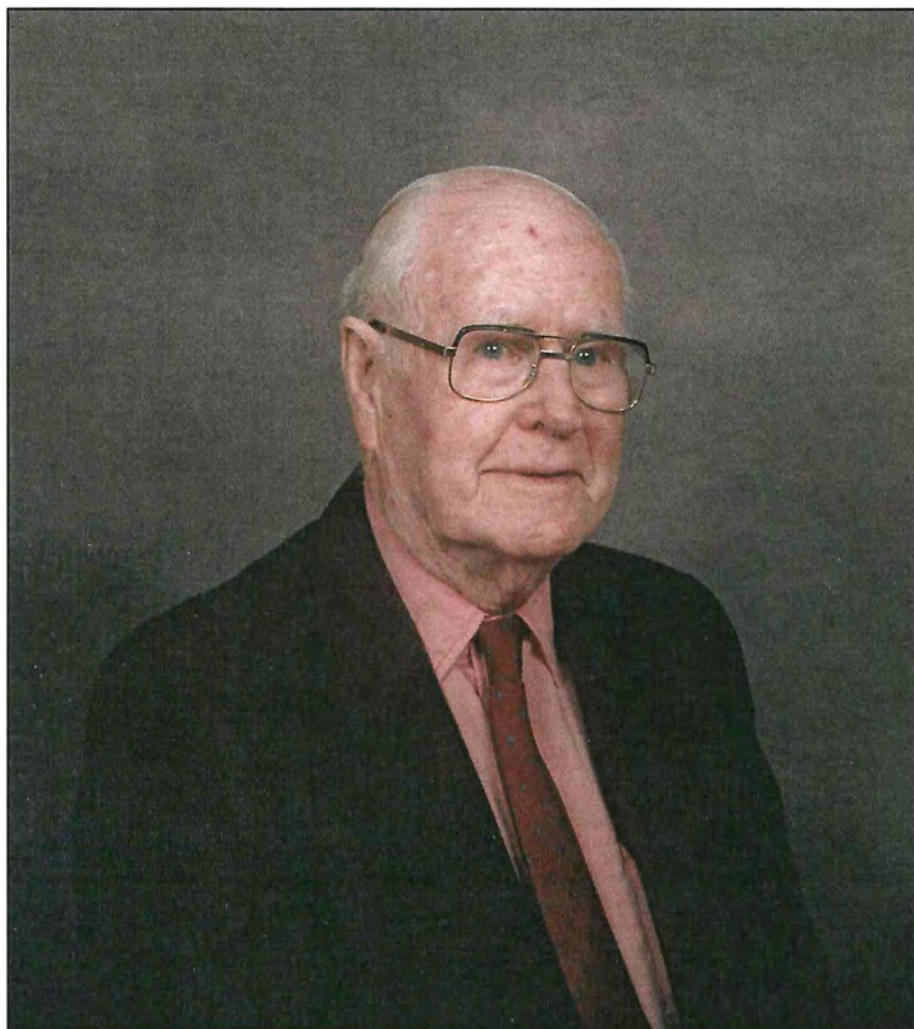


# **History of Cross Creek Country**

*Courtesy of Fort Vance Historical Society*



Alvin Dinsmore White  
Clan Historian

Alvin D. White, the author of History of the Cross Creek Country, was born in Smith Township, Washington County, Pa. on November 10, 1894. He received his elementary education in Cooke's one-room school in Smith Township and in Nosco Hall in Cross Creek Township. He graduated from Cross Creek Township High School in 1913. From 1913 to 1915 he attended Muskingum College and after that he was graduated from the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh in 1924, with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education. Mr. White took graduate courses at the University of Pittsburgh and at California State College.

After teaching in elementary schools in Cross Creek and Smith Townships and at the Cross Creek Township High School, Mr. White became Supervising Principal of the Cross Creek Township Schools from 1927 to 1930. From 1930 he was Supervising Principal of the following schools: Jefferson Township Schools, from 1930-1940; Cross Creek, Jefferson and Hopewell Township Schools (jointly), 1940-1956; Elementary Principal of the Avella Joint Schools, 1956-1959.

Mr. White retired in July, 1959, after forty years in the Public School System. During his retirement years he has had the time to devote to his many historical books and other publications, as well as being the "Clan Historian." The books he has written include: The Lyles of Washington County, in 1963 (third edition); History of Cross Creek Presbyterian Church, in 1969; The History of Cross Creek Graveyard and Cemetery, in 1969; The History of the Mt. Prospect Graveyard and Cemetery in 1972. He has also written articles for publication in the Burgettstown Enterprise and the Washington Observer. These include: "Burgettstown, the Metropolis," "Burgettstown's Neighboring Towns," "Our District Schools," "History of Jefferson Township," "History of the Cross Creek Academy and the Cross Creek Township High School," "First Families of the Cross Creek Country," "The Robert Dinsmore Murder Story," "The Van Baker Murder Trials," and "The Allingham Murder in Eldersville."

Mr. White was married on June 7, 1919 to Laura A. Cooper. They are the parents of six sons and four daughters, all of whom are living. Mr. and Mrs. White have twenty-four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
I.	Definitions, and a Description of the Area.....	1
	Description of the Area.....	4
	How the Area Was Settled.....	7
II.	The Cross Creek Village Community.....	10
	Schools in the Cross Creek Village Community...	15
III.	The Cedar Grove Community.....	20
IV.	The Patterson Mills Community.....	27
	Some Side-lights on the Foregoing History of Patterson Mills.....	35
V.	The Avella Community.....	40
VI.	The Doddridge-Manchester Community.....	55
VII.	The Independence Village Community.....	63
VIII.	The Community of West Middletown Borough.....	73
IX.	The Buffalo Village Community.....	88
X.	The Brush Run - Buffalo Creek Valley Region..	100
XI.	The Mt. Hope Ridge Community.....	109
XII.	The Rea-Woodrow Community.....	116
XIII.	The Upper Cross Creek Valley Community.....	130
XIV.	The Jefferson Township Community.....	136

## CHAPTER I.

### Definitions, and a Description of the Area.

The term "Cross Creek" is a very old one and it was applied, of course, in the very earliest history of this area, to the stream or "Creek" which flows through almost the middle of the area, and which drains a large part of what we are going to call "The Cross Creek Country."

This stream rises on the west side of the "dividing ridge" which separates the water-shed of this stream from that of Chartiers Creek to the east. Two forks of the stream then flow through well-defined valleys westward from their sources until they meet to form the main stream of Cross Creek about one mile southwest of the location of the Avella High School, and about one and three-quarters miles east of the town of Avella. At Avella, the north fork of Cross Creek joins the main stream, which then flows in a generally westward direction until it enters the Ohio River at a point just three miles above Wellsburg, West Virginia.

At the point where Cross Creek enters the River, it can be observed that, on the opposite (Ohio) side of the River, another creek enters the larger stream, and this creek, in Ohio, is also called "Cross Creek." The mouths

of these two streams are exactly opposite, or across from each other, or to express it another way, the River might be thought of as the upright and the two creeks as the arms of a Cross; hence, the name "Cross Creek" for both of these streams. It is probable that the Indians knew the geographical significance of the locations of these two streams, and that they called them "Cross Creek," in their own language, of course, and when the white men came, they were quick to adopt the names in English.

In addition to the so-called south and middle forks of Cross Creek, which meet at the point which has been mentioned, and the north fork which meets the main stream at Avella, there are numerous other smaller streams flowing into the Creek from both the north and south sides of the stream. Two of the more important of these are Hollow Rock Run and Scott's Run, which together drain much of the area of Jefferson Township. It is notable that as the Creek flows westward from Avella, the bed of the stream has become entrenched in a deep gorge, or canyon, the bed of the creek seemingly becoming ever deeper, and the adjoining hills ever higher. This is most pronounced in the vicinity of Meadowcroft Village, where a sort of Royal Gorge, or Grand Canyon, actually seems to exist. This characteristic is common in

other creeks of Washington County as they approach the river into which they flow. The hills appear to be high and usually very steep and the adjoining regions are "wild" in appearance and in the vegetation which abounds in such areas.

After white settlers came into the area, the name "Cross Creek" began to have a wider use. With the laying out of a village where the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church was established in 1779, both the Church and the Village were called Cross Creek, since the Village lay near the head-springs of the North Fork of Cross Creek. Then, in 1789, when Hopewell Township was divided, that part of it lying north of the South Fork of Cross Creek, and north of the main stream further west, was given the name of Cross Creek Township. That area included the present Cross Creek Township and, until 1853, all of present Jefferson Township, which in that year was set off as a separate township.

To apply the term Cross Creek Country in this History, we hope will not be confusing to anyone who reads these lines. We will use the term to include all the area of the Avella School District, now consisting of Cross Creek, Hopewell and Independence Townships and West Middletown Borough, the general idea being to compile this History for use in classes in the Avella High School.

Cross Creek Township and Cross Creek Village have been associated with a great deal of the early history of this entire area. Over the years, the history of adjacent communities of the present Avella School District have been closely identified with the History of Cross Creek Village and the Township, as we will attempt to develop in this History. So, the writer hopes that the term "Cross Creek Country" will be accepted as an appropriate name for the entire area of this School District.

Since Jefferson Township is not included in the Avella School District, although geographically it is a part of the Cross Creek Country, the history of that township will not be developed as fully as for the other communities in the Cross Creek Country.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

What was the Cross Creek Country like before white settlers began coming in here? It has been described by some writers as a "howling, trackless wilderness" consisting, we are led to believe, of vast tracts of heavily forested country in which ancient trees of Oak, Maple, Beech, Walnut, Chestnut and other deciduous hardwoods stood as the chief



vegetation of the country. Few, if any "clearings" existed, the deep forest covering virtually the entire area. Through these deep forests, of course, flowed the copious streams, such as Cross Creek, which, as we have noted, drained the central part of our area, with Buffalo Creek draining the southern part, while Harmon Creek and Raccoon Creek drained the adjacent areas to the north and north-east.

The region abounded, too, in wild beasts, some species of which exist here to this day, and consisting then of bear; deer; raccoon; skunk; foxes, red and grey; woodchuck; chipmunk; squirrel, grey, black, red and flying; muskrat, porcupine, and in the earliest times buffalo (bison) and the wolf. No doubt, the great numbers of these animals made the night hideous with their howls, thus contributing to the name "howling wilderness," as the early settlers described the region. And the sighing of the winds through the limbs of the great trees of the forest added to the sounds which sometimes soothed and at other times terrified the early settlers of this area.

In the immediate Cross Creek Country, no human inhabitants occupied the land when the white men came here to settle. Some Indians did live at or near the present site of Pittsburgh and along the Ohio River to the north and west, but this local area was not permanently occupied by the red

men. Instead, they used this region for hunting grounds and came in here periodically for that purpose from points across the Ohio River. However, there is evidence that in earlier times, human habitations did exist here, since burial places have been uncovered and places where the aborigines must have lived have been found.

As white men began coming into the present Cross Creek Country in the early 1770's, their contacts with the Indians, at first, were not too frequent, and occurred when the two races met on trading expeditions, or after the white men had built their cabins, as the Indians came in to resist the encroachments of the white men on their hunting grounds. As time went on, these incursions of the Indians became more frequent and so presented real difficulties to the settlers in their efforts to establish homes here.

No roads, as we know them, existed in the area, although the Indians did have well-defined trails which they used with some frequency, these usually following either the creek valleys, or the intervening ridges, as they sought to reach points in the interior of the forest suitable for the purposes of their hunting expeditions. One of these trails, the so-called Mingo Path, or one of its branches, may have run through some part of the Cross Creek Country.

## HOW THE AREA WAS SETTLED

By the early 1770's, we find the white men coming into this area in goodly numbers; seeking suitable tracts of land on which to settle and to establish homes. Before speaking of the early settlers in each community of the Cross Creek Country, we will describe briefly how these settlements were made. The first white men to come here from each of the Allegheny Mountains were usually traders who came in to "deal" some white men's goods for the pelts and furs which had been taken from animals of the forest by the Indians. But these traders were soon followed by men of families who wished to come here and establish homes. Quite often the man of the family or a few such men traveling together came in to "spy out" the land. If the man found a tract of land suitable to his purpose, he would make a "tomahawk" claim to it by chopping marks on trees at the four corners of his tract of land. These marks would be notice to other land-seekers that this tract of land had already been taken.

The new settler would then return to his home community where he had been living in the East to make preparations for moving his family here, either later that same year, or early the following year. Moving his family and their possessions to their new home in the wilderness would have to be by the most primitive means. With no roads over the mountains, but only pack-horse trails to follow, only the most necessary items

could be brought with them, and these would have to be brought on pack-horses or carried by the members of the family on foot, or in small hand-carts which they would drag over the trail. The "essentials" would consist of food for the family, necessary clothing, much of which they wore, of course, a gun, axe, sometimes a cow to furnish milk for the family; they couldn't bring very much, so the journey was hazardous and toilsome, and frequently was taken with much inconvenience and sometimes tragedy, since anything might happen on the way.

If the immigrants were fortunate and reached their new home in safety, there would be no conveniences awaiting them when they arrived, except possibly a sparkling spring of cold water, which was usually to be found on each tract of land, and which was always necessary for successful settlement. A log cabin would have to be built as soon as possible and a "clearing" in the forest made quickly so they could plant a garden, and the animals of the forest would have to be hunted and killed for meat and for the skins which would provide shelter and clothing for the coming winter. The forest provided an abundance of wood for building as well as for use in the fireplace, on which the cooking had to be done, and on which the family depended for heating their cabin during the long winter ahead.

Since the tract of land taken up was usually large, 400 acres or more, and with the log cabin the only house on the

tract, naturally the neighbors, if there were any, were some distance away, so most families were isolated from others in the same situation. This led to loneliness, as well as greater danger from the incursions of the savage red men. But as the region was gradually settled, all available land was eventually taken up, and the settlers were able, little by little, to improve their conditions and after living for upwards of twenty years in constant fear of the Indians, these savages were driven off to the West, and peaceful living came at last to the white settlers of the Cross Creek Country.

In most cases, the small log cabins soon gave place to the more commodious log houses of two storys, log barns were built on most farms, and as the forests were cleared off, our "Country" became communities of well-tilled and fertile farms, well-stocked with good herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. Our villages of Cross Creek, Independence, West Middletown and Buffalo Village were established early, as locations for our churches, schools, stores and homes for the artisans who served the farmers of the surrounding communities: the blacksmith, tailor, cobbler, carpenter and joiner, the merchant and the physician, all of whose services were necessary for the well-being of the farm families of each neighborhood.

With this overall background which applies generally to all of our communities, we will proceed to develop the history of the individual communities of the Cross Creek Country.

## CHAPTER II

## The Cross Creek Village Community

This community may not have been the first settled in the Cross Creek Country, but the settlers here were among the first to come, so we will develop the history of this community first in order. We will mention three families who came here very early and who had a prominent part in all that went on here in early times.

First, the Vance Family, consisting of Major William Vance and his son, Colonel Joseph Vance, and their wives and children. These men came to Washington County as early as 1772. Joseph Vance attempted to settle on some land located two miles south of Atlasburg in Smith Township and he built a cabin there which stood as a landmark for many years. It was long known as the "Cabin," but the association with the name of Joseph Vance was not known until just a few years ago when a paper was found in which Mr. Vance told of building the Cabin. But since the Stevenson Family, coming from Virginia, from whence the Vances also had come, had a previous claim to the land, Joseph Vance moved on to a tract of land located two miles north of Cross Creek Village where he made a permanent location, and on which he erected Vance's Fort in either 1773 or 1774. The farm on which Colonel Vance settled is, in part, that now owned and occupied by the family of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rommes.

Major William Vance located on a tract of land adjoining his son's to the northeast, and this tract also adjoins the present town of Slovan to the southwest. While these tracts of land taken up by the Vances lay slightly out of what we are calling Cross Creek Country, yet throughout early times, the Vances were closely identified with the history of the area.

Another family who came to Cross Creek from the vicinity of Winchester, Virginia, were the Marquises, two brothers, Thomas and John, together with their families. These men settled tracts of land to the west and northwest of Cross Creek Village, on land now comprising the farms of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Stewart, Mrs. Eleanor Lee, Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Lee and probably parts of other adjoining farms. Of these two brothers, Thomas studied for the ministry and he served as the second pastor of the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church. John Marquis was a farmer, but in those rugged times, he was known as a brave fighter against the Indians, and he also was a swift runner, a fact that stood him in good stead many times during the pioneer days here.

Henry Graham came to Cross Creek from Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1776, and he settled on land very near the Cross Creek Church, on farms now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Arley Briggs and family and by Mr. and Mrs. John Chechuck and family. On their way to the Cross Cross Creek Country, Mr. Graham and

others in his party signed an agreement that wherever they chanced to settle, they would assist in the organization of a Presbyterian Church. Three years after their arrival in the Cross Creek Country, the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church was organized in June 1779 and Henry Graham helped select the site for the church building and then, very obligingly, donated the ground on which the first church building was erected.

As these three families and other early settlers came into this community, in addition to the problems of building and furnishing their homes, they were faced with the necessity of providing protection from the Indian raids which were becoming increasingly frequent and deadly. To provide this protection for his own family, Colonel Joseph Vance erected Vance's Fort on his farm, and he offered protection in it to the other settlers of the area. In this well-built, stockaded fort, these families found the protection which they needed, and when forced to live there for long periods of time, these people also found the social contacts with their neighbors, which resulted in the eventual formation of a well-knit frontier community. Vance's Fort was used by people from over a wide area of this part of the Cross Creek Country as long as the Indian raids continued.

Another problem which confronted these people, many of whom were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, was that of securing a



a suitable place for worship in this community. This problem also was solved, in part, by their living in Vance's Fort, since, when they were compelled to assemble there for protection, it was possible for them to hold religious services also. These men were led in religious services at the Fort by such godly men as Major William Vance, James Campbell and others.

In September, 1778, the Reverend James Power of the Sewickley and Mt. Pleasant Churches in Westmoreland County, came into this area and on the 14th of September he preached to the people assembled in Vance's Fort and he baptized about twenty children from their families. The following spring, the Reverend Joseph Smith of York County, Pennsylvania, came and preached a number of sermons here and in the vicinity of Buffalo Village. Since the people of these two communities were looking for a minister, and since Mr. Smith was willing to come to this "then" western country, the people of the Cross Creek and Buffalo communities met on the farm of James Marshal in Cross Creek Township on June 21, 1779 and made out a call for the ministerial services of Mr. Smith. The call was taken down to him in York County by Mr. James Edgar of Cross Creek. Mr. Smith accepted the call and he moved to the Cross Creek Country either late in 1779, or early the following year. He lived on the farm in present Hopewell Township, now the property of the Carl Branczak Family, and he served as pastor of the Cross Creek and Upper Buffalo Churches until his death in April, 1792.

The first church building erected at Cross Creek in 1779 was a small log building and it stood where the present church still stands. This building became too small after four or five years of use, and a larger log building was erected in its place in 1784. This building burned down in 1803 and was then replaced by a stone church. A brick building was erected in 1830, and the present building, also of brick, was built in 1864. A more complete History of the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church may be had by reading the book having that title and published in 1969.

Since the church had been located, it seemed the proper time to lay out a village near the church. So Henry Graham drew up a plan of lots on the edge of his farm, and these were made available by sale to anyone who wanted to locate there. The Village, also called Cross Creek, from the name of the Church, grew very slowly at first, but as some of the older settlers wished to retire from rural life, they purchased a lot in town and built a home and moved to the Village to be closer to the church. As the population of the surrounding area grew in numbers, there was need for stores to provide for the needs of these people, and in 1825 a Post Office was established here with the storekeeper, Joseph Cook, as the first postmaster. More stores were opened and shops were opened by blacksmiths, wagon-makers, tailors, shoemakers and all the other artisans which the surrounding community needed for its existence. Although Cross Creek Village never became

a large town, yet for many years it was a place of considerable commercial importance. The Village has endured, and while the places of business have now ceased to exist, still the town is a pleasant place to live and it provides homes for a number of retired people as well as people who work in nearby communities in commerce and industry.

In addition to the Vance, Marquis and Graham families, already mentioned, numerous other families have come into the community to make their contributions to the community's life and welfare. Some of these came many years ago, such as the Lees, Allens, Currys, Bebouts, Andersons, Buxtons, Campbells, Cookes, Cummins, Donehoos, Duncans, Gaults, Lyles, Magills, Marshalls, Reas, Reeds, Simpsons, Scotts, Stevensons, Walkers and some who came somewhat later such as the Johnstons, Johnsons, Kerrs, Prys, Powelsons, Snodgrass, and in more recent years, many additional good families who have come into the area and have taken their places in the life of the community.

#### SCHOOLS IN THE CROSS CREEK VILLAGE COMMUNITY

The earliest account of a school in this community was of one taught in 1782 or 1783 by Mr. Joseph Patterson. This man was studying for the ministry so he was well educated and capable of being a teacher. Robert McCready, an early member of Cross Creek Church, was a teacher and he may have taught

classes in Vance's Fort or in Well's Fort. Schools were held for a short time each in buildings on the farms of A. S. Ritchey, John F. Sharp, R. T. Johnson (he was himself a "Yankee" school teacher), R. W. Wells and possibly in some houses in the Village.

In the summer of 1803, when the people were preparing to build the Stone Church, a small log building was erected near the church for the convenience of the workmen, for their tools and materials as they constructed the new church. After the church had been completed the smaller building stood there for many years and was used as the village school. It was known as the "study-house." Robert Lee and Thomas Best are mentioned as two of the teachers in this building. During the spring of 1835, some boys, who had become tired attending this school, met at night, and, using some ropes, etc., pulled the logs out of one side making it unfit for use as a school except in warm weather. It was used that summer and then abandoned.

Sometime after the Pennsylvania School Law of 1834 was passed, a public school was opened at Cross Creek Village, and for many years it was located in a building on a lot to the rear of where Mr. and Mrs. David Underwood now live. Sometime later a second building for advanced students was located near the graveyard on the lot now owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Collett. The older building went by the name of Bunker Hill and this newer building was called the Cemetery School.

In 1874, a lot to the rear of Cross Creek Church was purchased and a two-room building was erected, and the other two buildings were closed, with all classes being consolidated in the new building. About 1921, this building was torn down and a one-story two-room building was built on the same lot. School was kept in this building until 1961 when the elementary schools of the Avella District were consolidated at the buildings on Highland Avenue and at Avella Heights. The Cross Creek School building was then sold to Mr. Roy Beam who has remodeled the building into a dwelling.

In 1828, the Rev. John Stockton, then pastor of Cross Creek Church opened an Academy at Cross Creek Village, and this served as a Secondary School for the community until 1896, when the Cross Creek Township High School was opened to take the place of the Academy. The High School here remained in existence until 1929 when it was closed by the State, and the secondary pupils were then transferred to high schools in adjoining districts. The old Academy-High School building was a one-story two-room structure, and it stood on a small lot adjoining the old Cross Creek Graveyard. A bronze plaque placed on a triangular shaped stone and located near the Memorial Arch at the Graveyard entrance commemorates the existence of this old school.

Some interesting information concerning members of the older families of the Cross Creek Village Community can be

read in the History of the Cross Creek Graveyard and Cemetery, published in 1969. In early times, a graveyard was always established near a pioneer church, for the burial of the dead of the community and of members of the Church. In the old Cross Creek Graveyard are buried many members of the older families and many who were early members of the Cross Creek Church. There are at least forty-three veterans of the Revolutionary War buried in Cross Creek Graveyard. More recent burials are to be found in the Cross Creek Cemetery on an adjoining piece of ground. A visit to the Cross Creek Graveyard and the Church and Village would make a good field trip for Avella High School students.

This writer believes that if this material is used by classes of the Avella High School, that it would be a good exercise for the students from each community of the Cross Creek Country to make a list of the families presently living in his or her home community. In making such a list, it will be found that some of the present families are descendants of the older families in the community, while others will be from families who have not lived here for such a long time.

In the Cross Creek Village Community, one family has been living in the area since 1790; these are the Lee Family who are numerous around Cross Creek, and one of whose family,

Mr. and Mrs. Burns Lee, are living on a part of the old Lee Farm first settled by this family in 1790 or 1791. However, the names Vance, Marquis and Graham have disappeared from the immediate Cross Creek Village Community, although members of the Vance and Marquis families are still living in other communities not far away.

### CHAPTER III.

#### The Cedar Grove Community

As a center of concentrated population, this Community is one of the "younger" in the Cross Creek Country, since in earlier times, it was distinctly a rural community consisting of a number of good farms. As the area was being settled, members of the Wells Family came here and took up most of the land in the Community. Richard Wells took a tract of over 300 acres, located very near to the site of the present Village of Cedar Grove. Adjoining his land to the southwest, James Wells had a tract of 222 acres and next to this was the land settled by Captain Thomas Wells, who settled on 299 acres. The Wells Family were large landowners throughout the Cross Creek Country and we shall speak of them again as we write of the Avella Community.

Soon after the close of the Revolutionary War, in the 1780's, Peter Perrine came into the community, purchased some land from one of the Wells men, and located upon the property now occupied by the Village of Cedar Grove and also on the property now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Marosi. Mr. Perrine was the first of three generations of this Family to occupy this fine property lying in the valley of the North Fork of Cross Creek. During his life-time, he was engaged in clearing the forests from his land and in preparing



it for cultivation and for raising sheep and cattle, an industry which he began, but which was carried on more extensively by his son, Isaac Perrine, and by his grandson, Robert Perrine. The specialty of these men was the breeding and raising of fine wool sheep. After Robert Perrine became owner of this farm, he went to the State of Vermont where he bought the best sheep obtainable and brought them to this farm to improve his own flocks. Mr. Perrine was able to sell many of his sheep for three hundred dollars and more for each animal, and some he sold for as much as one-thousand dollars. The sale of fine wool from his sheep was also a source of great profit to Mr. Perrine.

Some time, probably around 1850, Robert Perrine erected the fine brick house on his farm, which is still the home of the Marosi Family. He had good barns and sheep houses on his farm, too, but these were torn down when the mine camp was built for the Cedar Grove Mine, and the barn which stood near the brick house burned down several years ago.

The fourth generation of the Perrine Family could not carry on the operation of the farm here, so at Robert Perrine's death in 1895, the farm was sold to Mr. John Studa. Mr. Studa was born in one of the stone houses over the hill south of Rea Cross Roads, his parents being German immigrants. He was an excellent farmer, also conducted a dairy and had some very good horses on his farm. He would have carried on the farm here much as the Perrines had done if he had not had the chance to sell his farm at a much better price than he had paid for it.

In 1902, Mr. Studa received an offer from the Washington County Coal Company for the purchase of 85 acres of his land, this lying west of the public road which runs through the farm. This company wanted the land for the purpose of opening a coal mine at this place. The remaining part of the farm, lying east of the public road was bought by Mr. James W. Gillespie, a farmer and stock dealer who then occupied the land for quite a number of years. When the mine camp was settled here, Mr. Gillespie found it profitable to open and conduct a butchering business for the town and adjoining communities, and this he carried on during the rest of his life.

In the early years of this century, the Wabash Railroad was being built down the Cross Creek Valley through Avella. In order to get the coal from the new Cedar Grove Mine to market, it was necessary to build a branch railroad from Cedar Grove Mine to Avella to connect there with the Wabash. A small group of local men who had about the same time sold their coal to various coal companies, and having money to invest, decided to build this branch railroad. By the time the Cedar Grove Mine was opened in 1906, the branch railroad had been built down the North Fork and was ready to haul out coal as it was produced at the new mine.

The opening of this mine created the need for miners, so the coal company built houses for them and the miners and their families moved in. The mine and camp here were given the name

"Cedar Grove," this name probably coming from the fact that a few straggly "pine" or cedar trees grew along the creek banks at this place. But when the Post Office was established for the town, it was discovered that there was another Cedar Grove somewhere in Pennsylvania, so the Post Office was given the name of Studa in honor of Mr. John R. Studa. Over the years, as long as the Post Office was maintained there, the town went by both names, but in later years, only the name Cedar Grove has been used.

Since the so-called Pittsburgh vein of coal at this point was not far under the surface of the ground, it could be reached by a "slope" entrance instead of a vertical shaft such as is required for greater depths of the coal vein. Sometime after the mine was opened, the Washington County Coal Company sold the mine to the Verner Coal Company, and still later the Carnegie Coal Company operated the mine.

In early September, 1912, a disastrous flood on Labor Day weekend swept down the valley of Cross Creek and its tributary streams and did a great deal of damage. Several persons were drowned at Avella, bridges were washed out on the roads and the railroads and general destruction was wrought on all low-lying lands. In this disaster, the branch railroad between Cedar Grove and Avella was completely destroyed. The valley of North Fork is narrow, and the railroad

had to built close to the Creek, and at many places bridges had to be built to cross the Creek, so this short-line railroad was very vulnerable to the ravages of this flood. The company of men who had built this line could not afford to rebuild it, so the Cedar Grove Mine had to close down for quite some time. All that can now be seen of this little old railroad are a few of the bridge abutments which are still standing where the railroad crossed the Creek at various points.

After many months of being without a railroad outlet, arrangements were made with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to extend a branch line from Langloth to Cedar Grove, and when this was completed, the mine was able to reopen. The mine then continued to operate with more or less regularity and a considerable amount of coal was taken from it. On October 18, 1939, the tippie burned and while some coal was mined after that time using temporary loading facilities, yet the mine was doomed and soon had to close. Some of the people here, left without employment, moved to other mining communities but many of the families bought the houses and some land from the coal company, remodeled the houses into modern homes and then sought employment in nearby mines or in other industry.

When some of the first families to settle here, such as the Pollock Family, located at Cedar Grove, their children had to walk to the one-room school located about half-way to

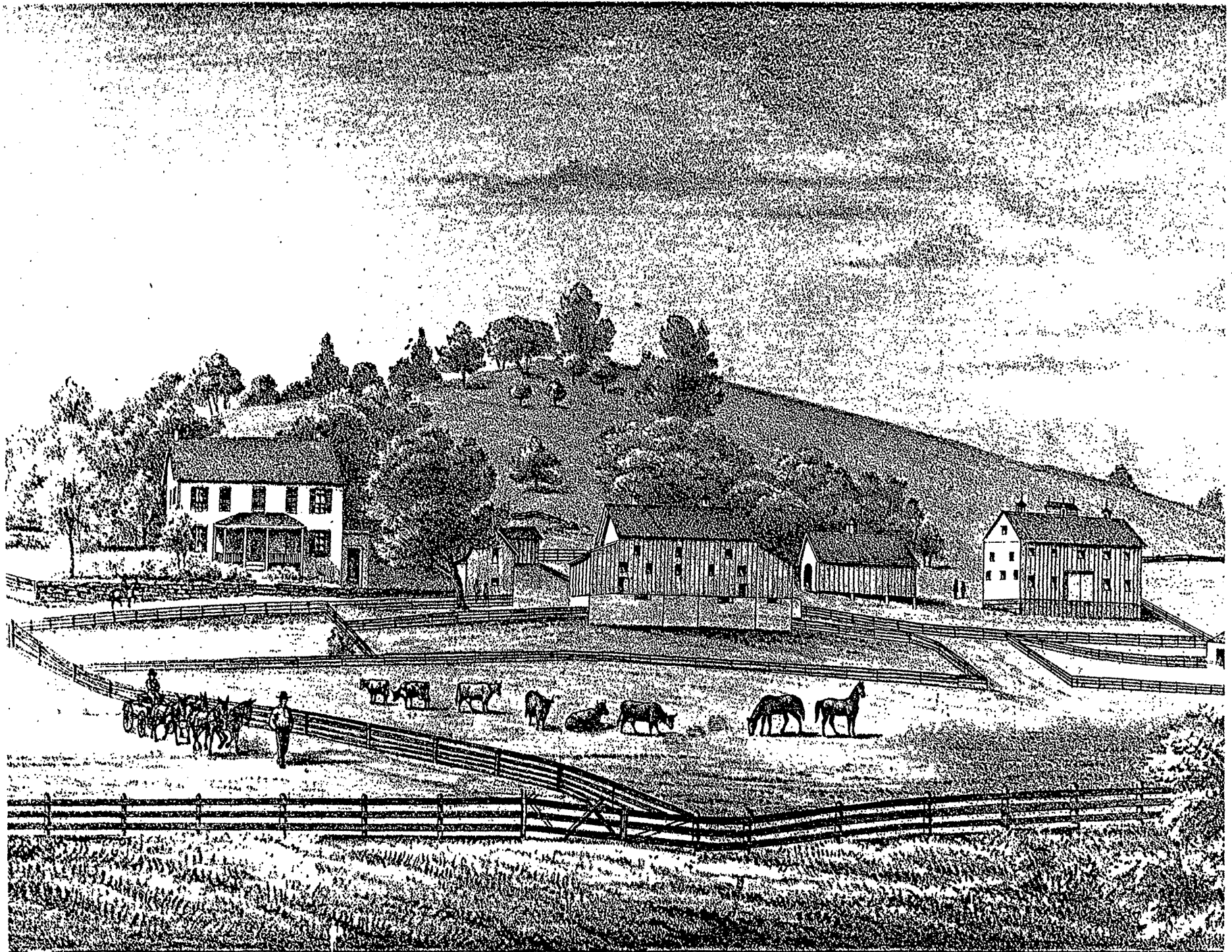
Cross Creek Village and known as the White Oak School. But as more families moved in, it became necessary to build a school at Cedar Grove. The first school was built near the building in which Mrs. Lena Wasik now makes her home, but after a few years of use, the building burned, and it became necessary to erect a second building at or near the same site. Then, in about 1921, the three-room building was built further up the road, and these two buildings provided five classrooms for the school. For a few years, secondary pupils from this community attended the High School at Cross Creek, but when that school was closed, they were transferred either to the Mt. Pleasant or the Independence Township High Schools. The elementary school here was finally closed at the end of the 1960-61 school term when all schools were consolidated at Avella.

Although there has been a good concentration of people at Cedar Grove now for many years, yet there has never been a church located here. To provide for the religious training of the young people in town, Sunday Schools have been conducted here at various times by the Cross Creek and Avella Presbyterian Churches and by the Catholic Church at Avella. For many years, Miss Bessie Donehoo of Cross Creek Village served as a self-appointed Protestant missionary to the people of Cedar Grove, and she conducted a Sunday School, using the public school buildings. Now, with good roads and modern

transportation, the people of Cedar Grove can easily drive to Avella to attend the church of their choice.

Presently, people living at Cedar Grove and who are employed drive to Langeloth, Weirton, Wellsburg and Washington to their places of employment in commerce and industry. Strictly speaking, Cedar Grove has never been a "ghost town," but insofar as coal mining is concerned, that is now definitely a thing of the past. The young people now living in Cedar Grove cannot remember when their town was a mining camp.

Since coal is no longer mined here, or reasonably near, it is not very largely used as a fuel in the town. Many of the homes are now supplied with natural gas, and electricity for light and power is available. Just recently a water line has been run to the town from Avella to provide a dependable water supply for the town. As long as the mine was being operated, the Coal Company maintained a "company store" for the convenience of the miners, but most shopping now has to be done outside the community. The Coal Company once erected a Community Building, but it was used mainly for recreation and did not remain in use for very many years.



T. M. PATTERSON'S, FARM & RESIDENCE, CROSS CREEK T<sup>r</sup>. WASHINGTON CO. PA.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Patterson Mills Community

This small community is named for the Patterson Family, who until very recent years have played a prominent part in many of the activities of this settlement.

In the year 1778, William Patterson, a native of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, came to the Cross Creek Country with two of his sons, Samuel and Thomas. They settled on a tract of land about two miles south of the present location of the Village of Patterson Mills. On this land, they built a log house, cleared some land and put in some crops. In the fall of that year, Mr. Patterson and son, Samuel, returned to Lancaster County, but they left Thomas in charge of their new settlement. During that winter, Thomas boarded with a widow, Mrs. Mary Patterson, who had settled on the farm where Mr. and Mrs. John A. Boyce now live. Mrs. Mary Patterson was probably not related to the other Patterson Family.

In the spring of 1779, William Patterson came back to the Cross Creek Country, bringing the rest of his family with him. They then settled permanently in the house and on the land where they had located the year



before. He took up there a tract of land of nearly 400 acres and when it was surveyed and plotted, it had such an odd shape that he called his farm, "Oddity." On this farm, in 1794, William Patterson built the large stone house which was the home of the Patterson Family until 1955 when Miss Mary Patterson, the last survivor of the Family, found that she could no longer conduct the farm and so she sold it and moved to Washington, Pennsylvania. Several years later, James Drain bought the stone house and removed it to Ligonier, Pennsylvania, where he has re-built it for use as his home and an antique shop.

After settling in their new home, the Pattersons experienced the usual difficulties of frontier settlers. They had to clear the land and erect more buildings. In addition to the stone house, they built, also, two log barns, one of which is still standing on this farm which is now owned by Paul Margaria. The so-called "upper barn" was purchased by Albert Miller and it was moved to Meadowcroft Village and rebuilt there.

The Pattersons had also to be on the alert for Indian raids, and it was told by older members of the family that William Patterson would not allow others in the family to go outside their log home in the morning

until he had gone out himself and made sure that no Indians were lurking in the neighborhood. Mr. Patterson had been a captain in the Revolutionary Army, and after coming to the Cross Creek Country, he got a lot of additional experience in fighting against the Indians. He died in 1818, and since the family attended the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church, he and his second wife and some members of his family are buried in the Cross Creek Graveyard.

Thomas Patterson, the boy who had spent the winter of 1778-79 looking after the family's new home, grew to manhood on the farm and he, too, was a famous fighter against the Indians. He became known as General Patterson, since he was an officer in the local militia. In 1794, after the Indians had finally been driven out of the area, General Patterson turned to peaceful pursuits. He purchased some land from his father down in the valley and there he established the Patterson Mill, which was to stand there for about 130 years. This was a grist and flour mill, and it was located at the foot of the hill, just in front of the homes of Fred Hofrichter and George Hines. This location enabled General Patterson to use water from the two branches of North Fork which come together at this point: the branch which comes down the valley through

Cedar Grove and the one which flows through the valley just south of West Point Cemetery and through the Boyce Farm.

A quarter mile or so up each of these streams, Mr. Patterson built dams in the valleys to impound the water, and then it was brought to the mill in "races" which were artificial channels built for this purpose. So, in being able to use water from the two streams, he had a much better supply of water to run his mill than from one stream alone. Usually, the water was allowed to collect in the dams overnight, and then it was used to turn the big water-wheel for power at the mill the next day. When the streams were low in water, sometimes the mill could not be operated every day, and the miller would have to wait until sufficient water had collected, and then he would start the mill again.

General Patterson lived near the mill, probably in a log house, but we do not know its location. He had a store in his house for a time, but later moved it to the mill, and this was an important trading point for people in the neighborhood as they would come to the mill to have their grain ground and also to obtain groceries and other supplies. On several occasions, Mr. Patterson shipped boatloads of flour to market at New Orleans. At such times, he would build a small boat to float the flour down Cross Creek to the River and there it was loaded on a larger boat for the trip to New Orleans.

On at least one occasion, General Patterson went along on the boat, sold his load of flour for a good price and then bought two horses to bring himself and the money which he obtained back through the wilderness to Patterson's Mill.

In addition to his activities just mentioned, General Patterson also was active in politics in the Cross Creek Country and in Washington County. He was elected a member of Congress where he served from 1817 to 1825, but aside from this service in the National Capital and his expeditions against the Indians, the General's life was pretty largely spent in his home community as mill owner, sheep raiser and an influential citizen. He died in 1841 and, since he was a member of the Grove Union Church at West Middletown, he was buried in the graveyard at that church and a large marble monument marks his grave.

Another mill, a so-called "fulling" mill had been built by General Patterson a half mile up the west branch of North Fork (toward Cedar Grove) and he put his son, William Patterson in charge of it as long as it remained in operation. The fulling process was used in connection with spinning and weaving of cloth, whereby a substance called fullers earth was worked into the fabric to harden and strengthen it. When this mill was established, this community then became known as Patterson Mills, rather than Patterson's Mill, and it is

still called Patterson Mills today, a name which one believes is a bit easier to say. Members of the Patterson Family continued to operate the Mill after the General's death, those who followed him were Samuel Patterson, who later moved to Bedford County, Va., where he there established a Patterson's Mill; William J. Patterson and finally, John S. Patterson, at whose death in 1896, the Mill passed into other hands. The Pattersons had operated the Mill for a full one hundred years. After others operated it for about thirty years more, the building was torn down about 1925. While excavating near the site of the Mill for the new waterline to Cedar Grove, the Paris Construction Company dug out one of the old stone "burrs" which had been used in the Patterson Mill.

So far, we have spoken of three mills: Robert Perrine's saw mill located on his farm at Cedar Grove, the Patterson fulling mill about one-half mile north of Patterson Mills and the grist and flour mill here in this Village. Another mill, a saw-mill was located on the east branch of North Fork on the farm now owned by George and Paul Checkuck. It was operated by the Sharp Family. Along the road in front of the Checkuck Farm, one can easily trace the location of the water-dam, the "mill-race" which runs along right at the side of the road, and then further down, the location of the mill itself. The reader will note that these mills were all run by water-power in the early days, at least. Later, the

Patterson Grist and Flour Mill was converted to steam power and since coal was easily obtained, it was the fuel used. In a later connection, we shall notice at least one horse-mill, operated by horse-power, of course, and such a mill need not be located along a stream, since it did not depend upon water as a source of power. These old mills were of great benefit to the people of the Cross Creek Country in earlier days, since the farmer had no means at his farm of grinding his grain, so he had to take it to the mill, and as the forests were being cut down and houses, barns and other buildings were being erected on the farms roundabout, there was a great demand for the lumber which the saw mills turned out in ever increasing quantities for many years.

The Pattersons seem to have dominated the business life of the Patterson Mills Community for many years. One of them, James Patterson, although a farmer, had a store near the mill for many years. He lived on the farm recently purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel Paris, Jr. In 1838, he built the fine brick house which the Paris Family have recently restored. This is on the farm settled by Captain Thomas Wells, whom we mentioned in our story of the Cedar Grove Community.

Another prominent businessman of this Community for many years late in the Nineteenth Century was Mr. George L. Wiegman, a German immigrant who, soon after his arrival in America,

came to Patterson Mills where he took charge of the village store. He was an industrious, thrifty man who was successful here, and he conducted the business as long as his health would permit. The Patterson Mills Post Office had been established here in 1829, and while Mr. Wiegman conducted the store, he served also as Postmaster. Mr. Wiegman was the grandfather of Mr. James Wiegman of Avella, and the Wiegmans of Eldersville in Jefferson Township are descendants of his, also.

A public school, known as West Point, was located at the Mill in 1846, when one acre of ground was purchased from Mrs. Mary P. Smith, who then owned the Boyce Farm. A brick building was built on the lot, and later it was replaced by a two story frame building. About 1920, the present three-room building, still standing, was built and was used until the school here was closed upon the consolidation of the elementary schools at Avella in 1962. The location of the school here was often referred to as the "Point," from the name of the school and also because of the sharp intersection of the two public roads which meet at this school lot.

Adjoining the school lot in 1865, just after the Civil War, an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was established by some people of the area who had been opposed to the way the United States Government had conducted the war. Since feeling

over the matter, which had run high for a time, gradually cooled, the reasons for having this small church here eventually disappeared, and the congregation was discontinued. They had erected a neat little church building just beside the school building, but being no longer used, it was later torn down. However, a graveyard was opened here in 1871 when a small child of Mr. and Mrs. Simeon Marquis was buried near the church. Later, some of the older members of the church also were buried here, such as Mr. and Mrs. Thomas McCorkle, Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Clemens, and Mr. and Mrs. William Patterson and some other members of their family. Now, this small graveyard has expanded into the present West Point Cemetery with modern sections for Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic burials.

\*\*\*\*\*

SOME SIDE-LIGHTS ON THE FOREGOING HISTORY OF  
PATTERSON MILLS

Although the Patterson name was once so prominent in this community, it seems to have almost entirely disappeared from the immediate area. The last family of the name to live in the old 1794 stone house were the five children of Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Patterson. They were the bachelor brothers, Frank and Charlie, who did the farming, and the maiden sisters, Ella and Annie, who were the housekeepers. Only one of the family, Miss Mary Patterson, ever left the home for



employment elsewhere. She worked as a secretary for the McClane Mining Company of Washington, Pa., for many years and when she retired from that position, she returned to the stone house to help her brothers and sisters run the farm and home. She was the youngest of the family, and as the older ones died one by one, she was finally left alone, so she had to sell the farm, which she did in 1955 and then moved to Washington, Pa., where she died in 1965.

The Patterson Brothers, Frank and Charlie, were excellent farmers and stock-men, raising blooded Shorthorn cattle and Chester White hogs. For many years they took specimens of their fine stock to farm shows and fairs in many parts of the country, often being awarded substantial prizes. These men were not as enthusiastic sheep breeders as some of their ancestors had been, although they, too, kept some sheep.

In the old log barn still standing on the Patterson Farm was erected, many years ago, a power wheel, built by James Murdock of West Middletown. It was operated by horsepower and was used for threshing grain, shelling and grinding corn and for other farm uses. It was, and is, probably the only such power wheel ever built in Washington County.

From the time of its erection in 1794, until the death of Robert M. Patterson in 1906, it is believed that no other death had ever occurred in the old stone house. Later,

Mrs. Robert M. Patterson died there and also some of the members of their family.

Of the older houses still standing in Patterson Mills, the brick house which is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hofrichter is probably the oldest. It is the type of house which was being built in the 1850's and 1860's and that is probably about the time of its erection. Mr. William J. Patterson, proprietor of the grist and flour mill from the mid-Nineteenth Century until his death in 1889, lived in this house, and he may have built it. His son, John S. Patterson, who also conducted the mill may have lived in the house. He died in 1896. Mr. D. Wallace Patterson, the school teacher, and his family moved to this house from the fulling mill property in the late 1890's and they lived here until Mr. Patterson's death in 1919. The Gordon Family owned the property for some years prior to its purchase by the Hofrichter Family.

The house in which Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Stefkovich live was built about 1870 for the Rev. J. A. Myers who came to be pastor of the Patterson Mills Church in that year. The Rev. Joseph Pettigrew, another minister, lived there for two years, 1884-1886. This was the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Andrews and their family, until the deaths of the parents and the Stefkovich Family have lived there for the most part of the past twenty-five years.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Kuhns, retired farm people and amiable senior citizens of the Village for a number of years, made their home for many years before their deaths, in the old building which had been George Weigman's store and the post office, just opposite the public school building. After their deaths, the old building was torn down and the modern home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hofrichter occupies the same lot. Mrs. Hofrichter is a grand-daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kuhns.

The Boyce Farm, one mile east of Patterson Mills has been in that family name for over one hundred years. The buildings are also over one-hundred years old. The 1876 Caldwell's Atlas of Washington County shows a picture of this farm property and it looked then much as it appears today. The brick house partially burned a number of years ago, but it was re-built. This farm was originally settled by the widow, Mary Patterson, mentioned earlier in this history. She had a son, Samuel Patterson, and three daughters, Margaret Lee, Susannah Cowen and Mary P. Smith, who inherited the farm and lived on it for many years. Later, Samuel Cowen, a grandson got possession of the farm and he sold it to the Boyce Family, who have owned it ever since.

Strip mining for coal and grading for roads have changed the contour of the land to some extent in the Patterson Mills Community, but quite a number of the old land marks and land features remain.



MAIN STREET AVELLA

1916

## CHAPTER V.

### The Avella Community

Alexander Wells, the first white settler in this Community, came here from Baltimore prior to 1772. Realizing the value of the Cross Creek Valley as a place to locate, he set about to acquire large tracts of land in this area. At the site of present Avella, he took out a patent for a tract of 412 acres which he called "Mayfield," and he followed this by securing patents to other good-sized tracts in the Valley of the North Fork of Cross Creek (in the Cedar Grove Community as previously noted) and also along the main stream and on both sides of Cross Creek to the west in the present townships of Independence and Jefferson.

Mr. Wells was not an educated man, but he was a shrewd businessman, and, with regard to acquiring land, he was especially adept in running the property lines, and he was able by using a peculiar system of computing acreages to determine in advance how much there was in any tract of land which he took possession of. Since there were limits to the amount of land which any one person could secure title to, he had several tracts entered in the names of other members of his family.

One of the Wells tracts was known as the "Cliffs" of 424 acres and this took in the site of the Village of Pine Flats in Independence Township, and the steep cliffs at the edge of Meadowcroft Village in Jefferson Township. The name of the tract was evidently given it on account of the steep, overhanging cliffs at that point, under which is the site of Meadowcroft Archaeological "Dig."

On the Mayfield tract, at the junction of North Fork with the main stream of Cross Creek, in 1775, Alexander Wells established a grist mill. If this was the exact location, it would be on the point of land in Avella where the former Economy Store building now stands. This location would enable the mill to use water from both of the two streams which meet at this point. A later mill, which was both a grist mill and a saw mill was, for many years, located further down stream in present Browntown. It stood to the rear of the store operated for many years by Mrs. DePaoli and later by her daughter, Mrs. Mary Daney. All that is left of the old mill is one of the stone "burrs," which is embedded in the concrete in front of this store building.

As with most of the old pioneer mills, the Wells Mill became a center for trade as other settlements were made nearby, and for many years a store was conducted at the site of the Mill. Mr. Wells operated this mill himself for about

twenty years, and when he offered it for sale in 1796, it was purchased by his nephew, Richard Wells, who was also his son-in-law. After Richard Wells death in 1830, the mills were left to Bazaleel Wells, who operated them for some time and then they were sold to Thomas Patterson, owner of the Patterson Mills on North Fork of Cross Creek.

When water in Cross Creek was high enough to permit it, flour ground at Wells Mill was shipped to the Ohio River by flat-boat, and would there be loaded on to a larger boat and shipped on to New Orleans for sale. After the grist mill was no longer operated here, the saw mill continued in use for a number of years longer. The power used for these mills at first was, of course, water power, but later steam power was used.

As a means of protection for his family and for his neighbors, Mr. Wells at an early date erected Wells Fort. It was located on the hill northwest of the present town of Avella, and was so situated that after the forest had been cleared off the hill sides, from this point a good view could be had both up and down the Cross Creek Valley, and also for a distance up the valley of the North Fork. In times of danger from Indian raids, nearby settlers would gather in Wells Fort for protection, and men from the



community would form the garrison for the Fort. If the Indians were particularly troublesome, Mr. Wells would send to Fort Pitt or to Redstone Old Fort at Brownsville for additional soldiers to aid in the defense of the Fort. After danger from Indian raids passed in 1794, when General "Mad Anthony" Wayne defeated them in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in western Ohio, the old fort was dismantled and no trace of it can now be found, but an old map of the area shows its approximate location.

On the same hill where the Fort was located can be found what is left of the old Wells Graveyard. It was just to the northeast of the Stone House built by the Wells Family, and in it Alexander Wells, his wife, Leah, and several other members of his family were buried. A few of the old grave-stones can still be found. Adjoining this old graveyard is an old Indian mound, used many, many years ago by these early people as a place for burial of their dead. When this mound was opened in the 1880's, a skeleton eight and one-half feet in length was found buried there. The Cross Creek Township Board of Supervisors have cleared off this old graveyard and plan to maintain it as a historic spot in the Cross Creek Country.

The stone house erected by the Wells Family (probably by Richard Wells) stood to the rear of the Browntown School building (now the Pentecost Lutheran Church). It was used by the Wells Family as long as any of them remained on the property here, was later used by members of the Campbell Family, and still later by the Oliver Clemens Family. Mr. Emil Lerby tore this stone house down about twenty-five years ago and moved the stones to his property near the former West Middletown station on the railroad east of Avella, intending there to reconstruct it but this was never done.

As the family of Alexander Wells was prominent for many years in the Avella Community, so other members of the family connection were equally prominent in other parts of the Tri-State area. When Mr. Wells sold his property here in 1796, he moved into the so-called Panhandle of Virginia, now West Virginia, and located at a town which was then called Williamsburg, but which was renamed Wellsburg as we know it today. There, Alexander Wells lived until his death in 1813 and his body was brought back to his former home here for burial in the Wells Graveyard. Another member of the family, Bazaleel Wells, settled the town of Steubenville, Ohio, and still others settled at Wellsville, also in Ohio.

As other families moved into the Avella Community, they bought land from the Wells Family, cleared away the forests, erected farm buildings and began cultivation of their farms. The best land for farming was on the level "bottoms" along the Creek, and on top of the hills some distance back from the Creek Valley. Two of the families who came into the Avella Community and became prominent after the Wells Family had died or moved away were the Campbells and the Browns. These two families eventually owned most of the land on which the present town of Avella is now located.

David Campbell was a son of the pioneer, John Campbell, who had settled in the eastern part of Cross Creek Township during the late 1770's, just about two hundred years ago. David Campbell married Ann Rea, daughter of the pioneer, William Rea, who settled in 1789 on the land which the Rea Family still occupy at the Rea Cross Roads one mile east of the Avella High School building. After their marriage, David and Ann Campbell lived for a time in Belmont County, Ohio, but they soon returned to the Cross Creek Country and settled on the land in Avella where the old bank building now stands. When they became too old to conduct the farm any longer, they moved to the Village of Independence where both of them died in 1858. They are buried in the Cross Creek Graveyard where the parents of both of them are also buried.

Their son, Samuel B. Campbell, took over the operation of the farm here, and upon his death in 1890, his son Samuel S. Campbell became the owner and operator of the home farm. Samuel S. Campbell was in possession of the farm in 1903 and 1904, when the Wabash Railroad was built down the Cross Creek Valley and right through Mr. Campbell's farm. He lived in the large frame house, which still stands across the street from the old bank building. He prevailed upon the Railroad Company to locate the station on a part of his property where it has stood ever since.

Mr. Samuel S. Campbell took advantage of the coming of the railroad to lay out his farm into building lots, and the main part of the town of Avella is located on land formerly belonging to Mr. Campbell. As people were attracted to the possibilities of the new town here as a place of business and of residence, these lots were soon sold and most of the buildings erected on them are the present buildings, homes and stores in the Avella of the present day.

Since several of the roads in Independence and Cross Creek Townships meet here, it seem a "natural" place for a town, as it had been a "natural" place for Alexander Wells to make the original settlement here 130 years earlier.

After selling much of his land for building lots, Mr. Campbell retired from active farm work, but during the rest of his life, he remained active in the development of "his" town. He helped organize the Campbell Theater, located just across the tracks from the railroad station; he was active in the organization of the Avella Presbyterian Church, and he was one of the promoters in the founding of the Avella Lumber and Supply Company, conducted for many years by his son, J. Earnest Campbell and now operated by his grandson, who is also Samuel S. Campbell.

About a mile down the Creek from the old Campbell Homestead was the home of Mr. William J. Brown, whose land at that point lay on both sides of Cross Creek, but his home was in Cross Creek Township very near the site of the old Wells Mill. Although Mr. Brown's land was not so favorably situated for laying out in lots as was the old Campbell Farm, yet Mr. Brown laid out a number of lots along the public highway and these he sold to good advantage, and to this part of the new town was given the name of "Browntown," by which it is still known. Quite a number of good homes were built on these lots as well as the Granish Hall for social purposes and two or three stores, including that conducted for many years by Mrs. DePaoli, and the one still operated by Mr. and Mrs. Falleroni. The so-called Browntown School also was built in this part of town.

Following the coming of the railroad to this community, interest in developing the mining of coal soon arose here and within a few years a number of mines were opened. Due to the shallow depth under the surface of the ground where the so-called "Pittsburgh" vein of coal "banks" were operated in a number of places by farmers or others who could reach the vein of coal by running short "entries" into the hillsides where the vein of coal "out-cropped." One such coal "bank" was just east of Avella, another between Avella and Patterson Mills and still another a short distance down creek to the west, all of these in Cross Creek Township, but others were not far away in Independence Township.

By employing a few men during the colder season of the year, the operator could have dug by hand the coal which was in much demand by the residents on the farms and villages in the Cross Creek Country.

The earlier settlers here had depended upon wood from the forests for heating their homes, and they burned huge logs in the large stone fireplaces which were a part of every log cabin, or log house. As better frame houses were built, with cast iron stoves in the kitchens and open fireplaces in each room of the house, it became more

convenient to burn coal, so this fuel so easily obtained from the country coal banks and for only a few cents per bushel came into general use as the fuel most used for heating the homes of the Community.

So, as soon as the railroad was completed and running trains through this community, coal companies large and small began buying up the coal under the farms of the area and also making plans for removing it through the mines soon to be opened. We have spoken earlier of the opening of the Cedar Grove Mine by the Washington County Coal Company. Here at and near Avella the following mines were soon opened:

The Duquesne Mine, just west of Avella, by the Duquesne Coal and Coke Company.

The Donehoo Mine, just east of Avella, by the Pittsburgh and Southwestern Coal Company.

The Meadowlands or P&W Mine, just south of Avella by the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Company.

The Pryor Mine, which was a small mine opened just west of the Duquesne Mine, by the Pryor Coal Company.

The so-called "Burgettstown" Mine, opened near Patterson Mills by the Leech Farm Coal Company.

And further west near Penowa:

The Penobscot Mine, operated by the Avella Coal Company.

The Jefferson Mine, operated by the Jefferson Coal and Coke Company.

The Waverly Mine operated by the Waverly Coal Company.

The coal produced by all of these mines was "billed out" through the Avella Railroad Station and for many years this town maintained a good record as a producer and shipper of coal, which was sent to nearby cities for use by industry and for domestic and large-scale heating in those places.

The years of World War I were "boom" years for the coal industry here, but hard times came after the War and mining became unprofitable for several of the companies operating here and their mines were closed, or operated only part time. In the panic years of the 1930's, more of the mines "went under." Those which did survive had another period of limited prosperity during World War II, but a further decline followed, and now not a single "deep" mine is in operation in the Avella Community. What coal is now being mined is from remnants of the vein of former "deep" mines which is being taken out by "daylight" or "strip" mining, where the coal is uncovered by power shovels, then loaded on to trucks and hauled away to market.



Other industries have never flourished in the Avella Community. A small Creamery and Milk Station was operated for several years, but it has been discontinued. In its heyday, the town had substantial hardware, furniture and clothing stores, as well as quite a number of grocery stores, but of these, one lone hardware store and two or three grocery stores remain. The Avella Lumber and Supply Company has a good business here serving a rather wide area of the countryside.

Avella has been a center for public schools for many years. The one-room Buckeye Valley School was one of the early "district" schools of Cross Creek Township and it was located for many years right at the junction of North Fork and the main stream of Cross Creek, where the early Wells Mill was located and where the old Economy Store building now stands. Pupils from both Cross Creek and Independence Townships attended this school. When the town of Avella was built, a larger school was needed and it was a two story building built up the road toward Patterson Mills about two hundred yards from the original building. When this building became too small, other buildings were built, at Browntown in Cross Creek Township and on Highland Avenue in Independence Township. There has been some disadvantage in the location of Avella's being in the two townships, separated only by the Creek, and when each township had its own school district and separate schools had to be maintained.

Cross Creek Township had a small High School at Cross Creek Village and pupils from the Cross Creek Township side of Avella attended there until the School was closed in 1929. In 1923-24, Independence Township organized a High School, located on Avella Heights, and this school was used by students from Independence, Cross Creek and the southern part of Jefferson Township, until the Avella Joint District was formed in 1954. The Avella High School is for students from the Avella Joint School District consisting of Cross Creek, Hopewell, Independence Townships and West Middletown Borough. The Elementary Schools are also consolidated with buildings on Highland Avenue and Avella Heights and at Buffalo Village.

From earliest times of the white settlements and throughout the Century of the 1800's, the people of the present Avella Community, almost all of whom lived on farms, were Protestants and, for the most part, Presbyterians, and they attended church at either Cross Creek Village or at Independence. If they were United Presbyterians, they would go to church at either West Middletown or Mt. Hope. When the small Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was in existence at Patterson Mills, a few people of this Community attended that Church, notably the Brown and Clemens families.

With the establishment of the town of Avella, the Presbyterians, in 1906, organized the Avella Presbyterian Church with the Rev. B. F. Heany as the first pastor. About the same time, due to the opening of the mines and the influx of people of foreign extraction, many of whom were of the Catholic Faith, a Catholic mission was established at Avella and it soon became the present St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church on Highland Avenue. For those of the Greek Catholic persuasion, St. John's Greek Catholic Church was organized and a small church building was erected near the Buckeye Valley School. In recent years, this congregation has erected a more commodious and very beautiful Church near Patterson Mills and this is now the church home for these people.

Other congregations in and near Avella are: The Pentecost Luthern Church, which met for years in the Brozier Theater, but which later purchased the Browntown School building and remodeled it for their use as a church. The Avella Free Methodist Church has a flourishing congregation which meets in their own building at the P&W Mine Patch, south of Avella Heights.

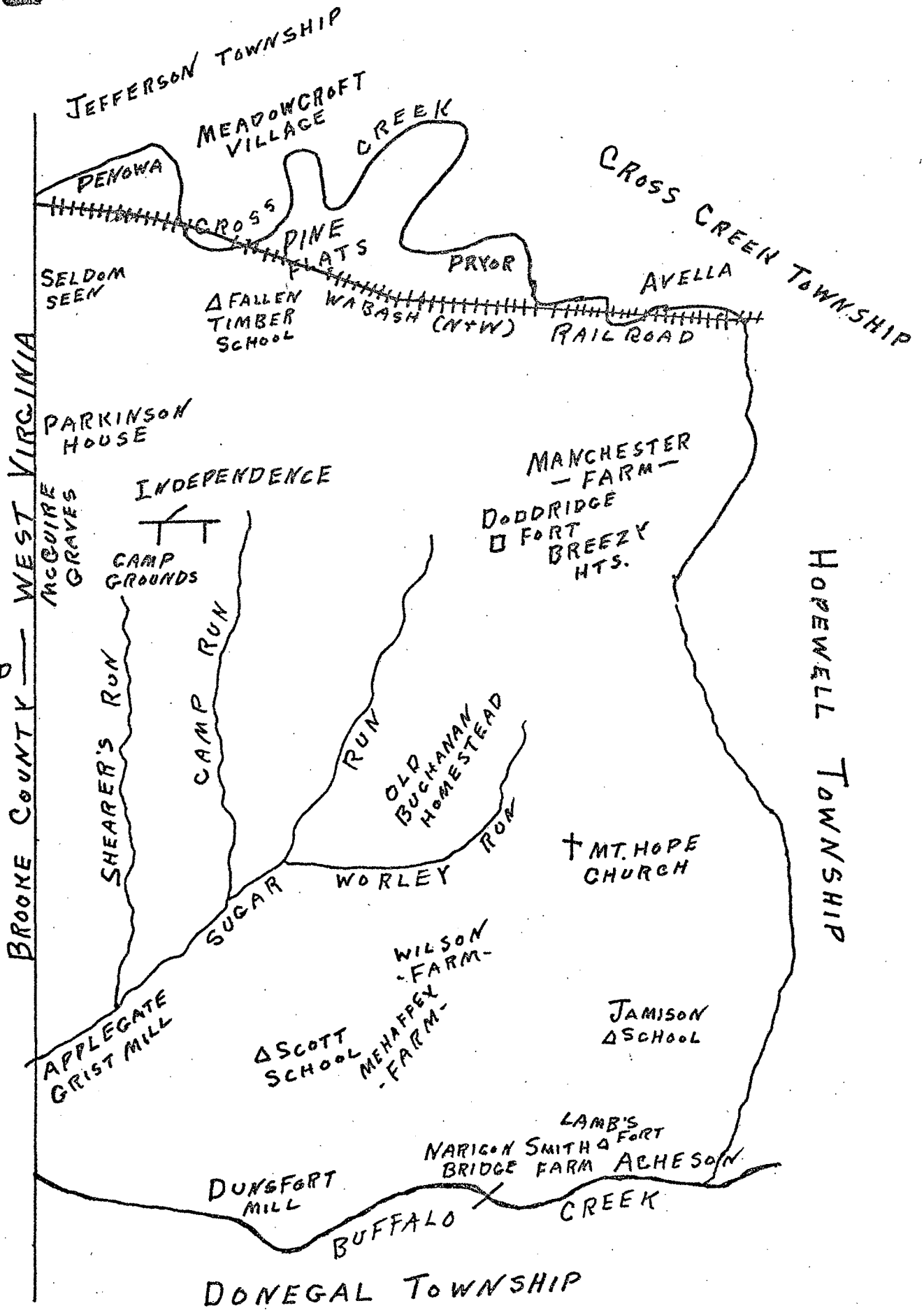
The question is often asked: "Where did Avella get its name?" This is a difficult question to answer, since this writer has never heard a satisfactory explanation. Now that the founders of the town are no longer living, it is impossible to ask them why the town was named "Avella."

In looking over earlier records, we find that there was an Avella Post Office kept by a Mrs. William Tigner in Independence Township in 1892. Just where this office was located cannot now be determined, but it seems safe to assume that it was in the vicinity or near the site of the present town of the same name, and that the name "Avella" was transferred to the new town when it was established.

The first Post Office in the new town here was actually at the Pryor Mine Camp down the Creek from Avella proper and for a short time, it was the "Pryor" Post Office, but the office there was soon discontinued, the Post Office was moved to Avella and the name "Avella" has been used since that time.

There is a word, "Avella," of Italian origin, coming from the Latin "avellana," meaning a fibert (nut), and this is said to come from the name of an Italian town Avella, or Abella, in Campania, and this word appears to mean "apple" in the Italian language. But whether this word "Avella" or "Abella" has had any bearing on the name chosen for the local Avella is not known. When the name was used in 1892 for the Avella Post Office, there was little or no foreign influence of any sort in the Avella Community, so it would seem difficult to connect the Italian name with this early community in the Cross Creek Valley. It would appear that the founders of the town gave it the name without leaving any explanation as to why they chose it. If any of our readers can give a better explanation, we will be grateful for it.

# INDEPENDENCE TOWNSHIP



JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP

CROSS CREEK TOWNSHIP

BROOKE COUNTY — WEST VIRGINIA

HOWELL TOWNSHIP

DONEGAL TOWNSHIP

MEADOWCROFT VILLAGE CREEK  
PENOWA  
SELDOM SEEN  
CROSS PINE FLATS  
PRYOR  
AVELLA  
WABASH (N.W.) RAILROAD  
FALLEN TIMBER SCHOOL

PARKINSON HOUSE  
INDEPENDENCE  
CAMP GROUNDS  
MANCHESTER FARM  
DODDRIDGE FORT BREEZY HTS.

LOWER BUFFALO GRAVEYARD  
SHEARER'S RUN  
CAMP RUN  
WORLEY RUN  
OLD ANAN HOMESTEAD  
MT. HOPE CHURCH

SUGAR  
WILSON FARM  
SCOTT SCHOOL  
MEHAPPY FARM  
JAMISON SCHOOL

APPLEGATE GRIST MILL  
DUNSFORT MILL  
LAMB'S FORT  
NARIGON SMITH FARM  
BRIDGE FARM  
ACHESON  
BUFFALO CREEK

## CHAPTER VI.

### The Doddridge-Manchester Community

In writing of this Community, which closely adjoins the Avella Community to the south, we shall speak, for the most part, of the history connected with two adjoining tracts of land settled here in early times by the Doddridge and Manchester families.

John Doddridge, of English descent, made the first permanent settlement within the bounds of the present Independence Township, when he came here from Bedford County, Virginia, in 1773, at just about the time when the Vances were coming into the Cross Creek Country from Winchester, Virginia. Mr. Doddridge settled upon a large tract of land of 437 acres, and he later took out a patent for the permanent possession of this land. He built the usual log house, or cabin, on the land and here he lived for the rest of his life. This land is comprised in the farms owned by Mary R. Carl, part of the Dryer Farm near Breezy Heights, and other nearby land. A roadside historical marker on route 844 near the Carl Home gives this information: "To the north were located the stockaded cabins of John Doddridge. Built about 1773, they served as a refuge for settlers of this region in Revolutionary days. Also, the boyhood home of Dr. Joseph Doddridge."

for the travelers, and they were well patronized.

As was true of many other country villages of the type of Independence, so this Village became an important trading center for people from over a wide area. The places of business here at one time were said to have included three general stores, three busy blacksmith shops, four shoemaker shops, two harness making shops, a tannery for providing new leather for the shoe and harness makers, two wagonmaker shops, a barber shop, a merchant tailor, two millinery shops, a hattery and a cooper's shop. From this array of establishments, one can readily see that the wants and needs of the people of the Community and surrounding countryside could be supplied right here in the town, so the Village, in the old days, was very much like the shopping centers of the present day. Travel, of course, was over "mud" roads on horseback or by horse drawn vehicles, and parking in the Village consisted of driving old Dobbin up to a hitching rack where he would be tied securely by a strap and there would await the owner's return from shopping, and then would come the long, slow drive back to the farm home.

Our best source of information on the residents and places of business of earlier years in the Independence Community is a series of historical articles written by Mr. William P. Wilson of Washington, who was born here in the Village on October 18, 1878, and is still living in his home at Washington, being past

96 years of age. These articles were published in the Washington Observer in January, 1967. Mr. Wilson's father was one of the harness-makers in the Village for seventy years and for a time he also served the Village and Community as Postmaster, so the Wilsons, father and son, were well acquainted with the business life of the Independence Village Community for many years. In the articles, Mr. Wilson speaks of his boyhood experiences in visiting the various shops in the Village and he also traces the ownership of many of the old properties here as the former owners died or moved away and new people assumed the ownership.

In those "good old days" the health of the Community was well taken care of by three physicians, old "country doctors," who rode over the countryside day and night and in all kinds of weather as they visited their patients and ministered to their medical needs. Perhaps the best known of these old doctors was Dr. Joseph Parkinson who lived one mile west of the Village, in the brick house still standing on the north side of the road, just before one crosses the State Line into West Virginia. Dr. Parkinson came here as a poor young man to establish his medical practice and so successful was he that at the time of his death, he was said to have been worth one million dollars. After his death, his widow and daughter continued to live in the old home for a time. One night thugs broke into the home believing that there was considerable money in the house and they tortured the two ladies severely, trying to force them to reveal the location of their wealth. Actually,



little money was found in the house, but these ladies suffered from the torture for the rest of their lives.

A public school was established in the village, possibly as early as 1834. The first building was a one-room affair and it stood on the upper side of the road almost opposite the location of the present school building in the Village. Here, it is said, that one teacher would have as many as eighty pupils from ages of 6 years to 21 years attending at one time. (The larger boys and girls from the nearby farms usually didn't enter school until the fall farm work was all done; then, in the spring they would leave school early to help plant the crops. During the most severe weather, the younger children didn't attend school regularly, so these two conditions helped to equalize the attendance during a part of the school term.) Later, in Independence, a two room building was erected on the south side of the road and school was held in that building until 1943, since which time pupils have attended school at Avella.

The Lower Buffalo Presbyterian Church is the oldest religious organization in the area. The first church building, a log structure, stood in the southwestern corner of the old Lower Buffalo Graveyard over in Brooke County, West Virginia, two miles or more southwest of the Village. The church was organized in about 1788 or 1789. In 1822, a stone church was built one mile nearer the Village and it was used until 1850 when it was decided to have the church at the Village. Here this congregation has had two houses of worship on the same lot:

The first, built in 1850, burned on January 1, 1917, and later that same year the present brick church was built.

The Methodist Episcopal Church here was established about 1840 and services have been maintained continuously since that time. For many years, beginning in about 1874, this denomination conducted an annual camp meeting on a parklike tract of land one-half mile southwest of the Village. Meetings were held here for two week periods, usually during the month of August and they were largely attended. A number of cottages on the grounds provided living quarters for those people who came to attend the whole series of meetings, while each day, and especially on Sundays, many people from near and far would drive here to spend the day and to attend the programs, which were largely religious, but during week days would be of Chautauqua-like in nature, cultural and entertaining, as well as religious. On the old camp ground can still be found many of the old cottages which are occupied during the warm season of the year by vacationers from towns and cities from over the Tri-State area. However, the camp meetings have not been held now for many years.

The Disciples (Christian Church) established a congregation here in 1867, meeting first in the public school building and later erecting a small church building for their use. The

congregation was never a large one and they never had a settled pastor, depending on receiving supplies for preaching by students and faculty members from Bethany College.

The Village has never had the use of natural gas for heating of the homes here, since there have never been any nearby gas wells to supply this fuel. Coal banks were opened many years ago in Coal Hollow which was along the road to the northwest of the Village leading toward the community known once as Seldom Seen. These "banks" supplied the people of the Community until commercial mines were opened in the Avella area at around the "turn" of the Century.

Early telephone service was furnished here by a local company and now the Bell Telephone Company has lines into the Community. Power is furnished here by the West Penn Power Company for use as light, heat and for appliances in the homes. Good roads have been serving the Community since 1925, when the first concrete road was built here from Avella, and in 1929 the concrete road, present Route 844, was built from the Manchester School house into the Village from the east. This road connects with Route 27 at the West Virginia line and leads into Wellsburg. The old Wellsburg to Washington Pike was paved with stone, tediously broken with "tapping" hammers by men sitting along the road, but now the entire road between the two cities

is a "ribbon" of concrete. Almost all connecting roads in the area have been improved for year-round traveling.

While Independence was once a thriving Village with all the merchants and artisans mentioned in an earlier paragraph serving the needs of the people of the entire Community, yet as in most small country villages of the present day, these services have disappeared from the Independence Community and the Village has become almost exclusively a place of homes. One combined store and service station remains of the many commercial establishments which once flourished here. Even the Post Office no longer exists having been closed in July, 1973.

The Presbyterian and Methodist churches are the oldest organizations in the Community. Independence Grange No. 179 was organized in 1874, and in March, 1974, it observed the One Hundredth Anniversary of its organization. One of the purposes of the Grange in earlier times was that of cooperative buying for the benefit of members. This Grange conducted a successful store here for a number of years. The Grange has held its meetings for some years in the old public school building in the Village which is owned by the Township Supervisors, but they will soon be meeting in their own Grange Hall, recently erected along Route 50 between Independence and Avella.

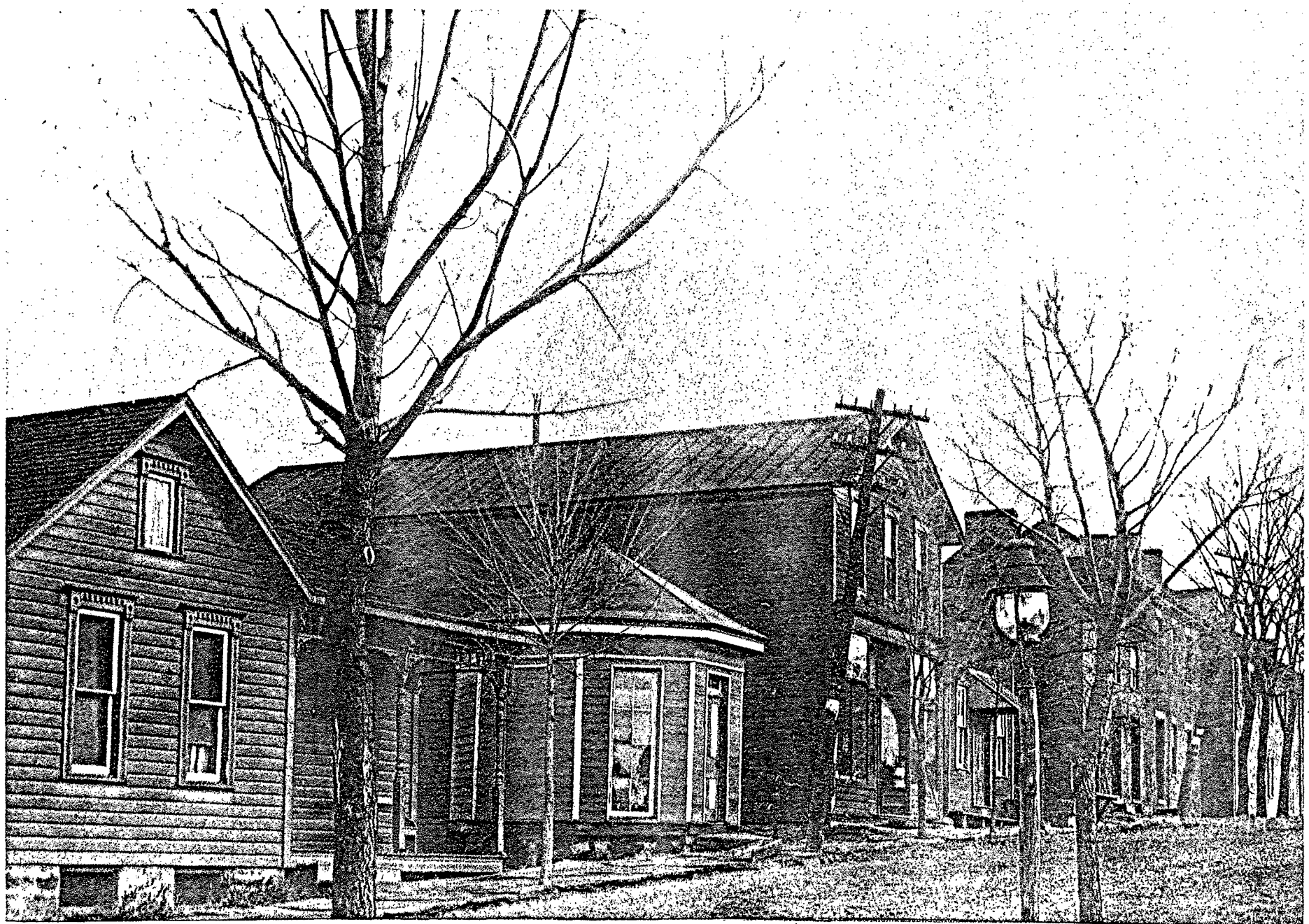
Historic points in and near Independence include the old Lower Buffalo Graveyard in Brooke County, West Virginia, site of the old log church. In this old graveyard, which is very well maintained, can be found the graves of many of the early pioneers of this Community and many of these graves are nicely marked by elegant monuments. The graveyard is surrounded by a heavy cut-stone fence, and a set of stone steps lead over the wall at the entrance to the graveyard.

At the State Line, across the road from the old Parkinson House can be found the graves of Major Francis McGuire, died in 1820 and of his wife, Barbara McGuire, died in 1835. The old markers at these graves are well preserved and legible. There are thought to be other graves nearby, but these two are the only ones which are so marked.

Just across the State Line is the farm formerly belonging to the Waugh Family. During the life time of Mr. Campbell P. Waugh, the farm operated an orchard which specialized in fine apples. An old brick house and a "round" barn, both erected many years ago were the principal buildings on this fine farm. After Mr. Waugh's death, the apple trees were torn out and the farm is now the site of the Highland Springs Golf Course.

In the Village itself, many of the old style homes have been torn down or have burned down over the years and most of the houses are of a more modern type, but a few of the older

houses remain and they have been remodeled into comfortable homes for the people of the present day still living in the Independence Community.



Street Scene in West Middletown in Earlier Days

Showing the Location of Campbell McKeever's Study which had been brought to The Borough and set up in this location. This was the original building.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Community of West Middletown Borough

West Middletown is the only chartered borough in the Cross Creek Country. Originally known, and still often referred to as simply Middletown, on account of its location midway between the towns of Wellsburg, West Virginia and Washington, Pennsylvania, it has been known as "West" Middletown since August 9, 1802, when a Post Office was first established here. The town received its charter as a borough on March 27, 1823, and the One Hundred-Fiftieth Anniversary of this event was observed by the people of the town with a mammoth celebration held on July 5 to 8, 1973.

Early owners of the land on which this town was built were: Samuel Gill whose tract of 185+ acres was given the name of "Rosegill," and James Martin who took out a patent for 303+ acres which tract was known as "Saint Martin." The Gill tract lay just to the north of the Village, while the Martin tract adjoined the Gill tract to the south.

No signs of a populous settlement appeared here until 1795 when Galbraith Stewart came from an earlier settlement on Mt. Hope Ridge, and, being a blacksmith, he opened a shop and started a store, and this added to the desirability of this location as a place to live. Log houses were built on both the north and south sides of the highway, the Wellsburg to Washington Pike, which thereupon became and continues to be the "Main



Street" of the town. From where this road enters the town at the west end to the last house and the Grove United Presbyterian Church at the east end of town, this road or street follows almost exactly the crest of the "dividing ridge," which here, as in the Village of Independence, divides the drainage of the Cross Creek Valley to the north from the Buffalo Creek Valley to the south. As a result, almost every house in West Middletown is built on fairly level ground "on the spot," but immediately to the rear of most homes, the back yard slopes rapidly away toward the adjoining valley. This is not so apparent as one drives through the town, but if you stop and go into some of these back yards, this condition can be easily noted. And, from the town itself and from the high points along the "Pike" to the east and west of the town, in clear weather marvelous views of the countryside can be obtained.

To add to the importance of the town in those early days, William McKeever, a hatter by trade, came and opened a shop, and he was soon followed by other artisans who began plying the trades of carpenter and joiner, cabinet-maker, chair-maker, cooper, wagon-maker, tanner, cobbler, harness-maker, spinner and weaver, tailor, milliner, copper- and tin-smith, barber, coffin-maker and undertaker, tombstone cutter; they were all here, and as their trades developed, the new town became a commercial center for an enlarged community. And, of course, doctors and dentists were needed to care for the health of the people, and as churches were organized, ministers, too, located here.

As already mentioned, the early homes and other buildings were constructed of logs, and several of these old buildings, now remodeled into modern homes, are still here. Perhaps the oldest of these is the old McClure house, now owned and occupied by Mrs. Edna Rohal. This is a two-story log house and being the first of its kind to be built in this area, when it was under construction, people came from miles around to see how it was being put together.

When brick for building first came into use, quite a number of the local residents of this town contracted to have homes built of this material. Since nearby clay deposits of good quality for making bricks were obtainable, these were made use of and the bricks could be "burned" near the location of the building. The oldest brick house in town is the so-called Hemphill House, in which Mrs. John Durilla lived for several years. Another "good" early brick house is the John Brownlee house, which, according to Rebecca Jones, was built in 1831. And another substantial house, probably not as old as these just mentioned, is that owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Temple. This is a large two-story house with full foundation which must have been built in the early 1850's, but it appears as straight and firm as on the day it was built. Most of these old brick houses were built on "cut" stone foundations which have helped to preserve their stability over many years. However, a few of these old "bricks" are not in such good repair,

such as the Dan Hodgens House which is in poor condition and not fit for residential use at present.

Many of the houses in West Middletown have been built close to the sidewalks, which has placed them so that a long "walk" wasn't required in front of the house in order to reach the street, and this was before the days of concrete walkways which are now easily built. An exception to this was the fine brick house built in 1859-60 by Galbraith Stewart. This house, now the home of C. G. ("Sam") Williams is built back from the street and has a good sized front yard surrounded by an iron fence. One of the results of the town's being incorporated was said to have been that the people of the town were enabled to use their road tax money to lay flagstone sidewalks and to pave, with crushed stone, the Main Street of the town.

In thirteen of the present homes in West Middletown, it can be noticed that there are two front doors in the buildings, these opening on to small front porches, or, in some cases, directly upon the sidewalk. In probably all of these houses, in an earlier day, the owners had their places of business in their homes. One of the front doors opened into the living quarters of the house, and the other into the store, shop or office, depending upon the nature of the business.

While a few new homes have been built in or near the Village, yet most of the homes here are the old houses which have been carefully maintained over many years of use. Almost without exception, the people owning and occupying these homes take great pride in them and do the necessary work to maintain and preserve them in good condition.

Since, as in the Village of Independence, traffic has always been fairly heavy on the "Pike" through these communities, there was great need at one time for hotels and taverns for the entertainment of those people who traveled through here by the slower means of transportation which was then in use. So, as many as three or four hotels were in operation here at one time, and among those where the buildings are still standing were: The Lindsey Hotel (not now occupied), the McNulty Hotel, later known as the Garrett Hotel, and still later as the France Hotel, this building being now occupied by Mr. William Houston as his home and place of business for his Antique Shop; the Buchanan Hotel, conducted in a building which stood on the rear of the lot owned by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Humphreys, and in the brick home of the Humphreys Family was conducted the Hamilton Hotel, built by Hugh Hamilton. In the house where Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Kelley live was the Clutter Hotel, while in the house where Mr. and Mrs. Charles Temple live was the Odenbaugh Hotel. Connected with each of these hotels were also stables for the horses of the travelers, and also large stock pens for drovers

who were driving their herds and flocks through here to the eastern markets. And to the rear of the Lindsey Hotel was a large open lot where the traveling circuses would set up for their exhibitions.

In addition to the shops of the artisans who worked here on a relatively small scale, Robert McClure had a large machine shop on his lot in town, and this was used as a factory for producing the Ralston (or McClure) Threshing Machines during the mid-years of the Nineteenth Century. Quite a number of these machines were produced here and many were shipped down the river to be used in the grain fields of the mid-western states. In 1859, the year of the Big Frost which destroyed crops over such a wide area, Mr. McClure had manufactured and sent out a large shipment of these machines but since there was no demand for them that year, it is said that these machines "rotted on the wharf" at St. Louis, and as a result, Mr. McClure's business was ruined. These machines were used locally, too, and the last one known to remain is now in the Henry Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan, and it appears to be in excellent condition. These early machines were operated by horse power, and later ones, of course, were steam operated.

A smaller manufacturing venture in West Middletown was that operated by James Bell in his tin-shop. Here he made the

Ralston Oil Lantern which had been invented by Andrew Ralston and patented by him in 1848 and who invented, also, the threshing machine. These lanterns were widely used at one time, but only two or three are now known to exist. Another invention of Mr. Ralston was a "patent" sheep-feeding trough for which he sold the directions for making, and which farmers of the community could construct themselves.

In those early days, now only a memory, the West Middletown Community was largely self-supporting. Meat, grain and other food stuffs were produced on nearby farms, as well as wood and flax for fibers for the spinners and weavers to make into clothing. The artisans and merchants in the Village processed these materials and sold the finished products. Salt and metals had to be brought in from other places, but there were wagoners who supplied these materials, so this town had a commercial importance, which it is difficult for us of this present day to appreciate. Now the town has become a place of peaceful homes with little commerce or industry, and the only places of business are the United States Post Office with Mrs. Marge King as postmistress; the Brownlee Farm Equipment Company operated by Frank Brownlee, Jr., and the Brownlee Ice Cream Shop with Frank Brownlee in charge. Of the old artisans once so numerous here, only Lawrence Headley, the Village Blacksmith, remains and his trade is light due to his advanced age and a greatly reduced demand for his services.

Before being incorporated as a borough, West Middletown was a country village in the larger Hopewell Township. As such, it had one of the eight or nine one-room schools in that Township and this school was attended by the pupils from the Village and from nearby farms. The borough became a separate School District in 1856 and thereafter maintained its own school which was a two-room affair for many years until 1941 when the building burned down. The pupils have since been sent by bus to either the Buffalo or the Avella Public Schools, and now the borough is a part of the Avella Area School District. Union Grove Academy was a secondary school conducted in a building on the grounds of the Grove United Presbyterian Church from 1828 until closed several years later.

The members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (Union) held services here as early as 1802, and the organization of the present Grove United Presbyterian Church dates to around 1810. The congregation did not have a substantial building until 1818, but whether it was of log, frame or brick construction does not appear on the records. The present brick church building was built in 1859, and it has been remodeled several times and is now a commodious, convenient and very useful house of worship. The congregation has had 14 ministers, the latest having been the Rev. Dr. Leland Miller who retired on November 1, 1974.

West Middletown and nearby localities have been prominent in the early history of the Christian Church, or the Disciples of Christ as it is usually known. The Valley of Brush Run, a tributary of Buffalo Creek, was the scene of the early ministerial labors of the Rev. Alexander Campbell, the founder of this denomination. His first church was built on the Gilchrist Farm in the southern part of Hopewell Township in 1811 and the baptismal pool used for early baptism by immersion was on the Russell Dunkle farm on Brush Run. Later churches organized under the direction of Mr. Campbell were at Dutch Fork, Bethany and Wellsburg, and also here at West Middletown, where a congregation has been maintained and a comfortable house of worship has stood for many years.

Rev. Alexander Campbell established nearby Bethany College in 1840 and that school is both a Liberal Arts College and a training school for ministers of the Christian Church. Pleasant Hill Seminary operated near West Middletown by Jane Campbell McKeever and her son, T. Campbell McKeever was a "select" school for young ladies which did good work from its organization about 1845 until it was forced to close some 25 years later. It was conducted as a school for blacks for a few years and then was finally abandoned permanently. This school was located on the land where Mr. and Mrs. William McAdoo now live, northeast of West Middletown, and a part of the McAdoo residence was one of the smaller buildings of the seminary.



Since West Middletown has for many years had a substantial black population, these people have had their own church, which is known as Zion A. M. E. Church. The group met in its early years in the old Doddridge Chapel building three miles west of town, but they have had their own house of worship in West Middletown since about 1860. At one time a church of the Methodist Episcopal denomination held services in West Middletown, but it was disbanded many years ago.

One of the most historical connections of West Middletown was that with the so-called "Underground" Railroad, which had a "station" here in the borough. This was not a railroad in the usual sense of the term, but it was a means of helping "runaway" slaves from the South to get away from their masters and then to get on north to Canada, which, if they reached, they would be free men. Although this practice was illegal under the Fugitive Slave Law enacted in 1850, yet many people of this area were sympathetic with the runaways and did all they could to help them escape. The runaways would be helped to travel from one "station" to another under cover of darkness, hence the name "Underground Railroad," as if they were always traveling through a tunnel. The "station" in West Middletown was in the old McKeever House, No. 56 East Main Street, which, in the basement had a secret room in which to hide the runaways. Thomas McKeever, a Justice of the Peace, lived in this house and he was a "director" of the Underground Railroad.

When the Nation became engaged in the War Between the States, or the Civil War, it soon became apparent that the people of West Middletown and of adjoining Hopewell Township would, "almost to a man," align themselves with the cause of the Union. When the call for volunteers came, many enlisted at once, and when it became apparent that the War would not soon be over, many men from this loyal Community flocked to the colors. One of the leading spirits in this evidence of local patriotism was James McElroy, who organized a company of recruits and led them into active service. This group became identified with the Ring-gold Battalion and they performed valiant service, much of it in western Maryland and in the eastern "Panhandle" of West Virginia. One of the heroes of this "outfit" was Corporal Robert G. Rush who was killed by guerrillas while carrying mail for his company near Romney, West Virginia. His body was brought back to West Middletown for burial, and a tall impressive monument was erected which has on it a tablet setting forth Corporal Rush's service and the manner of his death.

In other wars, earlier and later, the West Middletown Community was well represented. To commemorate the services and sacrifices of these men, a suitable monument has been erected in Soldiers' Park along Route 844 in West Middletown. A similar marker in Hopewell Township Park, one and one-half miles east of town, memorializes the services of men from the area who fought in World War II. Ninety-nine names appear on this historic marker.

To preserve the History of West Middletown, some writing has been done over the years and by various persons. We would like to mention, again, Doddridge's Notes. The revised edition of this book, still available, has an article of three pages entitled: "Distinguished Men of West Middletown," compiled by Mr. William T. Lindsey, who was himself one of the "distinguished sons" of this Community, although he doesn't mention his own name in this article. Mr. Lindsey and Mr. John S. Ritenour were responsible for having the revised edition of Doddridge's Notes published in 1912.

The Histories of Washington County by Alfred Creigh, Boyd Crumrine, Joseph F. McFarland and Earle R. Forrest all carry articles on the history of this town. Also, Beers Biographical Record contains numerous articles and references to men and families in West Middletown and Hopewell Township.

In a "Short Outline of My Life," James McElroy tells of his early boyhood experiences in the West Middletown Community and also gives an account of his activities in connection with the Civil War of recruiting and leading his Company during the war years.

Mrs. Aura Morris McFadden, in April 1935, had published in the Washington Observer (Pa.) a series of articles on the History of West Middletown which she had compiled. In the

Washington Observer for October 15, 1937, Mrs. Mary Herron Sloan published an article written by her on the Old McKeever Home - the "Station" of the Underground Railroad. These articles may be read in the micro-film collection of the Observer Publishing Company in their building at Washington.

Mr. Roy M. Thompson and others have written fairly complete histories of the Grove United Presbyterian Church, and these have been published in mimeograph editions.

Mr. James Mullooly of Meadowcroft Village in January 1964 and published in the Washington Observer a series of articles entitled: "America's Past Etched in West Middletown." This series carried also a number of good pictures illustrating life in earlier days in West Middletown.

The Pittsburgh Press in it's Sunday Roto Section for July 2, 1967, issued a special edition on West Middletown featuring colored illustrations by Nat Youngblood. These showed a number of the historic homes and other typical buildings in the town. In connection with the Sesqui-Centennial, some of these fine pictures were reproduced on place mats which were sold during the celebration. Memorial plates with quite a number of local scenes also were distributed during the anniversary.

Also during the Anniversary in 1973, this writer in collaboration with Mr. Homer R. Ross, compiled a set of type-written "Plaques" which were placed in front of each home and other buildings in the Borough. These have been published in loose-leaf notebook form and are now available for distribution to interested persons. Mr. Ross, a native "son" of this area has been collecting historical data on this Community, and he has accumulated a fine assortment of publications, pictures, slides and other artifacts pertaining to the History of West Middletown and nearby areas. Mrs. Phoebe Acheson Murdock, an aged resident of the Community, has had a life-long interest in local history and genealogy, and her mind and files are "chock-full" of information pertaining to the area. She is, without doubt, the most reliable source of information on this part of Washington County.

During the Anniversary, numerous articles appeared in the newspapers of the County having to do with the 150 years and more of local history. At this event, public buildings were open for inspection, walking tours of the Borough and bus tours of the surrounding countryside were conducted, and a number of the arts and crafts, such as soap-making, candle dipping, butter churning, chair caning, quilt making and horse shoeing were demonstrated. It is likely that West Middletown will conduct some sort of celebration in connection with the Bi-Centennial of our Country in 1976.

A by-product of the 1973 celebration was the erection in the west end of the Borough of a replica of the Campbell McKeever Study. The original building, patterned after his grandfather's study at Bethany, was built in the 1860's by Dr. Campbell McKeever for his use at the Pleasant Hill Seminary. Some years after the Seminary was closed, the old building was removed to the Borough and was used there for a variety of purposes. When it became too dilapidated for further use, it was torn down in the 1930's. It was thought appropriate that a replica of this building should be erected within the Borough which would serve as a suitable Memorial to the McKeever Family and to the cause of education to which Jane Campbell McKeever and her illustrious son had dedicated their lives. And to further the cause of education in the West Middletown Community, a Memorial Library and Museum, to be known as the McKeever Study Library, is being put into operation in this historic building. Mrs. Jane Murdock Fulcher, a trained librarian, is directing this effort.

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Buffalo Village Community

This small village, located in the eastern part of Hopewell Township is a sort of "sister" to Cross Creek Village over in Cross Creek Township, since their origins date to about the same time, around 1779-1780, when the two Presbyterian churches, Upper Buffalo and Cross Creek, were being located where the two villages now stand. It can be safely assumed that at least some of the early residents of these two villages located in them in order "to be near church."

Although located in Hopewell Township and its area drained entirely by the waters of Brush Run (and Buffalo Creek), yet due to the constant relations of the people of this Community with those of other communities of the Cross Creek Country over the years, and also because Hopewell Township is now a component part of the Avella Area School District, it is not stretching a point too far to include this Community with those others in the Cross Creek Country.

Early land-holders in the immediate vicinity of the present site of the Village were:

- Hugh H. Brackenridge, who had a tract of 380 acres, called Castle Bracken, to the east of the Village.

- John Tweed, evidently a Scotsman, whose tract "Tweedside" lay to the north. It contained 408 acres.
- James Vincent, whose tract, "Spring Garden," containing 348 acres lay to the west.

These three tracts "cornered" near the present site of the Village and it is likely that the Village stands on parts of all three. These early settlers took up these tracts of land on what were called "Virginia Certificates," which means that the men probably came to this area from Virginia and that they were among the earliest settlers here, having located here when the State of Virginia still claimed this part of southwestern Pennsylvania.

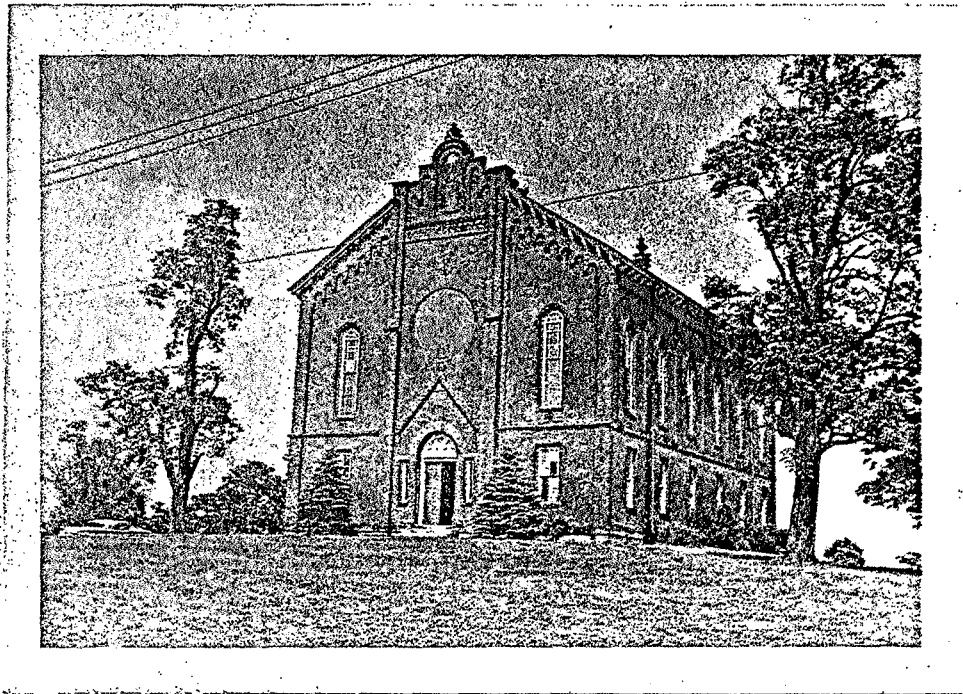
To the east of the Castle Bracken tract, another of the early settlers, Jesse Martin settled on a tract which he called "Buffaloe" and it was later taken over by Robert Caldwell and was the home of the Caldwell Family for many years thereafter. It was, no doubt, from the name of this tract, "Buffaloe," that the name of the vicinity and the Village was later derived. This land comprises the present home of the Andrew Carlisle Family. To the south of the present village, William Caldwell settled on what is now the James Hamilton farm, and William Smiley (or Smilie) had the land now owned by Robert Hamilton, Jr., and by Robert Cowden.



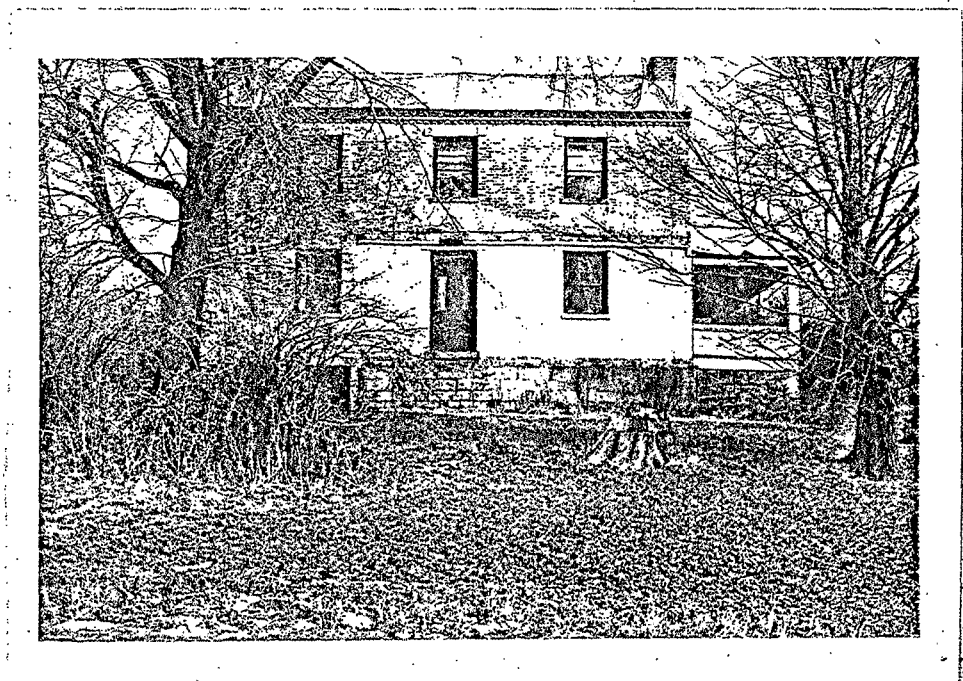
As indicated above, the Village probably dates to 1779, when the people of this Community, together with the people of the Cross Creek Village Community, met halfway between the two communities on the James Marshal Farm, now owned by Marino Cilia and family in Cross Creek Township, and on June 21 of that year made out a call for the Rev. Joseph Smith to become pastor of the two "young" churches in the two villages: Buffalo and Cross Creek. The Rev. Mr. Smith accepted this call and he moved into the Buffalo Community the following year.

Soon after arriving here, Mr. Smith took up two sizable tracts of land a mile or more to the north and northwest of the Village. The one tract, "Mt. Joy," was where the Branczek Farm is now and Mr. Smith had his log cabin home on that farm. A part of the other tract, "Welcome," eventually came into the hands of Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat. He was a nephew of Mr. Smith, and he purchased this land as a home for his mother and three sisters, who moved to this Community from their earlier home in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in order that they might be near Mrs. Fulton's brother, the Rev. Mr. Smith. While Robert Fulton, no doubt, spent some time on the farm here, yet he was busy with his inventions and his painting in the eastern part of the State, so he never became a permanent resident here. The land on which the Fultons lived was, in recent years, the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Leroy Taggart.

LANDMARKS IN HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP



The Upper Buffalo Presbyterian Church  
at Buffalo Village. Erected in 1873.



The Robert Dinsmore Home where Mr.  
Dinsmore was murdered by thugs who  
came to the home to rob him.

Mr. Smith served the churches of Buffalo and Cross Creek until his death in 1792. At his death, he was buried in the graveyard at the Village, and a large granite slab with a long epitaph marks his grave.

Mrs. Fulton lived on her farm until her death and she is believed to have been buried in the graveyard at Buffalo, but, if so, there is no marker at her grave. Of her daughters who lived on the farm with her, two, Mrs. Isabella Cooke and Mrs. Mary Morris, moved to Washington, PA., while Robert Fulton left the farm to a third sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Scott.

After Mr. Smith's death, the Rev. Thomas Marquis served both the Buffalo and Cross Creek churches until 1799. Then, in 1800, the Rev. John Anderson began preaching at Buffalo. It was during his pastorate, in November 1802, that the great "Camp Meeting" was held at the Buffalo Church. This meeting, part of the "Great Revival," which was then sweeping through the Presbyterian churches in this part of the country, was a notable one and it is said that at least fifteen preachers and 10,000 people came to Buffalo Village and camped on the church grounds for the long weekend when these meetings were in progress.

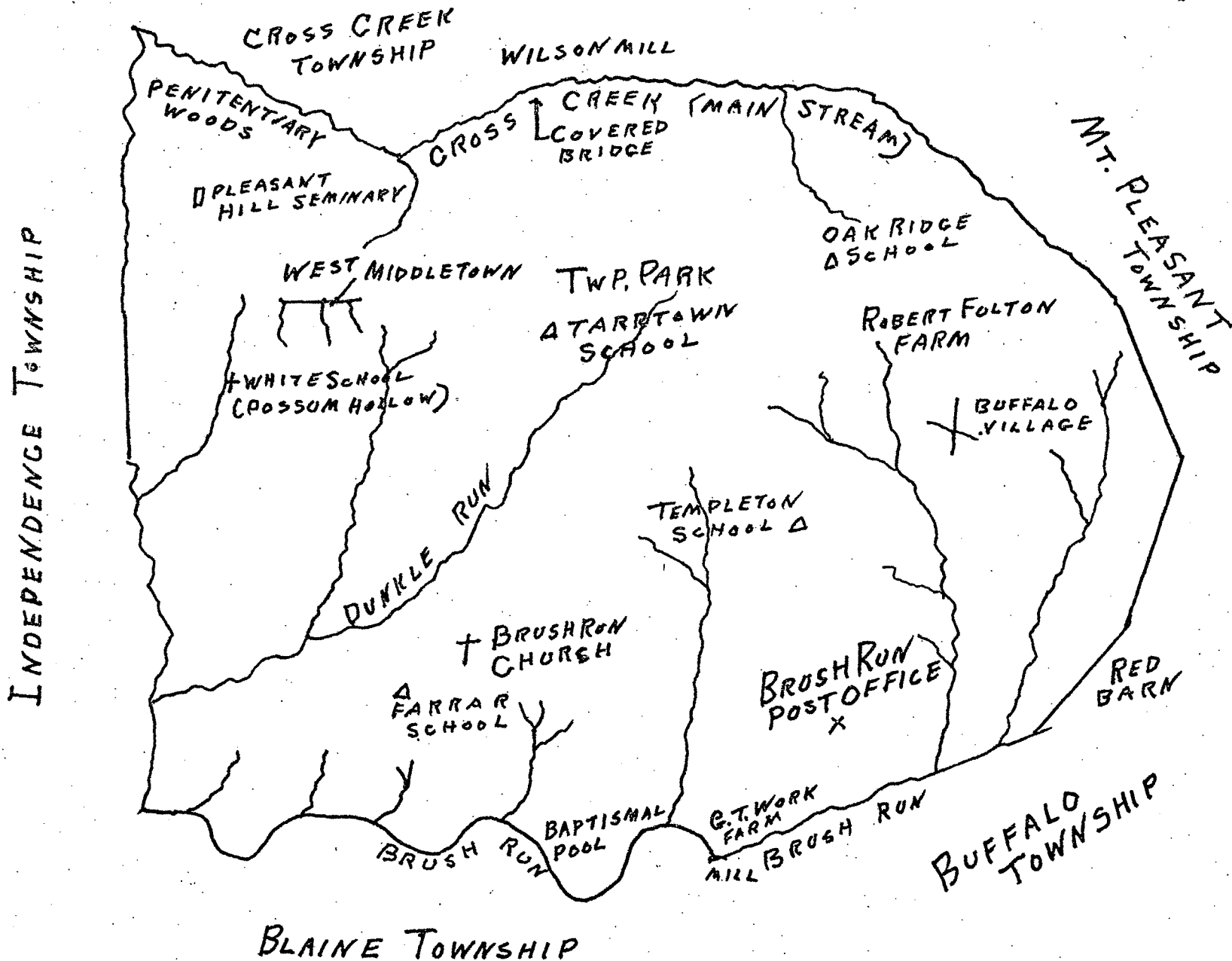
The Upper Buffalo Congregation, the oldest organization in this Community, has had four church buildings: The first, a small log "house" located in the northwest corner of the old graveyard; the second, also of logs, but much larger was used until 1845; the third of brick was built in 1845 and used until 1872, when the present building, also of brick, was built -- just 102 years ago. The congregation, once fairly large, has become somewhat depleted in numbers, but services are still held regularly.

This writer feels that no apology need be given for using the foregoing space in telling of the early history of the Upper Buffalo Presbyterian Church in connection with the History of this Community. In addition to being the oldest organization, the church, until recent years, has been the dominant factor in much of the history of the whole Community. The Village which has grown up around this church was, and is, strictly a residential community. For many years, older people from the surrounding farms would move into the Village for their retirement years, leaving a younger generation to take over the operation of the family farm. Also, in recent years, people who work in industry and commerce in nearby towns, such as Washington, PA., have moved here and taken up their residence in what they believe to be a very good residential community.

house which is the present residence of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Gamble of Washington, R. D. #3.

Two post offices served the people of eastern Hopewell Township before an office was established in the Village. At an early date, Mr. Abram Wotring kept the Buffalo Post Office at his farm two miles northeast of the Village. In 1846; the Brush Run Post Office was established at the home of James Clark two miles or more southwest of Buffalo Village. Under Samuel Merchant as Postmaster, these two offices were consolidated and moved into Buffalo Village in 1866. This Office then served the people of the Community until July 31, 1955, when it was closed. The last person to serve in that office as Postmaster was Mrs. Ida Coulter whose tenure of office was a full thirty years. The Community is now served by rural carrier on Washington, R. D. #3.

# HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP



## CHAPTER X

### The Brush Run - Buffalo Creek Valley Region

This region marks the southern boundary of what we have been calling the Cross Creek Country. For the purpose of this History, we can say that this Valley extends from the "Red Barn" at the intersection of Routes 844 and 331, the eastern extremity of Hopewell Township, to the southwestern corner of Independence Township. Route 331 follows this valley this entire distance, and connects at the Pennsylvania-West Virginia State Line with the road in the latter State that leads to Bethany. Brush Run forms the entire southern boundary of Hopewell Township. Near the southeastern corner of Independence Township, the "Run" flows into the main stream of Buffalo Creek, which, during the rest of its course to the State Line, forms the southern boundary of Independence Township.

In writing of this Valley region, we admit at this point that it does not comprise a compact "community" such as those which we have been writing about in previous chapters. But, since it is a definite "region" in the Cross Creek Country, this writer feels that some attention should be given to it in this History.

As we start into this Valley from its eastern end at the familiar landmark, The Red Barn, we find the countryside at this point "open" in the sense that here the Valley of Brush Run is fairly wide; the slopes of the north side of the Valley are of a "gentle" nature, reaching back some distance to the "top of the hills," and embracing some fairly level farm land. On the south side of the Valley here, the slopes are steeper and the summit of the hills to the south is higher than on the north side of the "Run."

At this point, near the Red Barn as we start down the Valley, we find that in recent years a number of small homes have been built on small plots of land which have been acquired by people who want to have a home in the country and so they have located here. A short distance down this road, these small properties become fewer in number and larger farm properties begin to emerge. In this paper, we are interested, for the most part, in the properties on the north side of Brush Run and Buffalo Creek, since those on the other side of the streams are in the adjoining townships to the south.

The first large farm to our right as we traverse the valley is the one where the large white house has the tall pillars on the front porch. This is the home of David J. Humphreys, a lawyer in Pittsburgh, Pa. This farm property once belonged to the Caldwell Family, who were early settlers



here and very numerous at one time. Next farm below is that of Robert Hamilton, Jr., and it, in part, was once the William Smiley farm. A log house was removed from this farm several years ago and taken to Meadowcroft Village, where it has been rebuilt. This old log house may have been the home of Elder William Smiley, who once took a boat load of flour down the rivers to New Orleans in order to get money for the Upper Buffalo and Cross Creek churches to pay their minister, Rev. Joseph Smith.

The next large farm is that of Mr. and Mrs. James T. Hamilton, where the farm buildings are located on top of the hill, some distance from the public road. The Hamilton Family have been longtime residents of this area, and James T. Hamilton conducts a large farm operation here. When a log barn was being "raised" on this farm back in 1808, William Smiley, Jr., was killed when a log fell on him, and this accident was blamed on carelessness on the part of some of the workmen who, it was said, had been drinking too heavily.

The next farm, that of Edmund Bredniak, has a modern barn on it, but just above the new barn are the remains of the old log barn which has stood here since early times. These old log barns were built by the earliest settlers here, around 1800, and not very many of them are left on the farms now, since modern farmers wish to have modern barns. Down the road from this farm, a few smaller properties can again

seen. About a mile below the Bredniak Farm is the former Dunkle Farm, which is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Laucik. This farm has a modern barn and a somewhat older house, and by the side of the road is an old stone spring house, once used by the people here as a source of their cold drinking water and to cool their milk, butter, etc., in the days before we had electric refrigerators. One hundred years ago, this farm was owned by Major George T. Work, of whom we wrote in the Chapter on the Buffalo Community as one of the leaders of the Ring-gold Battalion in the Civil War. Major Work located on this farm after the War, and he conducted a general farming operation, and, also, down beside the "Run" he had a water-powered grist mill and a saw mill. These mills have disappeared, but the old stone burrs from the grist mill are used by the Lauciks as "steps" to the porches of their home.

From this point down the Valley, the hills to the north, like those to the south, become steeper, and the Valley itself is narrower. Most of the farm buildings are built back from the Valley road, and many of them cannot be seen as one drives along. But, again, several small homes are built on "lots" near this road.

A mile or so below the Work Farm, one notices to the left of the road a small "patch" of land of an acre or so, which is surrounded by a sort of rail fence fastened to

posts. This lot of ground extends to the stream, Brush Run, and it takes in a small pool. Here, according to the traditions and records of the Christian Church is where, on July 4, 1811, the first baptismal service was held for members of the newly formed Brush Run Christian Church. This plot of ground has been acquired by Bethany College and is maintained as a shrine of the Christian Church.

Another half-mile down the road and one comes to a side road to the right, which, if taken, will lead to the site of the old one-room Farrar School. Along this road, one passes the home and fine set of farm buildings belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Craft. Mr. Craft is a farmer and dairyman and conducts a large operation on this farm. One hundred years ago this farm belonged to John Brownlee, and somewhat later, the family of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Farrar lived here and it is from this family that the Farrar School got its name. On the old 1876 map of Hopewell Township, it is shown that a coal "bank" had been opened along a small stream on a part of this farm. The Farrar School is about a mile from the old Farrar Farm, and when you reach it, you find that the old building is still standing there, although school has not been held in it since the term of 1936-37 and Mrs. Mary McGaughey was the teacher. The school was closed in 1937 and the pupils since have been hauled by bus to the Buffalo School.

If one opens the gate and drives into the field beside the old schoolhouse, he can then drive up a steep hill and back on the hill-top to the site of the old Brush Run Christian Church. Here, again, in a "park-like" plot of ground of several acres and surrounded by a rail fence is where the old church was located, and like the plot at the baptismal pool, this site is owned and maintained by Bethany College. When Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Scotch-Irish ministers, established the Brush Run Church here in Hopewell Township, they erected on this spot a small frame church building, about 24 x 30 feet in size, and in it the small congregation met for worship for 16 or 18 years. The outline of the foundation of the building can still be seen, and in the center of it stands a small granite marker with the inscription: "Site of Brush Run Church, organized May, 1811." This place and the site of the first baptismal pool are points to which come many faithful members of the denomination, the Disciples of Christ, at some time during their lives.

Returning to the Valley Road, Route 331, and continuing down the Valley, both the Run and the road follow a tortuous course for some distance with many windings and twistings, as the stream has become deeply "entrenched" in the valley here, with the hills becoming ever steeper and higher on either side of the Valley. Through this Valley had been built some years ago a "trunk" line of the Bell Telephone

Company, but unlike the stream and the road, this line has been built in a straight course, which means that it leaves the Valley at times and goes over an adjoining hill, then to reappear further down the Valley, as Brush Run again makes a turn into the "path" of the telephone line.

Near the point where Brush Run empties into Buffalo Creek, there is a small place, now only a single house, but once a bit larger place, which was known as Acheson. Its importance consisted of its having a Post Office which served the people on the surrounding farms, and also a small store was kept in connection with the Post Office. The Postmaster in 1892 was George R. Linville and at that time the Post Office was kept across the Creek in Donegal Township, and the name was spelled "Atchison," but later, the Office was moved over into Independence Township and it was renamed Acheson in honor of the Hon. Ernest F. Acheson, Congressman from Washington County and who was the father of Mrs. Phoebe Murdock, now of West Middletown. This Post Office was closed about 1900 when the rural free delivery of mail was begun.

A short mile below Acheson is shown on the old maps of the Township the site of Lamb's Fort, an old frontier fort of which little is known. The farm on which it was located is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Keenan. The next farm is the former George Smith farm, now owned by the Carmichael Family. When the Smiths owned the property, it was a large sheep farm. This writer visited this farm on Mary 30, 1909, and the Smith men were then engaged in

shearing their flock of over 700 head of sheep. On this farm on the Creek "bottom" is a very fertile field which, over the years has produced many good crops of corn. It is a sort of "flood plain" over which large quantities of fertile soil have been spread as the creek has flooded over its banks on many occasions. Near the road on this farm are the ruins of an old log house, which, no doubt, was the pioneer home on this tract of land. But the roof is gone from the old house and soon the rest of it will be rotted away.

Another mile and one reaches the Narrigan Bridge which crosses Buffalo Creek into Donegal Township. At one time, a long covered bridge was here, but it was washed out by a big flood several years ago, and the present modern bridge was built in its place. The bridge was named for Mr. Jacob Narrigan, an old-time farmer whose property was near the site of the bridge, but in later years a steam mill was built nearby in Independence Township and it was operated until destroyed by fire, now many years ago. These small milling communities, like others of which we have previously spoken, were a convenient place for the farmers to get their grain ground into meal and flour, and, also, at most of these mills was located a store for the convenience of the same farmers. A Post Office was located at Dunsfort and in 1892, it was located on the Donegal Township side of the Creek and the Postmaster was John A. Smith.

In somewhat earlier times, much of the land in this part of the Valley and on the adjoining hills was owned by the Jones Family, then very prominent here. Now, just before crossing into West Virginia is the home of Mr. W. R. Jones, who still owns a tract of over 200 acres.

As we have traveled down the Brush Run - Buffalo Creek Valley, if we had taken any one of the side roads to the right, we would have come back into other parts of the Cross Creek Country - to Buffalo Village, or to West Middletown, or to the Village of Independence. Just after crossing the State Line, the next road to the right leads to the Village of Independence, but in traveling on this road, one remains in West Virginia for about half of the way, and then the road crosses back into Pennsylvania for the rest of the way.

As we pointed out in the beginning of this Chapter, the Valley area which we have been describing is not a "compact community," but it is both a scenic and a historic region to drive through and so we believe we should include it as a part of the Cross Creek Country.

## CHAPTER XI

### The Mr. Hope Ridge Community

This is a somewhat dispersed or non-compact Community in Independence Township, which we believe should receive some attention in this history. It may be entered from three points in the Cross Creek Country:

1. At Breezy Heights, near the Manchester-Doddridge Community, where Route 844 intersects with Route 231 South. Drive south from this intersection and you are soon within this Community. As you drive along what is here known as Mt. Hope Ridge, it soon becomes apparent that this is the "Sky Line Drive" of the Cross Creek Country. This road follows the dividing ridge between the deep valley of Camp Run to the driver's right (west) and another unnamed branch of Buffalo Creek to the left (east). The slopes toward Camp Run are long and steep, while those to the east are more gentle, and as the road follows the Ridge, excellent views greet the traveler's eye in both directions.

Good farms lie along this Ridge road with those of the Carl and Craig families lying to the east, and the Smith and former Narigon farms in the Valley to the west.



2. A second approach to this Community may be made from the Brush Run-Buffalo Creek Valley near the former site of Acheson, which we have mentioned in the previous chapter. Here, if one follows Route 231 to the West (and North), a long ride up a peaceful valley will lead the traveler into the "heart" of this Community. A mile or so along this road, one comes to the site of the former Jamison one-room school, one of the rural schools of Independence Township. This school was closed in 1938 and the building has been converted into a comfortable residence. The school received its name from the Jamison Family, who once owned two substantial farms in the vicinity of the school.

At the head of this valley, this road intersects with the Ridge road and here Route 231 turns to the right, thus meeting the road which we have described in Paragraph 1 above. At this intersection, we may say that we have reached the "heart" of this Community, since this is the location of the old Mt. Hope United Presbyterian Church, of which we shall speak further in this Chapter.

3. The third "gateway" to the Mt. Hope Community is also from the Buffalo Creek Valley. In the previous Chapter (X.), we have mentioned the small settlement of Dunsfort with its mills. Very near the road which goes to the south from Dunsfort is another road which leaves the valley road and goes up a steep hill to the north. By following this

road for more than a mile, the "peak" of Mt. Hope Ridge is reached, and the Ridge road may then be followed to the site of Mt. Hope Church.

On this steep hill, which we have just mentioned, is located one of the former Jones farms, which we spoke of in the previous chapter. Here in the 1870's were living two brothers, William and Ellis Jones, who owned and cultivated a farm of 220 acres and on which they grazed a flock of 300 sheep. These men during the many years of their lives on this farm were recognized as among the best "sheep-men" to be found anywhere.

At the top of this hill is located the old Scott one-room school building, another of the old time schools of the Township. It was closed in 1935 and since then the building has been used for storage of hay and other farm products. This school received its name from the Scott Family who once owned large tracts of land nearby.

After passing this old school, one sees to the right the old Mehaffey Farm, with the farm buildings far off the public road and reached by a long lane. The Mehaffeyes first located on this farm in 1864 and it was in the family name until fairly recent years. It once contained over 800 acres of good farm land and it, too, had large flocks of sheep.

The next farm along this road to the north is that owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. James C. Wilson. In earlier times, this was known as the Woodburn Farm, and while containing only about 150 acres, it has been considered one of the best farms "on the Ridge." Owned in the 1870s by Mr. William Woodburn, it next became the property of his daughter, Mrs. Jennie Woodburn Wilson and her husband, Robert S. Wilson. After their deaths, their son, Ewing S. Wilson, and his wife, Dorotha, came into possession of the farm. During their more than twenty-five years of ownership, Mr. and Mrs. Ewing Wilson suffered three devastating tragedies.

On June 23, 1944, a destructive tornado crossed this part of Independence Township and struck directly the barn on the Wilson Farm, completely destroying the structure, and doing much other damage on this and nearby farms. Two residents of the Township, Miss Monta Moore of near Independence (Village), and Mr. A. Hensley Keenan, a near neighbor of the Wilsons, were killed by the storm.

The Wilson barn was quickly rebuilt with the help of their many good neighbors, and normal operations again began on the farm. But the new barn was destined for only about eleven years of use: On September 27, 1955, as Mr. Wilson had just completed his harvesting and had his barn filled to the rafters with hay and other products, the barn took fire and the building and its contents were quickly consumed, another total loss.

As it happened at the time of the tornado, so again the neighbors of the Wilsons rallied around them, helped in building another barn, and then topped off their good deeds by sharing with the Wilsons hay, straw and grain from their own farms to help fill the new barn. So, once more we can say that normal farm operations resumed for Mr. and Mrs. Wilson.

The third tragedy to strike the Wilsons came during harvest time in the summer of 1964. On June 30 of that year, while operating a tractor bailer in hay harvest, Mr. Wilson was caught in the moving machinery and was critically injured, so badly that, although he lingered for many weeks hovering between life and death, his injuries proved to be fatal and he died on October 9, fifteen weeks after he had been injured.

Mrs. Wilson, a long time teacher in the Avella Schools was unable to conduct the farm any longer, so she sold it to the present owners who conduct a general farm operation and keep a herd of beef cattle.

This road, of course, leads on north to the intersection with Route 231 at the site of the Mt. Hope Church. This church was an old Seceder Congregation, established here in about the year 1800. Its early members had belonged to

the North Buffalo Associate (Seceder) Church and had organized the Church here to avoid traveling the great distance to North Buffalo. The first pastor was the Rev. Thomas Allison who served from 1802 to 1837, when the Rev. David Thompson became the pastor to serve from 1838 to 1847. The church was vacant for about four years and then, in 1851, the Rev. John T. Brownlee, a native of West Middletown, became pastor and he served until 1900, virtually forty-nine years of service. During the rest of its existence, the congregation was served by a number of ministers for various periods of time, but none of them for as long as the services performed by the Revs. Allison and Brownlee. From 1938 for several years the pulpit was "vacant," the church being served by "supplies" or "student ministers." In 1946, the congregation was disbanded.

To memorialize this old Church, former members of the congregation and others gathered at the site of this Church on Sunday afternoon, October 9, 1949, and dedicated a granite marker with a tablet which outlines some of the interesting history of old Mt. Hope. Adjoining the lot where the old frame church stood is the graveyard, such as was always located near the old churches, and here are buried the former ministers, Drs. Allison and Brownlee, as well as the mortal remains of many of the old residents of the Mt. Hope Community.

Having been a strictly rural, farming community, there has never been even the semblance of a village in this community. Even at the site of the Church for most of its existence, there was no manse or parsonage; Dr. Brownlee and Family lived at West Middletown, although some of his successors did live in a house near the church.

The late Mr. Harland Keenan, local historian, who once lived on the present Dryer Farm near Breezy Heights, compiled a short history of the Mt. Hope United Presbyterian Church and also a listing of the burials in the old graveyard here.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Rea-Woodrow Community

This "dispersed" community in Cross Creek Township lies in the Valley of the South Fork of Cross Creek, and it begins at its western end where South Fork flows into the main stream. Route 50 traverses the Community in its entire length from this point to the Township Line just east of Woodrow. Near the intersection of the two streams is where the boundary line between Hopewell and Independence Townships meets the southern boundary of Cross Creek Township, which is the main stream of Cross Creek. Thus, since the Avella High School building is located just about one and one-quarter miles east of this point, it is in or within sight of the three townships which comprise the Avella School District, and the other municipality, West Middletown, is less than three miles away to the south.

Near this western entrance to the Rea-Woodrow Community, soon after the Wabash Railroad was built down this Valley, a railroad station or "stop" was established for the convenience of nearby residents, and this was called West Middletown Station. The station house was only an open-faced shelter and it has not been used for many years.

On the bank to the rear of where this station house stood, Mr. Emil Lerby built his home some years ago, he having purchased several acres of land here, part of which is located along the main stream of Cross Creek. Mr. Lerby impounded water from Cross Creek and made several small lakes and ponds as the "flats" near the Creek, and he stocked these with fish. As mentioned in the Chapter on the Avella Community, Mr. Lerby tore down the old Wells Stone House at Avella and moved the stone to his property here, planning to erect them into a stone house, but this was never done.

Back on November 30, 1952, and for the next two days, a frightening drama was enacted in the Lerby Home here. This was on a Sunday morning and early that day, five convicts had escaped from the Western Penitentiary at Pittsburgh, had made their way to this place in a stolen car, and seeing this house standing by itself off the main highway, they chose it as a "hide-out" from which to plan a further course for their escape. Only Mrs. Lerby was in the home at the time, her husband and son, Bert, having left that morning for Ridgeway, Pa., to hunt deer.

The convicts completely took over the home, compelled Mrs. Lerby to cook food for them and instructed her not to try to communicate with anyone in the Community, but they did not harm her in any way. Later in the day, Mr. and Mrs. John Gagich and their children, Marlene and John, Jr., came to visit, Mrs.



County contains pictures of all the fine farm buildings which Mr. Lawton had on his farm. These include two mills: a grist mill and a saw mill and they were located at the first turn in the road, Route 50, just west of Avella High School. These mills were run by water power, and water for their operation was collected in a dam in the creek, almost in front of Avella High School, and near the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Zatta. The water from this dam was then taken in a mill "race" down to the site of the mills. The mill race had to cross the stream which comes down the small valley to the right, and a bridge, or adqueduct, was constructed to carry the water over this small stream.

On the Lawton Farm is located a small private family graveyard where Arnold Lawton, his parents, his wife and three small children are all buried. The graveyard is surrounded by a substantial stone wall and it is maintained by a trust fund which was left for the purpose by Mr. Lawton.

At one time, the Lawtons owned over 700 acres of land here, and it included, in addition to the Home Farm just described, the land on which the High School is located, the farm adjoining where the ruins of the brick house stand, and also the farm now owned by Paul Kabo. On the wooded hillside opposite the High School, if one looks closely when the leaves are off the trees, he can see a road running diagonally up the hill through the woods. This was a "farm road" used by Mr. Lawton in going to some fields which he had at the top.

of that hill. Where this farm road crosses the Creek, opposite the old brick house on the Lawton Farm, there was a covered bridge, and one stone wall for that bridge can still be seen at the edge of the Creek. Also a stone gate post stands nearby. Much of this land, once belonging to the Lawtons, is now owned by the Ciaffoni Family of Cecil Township.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Zatta, just below the High School property, is the remodeled building of the Willow Valley one-room school. This building was last used for school during the 1943-44 school term, and it was sold to the Zatta Family about two years later. The land on which the High School stands was taken from one of the Ciaffoni farms and the building erected in 1962-63 and first occupied during the 1963-64 school term. The brick house, now in ruins on the farm just east of Avella High School was built in 1815, possibly by the Lawton Family soon after they moved to this Community. Over the years, in addition to the Lawtons, it has been owned by Alexander E. Walker, the Dinsmore Family, and more recently by the Ciaffonis. The last family to live in this house were the Boccabella Family. Soon after they moved out several years ago, the house burned down under mysterious circumstances.

Moving on up the road to the Rea "Cross Roads," this point marks the interesection of Route 50 with the road running from Cross Creek Village to West Middletown. Here are two modern

concrete bridges, the one across South Fork and the other across the tributary stream entering South Fork at this point. These bridges might well be called the Twin Concrete Bridges, since they are of similar design, they were built at the same time, and they replace the old Covered Wooden Bridges which stood here for many years, and which were called the Twin Bridges.

Here, at the Cross Roads, is located the Gagich Body Shop kept by Mr. Robert Gagich and the Rea Post Office of which Mrs. Gagich is the Post Mistress. The Post Office serves only local customers, although at one time not many years ago, two Rural Mail Routes went out from this Office. In a consolidation of postal services, these routes now leave from the Avella Post Office. The only other structure here is a small building once used as the coal house by the Beech Knob School, two miles up the road toward Cross Creek Village from this point. When this school was closed in 1945, the school building was sold and this coal house was moved here to be used as a shelter for children waiting for the school buses.

An old four-room house, long known as the McClane Home, stood for many years in the northwestern corner of this intersection, but it was destroyed by fire in March, 1950, being then occupied by the family of Roland Kemp, who were driven from the home on a cold night when an oil stove being used to heat the home exploded.

The hamlet known as Rea, or once as Rea Station, is located on the hill-side and across the railroad from the Cross Roads. The village was established on land owned by Mr. Charles M. Rea soon after the Wabash Railroad was built through here. Mr. Rea prevailed upon the railroad company to locate a station on his property. It was used by the nearby dairy farmers as a milk shipping point, and it was also a convenient point at which to take the passenger trains which ran east to Hickory, Bridgeville and Pittsburgh and west to Avella, Penowa and the Ohio River and State. Young people then attending the High School at Hickory would ride the early train in the morning and the late train back to the home station in the evening. This was a real "accommodation" train, stopping at all the way stations and taking a considerable amount of time to reach the City.

In its hey-day, Rea had several dwellings, a hardware and farm implement and feed store, a general store and the Post Office was here before being moved down to the Cross Roads. Cross Creek Grange has met here since 1911 and it has had its own Grange Hall since 1918. The Grange Hall and several dwellings remain, but no places of business are in the village itself.

This Village and Community takes its name, of course, from the Rea Family. The first of the name, Mr. William Rea and his wife, came here from Northampton County, Pennsylvania in 1790 and bought the farm which has now been in the same family for 186 years of history and through five generations

of the Rea Family, the longest continuous tenure of landholdings in Cross Creek Township, and possibly in the entire Cross Creek Country. The present owners of the farm are Mr. and Mrs. Maynard C. Rea, Mr. Rea being a great-great-grandson of the original settler, William Rea. The property in the Village is now largely privately owned by those who live in the houses there, but above the village, the hillside is still a part of the Rea Farm. In the wood-lot there, Mr. Charles M. Rea once had a maple-sugar grove and camp, since there are, or were, a good number of sugar-maple trees in the woods. The sugar-camp consisted of a shed-like building to which, in the early spring of the year, "sap" from the sugar trees would be hauled and there, over a huge wood fire, would be boiled down into maple syrup and maple sugar. Several sugar-camps were conducted in the Cross Creek Country at one time, but none are now being used here. This industry is still carried on in parts of Somerset County in Pennsylvania.

Also, among the trees on the ridge above the Rea Farm can be found huge rocks of sandstone, sitting on top of the group where they have been for hundreds of years. In this rough and rugged area, many native wild flowers grow and snakes can be found, possibly some copperheads are among these. Some of the rocks are as large as a house and in one

or two cases years ago, trees could be seen growing on top of the rocks. The question is sometimes asked: "Where did these rocks come from?" and the obvious answer is that they have always been right here. Erosion over many, many years has washed the soil away from the huge rocks so that they have become exposed, and being of very durable material, they have continued where they have always been. Glaciers which a long time ago carried immense amounts of rocky materials from the Far North did not extend this far to the south, so that these rocks are not glacier-borne. This rocky formation can be traced on this ridge, both toward the west and the east, but the rocks are most conspicuous here at "Rea Rocks" at a point south of Woodrow where they carried the name "Walker's Rocks," this name having been given from the nearby former Walker Family and Farm.

Near Rea Station, the railroad crosses South Fork and near the same point, the public road, Route 50, crosses the railroad tracks, and from that point the road and railroad parallel each other and on the north side of the Creek to the Township Line above Woodrow, where the Road crosses under the railroad through an archway and thus leaves the valley route which the railroad follows on to the next dividing ridge in Mt. Pleasant Township.

The small town of Woodrow is an older community than Rea, since there was the semblance of a village here for

many years before the railroad came. But like Rea, Woodrow also had a station or "stop" on the railroad and it was a fairly busy place in days before "good roads" came to the area. Milk and other farm produce was shipped from Woodrow, and to this place many farm supplies were shipped in to the general store which had been kept here for many years. Woodrow once had a Creamery or Cheese Factory which furnished a market for milk from the farms before the railroad was built. Almost on the line between Cross Creek and Mt. Pleasant Townships there was located a combined grist and saw mill. The location of this old mill can be identified and also the mill races can be traced in the flat field near the mill. A tradition tells of the death at the sawmill of a man by the name of H. L. Harsha. Mr. Harsha was a Covenanter minister who was either visiting or working at this mill on March 9, 1868. The old saw used at this mill was of the "up and down" type rather than the circular saws used on later mills, and as the frame of this saw moved up and down, Mr. Harsha was caught in it and was so badly injured that he died as a result.

When drilling was begun at the McGugin Well, it was under the direction of Colonel Frederick Crocker who had come here from the older oil fields of Venango County. In drilling this well, small pockets of natural gas were found at various depths but they were not of much significance

until a depth of 2247 feet was reached when a great roar of gas came from the well, throwing the drilling tools into the air, and, of course, causing great excitement among the drillers and in the whole Community.

Not much was known about natural gas but it was thought to be inflammable. In some manner this great stream of gas became ignited, and for months a giant flame spewed out of the ground here, blowing with a great noise and after nightfall causing a great glow in the skies which lighted up the countryside for many miles around. Many millions of cubic feet of gas thus went to waste. But the flow of the gas was finally brought under control, the well was "closed in", and the gas was sent through pipelines to the City of Pittsburgh where it was used in industry and also for the heating of homes and for outside lighting. In later years, many other wells have been drilled in the Cross Creek Country and both natural gas and petroleum oil have been found in paying quantities.

The villages of Rea and Woodrow have now both reverted to the status of almost entirely residential places. The railroad still runs trains down the valleys of South Fork and of Cross Creek, but they are only long, fast freight trains which whistle but do not stop at the way stations. Rea still has its Post Office, but Woodrow lost its office



several years ago and the patrons are served by rural routes from Avella and Hickory. Good roads have traversed the communities, so shoppers can go to the larger towns for their groceries and supplies. Woodrow once had a chapel for holding preaching services and Sunday School, and several attempts were made to establish a Sunday School at Rea, but, again, good roads have made these projects unnecessary as most people can drive some distance to attend the church of their choice.

Two of the farms located in this Community half-way between Rea and Woodrow have some historical significance of which we should speak in this Chapter. These farms, one now known as the Ronyak Farm and the other belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Marino Cilia, were originally one tract which had been settled by Colonel James Marshel, who had patented this tract under the name of Marshall Hall, or Marshall's Delight. It was a tract of 432 acres as originally surveyed for Colonel Marshel. Here Colonel Marshel built a small fort, or blockhouse, as it was called, for the protection of his family and of his neighbors against Indian attacks. Not much is now known about this fort and it is likely that there is little history connected with it.

It was on Colonel Marshel's farm, on June 21, 1779, that the people of the Buffalo Village Community met with the people of the Cross Creek Village Community, "half way between the

two communities," to make out a call for the ministerial services of the Rev. Joseph Smith to become pastor of the Upper Buffalo and Cross Creek Presbyterian Churches. This call was accepted by Mr. Smith and, as told elsewhere, he moved to the Buffalo Village Community and served for several years as the pastor, jointly, of these two congregations.

Colonel Marshel had served as County Lieutenant of Washington County, also as Registrar of Wills and Recorder of Deeds for two terms, and as Sheriff of the County for one term. During the years of these services, Colonel Marshel resided in Washington, the County Seat, and it was after these services had been performed that he sold his farms here and removed to Brooke County in West Virginia. We have used the spelling, "Marshel" in speaking of this man, and it is said that he used this form of spelling, while his cousins, Robert and John Marshall, who had also made settlements in this part of the Cross Creek Country, had used the other form, Marshall, in spelling their names.

His land here eventually came into the hands of Thomas McCorkle, who appears to have divided it, keeping the present Ronyak Farm for his home and deeding the eastern side of it to his son, Thomas B. McCorkle. The "home farm" was later owned by Charles M. Marquis and then was purchased by the Ronyak Family. The other farm was owned for a time by a Reed Family, then by the Pittsburgh Coal Company and now by Mr. and Mrs. Cilia.

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Upper Cross Creek Valley Community

This, another long, dispersed Community begins where we started in discussing the Rea-Woodrow Community, near the junction of South Fork of Cross Creek with the "mainstream" of that Creek. But we will follow the valley of this "main stream" to the southeast and east in discussing this "region" of the Cross Creek Country. The Valley embraces what is now being called, on recent maps, the "Cross Creek Country Park." We will discuss this project a bit later in the Chapter.

We should mention here that from our starting point, the present Route 50 - the concrete road - does not follow the course of the old road which formerly led from West Middletown Station toward Avella. The old road left present Route 50 where the present side road does, going south through the archway under the railroad, and then one-eighth of a mile farther where it crossed the Creek through a covered bridge, known as the Neal Bridge, then turned westward and followed the south bank of Cross Creek toward Avella. Because of a good spring of water which flowed out of the bank along this road, it was known as the "Cool Spring Road." This route was abandoned when present Route 50 was built down South Fork and Cross Creek Valley toward Avella.

From the Neal Bridge, also intersecting with Cool Spring Road, was another road which led up the hill to the south through Penitentiary Woods and met another road at the old Pleasant Hill Seminary grounds. This road, too, has been closed, and with the abandonment of these two roads, the covered bridge was torn down. Penitentiary Woods was so-called because of the use made of them during the days of runaway slaves. Here, in cleared spots in the Woods, those who helped the slaves to freedom maintained large gardens where food was raised to help feed the fugitives while they were in this Community. The gardens also furnished employment for the runaways during the time when they were kept in hiding in these woods.

Returning to the Valley of the "main stream": The first farm up this Valley was that of Samuel Neal, for whom the bridge was named. In later years, it was owned by Thomas M. Caldwell, and then by his son, William M. Caldwell, who sold it several years ago to Washington County for the use of the County Park. The breastworks of the dam, when they are built will be located on this farm.

The next farm, known for many years as the John S. Patterson Farm, later came into the possession of the family of Ray Liggett, and it, too, has been sold to Washington County. Next above is the former R. B. (Boley) Thompson farm, now also owned by the County. To this point, the valley road has been in Cross Creek Township, but at the Boley Thompson bridge, once

a covered bridge but now replaced with a concrete structure, the road crosses into Hopewell Township to the former Samuel T. Denny Farm. Here the road from Rea to West Middletown is intersected, a right turn taking one to West Middletown and a left turn farther up Cross Creek Valley, since at this point, the Creek makes a sharp turn to the left.

A "short" mile from the Denny Farm, the road again crosses to the north side of the Creek, back into Cross Creek Township, and it remains on that side until the township line into Mt. Pleasant Township is reached, some two and one-half miles upstream.

The section of the Valley which we are now entering has been known for many years as the "Wilson Valley," since several farms in this immediate neighborhood were once owned by members of the Wilson Family. The first farm here was that of Robert Wilson, one of four brothers who had settled in this Valley. Next was the home of Andrew C. Wilson, and between these two homes was located the Wilson Mill, started in early times by James McElroy, but conducted until the early years of the present Century by Robert and Andrew C. Wilson. The Mill burned down in 1906 and was never replaced. Andrew C. Wilson was the father of R. Clinton Wilson ("Hack"), popular school bus operator in the Cross Creek Country for many years. Near the site of the old Mill is the only covered bridge remaining in the Cross Creek Country. When the Valley is flooded by the

new Lake, this bridge will have to be removed.

The next farm was that of James B. Wilson, later belonging to his son, Lee M. Wilson and still later by a third generation member of the family, James C. Wilson, who sold the farm to the County several years ago and bought his present farm on Mt. Hope Ridge. The brick house on this farm was very old and it should have been preserved, but it was torn down in 1974. The next farm was owned by R. Park Wilson, who was a nephew of Robert, Andrew and James B. Wilson. He sold his farm several years ago and moved with his family to Hickory, where his son, Gailey B. Wilson, conducted an antiques business during his lifetime. This Wilson Farm was bought by the Romanetti Family who have recently sold it to the County. Across the Creek from this farm lay the farm of John A. Hamilton, also now owned by the County.

The next two farms were part of a considerable tract owned here by the Lawton Family. Harvey Lawton owned this land, but he deeded the eastern side of it to his son, Joseph Lawton, who in turn left it to his daughter, Miss May Lawton, and it is now the home of Dr. John Stratiff, a retired teacher from the Pittsburgh Public Schools. On his farm, at the Creek, Harvey Lawton conducted a saw mill, according to the old maps of his Valley area. On this farm, the Lawton Family had a private graveyard in which early members of the family here were buried. In 1932, Mr. Ira Lawton, a descendant of this

family, purchased a lot in the West Middletown Cemetery and removed to that lot three of the old flat gravestones from this family burial plot. These were from the graves of Joseph and Mary Almy Lawton and of their daughter, Jane Lawton.

The next two farms were owned a hundred years ago by J. J. Stewart, who occupied the present Monticello Farm, and by J. G. Smiley who lived on the present Davidson Farm. On the old Smiley Farm was located a Mill, and it is said to have been a combined grist mill and sawmill. The site of the mill, the course of the mill "race" and the location of the dam for impounding of water for this mill can be easily traced. The last farm here in Cross Creek Township, lying near the Township Line, was the old Pardon Lawton Farm, owned later by the Ray Family and now in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kovalcik, whose family has occupied this farm for the last fifty years.

As mentioned earlier, most, if not all, of the land described and lying in this Valley, has been, or will be purchased by Washington County for the use of the Cross Creek County Park, and for the Lake soon to be built in the Valley. The Lake will extend from the breast-works on the former Neal or Caldwell Farm to, or above, the former Park Wilson, or Romanetti Farm, and, thus, all his valley land will be under water. In order to control erosion on the adjoining hill sides,

this land is being acquired, too. As the Lake fills up, it will be necessary to close the valley road from the breast of the dam to the upper end of the Lake, and it will be necessary, also, to make new access roads to the Park, as well as to build new roads from one side of the Lake to the other.

The Park is to be used for recreational purposes, and the Lake is designed both for flood control and for conservation of the local water supply. Recreational uses such as fishing and boating will be permitted. So, with the construction of the Cross Creek Lake and the opening of the adjoining Park, this whole area will be changed from the former rural and farm uses to recreational and conservational uses. This is the first and only project of this kind to be developed in the Cross Creek Country.



## CHAPTER XIV

### The Jefferson Township Community

Jefferson Township is not a part of the Avella School District, but geographically it is a part of the Cross Creek Country, so we will treat briefly of it as one of the Communities in this History.

This Township lies just to the west of Cross Creek Township and, until 1853, it was a part of Cross Creek, but in that year, on petition of a number of citizens of the western part of the area, the Washington County Court ordered it set off as a separate Township. Perhaps due to the fact that many of the residents, then and now, are members of the Democratic Political Party, it was given the name of Jefferson. Its western boundary is the West Virginia State line, while it extends from (the stream of) Cross Creek on the south to (the stream of) Harmon Creek on the north. Because the "dividing ridge" between these two watersheds is in the far northern end of the Township, most of the area lies in the Cross Creek water-shed. The tributary streams flowing south into Cross Creek are relatively long, and the slope in that direction is gradual, while the tributary streams flowing north into Harmon Creek are short and swift, and the slope is short and steep. The road entering the Township from Follansbee on the western side of the Township follows this dividing ridge to and through Eldersville, and then toward Langeloth and Burgettstown on the eastern side of the Township.

For many years, Eldersville, formerly called Wardsville, was the only Village in the Township. When the "Panhandle" Railroad was built down the Harmon Creek Valley in the 1860's, it passed through the northern edge of Jefferson Township and a station was established at Hanlin, and a small village, still in existence, sprang up at that place. Then, when the Wabash Railroad was built down the Cross Creek Valley in 1903-04, a station called Penowa was opened to serve the southern end of Jefferson Township and the adjoining part of Independence Township in which the station actually was located. A village sprang up here, too, part of which was in Jefferson Township. Later, coal mining camps at Penobscot Mine and at Jefferson Mine in Jefferson Township were settled by the families whose men worked in these mines. Penobscot no longer exists but the village of Jefferson remains.

Since the terrain in Jefferson Township is a bit rougher than it is in Cross Creek Township, this area was settled a bit later. The land was not so desirable for farm locations, so, as these locations were made, they included settlements with some arable land, but in each was also much marginal land, not suitable for cultivation, so it was left in woodland and pasture land. Many of the hillsides are steep and rocky, so the better farms were, and are, located on the more level hill tops and along the ridges.

Among the early settlers who took up sizable tracts of land in present Jefferson Township were: Hugh Newell, John Stephenson, Alexander Scott, Jacob Buxton (he also had land in Cross Creek Township), John Gratehouse, Robert McCready, Thomas Ward, Samuel Marshall, Alexander, Richard, George and Thomas Wells, and later Alexander Walker, George Miller, the Cunninghams, Metcalfs, Thorleys, Murchalands, Coles, Boles, Stewarts and many others to complete the settlement of all available and desirable land in the Township.

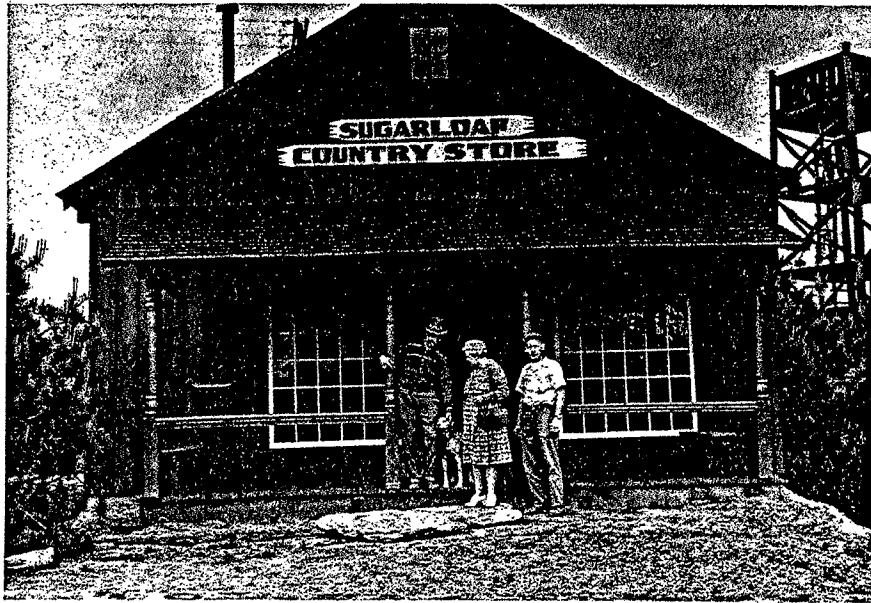
When Jefferson was set-off from Cross Creek, there were one-room rural schools at Millers, Melvins and Coles toward the southern end of the Township, and Gardners, Eldersville, Hanlin and Lees in the northern sector. When a coal mine was opened at Bertha in the northeastern corner of the Township, a graded school was opened there, and the opening of the mines in the southern end of the Township made necessary a graded school at Turney which replaced the one-room Miller School. The one-room school at Eldersville had to be gradually enlarged to take care of an increasing population, and especially after the Superior Mine was opened there. Now the outlying schools have all been closed and the pupils from all over the Township are transported to the consolidated school of seven rooms at Eldersville, where facilities for library, physical education and music, as well as cafeteria, are located.

Religious organizations in Jefferson Township have included the two Methodist churches at Eldersville and Bethel, both dating from 1829 or earlier. These two congregations have been considered as one "charge" or "circuit" for many years, and now the Bethel congregation has been disbanded while the church remains at Eldersville. During the mid-years of the Nineteenth Century, a Wesleyan Methodist Church was in existence at Eldersville, but the congregation was small and was disbanded many years ago. Presbyterians of the Township attend worship at Avella, Cross Creek or Burgettstown, while those of the Catholic faith attend at Avella or Burgettstown.

In addition to the fairly large, compact Community centering in and around Eldersville, there is a more "dispersed" Community on Bethel Ridge. This Ridge traverses the Township from a mile east of Eldersville to the southern edge of the Township near Penowa. Several good farms are located along this ridge road, and several homes have been built on smaller tracts of land. Bethel Church, with its historic graveyard, is virtually in the center of this Community.

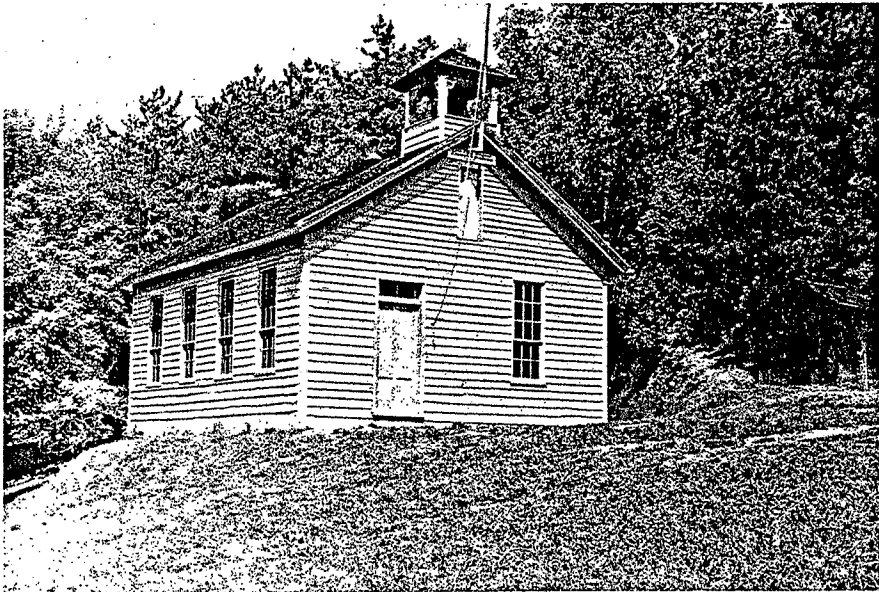
As one drives south on Bethel Ridge Road, the deep valley of Scott's Run is on his right, and the equally deep and rugged valley of Hollow Rock Run is on the left. These streams flow through relatively "wild" regions, but in a few choice, wide spaces in the valleys, an occasional home has been built.

MEADOWCROFT VILLAGE



Sugarloaf Country Store

Removed to the Village from Sugarloaf, New York



Restored One-Room Miller School

Originally stood on the Miller Farm, a mile or more from this location

but the spot can still be identified. It can be reached by driving east into the valley from the Bethel Church. The name, Hollow Rock Run, is given the small stream because of a peculiar rock formation at one point along its course.

A chief attraction in southern Jefferson Township to many people of the present day is the restored Nineteenth Century Meadowcroft Village, which has been developed by Delvin and Albert Miller. The Village is located on land, reclaimed from a strip-mining project of several years ago and now owned by the Miller Brothers. To the Village have been moved and restored many old buildings: Log Houses, the one-room Miller School, shops and barns of various types, a covered bridge, country stores, a block house, nature center, etc., all coordinated into a dispersed type rural village, which depicts in an authentic way much of rural and village living in mid-Nineteenth Century.

The Village is located on a bluff overlooking the Valley of Cross Creek and near the Royal Gorge, or Grand Canyon which we mentioned in Chapter I in this History. The whole area is very scenic, and with the added attraction of the restored village, it has become very historic, too.

To add to the historic importance of this Village area, during the past two years an archaeological excavation has been carried on at Meadowcroft by a group of students and professors from the University of Pittsburgh. An extensive examination of

a "rock shelter" protected by an over-hang in the bluff at this point has been made and will be continued, and important discoveries pertaining to prehistoric occupation of the area have been made. During the summer of 1975, this work will be continued, and other "spots" in the general area having similar significance will be explored by this team of experts.