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CONTENTS

98 The General Store
AMOS W. LONG, JR.

117 Pennsylvania German in Public Life
MARION LOIS HUFFINES

126 Building a One-Room School: The Dynamics of School Board Decision-Making at the Turn of the 20th Century
ROBERT L. LEIGHT

131 Washington Hood: 500th Graduate of the United States Military Academy
CHARLES R. STEITZ, JR.

140 Grandmother Schultz
ALVENIA SCHULTZ GRABER

Aides un Neies (Old and New)
(Inside back cover)

CONTRIBUTORS
(Inside front cover)

COVER:
Most of the general stores which flourished in Pennsylvania in the 19th and early 20th centuries have simply disappeared. Most, but not all; shown here is the interior of Shaner’s general store which has been in business for more than one hundred years. It is run today by the daughter of the man who bought it in 1898. (Photograph by Kevin L. Hoffman)

Layout and Special Photography
WILLIAM K. MUNRO
THE GENERAL STORE

by Amos W. Long, Jr.

The general store — so-called because it carried a stock of general merchandise — was a basic part of the economy of the early community; it appeared as soon as a settlement was able to support it. Some of the more remote general stores in Pennsylvania were the result of early trading posts which served as intermediary among Indian, English, German, and other European cultures. Unlike the Yankee peddler who had his roots in Europe, its origins were American; and as a social institution the general store had a considerable influence on the standards and behavior of everyday life. In the days when each family lived a separate and solitary existence, it was the general store which helped band scattered farms and homesteads into a community. Indeed, in the nineteenth century the village store provided services of astounding diversity and depth which reflected the wants, customs, and folkways of that community.

THE STORE BUILDING

Frequently the general store was opened in a room of the family dwelling house; early records indicate they

Harper's general store in Harper Tavern, Lebanon County; note the gas pumps. (Photograph by Amos W. Long, Jr.)
first appeared in crude log cabins located at crossroads and in country hamlets. If the settlement grew and the merchant prospered he was able to enlarge his stock and move his goods to a larger attached room or a separate building. The early general store usually resembled surrounding structures, with a front or side door and small-paned windows. Window display was not important then, and glass was expensive. Side walls generally had few or no windows in order to maximize shelf space in the interior.

About the turn of the 19th century, early store structures began being replaced with larger, more elaborate frame, stone, and brick buildings approximately twenty to twenty-five feet wide and twenty-five to thirty feet long. These bigger buildings usually had large cellars cool enough for the storage of perishable products, an important consideration in the days before refrigeration. Store fronts now had enlarged windows and doors, and protected platforms or porches extending across a portion of their length, or perhaps even across their entire length and along the side walls. The height of this porch or platform was such as to make it functional for
loading or unloading heavy merchandise, and a roof, or temporary roof of corrugated, galvanized iron or tin, protected it from inclement weather. Benches, chairs, boxes, and kegs were often put on the porch for the use of loungers in warm weather when they were no longer welcome inside. And, there are those readers who will recall the wooden Indian and the whip rack which also often found their place here.

Overhead, in front of the store, or somewhere else on the building was the merchant’s sign, and another for the post office if it was located here. The door — and window shutters if there were any — frequently served as the community bulletin board: official notices about farm and household auctions; lottery information; lists of commodities wanted or for sale; and lost-and-found announcements were placed here. In front of the building near the entrance, there were hitching racks for those who arrived on horseback or by horse and buggy or wagon.

Beside or behind the store there may have been an open shed or barn to provide shelter for customers’ animals and vehicles during bad weather; farm implements and flammable materials were kept here too, or in other outbuildings close by. And if the storekeeper dealt in hides and fur pelts, they were usually stacked in this same area. But even with all the attendant odors such areas were vital gathering places for loafers and storytellers.

Still later buildings housing the general store varied considerably in size and construction: buildings one, two, and three stories high faced the roadway, and new facades of more imposing appearance enhanced store fronts. If there was an upper level and it was not the merchant’s living quarters or storage area, it may have been rented as office space or perhaps as a meeting room.
Shaner's general store in Cedarville, Chester County, has been open for business for one hundred years. Today it is run by Erma Shaner, daughter of the man who bought it in 1898 and established the family business. (Photograph by Kevin L. Hoffman, the Pottstown Mercury, January 29, 1990.)

THE STORE INTERIOR

What pleasant sights and aromas greeted the senses as one stepped inside the general store! Counters and shelves — sometimes primitive or scarred — were stacked with a generous assortment of merchandise; at times an almost unbelievable accumulation of goods filled the showcases, and the room was cluttered from floor to ceiling. Actually, even the ceiling space was utilized, for merchandise was hung from iron hooks driven into exposed beams and rafters. As already noted, there were usually few windows and the unbroken walls provided maximum shelf space, but as a result, store interiors tended to be dark. It was even said that some storekeepers preferred it that way, since it discouraged a too critical examination of the merchandise.

As a general rule long counters, often with merchandise scattered over most of their surface, ran down each side of the store's interior. One was for hardware and the other for dry goods; it was often heaped with yard goods and trimmings, and might have stools in front so the womenfolk could make their selections in comfort. A third counter, where customers were actually served, was located in front of (and at right angles to) the other two. The top of this service counter might extend over its front side, which often sloped inward toward the bottom. In some stores a railing was positioned parallel to, and several feet from, the service counter to keep the aisle from becoming congested.

The money drawer, usually with five tills, six coin hoppers, and a steel gong that sounded each time the drawer was opened, was underneath the service counter. In the more progressive stores the money drawer was
replaced, in the latter part of the last century, by a National cash register with its ornamental cabinet, money compartments, porcelain-tipped keys, bells, levers, wheels, and very important detail slip.

Unless the book- and paper work were taken care of elsewhere, a small enclosed area somewhere in a corner was usually set aside for that purpose. There, a table and chair or a rolltop desk was positioned so the storekeeper had an unbroken view of the premises. If he owned a safe, it too was kept here.

The earliest general stores were heated by fireplaces as was evident from the ingrained grime found on all exposed surfaces; it was not unusual for ceilings, for example, to be black from smoke. Fireplaces were replaced by box stoves which burned cordwood, by Franklin heaters, or by castiron plate stoves centrally located somewhere near the service counter. The pot-bellied stove came into store use when coal became a cheaper fuel. By 1900 the stove gave way to floor registers connected with a cellar furnace. In the same way, candles and oil lamps eventually were replaced by overhead hanging gas or kerosene lamps which were a considerable improvement in store lighting. These gave way to electric incandescent lights which were followed by present-day fluorescent types.

Sanitation was always a problem for early storekeepers. Floors, especially, tended to be filthy. In the area where liquids were kept they became impregnated with drippings, spills, and leaks from the containers of various beverages, brines, syrups, and oils. Frequently, traces of spilled rice, coffee, tea, flour, and sugar were splattered about; there was tracked-in mud from un-
paved so often-muddy roads; and tobacco juice from customers who missed the spittoon. Sawdust was some help, and many store floors were partially or completely covered with it. Flies were another problem; during the warm months they swarmed over everything, and a fly switch or duster was used to keep them moving. Fly traps and sticky curls of arsenic paper helped to control them, but they remained a problem until fly-proof cases, netting and woven-wire screening were used to keep them out.

THE MERCHANDISE

Each country store seemed to have a character of its own, which was really a reflection of the personality of its owner. The successful merchant not only had to have a stock of goods for sale, he also had to select those commodities most needed by his customers as determined by the local economy. During the early years of storekeeping, acquiring and replenishing a stock of goods was a major concern, especially when certain items were relatively scarce and slow in arriving. Many times the local store had only the barest list of staples, and articles continually in demand; later merchants carried everything needed by their customers from birth through death, although finding it was sometimes a problem. For many years the stock carried by the village store was indicative of life in rural America.

In the early days of such stores sugar, for example, was a scarce, expensive, and therefore uncommon luxury. Molasses, or more commonly home-produced honey and maple syrup, both traded at the store, were usually used for sweetening. The sugar available was very hard and was molded into cone-shaped loaves until about the middle of the nineteenth century. The smaller loaves weighed from eight to twelve pounds each, the larger from twenty-five to fifty pounds or more; there was usually a row of them on one of the counters directly behind the service counter. The loaves often were wrapped in strong, dark blue paper which was carefully saved for future use, and which some families soaked in a small amount of water to remove the indigo dye. One loaf of sugar would have to last most families a year.

Some sugar arrived in hogsheads; it was coarse, hard, and varied in color from light to dark brown. Muscovado, for instance, was yellow and lumpy, but pleasingly sweet. The storekeeper needed a borer or auger to loosen and break up this lumpy sugar (he also used these implements to pry dried fruit from barrels and boxes), and a grinder, cutter, or hammer to break the hardened chunks into fine enough condition to be sold. Such sugar was not always free from dirt and other foreign matter, including insects. Refined white granulated sugar was even more of a luxury, and did not become available or popular in most homes until after the Civil War.

Because of its high price, coffee, too, did not become generally popular until after the Civil War. Many young men first became familiar with it when it was supplied as part of their army meals, and continued to prefer it after they were separated from the service. Imported mostly from Arabia, Java, and Brazil, coffee beans arrived in bags, green and unroasted. They were sold roasted or unroasted, ground or whole, as the customer desired. For those who preferred to grind their own, many village storekeepers carried small grinders, some of which can still be found adorning a nook or corner in present-day homes. In the nineteenth century, coffee roasters and mills such as the Enterprise with its huge wheels turned by a hand crank, were installed in stores for those who did not want to do the job at home. As coffee grew in popularity, unscrupulous competitors began adulterating it with other substances (roasted rye, wheat, oats, peas, beans, chicory, etc.) in order to lower their costs; the practice continued until consumers became more discriminating.

The storekeeper also carried many varieties of tea (it was shipped in chests or large cannisters and sold loose), and a great many different kinds of spices. In addition to those available from local sources he carried imported spices, most of which came from the East and West Indies, the Mediterranean area, and southeast Asia: allspice, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, peppercorn, pepper, salt peter, and saffron, among others. Saleratus, similar to baking soda, was sought after as a leavening agent for bread, biscuits and cakes; it was made by subjecting pearl ash to the fumes of fermenting molasses.

Some storekeepers carried all sorts of delicious candies: peppermints, horehounds, molasses taffy, rock candy, corn kisses, cinnamon redhots, gumdrops, lozenges, sugar plums, licorice, gibraltars, cream chocolate drops, bonbons, coconut strips, and burnt almonds were often to be found in gleaming jars behind the counter, or in small glass cases. Most candies were homemade, but fancy confections (particularly French candies), were imported after the Civil War. Confectioners who had been compounding sugar-coated pills and medicated candy lozenges for doctors and druggists soon realized sugar candies might be tastier and more saleable without the medicinal centers, and an industry was born. By the turn of the twentieth century candy was a big item in the general store, with some carrying a near-endless supply of penny items and fancy boxed varieties.

Seafood reached the country store about the time express companies became active. Fish and oysters were a welcome addition to rural diets, with the latter being a particular treat. For shipping they were shucked and put into small wooden kegs about a half-gallon in size; these were carefully nested in larger barrels of cracked ice. (Some readers will recall with delight the scalloped oyster suppers prepared by country churches about the
beginning of this century.) Some dried, salted, and smoked meats were available on a local scale, and some rural merchants sold a small selection of fresh meats from an iced meat box, but generally they were a rarity until the time of refrigeration. Actually, few or no products were carried that needed refrigeration.

And, with few exceptions, fresh fruits and vegetables were not common commodities in the early general store, for they were grown in the family yard or garden. At the beginning of the eighteenth century farmers and villagers bartered their surplus supplies of fruits and vegetables at the store or, when possible, peddled them in the community as demand grew. Often less perishable produce, bartered from customers, was carried in season; there was a big demand for watermelons when they were available. Dried fruits were not plentiful either. Casks of prunes, raisins, currants, figs, and citron were imported from the Mediterranean region, but were considered luxuries because of their cost. Dried apples and peaches were traded at the store, but they, too, were relatively expensive.

Bananas, from the West Indies and Central America, and oranges and lemons, from the Mediterranean area and the Azores, were first imported around the middle of the nineteenth century and made their appearance on the fresh fruit counters of some progressive country stores. Grapefruits, pineapples, and coconuts began to appear near the end of the century. Even then tropical fruits were still something special, and storekeepers carried only limited supplies. Seventy-five to one hundred years ago rural children received oranges only at Christmastime. Then, an orange might be shared by an entire family or, peeled and sectioned, made to last a week for a child.

Although he may not have made much money from the sale of fresh fruits and vegetables, the sale of medicines and extracts (along with books on home remedies) provided a substantial income for the country storekeeper. Indeed, the interior of some country stores resembled a drugstore, with one or more shelves stocked with patent medicines, physicks, sedatives, and other popular concoctions; and perhaps another area con-
taining drawers and glass jars of such pharmaceuticals as cassia, camomile, aloes, bergamot, ipecac, and lobelia, along with other barks, berries, flowers, leaves, oils, and roots used for herbal remedies. There were also medicines for animals, some of which were said to be equally effective for human use.

Many rural people had the medicine habit and were victims of pills and liquid remedies, dosing and physic­ing regularly. The solitude of life on the farm and in the village was one reason men and women alike were vic­tims of such addictions. Every home had a medicine chest, and many individuals felt a dose of patent medicine served as an anodyne in times of stress or pain. Such doses were reasonably certain to give the in­dividual at least a temporary boost, since most formulas included either whiskey or a narcotic.

Bitters were a large and popular classification, parti­cularly in the days when temperance was an issue. Some were twenty-five percent alcohol, which meant four tablespoons contained about one ounce of straight whiskey. But many church members with sound temper­ance principles took a daily dose as a tonic, preventive, or diuretic; or simply to build up resistance and energy. Even teetotalers found them stimulating and effective. In addition, strychnine was used in tonics to give an ap­petite; morphine or an opium derivative was used as a base ingredient in pain killers; and asafoetida, laudan­um, paregoric, calomel, sarsaparilla root, quinine, eps­som salts, alcohol, turpentine, and petroleum (rock oil) were also used.

Contrary to popular belief, most so-called patent medicines were not patented, but were the owner's or maker's own secret formula. "Patent" was used to sug­gest the U.S. Patent Office had acknowledged the pro­duct and the trade name had been registered. If a patent was granted the remedy would no longer be secret, since
the formula would have to be part of the patent specifications which would become public property in seventeen years. The owners or companies which produced patent medicines were usually represented by self-made doctors, professors, or Indians who personalized the products for public attention, and who often claimed unrestricted curative powers for them.

People were so influenced by these and other advertising claims made in popular newspapers and magazines (including religious ones) they ignored the warnings and advice of honest storekeepers, doctors and other experts. Advertising campaigns included names and pictures of satisfied customers and their testimonials for the products. There was little effort on the part of the press to investigate these claims because of the money made from the advertisements. Patent medicines were also widely advertised on billboards, and on the sides of barns and other buildings.

Door-to-door peddlers also reaped great profits from the sale of medicinal products, and some readers will recall the traveling showman "doctor" with his Indian costume, gasoline flares, and minstrel show; he dispensed herb medicines, some of which were supposedly the result of the vast accumulation of knowledge acquired by and from the Indians. But whatever their effect on public health, the general store, the drugstore, peddlers, and mail order catalogs — which devoted a considerable number of pages to such remedies — all competed vigorously for the patent medicine dollar about the turn of the century.

Alcohol and tobacco sales were also profitable. Whiskey, brandy, wine, gin, and rum were available at a counter in the back of some stores, or in an adjacent room or the basement. They could be bought by the glass and drunk at the counter, or purchased by the gill or gallon to take home. Under the influence of the temperance movement, most storekeepers were forced to stop selling all alcoholic beverages; hard cider, however, continued to be available in some stores.

In the early days of the general store customers selected cut tobacco by sight and smell from a row of small pails in which it was displayed; chewing tobacco was cut from bars. The sweetish, sticky tobacco bar was inserted under the knife of the plug tobacco cutter, and a nickel's worth was measured out and cut for immediate use. During the nineteenth century chewing and smoking tobacco came packaged in small bags; clay pipes were displayed alongside them. Twist tobacco, cigars (segars), and snuff were also sold, but cigarettes, or "tailor mades" as they were called, were not readily available. After 1900, tobacco and related items were displayed so customers could make their own selections; the beginning of self-service.

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From the beginning of storekeeping many country merchants carried a limited supply of the coarser woolens, linens, and cottons, even though at the time, most clothes were made from fabrics produced at home. Even imported yard goods were available for those who wanted them, and by the middle of the nineteenth century they were displacing the common fabrics of domestic manufacture. Most of the imports came from Europe, particularly England.

The dry goods counter of the country store would be heaped with yard goods, including drilling, shirting, ticking, and sheeting; and with the related items needed by the home seamstress: patterns, trimmings, ribbons, buttons, buttonmolds, thread, pins, needles, and tapes. The store also carried domestic and imported dyestuffs: walnut bark, hickory bark, and madder root were gotten locally; indigo powder, sold by the ounce, was imported from India; and logwood and other dyewoods arrived from the West Indies. Later, many chemical dyes were imported from Germany.

For a long time women made their own bonnets and hats (or had them designed locally), and trimmed and retrimmed their headwear with feathers and artificial flowers purchased at the general store. And, even after they stopped making their own fabrics, women continued making their own clothes, or seeking out capable dressmakers. Paper dress patterns which appeared about the time of the Civil War were an instant success. Sewing machines, once frowned upon by the very women they were intended to help, began to prove their worth and became more readily accepted. By the middle of the nineteenth century, bustles, corsets, and lingerie (the more acceptable term for women's underclothes) became available at the general store, but modesty hindered their sale for many years.

Men's ready-made clothing — overalls, work shirts, and underwear — began to be sold in the store at the same time, and it was well received. Men's headgear was another popular item; after the three-cornered hat of the Revolutionary period the beaver hat was a favorite, and the first straw hats of the palm leaf variety appeared about 1800. Other wearing apparel in stock usually included gloves (deer or buckskin was considered ideal for the work variety), and collars. The latter were first made of paper, but celluloid collars which were fancier and which came in colors, later proved more durable.

Footwear, too, was sold, and large bins or boxes of boots and shoes, arranged according to size, rested on the floor somewhere in the store. (Until the introduction of the shoe box, pairs were not individually packaged, but were shipped twelve pairs to the carton.) There were felt boots with rubber lowers which were purchased by teamsters and loggers for heavy-duty wear; lighter, all-wool knit boots, with the overshoe of heavy duck covered by good quality pure gum rubber; and Congress boots and garters. Also in the bins were factory-made shoes for the entire family, including high-button shoes.
for women. Some of the new styles of dress shoes were shaped to fit the foot; previously many shoes were sold as straights and could be worn on either foot.

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In the general store hardware included metal and other items not generally assignable to any other category: axes; shovels; beetles; frows; cuttoos; grass and cradle scythes; iron, granite, and enameled cooking pots; pails, kettles, and other kitchen utensils including tinware, cutlery, dishes, and glassware, stoneware, and crockery; balance scales; candle molds; locks; escutcheons; nuts; bolts; nails; rivets; grindstones; log chains; mower teeth; cultivator points; buggywhips; horse collars; axle grease; curry combs; brushes; horseshoes; horseshoe nails; lap robes; soapstones; whippletrees; felloe plates; foot warmers; saddles, harnesses, and other leather goods; glass lamps and lamp chimneys; cuspidors in tin, brass, or earthenware, some hand-painted with flowers or other designs; chamber pots and buckets for the bedroom; patented traps of various shapes and designs, some with back-breaking springs; and, in addition to certain tools for carpenters and blacksmiths, an assortment of nail rods, iron and steel rods, and bars of various sizes.

In addition to hardware, dry goods, and food, there were numerous miscellaneous items in stock: books, stationery, post cards, pens, pencils candles, mirrors, scissors, tooth brushes, side combs, gunpowder and shot, flints and caps, shoe thread and sole leather, bed cord, window screens, umbrellas, gramophone records, satchels, stove polish, and shoe blacking. Lanterns and splint baskets hung on the walls or from the ceiling, and brooms with their handles end down were stored in an empty barrel. For Christmas the storekeeper stocked more heavily in toys, candy, and other gift items.

Then too, some rural storekeepers sold basic items of household furniture such as oil stoves, and some sold farm implements and equipment — plows, cultivators, mowers, rakes, milk separators and the like — which were housed in a separate structure. Hay, straw, grain, and patented feeds were also sold, and barbed wire and other fencing became available near the end of the last century. Even the barrels in which merchandise arrived were sold; they were used for storing cider and sauerkraut, or for brining meat. Large and small pine shipping boxes were also sold or given away and converted for other uses. And speaking of boxes, it was even possible to purchase a casket through some country stores.

Most luxury and fancy imported items did not reach rural areas until rail transportation and national marketing and advertising came on the scene. Then, England and the continent (particularly Germany) were important sources for food delicacies, jewelry, neckwear, silk gloves, lace, ribbon, fans, toilet soap, clocks, watches, watch fobs, spectacles, violins, jew’s-harps, stereoscopes, and other such items. Cycling became very popular during the latter half of the last century, and "puddle jumpers" and bicycles with a small rear wheel and a large front wheel to which the pedals were attached were sold at some stores. Cycling remained a craze until the turn of the century and then interest declined. But it was at this time, with the introduction of the automobile, that some merchants installed gas pumps in front of their premises. This was later to be to their sorrow, for the automobile was partly responsible for bringing about the end of the rural general store.

**PURCHASING AND DISTRIBUTION**

The successful store owner was just as concerned with his buying as his selling. Prior to the American Revolution most farm products and homemade crafts were bartered, not sold; since there was little money in circulation, country people turned to other mediums of exchange which represented real values. Indeed, many times bartering was the only way the local merchant could move his goods. This barter and trade economy continued in remote parts of Pennsylvania until after the Civil War, when cash began to play a larger part in the store business. As a result of early storekeepers receiving so little cash, the expression "Where do you trade?" became a popular one, and is still used today by older folk in rural parts of the state.

This two-way trade frequently meant a double profit for the storekeeper, who readily accepted the native products of the rural countryside — everything from homespun to live cattle — for merchandise or credit. Sometimes he requested specific items for which he had a ready market, but there was always a demand for butter, eggs, and cheese in the larger towns and cities, and he was eager to receive them from local village and farm women who often used the credit received to meet their own, personal needs, or to buy such staples as sugar, salt, tea, or spices. Poultry and produce, too, continued to be traded well into the present century, providing housewives with extra income. The writer recalls being taken, as a youth, to a local store by a parent or grandparent with brown eggs to barter for store goods, and then sometimes being treated to a piece of penny candy given by or purchased from the storekeeper.

Bartering was a slow process, often involving stiff bargaining and a contest of wits to arrive at a figure acceptable to buyer and seller. Produce had to be measured or weighed and its quality assessed, for value was usually determined by weight, volume, and, if it was a large quantity, by the cost of getting it to market and disposing of it there. Many early storekeepers would collect items such as scrap metal, pelts, bones, and produce in season or throughout the year, and at the best or most convenient time dispose of them wholesale or sell
or trade them for whatever they could get that would be to their benefit.

Although the rural merchant usually exacted a good profit from bartering, he assumed many risks and it was not unheard of for him to be the victim of a deal. When buying or trading for apples, potatoes, or other produce, he had to be sure the best and finest-looking fruit was not all on top with poorer specimens beneath. In the same way, fresh butter might be placed on top of butter which had been stored for a long time, so he often removed a core with a butter borer to check it. He then stored it (and cheese) in a cool place until it was sold.

And, before eggs were candled it was up to the storekeeper to determine their freshness. He soon learned that fresh eggs had a slightly rough and powdery shell; those with smooth, shiny shells were no longer suitable for consumption. Another test of freshness involved immersing them in water; those that floated were rejected. Some eggs contained an embryo and occasionally, during hot weather, a chick or two would emerge. Then, too, chickens were diseased, bacon and lard were often rancid and strong, liquids were diluted, and potatoes frozen. But for many commodities the same price was paid regardless of quality, since there was little or no standardization or grading, and thus little or no incentive for the farmer to improve his products.

Although there have been many tales told of sharp practices involving both merchants and customers, in most instances, trading was upright and honest. The country storekeeper served as middleman and performed a useful service; if his customer had commodities to sell but made no purchases he was given credit and his return assured on another day. But as convenient as this system was for the farmer, it was extremely inefficient; many had no place to store their crops and were forced to sell or exchange them at a low figure during or immediately after the harvest. And the customer had to trade at what the storekeeper determined the prevailing price to be; this often caused mistrust and hostility. Some merchants were accused of allowing very little for goods received, particularly when the producer had no other place to take them.

Because the country storekeeper had to find an outlet for the goods he bartered, he became instrumental in the nation’s early distribution system as his accumulated surpluses of farm products and home manufactures were transported to the largest and closest market towns. Transportation problems were many and costs were high; bulky commodities could not be readily moved any great distance overland, so products high in value in relation to their weight were the most profitable to ship, and commodities which could be transported long distances had a dependable cash value. Before the days of the railroad, many such commodities found their way down the Susquehanna River in arks and other vessels, rather than overland by packhorse or wagon to Philadelphia. Some of the products found their way into intercoastal and export trade.

At least part of the proceeds from the sale of such goods was used for the replenishment of store stock, and until the middle of the nineteenth century many storekeepers made one or more trips each year to a wholesale center to purchase those items not otherwise available. When factories and mills began to produce large quantities of goods, wholesale suppliers could no longer wait for sales and began hiring salesmen to go out and get business. Like packaged goods this was a new innovation, and at first storekeepers did not trust commercial travelers, but still preferred traveling to the city to select their goods. But convenience, attractive discounts, and the fact that smaller quantities could be ordered at one time and reordered when necessary, soon won acceptance for the new system; by the end of the century most buying from wholesalers and manufacturers was done through traveling salesmen.

PACKAGING

Much of the merchandise found in the rural general store arrived in large quantities in heavy containers, some weighing as much as two hundred pounds. Consequently, somewhere in the store there was usually a heavy pulley wheel, or a windlass with a rope or cable and grapple hooks, for moving them to a storage area on an upper or lower floor. There barrels of rum, kegs of liquor, hog’s heads of molasses, casks of oil — whale oil and, later, kerosene (coal oil) — and others of brine-covered pork, beef, and, occasionally, pickled mackerel, rested on a heavy wood or metal framework. Sometimes heat, pressure, and expansion blew the bung out of a hogshead of molasses, showering the storekeeper with the sticky substance.

Staple items — flour, oatmeal, cornmeal, crackers, rice, beans, dried fruit, sugar, pickles, salt pork, chewing tobacco, and the like — were dispensed from dust-collecting barrels, boxes, or bags placed somewhere along the front or at the end of the counters. These stood open or were covered with a barrel head which the customer could lift to inspect the contents. The storekeeper usually had a counter scale with a scoop, a meat or butcher spring-balanced scale with a tin pan or flat marble slab, a delicate tea scale with scoops, and a platform scale for weighing feed, small animals, and other bulky items. Many of the earliest scales were made by local blacksmiths; the Toledo scale, which appeared around 1900, was the first to resemble modern scales.

Other necessary items included tin scoops, a large fork (for use in the brine barrels), and caddies and canisters for such things as coffee, tea, spices, baking powder and soda. Other bulk products which had to be cut, scooped, poured, and measured or weighed, were wrapped by hand. The forerunner of the present-day
paper bag began with a square sheet of paper laid on the counter; the merchandise was then placed in the center, the four corners pulled together and crimped to prevent leakage, and tied. The resulting package was quite sturdy. The wrapping paper, brown and strong, was kept on a holder fastened to the counter or wall; the string was on the counter in a holder which resembled a beehive, or a ball of twine in a container was suspended overhead. Loose pieces of string or twine were carefully wrapped on a ball which was kept in a drawer or box near or beneath the counter; they were much too valuable to waste.

Molasses, sorghum, maple and other full-bodied syrups, vinegar, and kerosene were drawn from their large containers into smaller tin, wood, or glass containers supplied by the customer. The storekeeper had tin measures from gill to gallon size, and spigots and measuring faucets for drawing liquids from casks and barrels. Later, of course, the syrups and vinegar were sold in ready-filled, carry-home jugs and bottles.

In fact, one of the greatest revolutions in storekeeping in the last hundred years was the individual packaging of goods, for bulk buying and selling was slow and unsanitary. But as the nineteenth century wore on, improved transportation meant more frequent trips to the store, so customers began buying in smaller quantities; manufacturers and wholesalers then responded by making smaller units available. During and after the Civil War (and due, at least partially, to it), small canneries proved transportation meant more frequent trips to the shelves of country stores after 1870, but few had money to buy them. Indeed, they were often regarded with suspicion; legend had it that food left in an open can became poisoned. For many, the greatest disadvantage to packaging was that the product could no longer be sniffed, handled, or tasted (and perhaps not even seen). So for many years there was a kind of prejudice against prepackaged products by many customers who purchased them with caution.

When bulk buying and selling was the norm, there was little or no effort to create customer demand for certain brand products or trademarks. But as machine-made paper boxes and tins became less expensive, manufacturers realized the package was not only a container, but an excellent means of promoting brand-name sales as well. Now goods were packaged more conveniently and more attractively, and decoration, color, design, and advertising became more important. Many of the newly packaged products were promoted with coupons and giveaways. For example, some companies gave dishes as premiums; some cereal makers had box-top offers; and some soap manufacturers placed a trade-in value or premium offer on their wrappers.

The introduction of small-unit packaging and the promotion of brand names made manufacturers more cautious and helped eliminate adulterated and low-quality products. Stories have been told and retold about adulterated goods in the country store: of sand in the sugar; flour in the ginger; dust in the pepper; lard in the butter; and water in the milk. Rum, whiskey, mustard, tea, flour, lard, spices, and many other products were also adulterated in one way or another; frequently even the substances used for adulterating were adulterated. But rural merchants were more often the victim than the perpetrator of such practices, for suppliers were tempted to them in the days before they could be readily identified and held responsible.

There were other benefits as well to these new methods of merchandising. Ready-packaged goods meant a savings in time and labor for the storekeeper, although in most cases it meant a lower margin of profit as well. And there was now more space available for additional tables, counters, racks, dispensers, and cabinets to display merchandise. Up to this time there was little system or order in the rural store, and much time was wasted looking for goods which were misplaced or which had no fixed place; oftentimes the customer found them before the storekeeper. Now, with larger stocks a necessity, more thought was given to display and arrangement, as specific classifications of goods were grouped together; the beginning of departmentalization. Even so there was still often not enough room, but the general store was beginning to be tidier, and to look brighter and more inviting.

As more goods became available to the consumer, competition among wholesalers grew keener. Suppliers gave shopkeepers attractive fixtures — holders, racks, cases, etc. — which displayed their advertising; and manufacturers and distributors began to supply colored and illustrated lithographed or engraved posters (for store display), and trade cards (to hand out to customers) to promote the sale of their products. Some merchants even gave out their own advertising cards to increase business, for capital investment was now a factor. Storekeepers had to carry a larger inventory and have a faster turnover of goods. They had to continually strive for more customers, more sales, and more cash.

**PRICING AND RECORD KEEPING**

In most rural areas little effort was made to develop a dependable price list for merchandise; storekeepers sought every opportunity to make the highest profit possible, and markups in some instances were as high as one hundred percent. Cost price and selling price were sometimes expressed in a secret code (based, for example, on the use of ten different letters representing the numbers from one to ten; or a nine-letter word and an x for zero) known only to the proprietor and his help. Some merchants did mark selling prices in plain figures — on the upper right of the counter; the merchandise was then placed in the center, the four corners pulled together and crimped to prevent leakage, and tied. The resulting package was quite sturdy. The wrapping paper, brown and strong, was kept on a holder fastened to the counter or wall; the string was on the counter in a holder which resembled a beehive, or a ball of twine in a container was suspended overhead. Loose pieces of string or twine were carefully wrapped on a ball which was kept in a drawer or box near or beneath the counter; they were much too valuable to waste.

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for negotiation. And oftentimes there were several prices for the same item; the lowest, cash price; a price higher if barter was involved; and perhaps a still higher price for a credit sale. In short, fixed prices were pretty much unknown, having become commonplace within the lifetime of many of those still living.4

As the foregoing suggests, cash or credit was a basic issue for country merchants. Much of the commerce in rural areas was based on long-term credit, and many customers settled their accounts on a yearly basis, usually between the end of the year and the following April. If the customer did not have the cash, he paid in bartered produce or labor. If there was a poor harvest or some other valid reason an account could not be paid in full, the balance was put on a note with interest or, in fewer instances, a mortgage was given. Notes circulated freely in place of money, passing from person to person, being endorsed over and over again, and usually finding their way back to the storekeeper. Frequently he was a preferred creditor; accounts with him were usually settled before other obligations, and he had the backing of the public in attempting to collect debts due him.

The proprietor often used mottoes and cartoons to emphasize his preference for cash sales, but when credit was extended it was based on need, rather than ability to pay. Many families, even in the present century, carried weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly credit accounts. If they worked in a factory, villagers usually paid every week or two; farmers who received monthly checks from the creamery paid then. In the same way, the merchant received similarly liberal terms from his suppliers, who might allow him up to a year of credit.

Old, scuffed, general-store account books are to be found in all sizes, shapes, and conditions, from those consisting of a few sheets of irregularly shaped paper stitched together, to those which are substantially bound in leather. Some of the earliest records were kept in pounds, shillings, and pence. Daybooks and ledgers used one hundred or more years ago are filled with surprising amounts of information, and many afford documentary and contemporary materials for study and investigation, if their entries can be interpreted. Within their covers is the debtor record of each family who purchased merchandise on credit, and the notations, jottings, and doodling found on many of their pages make them even more interesting.

Additional sheets were sometimes added to these account books until they were filled to over capacity. These could be estimates of the value of store fixtures, lists of out-of-stock merchandise, bills and notes receivable and payable, or other general calculations to establish the net worth of the business. And, since paper was scarce during the nation's early years, personal notes and reminders were written on pieces of all sizes and shapes and in all conditions; these were slipped between the sometimes torn and finger-marked pages of the book. Because of the scarcity of paper, the writer has seen many of these old account books which were later used as scrapbooks, with poems, tracts, jokes, newspaper clippings, and the like, pasted on the sheets.

Invoices of goods received and sales records were also filed in the account book, or were speared on a wire or slid onto a piece of twine. The calligraphy found in many of these nineteenth century records is graceful and elegant, with excellent quill work and carefully formed letters executed in a shaded, flowing style. As is evident from such books, penmanship got progressively worse as the decades advanced. Perhaps it was a good thing that longhand records and early methods of bookkeeping were being replaced by the cash register which recorded all transactions as they occurred, and thus saved considerable time and labor.

I have in my possession two account books which record purchases made on credit in an Annville, Pennsylvania, store in the years 1875-77. Many interesting bits of information can be gleaned from them, including the fact that many customers enjoyed their tobacco and alcohol (they were charged for a bottle if they did not bring their own receptacle). The books contain fifty-nine entries for credit purchases made by my great-grandfather, Amos Long, who also received a credit of $21.50 on Thursday, October 25, 1877, for forty-three bushels of corn at fifty cents a bushel. It is instructive to note the kind, as well as the cost, of some of the purchases in those years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal oil, gal.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.25¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan, qt.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.50¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sperm oil, gal.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.26¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lantern globe</td>
<td></td>
<td>.35¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandelion root ½ lb.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.40¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caustic lye, ½ lb.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.50¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patent smoke, 2 qts.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.75¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker matches, 1 doz.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.30¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage plants, 1 doz.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.10¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 lights, 10&quot; x 12&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>.18¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Green, 1 lb.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.60¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red lead, 10 lbs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.10¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benzine, 1 qt.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.08¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flax seed meal, 1 lb.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.10¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assafoetida &amp; bottle</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.13¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flax seed, 1 lb.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.15¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4

110
Wax candles, 40... 80¢
Gum nipple .......................... 06¢
Worm cakes .................................. 25¢
Gum rattle .................................. 25¢
Pulverized Sugar, 1 lb .......................... 18¢
Dr. Mott’s Cough Pills .................. 25¢
Wild cherry syrup, 8 oz .................. 30¢
Linseed meal, 1/2 lb .................. 04¢
Linseed oil, 1 gal .................. 40¢
Sulphur, 5 lbs .......................... 45¢
Fish hooks, 100 .................. 40¢

Beef, 139 lbs .................. $1339
Horse powder .......................... 50¢
Cattle powder .......................... 25¢
Gum stoppers .......................... 02¢
Washing blue .......................... 05¢
Snuff, 2 oz .......................... 14¢
Diarhoea pills, 25 .................. 25¢
Poorman’s bitters .................. 25¢
Magic linament, 2 oz .... 25¢
Fahnney’s Panacea ........ 1.25
Chocolate, 1/2 lb .......................... 25¢

POSTAL AND OTHER SERVICES

When located in the store, the post office was situated in a small enclosed corner of the premises. To become a postmaster, the storekeeper had to go before a magistrate and solemnly swear to support the Constitution of the United States, to faithfully perform his duties as postmaster, and to abstain from everything forbidden by the laws in relation to the nation’s post offices and post roads. Having a post office in the building was usually good for business, as some customers came perhaps a half hour before the mail or newspapers were due to visit and hear the latest news. So when the Post Office Department established the rural free delivery system and some fourth class post offices were closed, it meant a reduced income in more ways than one for some store owners.

In the village where I grew up the post office was located in the general store, and I remember going to the small railroad station many times as a youth to wait for the train which arrived once a day, around five in the afternoon. The train did not stop. The outgoing mail pouch was hung from an upright device which had two projecting supports to hold it until it was snatched away as the train passed rapidly by. It happened so quickly one had to keep his eyes focused on the pouch to see it vanish or the action was missed. The incoming mail pouch was flung from the train in the area of the station to be claimed by the postmaster.

In addition to supplying the village with the basic necessities, serving as a public gathering place, and often as stagecoach stop and post office, the general store, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, also linked rural areas with the city and beyond by means of the wall telephone — when its batteries were not weak or dead. And it also had other, miscellaneous functions: the tax collector was known to have set up shop there when taxes were due and payable; when men began to shave and get their hair cut more frequently a barber shop was occasionally located in an adjacent room; and frequently a back or upper room served as a center for political activity and as a polling place at election time.

STOREKEEPERS, CLERKS AND CUSTOMERS

The country storekeeper had to adjust to circumstances resulting from good years and bad; he usually had a better, but more complex, life than his neighbors. He was often the victim or beneficiary of boom and panic; war and peace; inflation and depression; high and low prices; fluctuations of money and credit; paper currency plentiful and depreciated; and of a collapse of agricultural commodity prices or of a scarcity of goods. There were times he had to take many chances, and times he had to proceed with caution. It helped if he had a well-rounded personality; if he were accommodating, pleasant, patient, honest, tactful, well-spoken, versatile, and resilient.

The proprietor of a general store always had problems to deal with. Pilfering was practiced then as now, and many times he had to deal with a lingering, light-fingered customer. He might also have had an idle clerk who preferred spending his time in front of the stove or on the porch rather than working. Or perhaps there was a request for credit from a customer who already had a substantial amount on the books; or an appeal for an advance of cash or a loan. Old record books show that storekeepers often dealt gently with those who could not pay. And, although stories have been told of dishonest weight and of scales tipped in their favor, most merchants were scrupulously exact, or gave weight in favor of the customer.

There was a great deal of work involved in running a general store; waiting on customers was only the most obvious chore. When there were no customers the proprietor did housekeeping work, arranged stock, checked invoices, and worked on his books. And, although competition was not a serious factor until after the Civil War, he was always concerned with buying and selling to meet the demands of the market; of being able to satisfy the ever increasing and diversifying desires of his customers.

Like the physician and pastor, the storekeeper knew the shortcomings, sorrows, complaints, aberrations, and follies of many of his customers, and he often served as a confidential advisor. Though he often lacked a formal education, he had a reputation for being well-informed, and his opinions were respected if not always agreed with. He might help diagnose an illness, and he generally knew enough law to frighten a debtor and enough bookkeeping to balance his books. He was consulted on business and domestic affairs, and read and wrote letters for neighbors and clients. He was a disseminator of news both local and distant, for being in contact with stage lines, freight forwarders, steamboat captains, commission dealers, money brokers, importers, and jobbers, he was well aware of events happening.
within a wide area.

The owner and operator of a general store was generally a man of substance and influence in the community, for he was banker, middleman, and merchant. He saw more cash in one year than most of his customers would in a lifetime of work. As a prominent citizen he was often pushed forward by circumstances and assumed a leading role in church, school, and community affairs. He might also be active in the lodge or militia; or become involved in politics and state government. John R. Kleinfelter, for example, great-great-uncle of the writer's wife, had the first general store in the village of Kleinfeltersville; he was active in the affairs of the Evangelical Church and Albright College.

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A young lad, fourteen years of age or older, apprenticed or employed as a clerk-helper had to be able to read, write, and calculate; and was expected to be diligent, obliging, and honest. Boys who could be spared from farm work and those who preferred not to work on the farm were often hired as store clerks. Not every storekeeper was fortunate enough to have such an assistant; oftentimes family members helped when he was occupied elsewhere. But the general store provided an opportunity for a countless number of young men to get business training and experience when the merchant found it necessary or profitable to hire a clerk-helper. Many politicians and professional people worked as store clerks in their early years.

For the energetic worker with a pencil over his ear storekeeping was anything but dull, but it indubitably had its tedious side. Among the clerk’s responsibilities were opening and closing the store; dusting the merchandise, counters, and shelves (with a feather duster, or turkey or goose wing); sweeping the floor after sprinkling it with rain water from a barrel usually located under the roof spout; and perhaps building and tending a fire in the fireplace or stove and cleaning out the ashes. He might also grind coffee and prepackage special items. If he was entirely dependable he may have helped with the books, and he was certain to have helped take inventory. That was also an ideal time to clean shelves and counters, as goods were taken down and counted, and their number and value entered on a sheet or in a book. As a rule, the store was cleaned thoroughly each spring and fall, with all merchandise wiped with a wet or dry cloth and replaced.

Clerking was not a chore for those who needed constant encouragement to stay on the job; willingness to work was a prime requisite. Store clerks were expected to work long hours, and a considerable amount of physical labor was involved; they were often the victim of a lame back or a pulled ligament. They also had to endure the frustration of dealing with difficult customers. Good clerks learned the tricks of the trade, very quickly becoming aware, for instance, that it was better to put only a small amount of a commodity in the measuring hopper or on the scale, and keep adding to it; rather than having to take some away because it was overweight. This positive approach left a better impression with the customer.

The job’s advantages included being able to wait on all the marriageable young women, and having the chance to wear good clothes on weekdays as well as on Sunday. And the clerk had the opportunity, particularly when the proprietor was not there, to sample candy, dried fruits, and other treats he might not otherwise have been able to enjoy. Since there were few opportunities for him to spend money, a frugal individual could save practically all his salary, even though his earnings were not extremely high. Occasionally he was allowed to invest his savings in trading of his own, especially if he was going to take over the business some day. And many such clerk-helpers did become proprietors of their own store; others became salesmen, managers, bankers, automobile dealers, factory supervisors, or chain food store operators.

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In the absence of a large city or town nearby, the rural storekeeper was the recipient of all or most of the local business. In the early period of the nation’s history, trading areas were determined by the distance that could be conveniently traveled on horseback, or with oxcart or wagon. Generally, a five to ten mile radius represented the merchant’s area of interest. Typical store customers then, farmers and villagers, bought only what they needed. For those from more remote areas, a visit to the general store was an occasion, and did perhaps create some disciplinary struggle to purchase only those things which were necessary, and not merely desired.

As roads improved customers made more frequent trips to the store, and often met their neighbors engaged on the same errand. People coming and going added warmth and neighborliness to the store as folks exchanged greetings, conversed, and perhaps socialized for a while with those inside around the stove, or outside on the porch. Shy children who seldom got to the store stared eagerly at some cherished item of merchandise, and gave exercise to their salivary glands in front of the candy jars. For some customers a trip to the local store meant buying their household and farm necessities at the same counter their forebears had leaned against to barter or to count out their money.

To most customers it was frustrating and discouraging to have to dispose of their crops or produce at
wholesale prices, and buy everything they needed at retail prices. But after 1850 they were better able to sell their excess commodities for cash instead of having to barter, and thus were less dependent on one store which extended them credit. As goods and stores did become more numerous, some villagers and farmers took their business beyond the local store to stores with larger stocks and lower prices where they could do more comparative shopping.

THE STORE AS SOCIAL CENTER

Through the years only the tavern and barbershop have offered serious competition to the old general store as a place of male refuge. In the decades before and after the turn of the century, many young and old men alike made a daily trip to the crossroads or village store in the late afternoon or evening. Some purchased an item or two, others just stopped to talk; on rainy days, too, when little or no work could be done outside they gathered there. It was an ideal setting for male companionship, and was, in fact, the public meeting place, social center, and economic hub of the rural community. Any and all citizens were usually welcome to sit there and relax while discussions got under way in an atmosphere of Gemütlichkeit.

It was here that conflicts and quarrels flared over questions of government and politics, church doctrine, and disputed boundaries and fence lines. But although there may have been many arguments from time to time, fist fights were infrequent. Most times a consensus of opinion on local and national issues and problems was arrived at by cracker-barrel philosophy; it was democracy at work. Indeed, it was the perfect environment for the cultivation and oral transmittal of jokes, tall tales, and traditional sayings. And gossip flourished, as everything that went on in the village and surrounding area was discussed and disseminated.

There were those loungers, some voluntarily unemployed, who sat in the store hour after hour, day after day. Their presence was hardly profitable, but they were generally accepted and their habits endured. There were those who became a nuisance, involving themselves in store matters which did not concern them; and some who tried to help the storekeeper locate an article someone wanted to buy but which could not be found. There were those who had established a reputation for wisdom, those who objected or were opposed to everything, those who talked too much, and those who were good listeners and sat in comfortable silence contributing little to the conversations going on around them. The proprietor usually joined in when time and duties permitted.
There were discussions about folklore, folk medicine, and superstitions, and one could learn much about weather signs, prognostications, and the almanac. City folk may seldom think about the weather while country folk, whose livelihood depends upon it, rarely forget it. So there was talk of the phases of the moon, of climatic occurrences and events, and of the actions of animals, all of which were considered helpful in foretelling weather conditions. Crop prospects were discussed and a good deal of practical information passed on, as certain days, phases of the moon, and signs of the zodiac were designated the best times to obtain optimum results for sowing and planting. Certain days or years were marked by extraordinary natural phenomena such as a great storm, an eclipse or a comet; everyone had an experience to tell about. There were stories of lean years, years of famine, years with short summers, and years when there was ice in May and snow in June.

And there was considerable lore about folk medicine, old medications, patents, and potions compounded at home from traditional family recipes. Many such home remedies were passed on to prevent or cure various illnesses and discomforts. Also circulated were numerous pithy sayings expressing general truths about human frailty, and tales of human ills, aches and pains and their cause and cure. Other favorites were stories involving characters of local history: heroes, hermits, ghosts, crackpots, frauds, fanatics, scoundrels, bold rascals, horse traders, mighty hunters, and colorful outlaws.

In sunny weather some of the loungers sunned, spat, and perhaps whistled away on a piece of wood outside on the front porch. Here would be a long wooden bench or settee, a line of decrepit chairs, and possibly several empty nail kegs and dry goods boxes. Come October's bright blue skies and breezy days, they moved inside. There, around the stove (and before that the fireplace) were chairs and oftentimes an old, dirty, battered checker game which rested on a nail keg, cracker barrel, or box. Some entertained themselves playing cards, and all could spit, scratch, discuss major and minor events of community life, and relate stories which everyone enjoyed but which few believed. In addition to neighboring visiting, certain times and events brought about an occasion for celebration, maybe with free cigars and drinks.

Since this was the day when a majority of adult males raised in the country chewed tobacco there was a great deal of spitting, at first into a sawdust-covered area around the stove. Later, when stores were kept tidier, the storekeeper was practically forced to provide a facility known as a spit box; sometimes it was a large square with the stove set right in the middle. Other times it was a bucket or coal scuttle filled with sawdust. But some men preferred to open the stove door and spit in the fire if they were confident of their aim. In later years all the various accommodations for those who chewed tobacco were replaced with metal or glass cuspidors. There were those who boasted that, without moving, they could hit the spittoon from any area of the loungers' quarters.

Sometimes the idlers became too boisterous and bawdy, or too often missed the spittoon, or dipped too frequently into the dried fruit or cracker barrel. Or sometimes they simply took up too much space and imposed too much on the merchant's time. Many had little or nothing to do except try to pull off some joke in order to get a laugh; they often roamed the store teasing the cats and dogs sprawled beneath the counters, or tormenting village unfortunately. It is undoubtedly true that many could have spent their time far more profitably performing necessary chores at home.

So, inevitably, as stores became more crowded with merchandise and storekeepers more progressive, they had less time and inclination to participate in the discussions. Then loungers were not so welcome, but were pushed into a smaller space; typically a corner or a fenced-off area near the stove. With the arrival of forced hot air and steam heat, chairs and benches were moved permanently to the porch or sidewalk in front of the building, and little or no loitering was allowed inside. But whether regular or occasional visitors, such men — sometimes unwashed, unshaven, and unkempt, and often with "chaws" of tobacco or well-charred, stubby-stemmed pipes — made their own special contribution to the atmosphere of the general store. Their around-the-stove and front-porch debates were the last stand of the local public forum, the passing of which has often been much regretted.

**THE PASSING OF AN INSTITUTION AND A WAY OF LIFE**

Owners of general stores felt the pressures of competition before the era of the automobile and improved roads which brought business as well as took it away. Such stores had begun to outlive their usefulness and lose their monopoly during the latter part of the nineteenth century, but their passing was a gradual process as they became casualties of a revolution in merchandising. This revolution included great changes in the way machinery, equipment, and appliances were sold and serviced; stores with larger stocks, parts, and accessories and which were equipped to offer repair services and to finance large purchases, took business from the general store. Mail order houses, with the aid of parcel post and rural free delivery, also provided competition; in his role as postmaster the merchant was frequently angered to find goods which could have been bought from him passing through the post office window right under his nose.

The big city department store was simply a logical ex-
tension of the general store concept of one-stop shopping, with all the merchandise under one roof. These, and chain store supermarkets, attracted more and more rural business for they carried more stock, had more effective advertising and displays, quicker service, and lower prices, the result of buying in quantity. Indeed, in the first quarter of the twentieth century some local merchants saved their businesses by becoming part of a retail chain; others contracted their stock and became simply convenience stores, supplying items forgotten on shopping trips to larger stores in nearby towns and cities. (It seems we have come full circle: in an era when more and larger supermarkets continue to be built, the small, local convenience store is also making a comeback.)

Starting as an American improvisation to meet new conditions, the general store supplied the needs of a rural society for nearly one hundred and fifty years after the American Revolution; it rendered a great variety of

services which would otherwise not have been available, and words and terms from that era such as dry goods, notions, hardware, produce, groceries, and patent medicine, are still a part of our vocabulary. It was a place of warmth and human contact (elements often missing in modern merchandising), and as a social institution helped influence standards of behavior and the routines of daily life.

Most of those general stores which were not absorbed by retail chains or which did not adapt to a different clientele simply disappeared. Most, but not all; for some can still be found in rural areas of the state. And, even in areas where it no longer exists, there are those who remember the general store. For them it is an institution recalled with affection, humor, and that wistfulness which is often attached to the remembrance of things past. Many believe those who know only the modern era of supermarkets, malls, and shopping centers — convenient as these are — have missed a meaningful experience. An experience which has been assigned a high place in tradition and folklore.

ENDNOTES

1The Federal Food and Drug Act in 1906 and the Harrison Law of 1911, passed by Congress, required a statement of contents be shown on the label of such medicines. These acts forced many of the bitters, cordials and tonics with a high alcohol content from the market and brought about a decline in the indiscriminate sale of opiates. Even then much money was spent on such worthless medicines.

In addition to contributing to the prosperity of the medicine makers, the salesmen, the general store, the drug store, the magazines and newspapers, patent medicines also provided additional income for the paper mills, box factories, glass works, printing and engraving shops.

2The early storekeeper bartered or bought practically everything produced or offered for sale by his rural customers. He bought and sold onions, potatoes, apples, cider, hops, wheat, oats, rye, corn, buckwheat, flax, flaxseed, timothy seed, cloverseed, beeswax, feathers, rags, hay, straw, tow cloth, linen, hides, wool, furs, lard, tallow, timber, boards, cordwood, shingles, tanbark, potash, salt pork, pickled beef, butter, eggs, cheese and many other items. He also purchased or bartered products from local glassworks, foundries, potteries and blacksmiths to sell in the store.

3It is not known who invented the first paper bag or exactly when. A machine was patented about the middle of the past century but it was not until several decades later that a machine was patented to produce paper bags on a large scale. Early journals, ledgers and newspapers, catalogs and price lists frequently referred to a bag as a paper, poke and "tutt". A common expression for younger children in years gone by when selecting penny candy was to say, "I want some of deee, dose and dem and put em in a tut". In the years preceding the American Civil War, cotton bags were used to ship flour, grain and other produce. Then came a scarcity of cotton during the war years and they were replaced with heavy paper bags or cardboard containers.

Although soap was a regular stock item, much soap was made at home from accumulated animal-fat wastes. Up to the middle of the 19th century, much soap was made in loaves to be sliced and weighed. Then soap manufacturers put it in a wrapper and sold it by the bar. In order to induce more sales of packaged soap, some manufacturers placed a trade-in value or premium offer on the wrappers. Another soap-like substance, fuller's earth, was sold in cake form. It is a fine

absorbent clay, slatey in color, slightly greasy which can be chemically transformed into a good soap. Fuller's earth was used in the cleaning of woolens and for removing grease from cloth and hands. The first commercial scouring powder was also manufactured from natural clay in brick and powder form. This abrasive was popular during the mid-nineteenth century.

4The most progressive country store could not carry all the items of merchandise demanded by customers in later years. Some stores stocked more in certain lines than in others. Toward the end of the era of the general store there was a tendency to contract rather than expand in stock. When ready-to-wear clothing was introduced, it meant a decided decline in piece goods sales and the country merchant was not able to stock the dresses, shirts, trousers and shoes that the department or specialized stores carried.

The salt provisions, the staple of the nineteenth century, gave way to a variety of refrigerated fresh meat available during all seasons at the meat counter or the meat was delivered right to the door by the butcher. At the same time, many more items in the store stood ready on the shelf and were being sold in convenient small cartons and bags which allowed for quicker and more sanitary service. For those who resisted change and insisted on purchasing loose quantities and bulk items which were less expensive, the merchant continued to carry a supply in large containers kept in the back part of the room or in a side room. The less spoilage, breakage and theft the greater the margin of profit. Experimentation with new and different merchandise came as the community continued to grow. People were demanding more goods and the storekeeper attempted to satisfy more of their needs and desires. The interior of the general store with its new embellishments, refinements and contents with many new inventions and novelties including domestic and foreign products of science and industry was an exhibition in itself.

To determine a fair and competitive price scale which provided an equitable profit for his investment in capital and time was a major concern of the storekeeper. When a supplier refused to negotiate on cost, it meant the store merchant had to be priced higher. Even so the merchant speculated because of price changes that may have taken place from the time he bought a commodity until he disposed of it.

5Gold and silver currency were very scarce during the colonial period. Any coins received from the sale of produce in the larger
towns were likely to be hoarded and carefully concealed. They proved to be too valuable to circulate. Likewise there was much distrust concerning paper money which was much depreciated and counterfeited. Any paper received may have been left on deposit at the general store for later purchase of goods or for safekeeping, many times without interest. At times the storekeeper loaned out large amounts on a farm or home mortgage to a friend or neighbor.

*Where a small population was a factor, the storekeeper may have been forced into other activities in order to make a living. Some engaged in farming, sawed timber and even dug graves. Other activities such as tailoring, barbering, undertaking, keeping a tavern and postmaster were combined at times with running the general store under the same roof. As postmaster he was frequently one of a few subscribers to a newspaper and was able to keep up with the times.

*Occasionally factory-made yarn, leather and other materials were distributed by the merchant among workers; the finished woven cloth, shoes, hats, bonnets, cooperage, etc. were, in turn, returned to and sold in the store or otherwise disposed of. Such workers many times were reimbursed for their labor in store merchandise; bartering their skills or provisions. If he had the vision and flexibility to change, as a successful merchant who had made and accumulated capital in his lifetime that was not required in the operation or expansion of his store, he may have made a transition into the industrial area. He may have invested in or helped develop turnpikes, canals, savings banks and life and fire insurance companies. As a small capitalist he may have promoted or contributed to the beginning of manufacturing between artisan and factory.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Napkins available in shops for tourists declare that “The Good Old Days Are Yet,” translating Pennsylvania German word for word into English. Matching coasters and kitchen towels are available.

The younger ones say, “No, I don’t speak Pennsylvania Dutch because my parents never spoke it to me”; or, “They never talked it around us kids unless they were telling secrets.” The older ones say, “No, I didn’t teach my kids Pennsylvania Dutch because I didn’t want them to have a hard time in school like I did”; “I didn’t want to ruin their English”; and, “I didn’t want them to have that accent!” Whatever the reasons they give, the result is the same: native speakers of Pennsylvania German chose not to speak Pennsylvania German to their children, and today fewer and fewer people speak Pennsylvania German.

Minority languages in the United States inevitably disappear. The promise of social and economic advancement offered by mastery of American English eventually overcomes the most sincere intention to retain another language. The number of places or social contexts in which speakers can use the minority language steadily declines. Without continued immigration from a language homeland, the number of fluent speakers gradually decreases, and eventually no social context remains in which it is appropriate to speak the minority language. The language is said to be “dead.”

Most receding languages are last spoken in the home and with close friends, but even there, as with Pennsylvania German, the use of the language becomes restricted to elderly members of the family and their generational peers. The dying language is seldom heard in public, but some dying languages enjoy what may be called an afterlife in the public eye and ear, promoted by the public itself.

This study investigates the public afterlife of Penn-
Few customers realize that Wos-Wit is Pennsylvania German for “what do you want?”

Pennsylvania German, commonly known as Pennsylvania Dutch, is a German dialect closely related to the Rhine Palatinate dialects of southwest Germany. It is spoken in Amish and Mennonite communities where children learn it as their native or first language. The Old Order Amish and most Old Order Mennonites speak Pennsylvania German within the family and community; they learn English in school and use English in conversations with outsiders. If one defines “public life” as using Pennsylvania German in a way that makes it accessible to non-Pennsylvania Germans, then Pennsylvania German does not participate in public life in any form among the Amish and Mennonites. While the sectarians may be overheard speaking Pennsylvania German to each other, for these speakers the use of Pennsylvania German in the presence of outsiders is inappropriate, but its use within sectarian communities serves as one of many symbols of Amish and Mennonite separation “from the world.” The remarks below do not apply to these sectarian groups.
Pennsylvania German skits and plays feature rural life and bungling, naive characters.

In the nonsectarian Pennsylvania German communities of Central and Eastern Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania German is receding rapidly. Native speakers tend to be elderly, and usage is restricted to a limited number of conversation partners. Nonsectarian native Pennsylvania German speakers have chosen to speak English to their children, most especially for the reason cited above: to aid their children's progress in school. Younger Pennsylvania German speakers, those below the age of 40, who have managed to learn the dialect are typically nonfluent; they make errors and use forms which the older native speakers would perceive as errors. Their lack of mastery is not surprising: younger learners of Pennsylvania German have little opportunity to hear Pennsylvania German spoken around them in order to learn it well.

In spite of (and perhaps because of) the separation of the Amish and Mennonites from mainstream society and the recognition that Pennsylvania German is dying in nonsectarian communities, Pennsylvania German "enjoys" a public life, i.e., a life outside of the intimate world of family and friends, in two main forms, one very limited and one quite widespread: 1. a small number of supporters use Pennsylvania German, often in attempts to maintain it, in local newspaper columns, radio broadcasts, annual church services, and annual entertainment programs; 2. a much larger group of supporters and detractors, often in commercial settings, promote the use of Pennsylvania German English, by means of which they achieve humor and attract attention to the cultural accessories they are selling.

PUBLIC USE OF PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN

The list of efforts to continue the use of Pennsylvania German in public life is impressive: radio broadcasts, newspaper columns, annual church services, entertainment programs, singing club performances, and skits at Sunday school picnics and family reunions, all in Pennsylvania German. The impression is illusory. In each of these areas, the written and oral presentation of Pennsylvania German must accommodate an increasing number of nonspeakers. The accommodation changes the presentation and renders the tradition less distinctive and less viable.

Pennsylvania German newspaper columns continue a long tradition which has been in place since the Civil War, but today's columns differ from those of a century ago. The columns are introduced in English, often with an explanation of their purpose. Today's columns also usually publish English translations of the Pennsylvania German; for example, the Middleburg Post reprints selections from Thomas Harter's Boonestiel with a full translation; Bill Kouser appends a short vocabulary list to the end of his new weekly dialect column in the Citizen Standard and a full translation once a month. One chatty columnist approaches the task from the opposite perspective; he writes in English and inserts Pennsylvania German translations of some expressions: "You know how I jump around. (room choomp'a) I just came from visiting a poor old farmer (an orem'a alt bower) who doesn't have much choice left but to spend the rest of his life in a nursing home! Now this man was one of the biggest tobacco chewers (doowack chawer) that I presently know."'

As local newspapers are taken over by larger or outside agencies, the Pennsylvania German column disappears. When column writers retire or die, editors can seldom replace them, and a single Pennsylvania German writer, for example C. Richard Beam (Bischli-Gnippli), may agree to publish columns in several newspapers in
order to keep the tradition going. Spelling conventions continue to be problematic. Writers who are trained in an academic tradition tend to use spelling based on German sound correspondences; other writers tend to use spelling based on English sound conventions. Non-academic readers often report that they find the latter system easiest to interpret and tend to skip over the former.

Few Pennsylvania German radio programs are broadcast, and these for only 15 minutes, once a week. One 50-minute weekly radio program features a Pennsylvania German call-in discussion; certain individuals call in regularly, but here also death takes its toll, and regular participants are sorely missed when they pass on. Local non-Pennsylvania German residents often do not recognize what the language is being spoken.

Annual Pennsylvania German church services do not replace the regular service but occur outside of the normal weekly schedule. While in many areas the Lutheran Church held regular services in Standard German until the first World War, the Pennsylvania German church service is a rather recent phenomenon, established to celebrate a past, not to continue a tradition. In addition, on so-called Heritage Day Sunday, the congregation sings Pennsylvania German hymns, but the minister delivers the sermon in English. The Pennsylvania German hymns are the usual English ones, translated specifically for such services. Two such examples are “Abide with Me” and “Nearer my God to Thee”:

Kumm, Bleib Bei Mir;  
Schnell Kummt Die Owetzeit;  
Wie’s Dunkel Wad  
O, Os Du Bei Mir Bleibscht;  
Wann Alles Schonscht  
Gar Nimmi Helfe Duht  
O, Du, Die Eewich Ruh,  
Kumm Bleib Bei Mir

> > >

Naecher mei Gott zu dir,  
Naecher zu dir;  
Doch wann en Greitze Lascht  
Leegt du uff mir;  
Doch kummt des Lied von mir,  
Naecher mei Gott zu dir,  
Naecher mei Gott zu dir,  
Naecher zu dir.6
Three Pennsylvania German grammars currently in print offer learners a variety of exercises and readings for practice. Druckenbrod and Frey also have audio tapes available.

The congregation at these special services is generally elderly; often the organist cannot understand the program and must be cued specially. In addition to annual services, some churches sponsor other annual events which provide Pennsylvania German entertainment, such as Sunday school picnics and covered dish dinners with Pennsylvania German songs and skits.

The annual banquet and entertainment programs sponsored by the Grundsau (Groundhog) Lodges, which only men may attend, and the so-called Versammling, which men and women attend, often draw hundreds of people. In times past, the use of English was prohibited at these gatherings, and anyone heard using English had to pay a fine. Not only has this practice fallen by the wayside, but often older men must now explain the punch line of jokes and anecdotes to younger attendees. According to Richard Druckenbrod, an increasing number of participants at the lodge banquets do not speak Pennsylvania German. Again, songs are sung, and “Home on the Range” becomes “Dehaem uff die alt Bauerei.”

Pennsylvania German was never used as the language of instruction in school. Many schools in areas heavily settled by Pennsylvania Germans were taught in Standard German until the turn of the century when laws restricted the use of German in public schools and interest also waned. Pennsylvania German was the language of the home and (if the teacher tolerated it) of the playground. The relatively recent advent of classes to teach Pennsylvania German is symptomatic of the language’s gradual disappearance. A number of organizations and individuals currently sponsor Pennsylvania German classes: several academic scholars hold or have held Pennsylvania German classes on college campuses; interested ministers hold weekday or night classes in church recreation halls; Grundsau Lodges tap the resources of their membership and sponsor a number of well-attended Pennsylvania German courses. But who takes these courses and why?

Native speakers of Pennsylvania German enroll in Pennsylvania German classes in order to learn how to read Pennsylvania German, to recover lost vocabulary, and to find other speakers. In fact, one recently published teaching grammar cautions, “If you have control of the language beyond what seems like an elementary level, please REFRAIN from showing off.” Other
students in the classes want to learn enough to understand family members who speak it; still others have identified with their ethnic roots and feel the need to learn more through the language. Neither the instructors nor the students themselves anticipate that these classes will help Pennsylvania German learners achieve fluency. As any foreign language teacher will concede, the foreign language classroom is relatively ineffective without the concomitant cultural and linguistic immersion. Where can these nonsectarian language learners have an immersion experience?

In all of these public events, where Pennsylvania German occurs purposely audible/visible to outsiders, the natural use of Pennsylvania German has been compromised. Either the audience is restricted to native speakers and the tradition sharply reduced, or Pennsylvania German must be supplemented by English translations. Each of these efforts to maintain the language or to celebrate its continued use is characterized by a museum quality: Pennsylvania German is being exhibited; its existence is planned and to some extent artificial. The traditions have been altered to accommodate nonfluency, and speakers self-consciously superimpose Pennsylvania German on Anglo-American cultural phenomena.

The cover of Ferhoodled English illustrates what readers will find inside. Few of these expressions have been verified by fieldwork and dialect studies.

Books claiming to have recorded English as spoken by the Pennsylvania Germans sell well in tourist shops, and several have had numerous reprints. The stereotype of the “dumb Dutch” is no better reinforced than in its association with Pennsylvania German English.1 The commercial promotion of this variety of English is pervasive and lucrative. A booklet entitled Ferhoodled English: A collection of quaintly amusing expressions heard among the Pennsylvania Dutch Folks has had numerous reprints. The introduction describes the language as “a combination of broken-English, bad grammar and grotesque construction that accounts for most of the humor in their speech.” Among the “quaintly amusing expressions” cited are the following:

“Amos, come from the woodpile in, Mom’s on the table and Pop’s et himself done already.”

“Aunt Emmy’s wonderful sick. She don’t feel so pretty good and they’ve got her laid down yet.”

“It wonders me you don’t feel fer Cleon. A man like him with right much land is a guut prowder.”

“When the little red house makes by, the train is all, aint, Mom.”12

The sketched illustrations indicate that the Pennsylvania Dutch folks quoted are allegedly the Amish, although it is clearly out of character for Amish and Mennonites to speak this way to each other in English. The grammatical constructions which the booklet insists are typical of this English variety have not been confirmed by fieldwork, and its description as “broken English, bad grammar and grotesque construction” is profoundly incorrect.13
people who have never met Pennsylvania Germans and further create the stereotype among them.

While humorous at first glance, such books nourish and thrive on rural, country appeal also display Pennsylvania German English. An advertisement for "'The Amish Homestead,'" for instance, notes it is "full of sun and surprises for the whole family — Cum Onct!" Similarly, an advertisement for "Gift Baskets Unlimited" says that hex signs "decorated their big red barns as blessings as well as 'chust for pretty.'" Another advertisement is for "The Amish Market 'Toot' (bag)"; while Zinn's Diner's advertising declares that "For BREAKFAST, Amos wants to know how would you like your eggs?"; and a tourist map announces "Wilkom to Lancaster County."

Certainly as long as "country/rural life" is fashionable for home accessories, the use of Pennsylvania German English serves these businesses well. Diner placemats, napkins, coasters, kitchen towels, trivets, light switch plates, Scotch tape dispensers, and cutting boards carry out the theme with a vengeance. One diner placemat entertains waiting hungry customers with incorrect formulations of Pennsylvania German such as "we bish? we gait? koom ball widder" as well as with imaginative Pennsylvania German English expressions, such as "Throw papa down the stairs his hat," "make the door shut," and "I sit broad, ain't I?" The illustrations confusingly portray the Pennsylvania German tulip along with an American version of the European beer stein. Similarly, Zinn's Diner combines both Pennsylvania and European German to achieve a language variety not spoken on either side of the Atlantic.

The radio broadcasts no specific programs in Pennsylvania German English, but at least one local radio announcer declared after a weather report predicted rain, "It's already making down," and similarly, following a reported road closing due to high water, "The showers are making down somewhat." After playing the pop song "I'M All Out of Love," he announced that the song should really be titled, "My love is All."

Entertainers capitalize on Pennsylvania German English to make off-color puns and ethnic jokes. At one recent public performance at Bucknell University, the performer told a series of what he called "dumb Dutch" stories in Pennsylvania German English; again, the humor hinged almost exclusively on phonological interference. The senior citizens in the audience participated enthusiastically by interacting with the performer. They obviously enjoyed the exaggeration of their own life experiences. Bucknell students, on the other hand, were mystified: they understood neither the humor nor the culture from which it derived. This brand of humor enjoys success at staged "folk festivals" but will be shortlived as those who remember the older lifestyles pass on.

Advertisements and commercial enterprises which depend on rural, country appeal also display Pennsylvania German English. An advertisement for "The Amish Homestead," for instance, notes it is "full of sun and surprises for the whole family — Cum Onct!" Similarly, an advertisement for "Gift Baskets Unlimited" says that hex signs "decorated their big red barns as blessings as well as 'chust for pretty.'" Another advertisement is for "The Amish Market 'Toot' (bag)"; while Zinn's Diner's advertising declares that "For BREAKFAST, Amos wants to know how would you like your eggs?"; and a tourist map announces "Wilkom to Lancaster County."

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Napkins for sale offer hex signs "Chust for Fancy," capitalizing on the phonological interference of Pennsylvania German into English.

DISCUSSION

Prospects for continued use of Pennsylvania German among nonsectarians appear dim. As speakers increase their involvement outside of the community, as they must in today's economically complex society, the support and the need for Pennsylvania German decrease within the community. Public appearances of Pennsylvania German are decreasing and are characterized by self-conscious planning and by artificiality. Pennsylvania German English is exploited commercially; its authenticity is irrelevant and subordinate to its entertainment value. What do these observations mean?

The continued celebration of a past Pennsylvania German culture by using Pennsylvania German provides a curious contrast to today's mainstream society. Older speakers enjoy the memory; outsiders view it as historical artifact. The highly visible lifestyle of the Amish and Mennonites continues the contrast in the present, but the public can easily relegate sectarian oddity to religious eccentricity. It is clear that the sectarians in no way threaten the economic well-being of members of the larger society. Quite the contrary, their mere existence brings millions of tourist dollars annually to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Among the nonsectarians, appropriate public uses of Pennsylvania German (church services, radio programs) are vanishing, and genuine maintenance efforts (columns with translations, classes) are few and ineffective.

The affected use of Pennsylvania German English is, in contrast, locally pervasive and currently elicits the desired consumer response. The public understands and supports this piece of cultural otherness. Mainstream society finds it humorous and non-threatening, and no small part of its appeal is that non-threatening safety. In many ways Pennsylvania German English validates the prevailing misguided view that English is superior to other languages, that anyone in the United States should and must speak (only?) English, and that minority languages cannot serve the communicative functions of any American community. By emphasizing the ignorance and naivete implicitly perceived in the use of Pennsylvania German English, the larger society ridicules the Pennsylvania German culture and language, verifies the political and social power of the Anglo establishment, and effectively eliminates vestiges of competitive diversity.

In contrast to the denigrating commercialization of the dying language, the public response to perceived cultural and linguistic threats is apparent in the "English as an official language" movements. Thirteen states, including notably California and Texas, have already adopted laws and constitutional amendments which declare English as the official language of the state. Two groups, USEnglish, founded in 1983, and English First, founded in 1986, are raising funds to pass an English language amendment to the federal constitution. It is not yet clear what such laws will mean for bilingual educational programs, voting rights, and the delivery of social services, but the movements provide an environment in which stereotypes are exploited and diversity is discouraged. While society resorts to legal actions against the languages of speakers whom they would rather not have around, the public can safely laugh at the dying language of speakers who have finally lost much of their distinctiveness.

Advertisements make use of "dutchified English" to attract customers who apparently look for a romanticized, hospitable backwardness.
Placemats in local restaurants entertain waiting customers with imaginative linguistic and cultural stereotypes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENDNOTES


2. Weekly Pennsylvania German columns appear in 9 newspapers: the Middletown Post, “Boonestled,” edited by Frank Gill; the Ephrata Shopping News, by C. Richard Beam; the Lebanon Daily News, by C. Richard Beam; Die Botschaft (Lancaster, Pa., serving the sectarian Old Orders), by C. Richard Beam; The Budget (Sugarcreek, Ohio, serving the sectarian Old Orders), by C. Richard Beam; the Kutztown Patriot, a monthly column by Vernon M. Kemp; the Schuylkill Haven Call, by Earl Haag; Town and Country, Pennsburg, Pa., by Carl Arner; and the Citizen Standard, Valley View, Pa., by Bill Klouser. A new column is to appear in the Lehighton newspaper, written by Eugene Stine.

3. Weekly 15-minute radio programs are broadcast on 4 stations: WGSW Ephrata and WBYO Boyertown, both programs produced by Allen Musser; the station serving Red Lion, York County, by Al Dubbs; and WLBR Lebanon, by C. Richard Beam. WBYO also broadcasts a 50-minute call-in program hosted by Dave Hendricks. [Note: Since this article was submitted, radio station WBYO, Boyertown was sold; the new owner changed the programming to rock music and moved the station to Reading. The Hendricks and Musser programs, therefore, are no longer on the air.]


5. Approximately 18 churches, most of which are located in Berks County, offer annual Pennsylvania German church services. In some cases only the hymns are sung in Pennsylvania German; in others the total service is conducted in Pennsylvania German.

6. The hymns were printed in the programs for the Pennsylvaniaisch-Deitsches Gottesdienstz, Zion (Klinger’s) Karrich (Erdman, Pa.), November 10, 1985 and November 9, 1986.

7. Currently, 16 Grundsaus Lodges, most of which are located in Lehigh and adjoining counties, hold annual banquets; in 1989, for example, Grundsaus Lodge No. 1 in Northampton held its fifty-third annual banquet program. In addition, 12 annual Versammlinge meet annually; in 1989, the Berks County Versammling held its fifteenth program.


9. The exact number of available dialect classes is difficult to determine. Many occur informally with little publicity. On the basis of listings provided by John Schrack and information from Carl Snyder of Grundsaus Lodge No. 1, I estimate that 10 to 12 classes take place within the calendar year.


INTRODUCTION

Pennsylvania's Constitution of 1874 mandates that a system of public schools be established which is "thorough and efficient." As it faced the milestone of the turn to the twentieth century, the school board of Richland Township had reason for satisfaction. The then rural township in Upper Bucks County had eight functioning schoolhouses spread throughout the township. Three of them had all been built during the decade of the 1890s. The treasurer was able to report in June 1901 that a balance of $449.70 was left in the accounts of the school district after all bills were paid. This balance was impressive as the yearly expenses were about $5,000. The decision-makers of the school district had been thorough, as they had sponsored a network of eight schools, and efficient, as they educated the children of the township in the relatively inexpensive one-room schools.

But a problem was emerging to test the resources of the Richland Township School Board. The eventual solution of this problem illuminates the decision-making and administrative mechanism that characterized democratic voluntarism, at least as it had evolved in rural Pennsylvania at the turn of the century. This case study emphasizes the particular dynamics whereby a small, closely knit, volunteer body of public-spirited men dealt with a controversial issue.

One-room schools had the potential to be extremely cost effective. At their best, they provided a school within walking distance of a reasonable number of pupils, taught by a teacher who was competent to teach children from five to fourteen years of age in the traditional eight grades. Beyond the continuing problem of
staffing the schools with competent teachers, the logistical difficulty was in maintaining the balance between schools which were within reasonable walking distance while maintaining an efficient teacher-student ratio. Once a school was sited, it was there for decades. In regions where there was a decline in population growth, the schools were under-utilized. By 1915, there were 886 such schools with less than 11 students in Pennsylvania. The problem in Richland was just the reverse. For almost two years, the board faced the problem of providing a school building for an area facing a rapid increase in population.

A borough had been incorporated in approximately the center of the township. The borough, Quakertown, grew rapidly after 1855 and had its own school system. Quakertown was the commercial center of the region. One of its major assets was a busy railroad station on a line of the Reading Railroad which linked Philadelphia with the cities of Allentown and Bethlehem in the Lehigh Valley. In the 1890s streets were laid out adjacent to the boundaries between the borough and the township. As this development was within the township, it was the responsibility of the township school board to provide for the schooling of the children in this development, which was called Fairview Village. None of the existing schools in the township was convenient for these children.

THE DECISION PROCESS

As it coped with the emerging population of school-aged children from Fairview, the board gradually narrowed its options within the constraints of fiscal responsibility. The first indicator of the board's decision process appears in the minutes of the school board secretary. A motion was passed on August 26, 1899, to appoint a committee to see if a suitable building could be rented for school purposes in the area of Fairview. The urgency of this need was highlighted for the board a month later, after the children had gone back to school for the fall term. A special meeting was called by the president. William W. Benner, the school board secretary who had been appointed to look into the feasibility of renting a suitable building, reports upon that meeting: "The School Board met — with all members present at the call of the President — a delegation of Tax Payers were present from Fairview and vicinity — pleading for a new school house. No action was taken. Wm. W. Benner reported that no suitable house could be rented for school purposes. Report rec. and committee discharged on motion . . . ."2

Apparently the parents and the board allowed the issue to simmer during the remainder of the 1899-1900 school term, as there is no mention of any action in reference to the Fairview population in the minutes. However, the board did take action on July 18, 1900 to "investigate the matter in regard to the new school house business for Fairview vicinity."3 Board members Charles Benner and Abraham Geisinger were appointed to report at the next meeting.

Later that month, at the July 28, 1900, board meeting, the two members did report. They clearly documented that there were sufficient students to justify a new school building within walking distance of Fairview. They found that there were forty-four children in a designated region. As the typical capacity of a one-room school was about thirty students, the school board clearly had a problem. But the board was not yet ready to meet it head on: "On motion it was ordered that the report be accepted and committee discharged. On motion to call a special meeting and notify taxpayers to discuss the new school house matter was lost."4 The decision was accomplished by a roll call vote. Two members of the six-member board must have gone home before the vote, as there were two votes for the motion and two against.

The issue came to a head, of sorts, at the August 13, 1900, meeting. One of the reasons for the reluctance of the board to build a new school in the Fairview area can be ascertained by a parliamentary move made earlier in the same meeting: "Motion to the effect that the School Board as a body should constitute a committee to locate site for a new school house far enough from Fairview the Board would be satisfied that the Quakertown Borough would not get same within the Borough should they annex [sic] the village of Fairview some day hereafter, and that the School Board should build a school house on the site agreed upon for the accommodation of the children in the District the committee had reported upon."5 This motion lost, with three against and two favorable votes.

There were tensions in rural Pennsylvania between the governing bodies of the rural townships and the fast-growing incorporated boroughs within the boundaries of the townships. The boroughs could petition the Commonwealth to annex contiguous property when the population or industries built up. Generally, the boroughs provide more services, but at increased tax rates. The rural townships bitterly resented the practice of annexation, as they had no legal redress when a stipulated number of taxpayers petitioned to be a part of a borough. The board had no real alternative other than continuing the students in the same schools that they had attended in 1899-1900. They ordered the continuation of the same districts for another term at the conclusion of their August 13, 1900, meeting. The issue was not to be mentioned again until the April 11, 1901, meeting of the board.

The stimulus for this meeting was reflected in the minutes. "... a special meeting by the School Board was held with all members present to consider the case now pending in the Court against the School Board."6 Three roll call votes were taken upon a motion to build a school building for the accommodation of the children.
of Fairview and vicinity. Three members of the board voted for the motion and three voted against, so the motion was lost. There is no further mention of the "case now pending in the Court against the School Board."

Certainly any school board has to consider the funding of any construction project. Treasurer Seth Gross had good news for the board in his financial report at the end of the 1900-1901 school year (June 3, 1901). He was able to report a surplus of $449.70 in the school account. The minutes of the concluding meeting of the school term on that same date report that the estimated valuation of all properties held by the school board was $7,500. As there were eight buildings at that time it would appear that each was valued at just less than $1,000.7

The board had re-organized and had two new members by the meeting of June 8, 1901. At that meeting another strategy was considered for providing for the children from the Fairview area. A motion was passed to appoint a committee to see the Quakertown School Board regarding the sending of children from Fairview to the borough school. On the face of it, the idea would appear to have some merit, as Fairview lay just outside the borough limits. The schools of Quakertown were probably closer to the Fairview children than any of the existing township schools. However, the motion had stipulations such as a limit of ten years of age for eligibility of township students, and a limit of six months of involvement per year. The six-month stipulation was probably an economy measure, as the Richland board would pay tuition to Quakertown by the month. For whatever reasons, the strategy went nowhere. The board was unwilling to raise its property taxes which continued at the same rate as the previous year's, at two and one-half mills. However, the proponents of a new school could find some comfort in the fact that for the first time the one-half mill was earmarked for "building purposes."8

The board was still not ready, though, on June 8 to build a school. For after authorizing an investigation into the feasibility of sending pupils as tuition students to Quakertown, the board considered a motion to build a schoolhouse for the children of Fairview and vicinity. Again, there were three roll call ballots. Each resulted in a tie. The three members who had previously favored building a new building again voted positively. The two new members joined Charles Benner (who had voted against a new building previously) in a negative vote.

At its meeting of June 22, 1901, the president appointed a committee of two to see the Quakertown School Board regarding sending township children to borough schools, as had been authorized on June 8. One proponent of a new school (Abraham Geisinger), and one opponent (Charles Benner), were selected.9

Finally, on July 16, 1901, the board faced the inevitable decision of building a new building and of eventually hiring an additional teacher. The committee to meet with the Quakertown board must have reported that the approach was not feasible, although the minutes are cryptic. The secretary reported, "The committee appointed to inquire to the Quakertown School Board reported progress ..." The "progress" (probably non-progress) reportedly triggered the decision to accept the necessity of action, and in a four-to-two vote the following motion was passed: "On motion made by William W. Benner and seconded by Abraham Geisinger that a school house be build [sic] for the accommodation of the children of Fairview and vicinity was passed and so ordered. The vote on the motion being as follows. Yea: William W. Benner, George B. Snyder, Abraham Geisinger, Leidy Scholl. Nay: Elias Walp, Charles Benner."10 One new member of the board, Leidy Scholl, cast the deciding affirmative vote.

Several actions were taken that same evening and in subsequent meetings which signal the board's awareness that the new building program would be a financial drain on the school district. The board immediately shortened the school year to eight months from the nine-month term which had been the practice. (Teachers were paid by the month, rather than by the term, so this constituted a savings of more than eleven percent in instructional costs.) The board also determined that there would be no changes in textbooks during the next year. And, at their next meeting (July 27, 1901), board members decided not to authorize the installation of new rain spouting on the schools, despite the fact that they had obtained two sealed bids for the work.12 During the year, the board resisted requests from the lowest paid teachers for a salary increase. "New" teachers were paid $32.00 per month; "old" teachers were paid $36.00. Eventually, one of the new teachers resigned to take another position.

Once the decision to build was made, the board determined to move ahead rapidly and with a united front. The board constituted itself as a committee of the whole "... to locate a site and make arrangements to buy a tract of land for the new school building."13 The committee to investigate the possibility of sending children to the borough schools was discharged.

The next major decision was to select the site for the new building. It had to be far enough from the borough that it would not be vulnerable to annexation, yet close enough to Fairview to be accessible for the children from that village. Three properties were targeted, and a committee of three was appointed to talk to the owners about the purchase of one-half acre for a site. By August 1 the committee reported discouraging results. Two of the owners were not interested in selling and the other, Morgan Shaw, wanted more time to consider the sale. Apparently the Shaw property was part of an inheritance, and Morgan Shaw had to confer with the other heirs.14
Although there were still a number of difficulties facing the board, the remainder of the steps leading to the building of the new school went rather smoothly. There were still problems in obtaining a site, and the board received the discouraging information on August 5, 1901, that Mr. Shaw was asking two hundred dollars and requesting that the board bear the cost of fences for a building lot of one-half acre.\textsuperscript{15}

By August 10, 1901, the board was ready with a counteroffer. Leidy Scholl moved that the board offer $100.00 to the Shaw estate. Director Scholl was appointed to see Mr. Shaw to negotiate. Scholl reported on August 13 that Mr. Shaw would not accept the offer.\textsuperscript{16}

In minutes dated August 13 (but probably August 31) the eventual compromise was suggested: “A motion was made by William W. Benner and seconded by Leidy Scholl that the Board pay $150.00 for ½ acre ground to the Shaw estate for the place the new school house is located, providing they will accept the amt [sic] and also make ½ of the fences and keep them in repair otherwise the ground is to be obtained by having a jury appointed by the court to have the [intelligible word] assessed.”\textsuperscript{17}

Whether it was due to the nature of the offer or the threat of the use of eminent domain, the Shaw estate accepted the offer. By this time the board had divided the immediate tasks among ad hoc committees. One committee was to finalize the details of getting the land surveyed, and of obtaining a deed. Another was to determine the dimensions of the new building.\textsuperscript{18} By September 9 both committees reported progress. The offer had been accepted by the Shaw estate. The committee to determine the dimensions of the new building had measured two of the existing buildings, and recommended that the new building be the same size. One of the buildings (Kauffman’s) had been built in 1890. The other (California) was the oldest building in the system, dating back ninety-eight years to 1803. Interestingly, both were the same size, indicating that school building dimensions had been standardized over the entire nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{19}

Two other decisions were made regarding construction. It was decided to build the school of brick, and the same motion said it should include a “seller.” Eventually the decision was to seek alternative bids, both with and without a cellar.\textsuperscript{20} A week later the secretary was directed to notify agents representing school furniture suppliers to submit bids for desks for the new school, and to obtain bids for the construction.\textsuperscript{21} By September 20 the surveying was done and two contractors had submitted sealed bids. The board agreed to open them and award the job to the lowest bidder. One contractor bid $1016.17 for the basic construction, with an additional charge of $110.50 for the “seller.” The other contractor, Milton H. Biehn, bid $988.00 for the basic construction and $120.00 for the “seller.” The contract was awarded to Mr. Biehn. Apparently the selection of Biehn over the other contractor, James L. Barringer, upset the board president, for “At this point Geo. B. Snyder president of the Board excused himself from the Board and went home, and on motion Charles Benner was appointed Acting President.”\textsuperscript{22} Snyder resigned from the board later in the term. His resignation is puzzling, as he had been a supporter of the building project from early on. But the timing of his departure — after bids were awarded — may provide a clue. The contractor with the higher bid, James L. Barringer, had drawn up the plans for the new building, and his name appears on bills quite often as doing minor carpentry work for the board. It is possible that Mr. Snyder was disappointed that Barringer did not get this major job.

Construction proceeded very rapidly. Bids had been accepted on September 20, 1901. At a meeting on September 26 it was decided to build the school without a “seller.” It was also determined “... that if the people in the new school district will furnish the material and bell for a steeple the Board will pay for the work.”\textsuperscript{23} Apparently the offer of a steeple was never taken, for the school building still stands, virtually unaltered, as a storage facility for a factory which eventually was built behind it. But there still is no steeple.

By the October 12 meeting the school board had divided its membership into three oversight committees of two members each: building (Geisinger and W. Benner); ground and fences (Snyder and Scholl); furniture (Walp and C. Benner). The specific sending district was defined, and decisions were made regarding the type of fence to be put around the school ground. There were two candidates for the position of teacher in the new school. Morris Wissler had four votes and was elected as the school’s first teacher; Carrie Bidding had two votes.\textsuperscript{24}

By the meeting of November 16, the various committees were able to report progress. The lot had been purchased and the deed executed. That committee was discharged. Geisinger was directed to purchase a stove and fixtures for the new schoolhouse. The school was to be opened on December 9, 1901.\textsuperscript{25} Apparently the deadline was met.

At its meeting on December 14 the committee on desks reported that the desks were in place except several desks “of which the castings were broke.” The committee on building reported that the building was ready for school purposes. The committee on grading the school ground reported that their work was finished. All that remained, it seems, was for the new school to be given its name. The board selected one which described the location of the new school in the township. “On motion it was ordered that the name for the new school is to be Central.”\textsuperscript{26} And the little red brick schoolhouse proudly carried that name until it was replaced by a con-
solidated school more than fifty years later.

There was, however, still some unfinished business. The treasurer's report in June, 1902, documented the costs which could be attributed to the new school. They add up to $1416.81. Although the fiscal year of 1901 began with a surplus of $449.98, the fiscal report a year later showed a deficit of $364.97. However, the board apparently never considered taking a mortgage. Rather, they took a note with their outgoing treasurer, A.M. Geisinger, for the deficit at a rate of five percent. Although they eventually retired the debt, it was a financial burden for several years.27

And there were still other matters to resolve. By February 20, 1902, the secretary reported that George D. Snyder, president of the board, had resigned,28 and in March, Elias Walp was named board president.29 At the reorganization meeting in June, 1902, Abraham Geisinger, whose term had expired, was selected by the board to fill George Snyder's term and thus he continued on the board.30 By the end of June, Central School was a part of the regular routines of the board. Leidy Scholl was the director selected to supervise the school. On June 16, 1902, Morris Wissler was reelected as the teacher at Central.31 The children of Fairview had their school within walking distance; the township had a school far enough from the borders of Quakertown to be safe from annexation; and the school board had completed a decision-making process which resulted in a school building which served its community for more than fifty years.

CONCLUSION

In fundamental ways, the decision-making process of the Richland Township School Board at the turn of the century would be similar to the way most of their successors operate today. Most boards are fiscally conservative; most deliberate in a process of considering options and discarding those that do not promise to resolve the issue.

But school organization is much more complex today than it was ninety years ago. Where ninety years ago school board members literally did all of the administrative tasks of data gathering and negotiating, and even of overseeing every step of the construction of the new building, today's public school systems have elaborate bureaucracies with administrators who gather data, present options, and carry out the policies of the school board.

Richland Township in 1901 had no such administrative structure. The board members faced up to the issues, appointed ad hoc committees; accomplished the tasks assigned to the committees, discharged the committees, and went on to the next problem. They had the advantage of an intimate knowledge of their communities. This capacity to get things done when a consensus was reached by respected members of the community was the great advantage of democratic voluntarism.

Given the strong opinions of the members, it was necessary to reach some compromises. Recognition should be given to the role played by the board secretary, William W. Benner. The minutes which he wrote illustrate that Benner was always ready to seek acceptable compromises, and to suggest to the board a variety of alternatives. Along with the treasurers, the secretary did have specific administrative responsibilities, and it appears that Mr. Benner accomplished these well.

By the spring of 1902, the Richland Township School Board had reason to be proud of its new school. This was to be the last construction accomplished for school purposes until the "baby boom" of the 1950s stimulated a great deal of new school construction. Along with eight other one-room schools, Central School served several generations of children from Richland Township until it was replaced by a consolidated school, the Tohickon Valley Elementary School, in the mid-1950s. But that is another story of school board decision making.
WASHINGTON HOOD: Five Hundredth Graduate of The United States Military Academy

By Charles R. Steitz, Jr.

A general view of West Point about 1826. (From an old lithograph by Deroy, U.S.M.A. Library.)

Uniforms worn by cadets at West Point c. 1823, when Hood was a student there.

A telephone call, a broken monument, and an interest in American history led the author on an enlightening investigation of the United States Military Academy’s 500th graduate, Washington Hood, class of 1827.

Washington Hood, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 2 February, 1808, was the oldest of a family of twelve children. His father, John McClellan Hood, was born in Newton Stewart, County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1778. At the age of twenty-one John Hood came to America and settled in Philadelphia. There he entered the wholesale grocery business, first as the firm of Hood and Hamilton, and later as Hood and Wilson. In 1805 he married Eliza Forebaugh, a descendant of early German pioneers.

John Hood’s business prospered enough to enable him to take leisurely trips into the country areas outside Philadelphia. During the summer months, when yellow fever season prevailed, he would take these trips into the countryside with his family. His favorite place seemed to be the village of Limerick — in the township of the same name — along the Reading Road (for many years U.S. Route 422) about thirty miles northwest of Philadelphia.

These trips became a tradition, and for a number of
years the Hood family spent the summer season in Limerick Township. In 1834-35, John Hood built a mansion there, a copy of a house he admired in Ireland; he named it “Bessy Bell.” In pre-Civil War days it served as a stopover for slaves as they made their way to Canada via the Underground Railroad. It was here that John Hood retired, and it was here, in 1848, that he died — broken in health by the death of his son Washington in 1840.1

During the span of Washington Hood’s life, America came of age. This period is often referred to in the history books as the “Era of Good Feelings.” The Barbary Wars and the War of 1812 won for the United States respect abroad, and Americans were strengthening the nation in all facets of growth. Into such an America stepped Washington Hood when, at the age of fifteen, he entered the United States Military Academy in 1823.
Hood's cadet application seems to indicate political overtones in connection with his appointment. A letter from one John Steel to a General Rogers (sent from Philadelphia 29 January, 1823) says, in part: "I earnestly request you to aid and join with all your forces, in having Washington Hood of our city appointed a cadet during the present session . . . his father (John Hood) has always been one of our decided men, no trimmer and no doubt will always remain so, from principle. Messers Findlay and Lowrie of [the] Senate — Mr. Sergeant Louis friend, [and] Ingham of H. Rs. will cooperate with you . . . We hope Mr. Calhoun will not forget Penna. You know what you have done and what we can do . . . this appointment would be popular in our city."

Letters requesting the appointment were written by Washington Hood himself, with additions written by his father. But this was probably to show the addressees the son's clear and beautiful handwriting, for the thoughts were those of John Hood.

Washington Hood entered the Academy in the school's most formative years. Sylvanus Thayer, class of 1808, was the superintendent, and William J. Worth, Twenty-third Infantry and a hero of the War of 1812, was the commandant. Entrance requirements were simple in those years: "Candidates for cadets [must] be not under the age of fourteen, nor above the age of twenty-one years; each cadet . . . shall be well versed in reading, writing, and arithmetic."

The entrance examination was simple, usually oral. It consisted of only a few questions (what is a fraction?) and a few tasks (read a few lines from a book; write a dictated sentence on the blackboard). Easy to answer or do today, but it must be remembered that most Americans of that period had very little schooling. So, even with these low entrance requirements nearly half the applicants were rejected, and, of those accepted, less than half graduated.
Washington Hood's life at the Academy was as ordinary as that of any other cadet who endured its four difficult years in the period before the Civil War. In fact, many cadets at that time professed to find life there "dull and monotonous." And, while little is known of Hood's personal life as a cadet, a review of his academic marks and his merits and demerits may give us a clue to his character and personality. As to the marking system, Superintendent Thayer attached a numerical weight to each subject according to its importance. Chemistry, for example, might have a value of one hundred points, and a cadet's rank might have been sixty-eight out of one hundred points (68/100). History was included in political and moral philosophy, and mathematics included all phases of the subject.

Hood's academic marks were as follows: During his fourth class year (freshman) he took only mathematics — 107/200 — and French — 42½/100. (French was taught because most advanced textbooks in engineering at the time were written in that language.) Hood's general merit was 149/300, and he ranked forty-sixth in the class. In his third class year (sophomore) he studied mathematics — 176/300; French — 39/100; and drawing — 47½/50. His class standing was thirty-four. His second class year (junior) included two new subjects: philosophy — 120/300, and chemistry — 50/100; his class ranking was twenty-nine. His first class year (senior) was the most challenging. That year he was required to pass nine subjects: mathematics — 176/300; French — 36/100; natural philosophy (physics) — 120/300; drawing 100/100; engineering — 173/300; chemistry and mineralogy averaged together — 85/200; and rhetoric and moral philosophy, also averaged together — 84/200. His final class standing was thirty-one in a class of thirty-eight.

As for Hood's disciplinary record as a cadet, his many demerits (which probably influenced his final class standing) seem to have been for minor offenses: "light not extinguished at taps, inattention at drill, not taking his seat at table at word of command, unnecessary talking at table, smoking cigars." (At that time a cadet who received two hundred demerits a year was dismissed.) Altogether, Hood's cadet record seems to indicate that he was a mediocre student except in drawing, at which he excelled. That strength could have been a factor in his eventual assignment to the Corps of Topographical Engineers.

Of the thirty-eight graduates of the Class of 1827, a few names ring out in American history. Leonidas Polk of North Carolina (8/38) resigned after graduation to become an Episcopal clergyman and, later, bishop of Louisiana; in 1857 he was one of the founders of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee. When the Civil War broke out he entered the service of the Confederacy, became a lieutenant general, and was killed in action at Pine Mountain, Georgia. Another classmate from North Carolina, Gabriel Rains (13/38), also joined the Confederate Army and developed the first use of land mines in warfare. And, Phillip St. George Cooke from Virginia (23/38) had an exciting army career before and during the Civil War. Cooke's daughter married "Jeb" Stuart and wartime situations often found Cooke chasing his famous Confederate son-in-law.

Another member of the Class of 1827, Abraham Van Buren of New York (37/38), resigned from the army in 1837 to become private secretary to his father, President Martin Van Buren. In all, six members of the class, including Washington Hood, are listed in the Dictionary of American Biography, a compilation of those who have made some significant contribution to American life.

Other men who would go on to distinguished careers were also students at the Academy when Hood was a cadet, and he may have been acquainted with many of them, for the corps was small then and most members knew each other. There was, for instance, Robert Parrott, class of 1824, the inventor of the Parrott gun; Jefferson Davis, class of 1828, president of the Confederate States; Dennis Hart Mahan, class of 1824, father of Alfred T. Mahan the naval strategist, and himself a professor at the Academy for many years; and Robert E. Lee, class of 1829, who would later work with Hood surveying the Ohio-Michigan boundary line.

During Hood's formative years at the Academy Sylvanus Thayer laid the cornerstones of cadet training, and these have stood the test of time. Traditions were born. The Dialectic Society, founded in 1826 and the oldest of West Point's clubs, debated and discussed the subjects of that day. And a fellow by the name of Benny Havens set up a tavern in 1824 near the Academy which became one of the more famous establishments in West Point history. Lafayette also visited in 1825 and the clock he presented to the Academy can still be seen in the administration building.

Hood received his military education at a most productive time. His final examination before the Board of Visitors in 1827 was both an ordeal and a reward. Imagine a young cadet about nineteen years old answering questions and demonstrating on a blackboard before a group of high ranking officers and distinguished educators. Those who passed became members of a closely knit group of graduates.

After graduation in 1827 Hood was breveted second lieutenant of infantry and assigned to the Fourth United States Infantry then stationed at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. Two years later he entered the corps of engineers and was assigned to Cantonment Brooke, which was located near the present-day city of Tampa, Florida. On 25 November, 1831, he was on topographical duty and remained so until 7 August 1836 when he resigned from the army with the rank of first lieutenant.

In 1835 Hood was associated with Robert E. Lee in a
Map drawn by Lt. Hood of a section of the Ohio state boundary line. (GSA, Washington, D.C.)

Part of the survey to determine a section of boundary between the U.S. and Canada, 1835; by Capt. Talcott and Lts. Hood and Lee. (GSA, Washington, D.C.)

Map drawn by Capt. Hood showing the "practicable passes" of the Rocky Mountains in 1839. (GSA, Washington, D.C.)
Washington Hood's crypt; base of monument lying in foreground. (Courtesy of Mrs. Kenneth Kehler)

View of crypt through underbrush; note top of monument lying in creek; 1979. (Courtesy of Mrs. Kenneth Kehler)

Close-up view of Hood's crypt, 1979. (Courtesy Mrs. Kenneth Kehler)
map-making expedition to settle once and for all the Ohio-Michigan boundary dispute. This involved a strip of land averaging six and one half miles in width and extending along the northern border of Ohio west of Lake Erie. Michigan’s claim was based on the boundary laid down by the Northwest Ordinance (1787). Ohio’s claim was based on the line set forth in its state constitution, which the U.S. Congress had neither confirmed nor rejected when Ohio was admitted to the Union.

To settle this dispute the government sent Captain Andrew Talcott and Lieutenants Robert E. Lee and Washington Hood to survey and map this area. On the basis of this survey both Michigan and Ohio agreed to compromise and Michigan became a state in 1837. This dispute nearly erupted into a border clash and is often referred to as the “Toledo War.”

During 1836 Hood, along with 116 other officers, resigned his commission to accept the faster promotions and higher pay of civilian life. In 1837 Washington Hood worked as a civil engineer in Cuba, and after a year there re-entered the army. Commissioned a captain, Hood was again assigned to the Corps of Topographical Engineers which had become a separate branch of the army in 1831. In the line of duty, Hood made many maps for the United States government. Since he served in Florida, one of his earliest assignments involved mapping the region of the Seminole Wars.

But Hood’s most important work came in mapping areas west of the Mississippi River, particularly in the Northwest. Many maps of the West were based on Spanish explorations, or on the Lewis and Clark and Zebulon Pike expeditions. Into those maps also went the comments of mountain men such as Jim Coulter and Jedediah Smith.

How much Hood’s maps contributed to the settlement of the West is debatable. According to William H. Goetzman’s publications *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* and *Exploration and Empire*, Hood’s maps were inaccurate and may even have been copied. And, in a book published in 1846, Robertson’s *Oregon, Our Right and Title*, Hood’s map of the Territory of Oregon shows the Great Salt Lake to be rectangular.

Whether accurate or not, Hood’s maps played an important part in the settlement of Oregon. Then, in 1838, he was commissioned by President Martin Van Buren to make a survey of land grants given to the Indians west of the Mississippi. His health failed during this expedition and he returned East, dying in Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania, on 17 July 1840; he was buried on his father’s estate in Limerick Township.
"Sacred to the memory of Captain Washington Hood."
(Courtesy of Mrs. Kenneth Kehler)

"WASHINGTON HOOD, Captain in the U.S. Topographical Engineer Corps, 1838. Died at Bedford Springs, Pa., July 17 in 1840. A faithful officer and a generous friend. The records of the War Department attest to activity and fidelity to his country. His fellow officers and friends commemorate his worth." Inscription on Hood monument. (Courtesy of Mrs. Kenneth Kehler)
The cause of Hood’s death is not known — county death records were not kept until 1890 — and his remains have never been found. Only a part of his coffin and its handles have been located; it is believed vandals destroyed the crypt and scattered Hood’s remains in adjoining fields. In fact, in the 1970s when the author first photographed Hood’s crypt and monument they were in a state of disrepair, located in a stand of second and third growth timber with vines, ivy, and raspberry plants interwoven among the trees. The crypt was broken (and still is), and the monument was in pieces, the part with the inscription lying in front of the crypt, and the top part in a small stream a few yards away. Empty beer cans and broken glass completed the picture.

In 1989 Washington Hood’s monument was removed from the above-described site and set on a temporary site in the rear of the Hood mansion. Today there are renewed efforts to restore the property to its former elegance and, through the efforts of Mrs. Kenneth Kehler, the present tenant, and the Limerick Township Historical Society, action has been taken to make the Hood estate a historical site.

Temporary site of Hood monument in rear of Hood mansion, 1989. (Courtesy of Mrs. Kenneth Kehler)

ENDNOTES


Cadet application on file of Washington Hood, General Services Administration, Military Archives Division, Washington, D.C.


Archives, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ambrose, Op. Cit. p. 163

Dupuy, Op. Cit. p. 196


Ibid. p. 401


Near the site of the present-day nuclear power generators.
GRANDMOTHER SCHULTZ

by Alvenia Schultz Graber

Sarah K. Schultz standing in her garden.

After a few introductory statements I shall confine myself to my recollections of my grandmother, Sarah K. Schultz, born August 25, 1836 in Douglass Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. She attended such sessions as were then held in the public school at Niantic. She was also taught the elements of housekeeping, which at that time included buttermaking, spinning, baking in a brick oven, etc. She married Joel Schultz, son of Henry and Susanna Schultz, November 21, 1857 when she was a little more than 21 years of age.

They started housekeeping on what is at present the Milton Bieler farm near East Greenville. She received from her father, Amos Schultz, as an outfit gift or legacy, practically everything that would be needed in a well regulated household at that time. It would take too much time to enumerate the articles with the price paid for the same, but included in the list are six bread baskets, hand bellows, candlesticks, dough trough and spinning wheel, which gives us some idea of the life in the home. They lived on the now Milton Bieler farm two or three years and then moved to the farm near what is now the East Greenville pump house. Here she lived till her death on March 25, 1920. There was a barn, log dwelling house, springhouse and other smaller buildings on the place. In 1872 a new barn was built. Grandmother enjoyed telling about this. She furnished meals to all the workmen while this work was under construction and if I am not mistaken some of the men lived there part of the time too. There was baking to be done every day as all the bread and pastry was baked on the place. Grandmother had what was then known as a hired girl, a rare article today, but all this extra baking, cooking and preparing of meals was done in addition to looking after her family of six children and attending to the regular routine of the household. We can see there was little time for recreation.
Ten years after, in 1882, a new dwelling house was built. While this was being done the older children slept in rooms on the second floor of an outbuilding which was later used as a pigsty. Grandmother and grandfather, with the smaller children, slept in a room in the springhouse because the old log house was first torn down to make room for the new dwelling. To reach the bedroom from the cooking compartment or kitchen, you had to go outside and walk around the springhouse to the other door.

In inclement weather or later toward winter they did not wish to take the baby, Amos, outdoors so they handed him into the cooking compartment from the bedroom and vice versa through a window with a sliding sash. This grandmother often recalled. They lived in the springhouse until the day before Christmas when they moved into the kitchen of the new house. That night snow fell and winter rapidly set in. While the house was being built grandmother again had to feed the workmen.

An incident she related was that whenever she served cherry pie with the seeds, one of the workmen, Mahlon Krauss by name, would take a generous piece, eating the stones and all, gnashing them with his teeth. Grandmother said it reminded her of a pig eating cherry stones. She could appreciate a bit of humor and I can see her now turning her head to one side a bit and chuckling or laughing over some incident.

Grandmother enjoyed relating about old Mrs. Henry Bieler who had a garden that could be planted very early in the spring, while grandma’s could not; but after grandmother’s was planted, the vegetables grew rapidly and soon were as large or larger than Mrs. Bieler’s. Mrs. Bieler called quite frequently to see grandmother’s garden. When grandmother asked her whether her vegetables were as nice or nicer than grandmother’s the old lady would not answer; grandmother would ask again to which the old lady invariably replied, “Ich hab’s erste Mal schon gehört” (“I heard you the first time”), and she would not answer grandmother’s question either. It must have been about 1877 that grandmother got some real early potatoes for planting, and around July 4th she served the first new potatoes out of her garden. When she told Mrs. Bieler this, the latter replied, “Doch net wahr” (“I don’t believe you”).

It was the custom for women during grandmother’s active years to dig the flower and vegetable gardens, tend to the chickens, feed the pigs and of course to help with the milking. I distinctly remember going with grandmother to do these chores. I remember too when the milking was done in the barnyard. Grandmother used to relate how, when pressed for time, or for more help in harvest time, it was not unusual for her to take the youngest child to the field under a shade tree where the older children cared for it and she could give it special attention when necessary. She often had a flock of ducks and geese and used to pluck the geese at intervals for the down. She did spinning in her own household, mostly for carpet warp, and also knit mittens and stockings for her family, although later her mother did some of the knitting; later in life as long as she was able she knit mittens for her children and grandchildren.

She was a great lover of flowers as all who knew her could testify. And it seemed that every bulb, seed, cutting or root she put in the soil grew. She had many
rosebushes. I remember the moss rose in the garden especially, and I never got a whiff of their fragrance that I did not think of grandmother’s flower garden. On approaching her flower garden you could hear bees and other insects humming, enjoying life to the full in such pleasant surroundings. For years a cinnamon vine grew along the fence. Along the garden wall a great variety of nasturtiums twined; above them towered the phlox of different hues. Within the garden, too, were coxcomb, balsam or ladyslipper, evening primrose, cup and saucer, pansies, asters, zinnias, marigolds, sweet alyssum, larkspur and foxglove; also hollyhocks along the fence and sweet william, pinks, of course, and a great variety of tuberose. In the center of the garden was a round bed, the border of which was a thick mass of Haus wachs. Grandmother often made a trip to the garden before serving supper to get tea. She frequently blended different varieties. You rarely came away in summer without a bunch of flowers and cuttings for planting.

On her large lawn were found rosebushes and a variety of other shrubs, clematis and honeysuckle, dahlias, coleus and a host of other plants. She was a subscriber to the Farm Journal from the time it was published until her death. Years ago in this paper there appeared an article on how to cut large potatoes for planting instead of planting small ones. Grandfather was rather dubious about this but after some persuasion, he allowed several rows to be planted according to directions in the Farm Journal. I do not know the result of this experiment and would be glad for information in case anyone remembers.

When I was small we visited at grandmother’s house frequently and some things that happened there will cling as long as memory lasts. Undoubtedly grandmother served a variety of meats, but the dinners that stand out are those of ham, a little hard sliced, rather thin, and browned nicely, mashed potatoes sprinkled with black pepper, jelly served in small footed glasses and flavored with rose geranium (I wonder what became of those little dishes), also Strøssel Kuchen flavored with what must have been saffron. On one occasion, I remember there were a number of other guests for dinner, including Uncle Owen, Mabel, and Aunt Lucina. Dinner had to be served in the spacious living room where a large table was put up. Mabel and I were allowed to carry things in from the kitchen with special warning not to spill the contents of certain platters. I might add that Mabel wore a silk dress on this occasion, which was considered by me at least as a wonderful thing. I felt a little better when the fact was mentioned that the dress had been made out of one belonging to her mother.

For our entertainment as grandchildren, there was always a slate, a pencil, and a cloth to clean the slate to be found in a certain table drawer. There was also a homemade wagon and several other homemade toys that the boys could have occasionally. Then, wonder of wonders, there was a wooden box covered with gray calico, the inside of which was fashioned into a bed in which reposed two rag dolls with different changes of raiment, and also a variety of quilts for the bed, some of which had been pieced by my uncles and father, when because of illness they had to stay indoors. This box was a panacea for every misfortune that might befall me while there, whether it was fear of the dog or the gander or whatever it might be. I do not know who fell heir to this box but I sincerely hope it was not destroyed.

On winter afternoons, grandmother would bring apples out of the cellar and usually set them on the ledge or shelf of the living room stove in order to warm them before giving them to us to eat. Smith Cider apples were usually included and they were specially prized because we did not have that variety at our house.

Often she brought out a pan of nuts and then she or one of the daughters would take us to the carpenter shop to crack them. (I imagine they at times were fearfully tired of amusing us.) This seemed queer to me as my paternal grandfather, who was always very strict and especially so on Sundays, would not allow us to crack a nut on a Sunday, at least if he knew about it.

This business of cracking nuts on Sunday seemed a moral issue to me and I never quite understood it and could not decide which was the right course as there were quite a few points in favor of cracking nuts. After the nuts were cracked they were usually poured on the kitchen table where we all helped ourselves. Quite often, we had just started to enjoy the nuts when someone would come to the kitchen door and tell us to get ready to go home. I went away more than once with a vision of the nuts I did not get on the kitchen table.

In cold weather grandmother always brought our wraps into the living room and hung them around the stove for some time before we were allowed to wear them.

When the weather was at all favorable, we took a tour of the grounds, starting with the pigeon and rabbit house and ending in the granary where we were usually weighed. Grandmother always gave me a sunbonnet or “strip Hut” to wear in case the pigeons would “spit.” There was always a variety of pigeons, fantails, pouters, homers, etc. The rabbits I classified as black, brown, gray, and white.

In any large family of ten children like grandmother had, there is sure to be a lot of happiness, which a small family misses, but there is also naturally more of sorrow and worry connected with a large family. Grandmother had her share of the latter and was at different times called on to minister to her children when misfortune had befallen them, even in her later years. No one knows what she did better than those to whom she ministered. The death of a daughter was a great blow to
herself and grandfather, and like every true mother she could never get over this sorrow entirely. Then in later years, grandfather's death was another blow. I remember that for years every spring as long as she was able she would come to our home and some of us children would go to the Schwenkfelder cemetery at Washington Township with her. Here with garden tools she would prepare the graves nicely and then plant some choice vine or plant on the graves of her loved ones. I remember on one occasion she said, "If you could get loved ones back by digging them out with needles I would surely attempt it." I can not recall any time that she seemed to be impatient or lost control of herself. She seemed to have an inexhaustible store of patience. I remember she often related with a laugh, that upon stepping outdoors one day she found chickens, a dog or dogs and cats on the porch. She said she soon had the porch cleared by crying, "Shoo, hiss, katz." She was always glad when her children and grandchildren came home and wondered why they did not come oftener.

In her later years, when she seemed to occupy but a corner of her rocking chair, she pieced quilts and made fancy pincushions etc., several of which are still in my possession. She worried much about her "Big Boy" as she called him and wondered what would become of him after she had passed on. I have often been thankful that she never knew what did become of him.* Thus her life was spent passing the four score limit by 3 years and seven months. She is living on in the great beyond, and also in the lives and memories of those who knew her. Most of all in the memories of her descendants. No more fitting close could be given to this rambling epistle than Proverbs 31:10-31 in which the praise and properties of a good wife and mother are given.

*The reference here is to Grandmother Schultz's son (the author's father), Henry S. Schultz, who was killed in an accident at his gristmill in Hereford, Pa. in 1935, when he was seventy years old.
FORMAT CHANGE

Beginning with volume 40 (1990-91), Pennsylvania Folklife will publish three issues a year: Autumn, Winter, and Spring. This will enable us to maintain our subscription price of $10.00 a year, even though publishing costs and postal rates have increased substantially over the past several years.

NEW CIVIL WAR HISTORY AVAILABLE

Volume II, The Battle of Olustee, the first of the new, four volume The Civil War in Florida, A Military History (Library of Congress #89-062014) to be available, deals with Florida's only major Civil War battle. Fought on February 20, 1864, the battle involved more than 10,000 Union and Confederate troops, with 3,000 casualties occurring in a four-hour period. Approximately one third of the Union troops (and casualties) were members of Black Union regiments. For the total number of troops involved, it was one of the worst casualty rates of the war.

The book has been compiled from contemporary and primary materials in the form of letters, diaries, memoirs, letter books, unit histories, newspaper accounts, and official records. For price and ordering information, write or call: Lewis G. Schmidt, 124 N. West St. Side, Allentown, Pa. 18102. (215) 433-3851.

“OUR PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN HERITAGE”

From May 8 until June 3, 1990, there will be an exhibition entitled “Our Pennsylvania German Heritage” in the Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pa. In addition to a lecture at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 26, the exhibition will feature books, letters, papers, art, and artifacts from the Pennsylvania Folklife Society Collection housed in the College’s Myrin Library. Admission is free and a brochure is available. For more information call (215) 489-4111 ext. 2354.

MERCER MUSEUM FOLK FEST

The 17th annual Mercer Museum Folk Fest will be held, rain or shine, on Saturday, May 12 (10 a.m.-6 p.m.) and Sunday, May 13 (10 a.m.-5 p.m.) on the museum grounds in the center of Doylestown, Pa. Sponsored by the Bucks County Historical Society, which owns and operates the museum, the festival will have approximately one hundred craft persons demonstrating 18th and 19th century skills. The Mercer Museum, 84 Pine St., Doylestown, Pa. 18901. (215) 345-0210.

PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN STUDIES COURSES AVAILABLE

The following courses in Pennsylvania German Studies are now offered through the Evening Division of Ursinus College, Collegeville, Pa. 19426. Persons interested should write to the college or call (215) 489-4111 ext. 2218 for more information.

201. Pennsylvania German Culture
Study of the history, language and culture of the Pennsylvania Germans, their influence on American life and contributions to the American scene in 17th & 18th centuries. Readings, lectures, discussion and folk performances on campus. Fall Semester. TUESDAY EVENINGS (7:00 p.m.). Three hours per week. Three semester hours.

202. Pennsylvania German Culture
Study of the history, language and culture of the Pennsylvania Germans in 19th & 20th century America; the diaspora and status of women among the Pennsylvania Germans. Spring Semester. TUESDAY EVENINGS (7:00 p.m.). Three hours per week. Three semester hours.
The Festival and its Sponsorship

The Kutztown Folk Festival is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Folklife Society, a nonprofit educational corporation affiliated with UR SINUS COLLEGE, Collegeville, Pennsylvania. The Society's purposes are threefold: First, the demonstrating and displaying of the lore and folkways of the Pennsylvania Dutch through the annual Kutztown Folk Festival; second, the collecting, studying, archiving and publishing the lore of the Dutch Country and Pennsylvania through the publication of PENNSYLVANIA FOLKLIFE Magazine; and third, using the proceeds for scholarships and general educational purposes at UR SINUS COLLEGE.

FOR THE FOLK FESTIVAL BROCHURE WRITE TO:

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