HERR'S ISLAND

Fred R. Herr

In the Allegheny River about two miles above its junction with the Monongahela River lies a small island. The town which had sprung up at the point where the two rivers meet was christened Pittsburgh on November 27, 1758, in honor of England's great statesman, William Pitt, and thirty-nine years later the small island in the Allegheny River was named Herr's Island.

The island, despite its size, being three-quarters of a mile long and six hundred feet wide, has had a long history of service to the needs of a rapidly growing community. It was the site, at various times, of homes, sawmills, manufacturing enterprises, oil refineries, stockyards, meat-packing houses, and fertilizer works.

There is no record of the island's having been used by the Indians other than as a means of crossing the river. An Indian trail from the east ran through the small Delaware village of Shannopin's Town, in the vicinity of what is now 40th and Butler Streets, continued over the river and across the island, thence through the town of Allegheny and on toward the west. It is entirely possible that, due to the island's isolation from the mainland, it was the scene of many overnight encampments.

The original owner of the island was William Wilson, having obtained the patent to the property on May 18, 1792. It was later purchased by Benjamin Herr in 1797 from George Wallace and Ann Wilson. It is not known what use Benjamin Herr made of the island,

Mr. Herr, a retired Mechanical Engineer, is a great-great-grandson of Benjamin Herr. He has always appreciated his heritage and as a result has a deep interest in the history of Western Pennsylvania.—Editor

but with the influx of settlers from the east, it soon became the site of homes and, later on, industry.

The year 1792 saw very few commercial enterprises in Pittsburgh, and what there were served mainly to provide for the immediate necessity of the settlers. Among the settlers, however, were coopers, skin dressers and tanners, cabinet makers, hatters, weavers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, saddlers, brewers, and rope makers. With the cessation of Indian hostilities and depredations in the area, the progress of invention and the stimulus to manufacturing because of the War of 1812, Pittsburgh became ever more important as an industrial center.

In the earlier years of its history Herr’s Island was probably used for farming, but later years saw the encroachment of industry. Leland Baldwin, in his book, *Pittsburgh: The Story of a City*, had this to say about the island: “Herr’s Island, which occupied the river front near Duquesne Borough (between Troy Hill and Millvale) was an idyllic spot that was fast giving way to industry. It is said that old Mr. Herr, the owner of the island, had leased it for 99 years at a very cheap rate and that, when upon reflection, he came to regret the act, he asserted roundly that when the lease expired they shouldn’t have it as cheap the next time.”

A map of the island dated 1852 shows it laid out with streets and with a bridge connecting the mainland to the west. The streets laid out parallel with the river were Franklin, Washington and Maria, with the cross streets being Bridge, Middle, Centre, Herr, Henriette, and Millers. Bridge Street connected with the bridge to the mainland. Property owners were S. R. Morrison, T. K. Litch, and A. Miller having property on the south end of the island, with W. C. Miller having property on the north end. Other owners were Harvey, Warner, Judge, B. Mead, and J. B. D. Mead. Another map of 1872 shows the following property owners and businesses: Olmslayer, William Graff, C. T. Place, J. Johnston, Mrs. McRoberts, J. Windley, Graff Tube Works & Co., McNeill, Dean & Co., Kirkpatrick & Lyons, Sterling Oil Works, and Union Refining & Storing Co.

Ten years later a map of 1882 shows the following property owners and businesses: Jas. Parker, Jr., J. Seibel, John McCance &

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DUQUESNE BOROUGH

BUTLER PLANK ROAD

PENNSYLVANIA CANAL

T.K. LITCH & A. MILLER

S.R. MORRISON

HENRIETTE ST.

ALLEGHENY

WASHINGTON ST.

FRANKLIN ST.

BRIDGE ST.

MIDDLE ST.

CENTRE ST.

HERR ST.

MARIA AVE.

W.C. MILLER

RIVER

3/4 MILE LONG
600 FEET WIDE

OTHER PROPERTY OWNERS

HARVEY
WARNER
J.B.D. MEAD

B. MEAD
JUDGE

HERR'S ISLAND - 1852
Co., Pennsylvania Tube Works, John Dean Saw Mill, Kirkpatrick & Wilson, and two icehouses. Herr Station is located on the Pittsburgh, Ft. Wayne & Chicago Railroad, which ran parallel with the Pittsburgh & Western Railroad on the mainland adjacent to the island. The station is located opposite the end of Bridge Street.6

As with the older maps, a map of 1901 shows a complete change in names of property owners and businesses. Shown are John Crawford, Wm. Zehnder, H. Nesmith, G. Tesh, W. Ward, Park Steel Co., Pittsburgh Provision Co., Pittsburgh Provision Company Stockyards, W. & H. Walker Co. (soap and fertilizer works), and a sawmill. Middle and Centre Streets do not appear; instead, Sand Street is shown. Franklin Street has been changed to Hugh Street, and Washington Street changed to Jaleppa Street. A branch of the Pittsburgh Junction Railroad crosses the north end of the island.7

A map of the city of Pittsburgh dated 1906 covers only a part of Herr's Island and shows a bridge, called 30th Street Bridge, connecting 30th Street on the Pittsburgh side of the river with Bridge Street on the island. This is probably the suspension footbridge that was in use as late as 1925.8

By 1925 the island seems to have been taken over entirely by the stockyard and meat-packing industry. A map of that date shows the following companies represented: Pittsburgh Provision & Packing Co., Pittsburgh Joint Stock Yards, W. & H. Walker, Inc., Walker Stratman & Co., Allegheny Garbage Co., Pittsburgh Melting Co.9 A few years later the 31st Street Bridge spanning the Allegheny River was built over the island, and was opened to traffic December 31, 1928. It was built at a cost of $1,680,000, as part of a program by the Allegheny County Department of Public Works to reconstruct bridges to comply with Federal Government orders to remove obstruction to navigation in the Allegheny River.

A great change in the island's industry came about in 1966. Since 1903 the Pennsylvania Railroad had operated the stockyard as a subsidiary. It was owned in conjunction with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad until 1933 when the Pennsylvania Railroad bought complete

control. Since before the turn of the century, the island had been used as a rest stop for livestock trains from Chicago to the eastern markets. It was set up when a Federal law was passed that required livestock be unloaded from the trains every thirty-six hours, and rested for eight hours before resuming the trip. With the advent of high-speed livestock trains which cut the travel time considerably, the stop at Herr's Island was no longer necessary. August 1966 saw the last of the unloading of animals on the island, and the packing plants that had slaughtered and dressed meats for the Pittsburgh district in the past were closed earlier in the year.  

Through the years, many plans have been advanced concerning the future use of the island. In 1959, the City Department of Parks and Recreation urged the city to purchase the land and turn it into a recreational area. Thought was given in 1960 to using the island for a light industrial area, but it seemed the cost of development would be too high.

Presently, the City Planning Commission and the Three Rivers Improvement and Development Corporation are advocating the idea of making the island into a water recreational area, and possibly operating it as a regional park. With pleasure boating on the rise, the island's location in the Allegheny River would make it an ideal center of activity for those using the navigational area between the Emsworth Dam on the Ohio, the Braddock Dam on the Monongahela, and the Highland Park Dam on the Allegheny. This would provide, without obstruction, a waterway of about twenty-five miles for small boats.

Benjamin Herr was a builder, merchant, and real estate owner. In addition to the island, he owned a considerable piece of land along the north side of the Allegheny River, in what is now the Borough of Millvale. A part of this land was sold in 1890 by his son, Henry, to the Pittsburgh & Western Railway Co. He is reputed to have owned property in downtown Pittsburgh and in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, but records of these holdings are not presently in existence. A history of Allegheny County refers to Benjamin Herr as "a leading citizen, identified with every good cause, building schools and churches, and having stock in the first bridge across the Allegheny River." This first bridge was completed in 1819 and linked St. Clair Street (now Sixth Street) with Federal Street on the

10 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 6, 1966.
12 Warner, II, 600.
opposite shore. It was replaced in 1860 by a suspension bridge.

In the biography of Henry Herr, in the History of Allegheny County, is the statement that his father, Benjamin, built the third brick house in Pittsburgh. In the same history the biography of Samuel Reed Johnston states that he was born July 26, 1797, "in a house on Front Street, now First Avenue, which his father, John Johnston, had erected two years previously, and which was the third brick edifice built in the borough. Samuel Johnston, with his brother-in-law, William Eichbaum, was the publisher of the Pittsburgh Gazette from 1819 to 1822." The house referred to is undoubtedly the one built by Benjamin Herr. The writer remembers, as a small boy, his father pointing out a brick house on the north side of Market Square and saying that it was one of the houses built by Benjamin Herr.

Little is known of Benjamin Herr's activity as a merchant in Pittsburgh other than what is found in a thesis by H. C. Douds entitled "Merchants and Merchandising in Pittsburgh 1759-1800." It is stated that merchants advertising in the Pittsburgh Gazette from 1786 to 1800, included Scott & Herr for the years 1794 and 1795, and Benjamin Herr for the years 1796, 1797, and 1798. The thesis contained the following advertisement from the November 21, 1800, issue of the Pittsburgh Gazette:

Benjamin Herr — He has just received from the east side of the Allegheny Mountains a quantity of Cherry Bounce of the best quality and has it for sale at the house of George Holdship, in Pittsburgh, by the barrel or gallon, and will attend on the Saturday of each week for the purpose of selling. The January 2, 1901, issue of the Pittsburgh Gazette mentioned this same advertisement in commenting on items contained in their centenary issue. It is evident from the foregoing dates that Benjamin Herr was engaged in merchandising, at least through the years of 1794 to 1801.

It was rather by accident that Benjamin Herr stayed in Pittsburgh when he arrived in 1780. Being a millwright by trade, he had set out from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with the intention of going to Kentucky to set up a gristmill to serve the pioneers who were settling there in ever-increasing numbers. Arriving in Pittsburgh, he found the water in the rivers too low to continue. The town, at this time, must have presented a sorry-looking appearance, and his

13 Ibid., 435.
decision to stay must have been prompted by something other than what he saw before him.

As there are no records of dwellings and population available for the early years, one must rely on the written descriptions made by visitors to the town. Judge Hugh H. Brackenridge said of Pittsburgh, in 1781, that it consisted of "a few old buildings, under the wall of a garrison which stood at the junction of the two rivers."

Arthur Lee, visiting Pittsburgh in December 1784, wrote:

Pittsburgh is inhabited almost entirely by Scots and Irish, who live in paltry log houses, and are as dirty as in the north of Ireland, or even Scotland. There is a great deal of small trade carried on, the goods being brought at the vast expense of 45 shillings per cwt from Philadelphia and Baltimore. They take in the shops money, wheat, flour, and skins. There are in the town four attorneys, two doctors, and not a priest of any persuasion, nor church, nor chapel, so that they are likely to be damned without benefit of clergy. The place, I believe, will never be very considerable.

Dr. Hildreth, passing through Pittsburgh on his way to Marietta in 1788, wrote: "The houses were chiefly built of logs, but now and then one has assumed the appearance of neatness and comfort."

Even as the town had little appeal to visitors, the outlying country had less. The country north and west of Pittsburgh at this time was Indian country, and the traveler entered it at his own risk until the treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784 opened it up for exploration and settlement. However, the Indian depredations and atrocities continued at intervals until long afterward, and history records quite a few of the exciting episodes, several of which are related herein.

Thomas Sample, son of James Sample, was born January 7, 1791, at Girty's Run. Two weeks after his birth his mother and all of her family were captured by the Indians. Through the assistance of a squaw whom Mrs. Sample had earlier befriended, the entire family escaped to safety. Other families were not so fortunate. Massey Harbison resided in a cabin near Reed's Blockhouse in Westmoreland County, across the Allegheny River from Freeport. On the morning of May 22, 1792, she was captured by the Indians and two of her young sons were killed. She was taken, with a baby in her arms, toward Butler. Three days later she escaped and, after "four days and nights of difficulties, trials, hunger, and danger," managed to get to the Allegheny River and safety at the site of the present town of

15 Warner, I, 492-3.
16 Ibid., 443.
17 Ibid., 443.
18 Warner, II, 179.
Aspinwall. Reed's Blockhouse, built in 1791, was manned by Continental troops after the Indians' fatal attacks on the Russ and Dick families in that area.\textsuperscript{19} The past, present, and future of Herr's Island completed, the writer naturally turns to Benjamin Herr, his activities, and family antecedents.

Benjamin Herr was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, December 7, 1760, and died in Pittsburgh, May 9, 1846. He was married April 29, 1794, to Magdalena Lichte, who was born in 1769 and died October 13, 1842. They had eleven children, four of whom died in infancy. The remaining children were Barbara, born September 6, 1797, married to John Croft; Benjamin, born August 16, 1802, married to Elizabeth Smith Sarver; Henry, born June 4, 1805, married to Mary P. Mathias; Daniel, born June 7, 1808, married to Ann Snively; John, born December 21, 1810, married to Barbara Ziegler; Elizabeth, born October 12, 1814, married to Louis Feilbach; and Magdalena, born June 10, 1818, married to Samuel Hershey.\textsuperscript{20}

Elizabeth was born in a hewed log house on a farm on the Millvale property. The log house was moved to the island to make way for the Pennsylvania Canal which was opened in 1829, with the first boat arriving at Pittsburgh from the east, on November 10. The old log house was still standing as late as 1889 and was said to be one of the few remaining pioneer landmarks.\textsuperscript{21}

Benjamin Herr was a descendant of the Rev. Hans Herr of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with the line of descent being:\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Rev. Hans Herr (1639-1725) & M. Elizabeth Kendig \\
Abraham Herr (1660- ) & M. Anna \\
Abraham Herr (1700-1785) & M. Anna Miller \\
David Herr (1722-1771) & M. Barbara Hershey \\
Benjamin Herr (1760-1846) & M. Magdalena Lichte
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Hans Herr was the minister and spiritual leader of a group of Swiss Mennonites who came to Pennsylvania in 1710, the first settlers in what is now Lancaster County. The group consisted of Martin Meylin, Christian Herr, Hans Herr, Wendell Bowman, John Rudolph Bundeley, Christofer Franciscus, Jacob Miller, John Funk,

\textsuperscript{19} Charles McKnight, \textit{Our Western Border . . . , One Hundred Years Ago} (Philadelphia, 1876), 685ff; Warner, II, 179.
\textsuperscript{20} Theodore W. Herr, \textit{Genealogical Record of the Rev. Hans Herr} (Lancaster, 1908), 5, 17.
\textsuperscript{21} Warner, II, 664.
\textsuperscript{22} Herr, 1, 3.
and three Martin Kendigs.  

Their settlement was in the Pequea Valley, just south of the present town of Lancaster, on a tract of ten thousand acres which had been granted to them by William Penn before they left London for their new home in America. They had left their ancestral homes in Zurich, Glarus, and Berne to escape the religious persecution which had prevailed for many years. Nothing is known of their journey from Switzerland to England, but there is a record of their leaving England for America. The following letter was written by the group to friends of the faith in Amsterdam, and is recorded as Letter No. 2253 in the Amsterdam Archives.

Worthy and Beloved Friends:  

Besides wishing them all temporal and eternal welfare we have wanted to inform you how that we have safely received that financial aid which the dear friends out of their great kindness of heart have given toward our journey; and this kind contribution came very opportunely to us, because the journey cost more than we had imagined. God bless the worthy friends in time and eternity; and whatever may be good for the body and wholesome for the soul may the merciful God give them and continually be and remain their rewarder.

But of our journey we report that we were detained almost ten weeks, before we were put on board ship; but then we actually entered into the ship on the 24th, and were well lodged and well cared for, and we have been informed we will set sail from here next Saturday or Sunday for Gravesend, and wait there for the Russian convoy. God be with us and bring us to land in America as happily as here in England. Herewith we commend them all to the merciful God (together with courteous greetings from us all) and remain your true friends.  

London, the 27th of June, 1710.  

Signed  
Martin Oberholtzer  
Martin Kundig  
Christian Herr  
Jacob Muller  
Martin Meili  
Hans Herr  

It is strongly believed that the ship in which the pioneers sailed from London was the Mary Hope. This belief is based on the account contained in the Journal of Thomas Chalkley, a famous Quaker preacher. Chalkley wrote:

I took my passage in the "Mary Hope," John Annis, Master, bound for Philadelphia; and on the 29th of the 4th month, (June) 1710, at Gravesend, we set sail and overtook the Russian fleet at Harwich and joined them and sailed with them as far as Shetland, northward of the isle of Orkney. We were two weeks with the fleet, and then left them and sailed to the westward for America. In this time we had rough seas, which made divers of us sick. After

we left Shetland we were seven weeks and four days at sea before we saw the land of America. We had sweet and solemn meetings on the first and fifth days; had one meeting with the Germans, or Palatines, on the ship's decks and a person who understood both languages interpreted for me. The people were tender and wrought upon, behaved sober and were well satisfied.

He continued and said that the ship was small and well loaded, with ninety-four on board — that all were brought well and safe to Philadelphia in September 1710.

An attempt was made in 1910 to verify the almost conclusive evidence that the pioneers came on the *Mary Hope* with Thomas Chalkley, and to find out what other people were in the group. Word came from London that the Custom House had burned several times in the past century, and that no passenger lists as early as 1710 were in existence.

From the "Diary of the Rev. Samuel Guldin, Relating to His Journey to Pennsylvania, June to September, 1710," we have further information on the arrival of the *Mary Hope* in Philadelphia.

According to the Rev. Mr. Guldin, of Berne, Switzerland, the *Mary Hope* sailed into Delaware Bay on September 16, 1710, and because of running aground at low tide, it was not until September 20 that anchor was dropped off New Castle, Delaware. The ship remained in New Castle for several days before continuing on to Philadelphia, where it arrived on September 23. Some of the passengers were so eager to see the new land that they walked from New Castle to Philadelphia.

The Rev. Mr. Guldin does not disclose the identity of his fellow-passengers and evidently was not a member of the "pioneer" group. However, it is on record that he obtained a warrant for eight hundred acres of land "in Strasburg with the rest of his countrymen." This land adjoined that of the Hans Herr group and he is described in the Minutes of the Commissioners of Property as "minister to the Swissers."

The following items of interest concerning William Penn's Commissioners of Property and their meetings with Hans Herr, Martin Kendig, and Hans Funk are found in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, Vol. 19:

Page 185 — *Minute Book “G”*

"At Philadelphia the 28th day of 8ber, in the 13th year of the reign of King William the 3rd, over England, &c., on the 21st of my Government, Anno Dom. 1701," William Penn appointed his friends Edward Shippen, Griffith Owen, Thomas Storey, and James Logan,
his Property Deputies, or Commissioners of Property for the "said Province of Pennsilvania and Territories." Isaac Norris was later appointed as a Commissioner by William Penn, 9th 9ber, 1711.

Page 622 — Minute Book "H"

Agreed with Martin Kundigg and Hans Heer of 5,000 acres of Land, to be taken up in Severall Parcels about Conestogo and Pequea Creeks, at L10 p. Ct. to be paid at the Returns of the Surveys and usual quitrents, it being the settlement for severall of their Countrymen that are lately arrive here. The Warr't signed, dat. 22d 9ber, 1717.

Page 624 — Minute Book "H"

At a Meeting of the Commissioners of Property the 22, 9ber, 1717. Pr'sent, only I. N. [Isaac Norris] and J.L. [James Logan]

Martin Kundigg, Hans Heer, and Hans Funk, with several others of the Palatines, their Countrymen, having applied to purchase land near Conestogo and Pequea Creeks to accomodate those of them that are lately arrived in the Province, who are their Relations, friends or acquaintances, and whom they assure the Board are Honest, Conscientious People.

Their request being Considered and the Circumstance of these People in Relation to their Holding of Lands in the Dominions of Great Britain were asked if they understood the Disadvantages they were under by their being born aliens, that therefore their Children could not inherit nor they themselves convey to others the Lands they purchase, according to the Laws of England, which may in such cases be extended hither. They answered that they were informed thereof before, however inasmuch as they removed themselves and families into this Province they were, notwithstanding the S'd Disadvantage, willing to purchase Lands for their own Dwelling. It was further said by the Commissioners that it was their Business to sell and dispose of the Proprietor's Land to such as would purchase it, yet at the same time they were willing to let them know, as they were aliens, the Danger that might ensue if not in time prevented, also that some years ago a Law was Enacted here and afterwards passed by the late Queen Ann, for enabling divers aliens, particularly named herein to hold and enjoy Lands in this Province, and that the like advantage might probably be obtained for those amongst themselves that were of good Report if a Petition were preferred to this present Assembly when they sit to do Business. With this advice they seemed pleased and desired to be informed when such a sitting of the Assembly would be, that they might preferr a Petition to them for such a Law as is above mentioned.

Page 574 — Minute Book "H"

Samuel Guldin, late of the Canton of Bern, in Switzerland, Minister to the Swissers, desiring to take up Eight Hund'd acres of land in Strasburg, with the rest of his Countrymen, the Sec'y agrees with him for the same at Ten pounds p. Hund'd, or Sixty younds ster'l'g to be p'd in London in 6 Months after Survey, and a warrant is granted, dated 1st Imo., 1713-4.

Page 627 — Minute Book "H"


Signed a Patent to Martin Kundigg for 800 acres of Land at Strasburg, which was first laid out to Samuel Gulden on Certain Terms, which he never complied with, and therefore it was granted to the said Martin for L80, dated the 30, 10ber, 1714.
Hans Herr died in 1725, in a stone house built by his son, Christian, in 1719. The house is still standing and is located on the D. M. Huber farm, near Willow Street, about three miles west of the town of Strasburg. The farm is part of the tract of 530 acres taken up by Christian Herr in 1710. The house has reached the venerable age of 250 years, and is still in very good condition. A visitors' register book in the house reveals that it is visited every year by people from all over the United States and various countries of Europe.

In 1960, the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society erected a bronze tablet adjacent to the house with this inscription:

The Hans Herr House — In this wilderness, Hans Herr and other pioneers founded a faith's pure shrine. This dwelling-meeting house, in its center was built in 1719 by Hans and his son Christian Herr, an excellent example of their European architecture and stability. The oldest house still standing north of Virginia, so far west in U.S.A. is before you.

Last year, in November 1969, the Society considered the purchase of the house, along with a tract of ground 156 feet by 267 feet. The house would be restored and would become a monument to the undying faith of the pioneers.24

The church building of the Willow Street Mennonite Congregation stands not far from the Hans Herr house and its graveyard contains the graves of most of the early pioneers. A granite memorial stone has been erected near the grave of Hans Herr and bears the following inscription:

Rev. Hans Herr, one of the pioneer settlers of Lancaster County, born in Switzerland September 17, 1639. Died October 11, 1725.
Elizabeth Mylin Kendig Herr, his wife, born in Switzerland May 1, 1639, died June 9, 1736.
Rev. Christian Herr, son of Hans Herr, donater of this plot of ground for burial purposes, born in Switzerland, died 1750.

Near the church building stands a large bronze tablet, erected by the Lancaster County Historical Society in 1910, which bears the names of the eleven original pioneer settlers, the number of acres of land held by each one and a map showing the location of each holding.

The May 22, 1895, issue of The Daily Examiner, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, contains an account of the proceedings of a meeting held that day in a room of the Orphans Court, to discuss the erection of a suitable memorial to Hans Herr. The meeting was held in response to a call published earlier in the month, as follows:

Lancaster, Pa., May 2, 1895

Greeting — It is now 186 years since Hans Herr and his family settled in what is now Lancaster County, being the pioneer settlers of that locality.

The influence of this man who first brought the Gospel to this region when it was a wilderness has left its impress on the character of the people of the present day.

It is proposed to commorate the fact by the establishment of an industrial home and school of a non-sectarian character as a proper memorial.

We therefore invite all his living descendants to meet at the Court House, or other available hall, Lancaster City on Wednesday, May 22, 1895, at 10 o'clock AM to consider a feasible plan whereby this object may be accomplished.

The article continues with a lengthy account of the origin of the Herr name, of the trials of the Mennonites in Switzerland, and of their migration to Pennsylvania.

At the meeting, the “Hans Herr Memorial Association” was organized and a committee appointed to consider the feasibility of erection of a suitable memorial. Other committees were appointed and among the members of the General Committee on Correspondence were Hiram Herr of Parnassus, Pennsylvania, and his son, Samuel Franklin, the grandfather and uncle, respectively, of the writer.

Examination of subsequent correspondence reveals the sad fact that it was found impossible to raise money for the memorial and it never materialized.

One of the original pioneers, Martin Meylin, had been a gunsmith in Switzerland, and in 1719, about a mile from the Hans Herr house, erected a shop for the manufacture of rifles. In this shop was made the earliest known rifle which in later years became known as the “Kentucky Rifle” due to its extensive use by the pioneers in their opening up of the lands west of the Allegheny Mountains.

The shop building is still standing, and on October 16, 1949, was the scene of an impressive ceremony. This day was designated “Pennsylvania Rifle Day” by Governor James H. Duff, as part of the annual Pennsylvania Week program for that year. A cast aluminum plaque was attached to the wall of the shop and its unveiling was followed with addresses by Consul Maurice Rohrbach, Consulate of Switzerland; Dr. S. K. Stevens, Pennsylvania State Historian; Dr. Herbert H. Beck, President of the Lancaster County Historical Society, and General Jacob L. Devers, U.S. Army, Retired.

The only known Martin Meylin rifle is one with a full curly maple stock, sixty-five inches long. Its original flint lock had been replaced by a hammer and percussion nipple. This rifle was presented to the Lancaster County Historical Society by Martin B. Meylin, of the seventh generation.
Plaque erected on the Martin Meylin Gun Shop
by The Lancaster County Historical Society
October 16, 1949

BIRTHPLACE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA RIFLE
Built 1719

Martin Meylin (1670-1749) gunsmith of Switzerland settled here in the Pequea Valley in 1710 and made in this gunshop the earliest known Pennsylvania or so-called Kentucky Rifle. He was the first of a group of Lancaster County Riflemakers who prior to 1745 originated and gave to America that historic and colorful firearm.
An interesting item concerns the “finding” in the Hans Herr house of an old anvil, believed by evidence of its eroded markings to have been made by Martin Meylin in 1719. The anvil was donated to the Lancaster County Historical Society in 1949, and was replaced with a new one hundred pound anvil which today can be seen in the Hans Herr house.\textsuperscript{25} If the anvil was really made by Martin Meylin it is doubtful if an anvil of greater historical significance exists today — certainly not in the history of American firearms.

The name of Herr was known in early times as attested by the following translation from the German by E. B. Vien:

The race of Herr descended from a very ancient family; is free — that is to say, of noble origin. Likewise from time immemorial, its knights were brave and worthy. Possessing in Schwaben vast and rich estates, the which was called and written Hern von Bilried. The father of this race was called the Schwabisch Knight Hugo, the Herr or Lord of Bilried. In the year 1009 flourished and was known to all, the family from whom that of Herr is descended. But in the fifteenth century several of the race resigned their nobility and settled as citizens. They, however, retained their noble name and their Coat of Arms, and in the year 1593 John Herr, or Lord of Bilried, obtained from the Emperor Ferdinand, in Schwabish Hall, a written testimonial, proving for his flourishing family their Coat of Arms, their free and noble descent and the possession of their race to the latest generation. And this Coat of Arms rightly belongs to the present living family of Herr.

E. B. Vien\textsuperscript{26}

The lands of Swabia anciently consisted of most of northern Switzerland and that part of Germany east of the Rhine River, and was at one time known as Alemannia.

The name of Herr is not mentioned too frequently in early Swiss history, but the following will serve to show that the name had been known for several centuries before the arrival of the pioneers in America.

Hansley Herr was a member of the sixty-man garrison of Greifensee, in 1440, under Wildhans von Breitenlandenberg, in the “Old Zurich War.” After the fall of the castle he was beheaded May 27, 1444. He was of Hegnau, near Uster, Switzerland.\textsuperscript{27}

The names of Christian and Hans Herr are found in 1450 in Canton Glarus, Switzerland, and a branch of the family was settled in the Canton of Zurich. No further record of the name of Herr is found until 1632 when David ter Herr was one of the delegates who signed the Dortrecht Mennonite Confession of Faith. In 1727, in Pennsyl-


\textsuperscript{26} Herr, Frontispiece.

\textsuperscript{27} Lancaster County Historical Society, \textit{Publications}, \textbf{XIV} (1910).
vania, this confession was translated into German and English and, upon approval, was adopted as the foundation of the Mennonite Church. One of the fifteen ministers deciding upon approval was the Rev. Christian Herr, son of Hans Herr.\(^{28}\)

The father of the Rev. Hans Herr was Hans Herr, born 1608. His family consisted of the Rev. Mr. Hans, Jacob, Christian, and Benjamin. The appendix of the Hans Herr Genealogy contains record of the descendants of Christian Herr, brother of the Rev. Hans Herr, some of whom came to America many years after the Lancaster County group, and settled mainly in Ohio, Indiana, Colorado, California, and Oregon.\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) *Ibid.*  
\(^{29}\) Herr, Appendix, 779-785.