NOTES AND DOCUMENTS
A NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA BRANCH
OF THE EISENHOWER FAMILY
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Between the years 1812 and 1814, a blacksmith named Philip Isenhour drifted into Wolf Creek Township, Mercer County, Pennsylvania. In 1819, he purchased land and moved his family to the banks of Neshannock Creek, seven miles southwest of the present borough of Mercer. A typical down-on-his-luck pioneer to begin with, Philip was to become a great-great-uncle of a President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower—our first, be it noted, of German paternal ancestry.

The first Eisenhower arrived in Philadelphia from Rotterdam, Holland, in 1741. His name was Nicolas or Hans Nicol Eisenhauer, and in January, 1753, he settled on one hundred acres of land near Fredericksburg, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. With him were two sons, "Johan Peter" and "Johan Isen Howor." But disaster apparently befell the family a few years later, for in August, 1756, the Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia) announced that Indians "had burnt the house of Nicholas Eisenhower," and whether or not as a result, Nicolas' next farm was at Elizabethville in Dauphin County. Peter, the eldest son, inherited this tract, and the brother John settled near by.

1 Mrs. Woge, a former University of Pittsburgh student now residing in Sharon, Pennsylvania, is publicity director for the Shenango Valley Community Chest, genealogist for the Mercer County Historical Society, and a frequent contributor of historical articles to local newspapers.—Ed.

2 In addition to information drawn from sources cited below, the writer has received invaluable assistance from Mr. Ansley A. Izenour of Pittsburgh, who has completed considerable work on the Eisenhower family, and from Mercer Countians Attorney Virgil Johnson, County Recorder Stephen Lukacs, County Treasurer Elizabeth Nicholson, Dr. Morgan Barnes, Mr. Orvis Anderson, president, and Mr. Griff Nicolls, a board member, of the Mercer County Historical Society. The resulting account, except for subsequent minor changes in detail, has been checked by members of the Eisenhower family, and accepted by the President.

3 The family name, in all of its twenty-nine spellings, including a number herein, means "iron cutter" or "iron breaker," according various authorities including Ross Keely Cook and Mrs. Claire Robinson Shirk, "The Eisenhower Family in America," in New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, 11:52 (April, 1945).
There, the United States Census of 1790 for Dauphin County found the two brothers, who, although listed under a variation of the family name, are readily identifiable as being the only heads of Eisenhower families resident in Pennsylvania at that time. The household of Peter "Isinhower" is listed as including, besides himself as head of the family, four free white males and four free white females; and that of John "Isinhower," one free white male and three white females. One of the free white males or sons in Peter's family was Frederick, the weaver, the great-grandfather of Dwight D. Eisenhower; the free white male in John's family was his son Philip, the principal subject of this sketch.4

Philip was born on December 19, 1754. In April, 1776, he enlisted as a private in Colonel Samuel Miles' Pennsylvania Rifles. He was on duty in Philadelphia at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and later fought in engagements at White Plains, Long Island, Germantown, and Trenton. He also served in the War of 1812.

Philip was married twice, and by the time he wed Elizabeth Bixler, in 1805, his first family had grown up.

Sometime after his service in the War of 1812, Philip, his wife, and one small child, Milly, migrated from the Harrisburg country to Wolf Creek Township in the eastern portion of Mercer County. There he set up his blacksmith shop. Early in the year 1814, being eighty dollars in debt to the heirs of a certain John Creaton, whose estate was being settled, he gave surety to his obligation as follows:

To all whom it may concern know ye that I Phillip Isenhower of Wolf Creek township Mercer County do here and by these Presents assign Over unto Samuel Waldron and John Barns the following property viz one Mare Saddle & bridle & gears one brown cow one brown heifer and one read and white heifer one set of Blacksmith tools including bellows Anvil vice hammer, tongs, chissels, punches and all other small articles in my shop, also two Shugar kittles holding twelve or thirteen gallons each two grind stones one hilling hoe one iron rake one single tree & clevice one small kettle one large...

4 The intervening ancestors in the President's line were Jacob Frederick, his grandfather, born in 1826, and David Frederick, his father, born in 1863. Along Philip's line there came Arthur in 1821, Frank M. in 1861, and the present Ansley A. Izenour of Pittsburgh in 1886. Data for the earlier generations are derived from the Cook and Shirk article cited above, and for the later generations, from Mr. Ansley Izenour. For a more detailed account of the President's Pennsylvania forbears, see Martin H. Brackbill, "The Eisenhowers in Pennsylvania," in Pennsylvania History, 20:77-89 (January, 1953).
puter basin one second size ditto Six puter plates one dutch oven & pot one tea kittle one skillet coffee mill & all dresser affairs including tea cups Saucers Spoons knives & forks & table & fire tongs & bed & bedding & two chairs four plains three drawing knives, three augers five chisels one hand saw one hand ax one falling ax one matick one wheat riddle one oats riddle Spinning wheel and reel & one logchain one pair of smoothing irons two buckets & half bushel & churn including all other small & loose property in the house at present all of which the said Samuel Waldron & John Barns is to have and to hold in their possession to sell or dispose of upon conditions as follows that the said Samuel Waldron and John Barns is to satisfy and stop a judgment on Esqr’s Smiths docket against me in favour of John Creatons Executors amounting to about eighty dollars for the Space of four months from this date of which the said Samuel Waldron & John Barns do agree to pay on or before the Expiration of the said four months from this date if in case I do not discharge the same Judgment myself on or before the above said term then all of the within to be void otherwise to remain in full force and virtue given under my hand this 9th day of April 1814.\(^5\)

This document was recorded on April 30, 1814, as having been signed in German by “Phillip Isenhower,” and attested by Jacob Harboggh (or Horboggh). A footnote reads: “N. B. omitted one Shovel & Shovel Plough.”

John Creaton had lived in the business section of Mercer. His house faced the courthouse square, in a block bounded by West Market Street, Turkey Alley, Currant Alley, and East Erie Street. Samuel Waldron lived near Centretown, Mercer County, and John Barns, south of Jackson Center in the same county.

Apparently Philip was not “down-on-his-luck” for long, because on December 6, 1819, he purchased a tract of land from Clement Pearson and his wife Elizabeth, of Wolf Creek Township, Mercer County, Pennsylvania, for $550. The tract was described in the indenture as Situate in the Township of Lackawannock in the county and state aforesaid bounded as follows, Beginning at the South west corner of the Tract of Land Surveyed on a warrant in the name of John Duncan at a Hickory. Thence by the line of Said Tract north two degrees west one hundred and twenty-six perches to a post, thence by the line of the same Tract north eighty-eight degrees east Two hundred and two perches to a post, thence by the residue of the same tract South two degrees east one hundred and twenty-six perches to a post, thence by the Warrant of Frederick Wm. Starman south eighty-eight degrees west two hundred and two perches to the place of Beginning containing one hundred and fifty acres and allowance of six per cent for roads, &c. (Being part of a tract of Land Surveyed on a warrant granted in the name of John Duncan dated 14th of April 1792 and ditto by William McLean) Together with the buildings

\(^5\) Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Recorder’s Office, Article Book 1, pp. 354-355. Possibly the variants of Philip’s name in this document and the one quoted below are ascribable to the Recorder or his copyist.
and improvements to the same belonging or appertaining.\footnote{Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Recorder's Office, Deed Book F, vol. 1, pp. 127-128. The names of the original warrantees of this tract and of adjoining lands (but not the hickory or the posts) have been useful in placing the Isenhour farm with reference to its present-day setting.}

While Philip and Elizabeth Isenhour lived in Mercer County, four children, Elizabeth, Joseph, Emily, and Arthur, were born, the last-named after the purchase of the farm.

In 1825, Philip's land was seized for nonpayment of a debt, and by order of the sheriff it reverted to Elizabeth Pearson. She did not sell the farm until 1830.

Arthur Isenhour was orphaned when he was seven years old. On April 12, 1828, the last Revolutionary pension check was received at Mercer by the Isenhour family. Philip was then seventy-three years old. It is said that in that year an epidemic of cholera swept through Lawrence and Mercer counties. Philip and Elizabeth Isenhour died of the disease.

Young Arthur went to Zelienople and became an apprentice to a wagonmaker. He died in Pittsburgh in 1892 when he was seventy-one years old. By the time his grandson, the present Ansley A., came along, in 1886, the family name in that line had become "Izenour."

The land where Philip Isenhour settled is in a hilly, isolated country of red clay. Although once entirely in Mercer County, it is now situated athwart the boundary between Mercer and Lawrence counties,\footnote{Lawrence County was established as late as 1849, from parts of Mercer County on the north and Beaver County on the south.} and crosses the Volant Road to the west of the gorge of Neshannock Creek. The properties of Urie Byler and Thomas C. Blevins are cut from this plot.