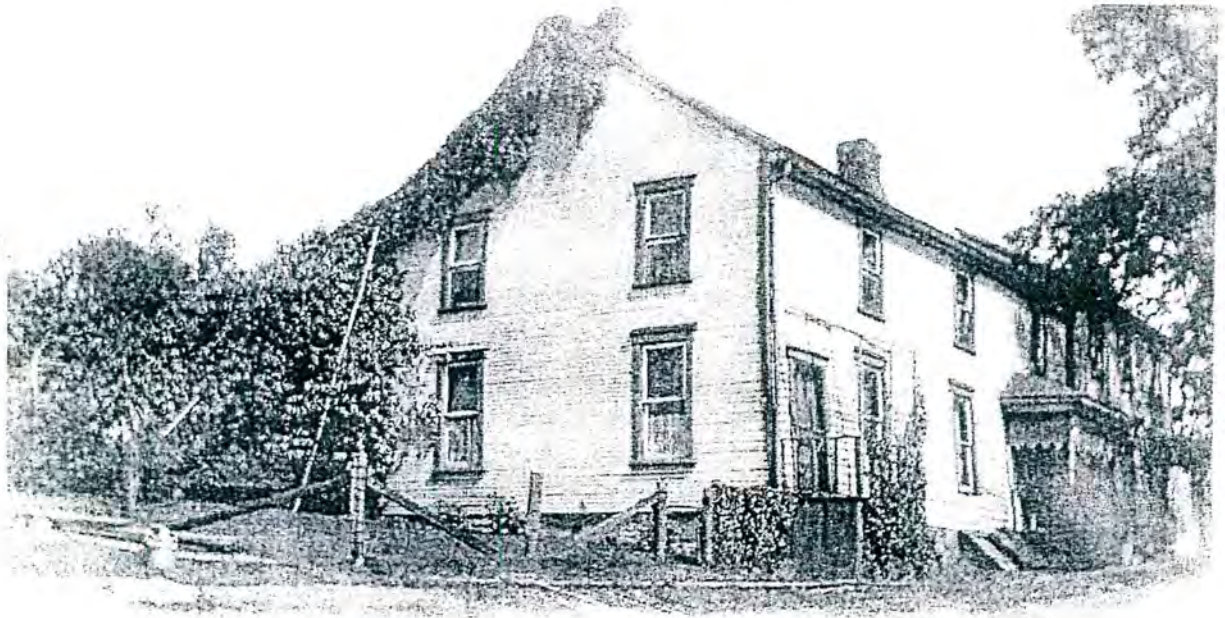


**The Tale of
Eldersville's
Gourley and Boles
House and Store**

**Research & Story by
June Campbell Grossman**

Lest
We
Forget



**Dedicated to those in attendance at the “New Beginning” of the
FORT VANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, April 18, 2009.**

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Lest We Forget

The Big House and Store in Eldersville

by June Campbell Grossman

Once upon a time on the corner of the village of Eldersville in Jefferson Township, there stood an unusual building. It was a landmark – possibly having stood there nearly a century before we were born. We took its presence for granted. After all, it had always been there, thus it could be counted on to remain forever as a part of our environment. But we had forgotten one very real factor about life on earth – namely, that nothing earthly lasts. Today, to all appearances, not one shred of its seemingly permanent existence remains. Some people thought of it as an eyesore. The stories of those whose lives depended upon its existence, and who loved it because it was home, did not even cross their minds. If mentioned today, the names of some families, who lived there for perhaps half a century, would not seem even vaguely familiar. In the lifetime of this author, it was known as the Boles house or the Gourley and Boles Store. But in its lengthy existence from circa 1830 until its demolition about 1971, it housed at least two different families for most of their lives and served as a place of business for at least 3 different proprietors.

The stories of the lives of those who once called it home, will unfold in the following paragraphs. These have been carefully researched to guarantee as much accuracy as possible. The purpose of this writing is to remind us that those who came before us faced hardships we cannot even imagine, yet girded up their courage and continued on with life. In other words – Lest We Forget !

The Richardson Family

No amount of research on the part of this writer has unearthed a single shred of evidence as to the time of the construction of this house. From census records, it seems highly probable that the house may have been built in the very early 1840s, or possibly a little before. It is an accepted fact that the Village of Eldersville was laid out into 53 lots in 1814. At about the same time, the ground for both the church and the cemetery were also designated. Thus it is possible that once this lot was created, someone may have built the house at that very early date. The first positively known occupants were William and Margaret Richardson, listed in the 1850 census, but other factors in existence would strongly indicate that they, in all probability, moved there shortly after 1840.

Since the first known child of this couple was born January 6, 1824, and since it appears that William did not meet his future wife until he came to this area from Ohio circa 1820, his places of living can be followed from his coming to the area until his definite settlement in this house. Since not one grain of evidence exists to prove that the Richardsons were NOT the first to live in this house, this assumption will be accepted by this writer.

When William Richardson chose Margaret Wright as his wife, he did his future children a great favor. Not only were the Wrights a prominent family, but Margaret's mother was Sarah Criss whose known ancestors were held in high esteem. The Richardsons' future appeared to be practically trouble free. But it was not to be. In the 1830s, an epidemic of huge proportion swept through the country. A quick examination shows countless families who lost two or more members – mostly children. Indiscriminately, this carrier of death left some parents standing free of the terror, and others watching their little ones take their last breath. At the foot of the hill in the Eldersville Cemetery, one can still see the two little markers bearing death messages for the Richardsons. Little Rachel, named for her mother's sister, died at age two and a half in 1837. The date on the second stone is no longer readable. But the inscription for little Samuel, named for his maternal grandfather, is still legible. The loss of these little ones is reputed to have nearly destroyed William. But the end was not in sight. Other hardships lay just around the corners.

One of the two eldest daughters in the family married John Rinehart Kline from the southern part of the township. When the Civil War came around, this young man enlisted in the Pennsylvania Infantry. While on the march from Petersburg to Bermuda Hundreds, he damaged his feet so badly that he suffered intensely the remainder of his life.

Just before the Civil War, in December of 1857, two local men set fire to the Melvin barn, completely destroying the building and its contents which included Melvin's winter supply of hay for his livestock. It was John Beany, the township Constable, who eventually brought the men responsible for the arson into custody. Beany was another of the sons-in-law of William, having married William's eldest daughter. The turmoil in the area created by the differences of opinions over the slavery and temperance issues had pitted neighbor against neighbor until the peaceful existence that the Richardsons once shared, was suddenly gone. The agitation and uneasiness of the 60s may have been the undoing of William. At the age of 64, he gave up the fight. Margaret buried him beside their two little ones in the Eldersville Cemetery. She lived the remainder of her life with some of her children.

Just a short time after all of the turmoil and horror of the Civil War and the incident of the barn burning, the ultimate event took place. One cold night in December of 1872, the tavern-keeper, John Allingham, who lived just across the street from the Richardsons, was murdered in his sleep. The youngest of Margaret's sons was the first one on the scene since their house was the first place contacted by Allingham's frantic wife.

No one knows for sure how much effect this murder had on the Richardsons' decision to leave the area. But leave, they did. Some twenty years after the untimely death of her husband, Margaret died in the strange new area into which the family had moved. Her children brought her remains back to Eldersville and buried her beside her beloved husband and two small darlings. There are no records uncovered by this researcher of anybody by the name of Richardson ever living again in the township, after the great Eldersville murder of 1872. It was the end of an age.

The Hugh Patterson Connection

Shortly after the Revolutionary War, two brothers, James and John Patterson, and three of their sisters, came to America from Ireland. For some time they lived near Philadelphia where the brothers worked at flailing wheat for 33 and 1/3 cents per day. After many sad experiences, they finally came to Washington County in what is today Jefferson Township. They bought land from Richard Wells near where the one-roomed Cole School later stood. Into a log house on the property, they moved their belongings and to it they later brought the women they had chosen for their wives.

John eventually moved his family out, but the two brothers were never more than a stone's throw from each other. In fact, in the days of their advanced age when death loomed on the horizon, they departed this earth but two months apart.

One of James's youngest sons was born in 1807 in the log house that had become home. They named him Hugh. He was a well-built man, six feet in height, and held in the highest regard by those who knew him. He held many prominent local offices in his time, but never married. Instead, he took it upon himself to care for his aging parents for the last twenty to thirty years of their lives. When his father died in August of 1849 at the age of 92, Hugh moved to Eldersville where, for 15 years, he carried on a thriving mercantile business with a friend named William Wilson. This operation took place in the "store" part of the building under consideration here.

The physical building which housed this operation was, according to a later resident there, NOT the same building which stood there in the life times of those of us living today. Exactly what building this first "store" was, still remains a puzzle. The building that later became the Gourley and Boles Store, was actually the third one-room school house of Eldersville. It had been replaced by the school building that eventually became the three room affair to which some of today's residents were assigned in their early days of education. The story goes that this old school house was moved on logs by horses to its location at the side of the house under consideration here. It was best known as the Gourley and Boles Store and was never attached to the frame of the house but was simply placed beside it. (These last factors were discovered by the young men who eventually dismantled this entire structure.)

Once Hugh Patterson's self-imposed duties of caring for his aging parents came to an end, he was suddenly afflicted with yet another burden. His sister, Elizabeth, who had married Erasmus Cooper, died, leaving behind four little boys. Two of Hugh's sisters each took one of the two youngest boys, while their father took the eldest. Apparently Hugh stepped in to take John, the remaining son. This actually took place while Hugh's father was still alive and being cared for. Unfortunately, Erasmus himself died while the boys were still very young. He had taken John and William with him to Iowa where his untimely death occurred. It was quite some time before the boys eventually made their way back to their Patterson relatives. John can be found living with his Uncle Hugh in Eldersville as a young man.

It was in 1867 that Hugh made a magnanimous decision. He sold his thriving Eldersville business to this nephew, John, and his youngest brother, Henry. He must

have trained them well in the necessary operations because the following paragraph was written long ago about this venture.

“They formed a partnership and became one of the best known business operating firms in the western part of Washington County. The store was well filled with various articles needed in a farming community and their patrons were scattered throughout the entire county as well as in neighboring West Virginia.”

In 1891, Henry retired from the firm. But it was not long until the Gourley and Boles Store, which grew out of this fledgling endeavor of Hugh Patterson, replaced this earlier business and became “the place to go” if you needed a quart of oil or a spool of yellow thread.

Hugh Patterson died at nearly the age of 90, but not before he left a landmark which stood as a monument to his life until a few short years ago when it was destroyed by fire. It was the home he built atop Eldersville Road that became known as the George Cunningham and later the Bane house. To Hugh, who had been born in a log house in 1807, it must have been a dream mansion. And just across the road still stands the pride of his little nephew, Henry Cooper, who built the house now occupied by Dorothy Petrel. It was the ultimate in Victorian beauty of its day and is even yet reminiscent of the days when the pupils of the Eldersville Normal School held reunions there in what they termed “Coopers Grove”.

Hugh Patterson and his dead sister’s sons were among the best known business men of the entire surrounding area. But like most things earthly, the business, the building that housed it, the faithful patrons, and the hard work and planning that made it a success, have all passed away. Only in such a drab historical effort as this manuscript do even the names of the personalities involved in the drama still exist.

The John Jacob Boles Family

The great-grandparents of John Jacob Boles were two of the most prominent early settlers in the greater Jefferson Township region. On the Boles side of the table was the immigrant, Cornelius, who was born in 1768 and died at the early age of 53. He was the only known immigrant by the name of Boles to come to the area in those early times. His wife was Nancy Buxton whose parents came to the Cross Creek region in the very earliest pioneer immigrant days.

Nancy had survived a terrifying experience as a very small child when her parents and siblings were on their way to Kentucky by boat. Near the present little town of Georgetown, the boat capsized, causing the total loss of all of their possessions. The only things of value that survived were little Nancy and her siblings.

When Nancy grew to adulthood, she married Cornelius Boles and moved with him to land in the Eldersville area patented by her father. Upon his death, he willed this property to Nancy and Cornelius. Over the course of time, they became the parents of twelve children, their fifth child being named Jacob. He was born in 1804.

When Jacob grew up and married Rachel Cunningham, he first lived either with or near his family. But as time passed and the living quarters became more and more crowded, he moved not far from what later became known as the hilltop above the

Kidd's Mill area. Here, he raised his family, and lived until his death at nearly the age of ninety.

Jacob and Rachel had their share of heartaches. Of their seven children, they lived to see the deaths of two of them. The youngest, Eleanor May, died at the age of two in one of the deadly epidemics of horror discussed previously herein. The third son, Francis Moore Boles, enlisted in the Pennsylvania Cavalry in 1862. On the 25th day of February in 1864, he was killed by a falling tree at Greenland Gap, Virginia. He was 19 years of age.

Time went by and the remaining children made lives of their own. Their son, John Lesley Boles, chose to move to a farm nearer to Eldersville. To this day, it is often referred to by old timers as "the old Boles homestead". After John Lesley married Margaret Mathews, five little ones came to grace their home. Three of the five remained either very near home or actually at home. But in 1904, the son, John Jacob Boles set about to create a place of his own. He bought the building about which this entire manuscript is concerned. The big house with its adjoining store room on the main corner in Eldersville became "The Boles Property".

This writer is not certain just when John Jacob, (known around town as Jerry), married Belle Quarterman. Nor is it known for sure just when they moved into the house in question. But at some point in time, the sister of Belle, Alma Quarterman Gourley, moved in with them. This permanent move was the result of a terrible tragedy. On January 31, 1901, Alma's husband of but eight years, was tragically killed in a freak accident by the bursting of a flywheel on an engine in the oil fields where he worked. Craig Gourley was 34 years of age at his death.

Sometime after the death of Craig Gourley in 1901, and after John Jacob's purchase of the big house on the corner in Eldersville in 1904, John Jacob and his sister-in-law, Alma Gourley, must have put their heads together. They decided to create a workable solution to the ever-present question of every earthling - namely, what are we going to do to make a living for ourselves the rest of our lives? The answer to this question for Alma and John Jacob was the Gourley and Boles Store.

In addition to operating the store, Alma also served as post mistress from 1905 through 1940. Her work in these two capacities continued until ill health for six years before her death made it necessary for her to give up the ship. She spent her last days in the care of her nephew, Clarence Boles, and his faithful wife, Helen Amspoker Boles, whose love and care of her were unsurpassed. At her death, she was the last of a family of ten children.

This writer has the fondest of memories of Alma's concern about everybody in general, and her pleasant way of making us, even as children, feel wanted and needed when we appeared in the doorway of her store. Being forced to walk well over 2 miles to Eldersville to catch the school bus for high school, we often were cold and discouraged in the wintertime after that long walk. But when Alma saw us approaching, she always left her work and rushed to stoke the big pot-bellied stove that heated the store, and hurry us to the warmth and cheer that awaited.

When Alma Gourley's days of running the store came to a permanent end, there was no lull in the operations. Clarence's wife, Helen, took up where the elder Boles personnel had left off - just as if she had been created specifically for that purpose.

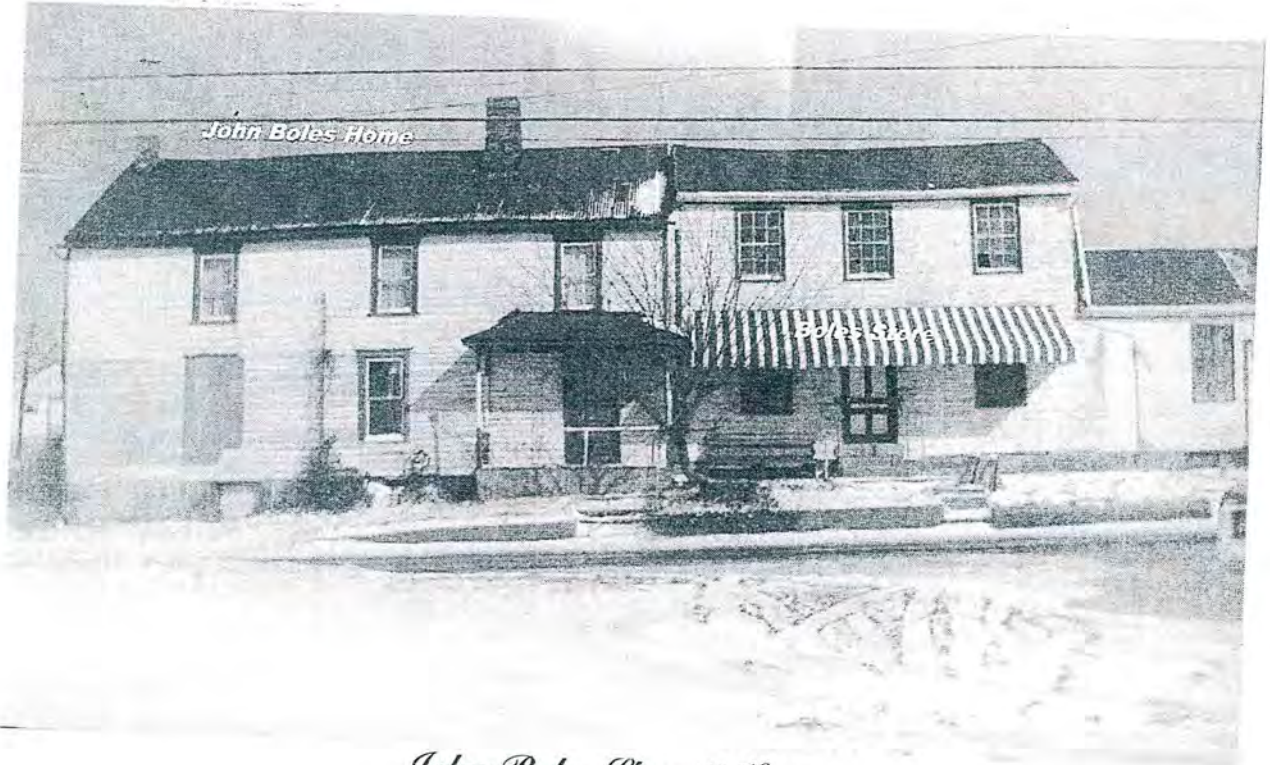
Through the long years that have elapsed since those early days of the Gourley & Boles enterprise, this author has often reminisced of the totally devoted life of Helen Boles. In addition to operating the store and caring for her own child and husband, she took it upon herself to “see to” her husband’s Aunt Ellie Boles Walker, and Uncle Park Boles. Somehow the fates had conveniently arranged to have them live not too far away from this Angel of Mercy who, more than one time every day, “checked” to see if Aunt Ellie and Uncle Park needed anything. This author does not know just how many years this ritual lasted, but one thing would seem certain. An accurate account exists somewhere in a better land than this.

The End of the Tale

Probably no one really knows exactly the names of all of the other persons who may have shared this unusual homestead and store room over the years. Thus, not only their names are lost in the pages of time, but also the stories of the events of their lives. It thus becomes necessary for us to be grateful for these meager facts that have been uncovered and to enjoy simply knowing about them.

Although the structure itself is known to have been demolished in 1971 or 72, no one knows all of the reasons why it was decided to undertake this operation. But some things are certain. The beautiful home created on this same spot of earth by Bobby Alexander, the great-grandson of John Jacob Boles, houses not only this blood descendant of John Jacob, but also his great, great granddaughter whose interest in the history of her forebears is unbelievable for a child of seven. Descendants of the Richardsons, the Pattersons and others who may have once called it home may not even be aware that this square inch of land holds tales of their ancestors. But it seems highly probable that Bobby Alexander and his daughter will not forget.





*John Boles Store & Home
On the corner in Eldersville*