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Autumn 1992

THE TRUNK IN THE ATTIC
Contributors

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ROBERT L. LEIGHT, Ed.D., is professor of education at Lehigh University. He has served on the board of school directors of the Quakertown Community School District for ten years. Prior to teaching at Lehigh, he taught at Ursinus College, and as a secondary school teacher in Bucks County, Pa. His first eight grades of schooling were in a one-room school in Richland Township.

AMOS W. LONG, JR. is a farmer and retired teacher who holds degrees from Lebanon Valley College and Temple University. He is a recognized authority on Pennsylvania German culture and has contributed numerous articles and photographs to Pennsylvania Folklife and other regional periodicals and newspapers over the last three decades. He is the author of The Pennsylvania German Family Farm (published by the Pennsylvania German Society), and Farms and Their Buildings (Applied Arts Publishers), both published in 1972.

ROBERT P. STEVENSON has contributed many previous articles to Pennsylvania Folklife. A journalism graduate of Pennsylvania State University in 1930, he worked as a newspaperman in his early years. At the end of World War II, Popular Science Monthly employed him in New York City. He worked there in various editorial positions for twenty-seven years. He retired in 1972. Two years ago he moved from New Jersey to Greeley, Colorado.
AUTUMN 1992, VOL. 42, NO. 1

CONTENTS

2 The Trunk in the Attic Was a Window
   MARION LOIS HUFFINES

15 The Rural Pennsylvania-German Home
   and Family
   AMOS W. LONG, JR.

39 The Happy Story of Georges Creek
   ROBERT P. STEVENSON

44 Duties of a Rural School Board at the Turn
   of the Century
   ROBERT L. LEIGHT

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

CONTRIBUTORS
(Inside front cover)

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COVER:
“Often what we know is an accident of history; the
selection of records saved and ignorance of records
lost.” Preserved for more than a hundred years, one
family’s “trunk in the attic is a time capsule, a window
on the past that elaborates the historical record of a
family and town, revealing the reasons behind events and
infusing those events with the emotions of the individuals
who experienced them.”
Jacob Hesse brought the trunk with him from Germany. Jacob, who remained single, lived with his brother Francis and later with his nephew William Bower. The trunk is made of wood and covered with hide; it measures 32\" x 17\" x 14\". Jacob's initials decorate the lid. The trunk remains in the possession of William Bower's descendants today.

**THE TRUNK IN THE ATTIC WAS A WINDOW**

by Marion Lois Huffines

The conversation among the five of us at dinner began innocuously enough: small talk about how busy we all were. My hosts looked forward to my lecture to begin later in the evening, and I began to describe my research on the Pennsylvania Germans and their language. Then it happened. "My mother has a trunk in her attic with old German books and letters that no one can read!" exclaimed the woman sitting across the table. That revelation changed my plans for the next day and interrupted my research for months to come. The trunk in the attic is a time capsule, a window on the past that elaborates the historical record of a family and town, revealing the reasons behind events and infusing those events with the emotions of the individuals who experienced them. The purpose of this presentation is to describe how private and personal papers from the past elaborate and explain events recorded by the official records. If the understanding of the past rests on explanations for the choices that individuals make in their lives, then the trunk in the attic is more than vignettes from the history of one family. Trunks in attics collectively tell the story of whole social phenomena—in this case the story of the 19th-century immigration and integration of Germans into central Pennsylvania.

**THE FIND**

The trunk contained a number of letters. Three of them had been sent from Gau-Algesheim, a small town west of Mainz (Germany), to Francis Hessel of Potters Mills, Centre County, Pennsylvania. These letters, dated 1842, 1846, and 1855, were large pieces of paper folded several times; they had been sealed with wax. Other letters, dated 1845, 1846, 1858, and 1859, had been written by Francis Hessel of Potters Mills to family and friends in Gau-Algesheim, but because these were never finished and never sent, we have them today. Two of these letters became blotters and scratch paper for doodles and calculations. Another, rather remarkable letter dated 1871 and also incomplete, is addressed to a local newspaper. The trunk also contained a series of paper scraps and pieces dated variously from 1845 to 1879; these record business transactions: work done, money paid, or commodities received by the Francis Hessel family. Included, too, was an account book that provides in substantial detail the record of daily transactions carried out by the Hessel family. Approximately one hundred pages of entries record transactions from 1838 through 1867, with the most frequent entries for the 1840s and 1850s. The final set of handwritten papers, undated
Central and southeastern Pennsylvania had an active German press during the 19th century which served the German immigrant population and their immediate descendants. The Hessel family owned German books published in Lancaster, Lebanon, New Berlin, Chambersburg, and Pottsville.

and in an unknown hand, comprises nine pages of a fictional short story or perhaps novelette, an incomplete but engaging and humorous account of a 45-year-old bachelor's attempts to find a wife.

The books in the trunk, all published in the United States but in German and printed in Fraktur, the so-called Gothic print type, reveal broad interests in history, nature, health, and religion. Some are obviously school textbooks, primers and readers, with children's scribbles and names indicating at least temporary ownership. The collector of

Letters arrived sporadically in the 1840s and 1850s. Writers often complained at not having heard from loved ones for years at a time. These letters, dated 1845, 1846, and 1855, were sent from Gau-Algesheim, Germany, to Francis Hessel in Potters Mills, Pennsylvania. One was hand-carried part of the way by an immigrating bride of another family.

An unfinished letter from Francis Hessel to friends in Germany served as a blotter and paper for rough calculations. Found inserted in an account book, this letter tells us today how Hessel perceived life in his new home.
Jacob Hessel, a shoemaker, also worked with his brother Francis as a laborer on neighboring farms. His work contribution was carefully noted in the Hessel account book.

these books was obviously educated, intellectually active, and wealthy enough to have the leisure to read.

THE OFFICIAL SOURCES

Who were these people who wrote and received letters from Germany and read German books? What was the quality of life in Potters Mills, Pennsylvania, during the mid-19th century? The letters give few clues about actual relationships. The writers refer to brothers and sisters, but the letters mention most individuals as known inhabitants of the social landscape. The writers assume knowledge of relationships, context, and background, as persons who know each other naturally assume during ordinary discourse.

Genealogists are familiar with the agony and ecstasy of lost and found family data in official sources. Tracking the Hessel family, the writers of these letters and the readers of these books, was no less laborious and emotionally rewarding. A search of Centre County wills, census data, baptismal records, cemetery epitaphs, and obituaries produces the following information.1

Francis Hessel (1815-1887), a laborer and later a farmer, lived with his wife, Anna Mary Hessel (1815-1890), in Potters Mills, Centre County, Pennsylvania; they had no children. Jacob Hessel (1820-1908), Francis’s brother, was a shoemaker and lived with them; he remained single. The census data report others also living in the household: in 1860 we find Mary Hocht, thirteen years old, and William Bower, three years old. William Bower remained in the household through the 1870 and 1880 census and was ultimately the executor of Jacob Hessel’s will. From the wills of Francis and Jacob we learn that William Bower was a nephew to whom they both left property. Jacob also left money to nieces Mrs. Susan Koch and Mrs. Mary McKinney. The baptismal records of Emmanuel Church record Francis Hessel and his wife as sponsors for Francis, a son of Herman and Mary Salina Bower; a later entry shows Herman and Mary as parents of a son William. Various obituaries report the death of William Francis McKinney, son of Perry T. and Mary Vogt McKinney; another refers to Susan Koch as the daughter of Herman and Mary (Hessel) Bower; still another concerns George Landis, son of George and Mary (Hessel) Landis. From census data, we also learn that Francis and Jacob were born in Hesse-Darmstadt; that William Bower had foreign-born parents; a father from Bieren (Germany) and a mother from Hesse-Darmstadt. The pieces of the puzzle are there, but the connections are vague, hardly retrievable with any certainty. How does the family fit together?

THE WINDOWS—THE FAMILY

The story emerges—rich in its detail—from the trunk. While the official resources provide a disjointed framework, they do not tell the story of the people. The individuals with their hopes and anxieties, their convictions and insecurities, speak in the letters, while the rhythm of daily and seasonal happenings with the necessary cyclical tasks are revealed in the measured details of the account book.

Salome Hessel wrote her brother Francis from Gau-
In this letter dated November 4, 1846, Jacob and Salome express their hopes and anxieties before their imminent departure for America. "With longing I yearn for America to seek my home there."

Algesheim in September 1842: “For us the situation is still miserable and the best future is not open to us. For that reason, it is my wish and especially the wish of our brother Wendel sooner or later to leave our homeland and come to you.” We learn that Wendel, who is working with his first master in apprenticeship, has had to spend several weeks in military service in Alsace. Another brother, Joseph, has not yet completed his training as a carpenter, but he would also like to come to America.

The next letter, dated 1846, is written in part by Jacob Hessel, another brother, and in part by Salome. Jacob has already left his work and auctioned off his possessions. The issue now is logistics. “I wish that you would write one more time what the most necessary things are which I should bring: namely, bedsheet, linens, clothes, or other things.” Salome is almost desperate with anxiety. “When you write me, the main thing is that you tell me exactly how I should travel when I arrive in New York. Perhaps by train to Philadelphia, then to Lancaster and Harrisburg or some other way. Tell me exactly! Best of all for me would be if Jacob would be in New York when I arrive.” The reasons for the emigration are clearly economic and political. Jacob writes Francis the unhappy details. “Our grain turned out very badly this year as in the previous year such that one often got only a little bit from a pile.” The one bright note also turns flat: “This year our wine is one of the best kind. It is even better than the one in [18]34. One hears that few people buy it because the speculators believe that the people with the least property should get the lowest price.” We also learn that Joseph has been drafted into the military and has disappeared, and that Wendel is traveling from place to place to do his work.

Wendel, who never emigrated, writes in 1855 from Gau-Algesheim. He has since married the daughter of a shoemaker and had two children, one of whom (Jacob’s godchild) died. He has not heard from Joseph in six years. He knows that Francis has married and complains, “You have not written us at all how you are and where you found a wife and what her name is ... and also what kind of a husband Salome has and how he is. Last year it was said that she married a Jew. And also whether Jacob is married.” Wendel’s personal loss of his emigrated siblings becomes poignantly clear in his request: “Dear brother, my great wish now would be that you would send me a portrait. You do not need to have it framed because of the postage. I am now the only one in Germany, and this would be so that I can remember now and then my brothers and sister.” His complaints also reflect hardship: “Everything is so expensive that one must work diligently in order to survive.”

On the American side of the ocean, Francis Hessel takes deep interest in the economic and political life of both his old and new homeland. No evidence suggests that he ever became politically active. In the letters that he writes but never sends we find a preoccupation with the price of goods as well as with political rights. In a letter dated 1845 to friends and acquaintances, Francis offers a lesson in American civics. “The people all have a right to elect a president for four years long. The people have two parties,
the one is the Whigs and the other the Democrat party. In the meantime when things were not the best, the South went to the Whigs, who promised the people 2 dollars a day and roast beef to boot, but they were unable to keep their promise. The times got worse then from 1840 to 1844 when farm workers earned 25 cents. . . . It's the same everywhere in the world, but there is a difference, and the difference is that everyone can say what he thinks and may say the truth against the officials. Everything gets into the newspapers and is made known to the people as the people want it. That is the biggest part of freedom, freedom of the press and freedom of contentment.”

Francis laments the lack of unity displayed among Germans, both in Europe and America. He accuses the Germans of disparaging one another in name calling: “...‘you dumb Schwanian’; ‘you blind Hessian’; ‘you Bavarian’; ‘you sly Prussian’; ‘you blunderer.’ And how does it look for German unity and brotherly love at home? Oh, dark enough. . . . It is a powerful obstacle from which Germany must fight to free itself.” The letter ends with Francis’s admonition and a political survival policy: “Remember your situation in Germany and its current inhabitants so that you silence the differences. It cannot always be straight, sometimes it must be crooked, even in the world where humans are. Where humans are, nothing is perfect, and you yourself are not perfect and do not always do what is right. Take therefore my well-meant advice: don’t see everything you observe, don’t listen to everything you hear, and don’t say everything you think.” Francis never sent his advice, at least not in this letter, but the sentiments reveal a man deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of friends still in the old homeland. He appreciates the benefits of the imperfect Union of his new homeland, valuing freedom of the press as crucial to guarding the freedom he enjoys.

A fragment dated January, 1846, picks up the political theme of the 1845 letter. Because only half of the page survives, the context is lost, but the concerns are clear. The fragment expresses his more personal concerns: “It was a good harvest and everything was plentiful for us [so] that no one complained, but I can hardly open a newspaper without reading that the whole of Europe is suffering from hunger and also a poisonous sickness. For that reason, I would like to hear something about that from you, whether it is true or not.” Troubled that he may have given a too optimistic picture of life in the United States, he append the prices of certain commodities within the context that earnings average one dollar per day without board, and fifty cents with board, “if a man has work. He does not always have a day of work.”

Francis Hessel began these letters in June, 1858, and February, 1859. He never sent them; someone put them into the trunk, and they are therefore preserved for us today.
The rolling hills of Penn’s Valley bounded by gentle mountain ridges are not unlike the landscape of the Hessel German homeland, Gau-Algesheim, in what was then called Hesse-Darmstadt.

The Hessel property, indicated by the arrow, is entered on this 1874 map and also on an earlier 1861 map of the area. The property is located west of Potters Mills toward the present-day village of Tusseyville.

THE COMMUNITY

Centre County was established by an Act of Assembly and approved February 13, 1800 from parts of Mifflin, Northumberland, Lycoming, and Huntingdon Counties. The village of Potters Mills is located at the foot of Tussy Mountain in Penn’s Valley. Maynard’s 1877 volume, Industries and Institutions of Centre County, reports Potters Mills as having thirty-five to forty buildings and 130 inhabitants. Maps from 1861 and 1874 place the Hessel farm to the west of Potters Mills toward present-day Tusseyville, then called Churchtown. In the 1860 census Francis’s real estate is valued at $600. According to Maynard, production of rye for the county exceeded that of wheat until 1850, after which time the wheat surplus was shipped to various markets. By 1870, corn was the leading crop.
The Hessel account book provides careful documentation of commodities received and services rendered. Accounts were settled annually, at which time money exchanged hands if necessary. Individual families each had their own set of pages, as in this example of entries for John Wagner.
Hessel’s account book and its record of his place in the Potters Mills’ economy picks up at a time before it is clear that he owned land. The account book, in general, contains lists of commodities received from an individual or family of a neighboring farm on one page, the facing page indicating labor rendered to the same family. Francis often indicates a monetary value for both commodity and labor. Accounts are settled once a year, at which time money changes hands. As laborers, Francis Hessel, his brother Jacob, and his wife Anna Mary participate fully in this rural economy. The account book lists transactions in detail; examples illustrate the format:

April 15, 1843, received of Friedrich Arnold, 2 bushels of wheat
April 21, 1843, received of Peter Wolf, 13 1/2 pounds of smoked meat
May 11, 1843, received from John Braun, 1 cow at a cost of $10
July 30, 1844, worked for John Wagner, 3/4 day binding oats
September 4, 1844, worked for John Braun, 1 day loading manure
January 6, 1845, settled account with John Wagner, the remainder of 5 dollars and 2 cents, say I
October 6, 1845, worked for John Farner, made one basket for 87 1/2 cents
February & March, 1848, received from Barnhart Wagner, 14 bushels of corn on cobs for $3.50
March 8, 1849, received from John Wagner, 3 bushels wheat for $3
June 6, 1851, given to Jacob Triester, 15 3/4 pounds ham, 2 bushels potatoes, 12 bushels wheat

Salome, seeking a better life for herself in America, experienced the hardships suffered by many immigrants, including in her case the deaths of three husbands and a child. Like other immigrants, she also endured economic uncertainty and the lack of an extended family network. It was her descendants who realized her dream of a more abundant life.

As was typical for farmers in rural areas at the time, the Hessels also worked on occasion for the township, digging and filling ditches, shoveling, and doing road work. The account book also records transactions at local stores that include purchases of cloth, ribbon, coffee, tobacco, sugar, salt, spices, nails, lumber, and boots. For the modern reader, the account book essentially describes the unfolding movement of life in the rural town, the active participation in a network of mutual dependencies often at a level of detail carefully reckoned to the half cent. It reveals the rhythm of the farm calendar with its cycles of planting, harvesting, and threshing; it demonstrates the relationship of the town to the surrounding farms and indicates the work rendered to the township for the good of the commonweal. All of this activity occurs within a context in which individuals value fairness and justice and respect personal rights and responsibilities.

What about Salome? We will never know if someone met her in New York, but we do know that she lived a relatively eventful life in Potters Mills. Mary Salome Hessel [Vogt, Bower, Landis] was born in 1825 in Hesse-Darmstadt and died in 1900 in Potters Mills. A sister to Francis and Jacob Hessel and the mother of their heir, what do all those names mean for her life? The trunk in the attic only provides some tantalizing, uninterpretable clues to the official records. She was twenty-one in 1846 when she arrived in the United States and settled in Potters Mills. We can assume that she married Peter Vogt, who was natively German, soon after her arrival because a daughter of that union ["Mary Hocht"] was thirteen in 1860. Vogt died early in the marriage, and when a Vogt relative died in Germany, consternation arose on both sides of the ocean regarding his estate. Salome then married Hermann Bower, also a German, and they had a son Francis, born in 1853, and a son William, in 1856. Hermann and his son Francis both died in 1857. Salome’s brother Francis writes of her in 1859, “Because we do not live among relatives as you do, she has endured hard times, and all that she can do is merely stand at the washtub and earn a living.” The 1860 census lists Salome as a servant living with her six-year-old daughter in the household of an innkeeper. In that household also was George Landis, a weaver, whom Salome married and who lived until 1895; they had two daughters and a son.
Salome (Mary Landis) is buried with her third husband in the Emmanuel Union Church cemetery. She met George Landis while working at an inn owned by William Bell.

Salome left Germany because of economic hardship and a bleak future. The hope of a better future on American soil was perhaps not realized in quite the way she may have envisioned. Husbands and children died, changing the configuration of family responsibilities; survival itself necessitated hard work. But Salome is the female progenitor of all the descendants from this line in the United States. True, the Hessel name of the patriarchal lineage was lost in this country, but her children, her children's children, and their children in turn, flourished, and flourish. Salome did not realize the immigrant dream herself, but her descendants achieved a more secure and abundant existence than she could ever have imagined. Salome became a contributing participant in the community, sharing in the network of mutual exchanges and responsibilities, and she is ultimately a founding mother for a segment of Potters Mills.

THE LANGUAGE
The trunk in the attic provides a fascinating window to the mid-19th century central Pennsylvania community through the language of its contents. In fact, the trunk probably exists because the language of the letters and books was inaccessible to the present owners, who were reluctant to discard what might prove valuable. The documents are also largely inaccessible to modern German speakers who were not trained to read the old German cursive script. Because the letters originating in Potters Mills reflect a regional German dialect influenced by English, readers of standard German may also find themselves at a loss.

The German language in central Pennsylvania has a history spanning more than 200 years, and one can still find today enclaves of speakers who retain the German dialect commonly known as Pennsylvania Dutch. These speakers, often referred to by their religious affiliation, include Lutherans and members of the Reformed Church as well as Amish and Mennonites. The Pennsylvania Dutch are descendants of 18th-century German immigrants to
southeastern and central Pennsylvania, and their language is most closely related to the southern German dialect of the Palatinate. The language that the Hessels brought with them to Potters Mills in the 19th century was a west middle (central) German dialect that shares a number of features with varieties of Pennsylvania Dutch. The letters and the account book reflect the Rhine Franconian dialect of the area from which the Hessels emigrated in the spellings (which give us hints of how the Hessels pronounced their words), and in their choice of vocabulary.

Spelling inconsistencies are not unusual in informal writing even today, when English and German have a strong prescriptive tradition, and when speakers benefit from rather insistent language teachers at school. By the mid-19th century, German spelling can be considered standardized, and some spelling variants clearly reflect a hurried hand and offer no insight into dialect features: missing umlauts, doubled letters written only once and single letters doubled, the lack of "h" as a vowel length indicator, and missing pieces of words, such as the final syllable in the past participle gearbeitet (worked) spelled gearbeit. Recurring inconsistencies in written texts usually reflect tension between the conventionalized standard and the speaker's/writer's own regional dialect. For example, in the Hessel documents originating in Potters Mills, one finds a frequent interchange of spellings p, t, and k with b, d, and g respectively, and k and g with ch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hessel Spelling</th>
<th>Standard German</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blanzen</td>
<td>pflanzen</td>
<td>plant (vb.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebel</td>
<td>Äpfel (dia. Äppel)</td>
<td>apples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dag</td>
<td>Tag</td>
<td>day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ernde</td>
<td>Ernte</td>
<td>harvest (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>betenkt</td>
<td>bedenkt</td>
<td>consider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treschen</td>
<td>dreschen</td>
<td>thresh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraben</td>
<td>Graben</td>
<td>dash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kifftige</td>
<td>gifftige</td>
<td>poisonous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gleider</td>
<td>Kleider</td>
<td>clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeuchen</td>
<td>Zeugen</td>
<td>witnesses (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reitlich</td>
<td>reichlich</td>
<td>richly, amply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beknüpfe</td>
<td>begnüge</td>
<td>satisfied (vb.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These interchanges carry over into the spelling of English loan words: caundi (county); Daunschib (township); egspenses (expenses) (Eng. "x" = "ks"); Gwilt (quilt); brestedent (president); grettit (credit). One can assume they spoke English with a German accent.

The recurring interchange in spellings indicates that the sounds represented by those spellings were identical, a dialect feature that linguists call the neutralization of the lenis-fortis distinction between the stop consonant series b, d, g and p, t, k. In addition, the non-initial stops k and g are often realized as the velar fricatives 'ch', phonetically [x] or [r]. The features represented by these spellings as well as the uses of punt and Äppel for Pfand and Äpfel indicate a phonology characteristic of a Rhine Franconian German dialect.

Vocabulary items also place the dialect of the letters and account book writers in the Rhine Franconian area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect Word</th>
<th>Standard German</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bu</td>
<td>Junge</td>
<td>boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petter</td>
<td>Pate</td>
<td>godchild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frucht</td>
<td>Getreide</td>
<td>grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinkel</td>
<td>Huhn</td>
<td>chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korn</td>
<td>Roggen</td>
<td>rye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grumbeere</td>
<td>Kartoffeln</td>
<td>potatoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Hessels may have adopted some of these forms from Pennsylvania Dutch as they also adopted Welschkorn (corn), Wannes (man's jacket), and Ladwarig (cottage cheese).

More telling of the integration of the Hessels into the economy of the community is not only the substance of the account book, but the profound effect that the language of the economy had on their dialect. The Hessels maintained the account book in German in their German script, but the entries reveal the adoption of English language measures and work-naming conventions:

**Hessel Formulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Meaning</th>
<th>German Meaning</th>
<th>Dialect Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>help butcher</td>
<td>helfen butschenen</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 feet 3/4 inch board</td>
<td>11 Fus 3/4 zoll bort</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 barrels cider</td>
<td>zwei Berl Seiter</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help make a fence</td>
<td>helfen fens machen</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 settled (an account)</td>
<td>habe ich . . . gesetelt</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one load of wood</td>
<td>ein loth Holz</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help to schock (wheat)</td>
<td>helfen schaken/schachen</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>build a shanty</td>
<td>helfen ein Schante bauen</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wagner's account</td>
<td>John Wagner sein ekaunt</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one load of shoes</td>
<td>ein par Schu gesold</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 bushel corn on cobs</td>
<td>8 buschel Welschkorn in Kolwen</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credit from the year</td>
<td>grettit vom jar</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paid and settled</td>
<td>bezalt und versetelt</td>
<td>Hessel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because language reflects both the personal and communal history of its speakers, the language of the letters and account book verifies what we already know about the Hessels. Their writing exhibits features of the dialect from the Rhine area from which they emigrated. That dialect came into contact with English, the result of which one sees in loan words from English, attempts to spell English by German conventions, and forced translations from English that Germans would not use (ex. ein par Schu gesold).

One of the more revealing among the Hessel letters in the trunk is one written from Potters Mills to The Democratic Watchman, a local newspaper. The writer of this letter is unknown because the writing cannot be identified when compared to other available documents. The letter, incomplete and unsent, is unusual because it is written in
A letter to the Democratic Watchman complains about a high property assessment. The language of the letter indicates that the writer was a native German speaker who was literate only in English.

German using English conventions. The writer is someone who is a native speaker of German but is literate only in English, i.e., a product of the American school system, which ignored ethnic background in its delivery of education, including its teaching of reading and writing. The writer complains that his land has been too highly assessed:

Ich habe die bar zeile geschrieben ob es kein mitel gibt den sache abzuhelpen den ihr habt ja das serbuch da könt ir sehen wie ungleig es ist einer ale tage da bei ist der sol es doch wisen oder helft einer dem andern ales auf den armen zu thun Da ist mein Nagbar Jakob Triester hat das säme land ist 200 $ gesest und so ale meine Nagbaren die sachen er sebse ich bin zu hoch gesest.

Approximate translation:

I have written the lines above to find out whether there is a way to help out the situation. You have the assessment book and you can see how unfair it is. Someone is at it every day, he should know this or does one help the other to heap everything on the poor? My neighbor Jacob Triester had the same land at 200 $ just and so we meine Nagbaren die sachen es selbst ichbin zu hoch gesest.

In bilingual communities in the American context, a minority language among immigrants quickly becomes restricted in its functions. It serves the family and their friends of like background, but it gives way to the majority language for education, economic transactions, and inter-
actions with social institutions, such as the church, bank, and government agencies. While speakers in homogeneous small communities which are also relatively self-sufficient can maintain a minority language indefinitely, as have some Pennsylvania Dutch communities, the situation of the Hessels is really quite different. They immigrated into a small town with its social conventions already established. Their task was to fit into what was already there, not to colonize a new frontier as its first settlers. This is especially true linguistically. We know that William Bower refused to speak German to his children; his daughters knew German words and used them to tease their grandchildren, but already by the third generation German had ceased to function as the language of the home. Without a function which it uniquely serves, a language falls into disuse. As speakers use it less, children have little chance to learn it because they hear it so seldom. Soon (within three, often two, generations) the language is not heard at all.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIND
What does it mean to find a trunk in the attic? There are personal responses for the family, the descendants of Salome Hessel: roots made manifest, memories restored, explanations found for family ways of being and believing. There are community responses for the town, Potters Mills: a piece of its history brought to life, the demonstration of the past interconnectedness of its citizens to each other and of the town to its the rural hinterland; the appreciation of the ethnic diversity of foreign peoples who formed the town, changing the town and being changed by the town. The German influence in central Pennsylvania is unmistakable. One cannot overestimate how much immigrants such as the Hessels contributed to the growth of towns like Potters Mills, a contribution characterized by ethnic features that endure to the present time.

There is a scholarly response. Often what we know is an accident of history; the selection of records saved and
ignorance of records lost. The larger analysis of regional and national economies, of social movements, class structures, and language choices must rest on the understanding of countless micro-interactions: individuals made choices and lived out the consequences. Some things we will never know, and we will observe consequences without context or explanation. Family mysteries will remain unresolved and social movements without identifiable impetus, unless someone finds a trunk in the attic. . . .

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
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ENDNOTES
1 The spelling of names in both official and personal sources varies. One cannot rely on exact spellings as literal facts but must interpret them along with all other information handed down from the past.
2 D. S. Maynard, Industries and Institutions of Centre County (Bellefonte, Pa.: Richie & Maynard, 1877), p. 195.

Jacob Hessels name is written on the inside cover of Allegemeine Geschichte der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika (General History of the United States of America) by C.B. Taylor and published in 1845. The German is a translation of an English edition. The Hessels maintained an active interest in political events in both their old and new homelands.
A typical large, two-and-one-half story Pennsylvania-German stone home located in S. Lebanon Township, northwest of Quentin, Pa. Note central chimney, sandstone quoining at corners, inscription and decoration in upper gable, and flat arch at lower windows. (All photographs by the author, unless otherwise noted)

As has been the case in the larger society, family-life patterns among rural Pennsylvania Germans have changed more during the past fifty years than in any other comparable time period. Several generations ago such families were patriarchal, closely knit economic units. Slaves were not kept, servants were few, and money was scarce, so all work was done by family members, with each having assigned duties. There was division of labor according to sex, age, and ability, but everyone was expected to work hard as a matter of necessity; indolence was not tolerated.

Strong religious as well as economic bonds helped hold the family together. The sanctity of the marriage vow meant marriage was a lifetime undertaking, entered into at a rather early age by both sexes. Husband and wife were one—the woman bound by Biblical injunction—with the woman’s rights surrendered. Legally her existence was incorporated or consolidated into that of her husband. She had no right to make contracts, own property, or retain her own earnings. And, under common law, a husband had the legal right to “chastise” his wife.
Class consciousness among rural and urban dwellers has now largely disappeared, but prior to the turn of the twentieth century country folks, many of whom had feelings of inferiority, were characteristically very suspicious of city people. And it was not only city dwellers rural Pennsylvania Germans tried to avoid, for they generally tended to limit their interests and contacts. Many knew little of life beyond their immediate hamlet, village, or valley, and confined their visits to the local store, church, post office, blacksmith, and mill.

Politics and religion, however, have always been matters of great concern because of economic and moral issues. The sale of intoxicating beverages, for example, was carefully controlled by the local citizenry, who often voted to keep saloons out. With strong convictions against slavery, many otherwise law-abiding rural residents became involved in the Underground Railroad movement, which helped large numbers of slaves to escape north. And, except for members of German sectarian groups with religious convictions against war, the great majority of rural Pennsylvania Germans volunteered or were drafted into military service.

LANGUAGE

Determination and a deep-rooted conservatism enabled early Pennsylvania-German settlers—many of whom had immigrated before the French and Indian War—to cling to the use of the Pennsylvania German dialect; Pennsylvania was the only colony that was bilingual. The Pennsylvania German dialect is, for the most part, the dialect of the Palatinate and nearby areas, including a portion of Switzerland. (Even today, anyone of Pennsylvania-German descent who has any comprehension of the dialect will have little if any difficulty in understanding the vernacular, or in making themselves understood while traveling in the Rhine Valley in southwestern Germany.)

Although modified and Anglicized in Pennsylvania, until the beginning of the 20th century, when the latter process accelerated (due to the intermingling of students in consolidated schools), the number of English and other loan words in the dialect was relatively small. Their use was—and is—sometimes because no dialect equivalent existed, or because of a failure to recall the correct dialect word or phrase. As spoken in the state, the dialect differs only slightly from county to county according to the area of origin of the first settlers. Moreover, a Pennsylvanian familiar with the dialect would have little or no difficulty being understood in the farthest reaches of the German-settled areas of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, or in Canada's Kitchener, Ontario, region.

The dialect was spoken not only by descendants of the original German settlers, but also by some of their English, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, and French Huguenot neighbors; by some Negroes who adopted many Pennsylvania-German customs; and by Gypsies, some of whom had emigrated from the Rhineland area of Germany. Frequently this was

Added to the fact that there were then few opportunities for women to earn a living outside the home, it is not surprising that they very rarely left their husbands; to do so would have made them social and legal outcasts. These injustices were slightly modified by the middle of the nineteenth century, and by the turn of the century married women had gained the same rights as unmarried women.

Children usually came soon after marriage—and often—and families with from eight to fourteen offspring were not uncommon. A large family was desirable for it gave a definite economic advantage; children contributed labor and outside earnings to the family until they reached the age of majority or married. They learned to respect their elders, to work, and to accept responsibility early in life. Most, by the time they left home, had repaid by their labor the cost of their upbringing. When children married, however, they were usually given an endowment to begin married life.

For many rural Pennsylvania-German families the day began early and ended late, with chores to be done before daybreak and after dark. Holidays and vacations were few (if any), and men frequently supported their families by long hours of arduous labor. Guided by the Biblical injunction "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, . . . " it was their obligation to teach by example and they did it well. As one observer noted: "The Germans take great pains to produce, in their children, not only habits of labor, but a love of it. ' . . . To fear God, and to love work' are the first lessons they teach their children." A woman's work was also continuous and exhausting. Managing a household meant cleaning, cooking, baking, gardening, preserving (food and herbs), and making as well as laundering clothes. With so much to do, little time was wasted and her hands were rarely idle; even when sitting she would mend, darn, or knit. A mother was also responsible for teaching her daughters, who learned by doing domestic chores. Girls began to prepare early for marriage by making such necessary household items as blankets, sheets, and pillow cases. They might also be taught how to make patchwork quilts and colorful samplers. These, along with dishes and other small items collected through the years, became part of their dowry.

Rural Pennsylvania-German families lived an independent life but their cash earnings were meager; most had incomes of only several hundred dollars a year until the beginning of the twentieth century. Many raised a hog, kept some hens for eggs and meat, and grew their own potatoes. Others got meat, eggs, and milk from neighboring farmers. The store and tavern keeper, the doctor and the minister (among others) were frequently paid in produce and/or articles of household manufacture. As old wills, estate inventories, and public sale bills show, little cash money circulated and few accumulated many worldly possessions. Wealth was expressed in such tangible things as land, animals, equipment, and tools. The chief hope of gain lay in increasing property values.
Most rural Pennsylvania Germans raised a hog, kept some hens for eggs and meat, and grew their own potatoes. Chickens and chicken houses are clearly visible in this view of Miner’s Village in the Cornwall area of Lebanon County. (Courtesy of Jay Angelo)

the result of working and playing together, or because of intermarriage.

Because conversation in the home was in the dialect, until the early part of the last century there were numerous children who knew only Pennsylvania German when they reported for school on the first day. There, instruction was in English, but the dialect was often spoken during recess. In fact, until the end of the 19th century many weekly newspapers were printed in German, and most or all of the services of the Lutheran and Reformed churches were conducted in German. This was because many members, particularly the more conservative ones, felt their language and their religion were inseparable.

The dialect continues to be heard in the home and in the marketplace. In a store, for example, it is not unusual to hear an older salesman and customer conversing in it, for particularly in rural areas there are still large numbers who can speak English (the dominant language among Pennsylvania Germans), but who prefer to use the dialect and are more competent in it. There is another large group who do not habitually use the dialect, but who can make themselves understood in it; and still another group who can understand but not speak it. Then there are those who can neither understand nor speak it, but whose accent or intonation and difficulty with the correct pronunciation of certain letters and blends makes their German background very evident.

Vehement and earthy (it has many curse words), Pennsylvania German loses much of its flavor when translated, and is primarily a spoken language. Although there is a great deal of written and printed dialect material, the lack of a standard spelling practice has always been a hindrance. No longer used in the homes of younger Pennsylvania Germans, it appears that by the end of this century or soon thereafter, it will be spoken only by certain ultra-conservative religious groups such as the Amish.

SUPERSTITION

The extreme conservatism of the Pennsylvania Germans has already been noted. As a result of it they were generally slower than most of their neighbors in accepting new ideas and adopting new practices. A traditional approach based on accumulated experience and sometimes on superstition—which was rampant—ruled and guided their behavior. (While this approach sometimes hindered efficiency, it also sometimes enabled them to avoid disastrous consequences.) Many of their superstitious beliefs were brought from Europe, a survival of the mythology of their Teutonic forebears who dwelt in or near the Black Forest and Harz Mountain regions and along the Rhine and Neckar Rivers. In Pennsylvania they were passed from one generation to another by word of mouth.

The most extreme manifestation of superstition among the Pennsylvania Germans was a belief in witchcraft. Some thought that there were individuals who could at will change themselves into an animal or bird in order to bedevil man and beast. Thus, when a calamity afflicted a family it was frequently ascribed to the spells of some unusual, disliked, or antisocial individual in the neighborhood. Recourse was through a witch doctor who initiated a series of counter charms designed to neutralize the witch’s evil influence. If the threat were to livestock, for example, it was thought that cutting an encircled geometric design into the lintel above the stable doorway would prevent animals from getting sick or being nonproductive.

The use of magic formulas and incantations was common among the Pennsylvania Germans and had its origins in the ignorance and superstition of the Middle Ages. Pow-wowing (Braucherei), a form of faith healing, is in some ways similar to the magic practiced by Indian medicine men. The pow-wow doctor or healer (braucher) must learn the art from one of the opposite sex in order to be effective,
and in most instances patients are also of the opposite sex. During the early part of the nineteenth century a book with explicit instructions for occult cures of the ills of man and beast, Hohman’s Brauch Bickley, was widely distributed in German-settled areas of Pennsylvania. (A reprint, entitled Der Lang Verborgene Freund, appeared about the middle of the century.) Such practices did effect cures in some instances.

Many families, particularly in rural areas, were guided by almanac prognostications (Kalender Aberglaube) based on the phases of the moon and other heavenly bodies, and on the signs of the zodiac. Many of the proverbs, adages, omens, and superstitions handed down from generation to generation had astrological connotations, and almanacs were the chief repositories of this lore. In the older German almanacs certain days were denoted as lucky or unlucky. A person born on an unlucky day was supposedly doomed to poverty, while marriages and other contracts entered into on such days were believed to be doomed to certain failure.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the waxing and waning of the moon was believed to exert a strong influence on all the phenomena of nature, but especially on animal and vegetable life. This was not only a cardinal belief among rural inhabitants, it was accepted and supported by many of the learned men of the time. It meant that frequently domestic and agricultural tasks were undertaken only when the moon was thought to be in a propitious phase. At such times fences were built, hens set, cattle and hogs slaughtered, meat cured, vinegar barrels filled, fruit trees pruned, firewood cut, weeds destroyed, manure spread, and crops planted and harvested.

The latter were thought to be particularly amenable to lunar influence. Many believed that planting under the supposedly fruitful sign of Cancer rather than under the sign of Leo (considered barren) would result in better crop yields with less damage from disease and insects. Other commonly held beliefs concerning the moon said that grains and other above-ground crops should be planted in the waxing (light) of the moon, while root crops should be planted in the waning (dark) of the moon; that wheat sown in the waning quarter would be likely to smut; that apples picked in the dark of the moon would rot quickly; that slaughtering should be done in the waxing of the moon or during the full moon when there would be less dehydration, resulting in moister, juicier meat; that during the new moon hens should be set only with an odd number of eggs; and that roofs should be shingled when the “horns” of the moon pointed down, for if they pointed up the shingle butts would also turn up.

Although scientific experiments completely refuted the popular belief in lunar influence, there were many adherents until well into the nineteenth century, and remnants of superstition continue to exist even now. There are still those among older Pennsylvania Germans who continue to check the signs of the zodiac and phase of the moon in the almanac before proceeding with certain chores.

**HYGIENE**

In early rural Pennsylvania-German homes facilities for personal hygiene were few; pure water was as essential then as it is now, but its supply was generally not as abundant or as convenient as it is today. In most early communities water was supplied by a hand-dug well from ten- to thirty- or more feet deep, with a sweep, a windlass and rope, or a hand pump. The well was stoned-up to keep it from falling in. Although there were privately owned

Most rural Pennsylvania-German houses had no running water until the beginning of the 20th century. Pumps like these had to be primed with a bucket of water in dry weather and thawed out with hot water in the winter. (Walter W. Calvert. All the Calvert illustrations herein are reprinted by special permission from the Farm Journal; copyright held by Farm Journal, Inc.)
As shown here, housewives made their own soap for many, many years; it was used to clean clothes and people. (W. W. Calvert)

wells, many had to rely on a public well or spring located somewhere in the village. Before being conducted into individual houses, spring water would be made to flow from its source to a common trough—again located somewhere near the center of the village—where users came several times a day to supply their needs.

Continuous pipes to carry water were first made from logs with holes bored through them from end to end; one end was cone shaped and it fit tightly into a cone cup on the end of another log. This prevented leakage. White pine was preferred because it was soft, easier to bore than most wood, and logs of it were readily available in a uniform diameter. Logs ten feet or more in length were used, and the holes bored through them were an inch or larger in diameter, depending on the water pressure and the distance the water was to be transported.

In the earliest years of German settlement in Pennsylvania, when clothes had to be washed in nearby streams, laundering was a monthly or semimonthly chore. Later it was done weekly, with water heated on the stove for the job. Some kitchen ranges had a water jacket, partly or completely filled, in which water was heated and kept warm, but wash water was usually heated in a large boiler. Many families filled the wash boiler before retiring on
Sunday evening and left it on the stove overnight so they could make an early start on Monday, the traditional wash day for most Pennsylvania-German families during the nineteenth century. Soapstone, rubbed on stains and spots (its powdery composition absorbed foreign matter) and a solid, homemade soap were used to get clothes clean.  

This homemade soap—made from fat rendered at butchering time and grease accumulated during cooking and from lye exuded from wood ashes—cleaned bodies as well as clothes. But bathing was not done as frequently in past years as it is at present. Particularly during the winter months, some individuals rarely washed at all except for their face and hands; many generations passed before the Saturday night bath became an established rural tradition. Eventually, though, the majority of country folk bathed regularly once a week by the kitchen fire in water heated in vessels in the fireplace or on the kitchen stove; a wash basin or a large wooden or metal tub was used for the purpose.  

Bathtubs of wood lined with tin or zinc came into use after 1850, but many were larger, wider, and deeper than necessary, and so were still uncommon in rural homes for many years, since most such homes had no running water until the beginning of the present century. In those hamlets or villages that had a public water supply, individual houses received it by gravity flow to a hand pump or faucet, or sometimes into an elevated storage tank located in the attic or outside the house. If the source of the water was high enough, it would flow into any area of the house.  

By 1900 cold water under pressure was often available in rural areas, but hot water still had to be made on the stove. It was now, though, that the more progressive and prosperous county homeowners began to install plumbing systems, bathrooms (with enamel- or porcelain-lined bathtubs), and cesspools, which were later supplanted by septic tanks. The elevated water-storage tank was now replaced with a pressure tank system located in the lowest part of the house; water was pumped into it first with a gas engine,
Wire-mesh screening became available after the Civil War and was a great help in keeping flies out of the house. A homemade brush was used to sweep them from the door before it was opened. (W. W. Calvert)

and later with an electric motor.

In spite of these advances, the privy or outdoor toilet continued to be used in rural Pennsylvania-German areas until the middle of this century, when water pressure became almost universally available. Government intervention also became a factor, for until then the principles of sanitation were not generally understood or observed by many. Frequently these outdoor facilities were located where seepage could readily contaminate the well or spring that supplied the family’s water.11

Insects were another threat to health; typhoid and malaria were prevalent. In fact, it has been said that they caused more fatalities among early settlers than Indians and wild beasts together. Not surprising since houses with unscreened doors and windows gave flies, gnats, and mosquitoes free access. Unsanitary conditions around the house made flies numerous, and the many forests and swamps were breeding grounds for gnats and mosquitoes. Such insects were at their worst after a rainy period, when their humming, biting, and sucking made them nearly intolerable. Aside from swatting, practically the only way to combat them was with smoke until after the Civil War when wire mesh screening became available. At that time, too, numerous flytraps and snares were invented to destroy those that still managed to gain entrance; these were available from door-to-door peddlers or at the general store. A poisonous flypaper also came on the market, but since it was harmful to humans as well as to flies it never became very popular, particularly with families having young children. Later a sticky, nonpoisonous flypaper (still in use), replaced it.

And, finally, on the subject of hygiene, while it can be said that the majority of rural Pennsylvania Germans practiced cleanliness to the extent that it was possible, it must also be noted that among some, an aversion to the use of water (externally and internally) remained, and many ills were ascribed to it. For years there was much controversy concerning the use of built-in bathtubs, with some in the medical field asserting that such bathing was conducive to inflammation and fever. Frequent and unnecessary bathing was frowned upon during the winter months except on medical advice, especially for those afflicted with lung or respiratory diseases. The result was that many older folk retained not only memories of earlier times, but habits from those times as well.

### ILLNESS AND TREATMENT

Even though rural residents were isolated and spent more time outdoors, statistics reveal that they suffered from sickness and disease more often than those who lived in...
urban areas. Many country people suffered from rheumatism and pneumonia because they were cold or wet much of the time, and smallpox, cholera, influenza, yellow fever, typhoid fever, bilious fever, tuberculosis (consumption), and measles took a heavy toll. Malarial fever, then called ague or chills, was a common and virulent disease, epidemic along rivers, streams, and undrained swamps; noxious vapors from decaying vegetation were thought to cause it. There was much ignorance about the causes of disease, and poor sanitation, contaminated water, and inadequate medical care all contributed to a low life expectancy. Unlike today, however, more men than women lived to old age. Outdoor labor was conducive to a vigorous constitution, and was relatively free of stress and tension. Women had their vitality drained by hard work coupled with early and continuous childbearing.

During the colonial period some rural doctors had little or no professional or formal training, while others had only a few years of apprenticeship with a practicing physician. Often considered ineffective and so held in low esteem, they might only be summoned as a last resort; some patients believed it safer to allow nature to take its course than to seek professional medical treatment. There was some justification for this feeling, for the country doctor's instruments were few, imperfect, and clumsy; and his remedies crude and drastic. Aside from diagnosing and treating illness, he extracted teeth, set broken bones, and amputated limbs. Since, however, it was considered inappropriate for a man to be present at childbirth, more children were brought into the world by midwives (usually older neighborhood women) than by doctors.

Surgeons during the colonial period were called barbers and leeches; their chief function aside from cutting hair was to let blood. They did this by making an incision with a scalpel or by applying leeches. The still occasionally seen red and white barber pole represents blood and bandages, and is a reminder of that period when bloodletting was thought to be a panacea for a great number of ills, and when bleeding, purging, and inducing vomiting were standard medical practices among physicians. Blood was drawn in the treatment of a number of widely different diseases and ailments (including fevers), whether or not a definite diagnosis had been made. The practice fell into disrepute before the mid-nineteenth century.

In some remote rural areas where many had no one but themselves and their neighbors to rely on, families might have a copy of John Tennant's Every Man His Own Doctor, or William Penn's Book of Physick. In such circumstances home diagnosis and self-administered medicines were the rule, and nearly every family had a supply of remedies, recipes, and treatments that had been passed on by word of mouth for many generations. Many of the ingredients for these medicines came from the family herb garden, in which were found such plants as hops, sage, rue, wormwood, tansy, peppermint, spearmint, catnip, thyme, horehound, camomile, mustard, rhubarb, yellow dock, comfrey, dill, and colt's foot, as well as many others. These were gathered in season and hung in the attic to dry, along with snakeroot, dandelion root, hepatica, motherwort, mullein, burdock, lobelia, pokeberry, blackberry, elderberry, bayberry, jimson, cinquefoil, sassafras, pennyroyal, goldenrod, cedar berries, wintergreen, walnut and wild cherry bark, white pine tips, and other plants taken from nearby pastures and woodlands and used for home remedies.

When there was sickness, various concoctions were brewed and bitter doses administered to the afflicted. Different parts—the roots, leaves, stems, flowers, seeds, and bark—of the collected plants were used to treat a long list of ills: fever, aches, pain, diarrhea, dysentery, constipation, swelling, consumption, frostbite, cold, sore throat, nosebleed, croup, worms, boils, burns, rashes, fits, weakness, kidney and back ailments, summer complaint, and wounds, cuts, punctures, and scratches (there were numerous accidents with knives, axes, scythes, sicks, pitchforks, and guns).

Much of the lore relating to the medicinal value of plants was derived from the Indians. Many believed that most native plants had specific medicinal properties, for under the ancient "Doctrine of Signatures" it was claimed that God had marked every plant with a specific sign, form, or color to indicate which human ill it would cure. Thus, if a plant or a part of a plant resembled a certain organ or part of the human body, it was considered a divinely appointed remedy for any disease or malfunction of it.

Nearly every home had a medicine chest, in which were stored homemade remedies in the form of elixirs, tinctures, balsams, drops, spirits, salves, tonics, teas, bitters, liniments, and other nostrums. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the sick were cared for primarily by the women of the family, who administered the above remedies liberally, along with hot baths, sweats, or poultices meant to cleanse the body of impurities. In the same way, patients drank elixirs and teas made from sheep, cow, and fowl dung so they would perspire and bring out rashes and other disruptive diseases.

In the spring a mother or grandmother might prescribe a dose of sulphur and molasses, thought to purify the blood; adults took draughts of "biters" for the same reason. Until the middle of the past century many rural children were made to wear medical amulets as protection against disease. A mixture of sulphur, camphor, and asafetida was enclosed in a small bag that was hung around the neck. The resulting stench seemed sufficient to keep all germs and viruses away, but children who suffered from colds despite this precaution would be given a large dose of castor oil, be made to soak their feet in hot mustard water before bedtime, and at bedtime have their chest and neck rubbed with goose grease and covered with a warm flannel cloth. Adults with colds often received the same treatment.

The era of patent medicine began in rural Pennsylvania-German areas shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century, when newspapers and almanacs began to be more widely read. Itinerant peddlers carried such remedies with
Itinerant peddlers carried a variety of goods including patent medicines which became available in rural Pennsylvania-German areas shortly after the beginning of the 19th century. (W. W. Calvert)

their assortment of wares, and they were also available by mail order and at the general store. Indian medicine men were believed to have medicines of great efficacy, and many claimed their patent medicines were based on the vast accumulation of knowledge acquired by and from the Indians. Most such products were advertised as a panacea for many ills, but were actually of little or no medicinal value. In fact, they were not as effective as home remedies, although they were expensive. But even when professional medical care had improved considerably, many credulous Pennsylvania Germans still relied on patent medicines and pow-wowing, rather than on the hard-working country doctor.

FOOD

For many Pennsylvania Germans the pleasure derived from preparing and eating good food is among the principal joys of life, and ranks high among topics of conversation. Indeed, many spend wakeful nights thinking of such foods. Among them, to set a good table is a matter of pride, and quality is, and always has been, combined with quantity. These sturdy people, whether on the farm or in the village, were hard workers and hearty eaters, men and women alike, and they did not stint themselves when food was involved. Enough always meant more than enough, and when making a meal Pennsylvania-German housewives were sure to peel an extra potato or two, and prepare an extra portion of meat. Most obeyed the Biblical injunction commanding them to be "... given to hospitality," and homes were open and meals gladly offered to neighbors and strangers. In fact, it was rare for visitors to leave such homes without being offered something to eat and drink.

The earliest settlers spent most of their time wresting a living from the wilderness, and for many years thereafter most of the food consumed by families living in small hamlets or villages was produced at home or secured nearby. Other than sugar, tea, coffee, condiments, and perhaps flour and molasses, very little was purchased. After the middle of the nineteenth century closed cooking stoves began to appear, and many rural women no longer had to cook on open fireplaces, which were now often boarded shut. It was at this time, too, that large iron, brass, and copper kettles began being replaced by smaller, lighter cooking utensils.

Until the present century, all three daily meals were much the same, with many consisting of one dish; quantity was thought to be more important than variety. In some homes food was eaten directly from the pot with long-handled spoons. Nor were individual drinking vessels commonly used. A gourd or large noggin or tankard was passed and each family member drank, completely unaware of the existence of germs.

Much early tableware—plates, bowls, cups, knives, and spoons—was made of wood. Hardwood trenchers, square, rectangular, and oval, and three or four inches deep, were used by many as substitutes for plates. There were some clay dishes, and cups and bowls of pewter, but very little glassware or china. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, light, plated tinware replaced pewter; plated silver came into use shortly thereafter. Spoons made of wood, horn, or metal were important since stew and porridge were often served, but forks were less common; early examples had two wide-spread tines and massive handles. Broad-bladed knives were also important since
For a very long time the most common way of preserving foods was by storing them in a house cellar or an outdoor cellar. Shown here are two interior views of a cave cellar (20 ft. long, 9 ft. wide, 6 ft. high) on the Harry Moyer homestead in Schaefferstown, Lebanon County. Note water trough (right photo), and full round stone arch, cooling closets, and vent (left).

Potatoes, cabbages, turnips, carrots, beets, corn, beans, peas, pumpkins, and squash were the vegetables commonly grown and eaten; all but the first two were sometimes in limited supply. Sometimes potatoes, cabbages, turnips, and other root vegetables were buried in pits for winter use, and sometimes foods were kept in springhouses or ice-houses, but for many, many, years the most common way of preserving foods was by storing them in a house cellar or an outdoor cellar. Meats, vegetables, fruits, milk, butter, and cheese were temporarily preserved in cellar areas, and cider, wine, sauerkraut, and apple butter were stored there as well. It was not until well into the nineteenth century that housewives began canning with hermetically sealed glass jars, but then it would not be uncommon for a woman to preserve as many as seven hundred jars of food each year.

While during the early years of colonization settlers

they were used not only to cut food, but to convey it to the mouth. (This required a certain amount of skill when foods like peas were involved.) Even today, there are still those among the older Pennsylvania-German folk who prefer to eat pie with a knife.

Although vitamins, minerals, and balanced diets were unheard of, rural families realized the importance of eating the proper foods, and adults and children alike looked forward anxiously to the first fresh fruits and vegetables of the season. Apples (eaten fresh or dried throughout the year), peaches, pears, plums, and cherries were generally available, and there was usually an adequate supply of berries (strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, huckleberries, elderberries, chokeberries, and gooseberries) as well. Some of these might be dried for winter use or, before sugar was readily obtained, preserved by being cooked and then covered with honey syrup in a large crock.
Butchering season was a busy time for rural families for it meant rendering lard, making sausage, pudding, and mincemeat; and preserving the meat by salting, curing, and smoking.

Mr. & Mrs. Luther Kleinfelter applying sugar-cure to hams, shoulders, and bacons. Note hanging sausages and meats which have had the first application lying on meat rack in foreground.

relieved on wild game, later villagers raised their own hogs and chickens and frequently bought a half a beef from a nearby farmer. Many also slaughtered their own animals, usually with the help of neighbors. Butchering season continued to be a busy time for rural families until the last decade of the nineteenth century, for it meant rendering lard; making sausage, pudding, and mincemeat; and preserving the meat so it would be available throughout the year. Until the time of refrigeration this was done by salting, curing, or smoking. Some meats were sugar cured or placed in brine; others were fried, placed in a crock and covered with fat. Home-slaughtered pork was generally plentiful and consumed in numerous ways; beef was less plentiful and, except at butchering time, frequently reserved for special occasions.

The wooden icebox which was later used to preserve food stood in the kitchen, woodshed, or other outbuilding; it was replaced by the porcelain-lined refrigerator, which came into use much later. Mechanical refrigeration was not common in village homes until about 1930 when electricity became more generally available in rural areas. Shortly
thereafter, many rural families, particularly those that butchered and preserved large amounts of meat, fruit, and vegetables, began to rent commercial cold storage lockers. Home freezing was not really common until after 1940.

Pennsylvania Germans consumed large quantities of all kinds of bread, and most rural families baked their own, either in a large bakeoven located in the backyard, in an oven adjacent to the fireplace or, later, in the oven of a wood or coal stove. During the colonial period, corn meal and rye meal or flour were staples in rural diets, but corn bread was crumbly and easily broken, while rye bread had a hard crust and coarse interior. Mixing the meal and flour together, however, produced a bread that was superior to either when used alone. In later years rye bread, which can be leavened with yeast but which is never really light, was made with a combination of rye and wheat flour. Most people, though, preferred the taste of wheat bread. Until the present century it was made with flour that was not highly refined and so was coarse and dark in color, but nutritious. After 1900 the public preferred commercially baked bread made from white, highly refined, vitamin-and-mineral enriched flour, and villagers began patronizing baker carts which made regular trips through the countryside.

Until then, large loaves of rye and whole wheat bread were baked once a week or oftener; white bread was reserved for special occasions. On baking day or the day before, enough dough for a week’s supply of bread was kneaded and placed in the dough tray to rise. Yeast was bought in the fall of the year, and in preparation for use a bit was saved and set in a warm place to form the starter for the next batch of bread or buckwheat pancakes.

Buckwheat, brought to America by the first colonists, was widely used and soon became an indispensable part of the state’s farm economy. Its large kernels were ground into a white, gritty-textured flour used in pancake mixtures, and pancakes, especially when covered with maple syrup or molasses, were always a favorite with Pennsylvania Germans. Buckwheat pancakes were made by mixing the flour with buttermilk or sour milk to make a batter and then adding a small portion of the yeast left from the last baking. Usually made at night, the batter was put in a large pitcher and set near the fireplace or stove to rise. It frequently ran over, so the foaming mass had to be stirred down in the morning before it was poured onto a hot
griddle or pan to make the fragrant, soft brown cakes so often eaten for breakfast. Raw-fried potatoes and mush with milk, or fried mush with molasses or honey, were also popular and commonly eaten breakfast foods, and corn pone, a cake made with corn meal, was a favorite with children. Scrapple (pon-haus), too, was a favorite, and like mush it was prepared by cooking corn meal until it thickened, but to the meal was added meat pudding. The resulting mixture was poured into a pan to cool and harden so it could be cut into half-inch slices and fried. Most Pennsylvania Germans applied a coating of butter and molasses or maple syrup before eating it.

The popularity of scrapple is not surprising, for Pennsylvania Germans have always liked meat (particularly with potatoes) and delight in such dishes as sauerkraut and pork (souver grout un speck); dried apple slices and dumplings (schnitz un knepp) cooked with ham or pork; cured and hickory smoked fried ham (shunkel flaish); meat pudding (lieverwurscht); and fried sausage (brotwurscht). Smoked sausage, as different from fresh sausage as ham is from pork, ranks high with many, as does bologna that is highly seasoned and smoked rather hard. Named after its town of origin, Lebanon bologna, which has no resemblance to other bolognas, is a variety still much sought after.20

Dough concoctions are almost as popular with Pennsylvania Germans as meat and potatoes, and many meals are based on them. Flat pieces of rolled-out dough were used in potpies with beef or chicken (one way of using up bony pieces of the bird); while chicken corn soup had homemade egg noodles with a pinch of saffron added for color and flavor; and bean and other soups had rivels made from flour, salt and beaten egg. Corn pie, with corn, potatoes, hard-cooked eggs, and seasonings between two layers of dough, was a highly relished meal. Flannel cakes were also a favorite, and waffles, made in heart- and other variously shaped irons in an earlier era, are at least in part of Pennsylvania-German origin.

Another dish that included dough was steamed apple dumplings (bouwa schenkel). Apples, eaten throughout the year, were also used to make pies, fritters (apfelkucha), and apple butter, a delicious concoction eaten on bread, frequently in combination with cottage cheese (schmierkase). Making apple butter was a long, tedious process, for each piece of fruit had to be pared, cored, and quartered. When available, the correct proportion of sweet and tart apples were combined with the proper amounts of cinnamon, cloves, and the bark of sassafras root and cooked, generally all day, in a large brass or copper kettle on an outdoor fireplace. The mixture had to be stirred constantly so it would not stick to the bottom of the kettle.

Dried apples were used in a variety of ways when the supply of fresh apples was exhausted. These were stored in the garret along with other dried fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Onions were stored there too, as long as they did not freeze; stewed onions were well liked and were served mostly on special occasions, as was dried corn (sweet corn cooked before being dried in the sun or oven) with its distinctive, nutty flavor. Green and yellow beans were also dried, and also had a flavor all their own, while dried lima beans were often used to make baked beans.

There were other favorite vegetables as well. Sugar peas are related to common peas and are eaten during the early stage of development, when the peas are just forming and the pod is still tender. Among the first vegetables planted in the spring (or they would not yield well), they were common in German-settled areas, but were at one time practically unknown elsewhere. Sauerkraut was not only
appetizing, it was an important source of vitamins during the winter months. It was made by slicing cabbage and packing it in salt; the brine was changed from time to time during the process of fermentation.

Many vegetables, including red beets, yellow wax beans, soybeans, Jerusalem artichokes, cauliflower, cucumbers, green tomatoes, and onions, were saturated in vinegar and seasonings to make the sour dishes considered by Pennsylvania Germans to be a must with most meals. Also included in that category are chow-chow, pepper cabbage, coleslaw, horseradish, and hard-cooked eggs in red beet juice; the latter were very popular, particularly for a summertime lunch or picnic. A springtime treat generally confined to the limits of German settlement is dandelion salad. Although only tender young plants or plant centers before they begin to bud are used, it tends to be rather bitter. This bitterness is somewhat lessened by the addition of a hot dressing made from small amounts of fried bacon, bacon grease, egg, sugar, and vinegar. The same dressing is used on lettuce and endive in the summer and fall.

The fruit pie is an American innovation and seems to have originated about the middle of the eighteenth century; there are no exact prototypes in European culture. Always a favorite dessert at every Pennsylvania-German meal, it has been suggested that pies are one of their contributions to the American way of life. Among them, apple, cherry, peach, berry, rhubarb, schnitz, and raisin (funeral) pies were common, as were milk, cheese, pumpkin, coconut custard, and (during the colder months) mincemeat pies. In addition, some women had their own specialties such as green tomato or ground cherry pie. In the view of many raised in the culture, however, there was no pie more satisfying with a steaming cup of coffee than a moist, well-risen shoofly pie, a dark, full-bodied molasses pie-and-cake combination with a bottom crust and a top covered with crumbs.

Many Pennsylvania-German housewives had as many as three or more pies on hand at any one time, in addition to cookies, which were comparable to their pies in quality and quantity. Cookies were baked all year, but during the Christmas season were often produced in truly prodigious amounts; depending on the size of the family or on the extent of the celebrations to be shared with friends and relatives, hundreds upon hundreds of cookies were baked. Frequently the job took more than a week, and at the end of every day during that time the kitchen table would be covered with cookies and the house filled with their tantalizing aroma.

Always a favorite, the lebkuchen (honey cake) was a moist chewy cookie made with spices, nuts, and citron, which gave it a distinctive flavor; it was often coated with a thin white or lemon frosting. Macaroons, too, were popular, but there was an enormous amount of work involved in making them. Yet the patience and effort required proved worthwhile because of their exquisite taste. The popular sand tart was also a lot of work; the dough had to be rolled as thin as possible, cut with cooky cutters of all sizes and shapes (animal designs were used the most), and each resulting cookie brushed with egg, sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar, and garnished with a nut placed in the center.

According to tradition, the custom of baking animal-shaped cookies goes back to the time when the Teutonic tribes worshipped pagan gods and sacrificed animals to them at the time of the winter solstice. After they were converted to Christianity, some of the activities associated with the winter solstice became part of the Christmas celebration, and the sacrificed animals were supposedly
replaced by those fashioned of bread and cake. These became smaller and smaller through the years and have so delighted children that the practice of baking cookies in animal (as well as other) shapes has continued through the centuries.

But even more beautiful and elaborate than animal-shaped cookies were springerle, delicate and delicious anise-flavored cookies that are works of art in pastry. They were made by pressing intricately carved wooden molds onto the surface of rolled-out dough. All of the many designs of animals, plants, flowers, birds, fruits, buildings, hearts, and geometric shapes carved on the springerle boards were the work of skilled craftsmen. Few had the time to do such demanding work, and most of the early boards were brought from the Rhineland. They are not baked as often today as they once were because fewer families now have springerle molds.

Like Christmas cookies, fasnachts are made for a special occasion, Fasnacht Day—Shrove Tuesday. Much the same as raised doughnuts (which have largely replaced them over the years) but without the hole, they are square or rectangular in shape and may be eaten sugared or unsugared, but are most delectable with molasses. Another fried treat, funnel cake, is made by running a thin batter through a funnel into hot fat with a back-and-forth motion; when the resulting swirls have been cooked on both sides they are liberally sprinkled with powdered sugar. Also popular for breakfast were hot cinnamon buns studded with raisins, potato buns in all their many varieties; and crumb cakes, coffee cakes, and sugar cakes. Layer cakes—referred to as “high cakes” among the Pennsylvania Germans—were another specialty; angel food, devil’s food, sponge, and spice cakes were among those often found in rural households.

Candy, however, was not plentiful in most Pennsylvania-German homes, although there might have been taffy (moshey) made with molasses and nuts for the children, or popcorn (or, later, puffed wheat and rice) covered with a thick molasses or honey syrup and compressed into a ball. At Easter, in addition to hard-cooked eggs dyed reddish-brown with onion skins, there were homemade coconut and peanut butter Easter eggs covered with bitter chocolate. And, at Christmas, some families made peppermint canes and candy sticks, and used animal-shaped molds to make red, yellow, and green toy candy.

It has been noted that “family and social drinking of ardent spirits was almost universal until after 1840. There was little or no hygienic, moral or religious sentiment against the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic beverages. The production and sale of liquor was thought to be as legitimate as the production and sale of wheat and potatoes . . . [and] alcoholic beverages were thought to be essential to good health.” Many claimed they provided the energy required for the hard labor necessary in that era, and at harvest time, for example, they were usually supplied to workers.

In most, but not all, Pennsylvania-German households, alcohol was used freely, but drunkenness, as a rule, was uncommon. Some families made a beer which was a combination of barley or wheat, bran, molasses, hops, yeast, ginger, sassafras roots, and water; others preferred fermented or distilled fruit juices; and nearly every household had its wines for use on special occasions: wild cherry, fox grape, dandelion, white clover, elderberry, blackberry, and wild plum were among the favorites. Practically every village homestead had several fruit trees, particularly apple trees, whose fruit was eaten fresh and used for cooking, baking, and making cider. The late-ripening apples were used for the latter, which was usually made at a nearby cider mill, although some families had

Dried apples (schnitz) were used when fresh ones were not available. The fruit was peeled, cored, sliced, and dried for winter consumption. (W. W. Calvert)
their own crusher and press. Everyone in the Pennsylvania-German family drank cider, although some did not think it at its best until it was well aged, or hard. The more potent applejack was made by distilling cider, while cider royal was applejack mixed with new cider that was fermented. Pearjack, or perry, and peach and other fruit brandies were also popular.

The first temperance society in Pennsylvania was organized in 1819, and similar societies appeared throughout the state shortly thereafter; their aim was to discourage the drinking of alcoholic beverages. As a result of their efforts, coffee, tea, milk, and water gradually displaced cider, beer, and liquors as the main beverages in rural homes. Pennsylvania Germans drank more coffee than tea, particularly after it became more readily available. Both, however, were very expensive, and many substitutes were used when they were not available or when their cost was prohibitive. Coffee substitutes were made from roasted grains of wheat, rye, barley, and corn; and also from potatoes, chestnuts and chickory. Tea was made from mint, thyme, sage, sweet fern, pennyroyal, sassafras, catnip, wintergreen, raspberry leaves, and many other herbs.

Drinking habits are not the only habits that have changed. The diet of rural Pennsylvania German families also changed (and continues to change); with the year-round availability of fresh meats, fruits, and vegetables it has become much more varied, although apples, potatoes, and corn are still used more than any other fruits and vegetables. When breakfast cereals first appeared on the market nearly one hundred years ago, many country folks ignored them in favor of more substantial meals of mostly fried foods; now, most no longer eat such a heavy breakfast. And, while there are still housewives who continue to use recipes handed down for generations, and who still bake their own bread, make their own jams and jellies, and preserve large quantities of food, through the years more and more have abandoned these practices in favor of the savings in time and, often, money afforded by commercially prepared products.

CLOTHING

As wool and flax became available during the colonial period, homespun woolen and linen clothes began replacing the leather garments of earlier years. Some villagers kept sheep to help control the growth of grass and weeds, and each animal gave three or more pounds of wool. After they were sheared, neighborhood women might have a social gathering to clean the wool of burrs and dirt. It was then carded by hand or at a mill with carding machines driven by water power, or by a tramp wheel. The resulting rolls of wool were spun into yarn, which was home dyed. Most rural families also knew how to grow, ripple, scutch, swingle, hatchel, break, spin, dye, and weave flax fibers, and linen was the most common textile until it was replaced by cotton after the invention of the cotton gin.

The dress of the rural male consisted of a durable jacket (wamus) of wool or linsey-woolsey, a shirt and vest, and trousers of buckskin, tow, corduroy, drill, or jean. Instead of long trousers some men wore breeches that were fastened at the knee, sometimes with a buckle; a waistcoat was worn with these. Many wore leggings and a leather jacket for work, but few wore or even owned an overcoat. Beaver hats were the norm until felt hats began to replace them during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, but even then many continued to wear fur hats in the winter and straw hats in the summer.

Women wore dresses and petticoats of wool in winter and linsey-woolsey in summer, and generally covered their heads with shawls, woolen hats, or quilted hoods in winter and sunbonnets in summer. Married women wore "day caps" and "night caps" (some men also wore the latter) and everyone, including children, wore flannel underwear day and night for most of the year. Women wore high-waisted, heavy dresses, an excessive number of under-clothes, cotton stockings, and high-laced shoes. But few rural women wore tight or confining garments, and their clothes were practical compared to prevailing city fashions.

By the end of the eighteenth century the whir of the spinning wheel was heard less and less frequently, and dresses of calico began to replace those of homespun for Sundays and special occasions. These were lightweight, attractively patterned and colored, easily washed, and relatively inexpensive. Then, some of the more worldly and progressive country women began wearing dresses of silk and other imported fabrics, feathered bonnets or hats, and other adornments, prompting a rural clergyman to write, in 1784: "The calico and silk and sin, By slow degrees kept coming in."\(^\text{24}\)

But no matter what the fabric, dresses continued to be made at home or by local seamstresses, for there were few ready-made clothes available for men, women, or children until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Howe and Singer sewing machines were sold for home use after 1850, and while they made the job easier, for many years thereafter women continued to spend a great deal of time making clothes for their family.\(^\text{25}\) Even many items of men's clothing were homemade until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, although factory-made clothes were on the market; in 1875 a man's shirt could be bought for thirty cents, overalls were fifty cents, shoes a dollar, a straw hat ten cents, and a good woolen suit cost ten dollars.\(^\text{26}\)

Before the era of factory production shoes were made by local or itinerant shoemakers, and they usually lasted much longer than the machine-made goods of today. Men continued to wear high, heavy leather boots well greased with suet to protect them against the elements. (Most people did not wear rubber overshoes until after the Civil War.) Growing children got one pair of shoes a year bought in the fall, so that many had to walk barefoot in the summer. Then, too, in some families everyone often went barefoot in the summer, except on special occasions. And many times children and adults would walk barefoot, carrying their shoes and stockings, until they came in sight of their school, church, or other destination. Then they
would put on their footwear, but remove it again for the trip home.

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

For most rural Pennsylvania Germans in earlier years the kitchen (der Küch) was the largest, busiest, and most comfortable and lived-in room in the house. It was the warmest room in winter, particularly if it had windows facing south or east. During the coldest months a fire burned in the kitchen stove twenty-four hours a day; if it went out during the night, it was the responsibility of the first one down in the morning to restart it. If that happened to be the wife, as it usually was, she also started breakfast. Even during the summer there was a fire burning for the better part of the day for cooking, baking, and canning. Because this made the entire house very hot, some families used a summer kitchen or house during the hottest months.

Kitchen furniture was simple and practical. In addition to the stove there would be a table, chairs, and a bench, perhaps a rocking chair in a corner; and a couch against one wall. The table would be in the center of the room or close to another wall, with the bench between it and the wall. One or more cupboards housed earthenware, pewter, and china, while a wall shelf was likely to hold, among other things, a loudly ticking clock. Pots, pans, and kettles were usually hung along the wall near the stove; articles of clothing on pegs or hooks, also fastened to the wall. Braided rugs or woven-rag carpet runners were sometimes placed over the floorboards, and, later, over the linoleum.

During the winter months the window sills, particularly those with a southern exposure, were filled with plants such as geraniums, coleuses, and Christmas cactus. On the coldest nights these were moved away from the frigid window panes. In early spring, after the danger of frost had passed, they were set outdoors for more direct sunlight and fresh air until such time as they were transplanted to an appropriate location in one of the flower beds near the house.

In contrast to the comfortable and much-used kitchen was the parlor, found in most rural houses after the middle of the nineteenth century. It was used primarily on weekends for company, or for weddings or other special occasions. Seldom was it used, even on Sunday, by just the family, and when it was not being used the shutters were closed, the shades drawn, and the doors shut, and sometimes locked. It was furnished with a sofa and chairs and often had a colorful, homemade carpet made with a stout yarn warp, and a weft of strips torn from discarded clothing saved for the purpose. Such carpets were used in parlors well into the twentieth century. During the annual spring housecleaning they were taken up, hung on the washline, and beaten with a carpet beater to remove the accumulated dust and grime. During the latter part of the nineteenth century the parlor was changed to a much more cheerful living room and used daily. This was due partly to the influence of magazines on homemaking, which began to appear about this time. 27

The first floor of the house might have had a bedroom, and if so it could have been slightly warmed to take off the chill. But second floor bedrooms were never warm unless the chimney or kitchen stovepipe passed through them. In fact, it was often so cold that ice formed in delicate, fern-like patterns on the windowpanes, and in thin sheets on the top of the water kept in a pitcher for morning washing which, like dressing and undressing, was an ordeal under such conditions. Children, especially, suffered, and sometimes the chill was taken off bedclothes with a warming pan. A covered pan, usually brass and about twelve inches in diameter and with a long wooden handle, it was filled with hot coals and moved back and forth rapidly between the sheets and blankets to keep them from scorching.

The kitchen was the largest and most comfortable and lived-in room in the house. In the winter it was also the warmest, and dressing and undressing was often done there. (W. W. Calvert)
Plainly furnished, bedrooms usually had one or more beds, a chest of drawers, a chair or two, and perhaps a cradle or a child’s trundle bed, kept under a large bed and pulled out at night. Goose feather ticks were used as mattresses and covers, for the Pennsylvania Germans were partial to them because of their warmth and softness. They were much more comfortable than earlier bedticks and mattresses, which were stuffed with straw or corn fodder, and much warmer than most blankets. They were economical, too, because they could be made at home. And, although goose feathers were preferred, the feathers from other fowl were also saved when they were slaughtered. These, along with the fine feathers sometimes stripped from living fowl—geese and others—several times a year, were steamed and cured before being used for bedding.

Bundling, an activity associated with the bedroom, was “an old custom, accepted from generation to generation, and probably more prevalent among the descendants of the early Pennsylvania German settlers than among other classes.” Whether mostly legend or fact, bundling was a simple, makeshift domestic arrangement prevalent largely during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when houses were hardly ever comfortably warm, and when extra beds were scarce. It was mostly a courtship expedition during cold weather months, with fully clothed young people sharing the same bed, or in separate beds in the same room (although visitors and travelers sometimes shared the same experience with a member of the host family). The bed was shared with the understanding that innocent endearments should not be exceeded, and in some cases this was made doubly certain by the presence of a center board from twelve to eighteen inches high which extended the full length of the bed between the two occupants.

Just as practically all of the furniture in pioneer houses was homemade (with most of the work done at night or during rainy periods), so most of the furniture owned by rural villagers was also made by local craftsmen. Hickory was preferred for chairs, cherry was saved for tables. Black walnut furniture was in demand after 1850, when tables and dressers with marble tops were considered the height of elegance. The tables were heavy, long, and narrow; of simple design and unpainted. Some were hung against the wall so they could be turned out of the way when not needed. Most chairs, with or without arms, had straight backs and were not upholstered; benches were common.

Early bedsteads were made with square posts and rails, unpainted and held together by strong bed cord; most were ponderous structures with high backs. Beautifully designed and crafted chests, large enough to hold all of the family’s linens and other valuables, stood in the bedroom or hall. Some still have treasured pieces of this furniture, prized heirlooms, handed down in the family for several generations.

Also prized today are the grandfather clocks, some made to indicate the phases of the moon, found initially in America only in the homes of the prosperous. Early clocks were handmade, had wooden works, and were operated by weights instead of springs. At first the works were imported from England and assembled by local craftsmen, who also made the case, so they were quite expensive. When the German and Swiss artisans who settled in Philadelphia and Germantown began to make them they were more readily available. Before that, marked candles, hourglasses, and shadows cast by the sun were used to tell time. A mark on the ground, the floor, or a window sill or the position of the sun indicated the time in relation to high noon.

Machine-made clocks made their appearance after the turn of the nineteenth century. Most people distrusted them, but they found their way into rural houses by the determined efforts of the itinerant peddlers who first sold them, often on a trial basis. Frequently bartered for other goods, many of the clocks were warranted but still oftentimes proved unreliable. When cheaper, smaller clocks more suitable for shelves and easier to transport came on the market, more households were inclined to accept them.

In early homes making and keeping a fire was always a major concern. In the days before matches, a new hearth fire was started with live embers or coals gotten from neighbors or carried from one location to another in a contrivance forged for that purpose. The fire then had to be carefully conserved, with someone getting up at night during the coldest months to replenish the fuel.

The first matches, which came into use shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century, were merely sticks or slices of wood tipped with sulphur; they ignited when brought into contact with phosphorus, kept in a vial. Friction matches—lucifers—invented in Europe and later patented in America, were not used extensively until after 1850, before that flint and steel, powder, and other methods were used to create a spark and ignite dry tinder.

For more than a century most fires were made in large, open fireplaces that were used for cooking and for heating the house. The first-floor fireplace was set on a solid base beneath a spacious chimney, located at first in Pennsylvania-German dwellings in the center of the building in the German fashion, and later at each gable end following the English and Scotch-Irish method. On long, cold winter evenings the kitchen fireplace was the center of family life, with everyone gathered before it, working or playing as the case might be. Even though one might be very warm on one side and very cold on the other, there are those who maintain that the blazing fireplace provided a far more pleasant setting than the stove that succeeded it; that it was “a symbol of closely knit family life [and] when it passed, something was lost in the solidarity of the rural home.”

The Pennsylvania Germans were among the first to embrace the cast-iron, wood-burning stove that replaced the fireplace. The Franklin stove had an open front and gave considerably more heat than a fireplace from the same
amount of wood; it could be closed completely and had a damper to increase the amount of heat radiated into the room. Other stoves in various designs by local artisans soon followed; their fireboxes, of heavy tin or iron, were about eighteen inches long and twelve inches wide, and had two lids; later models had ovens. These stoves not only gave more heat than the fireplace, they made less dirt and saved a considerable amount of work as well.

Hardwood, especially the wood of fruit and nut trees, was preferred for burning in stoves and fireplaces in the early years when wood was an almost universal fuel for both. Plentiful, it was cut and split each fall and winter, then allowed to dry and season for use the following year. Long piles of wood could be seen stacked in the backyard or woodshed of every well-ordered rural home.

Anthracite coal was discovered in Pennsylvania in the last half of the eighteenth century, but was thought to need air forced through it to make it burn, and so was used chiefly by blacksmiths until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Then it was learned that anthracite would burn when placed on a good wood fire laid on a grate raised four to six inches above the fireplace hearth. As such grates were installed, more and more coal began to be used for cooking and heating in the winter.

A base-burner stove for burning anthracite was invented in the 1830s, but high costs kept it from being used in many areas. The coming of canals and railroads, however, made it cheaper to transport both coal and stoves, and so hastened the demise of the fireplace. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century base-burner coal stoves, mounted with large, water-filled urns, and with a blaze showing through their mica windows, were a common sight in rural homes. Hot-air and hot-water furnaces were available then, but many continued to prefer stoves to central heating systems well into the twentieth century. And, although few, there are still some homes where a large coal range heats only the kitchen, and so much of family life goes on there. Frequently there is another stove or heater in the sitting room or parlor, but as a matter of thrift or habit this room is only heated on Sunday or for special occasions.

In early homes fireplaces gave light as well as heat, and that light was supplemented by the light from pine-knot torches; from lamps that burned fat, oil, or grease; and from hand-dipped or molded tallow candles, which were expensive unless they were homemade. There were also candles made from beeswax, from spermaceti (which

*Early Franklin-type stove found in the home of Raymond J. Emerich near Harpers, Lebanon County, Pa.*
gave several times the light of tallow candles), and from the waxy fruit of the bayberry bush. Bayberry candles cost several times as much as tallow candles because they did not burn as quickly, did not smoke, and had a pleasing fragrance.

Tallow was rendered from cattle during butchering, and while still hot poured into shallow round or oblong pans. When cool it was removed and stored in large air-tight containers to preserve it and keep it clean until a sufficient supply had accumulated and enough time could be found to make candles.

The possession of a candle mold was evidence of some wealth, so many families made theirs by dipping wicks (made of several strands of tow or twisted cotton) attached a few inches apart onto a small rod into a container of hot liquid tallow. Then the rod was hung between two chairs or benches until the light coating of fat cooled and hardened. When it had, the process was repeated until the candles were the desired size; then they were left hanging in a dry place to complete the hardening process.

Molded candles were made in tin or pewter tubes fastened in a frame. A frame contained from two to twelve tubes varying in length from six to twelve inches, and tapering from approximately one inch at the heavy end to three-fourths of an inch at the opposite end. A wick (of white cotton yarn, homemade or purchased at the general store) for each tube was attached to a wire or small round stick; this was placed lengthwise across the top of each row of openings in the frame, and the wicks passed through the center of the tubes, pulled tight, and fastened securely with a knot at the end. This knot closed the small opening and prevented the fat from leaking. Then melted tallow was poured into the trough at the top of the frame until all the tubes were filled; when cooled and hardened (and some candlemakers put the mold in cold water before pouring to hasten the process) the knots at the small end were opened or cut off, and a small amount of hot water poured over the outside of the mold so the candles could be easily removed.32

Spills of wood or paper were used to light candles, which were set in holders of various shapes, sizes, and designs. Many were round tin, brass, or pewter trays with attached ring-shaped bands made to fit the index finger so they could be carried. Still other candlesticks had long, cast-iron stems, some with a piston on the inside to raise and lower the candle; it was operated by a knob that extended through a slot in the stem and was loosened or tightened to hold the candle at the desired height.

A twelve-inch candle burned for approximately eight hours, but it did not always burn evenly and after a few hours of use the wick often had to be trimmed to maintain a bright light and minimize smoke. This was done with scissors or with a snuffer made not only for trimming but for extinguishing the candle as well. Sometimes, too, tallow ran down the side of the candle. In freezing weather these drippings were rubbed on sore, chapped skin, particularly on the hands, lips, and nose, to help heal it.

Many early houses were lighted with betty lamps suspended on hooks and chains. Shallow iron receptacles with projecting spouts, they were made by local blacksmiths. Animal fats, oil, and refuse grease from cooking and frying were burned in them, so they were odiferous and gave off considerable smoke. A piece of cloth or a wick was inserted into the fluid, became saturated and burned with a small, dismal flame.

Since there was always a danger of fire, children were taught to be very careful with candles and lamps. When "coal oil" was first distilled from coal in 1854, not only its cost, but the fear of explosion and fire made many (especially older) people afraid to use it. In 1859 the first natural petroleum well was discovered in Pennsylvania, but kerosene was at first of inferior quality and frequently caused lamps to explode. But improvements in refining soon removed that hazard, and it became safe to use and relatively inexpensive. Kerosene produced a brighter flame than other available artificial sources of light, but it was smelly and smoky, so lamp chimneys were soon introduced to alleviate these problems.

Kerosene lamps were universally used in rural areas until 1920. (The writer was born in a village home after that date, and the delivery took place by the light of a kerosene lamp held by his paternal grandmother.) Electricity superseded kerosene and gas after the invention of the light bulb, but electric companies were slow in extending lines into rural districts until there was enough use to make them profitable. In some instances small businesses generated their own electricity, but generally kerosene and gas lamps were used in country homes and businesses until the arrival of commercially produced current.

THE YARD AND GARDEN

The Pennsylvania Germans were noted for the tidiness of their homes, gardens, and yards,33 and all were the responsibility of the housewife and her daughters. In addition to housework, they did all the outdoor jobs except the most arduous, such as spading and plowing. Rural women were especially fond of flowers and few homes were without them. Paths or walks, whether of earth, stone, or brick, were usually surrounded with attractively arranged flowers, and weeds were kept well under control. Cockscombs, zinnias, petunias, sweet peas, sweet williams, marigolds, pinks, morning glories, and sunflowers were common; their seeds were gathered each summer and fall for use the following year. Many others such as roses, peonies, bleeding hearts, lilies of the valley, August lilies, hollyhocks, chrysanthemums, irises, pansies, foxgloves, pinxters, grape hyacinths, daffodils, and tulips34 were started from cuttings, roots, or bulbs gleaned from friends and neighbors.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century more consideration began being given to the yard's appearance, with trees and shrubs now starting to be planted solely for ornamental purposes. Lilac, bachelor button, mock orange
and rose of Sharon were the commonly found flowering shrubs, with the hardy lilac—which would flourish even after the house was in ruins—the most popular. The most popular shade trees included willow, poplar, maple, horse chestnut, ash, oak, sycamore, linden, white pine, and the black locust with its fragrant white springtime blossoms. But still more prevalent than these were fruit trees: apple, pear, cherry, quince, mulberry, and, less commonly, peach and plum. There were usually also several varieties of grapes, and frequently a grape arbor enclosed the porch, shading the area and making it more pleasant on hot summer afternoons.

A typical Pennsylvania-German family garden had those vegetables that were consumed during the growing season, and those that could be preserved by storing, drying, and canning. Scallions, asparagus roots, and artichokes could remain in the ground over the winter months. In very early spring, sometimes before the last snowfall, onions, lettuce, radishes, and sugar peas were planted, followed by carrots and beets; sometime thereafter, cabbage plants were set out. Much garden space was devoted to potatoes, first in economic importance. Often planted on the hundredth day of the year, they were easily grown and stored, produced large yields, and could be prepared in a variety of ways. Corn was sown in May or about the time apple trees were in bloom. When all danger of frost had past, tomato and pepper plants were set out and beans, squash, cucumbers, and cantaloupes were planted. Many gardens also had eggplants, spinach, and parsnips; pole beans, pumpkins, and turnips were often planted in the corn patch. Sweet potatoes were planted before the longest day, and celery, turnips, and endive were planted later in the summer, replacing vegetables that had been harvested.

There was usually a corner of the garden or an area by the fence planted with strawberries, and with currant, gooseberry, and perhaps raspberry and blackberry bushes. Hops, used in medicines and for brewing and baking, were grown in many early gardens, or in another area of the yard where they gave shade in the summer. And, as noted earlier, most rural families also had an herb garden.

Some rural gardens were much bigger than others, and when the area planted was larger and more ambitious than needed for family use, it was referred to as a “truck patch,” particularly if the vegetables were produced for market. These—and smaller gardens—were often fenced to keep animals, domestic and wild, out. Another kind of garden, a formal garden, was sometimes found in Pennsylvania-German areas before the time of horse-drawn farm implements. This consisted of four square (or slightly rectangular) beds, with sometimes a round bed in the middle. All the beds were surrounded by paths, and the entire garden area was enclosed with a fence or hedge.

OUTBUILDINGS

The purpose of the summer house or kitchen has already been mentioned, and even today in rural villages one or more houses can still be found with a separate or attached summer house located a convenient distance from the door of the main house. Bakeovens, too, can still be seen and these may also be attached to the house, or, in some cases, to the summer house; they are found less frequently in a separate building close to the house. If attached to the house the bakeoven was usually accessible from the kitchen. The brick or stone bakeoven had a flat hearth and an arched dome; it was used for drying fruits and vegetables as well as for baking.
Smokehouses were also located not too far from the house. In them, ham, bacon, sausage, bologna, dried beef, and tongue were smoked over a hardwood fire sprinkled with hardwood shavings to make it smolder; vents in the walls or roof allowed the smoke to escape. Hickory was preferred for smoking, but fruitwoods and other hardwoods were also used. When finished, the meat was often left in the smokehouse until it was used. Some families without these separate structures smoked their meat in a small room partitioned around the chimney in the garret of the house; there the smoke was confined until allowed to escape from the chimney after a brick was removed. Others had their meat preserved in the smokehouse of a neighbor or nearby farmer.

Outdoor tile-roof bakeoven on the farm of Paul Blatt, near Bernville, Berks County. A stone, brick, and frame structure, it is 12 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 8 feet high.
Many of those living in small hamlets or villages were retired farmers, and they had to have a barn. Many of these barns later housed the family automobile.

Many of those living in small hamlets or villages were retired farmers, and they had to have a barn. Such village barns were usually made of wood, with tin or wooden-shingle roofs. Some of these were of sturdy proportions, and many had two floors; others had only one floor, with a loft to store hay and straw. On the lower level were stables, stalls, and pens, their size and number determined by the number of animals kept. There was also an area that housed a wagon and buggy, and, later, the family automobile.

Probably the most important outbuilding was the privy, built in various sizes and sometimes confused with the smokehouse because of their close resemblance. Located near the house so that it could be reached easily and quickly, it was usually freezing cold in the winter, and unbearably hot in the summer. Since it did not have windows, various shapes such as crescents, hearts, and stars were cut into the upper part of the door, or into an area just above the door to admit light and air. Most of those still found in rural areas are now used to store garden tools and accessories.

CONCLUSION

Toward the end of the last century the rural family began becoming progressively smaller. The advent of the machine age made family labor less essential, and large families were no longer an economic asset. In fact, children were now required by law to spend much more time in school, and so became more costly to raise. As the era of self-sufficiency drew to a close, many of the varied and vital skills and activities taught in the home began being relegated to other institutions; no longer was there the constant daily companionship and mutual working relationship that once existed between family members.

Change accelerated dramatically after 1930, when the expansion of electrical facilities made a host of labor-saving appliances available to rural housewives. The coming of motion pictures, and the invention of the telephone, radio, and television, also contributed to changing lifestyles and helped widen the gap between parents and children. Cumulatively, these factors have been instrumental in weakening the bonds that in the past helped hold the rural Pennsylvania-German family together.

ENDNOTES

1Genesis 3:19, King James Version.
3Better rural-urban cooperation and understanding were enhanced by the automobile, better roads, the telephone, radio, television, and other communications media, all of which helped to end isolation. Each group became aware that the welfare of one group affected the welfare of the other.
4Until more recent years, especially among certain Plain elements of the rural population, the church discouraged or prohibited members from joining certain social organizations, or from holding public office. Even voting was prohibited except on local issues relating to education, roads, etc.; nor would they serve on a jury if they could be exempted.
5Similarly, some Indian words have been absorbed into the language; and some dialect words have been adopted into the English spoken in the German-settled areas of Pennsylvania.
6At present some newspapers have a weekly dialect column; regularly scheduled dialect programs are carried by some local radio stations in German-settled areas; and in some rural churches the services on occasion are still conducted in the dialect. And some colleges and universities in the state have, through the years, offered dialect courses, but there is not enough interest to keep it alive.
7Until witchcraft practically vanished at the turn of the nineteenth century, there were those who were imprisoned, fined, lashed, and ostracized for it, but there is little or no evidence of the death penalty being imposed in Pennsylvania for such practices.
8It was also believed that hens should be set only under the sign of the virgin; that cider should be drawn off for vinegar only under the sign of the lion; and that livestock should be bred only under the propitious signs of the zodiac, especially the Twins, for disposition of progeny, vigor, and productivity.
9The infallibility of the groundhog (woodchuck) as a prophet of spring...
still has a number of adherents among the rural population; numerous such beliefs are listed by Edwin M. Fogel in his Beliefs and Superstitions of the Pennsylvania Germans (Phila., 1915); also John Baer Stout, "Weather Prognostications and Superstitions among the Pennsylvania Germans," The Pennsylvania German, Vol. VI and VII.

A practice passed on from the time of the Middle Ages is to open the Bible at random and use the verse to which the finger was supposedly directed by Divine guidance to help decide many of life's problems. Among some groups and individuals the practice helped determine the selection of an occupation or marriage partner. The family Bible was also used to record births, deaths, and marriages, a practice that continues today.

Dishes were washed in a pan on the kitchen table, then put on a large tray to drain and dry. Dish, bath, and wash water were thrown outdoors. Kitchen sinks and internal plumbing were practically unknown until after the Civil War. Slate sinks became popular during the latter part of the last century.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century windmills became a common means of lifting water. Hydraulic rams were used when a stream with sufficient fall was available; Amos Long, Jr., "Pumps, Rams, Windmills and Waterwheels in Rural Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Folklore, 17:3:28.


Iteh was a common aliment all year round, partly because of infrequent bathing; it often lasted for years; hence the term "seven year itch." A lice was also prevalent among children and effective treatment was extremely difficult. The practice of walking barefoot in the summer months (still a common practice among the Amish) invited sores and infections of various kinds.

Romans 12:13, King James Version.

Salt, used for seasoning and preserving, was extremely costly, scarce, and an important means of exchange until well into the nineteenth century, when Pennsylvania became a leading salt-producing state; previously it had come from Europe, the West Indies, and, later, New York state, and transportation costs were a factor in its price.

Maple sugar, honey, and occasionally, molasses, were used for sweetening; oat sugar was available but very expensive. After the beginning of the nineteenth century cane-sugar products (including brown sugar and molasses) became available from Louisiana; granulated sugar became available after 1850.

In some families children were allowed to eat only what was passed to them. "Each of the nationalities . . . had a characteristic diet . . . the result of inherited preference as well as limitations in production," according to Stevenson Whitcomb Fletcher (Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, 16:40-1840, Harrisburg, 1950, p. 408).


Long, "Pennsylvania Cave and Ground Cellars," Pennsylvania Folklore, 11:2:36. The root cellar or cave was an important adjunct of some village homesteads. Frequently it was a cave dug into a hill or covered over with a mound with a ventilator. It was in this that apples, potatoes and cabbages, and root vegetables were stored for later use.


Oysters, too, were considered delectable, and used more frequently after railroad transportation made them available in rural areas. Oyster stew and fried oysters became a standard weekend meal for many families particularly during the colder months.

Fletcher, p. 450.

"Under the leadership of the churches, the Anti-Saloon League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Grange, and spurred on by the war-time need for more food, Pennsylvania joined the procession of states that ratified the national prohibition law; this went into effect January 16, 1920." (Fletcher, p. 495.) "Homemade beverages came under the ban of the law since they contained over one-half of one per cent of alcohol." (Fletcher, p. 496.)

Although there has been a drastic change in the kinds and amounts of beverages commonly used in rural homes, there are still some families or members of families who are partial to a stimulating drink, but to a lesser degree than during earlier times. Many families still have a bottle of rum or whiskey stuck away for the treatment of colds, stings, or bites, or for use in cooking or baking; such bottles may last for years.

Until about 1900 many villages also chewed tobacco and smoked pipes; cigars were reserved for special occasions. Cigarettes were little used until after World War I, between then and World War II, women began to acquire the habit.

Fletcher, p. 416.

Not until the last decade or two before the twentieth century did the clothing of rural families conform to that of city dwellers. With the increasing activity of women in all areas of life, their clothes became increasingly light, comfortable, serviceable and in conformity with fashion.

Fletcher, p. 497.

After daguerreotype photography became available large, plush photograph albums were found in the parlor. There were—and still are—among the strictest sectarians those who object to having their picture taken because of the Biblical ban on graven images (Exodus 20:4, King James Version).


After 1900 there was considerable improvement made in the furnishings of rural homes, with lighter, more comfortable furniture replacing heavy, clumsy pieces, and cretonne and other practical coverings replacing prickly horsehair and plush upholstery.

Fletcher, p. 387.


Some families employed an itinerant candlemaker who brought his own molds; a proficient candlemaker could produce as many as two hundred candles a day.


The tulip is among the most treasured of the flowers grown by the Pennsylvania Germans. It is a motif used to decorate furniture, glassware, earthenware, rugs, linens, and fraktur.

Vegetables and fruits grown in earlier years with little care are now infected by insects and diseases and must be sprayed throughout the growing season.

Long, "Pennsylvania Summer Houses and Summer Kitchens," Pennsylvania Folklore, 15:1:10. If there was no summer house then there may have been a small building in which the weekly laundry was done; it may have had a fireplace or stove for heating water. Frequently the laundry was done on an outside porch of the main house.


Long, "Outdoor Privies."

Only among the strictest sectarians is a woman's place still in the home. There are few if any career women among them. Very little or no thought is given to equality of rights between husband and wife; the husband and father takes his place out from based on Scripture (1 Corinthians 11:7, 9), which reads: " . . . He (man) is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for woman; but the woman for man."

Not has family size dwindled among them, for again they follow Biblical injunction, which commands them to "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Their extreme conservatism extends to dress, and the clothing of some Pennsylvania German sectarians has not changed appreciably for centuries. The more orthodox groups—the Amish, Dunkers, Brethren—wear clothes that sharply differentiate them from others. Mennonites usually dress in black or gray as opposed to the bright colors worn by the Amish. The dresses of both Mennonite and Amish women have a rather tight fitting bodice, long sleeves, and high necks with an additional piece of cloth of the same material as the dress extending from the shoulders to the waist area both in front and back, covering the basic dress, and a long, full skirt. Those worn by unmarried women may vary slightly. They wear black bonnets with house caps of fine, white linen and aprons. Black shawls instead of coats are worn in winter. No jewelry is worn by either group. The body is completely undressed.

The Amish men are clean shaven until marriage. After marriage a beard is grown. Mennonite men are mostly clean shaven, although some among the older men wear a beard. Usually a black, broad brim hat is worn, with dark trousers, and coats with standing collars without lapels. Pins are used rather than buttons among the old order Amish. The children are similarly dressed so far as style and color are concerned.
THE HAPPY STORY OF GEORGES CREEK
by Robert P. Stevenson

New Geneva as viewed from Greene County in about 1910 before railroad was built at river’s edge along the village. At the right see the covered wooden bridge across Georges Creek.

This is the first of a series of articles that Pennsylvania Folklife will publish under the general heading of “Oldtime Tales from Georges Creek.” This one gives the setting for the tales—the New Geneva area of southwestern Fayette County.

One subsequent tale will tell you how a five-year-old girl slept for nine hours beside her father after he had died because of a fall from a chestnut tree in the mountains.

Still others will include a ghost story or two, what happened when General Lafayette met a former soldier who had saved his life on a battlefield 50 years earlier, why some historic “Indian pictures” at the edge of the Monongahela will soon be submerged, and other Pennsylvania regional stories not previously published.

All concern true happenings that occurred in or near New Geneva, where the author was born and grew up.

As streams go, Georges Creek is sort of middling. It is not small, yet not large. It has its birth in cool springs and countless small brooks on the western slopes of Chestnut Ridge of the Alleghenies in Fayette County in southwestern Pennsylvania. It discharges its waters into the Monongahela River some dozen miles north of where that stream enters the state from West Virginia.

The creek’s waters were not always of their present clarity. In the early years of this century the stream ran deep orange, discolored by sulphur seepage discharged upstream from a series of bituminous coal mines. This seepage has now been mostly sealed off and the creek has regained much of its primeval purity. And fish are returning.

With its many tributaries, Georges Creek drains most of the southwestern corner of Fayette County, an area stretching from Wymps Gap in the mountains near the West Virginia border northward to the Summit Hotel atop the ridge on the National Pike (Route 40) east of Uniontown. This embraces about one-quarter of the surface of the county.

Georges Creek received its name from Col. George Wilson, a man who served in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. In the summer of 1765, he arrived in the woodlands at the point where the creek joins the Monongahela River. Wilson was born in Spring Hill, Virginia. When a township was formed embracing the area of his new home he named it Springhill.

Soon after Wilson’s arrival, a village began to grow at the junction of Georges Creek with the Monongahela, and people called it Wilson’s Port. The next permanent settler there was George Williams, a tailor. He arrived just at the close of the Revolutionary War. On February 19, 1793,
he married Joanna Phillips, a daughter of Theophilus Phillips. Williams descendants remained living in the village for the next 200 years.

Although George Wilson was one of the first settlers in the area, white men had visited the region four years before his arrival. Regional histories report that in 1761 four soldier deserters from Fort Pitt arrived at the mouth of what later became Georges Creek for a brief stay. They are identified as Samuel Pringle, William Childers, John Pringle, and Joseph Lindsey. The four did not find the area to their liking, however, and soon turned eastward to the upper waters of the Youghiyoheny River. After a brief stay there they went on to Virginia.

Georges Creek has a sound place in history. While returning from a visit to property he owned in Washington County, Pennsylvania, General George Washington noted in his Journal on September 22, 1784, that in traveling from Beesontown (now Unions town) for an overnight stay with one of his Revolutionary War officers—the already mentioned Theophilus Phillips—at the latter’s home, they had “crossed no water of any consequence except Georges Creek.” (The Phillips homestead, Phillips Choice, was located on the highlands about a mile southward from Wilson’s Port.)

The General was then on his way home to Mount Vernon by way of the Cheat River, a stream that enters the Monongahela a half-dozen miles south of the Phillips homestead. Washington never quite gave up a dream that the Cheat, which courses southeastward through the mountains toward Virginia, might become part of a river and canal route to the West.

The valley of Georges Creek was also considered as a possible route for the National Road when the latter was being laid out in the early 1800s. A shallow ford then existed at the creek’s mouth for easy crossing of the Monongahela River except in times of flood. This possible route would have stretched from the old Mud Pike, which crosses the mountains eastward from the town of Fairchance, down the Georges Creek valley, across the river, and then westward through Greene County to Wheeling, West Virginia. Another route was finally chosen, however. This comes down the western slope of the Alleghenies east of Unions town, across the Monongahela at Brownsville, and thence to Wheeling. This is the present U.S. 40, a highway to the west that is still heavily traveled.

Soon after George Wilson’s arrival, Pennsylvania granted him a 200-acre tract named Elk Hills. This lay north of where Georges Creek joins the Monongahela and embraces the village itself. The part of the settlement up on the hill was at first called Georgetown, only the lower section being designated Wilson’s Port. Wilson himself thrived in the new settlement and soon became active in the community, serving as the local justice of the peace. In 1772 he built a stone house toward the northern end of Ferry Street as a wedding gift for his son John and John’s wife, Sarah (Drusilla) Wilson. This house still stands and is still lived in.

When the American Revolution began, George Wilson set off eastward as lieutenant colonel of the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment. He died of pleurisy at Quibbletown, New Jersey, in April 1777. He left three sons—William George, John, and Samuel—and six daughters—Agnes, Elizabeth, Jane, Mary Ann, Sarah, and Phoebe.

A portion of the patent for Elk Hills, the part embracing the village, was sold to Albert Gallatin in 1797. Gallatin, who had just established his home along the Monongahela south of the village, then laid out the town into building lots and renamed it New Geneva for his home city, Geneva, Switzerland. Later, the Wilsons sold the rest of Elk Hills to Isaac Griffin.

Gallatin named his new woodland home Friendship Hill.
Main Street of New Geneva—Ferry Street—during the autumn in about 1910. At right edge of street is the Wilson homestead. Note wooden bridge across Georges Creek in the distance.

This estate is still intact. Several years ago the U.S. Department of the Interior took over the estate and now keeps it open to the public as the Friendship Hill National Historic Park.

The Wilson homestead in New Geneva has been owned by the Hager and Beck families since 1872. The original purchaser was Charles O. Beck’s father, George Washington Beck. The Wilson house is ranked as one of the oldest in Fayette County, and in its early history served for a time as a hotel under the name of the Harmony House. The latest occupants were the Harry B. Riffles, both of whom were teachers, and both of whom are now dead. Mrs. Riffle, the former Hiawatha Beck, was born and grew up in the house. During the early years of this century, her mother, Edna Hager Beck, operated the town post office and a grocery store in a frame addition to the south end of the stone structure. This addition, which included three rooms and a kitchen, was later converted into a garage and finally removed.

The former Wilson homestead is now located in Nicholson Township instead of George Wilson’s original Springhill. The new township was formed by taking part of the original Springhill and combining it with land from adjoining townships. The new township was named for another celebrated New Geneva resident—James Witter Nicholson, the brother-in-law of Gallatin and son of Commodore James Witter Nicholson, who served in the U.S. Navy during the Revolutionary War at the same period as the celebrated John Paul Jones. The younger Nicholson was Gallatin’s business manager for many years while Gallatin was serving as Secretary of the Treasury in the administration of President Thomas Jefferson. Gallatin eventually sold Friendship Hill and lived in New York City, where he died. The younger Nicholson’s grave may
be seen in the burial ground behind the Old Stone Church up on the hill in the village. The latter structure was built in 1811 as the town school. Its most recent use was as a church.

* * *

During the two and one-quarter centuries since Colonel Wilson gave it its name, Georges Creek has added considerably to the gross national product. Its strongly flowing waters have powered many mills. Albert Gallatin established or helped establish several mills at or upstream from New Geneva. One was a glass factory. In 1799 Gallatin and Melchoir Baker set up a plant to manufacture muskets, broadswords, and other arms.

In 1800 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gave the latter plant an order for 2000 muskets and the U.S. Government soon thereafter gave another order for about the same number. When Gallatin became Secretary of the Treasury under President Jefferson, he closed out his partnership in the gun factory so as not to be accused of a conflict of interest. Melchoir Baker continued the business successfully until government armories were established at Harper’s Ferry, Va., and Springfield, Mass.

Various products were turned out by mills set up along Georges Creek in Springhill Township. Among the mills were the Davenport and Down’s Grist Mill, Gallatin’s Grist Mill, Ross’s Mill (French Mill), Whetstone Mill, Hughn’s Mill, Hunter’s Mill, Laraman’s Mill, Oliphant’s Mill, Long’s Mill, Gans’s Mill, Morton’s Mill, and the Davis Mill. There were still others farther upstream.

Several fulling mills also operated along Georges Creek for many years, among them mills owned by Albert Gallatin and Ellis B. Stevenson Sr.

A foundry was built in New Geneva in 1840 by the Shealor and Merryman Company. For the next twenty years, this firm turned out a high grade cook stove known as the “Drum Stove.” This business was closed out at about the time the Civil War began.

A covered wooden bridge was completed across Georges Creek near its mouth on Nov. 11, 1808. This bridge remained in service for more than one hundred years. In New Geneva, Ferry Street led into it. The bridge finally collapsed in 1928. A concrete span replaced it.
DUTIES OF A RURAL SCHOOL BOARD
AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

by Robert L. Leight
Preserved in a vault in the Quakertown (Pa.) School District are records from school boards that served the Upper Bucks County community in the past. One of these journals holds the minutes of the Richland Township School Board from 1899-1910. The purpose of this article is to compare the duties of a school board at the turn of the century, based upon this historical document, with the duties of contemporary school boards in Pennsylvania.

Richland Township is one of the six municipalities that make up the present Quakertown Community School District. Until it was merged with the other districts in the 1950s and 1960s, the township had its own school system. Before consolidations were accomplished the township school system consisted of nine one-room schools that provided schooling for children in grades one through eight. For those residents of the township who went on to high school, the township school board paid tuition to the Quakertown Borough School District, which had a high school as early as the 1880s. Township schools changed very little from 1900 to 1950. No new schools were built after 1901, and many of the procedures that were described in the 1900-era minutes were still in effect in the early 1950s. The events described in the minutes of the turn-of-the-century Richland Township School Board were probably representative of the thousands of one-room schools that persisted in Pennsylvania until after the Second World War. These one-room schools were the dominant educational institution for rural school children, and thus were extremely important in establishing the foundations of our contemporary educational system.

DUTIES OF A SCHOOL BOARD

A school board is a unit of local government with broad discretionary powers. Its functions may be considered to be legislative (policy making), executive (carrying out policy), and judicial (determining if specific actions are consistent with state laws and board policies). At the state and national level, these functions are implemented by separate branches of government. In a local government agency such as a school board with traditions of local democratic governance, the boundaries between these functions may often blur. Fairly discrete examples of these functions follow: 1) legislative — adopting school board policy, adopting goals, adopting the curriculum; 2) executive — hiring teachers, establishing budgets, setting tax rates, buying property, building and maintaining real estate; 3) judicial — responding to grievances, conducting hearings for professional personnel on recommendations for dismissal or discipline, conducting hearings for students who are recommended for expulsion.

At the turn of the twentieth century rural school boards were involved in these same functions, but in a somewhat different way than present-day boards. Like today’s boards they established policy, purchased land and equipment, built and maintained school buildings, purchased educational supplies, set taxes and paid bills, and enforced laws and hired teachers. But most contemporary school boards are primarily deliberative bodies; they concentrate upon formulating policy that will be implemented, for the most part, by full-time administrative officers of the school district.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Those early rural school districts did not have paid executive professional employees. Teachers were the only paid employees and their job was to instruct. Most of the executive function, therefore, fell to the school board. The three elected officers had specified duties. The president called meetings and presided over them. The treasurer in rural Richland Township kept the account books and paid the bills. In addition, he was also the collector of the school real estate tax that Richland Township levied. The treasurer received compensation for these tasks. In Richland Township in the first decade of the twentieth century the treasurer was paid a commission both for maintaining the financial accounts, and for collecting real estate taxes. These commissions amounted to upwards of $150.00 a year, a rather substantial amount in that economy. The secretary also received compensation. During the eleven-year period from 1899-1910, the secretary received an annual stipend of $65.00. His routine tasks were to keep the minutes, order supplies, conduct correspondence, and carry out the decisions of the board. To a large extent, the secretary was the de facto executive officer of the board.

In addition to the magisterial responsibilities of any government agency that were performed by its officers, there were other tasks to be completed. One activity was the maintenance of the schools. In Richland Township the schools were divided among the directors so that each individual supervised one or two. The directors also performed labor for which they were compensated. With outdoor toilets (then delicately termed "water closets" in the minutes) there were cesspools to be cleaned. The directors did this and other routine maintenance tasks. They also did ad hoc jobs as assigned by the president. These ranged from the sensitive tasks of negotiating in behalf of the Board for the purchase of land for a new school, to the more mundane, such as inspecting shipments of school desks for defects. Once their tasks were completed the individuals or committees were discharged and the board went on to other jobs or issues.

As the foregoing suggests, early 20th-century school board members had a rather broad range of responsibilities. In addition to serving on ad hoc committees both to secure information for purposes of decision-making and to accomplish routine and special tasks, they hired teachers and purchased textbooks and other instructional materials. Other duties included responsibility for health and sanitation, school building programs, and fiscal responsibility.

Teachers were selected by board election in the early summer, usually at the July meeting. There was no tenure. At the turn of the century all eight teachers in the Richland District were male. In 1902 a female teacher was hired in mid-year to replace a male teacher who had died.

By the end of the 20th century, the roles of school boards and their members had changed significantly. The focus had shifted from implementing policy to formulating policy, and from administrative tasks to ceremonial duties.

...
1910 females were regularly being elected to teaching positions, and at that time they were a majority, with six women and three men staffing the nine schools.

Salaries were paid by the month for a twenty-day month. In 1900-1901 "new teachers" were paid $32.00 a month; "old teachers" were paid $36.00 a month. That salary range was maintained until 1903-1904 when it was narrowed to $34.00 and $36.00. For three years a uniform salary of $36.00 was maintained. After 1907-1908 the salary was increased to a range of from $40.00 to $50.00 a month. There is no evidence of a differential salary schedule between men and women. Experience seemed to be the basis for salary differentials.

In July, 1903, the Board specified the hours in which schools would be open. Teachers were to open school buildings at 7:30 a.m. and be on school premises until 4:00 p.m. If we assume that teachers had a lunch period of one-half hour they would be on duty for eight hours a day. At a salary of $36.00 a month, they would have been paid the equivalent of eighteen cents an hour, compared to the board-authorized wages of fifteen cents an hour for laborers. Teachers were expected to appear at the regular monthly meetings of the Board during the school term; after the reports that they submitted in person were examined they were paid. Teachers were also expected to have meetings, without compensation, on one Saturday a month. Supervision of the teachers was divided. The rural school districts were under the educational jurisdiction of the county superintendent of schools. However, the school directors also exercised some supervisory responsibility. When there were complaints about a teacher, for example, the director who was assigned responsibility for that school would investigate the nature of the concerns.

In areas that were related to student health and sanitation the Board exercised extremely wide discretionary powers, at least by present-day standards. In 1900 the Board authorized an extension of the deadline for compulsory vaccination of students for smallpox. At the same meeting the Board agreed to pay for the vaccination of students whose parents were too poor to pay the costs themselves. The Board paid for the fumigation of schools and private homes, and when a child had diphtheria and had to be quarantined the Board paid for his medical care. Perhaps the most unusual case of the reach of the Board's discretionary powers occurred when a board member submitted a bill for $2.50 to pay for the digging of a grave and the funeral of a child who had died.

In 1901 the Richland School Board decided to erect a new building for a student population that did not have a school within convenient walking distance. The board selected a site, negotiated for the purchase of the property (threatening to use condemnation through its powers of eminent domain), determined the dimensions of the building and the materials to be used, and arranged for its construction. They authorized competitive bidding in September, and the building was completed and in use before the end of the year. The Board paid for the entire building project and fixtures for the school (total cost $1416.81) out of current operating expenses. However, there was a deficit of $351.57 at the end of the fiscal year, after operating expenses and construction costs had been paid. The treasurer accepted a personal loan on the deficit at five percent interest, and was paid principal and interest over three or four years.

Most of the funding for the schools was raised through a property tax. The tax rate was set in June of each year. In 1900 the tax rate was set at two-and-one-half mills. By 1908 it had increased to four mills. There was a state reimbursement of about $1200.00 to $1500.00 per year, and the county returned the receipts for dog taxes to the school district for school purposes; this amounted to approximately fifty or sixty dollars a year. There apparently was no requirement that a budget be adopted prior to the beginning of a fiscal year, nor was there a requirement for a balanced budget. Fiscal affairs for the district were handled the same way those frugal farmers and businessmen handled their personal and business affairs. Expenses were watched carefully; money was spent only when necessary. When the receipts were not adequate to meet current expenses (as, for example, when a new school was built), expenditures were cut and taxes were increased to again reach an equilibrium between income and outgo.

**LEGISLATIVE FUNCTION**

One of the areas where the Board had considerable autonomy was in setting the length of the school term. Except when the Board was in tight financial conditions because of the expenses connected with building the new school in 1901, the term was set at nine months, or 180 days. During three years of fiscal austerity the term was cut back to eight months, or 160 days. Neighboring Quakertown had a school term of ten months, or 200 days. Until 1904-1905 there were four "hollerdays": Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Good Friday; after 1904-1905 Washington's Birthday was added as a holiday. Probably due to the large proportion of farm children, the compulsory education requirement did not go into effect until the second month of school. Thus farm children could help with harvesting until early October.

In those early schools the curriculum was the textbooks. These were provided by the School Board and utilized by the teachers in preparing lessons and making assignments. A few examples appear in the minutes where the Board took an active part in the selection of materials or in developing guidelines. For instance, in July, 1900, the matter of changing geographies was taken up, but no change was made, for, as the board secretary reported, the "red books" were in good condition. One of the few directives on instruction was ordered in November, 1903, when the Board decided that penmanship should be taught in all schools for at least ten minutes every school day.

By the end of the decade the Board seemed to be paying
more attention to instructional issues. They had a special meeting with the teachers in August, 1908, to discuss the grammar books then in use. With the guidance of the teachers new textbooks were purchased. The Board, in its typically frugal way, was able to obtain a discount on the new texts by exchanging the unsatisfactory ones. New spelling books were adopted in 1909 also, and, interestingly, the Board adopted a textbook on agriculture at about the same time that it was adopting new spellers.\textsuperscript{13} Given the nature of the community, agriculture was an appropriate subject.

As early as 1908, some township residents began to continue their education beyond the one-room schools to the high school. As Quakertown Borough had a high school as part of its school system, the Richland Board paid tuition to the Quakertown system for township residents. Quakertown had a ten-month term for its high school. Despite the fact that Richland Township schools by 1908-1910 had a nine-month term, the Board was directed by the state to pay tuition for its residents for the full ten months.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{JUDICIAL FUNCTION}

The Richland Township School Board exercised its judicial power in events involving compulsory education and the use of illegal substances. While the Board was responsible for enforcing compulsory attendance laws, they had some discretion in the matter and, as noted above, they consistently ruled that such laws were effective the second month of school in order to permit farm children to help with harvesting. The Board minutes indicate that in two cases, parents of students not attending school regularly were notified that they were to appear before the Board. In both cases the offending parents failed to appear and the Board secretary was directed to take the cases to the Justice of the Peace and have the parents arrested.

The local judicial officer found the parents guilty in both instances, but the Board disposed of the cases in different ways. In one instance the parent was fined $2.00 and costs, which he paid.\textsuperscript{13} In the other case the Board combined justice with mercy. After the Justice of the Peace found the father guilty of gross negligence in not sending his children to school regularly the Board met with him, and he promised that he would send his children to school on a regular basis. Then the Board determined that he was too poor to pay the fine and asked the Justice to forgive it; the Board itself paid the court costs.\textsuperscript{14}

As an additional aspect of the compulsory attendance laws the Board, as early as October, 1899, ordered that all students between the ages of thirteen and sixteen who were employed were to bring proof of employment to the Board.\textsuperscript{15} It should be noted, too, that at its annual organizational meeting the Board appointed a solicitor and set his compensation at ten dollars a year. There are a number of cases cited where the attorney was consulted, but no case over the entire eleven years of any additional bills being submitted by the solicitor to the Board.

The other area of judicial function illustrates a dilemma that has faced school professionals for at least eighty-five years, for even at the turn of the last century they had to cope with the issue of illegal substances. An episode in 1904 in the Township’s brand new Central School shows that some problems seem to be perennial. The teacher there reported that some of the students had brought cigarettes to school. One of the boys, who was younger than twelve, told the teacher he had smoked a half-dozen cigarettes before bringing the rest to school. The School Board secretary was directed to investigate to find out who had sold cigarettes to a minor, and to warn the seller not to repeat the offense, “under penalty of law.”\textsuperscript{16} This case was doubtless, in 1904, as troubling to the school board and teacher as are the highly publicized drug problems of today.

\textbf{COMMENCEMENT}

The decade ended on a positive note for Richland Township schools. By 1909 the Bucks County superintendent of schools administered a test to eighth grade students throughout the county. Those who passed were entitled to graduate from the eighth grade. In 1909 eight students took the examination; five passed and were authorized to graduate. By 1910 there were seventeen students who took it, and thirteen passed. The Board now assumed the pleasant task of working with the teachers to arrange for a commencement exercise. In 1910 this exercise took place in the new Grange Hall that stood next to one of the township schools. A guest speaker was obtained.\textsuperscript{17}

The commencement ceremony must have signified a new level of maturity for this rural school district, for it provided a way to recognize the distinction and pride that follows academic accomplishment. And, as the graduates had the opportunity to continue their education at the high school in Quakertown, the graduation from eighth grade was also the marker for the “commencement” of another phase of schooling for at least some of the adolescents who graduated on a June evening long ago.

With a portion of its students continuing their education beyond the eighth grade the rural township would begin to coordinate its program with the high school. Thus, in time, the foundation was set for the coordinated K-12 districts that now characterize Pennsylvania public education.

\textbf{COMPARISON}

The duties of a rural school board did not change very much as long as one-room schools continued. But three major changes impacted upon the educational landscape in the years following the Second World War, and they have influenced the specific role of the elected school board.

It was clear, in the years following 1945, that the days of the one-room school were numbered. There was a “baby boom” that particularly affected the new suburbs, and one-room schools were not large enough, nor were they in the
right locations, for the thousands of students who needed schooling by the early 1950s; consolidated schools were required for their greater efficiency. By the 1960s the conventional wisdom was that larger school systems were required educationally as well, and by the middle of that decade Pennsylvania's legislature had reduced about 2500 school districts to approximately 500. Today school districts provide a comprehensive program from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. With their increasing complexity school systems require the services of full-time administrative officers. After school systems delegated their authority for the executive function to superintendents of schools their role was bound to change. Today they have an expanded role in policy formulation, and they expect the administrative staff to execute that policy.

There have been other changes as well. As the instructional staff has evolved, teachers have sought to improve their status. By the late 1960s, they had converted their major organizations into professional unions. With the passage of Pennsylvania Act 195, collective negotiations became the established procedure of establishing relationships between school boards and professional staffs. The foundation for collective negotiations had been set in the private sector, assuming a corporate model of organization. As Pennsylvania has proceeded into its second decade of collective bargaining, the board has been viewed, along with the administrators, as "management." This would be a difficult concept for early school board members to comprehend. They worked by personal, face-to-face relationships, and would find the elaborate superstructure of contracts, grievances, and finely tuned salary schedules to be a puzzlement, to say the least.

Politically speaking, the provision of public schools has been a state function. In Pennsylvania, the General Assembly launched our public school system in 1834. The origins of our public schools coincide with the days of Jacksonian Democracy. The institutions of local government were the mechanisms to provide services in the most effective way. School boards were first authorized and thrived in an environment that could be called "democratic localism." They were democratic because they were elected by and represented their neighbors in the community. Individuals participated out of a spirit of responsibility to their neighbors. Although, as mentioned, there was some compensation possible, it is clear they volunteered their time freely, from a sense of civic responsibility. They developed the procedures and traditions that school boards now value as "local control."

But the pressures of centralization are at work in the arena of educational policy, as well as in the delivery of services to students. Schools have become so vital to our society that they have been the focus of waves of external reform movements, particularly since 1957. Politicians make reputations by influencing school programs. They do this by a political process. There is a layer of state-level decision-making that is distinctly political and that influences what schools are allowed to do. A large unit of state government, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, enforces state-level policies.

This is not to say that early school boards were not political. When a bridge was destroyed in a flood in Richland Township in 1905, the school board used its influence to encourage the Bucks County Commissioner to replace the bridge so that the children could get to school. The minutes contain a number of references to regulations of the state government. But the intensity and sophistication with which political leaders outside of the school boards turn education into a political football would be another source of puzzlement to those of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers who served their local constituents.

**CONCLUSION**

The responsibilities of Pennsylvania school boards in 1900 were, in broad terms, the same as they are today. We still work under the mandate of the 1876 state constitution, which requires the commonwealth to provide a "thorough and efficient" system of schools. But their specific role has changed. They are now more of a deliberative body than an executive agency, due to the greater complexity of schools and the need for full-time management. They have assumed more of a corporate character, due in large part to the impact of unionism and collective negotiation. They have been drawn into a positive advocacy for local control, due to the tendency of state and national politicians to turn education into a political issue.

With their neighbors on town councils and boards of township supervisors, local school board members continue to provide their communities with effective, face-to-face governance of important services. Democratic localism is alive and well in rural schools in the last decade of the twentieth century, built on the foundation established in the first decade of the twentieth century.

**ENDNOTES**

The minutes of the Richland Township School Board are maintained in a vault of the Quakertown Community School District, 600 Park Avenue, Quakertown, Pa. 18951. The journal was a blank, leather-bound notebook that was completed by handwritten notes, by the various secretaries to the board.

An abbreviated version of this article was published in the *Bulletin* of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, February 1989.


1Record, p. 111. 2Record, p. 110. 3Record, p. 117.

4Record, p. 77. 5Record, p. 20. 6Record, p. 126.

7Record, p. 21. 8Record, p. 113. 9Record, p. 246.

10Record, p. 249. 11Record, p. 259. 12Record, p. 232.

13Record, p. 7. 14Record, p. 135. 15Record, p. 260.

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