nothing but impatience registered in her strange aquamarine colored eyes, eyes full of feeling and sadness, seemingly too large for her pale narrow face. So, at last she got up and walked away in the direction of the fringe of wild cherry brush which screened the entrance to Piot's Woods.

As I sat disconsolately on the bench between the two giant primeval oaks I was approached by Billy Tillman, a playmate of mine. "So you got the 'go-by' from Zora," he said with a malicious grin. He had apparently been watching my futile efforts to keep Zora with me. I did not know what to say, and I began to look up the road for the arrival of the phaeton to drive me home when I was joined by an equally pretty dark child, Lovara Peterman. Tillman, seeing that I was to have some attention after all, ran off to join the other boys in a last game of ball. I asked Lovara if she had ever met



with the black penny dog in Piot's Woods, to which she replied that she was anxious to see it, but her folks had promised to spread red pepper on her tongue, put a tin ear on her, give her the "birch oil," and to lock her up in the smoke-house and to send the "black thing" after her if she came home with a sore throat. Her desire was considerably under control. Lovara sat beside me on the bench until the phaeton came in sight. I asked her to ride out the road with me. I dropped her at her front gate after she promised to come and play with me on the first rainy day.

When I reached the house old John Q. was sitting on the side porch whittling and telling his favorite panther story. I gladly joined his group of listeners as he was, by all odds, the most interesting old man with children I had ever met. He could talk to them for hours on subjects which interested them. He was always kind, patient and understanding. It was about suppertime when the hired man from where Zora Learmont lived came in the gate. I could hear his heavy boots on the boardwalk. He had come to inquire if Zora was with me. Zora had not come home and it had been reported that a little girl was seen driving up the road in the phaeton. I spoke up to tell him that my companion had been Lovara Peterman. To the best of my knowledge, I told him, Zora had left me no later than three o'clock to go for a stroll in Piot's Woods where such a wonderful stray "feist" kept itself. Since it was late in the month of August, and the days were getting shorter, it was now almost six o'clock. John Q., in his role of the witch doctor, was immediately aroused and changed from panthers to hechsers. "I never liked to hear about that whiffet from the start," he said, stroking his long grizzled beard, "especially since it began to harbor in those woods right after Harry Luks who spent so much time there made a die of it." He immediately volunteered to head a search party to Piot's Woods.



I wanted to join the search, but I was not allowed to go. Billy Tillman went, as did his younger brother, the hired man from Zora's home, and the hired man from where I lived, as he had just brought in the milk. I was informed afterwards that by the time the party had reached the entrance to the grove it numbered considerably more than a dozen armed with knives, pitchforks, clubs and a shotgun or two. I went up to my room and leaning over the wide window ledge watched the silent black line of the even tops of the giant white pines of Piot's Woods where so much was likely happening at the moment. My room was a ghostly little room at twilight. The thought of it brings to mind the poem by Henry Harbaugh where he tells of the death-watch beetle.

"It is the death watch's 'click, click, click'  
I would that worm were still."

Sometimes in the dead of night in my room, lit only by fireflies in a flytrap, I could hear this sinister insect calling to its mate in the little wall closet or in the cubbyhole. The 6:23 P.M. train was just whistling for the station when I was called downstairs for supper.

The next morning dawned bright and cool, and as usual I was downstairs early. I had just finished breakfast when old John Q. appeared, a long rifle over his shoulder,



to ask me to come with him for a walk to the High Rocks to see where Simeon Snyder had thrown an Indian chief over the cliff in pioneer days. My family had once hurt the old man's feelings when they said they were glad to let me go for walks with him provided he would leave his gun behind. John Q. had won fame in his younger days by barking squirrels in the giant hardwoods adjacent to Piot's Woods. He once killed three deer with one shot! After a few tears from his bloodshot old eyes, the aged man was allowed to take me. He continued to carry his rifle to the last.

After we had gotten beyond the barn and on the mountain road I asked him if they had found Zora Learmont. This is what he told me. Billy Tillman, old Tom Simcox and all the others in the relief party had about given up hope of finding the child alive and concluded that she had fallen into the Gum Stump Run which flows across the extreme eastern border of Piot's Woods when John Q. suddenly came upon her lying in a sort of hollow made by a white oak blown out of root. She was on her back asleep or unconscious. The penny dog with its silky black hair was pawing all over her, licking her face and neck. Old John Q. let out one of his characteristic oaths and grabbed the uncanny whiffet by the scruff of its neck. "Don't shoot at it," he called out as he held it dangling before him. As he pulled the dog away from the



child the two front teeth of its upper jaw seemed to be imbedded in Zora's throat, leaving considerable blood, "Judas Priest, consarned Maroney," exclaimed old John Q. "I know what you are now. I always suspected it, but thought such things were out of date."

At the mention of the word "Maroney" everyone was enlightened. It was now a case of fixing the vampire dog for good. Old John Q., was, among his other accomplishments, a "fetterhoof" or wandering veterinary and always carried a huge case knife, locally referred to as a "toad-sticker." He never sterilized it, yet nothing he operated on died or developed infection. Even the scores of hunting dogs whose ears he trimmed, a custom dating back to the old days when wolves always made a grab for a hound's ears, never suffered any harm when old John Q. fixed them up! Well, he laid the struggling, snarling little brute on the log which projected from the windfall and proceeded to amputate its head with his knife, it was a slow, gruesome and painful process. He said he never saw such blood as gushed out as he severed the head, or heard such cries, almost human cries, for mercy as the "feist" gave out! Once the head was off he asked for an iron-wood cane, "Kinne-ma-hah" the mountain boys called it. After sharpening the end, he drove it through the beast's heart impaling it in the bottom of the hole made by the uprooted tree. Then he told all hands to turn in and fill up the hole. When this was done he cut off the cane level with the ground so that no one would see it. It was getting dark, but by the light of blue tipped matches he carefully examined the dog's skull. The two upper front teeth were close together and sharp as needles, much like the visage of a bat. Squeezing it dry of blood, he dropped the head in the pocket of his hunting coat saying, "I'll mail it tomorrow morning to Doc Schneider and we'll see how he'll classify this varmint." But, Dr. Schneider never replied and would change the subject when anyone asked him if he had gotten the head of the penny dog of Piot's Woods.

During all of these sanguinary doings poor little Zora was not being neglected. Shivering with an acute chill, she was tenderly carried out of the woods by the hired man. Once at home she became conscious, but was evidently suffering from a terrible cold in the throat. The hired man was put on horseback and sent to the county town for Dr. Armstrong, who diagnosed the trouble as a "diphtheritic sore throat brought on by dampness and exposure" which had broken through the flesh in an angry ulcer. The child lingered between life and death for a period of six weeks, but finally got well. After that she was sent to some of her mother's relatives up the river and I never

saw her again. I understand that she is still living somewhere about Cherry Tree.

The story, with many and more terrible variations, got about the township in the next 24 hours "like wildfire" and there was no further desire to visit Piot's Woods. The black penny dog with the bat's mouth had been effectively done away with. It was said to be another feather in old John Q.'s cap, adding to his knowledge of the "black book" on witchcraft.

About 1895 Piot's Woods went the way of the remaining groves of original timber in that locality. Strangely enough, old John Q. and his six sons were the ones who destroyed it, making a fleet of rafts which they sold to a timber buyer at the river bank. I felt heartbroken when one bright June evening I arrived off the eight o'clock train just after a shower and found those towering pines with all of their beauty and wealth of mystery and romance were gone forever.

The consensus of opinion was that there would be less sickness since the sun now was able to dry up the "low ground" where the pines had cast their dismal shadows and the mysterious penny dog would be more quickly forgotten. But though the trees had stood some five or six years after John Q. had decapitated the weird little canine, there had not been a single case of "diphtheria of the throat" recorded among the little girls of the neighborhood.



WHITE PINE

# MOFF & ASSOCIATES

Tax Deferred Investments

Financial Planning  
IRA's-401-K  
Pensions/Profit Sharing Plans

Tax Free Investments

**326-2533**

460 Market Street, Suite 225

Williamsport, PA 17701

## EASTERN WOOD PRODUCTS COMPANY



*MANUFACTURERS and WHOLESALERS*

*of fine*

*Pennsylvania Hardwoods*

*Since 1939*

Kiln Dried Hardwoods and  
Moldings • Hardwood Flooring • Paneling

P.O. BOX 1056, 2020 MILL LANE  
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17703-1056  
717-326-1946

*Compliments of*  
LAW OFFICES

**FISHER, RICE,  
BARLETT, ELION  
& WAYNE, P.C.**

125 EAST THIRD STREET  
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701  
(717) 326-2443

DEAN R. FISHER  
CARL E. BARLETT  
ROBERT B. ELION  
ROBERT B. WAYNE  
ANTHONY J. GRIECO II  
WILLIAM P. CARLUCCI  
DAVID C. SHIPMAN

*Compliments of*



544 E. Third Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701

**323-9437**

*We're your kind of people*



329 Pine Street • Loyal Plaza Shopping Center • 1901 Lycoming Creek Road  
Third & Arch Streets • Halls Station • Center City Drive-In • 950 Broad Street, Montoursville  
Member FDIC and an Equal Opportunity Lender  
Tel. 717/326-2431 • 546-7171

**Gahr & Sholder**  
LAW OFFICES

270 W. Third Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701

(717) 323-9177

*Compliments of . . .*

Mr. & Mrs.  
Marshall D. Welch, Jr.

---

*We would like to thank the following Contributors . . .*

Mr. & Mrs. David Shipman

Roesgen, Larrabee & Engelman  
Attorneys At Law

---

KEYSTONE  
*Furniture Galleries*

---

Open Monday through Friday 9 to 9, Saturday 9 to 5, Sunday 1 to 5  
Intersection of Routes 220 and I-180 at Halls Station next to the Lycoming Mall  
Muncy, Pennsylvania 17756

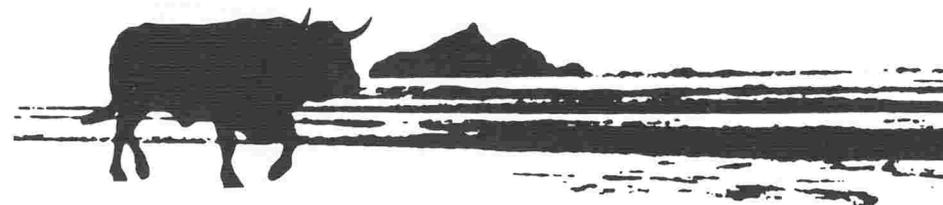
717-326-1589 • 717-546-5958

*Convenient Terms / MasterCard / VISA / Discover*

---

---

# In Lycoming County Merrill Lynch is building on a tradition of trust.



Merrill Lynch has lots of ways to help people in our county make more money, and keep more of what they make. And we think we do it better than anyone else.

With stocks, of course. And bonds. Investment counseling. Retirement security programs. Mutual funds. And much more.

So why don't you call or stop by for a visit and get acquainted. Let today be the day when you learn a new way to make money.

The William L. Schreyer Building  
One West Third Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
717-327-6600 or 1-800-332-8533  
John Bradburn, Resident Vice President

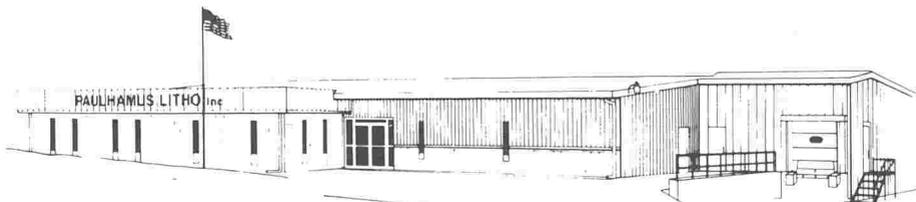


**Merrill Lynch**

A tradition of trust.

© Copyright 1988 Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc. Member SIPC.

---



# Paulhamus Litho, Inc.

from business cards to full color,  
brochures to wedding announcements

**Old Montoursville Road  
R.D. 3, Montoursville, PA 17754  
Phone: (717) 368-8176**

"unbeatable quality and service"

**Auctioneers**



**Appraisers**

R.D. #3, BOX 118  
COGAN STATION, PA 17728  
(717) 494-0170

**BOB,  
CHUCK,  
& RICH  
ROAN  
INC.**

ON ROUTE U.S. 15  
NORTH OF WILLIAMSPORT

---

**Complete Auction Services**

---

ESTATES • FARMS • BUSINESS • LIQUIDATIONS

REAL ESTATE • ANTIQUES • HOUSEHOLDS • CONSIGNMENTS

ON-SITE & GALLERY SALES



# ANCHOR

**Lincoln • Mercury • Nissan**  
633 W. Third Street Williamsport, PA Phone 326-5127



*Compliments  
of  
A Friend*



**C. A. REED  
FACTORY OUTLET  
STORE**

416 West Third Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(717) 323-2796

*Complete Line of Paper Napkins,  
Paper Plates, Paper Table Covers,  
Paper Cups, and Crepe Paper*

**STORE HOURS**

Monday - Saturday 9:00 - 5:00  
Except Friday 9:00 - 7:00

***McCormick,  
Reeder,  
Nichols,  
Sarno,  
Bahl,  
& Knecht  
Attorneys at Law***

835 W. 4th St. • Williamsport, PA

Paul W. Reeder	William E. Nichols
David R. Bahl	William L. Knecht
John E. Person III	J. David Smith
Robert A. Eckenrode	Stephen John Moff
Cynthia E. Ranck	

*Compliments of*

**Johnson  
Chiropractic  
Center**

818 Market Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701

*Gregory A. Johnson, D.C.*



**John L. Bruch, Jr.**

209 MASONIC BUILDING  
MUNCY, PENNSYLVANIA  
BUS. 546-7000 • RES. 546-8099



915 West Fourth Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701