

THE  
JOURNAL  
OF THE  
LYCOMING COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
& MUSEUM

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VOLUME XXXIII  
NUMBER ONE

SUMMER  
1991

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*Park Hotel, c. 1885. Lycoming County Historical Society Archives*

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LYCOMING COUNTY  
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Stephanie R. Zebrowski, *Editor*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was an ordinary day that took an extraordinary turn. I was working in my office in the History Department at Lycoming College when a student popped through the open door and dropped a box on my desk. Startling me, I remember him saying something to the effect, "My aunt said I was to give this to you and you would know what to do with it."

The box was full of old books that had been passed from generation to generation. There before me were the remains of the library of the founder of Williamsport, Michael Ross. I immediately called Andy Grugan (a past director of the Museum) and arranged for the materials to be safely deposited with the Lycoming County Historical Society & Museum.

I have, on occasion, reflected on this event and now share some of my musings with you. Books were, and still are, considered by many people to be special treasures. When someone dies and loved ones sort through their belongings, they often save the books, at least the more personal ones. People often write some of their most precious memories in books; Michael Ross used the fly-leaf of one to record that he named Williamsport for his son. Bibles, in particular, often survive and I have several from various ancestors with some of their notations in them. Many of you have similar old items.

Most families have other keepsakes passed down from former generations. The Ross family was a little exceptional in that Michael was famous as the founder of a town. Most people do not have famous ancestors, but keep such possessions because they are the ties to their past. I suspect that most of us have at least one box of personal effects (books, jewelry, clothing, photographs, personal papers, etc.) that have been carefully preserved. These reminders of the past may be precious to us, but at some point their condition becomes endangered. They begin to decay or fall apart or someone inherits them who has no interest in keeping them. That is sad, but preventable.

I once studied a famous revival that took place in New Lebanon, New York in 1827. After deciding to visit the site, I found a direct descendant of the revivalist still living in the area. Alas, two years previous to my visit, she had decided to burn all the old 'junk' in her attic, 150 years of books and papers suddenly destroyed. Fortunately, the descendant of Michael Ross chose a better way.

Our Museum has a fine collection of artifacts and archives, but is far from complete. We are always interested in receiving items that help to reveal our region's history. If you have inherited something, why not consider giving it to the Museum so that it can be shared with others to help make a more complete story about Lycoming County residents. Just as Michael Ross's notation answered the question how Williamsport got its name, so may your personal keepsakes provide answers. The items may still be precious to you, but they may need special care you cannot provide. The Museum is equipped to store and preserve artifacts and documents so that future generations can enjoy your story.

John Piper  
*President*

## EDITOR'S LETTER

The *Journal* has a new look. Our new Executive Director, Sara-Ann Briggs, has brought many new ideas for change with her, the *Journal* format and new type of paper, which will bring us better photographic images, included.

This issue of the *Journal* brings you Jim Bressler's "Man and the River," first presented at April's Annual Meeting. Our region is dominated by the Susquehanna River. The early phases of economic development depended upon the many large feeder streams and the river to sustain the logging industry. The natural progression led to lumber use in area industry. The furniture manufacturers took advantage of the fact that they could easily obtain the necessary raw materials right in front of their factory doors, thus bringing years of prosperity and recognition to Lycoming County.

Naturally, the logging of great areas of our wooded mountains had a down side. Some species of trees have not fully reclaimed their former ranges, while others like the American chestnut have been ravaged by disease when replacements from another part of the world were brought here. But, like so many other aspects of our environment, the chestnut has not given up. There are many of us who have seen our own American chestnut trees flower each year with hope, only to wither again. The point is, though, that next spring they will grow back.

Also included is a story by Henry W. Shoemaker. Once again, this is a previously unpublished work which I have edited for your enjoyment. Since this story involves a famous Williamsport landmark, I have included its history.

If Williamsport has one good storyteller, it has to be Bill Mosteller. And, he has come up with a good one involving a famous relative and a famous villian. Most of you should recognize both, either from personal recollection or high school history class.

I read a letter the other day passed on to me by one of the many helpful folks who provided information for this issue. The author was an elderly woman reflecting on her life. She wrote that, "living is a sort of 'sorting' procedure"; a weeding out. And, so too, is history a sorting procedure or a weeding out, a separation of fact from folklore and myth. I hope you enjoy the effort.

Stephanie R. Zebrowski  
*Editor*

# CONTENTS

President's Message .....	v
Editor's Letter .....	vi
Man and the River, by James P. Bressler .....	1
A History of the Furniture Manufacturers of the Lycoming County Region by Stephanie R. Zebrowski .....	9
Portrait of an Enterprising Man: Frederick Mankey by Stephanie R. Zebrowski .....	17
The Miracle of 1879 by William Landis Mosteller .....	18
The Meteoric Shower of 1833 by J.C. McCloskey .....	22
Remembering the Chestnut by Mike Simmons .....	23
The Hotel on West Fourth Street: A History by Stephanie R. Zebrowski .....	28
The Big House Back of the Park Hotel by Henry W. Shoemaker .....	31

# MAN AND THE RIVER

by James P. Bressler

©James P. Bressler

This is the story of a river, one that is very much a part of our own lives. We can approach our story in one of several ways, either by following its geographical course or by tracing its history through time. Perhaps, it will be a bit of both, but at any rate my purpose is to chronicle man's adaptation to the river and to see how that relates to our own history in Lycoming County.

The Susquehanna, one of nature's masterpieces is a stream as lovely as its name. It is about 444 miles long altogether, and is considered to be the longest non-navigable river in the United States. From its 28,000 square mile drainage it pours 19 million gallons of water into the Chesapeake Bay every minute. How old is the Susquehanna? According to Dr. William Shirk, Professor of Geology at Shippensburg State University, the Susquehanna was already in place by the time of the Permian Age, well over 200 million years ago. The mountains of the Allegheny Ridge were formed when the floating African Continent bumped into the then American Continent and buckled the Tectonic plates on which they rest. This was a slow process which the Susquehanna took in stride. As the mountains rose in response to that collision the river kept wearing down the land in its path. In fact, this process of erosion is still occurring.

We simply cannot comprehend the awesome time scale of the Susquehanna. A million years is but a moment in its existence. When it forged its present course in the landscape, reptiles were the highest order of life on earth. Yet to come were the ages of dinosaurs and flying creatures during Triassic and Jurassic times, and much later the age of mammals, and finally the age of man.

Our mountains, according to Dr. Shirk, had risen to at least twice their present height. All the while the relentless force of the water wore away the hardest rock of the Blue Ridge, among others, leaving only stumps of hard sandstone in the water.

The ages rolled on. Through successive ice ages, caused by mysterious forces not yet fully understood, the river stayed its course, and was partially locked into an ice grip upriver which was later swollen by melting ice waters whereby whole flood plains were created, such as the ones on which Williamsport and Montoursville rest. Sometime during this period of cold temperatures, an ice lobe formed near Muncy, damming up the river into a huge lake that extended as far west as Howard. So much of the earth's water was locked up in an ice cap that the sea coast was several hundred feet lower than it is at present and our shoreline extended far out into the Atlantic. At one time, eons ago, the river flowed through what is now the Route 15 South gap near the lookout, but later cut a path around the Bald Eagle Mountain at Muncy.

As the forests slowly advanced in the wake of the retreating ice, the first human, or more likely a band of them, entered the region. We can be reasonably sure that they made use of the river gradient to enter new hunting grounds on its shore or along tributary streams. These first humans, ten to twelve thousand years ago, came into a treeless, tundra-like land where large game animals such as the mastodon and caribou had already found the river highway a convenient migration route during seasonal treks to then available food resources. And, so

it was that Paleo man need merely to follow the routes the river had already carved out to find the first trails that have, in fact, persisted to the present, first as Indian trails and later as railroads and highways. These trails also led man to essential food resources in the form of the large game animals he hunted. The Lycoming Creek corridor is a typical example.

But, nowhere, up to now at least, is man's adaptation to the river more plainly evident than on that remarkable piece of real estate we know as Canfield Island. It is an archaeological site of great value, for here in successive layers of village sites early man left his record in bone, stone, charcoal, and ceramics revealing a story of human development. Canfield speaks of how prehistoric man lived in harmony with his surroundings and the river.

The earliest evidence of human presence on Canfield Island is, of course, the most deeply buried. At depths of 110 to 120 inches we found a campfire littered with butternut hulls. The deep river bottom soils of Canfield were ideally suited for the growth of nut crops. Although we did not find stone tools in this fireplace, and so cannot be sure as to what specific culture these folks belonged, we do know that they lived here around 7,000 years ago, as told by the radiocarbon date for charcoal from the fireplace. There may well be deeper levels than this, but we were not equipped to explore them in safety.

The next higher cultural level (Level 10) also yielded butternut hulls and a few non-diagnostic stone tools of the type commonly used by the ancients for preparing meal from various seeds. This level dated to 4500 B.C.

At a depth of 80 inches there appeared Level 9. If, as we believe, this level represents the so-called Otter Creek cultures, recognized by their distinctive spearpoints, then we would see here the earliest of the Laurentian visits to the Susquehanna basin. These Middle Archaic people seem to have had their roots in the north, but as most Archaic folks were wont to do, they practiced a transhumance. That is, they moved constantly to take advantage of seasonal food sources in different areas.

By Level 8, dated here to 3150 B.C., the Laurentian tribes had become thoroughly adapted to the Susquehanna as a homeland, where hunting, fishing, and gathering were the total means of survival. Their tools became more varied and were expertly chipped from local sources of chert or flint. We think they lived in small bark or thatch covered huts along the river and along major streams. The hills to the north of Williamsport were favorite hunting grounds and the river or stream estuaries provided fishing loci. Mussels were gathered in all seasons of the year in river riffles.

Level 7 was long a puzzle, but eventually produced enough tools and firepits to allow tentative identification as Savannah River. These people had spread out all along the Atlantic coastal rivers northward from Georgia. The Susquehanna, with its many stream estuaries, provided ideal conditions to trap and harvest fish, beginning with the annual spring shad run. Fishing was done in several ways, including the use of gill nets woven from the common Indian hemp that grows profusely along our river shores. Their spearpoints were large, stemmed affairs pointing to the need for substantial weapons for the large game they hunted. They are carbon dated at this level at 1900 B.C.

Level 6 represents the most intensive use of river resources by any known group of Indians at Canfield. Here they strung their nets in the Bull Run estuary,

and here they built huge roasting fires on beds of cobbles. They raked the coals to one side, while fish and other game roasted on the hot cobbles.

They, too, left behind numerous nut hulls, and had used stone tools for grinding meal from vegetable foods; they left their dead on the banks of the river, as well. One burial, that of a male, was cremation where considerable bone survived. With the body were a number of 'killed'\* spearpoints, and the grave was sprinkled with a red pigment, no doubt their own way of showing reverence for the dead. As we do with all burials where bone survives, this burial was later reinterred. We also found several apparent female burials, since with the grave offerings were several household tools such as pestle, stone knife, and hammers. One grave produced several postmolds underneath the cavity, indicating the body was tied to posts, whether dead or alive we do not know. These burials were placed there near the time of Abraham of the Bible, from 1600 to 1800 B.C. We named this hitherto unrecognized phase of Late Archaic times as the Canfield Cultures, for obvious reasons.

And, so the ages of primitive societies along our river rolled on. The next prominent phase, or Level 4, was the Broadpoint Complex or Terminal Archaic Period. These people had become completely river oriented, their campsites always being on major stream banks. They are also known as rhyolite and soapstone using cultures. The rhyolite was acquired from South Mountain near Gettysburg, while soapstone was laboriously quarried and transported from lower Lancaster County, most likely in dugout boats. The first known use of ceramic pottery occurred at this time, also. This major technological advance for them had its roots in the preceding Canfield times and marked the close of the Archaic Epoch.

For centuries thereafter, few Indians camped on the lower tip of the island. But, around 700 to 800 B.C., an Early Woodland group showed up as Level 3. Their mode of food procurement appears to have been similar to that of preceding cultures, but their purpose in visiting Canfield may also have been for gathering raw materials for chert knapping, since around their campfires are piles of chipping detritus. Their weapons were still hunting spears propelled by the spearthrower. These folks are called Meadowood and were coeval with the mound building Adena of Ohio. Strangely, few of their spearpoints found here were made of local chert, as the piles of chipping flakes would indicate. Rather, they left points of rhyolite, which they brought with them.

For a thousand years after Meadowood, few visitors appeared on lower Canfield Island. The Middle Woodland Period, so prominent as Hopewell in Ohio, is not well represented here. But, a new round of activity was about to break, for the Clemsons Island cultures that show up as Level 2, usher in the Late Woodland Period and its many innovations. They made use of yet another river-derived resource, its deep alluvial soil. Farming or gardening stabilized the food production problem of Archaic times, and required a more sedentary way of life, for growing crops must constantly be guarded from birds and animals. Their ceramic industry became highly developed and may have found use in grain storage as much as in cooking. They made triangular arrowheads, exclusively, showing that the bow and arrow had by now completely replaced the spearthrower. These people often buried their dead in mounds, several of which were located in the area.

\*This term refers to the practice of breaking the points to signify death.

The Clemsons Island people were succeeded in our valley by the Shenks Ferry people, but they left little evidence on the lower island, living, instead, on the upper end and at Bull Run, among other sites. I mention them in passing since we are, even now, working on further understanding of the Shenks Ferry cultures.

With the finding of Level 1, once thought to be Susquehannock, but now considered to be related to the McFate or Monongahela people of Western Pennsylvania, we come to the close of the truly stone-age life on the Susquehanna. From Chesapeake Bay to Cooperstown, New York on the East Branch, to Indiana County on the West Branch, man used the river for thousands of years, living in harmony with it as part of nature. But, the world was about to be turned on end for those native cultures with the coming of the Europeans. From here on, the old ways could not compete with the new, for aboriginal lifeways were never measured in terms of technological progress. They did not modify the river to their advantage, but rather lived by the terms of the river as the seasons provided. The surviving evidence of their presence is but a few stone tools or pots, and at times the bones of their dead. However, they left for us a legacy that will last as long as civilization lasts. Perhaps it can be best summed up by quoting the words of Elsie Singmaster, a great student of the Susquehanna who wrote this couplet:

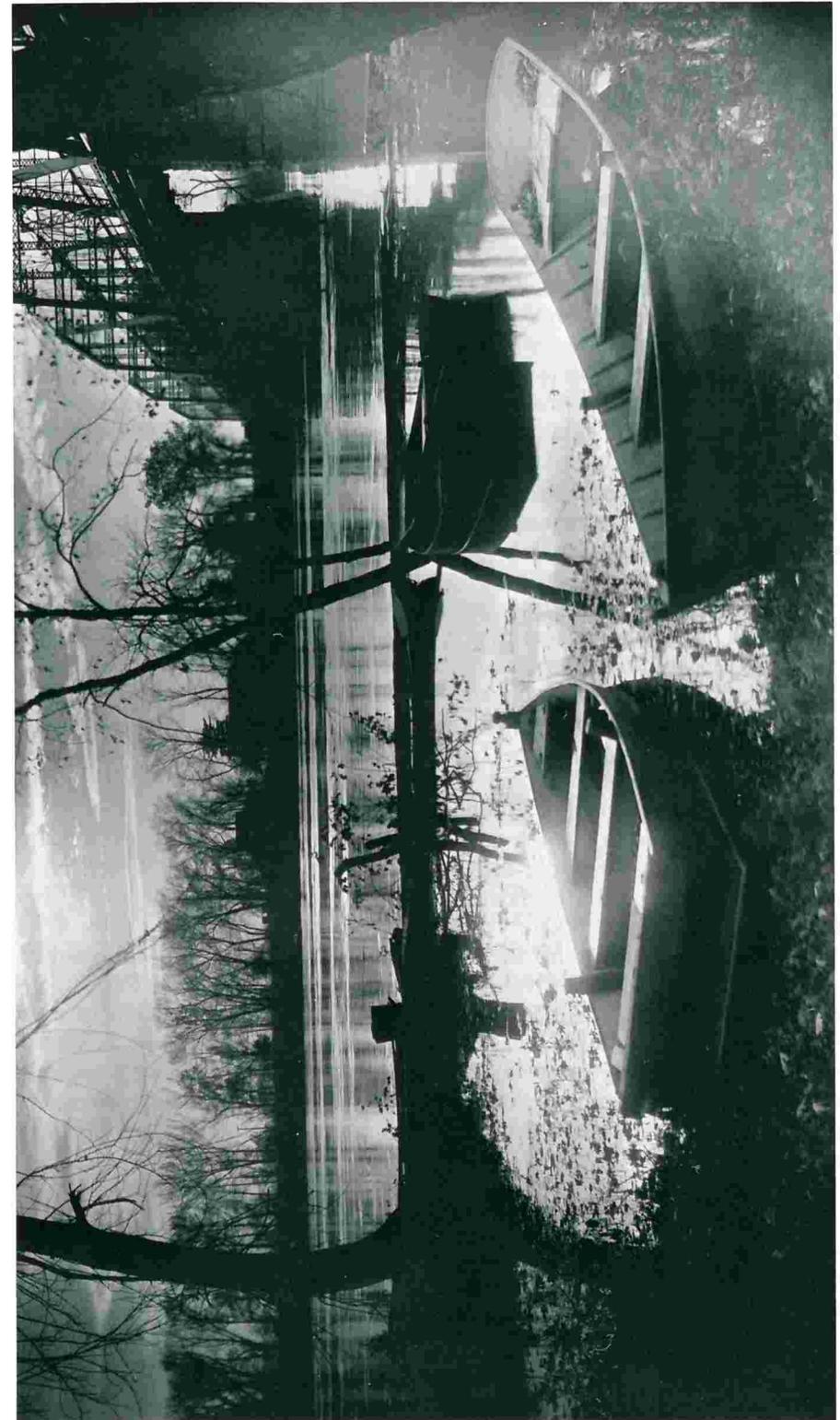
Ye say that all have passed away, the noble and the brave;  
That their light canoes have vanished from the crystal wave,  
That mid the forest where they roamed there rings no hunter's shout  
But their name is on your waters, you need not wash it out.

Surely their name is on our waters: Lackawanna, Nescopeck, Catawissa, Mahantongo, Sinnemahoning, Queneshackeny, Wyalusing, Cowenesque, Lycoming, Conodoguinet, Conestoga, Pequa, Juniata, and above all, Susquehanna.

Who were the first Europeans to visit the Susquehanna? Whether it was the French emissary Brulé in 1615, or the three Dutch traders who wandered into Susquehannock territory to be captured and released, we cannot be sure. Of far greater importance was the establishment of an English trading post on the Chesapeake in the early 1600s, shortly after John Smith's explorations there. As a result, the Susquehannocks became a powerful force because they controlled the supply of beaver pelts from the entire Susquehanna basin. In turn, they acquired guns and other trade goods to give them a military edge against their enemies, the Iroquois. By 1648, the fur supply had been pretty well exhausted, whereupon they established trade routes to their allies, the Hurons, by way of the West Branch. The Hurons had an inexhaustible supply of pelts in Canada.

The intrigue of the Iroquois in dealing with the Lake tribes in league with the Susquehannock is well known. They were able to overthrow not only the Hurons\*, but also to interdict the neutral nations on the Susquehannock trade route. By 1675, they took over Susquehannock towns on the lower Susquehanna and were able to assume control of the fur trade with its center at Albany. The Iroquois success was in part due to the ambivalence of the British who had dropped their earlier allegiance to the Susquehannock in favor of the Iroquois. This switch in favor of the Five Nations became the basis for Iroquoian loyalty to the British during the American Revolution and the ensuing bloodshed on our frontiers.

\*By 1649, the Huron nation had been destroyed by the Iroquois.



*Summertime on the Susquehanna River, near Newberry, c. 1900. D. Vincent Smith Collection, Lycoming County Historical Society Archives.*

With the Susquehannocks gone by 1675, there existed a dangerous vacuum in the Susquehanna Valley. This was temporarily resolved when the Iroquois allowed the Delaware or Lenape nation, whom the Iroquois claimed to have conquered, to inhabit the area. But, by now the Delaware were no longer a stone age people.

The arrival of William Penn in 1682, set in motion a series of expansionary moves and pressures to purchase more and more land from the Indians to accommodate the growing tide of immigration from Europe. In general, the Susquehanna was the western boundary, but adventurous settlers, mostly Scotch-Irish, ventured beyond agreed-to boundaries and soon came in conflict with the native Indians.

By now, another major struggle was coming into focus. The interests of the French who had settled largely on the St. Lawrence River and those of the British with footholds on the coasts of New England and Virginia, came into conflict on the Ohio River. I cannot go into details of the French and Indian War that followed, but, there were two key points of concern in Pennsylvania. When the French built Fort Dusquesne on the forks of the Ohio, the colony countered by erecting Fort Augusta at Sunbury. For, in each case, the forks in the river were considered to be control points for the region. However, Fort Augusta alone could not prevent the French and her allies from raiding the settlements well beyond the Blue Mountains. Though Fort Augusta was never attacked because it was so strong, it served its purpose well, even during the Revolution.

The building of this fort was an extraordinary achievement since all the materials, except wood, had to be polled up river in boats from Harrisburg and Fort Halifax. The war ended with the French withdrawal from the Ohio Valley. But as in most wars, one conflict sows the seeds for the next, Pontiac's War in 1763.

The taxes imposed by the British government to help pay for the war led to discontent in the Colonies, and in 1775 was fired the shot heard round the world. During the Revolution, the Susquehanna became a frontier. Fort Augusta stood between Washington's base of supply in Pennsylvania and the British and their Indian allies to the North. During the several severe Indian raids on this frontier, such as the Wyoming Massacre and the ensuing evacuation of the West Branch Valley known as 'The Big Runaway' the river again became a highway, this time as an escape route to safety at Fort Augusta.

By 1779, it was decided that the Susquehanna Frontier must be safeguarded at all cost. General John Sullivan was ordered to march from Easton with an army to destroy the Seneca country base from which all the raids on the frontier began. At Tioga Point, Sullivan was joined by the forces of General James Clinton with 1500 men. The march into enemy territory had begun; a short, crisp battle at Newtown below Elmira put the best Seneca warriors to flight and before long the entire country-side was laid waste and the Seneca's power to wage war diminished.

A large force of British and Indians had invaded the West Branch just prior to Sullivan's march with the purpose of capturing the supplies for that expedition that were being gathered at Sunbury. The Battle of Fort Freeland, although relatively unheralded as history goes, served to stop the invaders, for with their plunder the Indians insisted on returning home without achieving their original objective\*. How different our history might have read had they not done so.

\*The attack on Fort Freeland was led by the Seneca war chief Hy-o-ka-too whose family was forced to flee Sullivan on the Genesee River in New York State.

So far we have seen how for 200 million years the river served man by first providing food and resources during the stone age, after which it became a highway for the development of an infant frontier. Yet, the character of the stream remained relatively pristine with only occasional clearings on its banks to mark where settlements arose.

Following the Revolution, however, all of this changed. The accelerating age of technology and politics began to change our river. The river was now to be used as a refuge. Though there were many instances, but two come to mind as typical. In 1793, the peaceful flats near Rummerfield on the North Branch were to become a refuge for the Queen of France during the French Revolution. However, royalty fared poorly and Marie Antoinette never escaped the mob bent on her execution. When Joseph Priestly, famous as a pioneer of modern chemistry and the discoverer of oxygen, fled the mobs of Birmingham, England who were intolerant of his religious views, he came to find refuge on the Susquehanna, and spent the last ten years of his life in peaceful Northumberland.

The dawn of a new century saw great changes on both branches of the river. The discovery of anthracite coal was to bring untold prosperity to the Lackawanna County region. Little thought was given to the proper disposing of mine wastes. The river bore it all away, and all aquatic life with it. Until recently, dredges were still recovering coal from sandbanks far downstream. This wealth in the coal industry also stimulated the growth of the canal and the railroad industries as new markets for goods were opened up.

The turn toward exploitation of the many resources of the upriver hinterland demanded bridging the river at many places. Typical of the early covered bridges was one built at McCalls Ferry on the lower Susquehanna by that famous bridge builder of his day, Theodore Burr. It, like several other attempts to span the river with covered bridges, fell victim to a flood in 1818, thus ending its brief three-year life.

The coming of the canal era in the 1830s, and the railroads soon thereafter, depended upon the river gradient to be functional. At Rockville, above Harrisburg, the longest stone arch bridge in the world was built. The nearby Enola railroad yards are also among the world's largest. Bridge building across the Susquehanna occupied some of our best engineers for nearly 200 years.

When Major James Perkins came to Williamsport in 1845, he soon recognized the potential for harnessing the flow of the river against Bald Eagle Mountain to make possible a boom to catch logs cut from the vast upriver forests. His dream, of course, set in motion the great lumbering era we know so well, and the Susquehanna landscape was to change forever. From around 1860 to beyond 1900, lumber was king, not only in Williamsport, but wherever the forests grew.

Actually, the river was the real workhorse of the lumber era. It and its tributaries carried the cut logs from mountains to mill every spring. Huge rafts of spar and squared timbers floated to market on its waters. And later, when logging railroads came into use, it was the gentle slope of both river and stream that made it possible to transport the raw materials of the forests successfully, while the railroad along the river carried the processed lumber to market. From log drive to boom storage, from sorting and rafting, from jack slip to mill pond, all depended upon the river.

The Susquehanna's role as a tool of commerce also includes the direct generation of electric power as well as the supply of cooling water for nuclear generation. But, beyond that, the river has become a resource for recreation. The river passenger boat HIAWATHA is an established source of pride for the area and a tourist attraction of the first order. Its water, well on the way to being cleaned up, is once again a fishery both summer and winter. Just because it is here is reason enough for a traveler to pause at the Route 15 South, lookout to enjoy a scene unequaled anywhere else along its course.

In spite of its 200 million plus years of age, the river is probably only at half life. And, in time, when it has carried these mountains, grain by grain, to the sea, the mountains may yet arise again out of the ocean to start the cycle anew. Until then, may we respect and above all, enjoy this magnificent stream, the Susquehanna.

## A HISTORY OF THE FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS OF THE LYCOMING COUNTY REGION

by Stephanie R. Zebrowski

*[Author's note: Historical records and pictorial histories of furniture manufacturers in Lycoming County are scarce. Research can uncover names and dates but, unfortunately, very little about the style and design of furniture produced by these factories.]*

Furniture manufacture was the natural progression for the Lycoming County region, after all it was a great lumber center in the United States at one time. As a result of the rich abundance of natural resources, especially lumber and its by-products, many furniture manufacturers began to grow and flourish. As residents became more prosperous, the market for furniture increased. Transportation had evolved to the extent that goods could be easily exported from the region, while other raw materials could be imported.

One of the first companies organized to take advantage of this wealth was founded in 1859 by John A. Otto, who opened a planing mill and sash, door, blind, frame, and molding factory. Although the location of this plant is unknown, records do show that by 1873 John A. Otto & Sons had been organized as a furniture operation. The factory was struck by lightning sometime in 1881 and burned to the ground. When John A. Otto retired in 1882, his sons Luther, H. Howard, and Frank, reestablished the business at a new location on West Third and Grier Streets. For its day, it was a large factory and planing mill, composed of two buildings, one two stories high and the other four. It was, according to a December 28, 1890, issue of the *GRIT*, filled with "a full equipment of machinery and labor saving devices with machine and blacksmith shops, lumber shed, and other buildings attached."

In business until 1936, John A. Otto & Sons produced "antique" oak, mahogany, and cherry chamber or bedroom suites, sideboards, and wardrobes. The term "antique" refers to reproduction furniture. The late nineteenth century, thanks to the constantly changing and improving machinery of the day, allowed manufacturers to reproduce furniture designs reminiscent of more classical periods. The decorative arts were dominated by over-elaborate objects made in part or completely by machines, allowing historical ornamentation to be used on all kinds of design and objects from Gothic design tracery to furniture embellished with the trappings of the Bourbon Court.

This was the age of the machine, and change was its dominant feature. The advent of the machine age in furniture production now meant that what had once been the province of the wealthy, elaborately carved furniture in the style of Belter, for instance, was now readily available to all. Unfortunately for us, few furniture records remain from this period in Lycoming County. We know who was producing furniture, but we cannot ascribe particular pieces to particular manufacturers. The 1867 Williamsport City Directory lists George Luppert & Company and A. Page & Son & Company, for instance, but not John A. Otto.

By 1870, the A. H. Heilman & Company factory had been established in Montoursville. Within a short time, Heilman had showrooms and a warehouse on West Third Street in Williamsport and eventually employed 90 workers in Montoursville. But throughout the United States the 1870s were economically difficult;

many industries and magnates failed, Williamsport's Peter Herdic among them. However, the 1879 Williamsport City Directory did list four furniture manufacturers in addition to Heilman. George S. Luppert was in business and so was the Williamsport Furniture Manufacturing Company. By 1883-1884, the Directory listed the Hughesville Chair Company, Lock Haven Co-Op Furniture Manufacturing Company, Montoursville Manufacturing Company, and Elastic Chair Company in Williamsport, as well as the National Furniture Company, John A. Otto & Sons, and E. A. Page & Brothers.

By the 1880s, lumbering in this area had reached its peak with 25 to 30 sawmills operating in Lycoming County; but by the 1890s the logging industry began to decline, and by 1900 the sawmills were almost nonexistent. The industry, however, had a foothold here thanks to the good railroad systems available for the importation of raw materials.

Frederick Mankey began producing furniture in Williamsport in 1863 and became the first regional manufacturer to wholesale his inventory. However, by 1865 he had begun his association with D. B. Hubbard, founding with him the firm of Mankey and Hubbard; shortly thereafter, Frederick North Page was taken in as a member of the firm. By 1869, Mankey had found yet another partner, George Luppert. The business was called Luppert, Mankey & Company until 1871 when Luppert left. The firm was known as the pioneer of steam furniture manufacturers in Williamsport and produced desks and bedroom furniture under the name of the Williamsport Manufacturing Company. A brick factory was built with Peter Herdic's help on Center Street, the future site of the Williamsport Furniture Company.

With Luppert gone, Frederick Mankey and Frederick Page formed the Williamsport Furniture Company in 1876 and employed 50 men. Within six years it grew into one of the finest furniture plants in Pennsylvania. The October 22, 1889 edition of Williamsport's *Gazette and Bulletin* describes the building (designed by Eber Culver), the machinery and the functions performed in the earliest stages of furniture production:

The second story room of the main building, large as it is, is entirely clear of supporting posts or pillars. It is here where the lumber is taken in the rough. Cars of lumber are sent up an incline plane by steam power from the kiln, and run through a large doorway into the building, the first machine to take hold of it being the cut-off saw, which gives it a proper length; a truck is standing close at hand, which takes it to the rip-saw, where it is ripped into proper widths. It is taken off this table, laid on another and passed to a planer; from there it is taken to the jointers, where a long sweep jointer makes glue joints so close it is almost impossible to tell where the pieces are joined together. Close by is a glue heater and bench, where men glue them together to make wider pieces; portions then go to another jointer for smoothing the edges. Then the work is divided off, some to the moulder, the mitre saws, the fine cut-off, tenoning machine, mortising machine, lathes, jig saws, band saws, bowel machines, sandpapering machines, carving machine, gauge lathes, hand lathes, boring machine, polishing machine, and various little machines for cutting locks, tables, slides, etc. There are various other machines beside those named, numbering to over 50 in all.

Powering this particular operation was a 1600 horsepower engine with a fly-wheel ten feet in diameter and composed of two sections. It was made by the Millsbaugh Brothers. The engine room adjoined the boiler room and shaving vault. There were two boilers in use, each five feet in diameter and 14 feet long, made by Keeler Boiler Works of Williamsport, which also made the chimney.

*Industries and Wealth of Northeastern Pennsylvania* referred to the Williamsport Furniture Company factory as a "magnificent plant . . . the largest concern in the state of its kind and the leader in the United States in the production of high-grade chamber sets, chiffoniers, sideboards, etc., and such fine cabinet woods as cherry, oak, ash, and maple," and as having "achieved a most enviable reputation within the trade and public by reason of the superiority of its product both as regards materials, artistic design, honest workmanship, and elaborate finish." The new Center Street factory and lumberyard covered more than five acres, taking six years to build and "is of the most complex modern character and includes a dry kiln with a capacity of 120,000 feet and planes, edgers, buzz saws, etc."

The company organized into a stock company in 1882, under the name Williamsport Furniture Company. Williamsport Furniture continued to do well until fire struck on the night of September 3, 1895. News accounts of the time recorded that the fire swept through the first floor and was contained in part by the automatic sprinkling system of perforated pipes. Damage was heavy, however, as it took three hours to get the blaze under control. F. N. Page, treasurer of the company, estimated damages at \$30,000. Insurance coverage helped the company recover, and its 350 employees once again began operations.

While his association with Williamsport Furniture Company continued, Mankey personally branched out, founding the Mankey Decorative Works of Williamsport where he remained president until his retirement. Frederick Mankey sold his interest in Williamsport Furniture in 1889 and established the Frederick Mankey Furniture Factory in Emporium\*. Mankey remained in business as an independent furniture manufacturer until 1897, employing a total of 75 people at any given time in his Emporium factory.

Specializing in bedroom furniture †, Williamsport Furniture Company goods were well known and considered "the standards of the trade" by 1890. It was one of the original exhibitors at the Armory Show in New York City, as well as at the American Furniture Mart in Chicago where it eventually established a permanent showroom, further attesting to the quality of its furniture. By the 1950s, the Company offered 12 different patterns, reflecting changes in the trends in bedroom furniture. Initially it used local lumber but eventually began to use southern lumber and imported mahogany and other veneers.

\*A fine example of the work of F. Mankey can be seen on exhibit in the Hall of Industry, on the lower floor of the Lycoming County Historical Museum. The Eastlake style sideboard designed by Mankey, was made in 1879 of ebonized hard maple trimmed with 24K gold veining. All the drawers are dovetailed with keyplates and drawer pulls of nickel-plated brass. The gallery to the top of the sideboard was restored by Eugene Landon. The top molding had been removed and the pieces stored for more than 60 years.

†An early example of bedroom furniture is on exhibit on the main level of the Museum. Produced in 1896, the suite is an example of the "golden oak" design popular at the time and is attributed to John Luppert from the period during which he was associated with I. N. Kline.

As of 1950, Williamsport Furniture Company was one of the two oldest companies in Williamsport; the other was E. Keeler Company. By 1955, Williamsport Furniture was sold to the United Industries Syndicate of New York, only to be disbanded within a few years. However, for 73 years the Williamsport Furniture Company had been one of the most consistent and important industries of the area, surviving four major floods and two major financial depressions.

Perhaps the one manufacturer that faced the most challenges to stay in business was John Luppert, who began his first operation in the area in the fall of 1865. In May 1866, his first factory, including all inventory, was completely destroyed by fire. Not to be deterred, he tried again, this time in partnership with Frederick Mankey as Luppert, Mankey & Company. A brick factory was erected on Center Street at the future site of the Williamsport Furniture Company and was successful for a number of years. Luppert left his partnership in 1871 to become associated with W. & A. H. Heilman. Together they erected the Susquehanna West Branch Furniture Company in South Williamsport. The business opened in June of 1873 with its own unique setup. The two-acre layout gave it access to both the river for lumber and the railroads for shipping. The three buildings on the site — a sawmill, boiler house, and the main office/factory — were reported to house the latest and best equipment. Using an improved sawmill rig, the company was able to saw all lumber to its own specifications on site. The machines, also built to the company's specifications, allowed for the elimination of all extra handling of finished or rough stock, making the factory one of the most efficient and modern in Pennsylvania at the time. The West Branch Furniture Company turned out cottage suites of its own design manufactured from soft woods and chestnut. With a capacity to produce 100 suites a week and a completely self-sufficient operation, it was able to offer very competitive prices. With plans to expand and upgrade its line of furniture by offering suites made with fine, high-grade walnut, it anticipated a prosperous future.

On March 3, 1875, however, fire struck again and the factory burned to the ground. Undeterred again, Luppert and his partners rebuilt the factory, this time with the sawmill on an adjacent property. But bad luck struck again within a year, as fire once more destroyed the operation.

Luppert again rebuilt, this time independently. Again, fire plagued him; in 1881, his factory was destroyed. The loss was estimated at \$75,000. He rebuilt once more, contracting his entire output to a firm in Baltimore. Successful at last, Luppert went into partnership with I. N. Kline, forming Luppert, Kline & Company. After one year in business, the name was changed to Luppert-Kline Furniture Company, Ltd., and boasted a capital investment of \$100,000. Burned out yet again, Luppert formed the smaller, independent Keystone Furniture Company and remained in business until his death in 1913. The company continued until 1941.

The National Furniture Company, with a capital investment of \$24,500, operated in Williamsport for 37 years, opening the doors to its Walnut Street factory in 1882. National manufactured standard furniture and shipped goods as far away as Australia and New Zealand. National finally closed its doors in 1928, a year before the economy collapsed nationwide.

James L. Miller was another of the early pioneers of the industry. Born in Bloomsburg, Columbia County, Miller learned the carpentry trade in Kansas City,

Kansas. He came to Montgomery in 1889, and was employed at the Montgomery Table Works as a carver. Within a year's time he had built up capital of \$500, and organized the Montgomery Lounge Company which specialized in upholstered living room furniture. The company prospered and grew through the '20s, realizing an annual volume of \$300,000 at its height in 1929. Boyd's Directory no longer listed the company after 1930.

Another successful furniture firm that had its beginnings in the nineteenth century was Culler and Hawley, which eventually became known as the Culler Furniture Company. Organized by E. A. Rowley as president, C. Luther Culler as secretary-manager, and Robert Hawley as salesman, a small factory was established in 1893 at the foot of Center Street near the Williamsport Furniture Company site. The company eventually moved into the building formerly housing the U.S. Sandpaper Company with whom they signed a five-year lease. In 1898, Hawley withdrew from the firm and Culler took over as chief executive. By 1904, business had been good enough for the company to expand, and it moved into new buildings on Susquehanna Street. A three-story brick addition was constructed in 1907. The company gained a national reputation through its chief product, chairs.

Culler headed the company until his death on January 9, 1924. The company continued to grow and prosper until 1940; it owned seven and a half acres of industrial land with a 100,000 square-foot factory. The firm later boasted that it was not closed, even for one day, during the depression of the '30s. Its symbol, the Culler Chair, remained atop of its building at 200 Susquehanna Street for years\*.



*Culler Furniture Company, c. 1925, showing Culler Chair (atop building) over which Babe Ruth once hit a home run during an exhibition game played in the early days of the NYPEN (now Eastern) Baseball League. Lycoming County Historical Society Archives.*

By 1940, Issac C. Decker, Inc., of Montgomery, was known as the largest and oldest manufacturer of upholstered furniture in Pennsylvania. The company was formed in the spring of 1905 and began its operation in a two-story concrete

\*Eventually the factory was sold and in 1950 became the Atlas Plywood Corporation Division Building.

block building. By 1916, it had incorporated with Issac C. Decker, Paul R. Decker, and Annie B. Decker as stockholders. It patented an automatic, self-adjusting reclining chair "which holds any position without any push buttons or other gadgets," in cloth or leather. By the '40s, the "Decker Dream Chair" sold throughout the United States.

Pysher Furniture Company, producer of wooden office furniture, began in 1921. It employed 25 to 30 men in Montgomery. By 1926, the company was prosperous enough to move into a new building on North Broad Street, Montgomery; it was gone by 1930, however.

The year 1906 saw the formation of the Crandall-Bennett-Porter Company which built dining room tables. The Wilson Chair Company had a site adjacent to it. Eventually both buildings were purchased by the Carey McFall Company. They were no longer listed as manufacturers after 1906.

In February 1939, the Chicago firm of International Furniture Company constructed a facility in Montoursville\* at Streibeigh Lane, just north of the Reading Railroad site. The single-story building, built "out of the flood plain," comprised 118,000 square feet of floor space under one roof. The borough of Montoursville obligingly widened the street and provided International with a larger water main to suit its operation. Initially, the company employed 200 workers to build upholstered furniture, but by 1953 employees numbered 406. As the company grew the factory was enlarged; an additional 63,000 square feet of floor space was leased in an adjoining building from Montour Realty Company. The addition became International's custom furniture division, Karpen Division. In 1955, the company was listed as number nine among the top ten employers in Lycoming County.

International employed a modern production method with each man responsible for his own particular operation in the furniture-making process. The furniture sold throughout a 300-mile radius and was delivered by International's own fleet of trucks. International enjoyed a great deal of success in the area producing, in the words of the local AFL-CIO union organizer of the time, "very high quality, well built, custom furniture." The company remained in the region and has become a division of Schnadig Corporation.

The only other survivor from the heyday of furniture manufacturing in Lycoming County is the J.K. Rishel Furniture Company. Known today as Rishel Hon Industries, Rishel once advertised that it had the largest factory in the United States with a combined floor space of 295,932 square feet. The J.K. Rishel Company was started in Hughesville by James Laird in the 1850s as a planing mill. In 1869, Dr. J.K. Rishel, Laird's son-in-law, took over the business and formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, John Laird. The partnership continued until John retired. In 1896, Ralph T. Smith of Muncy joined the company, and by 1900 J.K. Rishel had incorporated, merging with the old Otto furniture plant in Williamsport.

Up until 1900, Rishel had produced only bedroom suites; however, it now began to produce dining room tables as its specialty. It pioneered the practice of producing matched dining room suites. Rishel advertised that its tables were

\*International Furniture Co., founded in 1898, had three other factories in the United States: Rushville, Indiana; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Chicago, Illinois. The Montoursville plant was the largest of the four.

capable of opening eight feet without dividing the base of the table, using longer slides to make the top "perfectly rigid." Its patented "Top Lock" locked the table at any desired length. Many of the tables stored extra leaves inside, below the table top. Rishel tables can still be found in homes and antique shops throughout the area.

Rishel manufactured reproductions of such famous furniture styles associated with Louis XVI, Hepplewhite, Chippendale, Queen Anne, and the English and Italian Renaissance. It also produced a modern American line of its own design. The company boasted of showrooms in New York, Philadelphia, and Columbus, extending a "very cordial invitation" to see the "largest and most complete line of dining and bedroom suites."

Two grades of furniture were produced by Rishel: a cottage line of less expensive goods and a high-grade line which sold for several hundred dollars more. Its cottage furniture was typical for the times and was often enameled in ivory or putty grey and decorated. These less expensive pieces often combined mahogany veneer tops and fronts and used "imitation" mahogany for the other exposed parts. The more expensive line of furniture was made of veneer surfaces over solid American walnut or mahogany, and were often decorated with curly maple drawer fronts or overlays of rosewood. Drawers had sycamore slides and mahogany bottoms.

The Hughesville factory covered nine acres and the Williamsport factory occupied an 11 acre site. Both were diversified; they not only produced matched bedroom and dining room suites but also phonographs and records. The company advertised that the "tone of the Rishel (phonograph) is the result of the correctly made sounding chamber, which is made from the same selected woods as the old master's violin and reproduces that rich, clear, bell tone that will completely satisfy your most ardent desire for sheet music."

After 1918, Rishel Company turned to the production of high-grade office furniture, much of it finding its way into United States Government offices. At its height, J.K. Rishel Company employed 400 area residents. Today, J.K. Rishel Company is known throughout the industry as Rishel, a Division of Hon Industries, having been purchased by Hon Industries, the largest manufacturer of office furniture in the United States, in 1983. The Williamsport factory is one of five Hon factories producing the finest office furniture; points of delivery include the White House, numerous United States Embassies, and the United States House of Representatives. It also produces bedroom furniture for United States military housing units and speaker cabinets for MacIntosh. Although it no longer operates the Hughesville plant, it employs 150 in the 149,939 square-foot facility on West Third Street in Williamsport.

The only other operating furniture factory in the region still producing on a large commercial basis is John Savoy & Son, Inc., in Montoursville. Started in the 1940s in a garage in Williamsport, Savoy produced carved oak chairs. The company expanded in 1950 and moved to Montoursville. Using northern red oak grown in New York and Pennsylvania, John Savoy & Son, Inc., produces office furniture, furnishings for the health care industry, and dormitory furniture.

Today the furniture industry, with the exception of five firms, is virtually gone from the area. At one point, Lycoming County could claim that two of its

## THE MIRACLE OF 1879

by William Landis Mosteller

©William Landis Mosteller

(My interest in the Tidewater pipeline evolved after reading a biography of John D. Rockefeller by Ida M. Tarbell the investigative reporter for *McClures Magazine* known as one of the "muck-rakers" of American literature. Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who broke up Standard Oil, was a relative of mine.)

The miracle of 1879 was that the Tidewater pipeline was ever built at all. The world's first long-distance oil pipeline, the Tidewater ran from Ricksford, McKean County, to Williamsport in Lycoming County. To understand why the Tidewater pipeline was built, we need to go back to the beginning of the oil industry in Pennsylvania and the growth of the Standard Oil Company monopoly, the brain-child of John D. Rockefeller.

John D. Rockefeller started work in Cleveland, Ohio, when he was 16 years old. Three years later, in 1858, he had saved enough money to join in a partnership with M. B. Clark to form a commission produce business, which in its first year did \$450,000 worth of business thanks to the Civil War. In 1862, a knowledgeable entrepreneur, Sam Andrews, borrowed \$4,000 from John D. to start a refinery. A year later John D. sold his share of the commission business and put the money into the oil firm of Rockefeller and Andrews.

The first oil well drilled in Pennsylvania by Colonel Drake in 1859 was followed by many more, some flowing 2,000, 3,000 and 4,000 barrels a day. In January 1860, oil was \$20 a barrel, but by the end of 1861, the price was down to 10 cents a barrel. The early producers' problems were many: transportation of oil from the wells to refineries, a primitive refinement process, poor communications, and undeveloped markets.

In the refining process of crude oil at that time, the only salable product was kerosene. The heavier residuum from the stills was dumped on the ground. Used as lamp oil, kerosene from crude oil was cheaper than coal oil, so the demand for kerosene for illumination in our growing cities was increasing tremendously. By 1863, the main railroads were building feeder lines into the oil fields, and three short pipelines were started to collect oil at the wells. This eliminated the teamsters. The unemployed teamsters began to sabotage the pipelines, and in 1866 the governor was called to protect the property and men of the lines.

Since there were so many inherent problems involved with on-site construction, refineries were being built elsewhere. This meant that the crude oil needed to be moved from the fields of western Pennsylvania to cities such as Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and New York. This opened up yet another opportunity for John D., and he began negotiating deals with the oil-carrying railroads by fostering competition among them over freight rates, thus allowing Standard Oil of Ohio, formed in 1870, to capitalize on the cheaper freight rates on both incoming crude and outgoing refined oil.

There had been rumors of freight rates going up in early February 1872. On February 26, the newspapers announced the raises, reporting that the members of the South Improvement Company were exempt. Pandemonium broke loose in

the oil fields at the news, and meetings of oil producers at Titusville and Oil City drew crowds of 3,000 and 4,000 people. These meetings produced the organization of the Petroleum Producers Union. The union members agreed to shut down well operations for 60 days, boycott the railroads who were in league with the South Improvement Company, and send committees to the state legislature and congress to squelch the conspiracy.

The union ordered that a history of the South Improvement Company and a list of its officers and its plans be prepared and 30,000 copies be sent to the judges of all courts, senators, members of congress, state legislators of all the states, all railroad officials, and prominent businessmen of the country. The union also prepared a petition 93 feet long which was sent to the Pennsylvania Legislature advocating a free pipeline bill. This petition was opposed by the Pennsylvania Railroad because it was getting a good percentage of the oil freight business. The objectionable part of the South Improvement Company's plan was that the railroads were to give as high as \$1.06 per barrel rebate to Standard Oil, while charging Standard's competitors \$1.06 more per barrel than the regular rate, giving that \$1.06 to Standard as a kickback. This, of course, would kill Standard's competition.

At the beginning of 1872, there were 26 refineries in Cleveland, but during the three months of the oil war, Rockefeller bought out 20 of the refineries at a cut-rate price by convincing them that they would never be able to compete with the new freight rates. However, on March 30, 1872, the Pennsylvania Legislature revoked the South Improvement Company charter, and a congressional inquiry revealed the dirty deals. President Grant said that the national government would have to intervene in the oil business to protect the public.

In the fall of 1872, to placate the producers, the Standard group contracted to buy 200,000 barrels of oil from the Petroleum Producers Union. After 50,000 barrels were delivered, Standard broke the contract with the excuse that the producers were not controlling production. In May of 1873, Standard announced the Pittsburgh Plan in which all refiners were to join together to control production. All refineries were to get shipping orders from a central office and all were allowed to become stock holders in the combine. The plan was fair to all who joined, and was meant to prevent overrefining and underselling. But because the oil men did not trust Standard Oil, they were divided over Standard's real goals.

A 30-mile pipeline, known as the Columbia Line to Pittsburgh, was built in 1874 to avoid association with Standard, but it had to cross Pennsylvania Railroad tracks to do so. Pennsylvania refused permission, so Columbia then built tanks on one side of the rail line. It hauled the oil over the tracks in wagons and dumped it on the other side into the pipeline to Pittsburgh. The railroad got wise to the scheme and broke up the operation by parking a string of cars at the crossing.

By this time the Standard Oil Trust controlled 90 percent of the American oil business. Railroad freight agents sent regular reports to Standard on the freight in and out of the competitors' plants, and employee spies were sending reports to Standard about their employer's business operations. The independent refiners were hard-pressed to remain solvent.

In the winter of 1875-76, Henry Harley of the Pennsylvania Transportation

Company went to see his old boss from the days when the Hoosac Tunnel was being built, General Herman Haupt, with the idea of building a pipeline from the oil regions to Baltimore. The General was enthusiastic about the challenge and in April 1876, he designed the proposed line which was to be 500 miles long with 30 pumps. If the line went through, it would be farewell to the Standard Oil/railroad combinations. But when Rockefeller successfully discredited General Haupt, the deal fell through.

The price of crude boomed in August 1875, because Standard raised the price of kerosene for the European export market. Ships waited in New York Harbor to load for Europe, but the exporters refused to buy at the higher price. This caused the supply of crude to back up, hurting the producers financially, especially the independents. During this period, well production was falling in the western fields and the drillers were starting to wildcat farther east.

By 1878, the drillers were opening up the Bradford or northern field, and the United Pipeline was starting to connect to the wells. When a large surplus of oil developed, the pipeline refused to accept the oil. It was common to hear oil producers remark facetiously that whenever John D. made an endowment gift, so had they. When I was a child in the '20s, folks used to say that when John D. gave away a million dollars, gasoline went up a cent a gallon the next day.

Early in the fall of 1878, the Producers Union resurrected the pipeline to Baltimore idea, and General Haupt reported his right of way was complete from the Allegheny River to Baltimore, a distance of 235 miles. Before much actual work was done, it became clear that the Butler and western oil field output was declining while the Bradford field was booming. A new idea was then formulated to lay a six-inch pipe from Ricksford to Williamsport to connect with the Reading Railroad, which did not carry oil freight at the time. It was willing and happy to take the oil to New York City and Philadelphia.

The Tidewater Pipe Company was organized at Titusville on November 13, 1878, as a limited, 20-year partnership with a capital investment of \$625,000. The pipeline was designed to carry 10,000 barrels of oil a day with four pump stations using 76 horsepower steam engines. When Standard Oil found that the Tidewater line was started, it leased a strip of land, north to south, across Pennsylvania to block the pipeline from reaching Williamsport. Fortunately, a title searcher for Tidewater discovered a gap in Standard's blockade northwest of Williamsport. It was a strip of unclaimed land 16 feet wide running down a creek bed between two farms, probably on Larry's Creek.

Tidewater quickly acquired a patent for the strip of land. The pipeline came down Bottle Run into the Williamsport area, and went down the run under Northern Central Railroad property and across Lycoming Creek into Loyalsock Township. Here the railroad, which was controlled by the Pennsylvania Railroad, used a locomotive to pull the pipe out. The railroad and the pipeline crews fought, but the pipeline crews succeeded in relaying the pipe and were able to protect it.

The 109-mile line, begun in the dead of winter, was completed 90 days later. On Saturday afternoon, May 28, 1879, Clarence Benson opened the valves letting oil run into the pumps and up the western face of the Alleghenies, a rise of 1200 feet, and over the ranges 2600 feet above sea level, and then declining

2000 feet to the Williamsport terminal. Outside of Williamsport the oil pushed up an incline of 1100 feet in three-fourths of a mile, leaving Pine Creek Valley at Ramsay. Oil flowed into receiving tanks at Williamsport the night of June 4, one week after the valves were opened at Ricksford. Tidewater maintained watchmen who walked along the line as the oil moved to watch for any leaks or vandalism.

The receiving tanks in Loyalsock Township were north of Four Mile Drive in back of what is now the Grampian Apartments. A line was laid down Miller's Run to the Reading Railroad which put in a siding so a string of tank cars could be quickly filled. The Solar Oil Company also built a refinery at this point and took 250 barrels of crude a day from the Tidewater line.

This successful pipeline operation put a crimp in Standard Oil's control of the oil business, so it opened its bag of dirty tricks to try to kill the pipeline. Since Tidewater's first customers were four independent refineries in the New York City area, Standard proceeded to try to buy them out. It succeeded in buying three, leaving Tidewater with only one customer. To maintain its business, Tidewater started to build its own refineries and succeeded. Several of Tidewater's large partners were tired of the fight with Standard Oil though, and sold their shares to Standard. The Standard Trust then became a one-third owner of Tidewater. In October 1883, weary of the long battles with Standard, Tidewater agreed to divide the eastern oil business, with 88½ percent of the business going to Standard and 11½ percent of the business to Tidewater, which continued to operate successfully.

Now, back to the title of my story, "The Miracle of 1879." The beginning of my story explained the necessity to build the pipeline in order for the producers to remain in business. It was a courageous undertaking when you think that they started on February 15, 1879, in the cold country of Pennsylvania, distributing 109 miles of six-inch seamless steel pipe across mountainous country, building four steam-operated pump stations on frozen ground. Since inexpensive concrete was unavailable, machinery had to be mounted on laid-up masonry\* in hastily constructed wooden pump houses. The big pumps, operated by 76 horsepower steam engines, produced pressure in the line of 600 pounds per square inch. Actually, after a short period of operating, the station on the Couderport Pike burned and was out of service. To everyone's surprise, the company discovered that it was not needed to push the oil into the Williamsport area, so it was never re-built.

When Teddy Roosevelt, the "trust buster," decided to enforce the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1907, he ordered the Justice Department to bring charges against Standard Oil. The case was assigned to Roosevelt's close friend, Judge Kenesaw Landis' federal court. Landis threw the book at Standard, fining the company over 20 million dollars and ordering that Standard be broken up into separate companies in each state. The Landis decision was upheld by the Supreme Court decision of 1911. The miracle was that Tidewater succeeded in building the line, surviving John D.'s efforts. Many did not.

\*Laid-up means to be done by hand.

## THE METEORIC SHOWER OF 1833

by J. C. McCloskey

(Editor's note: This article was taken from *The Historical Journal: A Monthly Record, Devoted Principally to Northwestern Pennsylvania*, as edited by John F. Meginness ["John of Lancaster"], 1877.)

There are but few persons now living who witnessed the great meteoric shower of 1833. At that time the news was not flashed from one end of the universe to the other in the twinkling of an eye, as it is at present. Those who saw the strange phenomenon in this country, had no idea that it was being observed in all parts of the globe, and with the slow methods then in use for disseminating information it was weeks before they were any the wiser. That the sight was one of appalling grandeur is vouched for by the few of our oldest residents who were fortunate in being permitted to gaze upon the singular spectacle.

An intelligent old lady gave the writer, a short time before her death, which occurred about one year ago, the following information regarding the great meteoric shower of November 12, 1833, as witnessed by her at her farm home near this city.

"My husband," she said, "was lumbering up river and had sent one of his men home with a team for supplies. This teamster had risen about two o'clock in the morning to feed and care for his horses in order to get an early start on his return trip. While going to the barn he saw the 'falling stars,' as they were called, and hastily returning to the house, called to us women-folks to get up as quick as possible, that the stars were falling and the judgment day was at hand.

"A single glance from the window convinced us that either his words were true or that some strange phenomenon was taking place. The air seemed to be filled with falling fire, each separate particle of which was apparently as large as the big flakes of snow that sometimes fall on a soft day in winter. The falling fire, or whatever it was, made it as light as when the full moon is shining on a clear night, and looking far up towards the sky we could fix our eyes upon a single one of the falling meteors and trace it until it almost reached the ground, upon which none of them could be seen to alight. Some of the meteors assumed fantastic shapes and our fears were terrible. When we finally calmed ourselves enough to reason together, we found that by fixing our gaze upon the real stars, they were shining brightly in the heavens, we could see that they were not falling. This allayed our fears, and from the moment that discovery was made, we feasted our eyes upon the falling meteors until daylight shut them from our view.

"But few of our neighbors witnessed the strange sight, and those who did not were loth to believe the occurrence as we related it to be real. We, however, were pleased to know, when we saw the newspapers, that the singular phenomenon had been witnessed all over the world, and that we had seen the wonderful sight of that remarkable night of November 12th, 1833."

## REMEMBERING THE CHESTNUT

by Mike Simmons

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Pressures of the modern day world have increased demands on a father's quality time with his children. Does today's father spend enough time sharing his past with his children?

In today's affluent society, vacation-time travel during the summer rates high on a family's list. Fathers frequently heap expensive toys on their children, such as ten-speed racing bicycles and ear-shattering music machines called "boom boxes." It's important for a father to see his children happy, but it's also important that he becomes their pal; a man who shares their adventures with them and fascinates them with tales of days gone by.

My pre-teen years were the 1950s. Baseball and the outdoors were my calling. My dad and I spent many hours playing catch and hitting balls. He taught me how to play the correct way, fairly with an emphasis on fun. Winning was often a bonus for playing well. Although baseball consumed much of our time together, we still made an effort to visit the magnificent forests of "Penn's Woods." The forests held many secrets. Their mysteries, I'm sure, are what enticed me to pursue a career in Forestry and Arboriculture.

My father did not hunt, but he so enjoyed challenging the trout in open lakes and the wild meandering streams which flowed through wooded areas, peaceful meadows, and cultivated farmlands. He taught me how to fish and catch our fair share, releasing the rest to grow and propagate or be challenged by other anglers. Because I wanted to learn, each fishing excursion taught me something new. My father gladly obliged. Thirty years later, I still remember our predawn ritual of eating breakfast, packing our lunches, loading the car, and arriving at our fishing spot well before light.

If springtime meant fishing, then summertime meant visiting the upper ridge tops of Pennsylvania's finest mountains. These ridge tops were characterized by smaller, poorer quality trees and numerous low growing shrubs, such as the wild huckleberry and blueberries. Picking blueberries meant money in my pocket, to be saved or spent at amusement parks and carnivals. Today's children often receive an allowance for tending to some trivial household chores. To get money I had to pick berries until my fingers were stained blue. The best picking conditions were in the early morning. This meant being in the woods just as it got light enough to see. The drawback to such an early start was that the trees and bushes were still wet with the morning dew. It took hours to dry off.

Was it possible for such a young boy to pick a ten-gallon bucket full of blueberries? My father must have thought so. But, it never happened even though he taught me how to pick with both hands. He taught me the difference between the Pennsylvania huckleberry and other blue-colored imposters. He also taught me the difference between the common black snake and the dangerous timber rattlesnake. How unfortunate for us that berry bushes and black snakes shared the same rock pile habitat.

Early fall introduced a new outdoor challenge, the search for delicious wild mushrooms. Often my grandfather, my father, and I would visit different forest

types to pick wild mushrooms which could be canned or dried for later consumption. A beech/birch/maple forest-type offered different wild mushrooms than what was to be found in a mixed oak/hardwood stand. I was taught the difference between poisonous mushrooms and those delicious edible ones. My favorites were the "stumpers," or honey mushrooms which could be found growing adjacent to decaying oak stumps. How well I remember a lunch of freshly picked mushrooms cooked in a pot of stewed tomatoes. This is a meal few, if any, children today will ever experience.

Autumn in the Pennsylvania woods also held other surprises. My favorite activity had to be searching the mixed hardwood forests with my father for that extra sweet nut, the American chestnut. Our search was not an easy task, because the American chestnut trees bearing nuts were few and far between. Often a day's harvest would barely fill a small bread wrapper. I would listen for hours as my Dad told stories about the American chestnut when he and his Dad took to the woods.

About the turn of the century, an unknown Asian fungus, later to be called chestnut blight, was introduced to the country on nursery stock from Asia, before the enactment of any plant quarantine laws. In 1904, the blight was identified as the pathogen killing trees in the Bronx Zoo, New York City. By the 1930s, the entire natural range of the American chestnut, *Castanea dentata*, had been severely affected by the blight. By 1938, approximately 85 percent of the American chestnuts, lacking natural resistance, were either killed or diseased. Years earlier, in February of 1912, the Governor of Pennsylvania convened that state's Chestnut Blight Commission to stop the spread by using any means, scientific or practical. State Foresters chose to develop a firebreak a mile across. The blight easily escaped its containment and went on to destroy trees in Pennsylvania's neighboring states.

My dad recalled how majestic this tree really was. One out of every four trees was a chestnut before the blight. An average forest chestnut grew to about 90 feet tall and approximately five feet in diameter. A tree this size could easily be 500 years old. Remarkably, the chestnut was suited to many different sites and soil types. Ridge tops were often pure stands of chestnut. He recalled the abundance of this sweet nut on the forest floor. Even after deer, wild turkeys, bear, raccoons, foxes, and squirrels all had their fill, enough remained for any adventurous humans who took to the woods. As Henry David Thoreau observed in *Walden Pond*: "In October . . . when chestnuts were ripe I laid up half a bushel for winter. It was very exciting at that season to roam the then boundless chestnut wood of Lincoln,— they now sleep their long sleep under the railroad,— with a bag on my shoulder, and a stick to open burrs within my hand, for I did not always wait for the frost, amid the rustling of leaves and the loud reproofs of the red squirrels and the jays, whose half-consumed nuts I sometimes stole, for the burrs which they had selected were sure to contain sound ones. Occasionally I climbed and shook the trees. They grew also behind my house, and one large tree, which almost over-shadowed it, was, when in flower, a bouquet which scented the whole neighborhood, but the squirrels and the jays got most of its fruit; the last coming in flocks early in the morning and picking the nuts out of the burrs before they fell. I relinquished these trees to them and visited the more distant woods composed wholly of chestnut. These nuts, as far as they went, were a good substitute for bread."

The chestnut tree was priceless, valued as a food crop tree for wildlife and many Appalachian Mountain families. These same people built their homes of this wood because the wood was easily split and quite workable. What was not used as lumber surely was burned as fuel. Because it resisted weather and rot, it became choice timber for fences, shingles, railroad ties, and utility poles. Dad pointed out that our front utility pole was indeed chestnut. I remember the day when it was replaced by a modern day Southern yellow pine. In the early days utility companies selected the chestnut because it was characteristic of the tree to grow in long, straight logs and to resist decay. Some other uses for its wood were for fine furniture, packing crates, pulpwood, musical instruments, and leather tanning. Chestnut bark was high in tannic acid, which could be extracted and used to tan leather.

The chestnut blight would enter bark wounds near branches and cause a canker which destroyed the vital vascular system beneath the bark. Repeated infections girdled the tree and caused mortality. The roots, however, were not infected so sprouts continuously grew from old chestnut stumps or arose as root sprouts. These sprouts grew to the size of a small tree, approximately 20 feet in height or five to six inches in diameter, before succumbing to the blight. A certain percentage of these sprouting trees survived long enough to bear nuts, but the number of trees bearing nuts decreased each year. These were the elusive nuts that my Dad and I sought, some 50 years after the disease first started killing trees.

It amazed me that my Dad had all this knowledge. He kept his eyes and ears open to all of nature's little clues. On one peaceful July morning, while stooped over my blueberry bucket, he pointed out several scattered trees in full bloom. The pencil-like yellowish plumes belonged, of course, to the American chestnut tree. These nut-producing flowers develop rapidly and the green prickly burrs are well developed by late August or September. Few trees develop their fruit so rapidly. I can only visualize what our forests must have looked like when entire ridge tops were resplendent with chestnut flowers. The aroma had to be intoxicating.

The Pennsylvania Department of Forestry first detected the blight in the state around 1909, when a commission directed by the Department and assisted by the Deputy Commissioner discovered the disease to be prevalent in Northampton, Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, Lancaster, Pike, and Monroe counties. The blight continued to spread from the southeastern part of Pennsylvania to the other counties in the state. The chestnut was well-established in the forested regions of the centrally located counties, like Lycoming, Union, Snyder, Clinton, and Centre. Ridge tops and plateaus contained a mixture of American chestnut, scrub oak, and maple trees. This was especially true of the western mountains of Lycoming County.

As the timber production industry boomed in the Williamsport area during the turn of the century, logging operations in accessible areas increased. White pine and hemlock were the most economically important conifers (softwoods) harvested, while oak and American chestnut were the valuable hardwoods. In the cut-over areas from logging and in the many fire-scarred acres, thick sprouts of chestnuts emerged, living up to its reputation as being an aggressive colonizer.

Suited to many different sites, the American chestnut thrived in most areas

in the eastern half of the United States. There is a "Chestnut Ridge" in every state in its range, and a "Chestnut Street" in almost every city and town. In the early 1800s the town of Chestnut Grove developed in the eastern portion of Lycoming County on state highway 118, so named because it was nestled among a thriving stand of American chestnuts. As time passed and as the chestnut blight continued to ravage its host tree, the chestnut was replaced by other species. Today no chestnut trees exist there and the development is no longer Chestnut Grove. The town is now called Lairdsville.

In nearby Clinton County, just across the West Branch of the Susquehanna River from Lock Haven, was the village of Castanea, established on old farmland in 1871. The village received its name because of the abundance of chestnut trees which surrounded it. The village's name "Castanea" is the Latin botanical name for the genus of the American chestnut species (*Castanea dentata*).

In 1877, residents of Dunnstable Township petitioned for the creation of a new township to be split from Dunnstable Township, to make administration more convenient. The new township, which surrounded the village of Castanea, was named Castanea Township, again because of the abundance of large groves of chestnut trees on the southern slopes of Bald Eagle Mountain.

Today my father is retired. There are many activities he no longer pursues, but he still has time to support Little League baseball and to fill his containers full of mushrooms and blueberries. I suspect he'll continue these activities as long as he is physically able.

Over the years the American chestnut sprouts have become too scarce in my father's home area for him to locate. Regarding the chestnut, our roles have reversed; he now finds me the teacher. He calls upon my college education in Forestry to predict the future of the American chestnut. He knows he'll never see our forests again populated with a blight-resistant chestnut tree, but he hopes that his grandchildren will.

Currently, many Pennsylvanians can enjoy a fine meal flavored by chestnut: raw or roasted to munch or mix with stuffing in turkey on Thanksgiving Day. These are the larger, less sweet nuts of the Asiatic or European varieties. Several of these trees used to grow in my backyard near Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. My father, when visiting in the fall, would take bags of chestnuts home with him. Though they were not as delicious, he still enjoyed them. It must have reminded him of days gone by.

The Asiatic chestnut, *Castanea mollissima*, so common on properties in the river valleys of Lycoming and Clinton counties, grows, not as a tall forest tree, but squat, like an orchard tree. Without leaves in the winter, one could easily mistake it for an apple tree. The Asiatic chestnut can withstand the blight, but it is far too short in stature to compete with our other native hardwoods. To be of value to our Appalachian forests we need a blight-resistant American chestnut.

Numerous researchers and volunteers are currently uniting their efforts to produce such a tree. Through well thought out breeding programs, susceptible American chestnuts have been back-crossed with the resistant Asiatic chestnuts. Now, additional breeding must continue until the desired tree is achieved. Numerous generations may be involved in producing such a tree. This will take decades or longer. In order for the desired traits to be truly restored, the breeding programs

may need to be replicated in different regions using Asiatic chestnuts from different geographic regions in China. This will take adequate funding, continued volunteering, and plenty of patience.

Science may introduce quicker methods of finding that quality tree. When I talked to my dad of hypovirulence research, genetic engineering, and tissue culture propagation, his quizzical look told me to stop. I believe he felt satisfied that all that could be done to restore the American chestnut was being done. He appeared grateful when I told him that I believe the day will come when the American chestnut, that vigorous colonizer of existing forests and an aggressive competitor, will take back its rightful place in our northern hardwood mountain acreage as a valuable timber species. What I didn't tell him, though, was that the numerous other persons, many more involved in chestnut research than I am, weren't quite as optimistic about the chestnut's future. Some well-informed individuals feel that the current organized research efforts are too weak to overcome the forces of nature. Time, I suppose, will provide us with this answer.

In the meantime, my father wants to know about these gypsy moth caterpillars eating the blueberry bushes at his favorite picking spot.

## THE HOTEL ON WEST FOURTH STREET: A HISTORY

by Stephanie R. Zebrowski

As railroad passenger traffic increased through Williamsport in the 1860s, the question of depot relocation became an issue. Having anticipated just such a problem, Peter Herdic stood poised to take advantage of the situation. The big hotel on West Fourth Street, once bearing Herdic's name, and now known as the Park Home, was constructed in conjunction with the railroads to offer both convenience to the traveler and elegance to the vacationer. It remains a famous landmark long after the passenger railroads have ceased to exist.

Prior to 1865, the railroads maintained a joint depot near the intersection of Pine and Third Streets. Because of its close proximity to the intersection, it daily created an obstruction. This problem prompted the passage of a borough ordinance making it obligatory upon the railroads to keep the intersection clear of obstruction; any violation of that ordinance subjected railroad employees to arrest, resulting in numerous fines. To further complicate matters, land around the depot had become prohibitively expensive and the need for expansion so necessary, that the railroad companies were thinking of relocating, possibly to the south side of the river. The repair shops would then be relocated to Sunbury.

Peter Herdic, characteristically ahead of the game, just happened to own an interest in a property that bordered the Pennsylvania and Erie Railroad Company's right of way between Center and Walnut Streets. This particular strip of land had been purchased in 1855, with the belief that eventually the railroads would need more land for additional tracks and buildings. It was originally part of a 26-acre tract which had been divided into blocks and sold to investors. The strip of land Herdic now proposed be used as a depot site had been held in trust for him. He purchased it for the then great sum of \$4,000, in cash, from the investment group, and in effect offered to donate it to the railroad companies for a depot site. His offer was accepted on June 13, 1864. At the same time, he also gave to the city, "free of cost," the ground covered by streets and avenues subsequently opened west of Hepburn Street, all of which ran through the large tract of land he owned.

This was a boon for Williamsport and for Peter Herdic, for along with a railroad depot came the need for additional services, then nonexistent in that part of the city. He agreed "to build on the said Grove Lot, and adjoining or near the said passenger depot, and connected with it in such manner as the said Pennsylvania Railroad engineers and myself may agree to be best, a first-class hotel, with a dining room of such plan and location to accommodate the traveling public as the railroad company and myself may determine. The eating arrangements thereof always to be kept in a manner to accommodate the railroad travel, to the satisfaction of the General Manager of the railroad company."

With that agreement in hand, Herdic commissioned Eber Culver, the architect who designed Herdic's buildings in Williamsport, to draw up plans. It has been reported that Herdic then asked Culver for an estimate. When the architect got up to leave the room, Herdic called him back, telling him to forget the estimate and to go ahead with the project.

Construction was begun in 1864, and completed by the fall of 1865. It was unusual in its time because the method of construction was new. Called suspension construction, the building, a four-story brick structure, had a series of "A" shaped beams under the roof around the building, with steel rods running from the beams to the first floor for support, rather than the more traditional load-bearing walls.

The hotel stood in the middle of a five-acre park that was filled with ancient oak trees, evergreens, vines, and flowers. Smooth walkways led the hotel guest through this inviting retreat while the bubbling fountain and deer park added to its elegance.

The hotel was approached from the street by a broad, open archway. The halls and the lobby floors are tiled, yet today, with marble from Mosquito Valley. The high, vaulted ceilings were hung with massive chandeliers, some brass, others of more elegant crystal. The grand staircase, with its wide beautifully sculptured walnut banisters, welcomed guests up to their sumptuously furnished, steam-heated rooms. Each floor had its own bathroom.

A covered colonnade, built from the passenger station to the hotel, protected arriving guests who were in turn welcomed by Chef Jan Emery, who stood on the porch to greet them with the beating of a gong, calling out, "This way to the Herdic House." At mealtimes he would add, "Dinner is being served in the dining room."

The hotel had three dining areas, two large adjoining rooms on the west side of the building, and another restaurant located in the basement. Dinner at the Herdic House could be an elegant affair, for the menu featured such delicacies as "Turkey with Oyster Sauce; Baked Halibut with Champagne Sauce; Pheasant, larded, a la Cashmere; Oyster Paté, a la Francaise; and the famous Herdic House Planked Shad, when in season."

The hotel was so successful, that before long it became noted as a fine summer resort, attracting guests from Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., New York, and Baltimore for the summer season. All could be had for a moderate rate, never exceeding three dollars a day.

When the hotel opened in the fall of 1865, Peter Herdic had planned a spectacular show, replete with new gas lighting; he had built a gas manufacturing plant at the corner of Edwin Street just to light the hotel. Everything had been tested and expectations were high. On the day of the grand opening, however, the gas plant burned to the ground. Herdic and his entire staff of 75, were sent scurrying about Williamsport to buy every oil lamp and candle they could lay their hands on, and the hotel opened as planned.

Elegant in every manner, the hotel housed every convenience for its guests: telegraph office, barber shop, cigar stand, news stand, and restaurants. Band concerts, by the famous Repaz Band of Williamsport, entertained on many a balmy summer evening. Since the business district was nearly a mile from the hotel, Herdic built a streetcar line. Horse-drawn, the service carried passengers from Market Square up Fourth Street, around the hotel, and back down Fourth Street again to the center of the city.

During 1872 alone, 27,593 guests were entertained at the hotel which remained a success for Herdic until the financial decline affecting the nation, from 1873-1878, finally struck him down, too. He went into voluntary bankruptcy,

## THE BIG HOUSE BACK OF THE PARK HOTEL

by Henry W. Shoemaker (ed. by Stephanie R. Zebrowski)

failing for a sum of approximately \$1,800,000\*, in 1878. On the morning of September 15, 1883, his famous hotel was sold at United States Marshal sale to R. J. C. Walker, the son-in-law of William Weightman, for \$1,200. The hotel changed hands a number of times after this, until it was finally rented from the Weightman estate by Colonel Charles Duffy and reopened in 1889, as the Park Hotel.

The Park Hotel continued, in the tradition of Herdic, as the center of social activities in Williamsport. The large ballroom was in constant demand for "coming out balls" and "hops" or dances where such orchestras as Stopper and Fisk regularly entertained. Duffy added apartments for permanent guests. During World War I he opened the back of the hotel as a canteen for soldiers travelling by train.

The Park Hotel remained a successful establishment until it was sold to William Budd Stuart in 1930. During 1937, and until the project was completed in 1938 under the direction of Lester "Red" Landon, the Park Hotel underwent major changes. In order to suit building codes specified for buildings to be used as a retirement home, the top two stories of the building were removed.

Because of its unusual suspension construction, the lower walls of the building had to be reinforced in a different manner. New load-bearing walls were built to carry the weight of the structure. Preserving the building in this manner probably makes it the earliest practice of adaptive reuse in the county.

The Park Home, a residence currently housing 19 guests, is also the repository for Mr. Stuart's fine art collection, which includes some beautiful pieces of nineteenth century furniture, as well as his collection of oils. A collector of national reputation, Mr. Stuart dedicated the reception room, to the right of the entrance, to his mother. It is furnished in 1875 period pieces.

It was quite a coincidence that the night of the Park Home opening, the lights also went out. Perhaps, as Henry Shoemaker suggests, there are always spirits left to dwell among the former glories.

\*Herdic's heaviest creditor was reported to be William Weightman, a Philadelphia chemist, to whom Herdic owed several hundred thousand dollars.

There is nothing more dreary or depressing than a partially abandoned house. The remnants and shadows of occupancy cast one's spirits down far more than a structure utterly deserted, or never more used. When the genius of tenancy has fled one may feel the subtle influence of the evil or good spirits which remain, if one is in tune to the more delicate vibrations of life. In a house that has never been lived in there may be a sense of loneliness, of emptiness, but it does not touch the spirit. In a house that is partially dismantled, yet being lived in, one feels as if in the presence of a person dying a lingering death. These were some of the thoughts that flitted through the mind of a certain young businessman from the eastern part of the state while seated in the denuded dining room of a partly abandoned house in one of the leading cities of central Pennsylvania.

It was a new territory to him, for he had never been west of Sunbury or north of Elmira before, and the whole contour of the rugged mountainous country and the marvellous winding rivers made a deep impression on his mind all afternoon while he travelled along in the trains up through the valley of the Otzinachson. Now, after his journey's end, in the brooding silence of late afternoon to sit waiting in such a vast and gloomy apartment, it formed a romantic background for his trip and unexpected acquaintances.

At a small station below Sunbury a close connection had been made and he had met three somberly attired ladies. From their long slim lines and aquiline features, they were evidentially of the best class. They had been very anxious not to miss the train, so by carrying their luggage, and signalling to the trainman he had gotten them safely aboard. In turn, they showed their gratitude by a friendly and social attitude towards him all the way to his destination. Until it had gotten too dark, they took pleasure in pointing out the various scenic and historic spots along the way: the lordly heights of the Mahanoy; the Peter Fisher stone house at the old ferry where Maria Cox, the deserted wife of Governor John Penn had been reunited with her recreant spouse just before she died; the Swiss handmaster's chalet on the Spangenburg above Shamokin Creek; the "meeting of waters" of the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna River at Packer's Island; the Blue Hill with the bold profile of Shikellimus, vice-regent of the Iroquois Confederation, carved on the rock; the old home of Dr. Joseph Priestly at Northumberland; the beautiful Chillasquaque with its wooden banks; the spires and domes of Derrstown, now Lewisburg; and the vast form of Jack's Mountain, blue against the flaming western sky. As they indicated many of the wonderful sights to him, more than once, he had heard them say among themselves, "Betty would have enjoyed this so much." He wondered who Betty could be.

It had become dark and he remembered no more except the jangling crossing bell at Montgomery and the brakeman calling the names of the stations, Muncy, Freystown, Loyalsock, Market Street. Friends were there to meet his appreciative travelling companions at the Park Hotel Station, but still, in the excitement of parting, they had urged him to call some afternoon before he left the city. As his stay was to be short he resolved to respond to the invitation the very next afternoon.

It was a dark, overcast afternoon in the very late fall. The days had already shortened appreciably. The trees along the sidewalks were trembling as if shivering from their recent defoliation. The address to which he had been directed proved to be a great mansion built in the long gloomy lines of the seventies of the last century. It was just back of the Park Hotel, which had only recently been re-christened after bearing the name of "Herdic House" for nearly a quarter of a century. He entered the courtyard through huge iron gates. He pulled the rather primitive bell pull above the brass plate on which was engraved the name of Montecaulis. He could hear the discordant jangle and jingle of its echoes down the dim, unlighted corridors within.

He had to wait a long time before the door was opened. A rather shabbily attired mulatto girl admitted him, but stated that the ladies would not be home for probably half an hour. He said he would wait until their return as he desired to see them before leaving town. The girl led him down a dim corridor roofed like the cloisters of some old church, past dusty and absolutely unfurnished drawing rooms with high frescoed ceilings, into the apartment that had once been the state dining hall of the mansion. Evidently, while the family was moving out it served as eating room, drawing room, and living room combined. It must have been equally depressing in all of these capacities. The great windows had not been recently washed so that even the dim light of late afternoon was still further subdued. The only furniture consisted of a massive ornately carved sideboard of mahogany; two rocking chairs; three straight-backed, upholstered in petit point chairs; a torn and faded davenport; a mirror in a frame of Irish bog-oak on which was carved the armorial bearings of the Montecaulis family with the motto below: "The gentle hand uppermost." It hung between the great French windows.

Outside, the giant oaks in the yard were waving their naked arms in the bleak autumnal gale, while a belated leaf occasionally blew against the panes. As the young man seated himself on the davenport, the colored girl apologized for the condition of things, "The family has sold the house as the old folks are no more. They are going to Europe soon, to Italy, I think. Everything but what is in actual use has been sold or stored. One in help can hardly keep the place as neat as it should be." Then she pointed to the walls where unfaded portions of the olive-drab flowered paper, in the form of shields, showed where giant game heads had formerly hung. "On that side," she resumed, "was the biggest elk's head you ever did see. It was the last one killed on the Tiadaghton, a river which comes from the mountains near here. I think they sold it to a lodge in town. Over there was a buffalo bull's head, big, black, and curly. The master, himself, shot it from a window on the first westward train run on the Kansas-Pacific Railroad. It weighed a ton. No one wanted it except a second hand man down on the river, who got it cheap. Above the sideboard you can see the marks where a great bald eagle hung; it used to soar above the packet boats on the old West Branch Canal. The boatmen always said it brought them good luck on their trips, until one of their passengers shot it and sent it as a gift to Colonel Montecaulis. Dead, it seemed to bring misfortune, for the family fortunes began to wane from the first day it came. It was the first thing sent to the furnace when they began to clean up to go away. There was a big wildcat, too. It crouched on a branch of a tree. It was the one that attacked one of the master's woods

bosses in Clearfield County. They burned it, too, as the hide was moth-eaten and faded and had lost its pretty marbled spots. I was always afraid of those things as a child. I'm the third generation of my family to work here. I always felt there was a spark of spirit in all of those trophies. But, now the room feels even uglier and more forbidding since they have gone."

The communicative mulatto girl went away, her footsteps echoing on the uncarpeted halls, leaving the young man alone with his thoughts in the untenanted and gloomy apartment. He recalled the lines from Tom Moore that he had read in a biography of Edgar Allen Poe, "I feel like one who treads alone, some banquet-hall deserted."

The brightly colored spaces where the trophies had hung strangely fascinated him. But, most of all, he could not keep his eyes from the dark, sombre, impenetrable mirror with its fantastic armorial frame of carved bog-oak. What scenes must be pictured in its inscrutable depths, scenes happy and terrible; what joys and sorrows it had been a partaker of and photographed in its soul of quicksilver, never to reveal in all the 50 years it had hung there. What mystery lurked in it and about it, what family skeletons and secrets even to the history of that bog-oak frame, dug up and sculptured with the arms of Waldensian exiles to Ireland after long ages of oblivion, possibly at the celebrated Ballybetaag where William Williams found so many heads and horns of *meгаuros hibernias*, "the Irish Elk." Its surface seemed to be surging with ever-moving dark purple clouds, vast moving forms. And, yet, it might only be the effect of the wavering light through the long dusty windows.

In the midst of his reveries he was interrupted by the return of the colored girl. "I thought you'd like to see about the house a bit," she said. "Tain't very polite to leave you by yourself, for I can't tell how soon the ladies will be back. Once they get to talking they forget all about time." So, she led him through corridor after corridor beneath chandeliers of crystal jet, and up flights of massive stairs with carved banisters. Why, he thought, was such a house built for private occupancy?

As they passed along one of the upper hallways a door suddenly opened and out stepped a very neatly attired and demure looking young woman, apparently in her early 20s. She looked at him and he at her, in mutual curiosity. The young man was so surprised to see her that he stood motionless until she reached the end of the corridor and disappeared down the stairs.

The mulatto girl did not wait for him to inquire who she was. "That's a young lady who lodges here. She came to town to be an interior decorator. There was something about this old house that appealed to her, so she secured an introduction to the ladies, and they let her have a room until they move out. She has a friend, a young architect, I believe they are engaged, who also has rooms here. They always take their meals together at one of the restaurants or tearooms. She waits for him in the dining room, where you sat.

After visiting the various parts of the old house, the visitor was once more in the dining room. The architect had evidentially been punctual as no one was to be seen. The young man was sorry, as he rather admired the trim, refined type of the fair interior decorator trying to ply her advanced calling in a utilitarian town. "It must be late, I ought not to wait here much longer if that lodger has gone out to supper. But, perhaps the ladies are also having tea outside and will

be in soon," he thought.

As the room was fairly warm, the davenport fairly comfortable, he elected to remain. As he sat there, his eyes rested on the mysterious mirror, still cloudy and ominous looking like the ammonia of a barometer. He was enthralled by its very mystery, of its wavering surface, like some stormy unsettled lake. As he watched it, he seemed to lose all sense of space and time. Could there be faces in back of it, vague shadows or doubles of the proud dynasty that inhabited the big house for 50 years, of those who helped to shape its destiny for good or ill? As these thoughts took root, he fancied he saw a face and form materialize within the misty surface of the mirror. The moving, unstable shadows seemed to be assembling themselves into the dark waving tresses of somebody's pretty head. Was it only the radiation of the gas lamp over there on Fourth Street that seemed to convey the outlines of an oval face? What peculiar pallor she had, greenish-white at first glance, transparent as alabaster or serpentine. On closer observation, that peculiar delicacy of whiteness known as an Italian aristocrat's complexion, or to connoisseurs of marble as Bardiglio, were there to behold. The green had become her eyes, a green-blue or quicksilver, like the color of the north Italian lakes. Was it not the Gypsy poet who said, "her eyes of silver shine"? Could it be the diagonal rays of the street lamp below that were forming beautiful hands, so chalky, yet so smoothly white, folded like those of Mona Lisa, absolutely immovable; or those lips, so like a budding rose that has not been withered and distorted by disappointment or pain? Yet, when he glanced at the mouth, the smile was not that of La Giconda, nor was the sharply chiselled nose, which was the key to her unique expression. Hers was a sweeter, milder, less penetrative expression, a darker type than da Vinci's masterpiece, and yet the pose was much the same. There seemed to be a pearl ring on one of those smooth, shapely, milk-white fingers. Never had he beheld such loveliness before. Who was she? Instantly he thought, "Can it be Betty, Betty Montecaulis of whom they spoke about so much, visualized out of the gloom of the mirror, the mirror that must have often received her unconscious reflex, out now of the gloom to have one last look at the old home before its final demolition?" Yet, she never stirred or moved an eyelash. What a weird position to be in, waiting for people who might never come and falling under the spell of a shadowy personality reflected in a magic mirror.

The old people of the Oley Valley of Berks County, where he was born, often told of these magic mirrors which held inexorable the past and the future. Could this be one even if framed in bog-oak and carved with arms? He looked around to make sure that it was not an illusion, that the real person was not standing there looking at him while he gazed abstractedly on her reflection in a mirror. It was quite dark now, and he was quite sure no living person but himself was in the room. Ghosts, there may have been many of them. There always are in every old house that has not been remodeled. What a strange faculty to conjure up such a divine creature only to find her a figment of imagination or an emanation from the depths of a haunted looking glass!

He got up and walked towards the mirror. As he neared it, a great light made his eyes blink and stare. He felt amid changed surroundings. He was not on the davenport, but in some other sort of comfortable upholstered seat. There was a creaking and squeaking and grinding of brakes. Someone was calling out,

"Market Street." Where had he heard those fateful words before? A long line of people were coming towards him, single file. Why, he was in a prosaic railroad car, and passengers were entering. He felt the cold drought of air from the open door. A brakeman had been calling, "Market Street." Where was Betty Montecaulis and the magic mirror, the gloom and subtle terror of the big house in back of the Park Hotel?

Why, Betty was coming towards him in all the radiant beauty of that vision on the wall! She seated herself opposite him across the aisle, her eyes down-cast. Someone beside her was saying, "You act as if you had been crossed in love," which made him feel like calling to her, "I love you, if it means anything to you!"

The train was in motion again. Studying her hands, it was as if Mona Lisa had come to life. The brakeman was calling out, "The next station will be Williamsport. Change cars for Troy, Canton, Elmira, and the north. This car for Jersey Shore, Lock Haven, Renovo, and points west." Yes, there was that transparent Italian complexion with just a suggestion of verde antico, the oval lines of her face so soft and harmonious, even to the pouting lips. Those tourmaline eyes, so calmly pensive, in harmony with those tranquilly folded carrara white hands. The dull luster of a pearl ring shone on one of her fingers. It was Mona Lisa with a soul, a face that da Vinci would have owned as his mightiest inspiration had she been living in his day.

Then, the cars gave another jolt and shock. He heard one of her companions call her Betty. In another moment her tall, slim, graceful form was gone. He sat there in the cushioned seat feeling dejected and let down. Other travelers were pouring into the car. The train would soon be starting again for points deeper into those dark eternal mountains.

Springing to his feet, he brushed by the throng and in an instant was on the platform. The lights of the Park Hotel gleamed out below the station. No one seemed to be about. In the cold night air he started to run. As he passed Peter Herdic's favorite deer paddocks in front of the hotel, a group of does and a noble stag with a great rack of antlers were huddled together under a mammoth black oak. At the sound of his footsteps on the brick walk, they instantly looked up and started on a gallop down the yard, their stampeding hooves resounding on the frozen ground. In an instant the young man was at the back of the hotel in a park among giant trees. There was no structure at all similar to the Montecaulis house, except one on the opposite side of the street.

He ran back to the station to make sure he was not dreaming. The train had gone. The station was still and deserted. A full moon was trying to come out through a curtain of ebony clouds above the ancient trees. He retraced his steps, and for an hour he searched every nook and corner for that big house, without success. It was not a dream. He was so satisfied that Betty was real he believed he would meet her some day. Then he recollected that he had a room in the Park Hotel where his baggage had been deposited. He could go there and try and sleep over the mystery and perhaps in a flash of light all would be made clear to him. If not, then for some time to come he knew he would not forget those calmly folded hands with their sculpture's perfection of line. That would be his inspiration, his guarantee of earthly happiness. He walked down the long corridor beneath the crystal jet chandeliers to his room.

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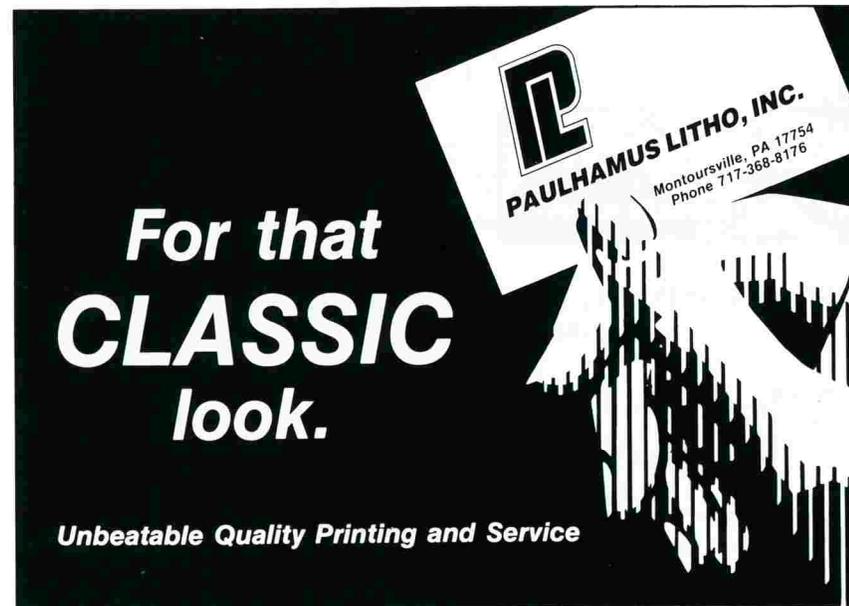
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