Some Historical Notes of South Western Pennsylvania

BY JAMES LOWRY BOWMAN

(Continued from January Issue)

Christian Krepps purchased in 1772 a tomahawk right to a tract of land adjoining Indian Peter, and had commenced an improvement at the base of a very elevated hill still known in that section as "Krepps Knob." He and his wife entering their cabin, from which they had been absent the greater part of the day, discovered a number of large rattle snakes crawling from under their bed. It turned out that they had unknowingly, built their cabin over a den of snakes, and as the warm weather approached, they were enlivened from their torpid state and had issued forth to see what intrusion had been made upon their hitherto undisturbed premises. Krepps and his wife were Germans and had resided on a part of the ground now occupied by the Northern Liberties of Philadelphia—were unaccustomed to reptiles of that kind and felt no disposition to contest the right of occupancy with their snakeships. The same day they packed up their duds and retraced the way to their former residence, a few years after returned and completed their improvement.

An early settlement was made at the mouth of Pike run by Robt. Jackman. Doct. Charles Wheeler made a settlement four miles from the river on the West side, in the year 1775 or 6. This gentleman had been educated in England and having emigrated to the Colony of Virginia received the appointment of Surgeon, and accompanied the army of Lord Dunmore in the expedition to the West. He was the only surgeon attached to that army. He soon after selected the location above stated. He was the first and for many years the only Physician in that section of Country.* He died in the year 1814 at the age of 71 years

*Inscription on tombstone in Episcopal Churchyard Brownsville.

"To the memory of Charles Wheeler, M.D., who departed this life Sep. 1813, in the 71st year of his age."

"Also in memory of Elizabeth Wheeler, who departed this life on October 13th, 1838 in the 94th year of her age. They emigrated to America in 1769."

"They were generous and good citizens."

"They died without issue and left an estate of about $10,000 to their friends the church and their domestics.

And I Joseph Crawford one of the Executors consecrate this monument to their memory in 1840."
and his wife, who came with him from England and had shared with him in all the vicissitudes of a frontier life died in the year 1838 at the advanced age of 94 years.

Not many of the tracts of land were originally “taken up” by actual settlers. Surveyors and land speculators had early penetrated the country and secured the choice spots and afterwards disposed of them to those who wished to occupy them. Money was scarce and seldom attainable and a barter was resorted to in the purchase. The consideration of a tomahawk right for a four hundred acre tract was a cow, a horse and more frequently a rifle gun.

After the expedition of Dunmore in 1774 few inroads were made by the Indians with an hostile intent. The few citizens felt pretty secure and settlements progressed more rapidly by immigration. The first flouring mill probably west of the mountains was built by Phillip Shute herein-before mentioned, about the year 1772-3, on a small but permanent stream flowing at the base of Laurel hill, two miles East of Union Town. The next and about the same time, by John Davidson a mill-right, on a branch of Redstone Creek three miles East of Brownsville. This last was what is denominated a “Thunder gust” mill. It was put up at little expense for a dam on an insufficient stream and could only move after heavy rains, it was of not much convenience to the public and had it not been for a few hand mills brought from the East, inconvenience for the want of bread would have prevailed. These hand mills were like the old fashioned post coffee mills, but on a much larger scale, they had a fly wheel appendant to assist the power applied.

In 1780 Samuel Jackson built a flouring and saw mill at the mouth of big Redstone Creek. He was a mill right by trade, and very capable of arranging the whole so as to perform well and make good work. Soon after, Septimus Cadwalader had his flouring mill built on Dunlaps Creek, one mile from its mouth. These two mills were of great convenience to the settlers about the “old Fort”.

Andrew Kramer, Christian Kramer, George Reppart, Christian Reppart and four others, all glass blowers who had come from Germany and were working at a glass factory on Pope Creek. Frederick County, Maryland, were
solicited by Col. Hart, the father-in-law of Henry Clay, to go to Lexington, Ky. and in connection with him, erect a glass factory there; they proceeded thither, but the country was so new, few houses and those of the most ordinary kind with greased paper in the windows as a substitute for glass, they thought the prospect not very promising and all determined to return to the place of their former labours. On their way they met with Albert Gallatin at New Geneva where he then resided. That gentleman in the course of conversation learned the object of their journey to the West and their disappointment. He proposed that in connection with himself, works should be erected where they then were. His proposition was acceded to and in due time the works were completed and put into operation. This was the first glass factory in the Western Country and many of the old settlers will recollect the "New Geneva glass".

In 1795 Samuel Jackson and Jonathan Sharpless erected on Redstone Creek four miles from Brownsville, a paper mill with two engines. This was the first mill of that description. and upon it, the people of the West were mainly dependant for their writing, printing and wrapping paper.

About the year 1790 a furnace was erected by Turnbull Marmie and Co. on Jacobs Creek, but soon after it was put into blast, an accident happened and it was discontinued. The first successful one, was erected a few years after by Col. Isaac Meason, John Gibson and Moses Dillon called Union Furnace. It was propelled by the water of Dunbar's run and situated 8 miles N. E. of Union Town. The number was increased as the population and consequent demand was augmented. To some Forges were appended, by which the metal was converted by means of heavy hammers, into bar iron, of the various sizes and dimensions. The supply of castings and bar iron from these works, were of great importance to the people West of the mountains as they were previously dependent upon the East for their supply. The transportation and expense thereof, caused the price to be high and added considerable to the outlay.—but the manufacture of the raw material in the West, brought hither manufactures of the various agricultural implements and in a few years a supply equal to the demand was fabricated.
The French who were claimants of the country from Fort Duquesne to New Orleans, had established a line of military posts between these points and were early navigators of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. In 1772 John Dawson and five others dug out two canoes, near where Connelsville now stands, launched and lashed them together, and embarking, navigated them to New Orleans on a trip of exploration and pleasure. They were about four months making the voyage thither. It is probable, these men were the first Americans that made a voyage the whole length of these rivers.

It is really astonishing when we look back at the adventurous disposition, manifested by the early settlers of the West, and in few instances more remarkable than in the voyagers mentioned. The two Dawsons had been raised in the neighborhood of George Town D. C., had never been accustomed to a frontier life, until they crossed the mountains in 1769 and 1770. It would seem that commingling but for a brief period, they imbibed the spirit of their associates and a curiosity excited to explore a wilderness of two thousand miles in extent, encountering dangers, fatigues and in risque of their lives, and all it would appear as if to ascertain where the mighty river poured forth her waters. John Dawson, one of the voyagers, we have already stated herein, died in Oct. 1845 at Urbana, Ohio, at the advanced age of 97 years and 8 months. If a similar voyage had been made, in the latter years of his prolonged life, what an unsurpassed change would have presented itself to his view.

Col. Burd who was sent out in 1759 with two hundred men to cut a road from Braddock road to the Monongahela river, states in his journal that they had for their Chaplain the Rev. Doct. Allison of the Church of England, through whose official instrumentality several mutinies were quelled. He doubtless was the first Rev. gentleman, that raised his voice at the throne of grace in this region, if not, West of the mountains, unless a chaplain accompanied the expedition of Braddock in 1755 or of Forbes in 1758, of which no mention is made in history.

The first church edifice built in this section was upon a lot of four acres donated by George Clark four miles East
of Brownsville. It was for those of the Episcopal Church and the principal contributors were Mrs. Hutton, Capt. Macgruder, Wm. Goe, Geo. Clark and others. The building is of hewn logs, and although erected previous to or during the Revolution is still standing in a dilapidated state. The Rev. Mr. Matthews was the Rector. He was succeeded by the Rev. Robt. Ayres, who is still living at Franklin, Pa. Another was built of similar materials about the same period, and for the same denomination about midway between Brownsville and Union Town on a few acres of ground given by Robt. Jackson. This latter building was taken down a few years ago and a brick one put in its place.

Four miles South West of Brownsville, the Presbyterian denomination erected their first house of worship; it was of hewn logs, but a substantial stone one now supplies its place. Doct. Dunlap the first or at farthest the second President of Jefferson College was the first Pastor. His successor was the Rev. Jacob Jennings, who continued to officiate for nearly forty years, and until age and infirmities prevented. Another was built by the same society, about the same time, near the Northern line of the County, wherein, for many years the Rev. Wm. Finley officiated as an acceptable Pastor to the congregation.

Previous to 1800 the Society of Friends built their first Meetinghouse two miles S/West of Brownsville, which having been destroyed soon after by fire, caused the same meeting, to obtain a piece of ground on the hill back of Bridgeport on which they erected a large stone building for holding their meetings.

The whole of Fayette County is underlaid by a strata of superior bituminous coal, and of such easy access, that every farm may have its own supply. During the progress of Col. Burd's road cutting in 1759 his men encamped on a small run, which empties into Redstone Creek, some four or five miles from where Brownsville now stands. In the bed of that stream, fully exposed to view by the action of the water, stone coal was obtained and about one bushel burned. This was probably the first coal burned in that region by the whites. That the Indians or a race of people, of whom we have no knowledge, were aware of its presence and of its ignitable property, we can readily believe,
from the burned appearance of the ground and the coal cinders found at the face of the coal in many places, eight or ten feet from the surface, when excavating to obtain access to the coal vein. No coal had been used at Brownsville when Jacob Bowman Esq. settled there in 1787. The year following, he had a wrought iron grate made and obtained coal from the bed of Dunlaps Creek about a mile above its junction with the river, which he made use of in his family. It was not then known, that the hill on which the town stands, rested upon a bed of coal, and that all the hills in the vicinity equally abounded with it. There was no inducement to search for it, wood was abundant and easily obtained at a cheap rate. It was by accident that the vein of 8 to 10 feet in thickness was known to exist thereabouts.

In 1793 John McCourtney was having a cellar excavated at the base of the River hill near the northern limits of the town plot, where the workmen came upon the coal. The next year he opened an entrance nearby, from which the citizens got their supplies for several years, as it gradually came into more general use.

The good housewives were tenacious of their rights in the kitchen department and very reluctantly gave way to its substitution as fuel for culinary purposes. Custom and fashion however in a few years obtained the predominancy, and we might say that it is now indiscriminately used.

After the successful campaign of General Forbes in 1758 and the capture of Fort du Quesne, it became necessary to form a more intimate and accessible communication between the settlement and that distant Post and also the establishment of others to prevent the predatory incursions of the Savages into the newly settled parts of the territory. The manuscript journal of Col. Burd which is minute and written in a very legible hand and now among the archives of Pennsylvania at Harrisburg states that in 1759 he was dispatched with two hundred men to cut a road from Braddock road to the Monongahela. That he proceeded along said road to the base of Laurel hill to the settlement of Mr. Gist or Gest, the same who is mentioned in the history of Braddocks war as having given some pioneer aid to that army. That plantation is now known as
Mt. Braddock, the family domicile of the late Col. Isaac Meason and his descendants to the present day. From Gist's he diverged to the west and at an angle of divergence he marked a tree J. B. 1759—pursuing that course he crossed Redstone Creek to the left bank and whilst the men were employed he reconnoitered the country by pursuing that stream to its junction with the Monongahela river, thence up that river about a mile to where it was joined by the Nemocalling Creek, now known as Dunlap's Creek, separating the two boroughs of Brownsville and Bridgeport and over which on the route of the national road there is a bridge of entire cast iron, the most permanent and the only bridge of that material in the United States. On the high bank at the junction of the Monongahela and Nemocalling he built a fort.

We have seen it stated in a credible work that the fort at that time was built by Capt. Paull, that is doubtless an error as the journal of Col. Burd should supply ample evidence to settle the matter. The probability is that after the accomplishment of the object for which the commanding officer was sent he placed Capt. Paull in command.

In 1794 an opposition was manifested by many of the citizens of the four south-western counties of Pennsylvania to the Act of Congress levying a tax on distilled liquor which eventually broke into open resistance and was known as the whiskey insurrection. The central locality of the operations was at Parkinson's Ferry on the Monongahela, now Williamsport, but as some of the citizens of Fayette County participated and that county was famous for her numerous distilleries, several meetings of the insurgents were held at Brownsville.

Samuel Jackson, a member of the Society of Friends, whose religious principles were opposed to the distillation of liquor, was favorable to the Acts of Government and had called one of the insurgent meetings a "Scrub Congress". This gave umbrage to them and at a subsequent meeting it was proposed that a file of men should be dispatched to the residence of Samuel a short distance therefrom and bring him before them for condemnation and punishment. Samuel, being a man of peace, submitted without resistance to the commands of his unwelcome visitors and proceeded with them into the midst of the assemblage as unconcernedly as if he were attending to his private avocation.
The late Judge Brackenridge, who was of the assemblage, was personally acquainted with Samuel and had a friendly regard for him, mounted the stand and commenced a harangue in which he admitted that Samuel has been remiss in applying so inappropriate a term to so august and legitimate an assemblage of sovereign people, but that he attributed it more to a want of reflection on his part than to an enmity or design and that as great a degradation as they could inflict upon him in return would be to stigmatize him with the name of ‘Scrub Quaker’. It had the intended effect. The insurgents took [the advice] and Samuel was discharged with the appellation of being a Scrub Quaker.

The settlement of the country has been attended with difficulties and dangers from Indian depredation as it progressed westward, from the Atlantic.—The settlers of the Conococheague valley, now embraced within the limits of Washington County, Maryland, had privations to endure from marauding Indians, and had to till their fields, encumbered with their guns—About the year 1751. John Adam Easter, Adam Rough, Peter Shees & Jacob Shees, who had settled in that valley about 8 miles west of where Hagerstown now stands, were employed in gathering the grain of one of the parties, and hauling the same to a private Fort about three miles distant when they were attacked by a party of Indians who had made a descent from the adjacent North Mountain. Jacob Shees was killed at the first fire. John Adam Easter, in the act of returning the fire was wounded in the hand and shoulder—Adams Rough and Peter Shees were made prisoners—John Adam Easter fled in the direction of the expected return of the waggon, for the purpose of apprising the hands with the waggon, of the dangers—He carried his gun with him, but finding himself getting weak with the loss of blood, he placed it, under some willows growing along a branch in his rout, where it was afterwards found and has been retained by my father Jacob Bowman Esq. as a memento of the danger of his grandfather—The Indians having bound the hands of the two prisoners, Rough and Shees—and lashed them to trees—pursued Easter—but he having reached the waggon and gotten into it—hastily retreated to the fort—

Peter Easter son of John the preceding and John Hicks boys of about 15 years old—had been sent in pur-
suit of the cows which had wandered off from the Fort &
were supposed to be in their accustomed range about a
mile further off—Whilst thus engaged, they too were fired
upon by an other party of Indians and fled in a direction
to the grain field where they knew their friends were em-
ployed. They reached the adjacent wood where Adam
Rough was bound to a tree, and succeeded in engaging
him from the tree, but having no knife to cut through
with which his hands were bound, were endeavoring to
loosen with their hands. While thus engaged, the Indian
who had pursued John Adam Easter returned for his
prisoner and finding Peter Easter employed in extricating
him—tomahawked and killed him on the spot—John Hicks
was taken prisoner—Adam Rough made his escape a few
days after his imprisonment—Peter Shees was retained
three years—and John Hicks who was but a youth, became
enamoured with the Indian life, remained with them—In
1785 he visited his mother who was still residing near
Hagerstown, accoutered in all the habiliments of an Indian
and was very desirous that his only brother should accom-
panying him to the nation and become one of them—

The adventure here related, does not differ material-
ly from hundreds of others which have taken place in the
advance of civilization upon Indian territory and, and I
should not have considered it worthy of your notice, but
for the purpose of identifying the ancestry of the num-
eros family of Hicks' who have figured conspicuously
in the transactions of the Cherokee Nation—John Hicks,
was six feet two or three inches high, athletic & stout
in proportions, and worthy of the natives' admiration and
respect as a chieftain. He had several native wives and
his family became numerous—

According to Mr. Edmund Hayes Bell, who kindly submitted for
publication this old manuscript, the last three paragraphs, unsigned
but in the handwriting of James Lowry, may be a part, unattached,
of a letter to Hon. Andrew Stewart, February 24, 1845. This letter
will be published in the July issue.—The Editor.
List of Articles Presented to The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

399—Frame 18 1/2 x 23

The Map of West Pennsylvania.

Showing Wills Creek—Georges Creek Savage River—Turkey Foot—Yaugh Yaughgone River Turtle Creek—Lacoo Nick Creek—French Creek The Allegheny Monongahela and Ohio River's. Also showing a trail or road beginning at Wills Creek to Turkey Foot to Mr. Gist's new settlement to Queen Aliquip pas to Mr. Fraziers to Shanapins Town crossing the Ohio to The Logs Town to Menacing Town to Mingo Town to Cusausca Town to Vinango to Cussawaya to Fort LeBoeuf to Fort Presqu' Isle.

Copied from the original in the British Museum (Add.MS.15.563 B.) for W. M. Darlington Esq., 1882.

This map was exhibited in the Pittsburgh Building at the Sesqui Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, Penna. 1926.

Presented by
Mr. William H. Stevenson

400—Frame 15 1/2 x 18

Plan of Pittsburgh.
Pittsburgh in 1825-26; From "The Travels of H. H. Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach, in North America, 1825-26."

Presented by
Mr. John C. Slack

401—Frame 12 1/2 x 9 1/2

Sketch found among Wayne Mss Collection Letters, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia. This sketch is believed to represent the arrangement of Wayne's encampment around Fort Fayette, in 1792, with the outposts on the other side of the river Allegheny, and in other directions to protect it. Reference to the map of Bernhard, presented by Mr. Slack, showing the small stream running into the river, seems to bear out this idea.

402—Frame 8 1/2 x 12 1/2

Collot's Map.
The Plan of the town of Pittsburgh, 1796.

Presented to
The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, by Dolly Madison Chapter United States Daughters of 1812.
Containing several photographs, one of which is of the first automobile gasoline pumping fire engine built in America.

The apparatus was built in 1908 by Thomas L. Pfarr, now Fire Marshall of Allegheny County. The work was done in his laundry plant, without a drawing or blue print, only a pencil sketch made on the white washed wall. Mr. Pfarr was born and lived opposite No. 4 engine company, so his early interest was in the firemen, and the doings at the No. 4 station. When lettering the engine No. 4, D. P. S. Bureau of Fire, Pittsburgh, was placed on the machine in honor of the Company of his boyhood days. At the time of building the automobile fire engine the officials of Pittsburgh could not be made to believe in its practicability. The apparatus was so built that the same engine which propelled the machine pumped water and threw four streams at one time. It had two reels at the rear each with a capacity of 600 feet of hose arranged so as to lay two lines at one time already coupled for action. The hose could be reeled up by operating a foot lever. The builders ideas were 25 years in advance as time has proved automobile fire engines so practical that they have replaced all horse drawn apparatus.

One picture shows the Fire Marshall, to his right is the late Joseph Busha, who was the inventor and builder of the first steam pumping fire apparatus in the United States. He was also the inventor of the registering Fire alarm, the automatic unhooking of the horses, the swinging harnesses, etc. Mr. Busha for 40 years was connected with the Pittsburgh Fire Dept. To the left is J. R. Galbraith the automobile mechanic who did the mechanical work in the construction of the apparatus. Elmer Wiskerman, standing at the rear wheel made the detail drawings for the castings.

The second picture shows the apparatus in action. The third picture is a photograph of the original Vigilant Hand Pump fire apparatus recently presented to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and now on exhibition at the Carnegie Museum. Picture four shows the Historical Bell that hung in the tower of old city Hall, Smithfield St., and which sounded all the fire alarms in the city of Pittsburgh. The name of the maker, A. Fultons Sons & Company is plainly visible. The bell was cast in 1886 under the personal supervision of A. Fulton, Sr., the father of the late Mayor Andrew Fulton. In 1921 the City of Pittsburgh presented the bell to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Picture four shows the Fire Marshall striking the bell on the signing of the Armistice November 11, 1918. Each year Armistice Day is commemorated in the same way, as is the anniversary of the Great Fire of Pittsburgh, 1845 at three minutes before twelve o’clock, April 10th.

Presented by
Mr. Thomas L Pfarr

Four Standard Flags.

Presented by
Mr. R. C. Schanck
Articles Presented to Historical Society

405—Scrap Book
Belonging to the late Mrs. Agnes M. Hays Gormly,
Presented by Mr. Gilbert Adams Hays.

406—Frames 16x22
Containing the photographs of Pittsburgh Mayors.
The Society is greatly indebted to Mayor Kline for a gift of
35 photographic reproductions of the portraits of Pittsburgh
Mayors.

Presented by Hon. Chas. F. Kline.

VOLUMES RECEIVED
Historic Churches of the World.
By Robert B. Ludy
Presented by Robert B. Ludy, M.D.

History of Columbiana County, Ohio.
In Two Volumes Illustrated.
By Harold B. Barth
Presented by Mr. Harold B. Barth

“Old Tom Fossit”
A True Narrative Concerning A Thrilling Epoch of Early
Colonial Days.
By John S. Ritenour
Presented by Mr. Florence C. Miller.

“George Clymer”
Signer of the Declaration of Independence
Framer of the Constitution of the United States and of the
State of Pennsylvania.
His Family and Descendants.
By James R. Macfarlane.
Presented by Hon. James R. Macfarlane.

“Allegheny Cemetery”
Historical Account of Incidents and Events Connected With
Its Establishment.
Reports of 1848—1857.
Presented by Mr. Benjamin Page.

“McNair—McNear—and McNeir Genealogies.
By James Birtley McNair
Presented by Mr. James Birtley McNair.

“Memorial History”
Pittsburgh Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
1748—1845—1924.
By Ellis Beaver Burgess,
Presented by Rev. Ellis Beaver Burgess.

“The Correspondence Of John Cleves Symmes,”
Founder of the Miami Purchase.
By Beverly W. Bond, Jr.
Presented by The Historical And Philosophical
Society of Ohio.

EMMA D. POOLE, Librarian