

**Interesting Incidents
in the Early History of
Burgettstown
and
Neighboring Communities**

Burgettstown Enterprise-July 9-16, 1953 Editions

Fort Vance Historical Society

Because you asked for it, the Burgettstown Enterprise this week is happy to present a history of Burgettstown written by Miss Katherine Pyle. Miss Pyle gave incidents in the history of our town in a well-received address in a recent meeting of the Burgettstown Friday club and so many people expressed a desire to know more about the community that she promptly returned to her sources of information and penned the following. We hope you enjoy reading it-MLV.

You see, I embarrassed! For some time now folks have been asking me when I'm going to have my book printed. What they mean is: when is my little sketch on local history to appear in print. Asking such a thing is almost like wanting to know when I am going to buy an Oldsmobile or when I plan to vacation in the Himalayas.

Folks, I ain't writin' no book. But I have written (to please the more conscientious side of my nature but I have not printed) a pseudo-scholarly account complete with preface, bibliography and footnotes, that anyone can view free of charge if he is enough to want to see it. You know the sort of thing it resembles: one of those simple research papers which one might have to write in college with a title about as impressive as "A Study in the Relative Lengths of a Proboscis of Mosquito and the Elephant" or "A Computation of How Many Brush Strokes When He Hung Upside Down from the Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel". Only mine is just called "Incidents in the History of the Burgettstown Community 1780-1853." But doesn't that have a high minded sound?

The only trouble is that newspapers are interested in "reader appeal" not footnotes, and since the Enterprise is the logical voice of my precautions, I'll tuck my "scholarly work" away for the prosperity of the moths, and proceed to tell you in chatty column style what I've run into chasing through the leaves of several mighty big books and around the back roads of this vicinity. I've a notion it'll sound authentic if not high falutin'. You can draw your own conclusions about whether or not we are living in an interesting locality.

Incidentally, I don't mean to tell everything about the Burgettstown community. So far I've just sort of skimmed the surface of the first 83 years the white men settled here, and I have left the last hundred for another time

when I feel “historical.” And please take note of the phrase “skimmed the surface”. Believe me, there is no end to this history business even of a section of the country as ordinary looking as ours. Furthermore, it’s impossible to limit one’s research (there I go being high falutin’) to Burgettstown as we know today, for our pioneer granddaddies owned sizable tracts of land and thought nothing of galloping around for miles in the wilderness. What I aim to do is to tell you some of the things that happened within the radius of about ten miles of Burgettstown as a central point. That ought to give you a flavor of the early days and enough thrills to set your teeth on edge.

Since I must see some sort of organization even in a grass roots newspaper column I’m going to tie the facts together by mentioning three things I’ve noticed about our early settlers: first they were people of great courage, second, they were mighty industrious and third, they possessed a sense of humor. I’ve sort of fitted the facts together to stress these particular qualities-all of which I think we might use today. After all, there isn’t much point in looking over the past unless we get a little inspiration from it.

Naturally I have to begin with Sebastian Burgett, for he was the first person we know of who settled within the confines of what is now the Borough, and of course, it’s for him our town was named!

Sebastian himself was a native of Germany. When he came to America, he settled over in Berks County. There his first wife died; then he migrated to Westmoreland County near West Newton where he married Roxanna Markle. (I’ve been told she was a member of the original D.A.R.) Sebastian, Roxanna and three youngsters came to this part of the county about 1780, when the land was an absolute wilderness. They settled just beyond the present Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Burgett built a home on the property now owned by Vincent Tender and a grist mill down by the creek near the bridge on Pittsburgh Street. And because there were plenty of Indians hidden in the bushes between the years 1780-1783, he built a fort close to the house.

We know that this fort, which was officially called Burgett’s Fort, was subject to attack, for later Sebastian’s son used the logs from it to build a cow barn, and the marks of bullets and tomahawks could be seen in these logs by later generations. Boyd Crumrine in his **History of Washington County** (1882) tells us about the fort and the cow barn and adds that the later was struck by lightning and burned. Its exact location is not known today.

It must have taken considerable courage to make this settlement and to withstand the Indians. Burgett, of course, was not the only one to build a fort in this area. There is a record of another within the present limits of Burgettstown; however no one knows exactly where it stood. It may have

been a site not far from the present post office. An Enterprise for October 7, 1896, says that an Indian mound was once located near the old Burgettstown Bank Building. The field on which it stood was farmed for a number of years, and after each year's plowing the mound grew smaller and smaller until it was destroyed.

Better known forts in this district include Ft. Vance, Ft. Reynolds, Ft. Wells, and Ft. Allen near Cross Creek; Ft. Beelor at Candor; Hoagland's Fort on the former Joseph Keys farm; Turner's Fort near the Y on Rt. 22; Dillow near Murdocksville or close to Mrs. John Figley's old home (Cooley farm); and Cherry Fort near Cherry Valley. A book called **Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania** which Miss Ethel McNary lent me gives a nice synopsis of these forts. Some of the stories connected with them are enough to make one's blood run cold, and certainly they make us wonder at the courage of the pioneer people.

Ft. Vance, which probably has the most interesting history of all the forts in the Burgettstown community, was located on the farm now owned by Joseph Fritch. A back road from Langeloth to Cross Creek passes the Fritch or former James Vance farm. Elizabeth Scott and I traveled out to see the spot one day last spring and were struck by the proximity of the fort site to Climax Molybdenum Company.

When the poor old pioneers scuttled for safety some 180 years ago they little dreamed that the biggest smoke stack east of the Mississippi would one day be built only a few miles distance from their point of refuge.

Speaking of pioneers' scuttling for safety reminds me of a story was told of the early Vance family who was ready to flee to the fort before an Indian attack. Ma Vance was scurrying about gathering some food together to take along for, after all, there wasn't any point in starving to death during a siege. Pa Vance was getting a bit impatient and had all but mounted his horse to take off. His feverish haste made Ma a bit irked. "Aren't you going to wait for me, Pa?" she called. "I will if you can keep up with me", was his grim reply.

Shurley Bruce tells me that his Tucker ancestors, who lived near Tucker Church, were in constant fear of Indian attacks. They were pretty far from any fort, Vance near Cross Creek was probably the nearest. One of the things that they did for protection was to fasten bells on the horses at night. If the animals smelled Indians approaching, they stamped, setting the bells a-jingle. One person in the household always sat up listening for the bells or the stealthy approach of Indians. A son in the family was hard to waken, and only pulling him from his bed by his long thick hair could he rouse fast enough to start galloping with the rest of the family through the wilderness to Ft. Vance.

There are a number of stories of Indian terror in connection with the history of Vance's Fort, but one of the most pitiful and with the most far-reaching effects has to do with the Robert Wallace family. The Wallace's lived about a mile east of Florence on land adjacent to the property now owned by Fred Miller on Rt. 22. Joseph Wallace of Midway is a descendant of the Robert Wallace family. Robert Wallace returned home one evening in 1782 to find his cabin destroyed, his wife and three children gone. He spread the alarm, and a pursuing party was raised that night. Snow fell, however, obliterating the trail, and the pursuers had to return home. Wallace continued the search for a number of months almost distracted with grief. Finally, in 1783, news reached him that hunters had found the bones of what he believed his wife and infant child in the region near Hookstown. Wallace went to the spot and identified the body of his wife by the teeth. Both mother and child were tomahawked. Later it was learned that the older of the two boys had died on the Plains of Sandusky; the other, who was only two years old, was held captive by the Wyandots. Wallace sent a ranger to the Wyandot town; the boy was identified by a scar, and redeemed. This child grew to manhood and died at the age of 77. He was buried in an unmarked grave at Venice cemetery.

Upon gathering the bones of his wife and child together, Wallace who was half crazed from the long months of anxiety, hung them in a sack above his bed. Eventually they were laid in the cemetery at Cross Creek, but the spot is unmarked. This might have been the end of the incident, but it was reported that Mrs. Wallace's blood stained dress was in the possession of the Moravian Indians at Gnadenhutton, Ohio. The fury of Wallace and his friends was unquenchable. At Ft. Vance, it was planned that the settlers would march upon the Indians at Gnadenhutton. The Moravians, of course, were considered Christian Indians, and it is now thought the dress had been given them by savages who sought their destruction, The Gnadenhutton massacre in which 96 Christian Indians were destroyed is one of the most awful tales in American history. It is something none of us living here today can be proud of. However, it is understandable why it was initiated and we can at least believe that our settlers were not cowardly.

The story of the Wallace family is related in James Simpson's little book, **History of the Graveyard, Cross Creek Presbyterian Church** (1894) and Earle R. Forrest's **History of Washington County** (1926).

Mr. Forrest also relates a happier memory of Vance's Fort. It was near its door under a huge white oak tree that one of the first sermons ever preached in English west of the Alleghenies was delivered in 1778 by Rev. James Powers.

It is ironic that the builders of both Ft. Reynolds near Cross Creek and Ft. Dillow near Murdocksville should both have suffered at the hands of the Indians.

Reynolds's home was attacked in 1779 during his absence, his wife and child were carried off by the redskins. Being hotly pursued and attacked by Reynolds and a party of whites, the Indians killed Mrs. Reynolds and her child.

Matthew (or Michael) Dillow shortly before 1780, built Dillow's Fort, but he did not live long to "enjoy the fruits of his toil in the wilderness". In the summer of 1782, he and his son John were at work on a clearing on their farm, when Matthew Dillow was shot by an Indian. John watched the Indians secrete his father's body in a log; then the savages carried off the boy to the Ohio county. He was later secured his freedom, however, and returned home where he told his story and led a party of friends to the log where the bones of his father were found.

One of the tragic stories in connection with Dillow's Fort concerns the Anderson family. Mr. Anderson was working in the field when he was shot from ambush by an Indian. He was not killed, but fled to a neighbor Thomas Armour, who being a man of great strength, carried Anderson on his back to Dillow Fort. Meanwhile Mrs. Anderson had heard the shot and fearing Indians, she fled to the forest with her infant child. There she hid in the bushy part of a fallen tree. Fortunately, the baby made no noise, and the Indians passed leaving her unmolested. Her two sons were taken captive, however, and were never heard from again, although many years later a rumor went through the country that one of the sons had married a half breed Indian girl, and had gone West where he had become an Indian chief.

Ft. Beelor, which stood only a few rods from the present site of the of the first McDonalds to settle in this vicinity married a Noble of the Nobletown Nobles, I have been told , and their twin sons were born during an Indian uprising at Ft. Beelor.

A similar story is told in my own family history. My great great great great grandparents, Alexander and Jenny Wilson McCandless, who lived not far from Turner's Fort, at the Y, one day received an alarm that Indians were coming. Great great great Grandma was pregnant, curiously enough one of the two horses they possessed was about to fowl. Great Grandpa gave Great Grandma the faster horse and he took the one about to fowl. Grandmother's horse galloped to safety, but Grandfather's was much slower, and as he rode, the Indians appeared close behind him and shot arrows that stuck and quivered in the trees above his head. He reached the fort in safety, though, and the next day my great great uncle was born in Turner's Fort. No one has ever

told us what happened to the horse. Maybe her great great granddaughter raced at the Burgettstown Fair!

There is a tradition that at one time women at Hoagland's Fort repulsed the Indians who were attacking it with scalding water. "Repulsed" is the word the history books use. I would say the Indians probably went whopping into the wilderness.

Of all the forts in this part of the frontier, Cherry Fort was probably the most elaborate in construction. It was built by Thomas Cherry who immigrated from Maryland in 1774, and settled on land now owned by John Loffert beyond Cherry Valley on the Cherry Valley-Primrose road. The fort that Cherry built was really three buildings arranged in a triangle and enclosed by a stockade. The largest building was two stories and a half and twenty feet square. It was almost impregnable to the Indians in the fence corners.

On the same day that Libby Scott and I viewed the site of Vance's Fort we toured out to the Loffert farm to see if there were any Indian or pioneer spirits lurking in fence corners. Only a grassy hillside and a trim farmhouse gleaming in the sunshine met our curious gaze. John Loffert was fixing some machinery a few yards from the spot where all the old Cherry's are supposed to be buried. He assured us we were looking at the site of Cherry's Fort and he said he'd been told sixty or seventy souls had been laid away on the hillside once upon a time. We didn't ask to dig, but I had sort of a grim desire to take a spade and see how many skeletons I could unearth.

There are numerous stories, no doubt, about Cheery Fort, but the one which strikes me as the most fantastic and displays the most courage on the part of the early settlers involves the two famous Poe brothers and John Cherry, son of the man who built the fort.

The fort itself figures very little in the story, but I feel the tale is worth the telling and I describe it here in much the same way Earle Forrest does in his history, though similar accounts may be found in several books.

In June 1781, seven Wyandot Indians attacked the cabin of Thomas Bay who lived on 414 acres of land adjacent to what is now Burgettstown; as well as I can make out, somewhere between Plum Run Road and Route 22. The Wyandots repulsed, however, for a number of men present at the cabin, so the Indians continued on their way. Eventually they came to the cabin of a man named Jackson. He was captured while at work in his flax field, but his son saw what had happened and immediately set out running for Cheery Fort nine miles away. A pursuing party that included the Poe brothers and John Cherry started at once. The Poes lived on land about four miles west of Burgettstown

situated on Harmon Creek not far from the present Hanover township school. Part of this farm was, during the early part of this century, managed by the late John McGough, but during the twenties it was sold for coal stripping and little if any of the surface remains untouched. "The old Adam Poe Farm" is marked on the map of Smith Township in **Caldwell's Atlas of Washington County**. When it came to hunting Indians, the Poes considered it as much as a sport as shooting deer or bear. The pursuing party followed the Wyandots almost as far as the location of Wellsville, Ohio.

The men were making considerable noise as they went along, and Andrew Poe decided that he would like to go up the river alone. Leaving his brother Adam with the rest of the party, he made his way up the river stealthily. Pausing on the cliff about twelve feet above the river, he happened to glance down and saw to his surprise the Wyandot chief, Big Foot, and a smaller Indian just below him. Andrew hid himself in the bushes, cocked his gun and pulled the trigger, but the rifle missed fired, and the hammer fell with a snap. The Indians heard but did not see anything, for Andrew pulled his rifle just in time. He tried again, but the same thing happened. Knowing that the Indians would immediately investigate, Andre then did one of the most courageous things in all frontier history. He leaped over the cliff upon the two Indians.

They fell to the earth writhing beneath him. Poe tried to reach for his knife, but Big Foot realized what he was attempting to do. He waited for a moment; then he grasped Poe's arm just at the crucial moment and the knife fell from the latter's fingers and slipped into the river.

In the tussle, the little got loose, ran to the raft anchored at the river bank and picked up one of the two tomahawks. He flourished this about Andrew's head as the latter struggled with Big Foot. Poe kicked at the little Indian, and unbalanced him so that the tomahawk was flung into the river. The little Indian was not to be outdone. He ran to the raft again, secured a second tomahawk. This he threw at Andrew who jerked so that the tomahawk missed his head, but it stuck in his wrist severing three of the cords in his fingers. Poe was not one to give up. He pulled the tomahawk out and reached for the cocked gun which was lying on the beach where it had fallen in his wild leap. With this he shot the little Indian.

Big Foot had got hold of Poe again by this time, and now he threw him into the river; but Poe grabbed at the Indian's breach-clout and dragged him in too. The fight began in the water. Each tried to drown each other. Andrew finally succeeded for Big Foot lay still. He started to swim ashore. But Big Foot was only playing possum. He began swimming too, and not being hampered

by a wounded hand such as Poe had, he got to the beach first, and began reloading the gun.

Just at that instant Adam Poe who heard his brother shouting appeared. But his gun was empty. He had to re-load. Of course, Big Foot was already loading his gun, a process which took considerable time. The race to see which would load first seemed to be in the Indian's favor until in his hurry, Big Foot dropped the ram-rod. The extra seconds were all that Adam Poe needed; in a moment his bullet was sent crashing through the Indian's body.

The pursuing party meanwhile had rescued Jackson, but in the fracas John Cherry had been shot. Now the group appeared just as Adam Poe was endeavoring to help his brother from the river.

The other white men thought Adam was wrestling with an Indian and a shot was fired that seriously wounded Andrew Poe in the shoulder. Soon realizing their mistake, they ran to the rescue; then they started on the way back to Cherry Fort bearing the dead body of John Cherry, who was buried beside his father on the Cherry Farm (Loffert's place) and Andrew Poe, who eventually got better to hunt more Indians.

These Indians tales indicate, I believe, something of the courage of those who lived before us and give us some idea of what life was like in this region almost 200 years ago.

(In next week's **Enterprise**, folks, I'll tell you about some of the houses in Burgettstown, a few early industries and several other juicy stories that happened to early inhabitants of this section. K.P.)

History of Burgettstown and Community
Burgettstown Enterprise-July 9, 1953 Edition

Fort Vance Historical Society

*This is the second and final installment of a history of the
Greater Burgettstown Communities, covering the years 1780 to 1853,
Written by Miss Katherine Pyle*

I thought that I had disposed of most of the local Indian stories in last week's **Enterprise**, but another one cropped up this past week end when I was upon another "historical spree". I wandered out beyond Mt. Prospect Church Saturday to take a look at the spot of the Mighty McGugin Gas Well once burned for a period of two years. There I had a long chat with James McGugin's daughter, Mrs. Robert Phillips. The story of the gas well in a later chapter of our community's history (1882) but Mrs. Phillips came up with an Injun that strikes me as being worth recording before I go into the further history of this locality.

Her original ancestors in this part of the country where Daniel and Ann McGugin who came here from Iceland to settle here in 1770. They built a cabin on land now owned by Mrs. Phillips father James McGugin. One day there was an Indian alarm, and Daniel McGugin decided it would be best to send his wife and two or three of his younger children to Fort Pitt (local forts had not been built at the time of this particular scare.) He saw to it that his wife and children were mounted on an old white horse and headed for the fort; then he strapped his gun on his shoulder and returned to the field to cradle his grain.

No Indians appeared at the McGugin place but on the way to the fort Ann McGugin and her children met up with several Indians. It is hard to tell what might have happened had not the Indians noticed the red knit stockings one of the children were wearing. Charmed with the stockings the Indians showed signs that they wanted them. Mrs. McGugin passed them over to the red skins, and while they were quibbled among themselves for the prize, she road on to the fort unmolested.

And now, on with my original manuscript-

Besides being a people of insurmountable courage, the early settlers in this neighborhood were enterprising folk. Sebastian Burgett himself was ambitious. He erected his grist mill and worked hard to make a living. From what knowledge I have, there must have been considerable amount of competition in the milling industry. There was a mill in Bavington built by John Bavington; one at Murdocksville built by John White; one at Cross Creek owned by Alexander Wells and one operated by Samuel Johnston somewhere

in Cherry Valley area, possibly on the Farrar farm, though Miss Dorothy Farrar tells me that the mill on their property was known as White's Mill. Possibly some of the Whites who were millers purchased the Johnston Mill in later years. We know that it passed from Samuel Johnston to Humphrey Montgomery to John Wishart. Wishart bought it in 1795. The Farrars came to this locality about 1814.

All three mills operated simultaneously with the Burgett mill, and although scattered they no doubt drew some of the trade which might well have been Burgett's.

Burgett was successful, though, and it was at the time he was repairing or enlarging his mill that he went to Pittsburgh for iron castings. The journey was long and tedious through the forest. He had reached within two miles of home on his return trip when his wagon upset in crossing a log and Burgett fell beneath the iron castings and was killed.

He was buried in the family plot at the top of the hill directly above the family homestead, now Tender's house. Crumrine states in his history, "It is recorded on a slab in the Burgett family burying ground that Boston Burgett departed this life September 4, 1789 in the fifth year of his age."

The slab marking Burgett's grave is no longer standing. Neither are any of the others in the plot. Only depressions in the earth and evidence supplied by older residents in the district, who once saw the headstones, indicate that there once was a cemetery. Jessie Mungello, Mrs. Tender and I together with several neighborhood children, climbed the hill to see the spot ourselves. I wondered when I reached the breezy crest, what in the world ever induced those pioneer folk to carry their dead to such heights for burial. It must have been a strong team to haul the rude coffin up the hill or sturdy pall bearers if it were carried there. The same thought reoccurred to me when I visited the Whitaker Cemetery on the western side of town. Both of these old burial plots offer a mute reflection of the diligence and determination of the pioneer people; to bury their dead took work.

After Burgett's death, part of his land passed to his second wife, but the tract, known as "West Boston" became the property of his son George, who, with Peter Kidd, a surveyor, laid out the town in 1795. The town, more or less the present Pittsburgh Street, was called West Boston, the word Boston being a corruption of the name Sebastian. At first there were three log cabins beside the grist mill. Other houses were eventually built, and in the very construction of these houses one can glimpse the ambition of the early settlers.

We can't say which houses left in Burgettstown are actually the oldest. There are still several standing which are basically log-The Buritz house, the former Gilbert property on Market Street, for instance; the home of Mrs. Glenn Cummins on Pittsburgh Street, which to many is known as the Ringler property; and Jane Perry's little cabin which sits on the hillside overlooking Pittsburgh Street. It was meant to face the old road which wound over the hill south of the Presbyterian Cemetery.

Jane Perry was (Rat) Brown's grandmother, and for many years she lived in the little cabin that is now unoccupied. She and her husband built the cabin themselves with the help of neighbors possibly 1839, though the date is uncertain. Ben Lewis, who showed Jimmy Malone and me through the old cabin, told me its history. The logs were hewn by hand. A tiny staircase winds up the near the chimney to a loft above. The fireplace at one time took up almost the entire end of one side, but in recent years it was made smaller. Part of the cabin was later covered with siding but much of this has come off. Though the cabin remains in a state of dilapidation, its sturdy structure is indicative of the pioneer people and the strong negro couple who built it so many years ago.

The "Hood Tavern," where McGraw's live, and where the Vance Malone family lived a few years ago is, of course, an old landmark. Mrs. Malone tells me that the roof is made of saplings laid side by side.

The house is now owned by Rennison Malone is an old timer. Like the Hood Tavern it is a frame house which has undergone considerable remodeling through the years. When the Malone's took up the flooring on the second story they were amazed to discover a great quantity of wheat lying between the ceiling and the floor. They decided that the wheat must have been used for insulation.

The house formerly owned by T. B. Stevenson's family at the corner of Main and Market Street across from Urbanic's Market has timbers in the basement from which the bark has not been peeled. Weaver's house on Cherry Valley road, incidentally, is similar to the Stevenson house in this respect.

Although the Weaver house is not within the confines of Burgettstown Borough, I feel I must mention it here. It could well be one of the oldest houses in the community, if not the oldest house in the community.

James Stephenson (Stevenson) who built it, came to Smith Township from Pigeon Creek. He was born in 1773 and Crumrine tells us that "upon reaching maturity" he came to this vicinity where he built a grist mill and a house on the east branch of Raccoon Creek. We know that the grist mill was in operation in 1795, for Crumrine also mentions a record established in 1795,

of a road to run "from Raccoon Creek to intersect with the great road leading from Burgett's mill to Mingo Bottom". The house which Stephenson built was known as the "Mansion House." Anyone acquainted with the Weaver home can well understand why the old brick dwelling with its long hall and stairway and its ample sized rooms might be called a "Mansion House". It must have seemed so to the pioneers who were glad in those days for the rudest shelter. James Stephenson and his wife Jane Vance Stephenson reared a family of eight children under the roof of the Mansion House. In 1805-07, Stephenson was a member of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania. He lived many years later and died at the Mansion House in 1846, aged 73. The mill property with the house was willed to his son John who sold it to John Armstrong; later it was owned by John Keyes. The mill has long since gone, but evidence of it are still remaining not far from the Weaver home. T. P. Weaver, a relative of the Keyes family now lives in the Mansion House which has lost little of its charm. Sitting on the lawn beside Mrs. Weaver's gay garden last summer, I looked up at the old house and thought that none of the New England houses, which are so often pointed out for their simplicity and antiquity, could be more attractive.

One of the most unusual features of the Mansion House is the iron rod which goes through the center of the house terminating in two S like hooks on the outside walls. I have read that old Charlestown, South Carolina, houses were re-enforced with iron rods in order to protect them from hurricanes. Weavers do not know history of the iron rod through their house, but it is obvious it is meant to hold the building together. Perhaps some terrifying windstorm of the last century provoked its installation. At any rate, our early pioneers built, and built well.

The other very old houses (and by old, I imply built before 1840) are two in Pittsburgh street owned respectively by Hettie Leopold Kaiser and Lawrence Meneely's. Of these two the latter particular fascinates me. The Meneely house is the second above Hanna Pompe's Restaurant. Only half of the original structure remains, but it is truly remarkable. The chimney on the upper side runs the length of two thirds of the sides of the two rooms. The door hinges are long strap like ones similar to those sometimes seen on barns. The flooring is heavy oak and much of the inside wall is heavy timber. But the mantels are the most interesting features in the house. As far as I know there are no other mantels like them in Burgettstown, though the Tom Perkins house near Paris has similar ones but of a little different design.

Years ago in England Two brothers named Adam designed the houses of Adelphi Terrace. The mantels of these homes, which were owned by wealthy

people in London, were especially beautiful being white marble and classic in pattern, the grooving and carving being done simply and gracefully. I have been told the home of George Bernard Shaw had such mantels. They were known all over the world as Adam mantels.

Shurley Bruce, whose Tucker ancestors lived in the Tom Perkins house, was acquainted with the Adams mantels there and discovered there and discovered the ones in the Meneely house. He has compared them with the ones in Virginia homes. Mrs. Meneely was kind enough to let me inspect one of the mantels in her home. The woodwork in her living room is carved here and there in the same pattern as the mantel.

Another beautiful old house in Burgettstown of a little later period is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Henderson-the former Tenan property. Mrs. Effie Tenan Russell (whose mother was a Whitaker descended from some of the earliest settlers in this region) says she does not know exactly when the house was built but it must be at least 100 years old. The Tenan is a frame dwelling snuggled safely on the side of the hill near what was once an excellent spring. With its wide hall beautiful walnut stair railing and white woodwork, it possesses an antebellum charm that the Hendersons have cherished in redecorating and in making repairs. Frankly, there is no other house in Burgettstown I would rather live in-if only to sit at one upstairs window that faces west. There the ceiling slopes gradually and through a broad window that rises from floor to ceiling, one can glimpse in summer the leafy branches of the trees outside.

Another interesting old house though probably not so old as those I have mentioned, is the one where the Noah's live on South Main Street, two houses below the redbrick house were Mrs. Adah Campbell lives. It was originally built of walnut, the siding being huge walnut planks set on end.

The red brick house of Campbells was built for a school house in Burgettstown, the first being a crude little shelter located near the rear of the present Scott's garage. It was known as the Divitt house.

Besides being enterprising in building homes, the early Burgettstowner's wanted education for their children. Even when the roof leaked on the Divitt school house, classes were held in various homes on Pittsburgh Street or in that neighbor hood. Finally in 1834, when the famous school law requiring free education for all children in the state of Pennsylvania, was passed, the red brick school, the Campbell house, was constructed. William Melvin in **A Century of Education** (1898) says of the adoption of the school law that the vote was taken in a covered bridge at the foot of Pittsburgh Street. The day being rainy the people assembled there, and

all those voting Aye went to one end of the bridge; all those voting Nay to the other end.

Two other schools followed the red brick house; a frame one near the present borough school and the present one itself.

A little anecdote has come down to us from one of the earliest schools. Miss Ethel McNary says it was told to her when she was a little girl. There was a teacher named Benjamin Gail. He was a tall lanky Icabod Cranish sort of figure, and like, Icabod, he wore a swallow-tail coat. On his way to school he would not to gracefully leap a stake and rider fence. The children made up the rhyme:

Benjamin Gail
Catch him by the tail.

Industry in West Boston grew slowly. The mill built by the Burgetts in 1783 was run by water power. In 1808 they sold it to Rolland Rogers. It is believed that he built the second mill on the same location and steam power was introduced. The third proprietor was Freegift Crawford who bought it from the heirs. Mr. Crawford sold it to T. J. Patterson in 1851, which takes up its history through the period I have set aside to discuss. It is interesting to know, though that the mill changed hands several times more and in 1870 became the property of Daniel Crane and his sons D. L. and Robert. The Crane family owned the mill until 1893. For 92 years the property was in the family name of but four; Burgett, Rogers, Crawford and Crane. Miss Estelle Crane, who has given me considerable help in establishing Historical facts, is a descendant of the Cranes who owned the grist mill.

We know that there was a tannery in 1792, on the site of Lounder's Grill. In 1810, there was a small nail factory on the south side of Pittsburgh Street going up the hill. In 1820, a pottery was located at the head of Pittsburgh Street. It was owned by John Franks. People in fairly recent years have dug up bits of dishes while making gardens on their Pittsburgh Street properties.

There was a woolen mill near the head of Pittsburgh Street. It burned about 1829, near the site of Brosky's Tavern. In 1831, a business of carding, spinning, and manufacturing of jeans was carried on. John Brown of Civil War fame was said to have purchased wool at one time in Burgettstown.

Always there have been taverns here. It is not established fact, but it has been said that four taverns or hotels operated at the corner of Pittsburgh and Main Streets at one time. Some of the early tavern owners were George Day, licensed in 1796; Robert McClelland licensed from 1803-1815; Rowland Rogers, 1803-1815; Caleb Russell, 1804-1809; Margaret McDonald 1806-1809; Joseph Caldwell, 1806-1815; Thomas Miller, 1810.

In the center of the road was a town well which eventually was removed because persons living nearby complained of the confusion. After the Main Street was paved (or Washington Street as it was officially recorded) a sink hole from the old well gave trouble to townsmen in charge of road maintenance.

As the town grew, stores opened. The first store owner was a one-eyed old fellow who came here from Bavington. His name was David Bruce, Bruce not only kept store, but also he had other ambitions. He wrote poetry. A book of his poems was published in Washington, PA.

Creigh's History of Washington County (1870) gives a sample of two verses which was sometimes written in Scottish dialect. The better of the two, and a poem not written in dialect, is entitled "On Washington's Retiring from Public Life", the last stanza runs as follows:

"On earth will future bards rehearse
His deeds in never dying verse,
And when all mortal things shall cease,
And time has run his span,
In regions of eternal spring,
The blest their heavenly harps will string,
And to seraphic airs will sing
The friend of peace and man,"

David Bruce is said to have been buried in the Old Presbyterian Cemetery, the second old cemetery one passes in taking the road from Pittsburgh Street extension to Cherry Valley, but I can't find his tombstone. I ruined a pair of hose looking for it in the jungle of yucca plants and blackberry vines. I had a notion to send a bill to U.P. but I thought twice remembering that the Presbyterian had a cemetery jungle of their own on the hillside near Paul Smith's house.

As I look over the early history before 1825, I am impressed too by another thing which stamps the early settlers as enterprising. They traveled such long distances on horseback or in wagons or possibly on foot. How they did it was a miraculous to me. We know that George Washington was constantly on the go from Virginia to Pennsylvania and even farther north to New York State.

We have no proof that Washington ever traveled through the Burgettstown area but we do know that he must have passed through Smith Township. His own journal mentions him following the trail from Mingo to Pittsburgh in 1770. He probably passed between Cross Creek and Burgettstown, and he may have spent the night at some farmer's dwelling. There is a

legend that Washington once hitched a horse to a big a tree which stood for a long time near Alvin Berry's home. The story has never been verified but it could well be true.

Captain John Bavington was traveling a considerable distance with a cumbersome load when he met disaster June 10, 1810. Captain Bavington was of Revolutionary War fame and owned land near the present Bavington village. (T.C. Linn's home stands on a portion of the old Bavington land. Incidentally, the Linn home is an old one. When they remodeled it recently they found a newspaper dated 1836 in the rafters.) Capt. Bavington was traveling with several horses, wheat and whisky when arrived at the ferry near Steubenville. He asked the ferryman to put everything even the horses on boat. It was the thought that the horses grew frightened in crossing the river and stamped a hole in the bottom of the ferry, for a hole was made, and the water came in so that the boat sank and all were drowned. The river was dragged and captain Bavington's body was found. He was still clutching his riding whip. His body was brought back to Washington County, and he was buried at the Florence Cemetery.

There is a sequel to this story. A few years later (August 26, 1811) two soldiers stationed in Pittsburgh quarreled and challenged each other to a duel. They set a meeting place at Winchester, Virginia. One traveled as far as Florence where he spent the night. The next morning he awoke very early and went out to practice with his pistols. Random shot hit old Captain Bavington's tombstone in the Florence Cemetery. One can see to this day the two bullet holes in the slab that marks his grave.

The other duelist set out and rode as far as North Star. There he fell from his sulky and broke his leg. He was taken back to Pittsburgh and the duel was never fought.

Preachers in the early days did a tremendous amount of traveling. Rev. John McMillan, Rev. Elisha McCurdy, and Rev. Joseph Patterson must have been hardy old fellows to wander as they did, preaching first at one church then another. Besides being enterprising physically, they were zealous in their religion.

Most of you have noticed the little sign at Florence that mentioning the fact that Elisha McCurdy preached there. When McCurdy was called to the Cross Roads Presbyterian Church at Florence and Three Springs Church near Paris in 1800, the settlement was made up largely of hardened back woodsmen. (The town of Florence was not platted until 1814, and was first known as Mount Bethel, later as Briceland's Crossroads since James Briceland

operated a tavern at the intersection. The name Florence was used about 1834.

McCurdy was definitely a tee-totaler, and it was custom to drink heavily at funerals. McCurdy attended one where he found the people formed in a circle waiting to receive the whiskey and cake. He was asked to give the blessing, but refused. After the repast, in the heat of his indignation, he delivered a sermon on the subject "Whiskey at a Funeral". So ardent was his protest that the use of whiskey at funerals was seldom adhered to in the years that followed.

McCurdy's name will always be associated with the Great Revival of 1802, which began in the Three Springs congregation and swept the country for miles so that even proceedings of national government were affected. David Elliott in his **The Life of Rev. Elisha McCurdy** (1848) and Clarence E. McCartney in **Not Far from Pittsburgh** (1936) give us some insight into McCurdy's fiery enthusiasm. How much it had to do with the revival can never be determined, but members of his congregation would pray all night in the woods or stay up in the homes of neighbors for several succeeding nights. It was the habit to fall prostrate on the ground and writhe in torment over the recollection of one's sins. Even school children were said to have spent the night in prayer in schoolhouses, caught by the spirit of evangelism.

Joseph Patterson, first minister at Candor, was another such zealous soul who believed fervently in prayer. On one occasion Patterson had subscribed six dollars toward the building of a meeting house, but when the day came to pay the sum, he started for the school house empty handed. On the way through the forest he felt called upon to pray about the matter. On his knees amid the great forest trees he prayed fervently and long. Suddenly, he was startled by a movement in the bushes. He looked up to see a panther, which was a common enough animal in this region in those days, glaring at him. He raised his gun and shot the animal. The pelt, curiously enough, sold for six dollars and Patterson felt he had received a direct answer to prayer.

Not only the minister but the laymen of this locality were, in the early days, zealous in their religious faith. The historical committee which composed a pamphlet on the history of the United Presbyterian Church for the sesquicentennial in 1950, mentions the character of the Scotch Irish settlers who often traveled great distances to attend church services. The United Presbyterian Church is, of course, the oldest in Burgettstown Borough, having been organized in 1800, as the Associate Presbyterian Congregation. A log building was erected on a plot of ground near the old United Presbyterian

Cemetery. Shortly before 1871, the frame building was moved in its entirety to the present location on Washington Street.

The First Presbyterian Church of Burgettstown was the second to be organized in Burgettstown proper, but its establishment was not until 49 years after the United Presbyterian Church had origin. Anyone interested in the early history of the Presbyterian Church will discover that a great deal of diligent effort was put into its establishment.

Were I to go into the history of the years between 1853 and 1953 there would be much to prove that our early settlers were always enterprising and eager to make an opportunity. Consider the great projects of this community- the building of the railroad, the interest in the agriculture as manifested by the Burgettstown Fair, the gas and oil boom and the coal mining industry which continues to keep our town on the map.

I shall not go into this later history here, for so much of a new town for instance-Abilene, as it was called, or later Cardville, which today is the newer part of Burgettstown down by the station. The history of Abilene or Cardville is a sketch in itself and belongs in the period after 1865, when the railroad was laid from Pittsburgh to points west.

Finally, I find that people in the early days were not without one prize possession-a sense of humor. Humor is evident in the very names that were given things.

It is fun to read the names of the old land patents: Thomas Whitaker, who came from here before 1786, took out a warrant for 400 acres of land which bears the date 1805, and was called "Slow and Easy." We wonder how on earth such a name could be given a patent. The town of Slovan is now located on a tract of land that once belonged to John Easton and many years before that to Major William Vance. The tract was simply called "Oatfield." A son of Major William Vance took out a certificate for land in 1780. This was surveyed to land him as "the Corn-Field". Other less amusing names are "Gretna Green", "Shady Grove," "Long Bottom," "Victory," "Marquisate," and "Wallace Bower."

Villages, too, were often named for rather humorously. Midway, for instance was once called "Little Egypt" for its mill many settlers went for corn as the Israelites journeyed to Egypt. Today Midway high school still uses three pyramids as a symbol of Little Egypt on its class rings.

The name Hickory grew out of sort of a joke. Some young surveyors were following a path through the woods one day. Feeling the pangs of hunger, they sat down in a wooden grove to eat the lunch they had brought along. They found an old abandoned sled which they used for a table. After

the meal one of the fellows tied the sled to a hickory branch which sprang up into the air permitting the sled to dangle beneath. There it hung, and for a long time the fellows alluded to the spot where they had stopped as the "Hickory Tavern." Eventually a village grew up near the history tree. It, too, was first called "Hickory Tavern". Later the word "tavern" was dropped, and today we know the town as Hickory.

Picturesque names have continued to be used by later generations. "Turkeyfoot" was a name given to the oil fields of this community because the oil lay pocketed in the earth in the design of a turkey foot.

More recently early coal miners in this section found false vein of coal lying above the regular Pittsburgh vein, and because the false coal seemed to "roost" above the other it was called "rooster" coal. We Burgettstown are proud of the shiny black coal that burns to a fine ash. Only people in this region can boast of "rooster Coal".

Sometimes the humor of the early settlers became somewhat perverted, as was the case in 1786, when the government sent a man from Philadelphia to collect tax on whiskey brewed in this locality. The settlers were indignant that such a tax should be placed on whiskey for it was the only means they had of selling or distributing the corn and rye which they cultivated. A group of infuriated but somewhat humor loving woodsmen met the excise man near Cross Creek. He had ridden through the woods in grand style wearing his wig and cocked hat with pistols at his sides. When the settlers encountered him they tore off his hat and wig, shaved his head on one side, made a cue of his hair on the other, turned his garments backwards and hustled him to the Westmoreland County border, stopping at every still or tavern on the way to make sport of him. The incident set off the famous Whiskey Rebellion of our nation's history.

Occasionally some of the incidents have simply gathered humor for us over the years. One is naturally amused when he reads in William Melvin's **A Century of Education** that Elijah Henwood paid one dollar a month by Samuel Douthett for the privilege of walking through her kitchen. Douthett and his sister taught school in the second story of the house in which Mrs. Henwood lived. Her house and the school were located on Main Street south of the United Presbyterian Church.

My favorite story, however, of early Washington County humor concerns two ministers John McMillan and Joseph Patterson. McMillan was the famous minister of Presbyterianism in these parts. Joseph Patterson was the Candor preacher who shot a panther. According to Guthrie's recent biography John McMillan, they were riding to the Presbytery in Pittsburgh one

day, and being tired, they stopped at a tavern on the way. Evidently they did not share Elisha McCurdy's views on temperance. They both ordered drinks. The whiskey was poured and both preachers set about offering grace over the glasses. McMillan's prayer was brief and to the point. Patterson with closed eyes, prayed on and on. Eventually he finished, but he opened his eyes upon an empty glass. He looked accusingly at McMillan who rather sheepishly admitted that he had drunk the whiskey, Patterson, a little annoyed made some feeble remonstrance.

"Bother Patterson," said McMillan, "you must watch as well as pray."

*Besides those persons whose names are mentioned in the above sketch, I should like to acknowledge the help received from the following: Mrs. R. C. Cassidy and Mrs. Michael Harris who graciously lent me Forrest's **History of Washington County**, Mrs. R. M. Donaldson, who told me stories of Beelor's Fort, Harry Richey whose copy of Crumrine's History has been invaluable guide to me, Dr. A. O. Hindman who helped me establish several facts; Dr. Jacob C. Ruble for lending his book **John McMillan**, and Mrs. Margaret Malone who told me the story of the Vances. I also appreciate the fact that the program committee of the Burgettstown Friday Club launched me on what has been an experience in research that I'll never forget.*

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