PLACE NAMES IN
WARREN COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

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Part II

Mahan Corners — the first four corners and very small settlement south of the New York state line on township road 508, Farmington township.

Named for James Mahan who settled here in 1823.

James Mahan came with his parents from Ireland, his parents dying in Philadelphia in 1789 from yellow fever. He was brought by an uncle to Deer’s Eddy, a location south of Brokenstraw Creek in Warren county, and grew up there. As a soldier in the War of 1812 he suffered great hardship and died in 1882.

Mead — a township.

Named for Darius Mead who settled here prior to 1838.

Erected from parts of Sheffield, Kinzua, and Pleasant townships by an order of the court confirmed June 7, 1847.

Mead Island — in the Allegheny River three miles south of Warren. Named for Joseph Mead, an early owner of the island.

Originally the island was called Conewango Island and the Pennsylvania legislature directed Governor Mifflin to patent it to Big-Tree, a Seneca Indian who had accompanied Chief Cornplanter on his trip to Philadelphia in 1790. Big-Tree died and the island was patented by Governor McKean January 26, 1801, to “Halftown and George, Seneca Indians, in trust for the heirs of Big-Tree, deceased.” In 1813 the heirs sold the island to Chief Cornplanter who in turn sold it to Joseph Mead for $770.

New London — a former village in Triumph township.

Many of the settlers in this immediate area were English and they named the place after London, England. It was an active village during the oil excitement but now is represented by lonely pump houses and a few still productive wells.

Prior to 1874 the village was called Berry's Corners after Stephen Berry; by providing free land for a railroad station he was instrumental in having the Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley, and Pittsburgh Railroad make this a regular stopping-point shortly after it commenced operations in 1871. Through the influence of D. C. Allen, a Warren attorney of considerable prominence, the new stop was soon called North Warren because of its proximity to Warren.

The Warren State Hospital, located here, was built in 1874 and has since grown to large proportions and serves thirteen northwestern Pennsylvania counties.

Parthenia — a former lumber mill location in Deerfield township named by the Grandin Brothers of Tidioute who owned the mill.

Today the spot can be found at the Hunting Valley Lodge, near Althom, a little northwest of Tidioute, as the Parthenia post office was located in what is today part of this lodge. The post office operated from May 24, 1886, to July 30, 1910, after which date the mail was routed to Irvine, Pennsylvania.

Pine Valley — a small settlement in Columbus township.

Named because of the heavy growth of gigantic white pine trees in the vicinity. In early days expert lumbermen were employed to cut selected trees from this area to serve as masts for sailing ships.

Pittsfield — a township and a village.

Named for Pittsfield, Massachusetts, by James L. Acocks, the first postmaster, who had come from that town. Previous to this naming, the location had long been known as The Corners.

The township was formed from Brokenstraw and Spring Creek townships in 1847; the Commissioners reported June 5, 1847, but the order of the court confirming their report has not been found.

Pleasant — a township.

The petitioners for this township selected the name Mount Pleasant but the court disagreed, and, because of the pleasant landscape, named it merely Pleasant.

Formed from Limestone township by order of the court confirmed during March Sessions, 1834.
Putnamville — a former village of historic interest in Farmington township; it was located on what is today Legislative Route 61062, on Thompson Hill.

In the spring of 1829, Jesse Putnam, seventy-nine years old, arrived at this place with his two sons, Daniel and Edson, from Boston, New York, where they had settled on arrival from Brattleboro, Vermont, some years earlier. Following the Putnams in the fall of 1832, William Thompson with his numerous family moved into the vicinity.

The children at first had to walk to Marshburg (site of the present Eisenhower High School serving the Russell-Lander area) to attend school, but soon a log school was built nearby. The present building at the forks of the road was built in 1861 by subscriptions in the neighborhood; after use of this school was discontinued in 1946, the building reverted to the local inhabitants and now serves as the Community House.

A post office was established at Putnamville on May 5, 1896, in the home of Elmer Thompson, a Putnam descendant, and consisted of a handmade bank of sixty boxes and a slotted service window; this unit is still preserved. In 1899 the office was moved to Sparks’ store but with the institution of rural free delivery came the death knell of this office on October 4, 1903.

Rogertown — a cluster of houses in Mead township just across the Allegheny River at the east end of Warren borough.

Named for Alson Rogers who had a lumber mill at this site. The first mill at this place had been constructed prior to 1806 by James, Jeremiah, and Samuel Morrison, brothers, who came from Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania.

Roystone — a small settlement in Sheffield township.

Named for Roy Stone who held the contract for grading this section of the railroad when it was put through here; at the time it was the Sunbury & Erie Railroad.

Stone is a figure befitting an able novelist. Born in 1836 at Prattsburg, New York, he engaged in lumbering and railroad construction and served with ability in the Civil War where he became a Brevet Brigadier General.

He gained ephemeral fame as the inventor and developer of the Safety Elevated Railroad used at Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibit in 1876 and of the so-called “Peg-Leg” monorail railroad used at Bradford, Pennsylvania, later. But his greatest accomplishment was the
founding of the United States Bureau of Public Roads.


Russell — a village in Pine Grove township on Conewango Creek north of Warren.

It was named for Robert Russell, a son of John Russell, who came into this area about 1800. Robert Russell died August 17, 1857, at the age of sixty-five.

The history of Russell is unusual, to say the least. According to the Voice of the People (Warren, Pa.) of February 4, 1835, at a meeting held at Thomas Turner's hotel, Pine Grove, where the post office had heretofore been called Conewango, it was,

RESOLVED, That with the consent of the Postmaster General, this Post Office receive the name of Russelsburg, and also that the village shall hereafter be known by that name.

The March 18, 1835, issue of the same newspaper reported,

Russelsburg Post Office — The name of the Post Office at Russel's Mills, Pine Grove Township in this co. [sic] has been altered from Conewango to Russelsburg, by the Postmaster General.

Rinaldo D. Ingalsby, P.M.

From the first settlement of the village, around 1800, it had been known as Pine Grove, or simply "the dam," with the name of Conewango Post Office being adopted to avoid confusion in the mails with a Pine Grove in southeastern Pennsylvania. But the name of Pine Grove persisted to some extent, along with Russelsburg, Russellburg, Russellsburg, Russellsburgh, and Russellburg, until 1884 when Russell, presumably official, was adopted.

The name of Pine Grove, still carried by the township, derives from the wonderful stands of white "cork" pine which covered the Conewango valley and tributary valleys, and which furnished masts for ocean-going ships and lumber for the rapidly growing towns along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the nineteenth century.

The site of Russell, at the head of rapids and the foot of deep slack water extending into New York State, was a natural stopping place for the Indians from time immemorial, and for the French ex-
peditions from the lakes to the Ohio and beyond, and furnished the setting for splendid all-year-round water power for early industry. Here it was that local lumber rafts from the vicinity, and from the upper Conewango Creek area, were supplied with pilots for the swift descent to Warren and where, during high water, the crews were assembled. Descriptions by the old timers of the bustling activity in Russell with the raftsmen in town, were vivid. Here it was that the famous pilots and the lumber tycoons lived and the business of the northeastern part of the county was transacted. Russell was a sort of metropolis before the coming of good roads and automobiles, with a variety of stores catering to the surrounding territory — wagon shops, gristmills, blacksmith shops, planing mills, spoke and stave mills, old-fashioned chemical works, cider mill, carding mill, and others.

The first sawmill was built by Daniel McGinty and Ethan Jackson in 1803, in the vicinity of where the bridge across the Conewango was later erected in 1830. The larger mills, at the foot of the mill race, were built by Thomas Martin and Garrett Woodworth. They were soon acquired by Robert Russell and operated by him for many years. Russell had acquired most of the land in “Pine Grove” and in 1843 had the town formally laid out by A. H. Ludlow, with the streets named as at present, on a map showing his own handsome brick house, still in existence, built about 1830, and occupied in succession by Russell, Thomas Slone and the Weatherbys. The mills burned about 1918 while being operated by Fred Thompson, son of the long-time owner, Edwin Thompson. After this event, the venerable dam across Conewango Creek began to disintegrate and is now no more. It had served the ancient gristmill at the bridge, by means of a branch canal, until the latter burned in 1908.

The first inhabitant of the town was John Houghy, who, with his wife Betsy, lived in a cabin near “Johnnie’s Run” (today Johnny Run) around 1800. Other arrivals led them to move to the neighborhood of the later Guy Irvine house down the creek near the island called Houghy’s Island, whence they later moved down the river.

Most of the early settlers in Russell were Yankees from New England and Scotch-Irish from eastern Pennsylvania. Joseph Akeley arrived in 1815 from Vermont and was followed by many relatives. He secured six hundred acres of land on the east side of the creek and up Akeley Run, raised a large family, and bestowed the land on his children after they got married. A few years later members of the Briggs family arrived, also from Vermont. These two families were very prolific, and through intermarriages the town soon became a “Briggs-
Akeley" town. When the Briggs-Akeley reunion was held annually in French's Grove, across the creek, the town almost became de-populated.

The coming of the Dunkirk, Warren, and Pittsburgh Railroad (Dunkirk, New York, to Warren, Pennsylvania, in 1871) stimulated the town's woodworking industries, and the Warren-Jamestown (N.Y.) street car line (1905-1929) livened things up considerably. During the first World War, with the operation of the guncotton plant at nearby Irvineburg, Russell had its liveliest days since the times of rafting.

With the coming of the hard roads, Russell has become more or less of a dormitory town. While there has been a notable increase in population along the roads entering the town, business has chiefly departed and there are no important industries in operation since the burning of the last gristmill on the island in the fall of 1937. The famous old covered bridge, built by F. E. Perkins in 1853 to supplant the second bridge of 1840, gave way to the modern steel span, also in 1937, which year marked the suspension of passenger trains on the Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley, and Pittsburgh Railroad.

Russian Houses — so called because these huge houses were built for the use of a group of Russians belonging to the Hutterische Society brought to this location in Limestone township from Dakota Territory by the Economites.

The Hutterites came in April 1884; and on June 30, 1886, most of them left to return to South Dakota. In a region where men worked six twelve-hour days a week, their religious demands for protracted holidays put them out of the economic competition.

The two large wooden houses measured 32-by-96 feet in size, were two stories high, and encircled by a high wooden fence. The stone foundations could still be plainly seen in 1965. (See Economite Hill.)

Sanford — a very small settlement in Eldred township.

Named for John Sanford who came to this place from Connecticut in 1838.

Saybrook — a village in Sheffield township.

Known as West Sheffield for postal needs from 1853 to 1868 when the post office was discontinued. In 1886 the present name, Saybrook, was adopted.
Probably named by residents who were acquainted with Old Saybrook in Connecticut, which was named in honor of two leading English proprietors of Connecticut, Lord Say and Lord Brook, hence Saybrook.

Scandia — a village in Elk township.

In ancient geography Scandia was the name of a supposed island reputedly once southern Sweden. During the Middle Ages, Scandia was the name used for all of Scandinavia. As the early settlers in this area were mainly Scandinavians, they adopted Scandia as the village name.

Sheffield — a township and a village.

Named for Sheffield, England, by the early settlers.

The place was first settled in 1836 by Newton Lounsberry and was an early tanning center because it was accessible to large supplies of hemlock bark used in tanning sole leather.

The township was organized by order of the court during June Sessions, 1833.

In 1908 the Pennsylvania Lumber Company built the largest electrically-driven sawmill east of the Mississippi River at Sheffield; it was the first of its kind in the east.

The present location of Barnes was first called Sheffield, and the present location of Saybrook was known as West Sheffield from 1853 to 1868 when the post office was discontinued. (See Barnes and Saybrook.)

Southwest — a township.

So named because of its southwestern location within the county.

Set off from Deerfield township as a separate township by order of the court during March Sessions, 1837.

Spring Creek — a township and a village.

The name was derived from the stream, Spring Creek, so appropriately called by the first settlers by reason of the confluence of several springs forming the headwaters of this stream.

The township was formed from Brokenstraw township March 8, 1820 (??), and was originally called Number 2.

Starbrick — a village in Conewango township just west of Warren.

This now important industrial suburb of Warren owes its name
to the somewhat transitory existence of a corporation named The Star Brick Company. The firm was located on the western end of the property now owned by the General Concrete Products Co. It was organized in 1899 by well-known Warren businessmen and the kilns were located near the railroad, and the clay pits were in the rear.

During the early years of the company, the bricks, with the figure of a large star moulded therein, were in great demand because of the lively building spree going on in Warren. About 1908 the plant failed, probably due to the fact that the clay on the land became exhausted. These bricks were in great demand among the boys of Warren; they melted lead, poured it into the star design, and inserted a heavy safety pin in the star as the lead hardened. The result was a fine replica of a sheriff’s badge!

Today both sides of the highway at Starbrick have been built up with diversified industries.

Stoneham — a small village in Mead township.

Named for Leroy Stoneham, an early settler. Prior to 1839 the place was called Rink Farm after Jacob Rink, the first farmer in this region.

Sugar Run (and Sugar Run Station) — a former small settlement and railroad stop in Corydon township located on the east side of the Allegheny River where Route 59 veered sharp right towards Bradford.

The huge grove of sugar maple trees here provided the name for this place.

Seneca women formerly came here to boil maple sap in the early spring. The Cornplanter Indians called it dyeenodah gwa meaning “where women make sugar.” The site has been obliterated by waters of the Kinzua Dam.

Tidioute — a borough partly in Deerfield township and partly in Triumph township.

Tidioute is an Indian name meaning “log trap place” and the Indians often trapped deer at the mouth of the various streams flowing into the Allegheny River near Tidioute.

The town was first called Deerfield but with the great influx of people following the discovery of oil in 1860 and 1861, an incorporated town was deemed necessary to handle the town affairs. Just before the papers for incorporation were filed, it was found there was another Deerfield village in the state so Tidioute was the name finally selected.
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The place was incorporated as a borough on June 7, 1862.

Following incorporation, a town jail was built in three days and fully filled in half a day!

The opera house and many fine early homes still stand in Tidioute and make it an interesting place to visit.

TIONA — a village in Mead township.

Named by the Sunbury & Erie Railroad, later the Pennsylvania Railroad, when the road was built through here in the early 1860's.

At this site a Mr. Wheeler operated a sawmill prior to 1839 which was later owned by Amasa Ransom and still later by Edward Clapp & Co. During the 1850's, Joseph Hall owned a mill here and considerable land, and the place was generally known as Halltown until it was renamed Tiona.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the name cannot be clarified at this time as the historic and library records of the Penn Central Railroad Company in Philadelphia have been closed indefinitely with no present plans for the future use of these facilities.

Tiona does not mean "wolf" in any Indian language as some have suggested. Nor is it a contraction of the word Tionesta as stated in Donehoo's volume, Indian Villages and Place Names in Pennsylvania.

TORPEDO — a village in Pittsfield township.

Named from an incident when nitroglycerine, generally exploded by a falling weight in oil wells to increase production, failed to "go off" when struck by a train as the explosive was being transported to Clarendon, Warren County, Pennsylvania.

The best report is an article appearing in The Titusville (Pa.) Herald under date of February 24, 1882, which says:

Additional Local News

A Narrow Escape

How a Number of Passengers Were Badly Frightened

If accidents are ever fortunate such a one occurred last Wednesday (February 22) night. Fred Cohensquire was on his way to Clarendon with a load of 880 pounds of glycerine, driving the splendid grey team which once did service on the Brunswick carriage. While crossing the Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley & Pittsburgh railroad at Ross' switch one of the animals caught his foot between the rail and a plank and fell down. The driver, knowing it to be about train time, made efforts to release the fallen horse but could not succeed. He had removed the other horse when the rumble of the train was heard, and summoning a Swede near by he began unloading the wagon of its dangerous load.

Probably not over one-half of the load had been removed when the train, the express due here at 7:40 in the evening, dashed around the curve. Engineer Daniel Beam immediately reversed the locomotive and applied the air brakes, but the short distance and the speed of the train prevented a full stop. The
engine struck the horse, cutting both legs and also tilting the wagon about half way over but very luckily the glycerine did not explode. The chances are that had the wagon gone clear over, the explosion would have occurred, and undoubtedly caused a great destruction of life and property.

The horse was shot by one of the passengers and put it out of misery. The train men and passengers of course were startled by the sudden stoppage but hardly realized what a narrow escape they had had. The more they discussed the matter the more they became frightened, and when their train reached this city they were a pretty excited lot. Conductor Nelson had charge of the train.

VANDERGRIFT (and VANDERGRIFT CORNERS) — a village during the oil boom of 1882-1883 and a crossroads location since, in the exact center of Cherry Grove township.

Named in honor of Captain Jacob Jay Vandergrift. He was born in Pittsburgh in 1827 and became a captain of river steam boats. In 1861 he towed four thousand empty oil barrels to Oil City and decided to enter the oil hauling business. Using an idea patented by Richard Glyde of Pittsburgh, Vandergrift built twelve bulk boats measuring 80-by-14 by 3-feet deep, divided into compartments, and securely decked over; with this fleet he hauled bulk crude to the Pittsburgh refineries and laid the basis for one of the largest fortunes to emanate from the land of oil.

About 1870 he formed the United Pipe Lines Association and combined most of the small pipe lines in the region into one organization. In 1872 he was among the strong independent oil men who successfully defeated John D. Rockefeller's South Improvement Company. Two years later, the Rockefeller interests purchased a one-third interest in the United Pipe Lines and Vandergrift soon became head of the Standard pipe system, a director of the company, and a very rich man. He was active in banking and other business affairs in the Pittsburgh area all his life.

During the great oil excitement in Cherry Grove township in 1882, the Standard erected eight huge boilers and three pumps in the Cherry Grove field, and one of these pumps was a Worthington-Duplex and at the time was the largest in the world. This pipe line station was called Vandergrift.

WARREN — a borough and county.

Named to honor General Joseph Warren who was killed at the battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775.

Warren, a Harvard graduate and Massachusetts' most famous doctor, was a leader of the patriot party along with Samuel and John Adams and Josiah Quincy. Urging forcible opposition to Great
Britain, Warren drafted the "Suffolk Resolves" and his political ability landed him the presidency of the Provincial Congress and chairmanship of the Committee of Public Safety. He was the leader who dispatched Paul Revere to rouse the farmers April 18, 1775, and this act was so recognized by Congress several months later.

He favored waiting for the arrival of volunteers before fortifying Charlestown Heights but others outvoted him on this matter. Warren was commissioned a major general June 14, 1775, but as his commission failed to arrive, he volunteered to fight under Prescott and Putnam. When his ammunition was spent on June 17, he was leaving the redoubt on Breed's Hill when a ball struck him in the head.

By an Act of March 18, 1795, the governor of Pennsylvania was required to appoint two commissioners to survey and lay out the town of Warren and certain reserved tracts adjoining, upon the land reserved for that purpose by an act of April 3, 1792. It was done that year by General William Irvine and Andrew Ellicott.

By 1795 or 1796, the Holland Land Company had a warehouse at the site of Warren which was used part of the time by Thomas Gillaspie and Joseph Johnstone, representatives of the company, and less frequently by Jacob Ulp and Daniel McQuay. The first permanent settlers in the present city limits of Warren were James Morrison and Ebenezer Jackson. In the county, the first permanent settlers were Robert Andrews of Pittsfield, his son, John Andrews, of Irvine, and John McKinney of Youngsville, although a few men were residing most of the time along Brokenstraw Creek as early as 1740 where they operated fur trading posts. The famous George Croghan had an interest in these posts as did John Fraser of Venango (Franklin, Pennsylvania) and at times the two traders cooperated in various ventures and both of them were often visitors along the Brokenstraw.

On March 12, 1800, the State Legislature created eight new counties; one of them was Warren county formed from territory previously part of Allegheny and Lycoming counties.

Until the taxable inhabitants could be enumerated, five northwestern counties, including Warren, formed a single county, Crawford, and thus Meadville became the seat of justice for northwestern Pennsylvania. In October 1800 the Crawford court erected Brokenstraw township which became Warren county.

On April 1, 1805, Warren was detached from Crawford and added to Venango county for all judicial and other purposes. During March 1808, at the Court of Common Pleas held at Franklin, the report of the commissioners appointed in 1806 to lay out the townships in
Warren county was acted upon and in this manner Brokenstraw and Conewango townships included all of Warren county.

The State Legislature passed a bill March 16, 1819, introduced by Colonel Joseph Hackney, providing that Warren should be a separate county and commencing October 1, 1819, should be attached to the Sixth Judicial District. The first Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace and Common Pleas to convene in the newly organized Warren county began November 29, 1819, in the unfinished home of Ebenezer Jackson.

In March 1821, the two townships comprising Warren county were divided and ten other townships created from them, making a total of twelve. Warren was incorporated as a borough May 7, 1832.

**Watson** — a township.

Named for the Honorable Lewis F. Watson of Warren who owned large tracts of timber in this township.

The township was erected from Limestone by an order of the court confirmed March 4, 1880.

Watson had been a member of the House of Representatives in the 45th, 47th, and 51st Congress; he died suddenly August 25, 1890, as he was leaving the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D. C., to go to the House of Representatives.

**Weldbank** — a small settlement in Mead township.

Originally called Watson, the commonly accepted story of the naming of this place is that because of a location in Forest county called Watson Siding, the postal service often became confused and mail was heavily misdirected. The post office department asked James Anderton, postmaster at Watson, if he could arrange to have the village name changed. He called the people together in his general store, explained the situation to them, and asked if they would change the name to Weldbank, a name dear to him because it was the name of his former home in England. The name was so changed.

However, this researcher, and the facilities of the British Information Services, have failed to find any town or location in Britain called Weldbank. It is possible that the name was a locally known name of an area in Britain and thus might not be recorded in any British book of locations. (*See Beantown.*)

**West Spring Creek** — a small settlement in Spring Creek township located in the western part of that township. (*See Spring Creek.*)
Wheedale — a former village in Eldred township.

The name was concocted from the two names Wheelock and Martindale, joint owners of the lumber mill located at this site.

There was a post office here from August of 1886 to December of 1891, at which time the name of the place was changed to Selkirk and the post office continued into 1902 after which mail was routed to Grand Valley.

Wrightsville — a village in Freehold township.

Named for Joshua Wright who came to this site in 1821 from the vicinity of Rochester, New York. He operated a farm, a gristmill, and a sawmill, and died here on January 19, 1842.

During the years 1850 through 1860, Wrightsville was a booming town due to lumbering activity and at one time seven stores operated in the village.

Youngsville — a borough in Brokenstraw township.

Named for Matthew Young, a Scotchman, who settled here in 1796.

Young was a bachelor, a schoolteacher, and the second treasurer of Warren county. He built and operated a sawmill along with his other activities.

While visiting Charles Smith in Deerfield township, he died suddenly August 4, 1825, and his body was returned to Youngsville by canoe.

The borough was incorporated September 4, 1849.

SOURCES