HENRY GAST WOLF’S YOUNG MANHOOD: 
INSIGHTS INTO AMERICAN LIFE IN THE 
MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Social life in the United States has never become static, and no generation has duplicated its predecessor. The first generation of immigrants were of varied ethnic backgrounds, and foreign influences have continued to reach American shores to find acceptance here, and to blend with changes inherent in the environment. To be sure, the rate of change has increased dramatically in recent years. Our grandparents would have felt at home, if not altogether comfortable, had they returned to the generation of their grandparents, whereas our current generation would find a return to the life of their parents a flash-back to a seemingly ancient past.

With this in mind it might be of interest to take a backward glance into the world of Henry Gast Wolf more than a century ago, based on recently discovered diaries and correspondence. Since he died in 1901 no one may remember him personally, but his widow, Ellen Moss Wolf, lived until 1916, and older residents of Mifflinburg may recall her in and about her home at 415 Chestnut Street, which she shared with her grandson, Dr. Paul Bikle, from 1909 until her death.

While no two lives would have been identical, it is safe to assume that Wolf’s over-all behavior, including his home life, employment, recreation and courtship reflect the life in his time and place of one in his socio-economic group, leaving room for personal interests, tastes and idiosyncrasies.

He was a member of what a sociologist might term a middle class farm family in Brush Valley, Spring Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania, and it was here on October 5, 1828, that he first saw the light of day. His parents, Jacob and Mary Gast Wolf, named him...
HENRY GAST WOLF

Henry Gast for his uncle Henry, who had recently become a partner in a general store in Mifflinburg, some twenty miles away.

Like their neighbors the Wolfs were Pennsylvania-Dutch (German), most of whose parents or grandparents had settled in Pennsylvania after emigrating from Germany. By the time of Henry's birth they were becoming bi-lingual, speaking "Pennsylvania-Dutch" in the home and English in school and when in town. John Blair Linn, author of the Annals of Buffalo Valley, and the History of Centre and Clinton Counties, generalizing on home life in Brush Valley at the time of Henry's birth, observed that the privations of the frontier, though well remembered, were yielding to a more productive economy. Grist mills had relieved the homemaker from long trips on horseback to the Juniata Valley to procure flour, and distilleries had opened a market for surplus grain. Yet, in most cases, "necessity continued to make the populace economical in dress, in furniture and in food. Clothing was nearly all home-made, and there was heard in every house the humming sound of the spinning-wheel, and the incessant stroke of the loom. . . . There were no kid gloves and luxuries of that sort, and one pair of shoes had to last a year. . . . Children knew when Sundary had come by the appearance of coffee on the table . . . and sugar was kept to be seen rather than to be eaten. Dependence upon neighbors made them more helpful in time of need, and more sociable as well.”

By 1828, also, the village of Rebersburg near the center of the valley had become a local market place to accommodate the farm-folk, providing a general store, tavern, physician, log school, cemetery, and a Lutheran-Reformed brick church, which had recently replaced an earlier log structure.

If the Wolf family differed from some of their neighbors, it was in their respect for learning and the value of education. They managed to send their six sons to secondary academies for at least a few terms, two of whom went on to college and theological seminary to become ministers of the gospel, and one of the latter studied in Germany. It would be misleading, however, to portray them as "bookish," if it implies withdrawal from an active social life. They mingled with their friends in the special events as they came along through the year: parties at New Year's, and visitations through the sleighing season; singing schools, hayings, corn huskings, butcherings, and barn-raisings; weddings, including infares (receptions) and bellings; christenings and confirmations; and camp meeting (Methodists in August, and United Brethren in September). There was also hunting for wild pigeons and grouse, and
fishing. All were opportunities to socialize and escape from the routine on the farm.

A glimpse of Brush Valley’s social life described with obvious exaggeration by a young farmer in a letter to Henry when he was eighteen, catches a bit of drama:

“You said I should let you know when the camp meetings commenced. It begins on the 19th [of August]; that is, the Methodist. The United Brethren begins on the third of next month. I almost forgot to tell you we had great times at old Weaver’s this week making hay. There was fifteen men at the table, and not one of them fit to carve a chicken. At last John Weaver undertook the job. Well he worked away about an hour, and then give it up for a bad job. He only got one leg off. Then Benovel Root was elected carver. We he went at [it] rough and tumble, and cut and hacked away until chicken, dish, broth and all went under the table.

“By golly, I almost forgot to mention, Bevy Colby is married to Sam Slemer, Cas Sugar is married to Wolly Schlagle. Adam Gensel is also married again; George Young to Rachel Bierly. . . .”

The following winter the same writer reported to Henry that Mary Winters had married George Strayer. “They saranaded [sic] them in full. . . . I was speaking to a girl about you, and made a bargain for you one night; and so try to come as soon as you can. I [sup]pose you know the girl, Lisa Gramley. Paul [Wolf’s] young folks were here at your house, sleighing. We had first rate times, I tell you. We almost upset the house and threw the chimney [sic] out of the chimly [sic].”

Henry shared the chores on the farm with his brothers and sisters, and attended the neighborhood one-room country school. At sixteen he appears to have worked for a time in a store in Rebersburg, and in February of 1847, when eighteen, he matriculated at the Mifflinburg Academy. Mifflinburg offered opportunities for employment as well as education, and in addition to his Uncle Henry, his Uncle John Gast was a tanner, his Uncle George Wolf, a store keeper, and his Cousin A. S. Cratzer, a physician.

His stay at the academy, however, lasted only until May, when his Uncle Henry invited him to enter his employ as a store clerk, a position expected to provide training and experience which would enable an ambitious and capable young man to eventually conduct a store of his own.

He accepted with a vim and vigor which would be characteristic of
him through a long career in business and banking. And, if his enthusiasm for his work occasionally wavered, his spirits must have been rallied by his association with the Gast family, where he now resided.

Instead of a daily routine behind a counter, he was oftentimes delivering or procuring merchandise, running errands to fetch a cook or hired girl, meeting a canal barge at Selinsgrove, Northumberland or Montandon, or driving his Uncle to Selinsgrove to board a canal packet on his semiannual buying trips to Philadelphia. On one occasion he drove as far as the Clarks Ferry Bridge at the mouth of the Juniata River to intercept an errant delivery of goods. Or he might set out to collect unpaid purchases. And sometimes on work days he joined the Gasts and their friends on excursions to the mountain to pick whortleberries (huckleberries or blueberries) or on fishing and hunting trips.

In September of his first year on the job he and his young cousin, Spyker (J.D.S.) Gast, attended a camp meeting west of Hartleton. On the day before Christmas in cold and blustery weather he rode horseback to his home for a brief visit with his family and friends, where he enjoyed a day of butchering and an evening with "the second girl I ever did court."

Yet, despite all of this, if Henry had doubts regarding his chosen occupation, they might have been its limited monetary returns at the outset. No record of the terms of his clerkship appear in his records, but Gast presumably sent sums to his parents and retained money in trust for him. He also received his board and lodging. But his personal account book shows very little cash in hand.

His initial expenditures were for clothing, and while the garments are not listed specifically, it is obvious that a store clerk had to be properly dressed, since the materials included tweed, calico, gingham, muslin, satin and silk; also a cap, gloves, boots, studs, suspenders and shoes; also buttons and thread. It added up to forty-two dollars with an employee discount reducing it to thirty-four dollars. All other expenses during the first year came to $6.47, which included $3.75 for a violin, .80 for postage (the usual cost was .05 with the receiver ordinarily paying the cost, unless it were a young man writing to a young woman), .50 for light refreshments, including candy and oysters, .25 for mending boots, and .50 for daguerreotypes (Photography had just come to Mifflinburg.); $5.26 of the $6.47 had been contributed by his family, making the sum paid by Gast $34 in store goods and $1.20 in cash!

His one "extravagance" was the violin. At home one had been handed
down from one child to another, and a year later he purchased an
unidentified instrument, and joined the first Mifflinburg brass band
directed by Henry Yearick, a local hatter. Henry served as its secretary
for a number of years.

That Henry was a sociable young man and enjoyed the *comarada*
associated with young bachelorhood is evident in his correspondence.
Both countryside and villages and towns of Central Pennsylvania at this
time were already overpopulated (taking into consideration the economy
in that period), and even before Horace Greeley offered his oft quoted
one liner, “Go west, young man,” hundreds of Buffalo Valley people
were already moving there. Students from the Mifflinburg Academy
were scattering to find employment, and Henry was soon corresponding
with some of them who were teaching in Lock Haven, McEwensville,
Millersburg and Curwinsville, and other of his friends were writing
from more distant places. One is of particular interest in that it bridges a
new life at Oberlin College in Ohio with the old days in Brush Valley.
The writer praises the broad curricula, boasting that “If a man has too
great an ambition we can lower it, but if it is too low we can elevate it; if
one should be stuck with one of the lovely sex, we can heal the wound,
though his heart may wilt. We don’t care [if it] is for his own benefit.”
Having introduced the subject of females, he proceeded to warn Henry
against yielding to the “impure air” of wedlock. To do so would turn
him into a traitor to the cause of “single blessedness.” Yet he did not
overlook advising him to “Tell all the girls I was acquainted with in
Brush Valley . . . that I am well, and send my compliments to
them.”

Warnings to beware of marriage were repeated by other of his
correspondents. But short of wedlock they wished him success in his
endeavors with the opposite sex.

It is evident from his correspondence, also, that his “gang” occasion-
ally gathered to tilt a festive glass, and correspondents referred with
nostalgia to Captain Forster’s, Crotzer’s, the Eagle Tavern—the public
houses in Mifflinburg. A letter from William J. Smith, a former
Mifflinburg resident, of Freeport, Illinois, recalled the old times, and
informed him that he and other of his friends there had drunk a toast to
him and their Mifflinburg pals on militia day. “We hope you think of
us, and drink health to us.”

Allowing for embroidering, not unusual
among youths anywhere or any time, Henry’s friends would appear to
have been a lively and fun-loving lot!

Living away from home for the first time Henry recorded no romantic
interest during the first months, and his thoughts frequently turned back
to his old friends in Brush Valley. Noting that Amanda Hosterman had
married, he expressed his displeasure. “She was the first girl I ever courted when seventeen on Saturday night before Whitenday at Henry Smull’s and the second at David Wolf’s on the first night in the year 1847. I always thought more of her than any other girl.” Elsewhere he recalled that he had called on Rebecca Stine, “the second girl I ever did court.” But he added that his interest in her had flagged three nights later when she gave him the “mitten,” a Brush Valley, as well as Mifflinburg way of saying she rejected his invitation to take her home from a party.

By the second year, however (he was now nineteen), the sights and sounds of Mifflinburg were drawing him into its social milieu. The first intimation occurred in his diary on March 3, 1848. “Attended a party at E. Smith’s; the first party in Mifflinburg.” In December he noted that he had “noticed Miss Ann [Lephart].” And several days later he added that she and Harriet Shoch had dropped in at the store, and he had become acquainted with her. Then, calling at her house, he invited her to Motz’s ball at Woodward, a sixteen mile sleigh ride. She accepted.

In his diary the day following the affair he commented: “In the afternoon I started with a party to go to Motz’s ball, the first ball I ever attended. I had Miss Ann for the party, the first time I had her out, and the first girl I had out from this town, also the first one I kept company with in this Burg. . . . We left Motz’s about 3 o’clock; arrived here at daylight.” It might be added that it was not unusual for sleighing parties to last through the night. In addition to the pleasure, the coming of dawn facilitated the driving home.

During the weeks which followed he pursued Ann with a zest suggestive of first love. It began somewhat informally in a manner considered proper, with two young men calling at a young woman’s home. His diary depicts this transition: “Sam Blair [who would later become the father of Harry F. Blair, a prominent local buggy builder] and I called on Ann. . . . Called on Ann to invite her to Captain Foster’s ball with Blair; too late, Bill Smith invited her. . . . Attended ball with Blair; [obtained] good will of Ann. . . . Took Miss Ann from singing school. . . . Took Miss Ann to temperance meeting. . . . Hugh Wilson and I called on Miss Ann. . . . Took Ann home from church. . . . Went to ventriloquist show with Ann. . . . Blair and I called on Sarah Hoffman and Ann.”

At this point the diary indicates a more serious development. “Took Ann home; asked her for her company. She accepted. . . . Took Ann home from singing geography. . . . Courted Ann, first time.” A few nights later Henry noted that he “stayed” for the first time, which
inferred that he had remained with Ann into the wee hours of the night after her parents had retired. It symbolized parenteral approval of his courtship, and an anticipation of an eventual marriage. Henry’s acknowledgment of it in his diary was a laconic, “I stayed with Ann,” and a few nights later, “I stayed with Ann until 3 o’clock.”

However, five months after their sleigh ride, they had a “spat” [spat]. “Called on Ann; all former intimacy dropped; hardly a word.” Ann returned his watch, and he told her that their “former intimacy was ended, with the intention of never to renew it again.” But several months later they met at a wake, and “healed up” their “former difficulties.” And several nights later, after attending June Titus and Company’s circus, he stayed, “where we passed some very pleasant hours.” In December on the anniversary of their meeting he wrote that they talked of love. Shortly thereafter he “serenaded” her on her twenty-first birthday, and he was pleased to have a local fortune teller predict that he would marry in two years. He attended his first dance with Ann, a new and controversial pastime in town, and when a report of it reached Brush Valley it elicited a rebuke from his parents.

“I was informed that you was in some notion to attend the Dancing School,” his father wrote. “I hope you will not let any such as that be heard of you, and pud [put] your parents in troupel [sic]. Enuf [sic] without hearing that. You know that we alwes [sic] trained you to keep out of such company, as I know your uncles [George Wolf an earlier partner of Gast and Henry Gast] alwes [sic] kept out of such company, and there was very few people in Mifflinburg who was more respected. . . . I know that your Uncle and [Aunt] Mary thought a hip [heap?] of you, and I would like to make a fine young man out of you.

“Therefore I want you to try and keep in with them; else I am afraid you will loose [sic] that place, and we would be ashamed to come to that place any more. . . . And I hope you will take your father’s advice, and do as your Uncle and Aunt direct you to do; and don’t listent [sic] to[o] much on other folks that is all wickedness.

“Be alwes [sic] a good boy.”

There is no record of Henry’s response, but he wrote a defense of his over-all behavior to his brother William in Centre Hall, possibly in the hope of mollifying his parents. “We had but few dances this winter in our place, which is a thing I know you condemn. I have not attended one. Yet I will give you my opinion respecting the art of dancing. Dancing in itself is a very pleasing and perfectly harmless exercise, but I am
opposed to public balls. They are never productive of good, but always of harm. But the sin does not lie in the mere act of dancing, but in the improper hours which are kept, the mingling with improper associates...the vice of intoxicating liquors. But for people to pretend that dancing alone is sinful is too absurd for any sensible person to believe. As well they might blame a person for walking."

Did Henry dance at this time or remain a spectator? Evidence is lacking, but he and Ann were attending dances in the spring of 1850, and he would be escorting Ellen Moss to dances a year later.

But time was now running out on their romance. Henry was distressed by reports that Ann had been seeing another man during a visit in Lewisburg. "I told her that she did not do the fair thing in encouraging me to come to see her.... Miss Ann remarked that it was strange a person did not know from one week what he would do the next, and said we had acted like babies." Both made overtures toward patching up their difficulties, but on September 5 he returned her ring, and requested his "letter." "I spoke to Miss Ann last," he noted, and two days later he added, "Miss Ann sent me my letter." While no copy of this letter has been found, it would appear to have been a statement of his affection for her, and possibly of his marital intentions given in exchange for her keepsake. A year later he confided in his diary. "DeHoss and Ann Leiphart was married." Then, he excised it with his pen.

While the evidence is incomplete, a partial explanation of the blighted romance may have been Henry's interpretation of the responsibilities of marriage. His future as a store clerk remained undetermined, and he lacked capital to strike out for himself. Marriage, in his judgment, would have to wait until he could meet its obligations. In this respect he did not differ from accepted standards of his socio-economic group. A young man entering the legal, medical or teaching profession was expected to engage in it until he could provide a home for a family; and a bride-to-be was expected to wait. Thus, a breach of promise was a serious matter, and might end in court. As will be seen, Henry's relationship with Ann was not to be the only setback on his approach to matrimony.

Meanwhile, back on the farm in Brush Valley dancing was not the only temptation which the home folk feared might divert Henry from their aspirations for his future. The Mexican War was attracting enlistees, and while Henry did not comment upon his feelings about joining up, he saved copies of the stirring war songs and other memorabilia calculated to stimulate the war fervor. His family joined to
voice their opposition to his enrolling, and Henry limited his activities to
a participation in the band and attendance at war rallies.

Shortly thereafter another temptation confronting Henry loomed
ominously upon the family’s horizon, the Gold Rush to California.
Whatever his views may have been at the outset, he caught a touch of the
fever after six Lewisburg young men drove through Mifflinburg in a
covered wagon enroute to the gold fields in February of 1849. He
paused, however, to seek the wishes of his parents.

His father’s response left no doubt about their sentiments:

“If you take my advice,” he admonished, “and I hope you will do
so, put them notions out of your mint (mind), and stay where you
are, and be savish (saving) with what you have and what you earn;
if you keep your health, you have chance enough to make a good
living in this world without going to that country. You must a seen
as well as I in the newspaper that some is coming back without
gold, and spent their money and lost their health.

“If you would go we would not expect of seein [sic] you in this
world, and I would not like to undertake that journey with the
capital you have or could raise. And if you should have luck for
maken [sic] a fortune by it, it is not alwas [sic] the case [that] rich
people is the happiest in this world nor in the coming. . . . I hope
you will be a good boy, and remember your father and mother.”

Whether parental advice was the deciding factor can not be ascertained,
but Henry neither enlisted in the army nor joined the gold rush, but
remained a store keeper until the last years of his life.

If Henry’s thoughts lingered upon Ann during the weeks following
their separation, they are not revealed in his diary:

“I took Miss Ellen [Moss] home from Church. . . . I called on Sally
[Wolf]. . . . I took Miss Ellen to the lecture. . . . I took Miss Ellen to
the Methodist Church. . . . In the evening I was at Captain Smith’s
party. . . . I took home Miss Ellen and Miss Hassenplug from
Church. . . . James Newman and I went up to Kleckners to drive
down a couple girls. . . . I called on Miss Sally [Wolf], and then on
Miss Ellen. . . . Dr. Miller and I was out seeing some patient; in
the evening I took Miss Ellen home. . . . Took Miss Ellen home,
and stayed awhile. . . . Mr. Eyster had a free supper at Crotz-
er’s. . . . We had a party at Stitzers. . . . I stayed with Miss Ellen;
first time.”

Thus Ellen Moss had replaced Ann in his affections. She was a
daughter of Daniel and Mary Ann Moss. A wagon maker, Moss was switching to buggies at this time, and four of his sons would subsequently follow this trade. Their home was at the southwest corner of Chestnut and Sixth streets, and their shops spread over the lots just west of it. Ellen was six months younger than Henry, and since she was the oldest of the daughters, she must have had an early introduction to housekeeping. A picture taken when she was about sixty indicates that she was small and slender, and had a rather angular face. Little is known of her education, but in later life correspondence with her children was handled by her husband. Life in the home seemed to revolve around her, and both the children and grandchildren thought of it as their second home.

Henry’s courtship continued through the fall and winter, and the spring of 1851. In May she joined him on a four day visit with his family in Brush Valley. In September, after viewing “Panorama” they talked about “first love.” But in December Henry observed that he had hurt her feelings very much by correcting her. Yet during Christmas week he noted that their conversation was “long to be remembered,” and he termed New Year’s eve “a happy one with Ellen.” But in late January he wrote that they had “some solemn conversation,” and a day later added that he was “happy to say that they passed a few hours without quarreling and ill feelings.” And in March he observed that they had come to a fair understanding regarding their former difficulties.

While the nature of their problem cannot be fully determined, it would appear that Henry had been dragging his feet on the question of marriage. Two entries in his diary at this time offer clues. On March 28 he mentioned that Ellen told him that her father had asked her, “what we are going to do,” and on April 25 he added that Ellen had explained “the gossip that has been going on between her folks and others.” He made no further mention of the matter in his diary, and he continued to see her as before, but on June 6 he added, “In the evening Ellen and I had the pleasure of taking a walk. After we returned, there was some indifference prevailing between us which will long be remembered. It taught me a lesson that can not be rejected.” But again the setback did not disrupt their dating pattern, and on the next to the last day of his diary on June 30 he noted, “Ellen and I took a walk about town.”

On the following day, July 1, 1852, Henry terminated his employment with his Uncle Henry, and went to work for John M. Taylor in his general store. The following year he entered into a partnership with Taylor, a transition from employee to management he had had in mind for six years. It was made possible by Henry’s aptitude for business, and
financial backing within the family. His father, facing a terminal illness (though probably not diagnosed as such), provided $100 of the $700 needed. His brother-in-law, Daniel Bartges, supplied a loan of $350, and his Uncle Henry, credit of $100.

While one might hesitate to tie Henry's finances directly to his courtship, six weeks after taking employment with Taylor he drafted two documents, and possibly a second draft of the one, suggestive of a significant decision. Both are dated August 15, 1852. The first is a letter to Ellen, which might be defined as a confirmation of a proposal of marriage. On the margin of the first draft is a reference to Lord Byron, "page 41." (He had sold a copy of Byron's Works a few months earlier for 87½ cents.) He may have plagiarized Byron, but the writer has found no evidence of it:

"At length, after doubt and suspicions," he wrote, "I have given my hand and heart, and in return you gave me yours. Both had been at fault, but they were now united, and the pangs of death alone could sever them. Many may consider you a coquette, and me, a deceiver, but we defy the world to disturb our feelings of affection for each other. Ours has been a life variegated with joy and sorrow, sunshine and tears, but we have been spared; and knowledge, truth, grace and virtue shall be our guide, and, where these dictate, happiness must follow, pure, bright and spotless. . . ."

It might be asked whether he delivered the letter.

On the same day he drafted what was surely a more unusual message to Ellen's parents, designed to relieve their doubts regarding his intentions toward their daughter, and to express his dissatisfaction with Mrs. Moss' conduct in the matter. It reads in part:

"I have heard frequently (of) some serious remarks or threats that have been made as though this running to your house by me would be brought to a close before long. Such tidings are hard to endure. . . . Yes, it is enough to break the heart of one who possesses tender feelings. . . .

"I must say to you, Mrs. Moss, that some of your sex have been talking and carrying news to you. I know they tried to lower me in your estimation by saying that I called on your daughter just for pasttime [sic], and that I would certainly disappoint her; for which I can call upon God to witness that I never dreamed of. I have it, not from Ellen alone, but from a warm friend in whom I have all
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confidence, and my own eyes and my own ears, which can not deceive me, and your own actions toward me which have spoken louder than a thousand words.

"Now I ask you, and I earnestly desire to know, why and on what grounds you oppose me, as I am altogether in darkness of the fact.

"I could not deceive your daughter under the most trying circumstances. She has proved herself to be true and sincere to her humble friend, and is worthy of every honorable person's praise. I ask your consent, and then time until I am prepared to get married; and then we shall be united together which death alone can sever us. For I think no two ought to get married until they were fully prepared, and I think both of you will agree with me on that point.

"I have learned and considered all the qualities of your daughter's and mine with the exception of wealth, which I consider too trifling to endeavor to find out. . . . Her moral and intellectual character . . . her noble feelings and kind disposition can not be surpassed; her good sense and sound judgment will compare with all.

"If we were not certain of leading a happy life together I would at once say we would part to meet not more in this world of sorrow; no not until the clods would rattle upon our coffin lids. We would, and will then again reunite in a far better world than this, where happiness is of endless duration, and where we will have no opposition to contend with.

"If you have any other objections to render than those mentioned, will you please inform me of the same.

"Your obedient servant,
H.G. Wolf"

Again, would this solace have remained in Henry's files, or was it delivered to his prospective mother and father-in-law? If it aroused a storm of controversy in the Moss household, it had subsided by the following year, in that on May 31, 1853, Henry and Ellen became husband and wife.

Two months earlier Henry had entered into his partnership with Taylor. Thus, it was Henry G. Wolf, merchant, not Henry G. Wolf store clerk, who claimed Ellen Moss as his bride.

Ellen and Henry would live full lives as residents of Mifflinburg.
They would rear three children, two girls and a boy. Each of the three would marry well: Emma (Emmalene) to Professor Philip M. Bikle, Dean of Gettysburg College, and Edith to Benjamin K. Focht, editor, legislator and Member of Congress, and Harry to Annie Earnest, daughter of John Earnest, a distinguished Lutheran clergyman. Henry, in turn, would become a leading merchant, President of the Mifflinburg Farmers’ Bank, and director of two others. He would erect the Wolf block at 415 Chestnut Street, consisting of a three story brick store building and a fine brick residence. He was a civic leader, and chairman of the town’s centenary celebration. He was a prominent Lutheran, and served as church treasurer and secretary of the Sunday School for many years.

It might be interesting to observe that despite his misgivings and indecision regarding his own marriage, he was adamant at the outset against Emma’s marriage to Professor Bikle. He was ten years her senior, and a widower with a young son. But even more objectionable to Henry was the thought of her leaving home. He eventually capitulated—she was not one to be rebuffed easily—and the wedding was a highlight of the town’s social season. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Edmund Wolf, Henry’s younger brother, who was then a professor of theology at Gettysburg Theological Seminary, with the assistance of the Rev. Isaac Grier, pastor of the local Presbyterian Church and the Rev. William L. Heisler, of the Lutheran Church. Through the years which followed Dean Bikle’s family tie was a source of pride for Henry.

The veteran merchant retired from store keeping in 1897 after Harry had left the store to become cashier of the Farmers’ Bank, and he died in 1901 at 72. Meanwhile, Ellen’s life had centered upon her home, her children and her grand children. She died in 1916 at 86, seven years after her grandson, Dr. Paul Bikle had moved into her home and opened a medical practice. Bikle continued to reside here until his death in 1944, and his third wife lived in the home until 1977.

NOTES

The manuscripts cited in the paper remained in the Wolf residence until 1979.


2. William Magee to Henry G. Wolf, August 9, 1847, Union County Historical Society. The diary and correspondence cited elsewhere are also here.
