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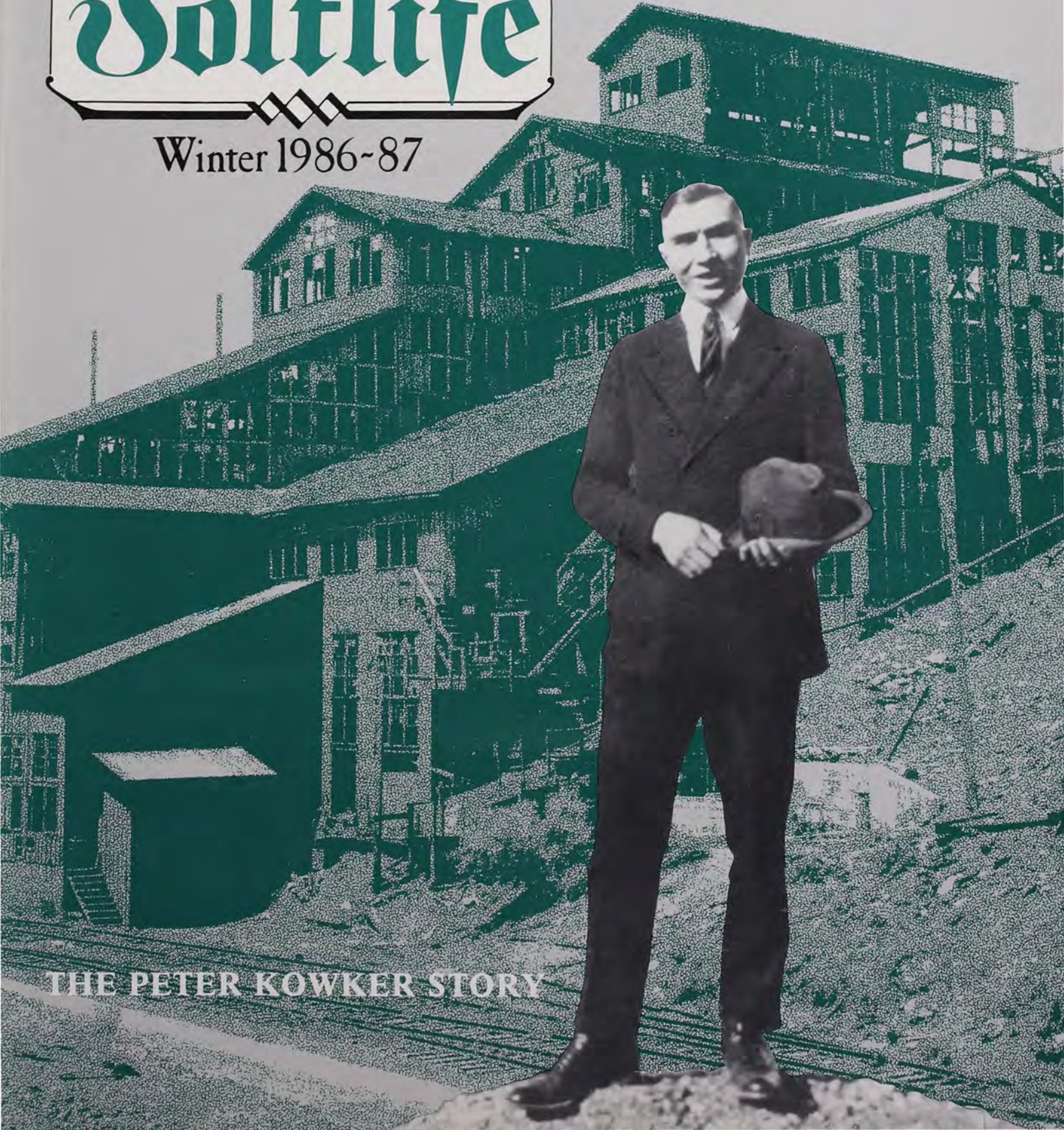
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Winter 1986-87



THE PETER KOWKER STORY

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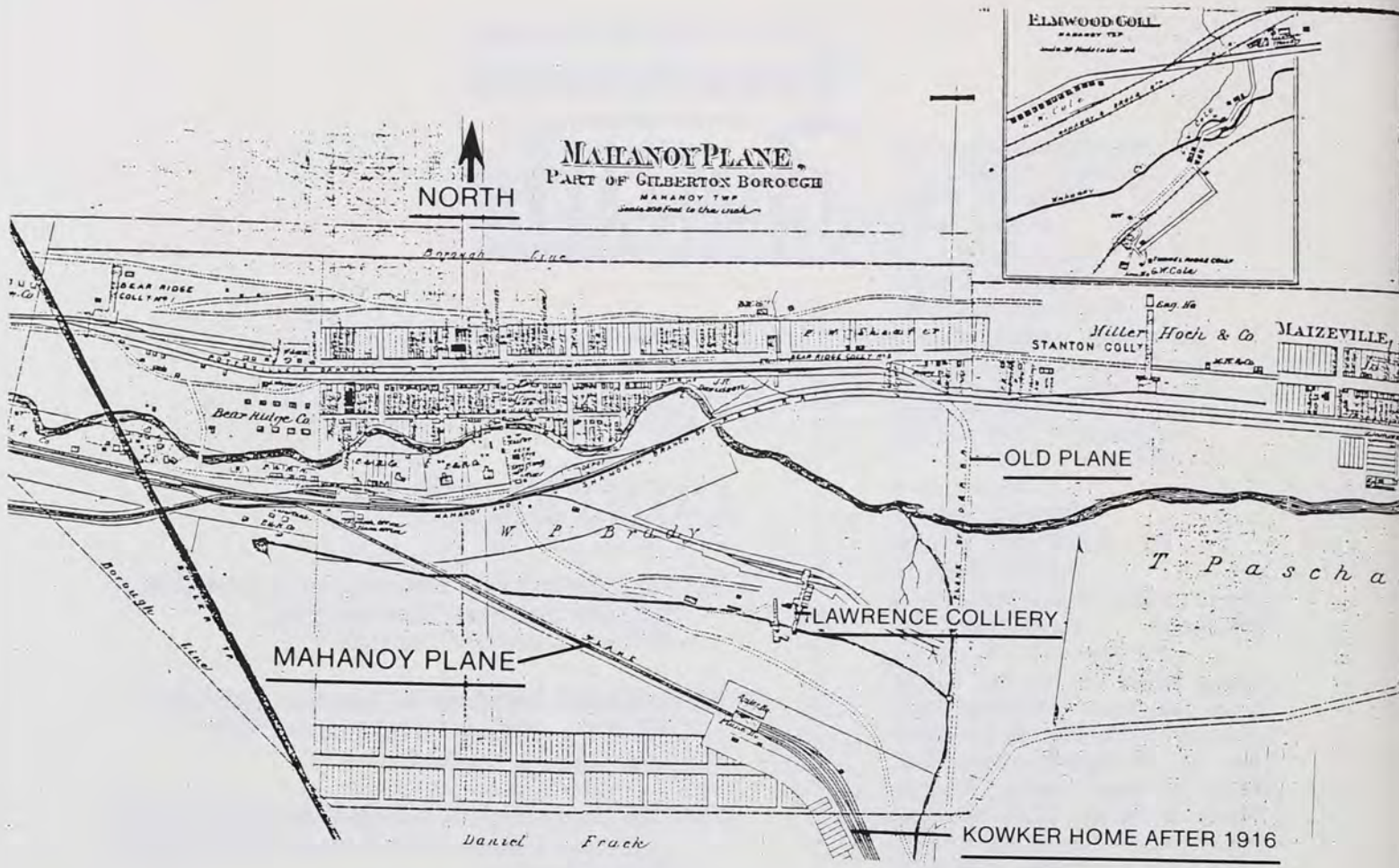
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(Inside front cover)

COVER:

America is a land of immigrants: that truism assumed added significance in this year in which we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Statue of Liberty. Most immigrants — and their children — are ordinary people leading what they, at least, consider ordinary lives; but collectively their achievements and contributions are responsible for what we as a nation are, and for what we will become. No doubt there are thousands of individuals with stories that could be, should be, told; herein we tell only one — that of Peter Kowker. The son of Lithuanian immigrants, he overcame the limitations that affected many of his time and place to lead a life of extraordinary service to his family and community.

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IMMIGRATION AND ETHNICITY IN THE ANTHRACITE REGION: The Peter Kowker Story

by Barbara Knox Homrighaus

INTRODUCTION

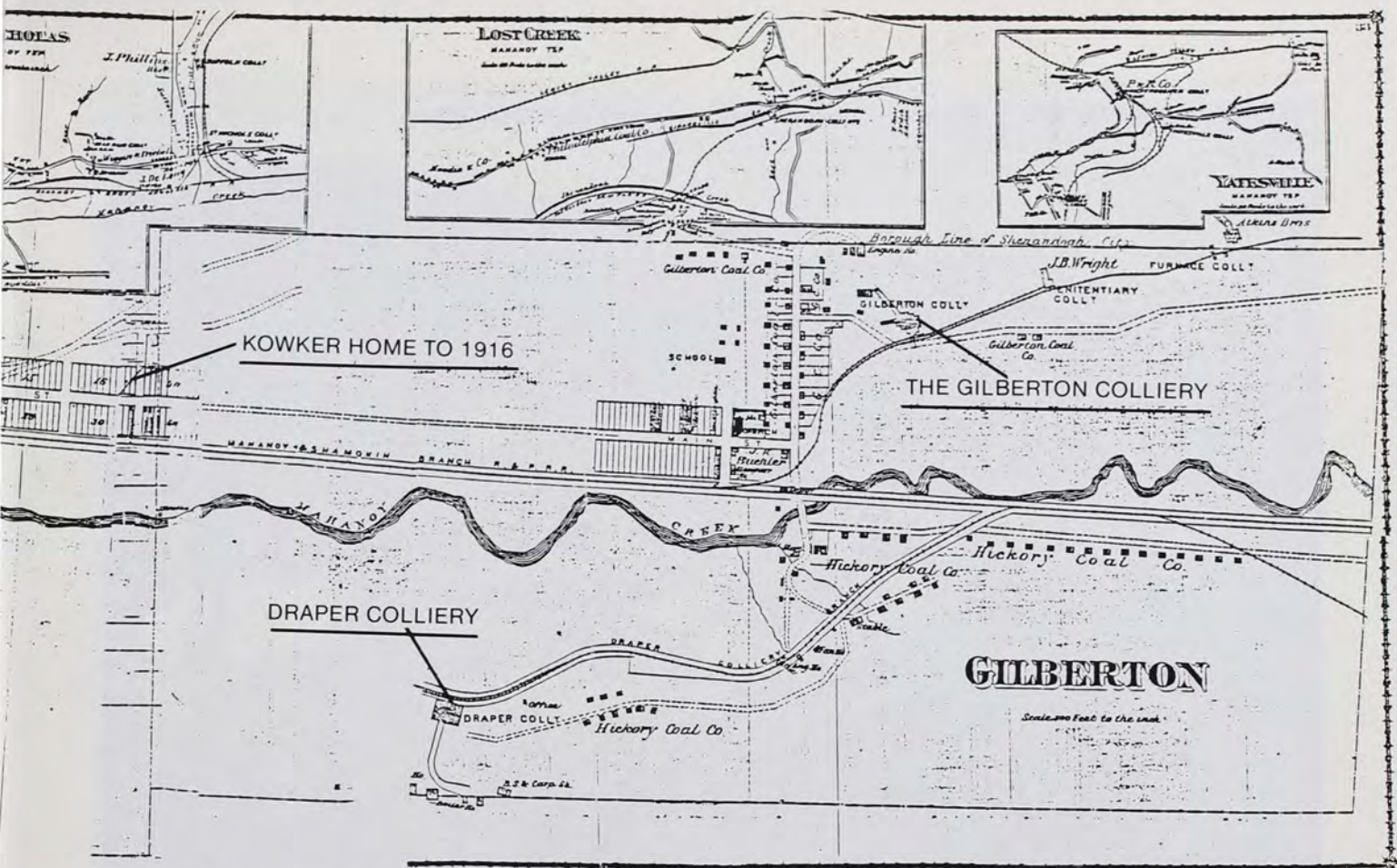
In 1917, a fourteen-year-old quit school to work as a breaker boy in the anthracite region of northeastern Pennsylvania. Without the state-required baptismal certificate or school record verifying proof of age,¹ he was hired to work eight hours a day in a dust-filled, metal-walled building removing slate and other unwanted material from chutes of coal.²

In reality this fourteen-year-old had already been working for many years. From the age of six he earned pennies by picking coal from colliery rock banks, cracking it, and carrying it home; by retrieving wooden planks (useful for building and repair projects) discarded by the coal company; by walking several miles to pick huckleberries;³ and by running errands and doing a little painting.⁴ But this was all work done around the home;

now he was employed as a breaker boy, an above-ground coal industry job that ordinarily led to other jobs, below ground, in the mines: door boy, mule driver, laborer, miner.⁵ But Peter Kowker had other ideas. In his own words, "I figured that I wanted to make something different out of my life."⁶

That he did: although he began his working life in the anthracite industry, Peter did not go on — as most did — to become a miner; although he lived within the defining boundaries of an immigrant Lithuanian family culture, he pursued a modern business career; and his decisions — both personal and professional — were not only privately satisfying, but contributed greatly to community development as well.

Baptised Petrus Kiaurkury, Peter was the fifth of seven children born to Vincent and Petronella Kliuciskiste Kiaurkury. Vincent Kiaurkury, born in



Map of Gilberton Borough showing the Kowker home and work sites. Four miles long, the borough lies in a valley that is nowhere more than one-half mile wide. (Source: Beers' Atlas, 1875.)

Peter Kowker standing above Gilberton Borough at the top of the Mahanoy Plane (1924).



Lithuania in 1865, emigrated to the United States while young, Anglicized his name to William Kowker, and became a coal miner. Petronella Kliuciskiste, born February 2, 1873, in Lithuania, came to the United States at the age of sixteen.⁷ The Kowker's first child was born in 1891; Peter was born on September 13, 1903, in Maizeville, the central ward of Gilberton Borough in Schuylkill County, Pa., and lived there until 1916. In that year the Kowkers moved a few miles away to the borough of Frackville. There they bought a house, referred to now as the "family homestead," where Peter lives to the present day.⁸

I first met Peter Kowker in May, 1985 when I was documenting a photography exhibit of Schuylkill County industrial and cultural sites for the Schuylkill County Council for the Arts in Pottsville.⁹ Peter was listed in a local historian's file as the owner of an old photograph



View of the Mahanoy Plane from the Gilberton ward of Mahanoy Plane (ca. 1880). Visible at the base of the hill is the "lokie" road, and (left) the Lawrence Colliery. (From the Edward L. Bafford Collection, Alvin O.

Kuhn Library and Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; courtesy of Tom Beck, curator of photography.)

of the now dismantled roller coaster at Lakeside Park, and I called him about it.¹⁰ He not only agreed to allow the photo to be part of the exhibit, but he also invited me to his home in Frackville, and showed me several albums of family pictures.¹¹ Peter agreed that some of these pictures could be part of the exhibit, reprinted to document typical work and leisure pastimes for anthracite workers in the 1920s, and he was a featured guest at the exhibit that July.

In late August Peter called me to ask if I would write an article using the pictures in a story. Since I was packing to move from Pennsylvania to Ohio, I asked him how he would feel about tape recording some interviews with a view to writing an article once I settled in Ohio. He agreed. We had time to tape two hour-long sessions and then exchanged letters about areas I needed to know more about once I transcribed the tapes.

Peter mailed two packages of family records for me to review; I traveled back to Pennsylvania four times to visit him and his wife, Helen. We walked to former work sites; I visited the school he attended. I also corresponded with Peter's younger sisters, Helen, in Oregon, and Matilda, in Philadelphia, for their recollections of family life.

Peter's story, as I came to understand it, led me into many areas of interest, including the labor history of the anthracite region, and theories of immigration there. Some of Peter's decisions corresponded to important labor events and social reform movements in the region. As I tried to fully understand his life-story, I became aware that it had significance in addition to being an accounting of one life in the hard coal region. So it came about that Peter's interviews and letters, his family documents, written recollections from two other family members, and additional historical materials, all became the sources of this article.

I intend to use narrative sections from Peter's interviews to describe key personal decisions he made, and to describe the circumstances in which he has lived and worked. These will be marked according to interview or letter dates and will represent composite statements. The other source materials will be used to footnote or amplify his narrative.

We have few contemporary accounts from the native born sons of immigrants who began working as breaker boys in the hard coal region. I offer Peter's story, which is the intrinsically interesting one of an outstanding individual, to provide comparative information which

may contribute to our understanding of ethnic family culture, work, and upward mobility there at the turn of the century.

BACKGROUND

We do not know when William Kowker emigrated or the date he began working as a miner, but we do know that as a laborer or a miner in 1891 (when his first child was born), his working environment in West Mahanoy Township, Schuylkill County, would have been dominated by two prominent features. The first of these was the inclined plane at Mahanoy Plane. Located west of Maizeville in the west ward of Gilberton Borough, Mahanoy Plane was host and namesake to a set of railroad tracks 2,460 feet long, equipped with steel cable and powerful stationary steam engines to hoist anthracite coal cars from the Mahanoy Valley floor up the north face of Broad Mountain to its summit near Frackville. From there it went, via the Mahanoy and Shamokin branch of the Philadelphia Railroad, to St. Clair, and then on to eastern markets. The "Plane" was an engineering marvel of its day, and a prominent feature of the local landscape.

It was the demand for anthracite during the Civil War which stimulated the development of the valley's coal resources and was ultimately responsible for the successful operation of the plane. In the 1830s a shorter version of the Plane had been constructed, but it was abandoned by 1836. Reestablished in a second location there, in 1861, as the most efficient way to get coal out of the valley and over the mountain, Mahanoy Plane operated from July 18 of that year until February 2, 1932. In its seventy-year history it carried out 1,376,400,000 tons of coal for at least fifty individual breakers employing 10,000 men.

The second prominent feature of William Kowker's working environment in West Mahanoy Township in 1891 would not have been as obvious to the eye as the Plane, but was equally important in the life of the working miner. That was the pervasive influence of the Philadelphia and Reading Company. Organized by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad in 1871 to buy up all available coal lands of the middle and southern anthracite fields (in order to prevent rival railroads from entering the area and taking away freight tonnage), the P & R purchased and controlled many of the Mahanoy Valley collieries as early as 1879. The P & R Coal & Iron Company operated the Mahanoy Plane, and when William Kowker worked as a miner it is likely that the coal he mined, owned by the P & R Company, would leave the region by the Mahanoy Plane: indeed, in 1891 the Plane had been in operation for thirty years, and the P & R C & I Company had existed for twenty. When you consider that in the next half-century this company would own 85,000 acres of coal lands (with reserves sufficient for two hundred and sixteen years), and would go on to follow the consolidation of ownership with the centralization of processing, it becomes clear that the

essential features about work for William Kowker in the coal industry were in place when he was six years old, and remained so for his sons.¹²

When William and Petronella emigrated to the United States and settled in Maizeville, their actions were part of a wider ethnic movement. Historians describe a distinct Lithuanian migration which began in the late 1860s and continued without major interruption until 1914. Three hundred thousand Lithuanians, most emigrating to improve their worsening socio-economic status, came to America during those years.

There were many factors behind their mobility within the Russian empire, and later beyond it. Serfdom was abolished in Russia in the 1860s. A railroad boom (1850-1870) stimulated unskilled, seasonal labor there. Agricultural pressures included severe famine in the late 1860s, and, after 1870, subdivided land allotments in a changed economy failed to support families. Economically, prices for those able to produce surplus crops were inadequate because of the world-wide agricultural depression of the 1870s and 1880s. Moreover, many wanted to escape compulsory service in the Tsar's army, instituted in 1874, and significantly higher earnings were obtainable through migration.¹³ The most important aspect of a pattern of Lithuanian mobility within Europe gradually became emigration to America. Beginning in the late 1860s, it grew during the 1880s and continued through the early 1900s. Peter's parents were a part of this Lithuanian migration.

The Kowker family's residence in Maizeville further defined their participation in a specifically Lithuanian settlement pattern. Lithuanian newcomers generally found work in coal mines, garment shops, textile and shoe factories, oil refineries, and packing houses. Particularly before 1890, most Lithuanians moved to the anthracite districts of central Pennsylvania, finding jobs as mine laborers in coal towns such as Plymouth, Freeland, Hazleton, Shenandoah, Pittston, Mahanoy City, Mount Carmel, and Scranton. Maizeville is four miles south of Shenandoah and seven miles west of Mahanoy City.¹⁴

Between 1880 and 1924 there was a great upsurge in immigration in America. In all of the decades between 1607 and 1880 perhaps ten million people came to the United States; but in the four decades between 1880 and 1920, almost twenty-six million came.¹⁵ In 1880 Slavs, or non-English speaking immigrants from southern and eastern European countries, made up 2% of the foreign born population of the anthracite region; by 1900 they accounted for 40% of that population, and had changed the composition of the anthracite work force. In 1880 they comprised less than 5% of that force; by 1900, nearly 50%.¹⁶ By the turn of the century, twenty-six nationalities and an estimated population of 630,000 people were directly or indirectly dependent on the mining economy of a region 1,700 square miles in area; a region which had 480 square miles of hard coal deposits scattered

over seven counties in northeastern Pennsylvania.¹⁷

In reality, many of these twenty-six million immigrants were non-Slavic peoples: Lithuanians from the northern part of eastern Europe; Hungarians from its central section; and Italians from southern Europe. But all non-English speaking peoples tended to be regarded together with suspicion, and for most, the Kowker immigration, settlement, and work pattern was a part of this wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe which came to be known as the "Slav invasion." This so-called invasion was depicted at the time as disruptive; as a force which imperiled liberty and carried in its train evils to the individual and to organized society. It was blamed for creating an oversupply of labor and a competition between two widely varying standards for a limited amount of work. Moreover, Slavs were thought to have a negative impact on unionization (because they were not familiar with American wage scales and accepted a lower standard of living), and they were believed to be the underlying cause of the two major strikes in the region. It was also said that the Slavic influx caused the departure of the region's sturdy, English-speaking immigrant groups. In short, the "Slav invasion" was said to have weakened the social fabric.¹⁸

However, anthracite mine workers historically had been divided along ethnic, cultural, language, geographic, and religious lines.¹⁹ Mine owners capably controlled and administered a private property which, in the instance of hard coal, became a developed and marketed resource required by both industrial and domestic users. Some argue that by the turn of the century the entire anthracite region had become, in effect, an economic colony of powerful financial interests located in New York and Philadelphia. More than 96% of all anthracite coal lands were controlled by eight railroad companies, with 91% of deposits owned outright. Railroad companies were able to fix the price of coal, determine production levels, and establish tonnage quotas. Both the coal and the profits flowed out of the anthracite region to immensely wealthy absentee owners.²⁰

Until 1900 there had never been an organized, coordinated worker strike successful at changing and maintaining bettered work conditions. In the strike of 1900, the United Mine Workers Union won *de facto* recognition when the vast majority of the 147,000 anthracite work force went out on strike September 1, and stayed out until the union ordered them back to work October 29; well after the coal companies began posting notices agreeing with the strikers' demands.

In 1902 the "armistice" of 1900 became a great strike — a long and difficult confrontation. The issue was whether or not the workers and their demands could be presented collectively, rather than individually, to mine owners who, for the most part, represented private property and combined railroad interests. A most significant

characteristic of the strike was that the federal government intervened for the first time in the country's history, not to break a strike, but to bring about a peaceful settlement.²¹ Commission testimony about living conditions, and the union's moderate posture, put public opinion firmly on the strikers' side; but the strike of 1902 was not without violence. Nonunion men and scabs were harrassed and sometimes attacked throughout the strike. In the Kowker family's vicinity, five thousand strikers forced a deputy sheriff escorting two nonunion men to seek refuge in the Reading Railroad depot in Shenandoah. When the sheriff's brother tried to smuggle arms into the building he was beaten to death. Two regiments of National Guard and a cavalry troop were sent into the city. Eventually the entire Pennsylvania National Guard was assigned to the region, joining the operators' private forces already in the fields: three thousand Coal and Iron Police and one thousand private detectives.

In the 1903 settlement miners were awarded a 10% pay increase, a sliding wage scale, an eight-hour day for several categories of work, and "weighing men" to be paid by the miners. The United Mine Workers did not receive official recognition, but a conciliation board on which representatives of miners' organizations were to sit was established. Even though the primary objective of recognition failed, the union emerged as a major, powerful, organized force in the region.²²

THE KOWKER FAMILY

William and Petronella Kowker were an ambitious, capable, and devout couple. She was eighteen and he twenty-six when their first child, Anna, was born in 1891. John (1893), William (1898), Anthony (1900), Peter (1903), Helen (1906), and Matilda (1909) followed. While there are no Kowker family stories about the labor aspects of the strikes of 1900 and 1902, the family evidently did not temporarily leave the region to work elsewhere until the confrontation was resolved, as many miners were encouraged to do in 1902. Helen Kowker does know that "during the big coal strike in 1902 times were hard Anthony was not yet two — mother said she would open a can of sardines [and] put vegetables in to make soup for the family. They would go out to pick coal for the stove; Anthony would go along with a five-pound lard can to 'help.' He would fill his can with rocks and when he got hungry [he] would take mother by the hand and lead her to a rock, crawl up on her lap and nurse."²³

While there are no family stories about the turn-of-the-century strikes, the youngest Kowker children do recall stories about chain migration, the process whereby relatives (if not immediate family members) helped one another emigrate and adjust to a new country.²⁴ They heard that with the help of her brother, Petronella found an arranged job awaiting her in



Peter's mother, Petronella Kliucuiskiste Kowker (1924).



Peter's father, William Kowker, in front of the Frackville homestead (1916).

America, as well as a practical marriage to a Lithuanian coal miner with a brother and sister of his own living nearby in Maizeville. Renting preceded purchasing a first, and then a second, home for them. Boarders helped defray initial expenses; renters later helped provide family income.

Concerning her parents' origins and immigration to America, Peter's younger sister Helen uses the words "thrift, faith, devotion, obedience, patriotism, respect, good humor, integrity, hard work" to describe her parents as she recalls:

. . . Mother was from the Vilna or Kaunas area . . . [she] lost her mother when she was two years old. They lived in the country. They had dirt floors packed tight, and a big oven in the main room (the kind they baked bread in, in the backyards when I was little). It had shelves or ledges on the sides where one could sit or lay down and keep warm in winter. I think her father married again.

I don't know who paid her fare to come to the states. She had two cousins living in Cumbola, [Pa.], Agnes Michaelsavage and Agnes Lookasavage, and a cousin, Matthew Valesevicius (who later became my godfather). She also had a cousin, Andrew Klutchinsky, who changed his name to Klitsch and had a bar in Pottsville. There was also a Percy who had a store or meat market in Mahanoy City, I don't recall any brothers.

* * * *

It was customary in those days for relations to pay the fares of the young ladies [of the family]. When they arrived there was usually a half-dozen suitors on hand waiting to court the young ladies and win them for a wife. This is what happened to mother . . . [She] had left her home [and] traveled half way around the world to a strange land with strange customs. The first thing they did was get [her] a job as maid in a home to [help her to] learn the ways of her new country. [At that time], they scrubbed the wooden floors on their hands and knees with water that had lye in it to whiten the floors. Needless to say this was hard on the hands . . . [But she] learned the customs and became acclimated. I don't know how long mother worked while being courted but it wasn't too long. Of her half-dozen suitors she chose my Dad and they were married. I think it must have been at St. George's Church in Shenandoah because I was christened there. I don't think there was a church in Maizeville at that time.

They rented a house, bought a bed, table and chairs, and a stove, and set up housekeeping.

Because there were so many young immigrants coming in that had to have a place to stay, before you knew it they had a house full of boarders. The boarders didn't pay much but it helped.

Mother was thrifty so they were able to buy a house, and later [they bought] the one next door which they rented [out]. It was just across the street from the schoolhouse which made it easy for us. We left the house when the bell started ringing and were in our seats at the last bell.

They bought there because they felt it was in a safe area. With the mines from Gilberton coming from one direction and the mines from Mahanoy Plane coming from the other there was an area of several blocks that was solid and that was where the school was.

Mother was a remarkable woman. The newspaper clipping when she passed away said she was a woman of profound religious convictions and a devout member of her church. That is true; she loved her Savior and Lord and by her life and example taught her children faith, obedience, thrift, responsibility. She was wise and had a memory that was like an encyclopedia. People from all over town would come to ask her dates of births, weddings, funerals, etc., and she could always help them.

When I say she was thrifty — she never bought anything (house excepted) unless she either could pay cash or pay half and finish paying in thirty or sixty days. No interest for her. She had a sense of humor and knew when to use it. We children went to church sun, rain, snow or sleet unless we were sick. And on Sunday we did not do anything except eat and clean up afterwards. She did a lot of the cooking on Saturday. I remember on [one] Sunday I was going to sew a button on a dress I wanted to wear. Mother said, "You don't do it on the Lord's day; you had all week to do it, and now it can wait a little longer."

We never talked back to mother; she didn't raise her voice but when she told us to do something we did it. And yet she could be fun; she had slim, trim ankles, and [she] could sure dance the polka with the best of them.

I remember coming downstairs in the early morning and finding mother in the rocker by the kitchen stove either praying or reading her prayer book; and how many times I heard her pray, "*Yesau Christo Sunoo Dovedo Susi Milk ahu musu*" (Jesus Christ Son of David have mercy on us.)

I know she prayed for all her children and by her life and influence sought to instill in us a love and

reverence for God [and] patriotism for our country; [she wanted us] to be obedient, dependable, to not promise anything unless we could keep that promise; [to have] respect for others, and honesty and integrity. Though she is long gone, her spirit lives on and I often, even now, find myself doing things the way she did and would want me to.

We may have been poor in material things but we were rich in the things that matter and with the legacy she left I can only say, "Thank you dear Lord for mother; and thanks, mother, for everything."

* * * *

The only thing I know of Dad — he said he was born near the border of Prussia and had some Prussian ancestors. They often crossed the border to shop. He told of one time he went with his father, [and] chose the smallest package to carry; it turned out to be salt and very heavy. [He] said you could not tell by the size what it would weigh.

Dad had a Kaiser mustache that curled up at both ends. He would comb it, pour some brown liquid in a saucer and brush it on his mustache. I was always inquisitive and liked to explore so one day (about age 3 or 4) I climbed up on a chair, poured some of the liquid in the saucer and daubed it all over my face. When I looked in the mirror and saw this black face staring at me I started to scream, it scared me so. Mother came rushing in to the room, took one look at me and I thought she would never stop laughing. I couldn't understand why.²⁵

Sister Matilda adds to this description of Petronella and William's immigration:

No, I do not know where Daddy was born. All I know is he was born near the border. I thought it was Germany but I think you are right [Helen] about that [meaning Prussia]. About who paid mother's fare, I do know that; I heard the story so many times. It was paid by her brother, but I cannot remember his name. I first thought it was John but . . . [now] I am almost positive it was Anthony. He lived at Schuylkill Haven at the poor farm. They had men that went there to work as farmers. They had little cottages that they lived in. They used to grow the vegetables for the people in the hospital for a salary and a home. I used to go there with mother to visit him. He was a very nice man. I used to like going there.

He [Anthony] was a good friend of our father's, so when Mom was coming to the USA . . . [the two of them] went to meet the boat. He liked



Maizeville School about 1909; Peter (age 6) second row, center (seventh from left).

mother very much, and they were married two weeks later. They rented a house and moved in. They had two boarders to help pay the bills.

Two weeks before the wedding Mother had a job as a maid. This had been arranged for her by her brother. One day the lady sent Mom to the store for a broom. At the store Mom was saying “proom, proom,” [and] the store man kept giving her prunes but she would not take them. Finally she saw a broom and went over and pointed to it. Our mother must have been beautiful at eighteen years of age.

She taught us to [have] love [for] one another, honesty, respect [for] old age, and to get along with people. And to help others whenever we can. I am still the same; I love my brother Peter very much. Always did. I love my sisters also . . . My son and I help all the senior citizens in our block. Anything they need they call and ask my son Don. Don used to spend his summers in Frackville and my mother taught him what she had taught me.²⁶

PETER’S STORY

By 1915 the older children in the Kowker family were all working. Anna, twenty-four, was a professional dressmaker; John, twenty-two, had enlisted in the army as a teamster and was now in the navy; Bill, seventeen, worked on the colliery railroad; and Anthony, fifteen worked around the breaker.²⁷ Peter, twelve, was still at home as were Helen, nine, and Matilda, six. In 1916, after a cave-in at the Mahanoy Plane end of Gilberton Borough (in which a small boy lost his life and many houses were damaged), the Kowker family decided to buy a third home and move to Frackville.²⁸ Peter began the eighth grade in Frackville that fall.



Peter, age 13; the summer before he began working full-time.

The next year, 1917, brought change. Sixteen-year-old Anthony quit work to enlist in the Marine Corps, and Petronella became pregnant at the age of forty-four. Peter attended high school for only two weeks that September, and then quit school to start work at the Draper breaker.²⁹ At the age of eighty-two he told me about his earliest industrial experience:

In 1917, I worked eight hours a day at the age of fourteen. The first day of work pickin’ slate wasn’t an easy job. You had to sit and pick the rocks out of the coal as it went down a chute aside of ya. And naturally you got red tops from rubbin’ the sheet iron or the metal underneath. “Red tops” means the fingers got sore, the tips of the fingers got very sore. You’d try to wear gloves but you couldn’t do a good job with them so you just had to live with it. Toughen them up.



Undated photograph of the Gilberton Breaker (perhaps ca. 1930) from the Reading Company files. (Courtesy of Jim Curran, Vice-President, Reading Anthracite Company.)



Peter (left), employed by the Arrow Coatings Company, takes the boss's son on a tour of the Draper Colliery (1924).

About twenty or thirty other boys and men worked there with me I guess. We started work at 7 o'clock and got a half-an-hour off for lunch, and then back to work again until quittin' time. You took your lunch with you in a lunch pail — a lunch can they used to call them. Old time "lunches." You couldn't get a drink of water there, [so] you took it with ya. You generally had your breakfast at home. When you went to work it was dark.

At work there was the main chute with the coal comin' down; there was more than one pickin' on that. And as it came to you, you picked off what you could, and then let the thing move along. And then there's a chute aside of you that you threw that there slate in . . . and this chute went down into a hopper where they loaded it on cars, and then took it out and put it on the rock bank. There was a boss that overlooked everything. And it was up to him to see that you were doing your work.

. . . The Draper breaker would be above Gilberton, up on the mountain. It was part of the [P&R C&I Co.] Reading Coal Company. They had hundreds of people employed there because the breaker was a big breaker and . . . at that time there was hundreds employed in the mines too. There was a lot of work in the coal regions at that time.

* * * *

I decided that I wanted to go to work to help. So I went to work the day after I was fourteen years old. You had to be fourteen before you were left [allowed] to quit school. I wanted to help. And it did very much. They worked six days a week. They worked every day including Saturday — not Sunday though — and they paid twicest a month. So when the month was a little longer you got an

extra day in for that particular pay. So that's why the first pay we got fourteen days in, and I got \$14.14 for it. So I got the fourteen cents and my mother got the fourteen dollars. She used it for food, and whatever was necessary: clothes and things that was needed for the house. 'Cause that would buy a lot at that time. I saved a dime of it and spent four cents . . . on candy. I just saved a dime at home, and then I bought myself a suit for [with] it after I got enough to buy one.³⁰

Where 1917 brought family change, 1918 brought tragedy. That February Petronella's ninth pregnancy ended in still-birth;³¹ in April, Peter's father died of pneumonia at the age of fifty-three; and in June, the family was notified that Anthony had been killed-in-action with the U.S. Marines in France. Peter had been working for nine months by that time.

Peter's first decision, to go to work to help out in 1917, was one that each of the older Kowker children had also made, so it fit the family pattern for work. But after the events of 1918, Peter's decision took on a new significance:

. . . I stayed with my mother after father died of pneumonia in his fifties. He only was in his fifties. His lungs were a little bit coal dusty I guess, and when he got pneumonia why he was ill for four, five, six days — whatever it took until it got him. Years ago they didn't have what they have today for fightin' some of this stuff. He had a little insurance, but not that much because at that time ya wasn't being insured like they do today. There were nickel and dime policies at that time, small policies. And money wasn't [so] plentiful that you could afford too much.

When he died things got different. At that time we had this house; we [had] just bought the house in 1916. And they owed money on it. So naturally that hadda be paid. And there was no income from the father part of it. So my income helped. And when my brother was killed in the war, then she got insurance money, so that helped [too]. And I stayed with her until 1937. I didn't get married or didn't think of getting married. So I helped a lot. [There was] nobody to turn to in those days; [you] had to scrap and do the best with what you had.³²

After his father's death, Peter continued to work. He was ambitious. He changed breakers for better pay, and eventually moved up to "sprager" at the age of seventeen (1921).³³ All of his work sites were near Gilberton Borough:

I went from Draper colliery to Gilberton colliery and I worked in the top of the breaker in the big



Peter — with lunch "can" — at the Wild Cat cleaner (1921).

chute where the bigger coal came. The other breakers you were pickin' the smaller coal. And then I worked in there for a coupla of years and then from there I went out to the Wild Cat. And that was as far as I worked myself up, moved up the ladder, in that department.

I was sprager at the Wild Cat. When they brought the coal up from the mines and they dumped it in the cleaner, they picked out the big logs and big rocks and all, and then they put it down the chute and they loaded it from that hopper into the cars. They used to bring about ten cars out with a lokie [locomotive]. And they pushed them back and then one car at a time they would load and leave it go.



Lunch time for Peter at the Wild Cat cleaner; wooden sprags — the tools of his trade — at his feet (1921).



Peter and co-laborer at the Wild Cat (1921).



Peter (top) and fellow worker, Wild Cat cleaner (1921).

The cars they have little holes in them. And each car they'd load and I'd sprag it and then hook it on to the other car until we got the whole trip fixed up. A wooden sprag. That's the thing you used. You hadda stick it in the wheel. It would hit the top and then it would stop. You could break an arm.

There were four wheels. So you stick the sprag in the hole as it's going and then it comes up to the top and stops. Well it was up to me to stop it far enough so we could get all the load ready to take back into the breaker, of full cars. Well, the first car was the hardest to control because you had to leave it to go for a little while to get it down far enough from the loading dock to make the trip. And then the lokie used to come in and take the loaded cars in, bring the empty cars back again, and take the full cars into the breaker. It was a little better pay rate. A little more. But at that time the advance was very little. Very little.³⁴

Even before he changed jobs in the industry, Peter had begun evening classes at the McCann School in Mahanoy City.³⁵ First opened in 1897, by Louis C. McCann of Coshockton, Ohio,³⁶ the McCann School of Business offered courses in business, accounting, shorthand, typewriting, bookkeeping, penmanship, English,

and mathematics, to both day and evening school pupils. Night school was a particularly important option for those McCann students employed during the day. Asserting that "business training makes leaders," individualized instruction and the ideal of progress through personal effort were the mainstays of the school.³⁷ Peter remembers the years (1919-1922) he attended classes there:

While working I went to McCann's School, night school, for over three years. It was my idea again. Working, I figured this ain't gonna get me anywhere because at that time when you worked in the breaker you eventually shifted into the mines and I figured that I wanted to make something different out of my life. So I decided to go to McCann's School. And I went to night school.

At that time [to go to night school] we had to go down to Mahanoy Plane — walk down to Mahanoy Plane — that's down the mountain — and get on a train around 6 o'clock. You got home [from work] around 4 — before 5 o'clock. . . . had something to eat and changed clothes We got to school around 7 and then we'd come home on the train again at 9 o'clock and then walk up the hill again. Over a mile up the mountainside. I didn't mind it. I did what I had to do and I did



Wild Cat crew (1921); Peter, seated, front, left.



Wild Cat crew (1921); Peter, far right.

all right at school too. We had homework . . . reading and spelling and 'rithmetic, and I took a business course so I had books to complete and keep things balanced and so forth. You bought things, books, at that time but everything was very cheap, very cheap. When you got home you did some homework, or you did some homework the next day because school, I think, was three nights a week. You had a day in between and you had the weekend.³⁸

On April 1, 1922, the "six months" coal strike began. For the first time, more than 400,000 men in the anthracite and bituminous fields simultaneously walked out when March negotiations broke down. Where the principal issue in the earlier strike of 1902 was the right to negotiate collectively, in 1922 the collective bargaining process was in place. Nevertheless, the differences between miners and owners were extensive and complex, and resulted in a protracted stalemate.³⁹

Peter was eighteen years old. He used the strike as an

Peter and his fellow McCann School classmates on an outing at Lakeside Park (1923).



opportunity to change to day school at McCann's and become a full-time student. Family economic responsibilities had eased. His sister Helen, fifteen, had already left home to work in Schuylkill Haven, and although Matilda, at thirteen, was still at home, she was working part-time. When the strike ended, Peter chose not to return to the breaker to work. In 1922 he had no conflict with identifying his occupational interests elsewhere:

For night school there was people that you didn't get too much contact with them because you were doing what you had to do and they were graduating as they advanced. But then, during the six months coal strike in 1922 . . . instead of loafing like the rest of them did I changed to day school and then when the strike was over I never went back to work at the colliery. I stayed in school until I graduated.

There was a strike in '22 because they were looking for more money, the Union and whatever else. And I wouldn't know the details at that time because I wasn't that much interested in the strike, and . . . I changed to day school because then I figured that was my start in life.

. . . I graduated on March 29, 1923, so I was twenty years old when I graduated. And I completed a complete business course — well I used the business in salesmanship, but I stayed with specialty salesman and I worked for the Arrow Coatings Company, selling roof paint and paints for a coupla years. After I graduated I did many specialty sales projects and how I got the Arrow Coatings job, I don't remember the details because I tried many jobs and finally made [a] success with Arrow Coatings. And then they asked me to start work for Metropolitan as an agent in the Shenandoah District until I retired and that was in October 30, 1965 with over 36 years of service.

So I did, I got out of the procedure of going into the mines eventually as a miner. Once I got to McCann's School and I got the business education, and I graduated and I was interested in salesmanship, then I stayed with that. Until I got into the insurance business, and then I stayed with that, until I retired.⁴⁰

Peter, a responsible, personable young man, was recommended for the insurance job by the local bank clerk. When he was hired he was the first unmarried agent on the local staff:

Life insurance was very important in my life. It became part of me. I worked one day at a time doing my best. I started in October, 1929, and did good. I was among the leaders in the Shenandoah



Peter Kowker, "salesman"; McCann graduate, 1923.

District. In 1932, and in 1934, and other years I led the Shenandoah District in sales, etc., leader among 31 agents, and the Shenandoah District was among the first 100 of the over 1000 districts the Metropolitan had. My income was based on my sales which was good. And I won several trips to gatherings, etc., and planned and established a good and solid retirement.

As an agent I had a debit to collect and to service and to sell. Usually the selling part was where you made the extra money. And naturally the more you sold, the more money you got extra, on a commission basis. You had to speak to people about buying insurance. You had to convince them that it was a good idea too, for their benefit and so on and so forth.

You got to know people real good. You was a — in a lot of cases you were like an advisor to them when you came to collect either weekly, monthly, or yearly, depending on what kind of policies they had. I advised and provided service for hundreds. I went to the homes to collect and if there was any service to be rendered I took care of it, like when they died or changed a beneficiary from one to another; and you got to be a member of the family practically.



Peter Kowker at Lakeside Park, 1924.

They got to know you real good. You got to know them and they had confidence in you. And when you recommended something that was for their order, which I did a lot of times, they bought. And the more you sold the more commission you got. It was all on a commission basis. Of course in collecting you got a percentage of what you collected. That was like your salary. I did all these things and I did them good.⁴¹

Between graduation from the McCann School, in 1923, and the Metropolitan job in 1929, Peter continued to live in the homestead. He stated he would never leave Petronella as long as she lived. His sister Helen writes: "I also asked Peter if he remembered when he said he would never leave mother as long as she lived and he said he don't remember but thought it was after he graduated from McCann's. It's possible he could have said it when Tille [Matilda] married and left home [1928], and it looked like mother might be left alone."⁴²

During these years Peter expanded his affiliation with the Frackville Lithuanian Catholic Church,⁴³ and when the Frackville chapter of the Knights of Columbus was founded in 1925, he became a charter member. The Knights was a voluntary society with a special religious — and in this case a special ethnic — basis for organizing. The Frackville chapter was dedicated to providing

insurance for its members and their families, to furnishing financial aid to members and their beneficiaries, to assisting sick and disabled members, and to promoting educational, charitable, religious, social, and patriotic activities in the community. It thus reflected the special socio-economic needs of the Lithuanian Catholics in the anthracite region, and Peter's interest and involvement with this group was abiding: as a new member he took a K of C correspondence course and received a certificate of salesmanship in 1926;⁴⁴ in 1931 he was elected treasurer and served in that post for the next forty-eight years.



Peter (left) celebrates Lithuanian Day at Lakeside Park with a friend, Al Bobbin (1925).

After 1929, Peter joined other groups. He became a life member of the Frackville Elks Lodge #1533 [1934], and the Goodwill Hose Company.⁴⁵ He belonged to the Six County Fireman's Association for more than fifty years. Married in 1937, he continued to support Annun-

Peter (right) was a life member of the Goodwill Hose Company and a member of the Six County Fireman's Association for more than fifty years. This was taken before the Six County Fireman's Association convention in 1927.



ciation BVM Church and was involved in community-wide Church fundraising affairs. Before retiring from work with the Metropolitan in 1965, he joined the newly formed Holy Name Society and was officer and member for the next twenty-five years. In retirement Peter increased his own gardening activities at home while also working for others as a landscaper, and at the church as groundskeeper for more than twenty years.

Today, after thirty-six years in the insurance business and twenty years of retirement, Peter Kowker is well-known and locally respected for his life-long service to the community. In his honor, the mayor of Frackville declared July 9, 1983, "Peter Kowker Day." That evening, at a local country club, the Holy Name Society of Annunciation BVM Church named him "Man of the Year." Congratulatory letters from Pennsylvania's senate, its governor, and one of its United States senators were read. Recognition from family members and local dignitaries followed. All referred to Peter's character and influence, thanking him for years of dedicated service to family, church, and the community of Frackville. Holy Name Society announced a special fund for usher's jackets, naming it the "Peter Kowker Usher Society" of Annunciation BVM Church. Peter was designated honorary president of this group, and it was stated that the group would bear his name forever.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

From childhood Peter's family value structure included enterprise and hard work. When he was six or seven years old his father, William, stopped mining and opened a store in the basement of their main street home in Maizeville [1910]. Helen writes:

For awhile we had a store in [the] daylight basement of [our] home and Dad was a huckster . . . I remember I was pre-school age — about four. I went next door. On the window sill at my elbow were some pennies. I took one of the pennies. It was burning a hole in my hand and I got out of there as soon as I could and made a beeline to the store and bought some candy.

Anthony was "minding" the store. He asked Mother where I got the money for the candy. I received a good lecture and a whipping, and I will never forget it. Dad went back to mining about 1910. I don't think they had the store very long and I guess I would not have remembered it if it hadn't been for the candy and spanking incident.⁴⁷

Although William's venture as a storekeeper failed and he returned to mining, his aspirations were reflected in his children's attitudes toward work, and in his encouragement of their enterprise. Peter remembers that when he was seven, he "picked one hundred buckets of coal for 1 cent a bucket; and my father had a dollar in his hand but he only gave me a penny. So I said in Lithuanian to him, 'Work, work like a mule. Pay day comes and you stick me with a penny.' " But William *did* pay him the dollar; the penny was a bonus.⁴⁸ And the story of the hundred buckets of coal is a favorite in the Kowker family today.

When Peter's father died, the family did not starve. After 1918, Petronella sold the two houses in Maizeville. She also received an allotment from John in the Navy. But she used neither of these sources of income for everyday family needs. According to Helen:⁴⁹



All dressed up; Palm Sunday, 1929.

When Mother sold the two houses in Maizeville she got a widow's third and the rest was divided among the children. On my 21st birthday [1927], I was called into the lawyer's office and was handed \$50.00 — my inheritance, with about 10 years' interest added on. I guess the rest was used up in lawyer's fees.

[John] made out an allotment and money was sent to Mother every month. Instead of using the money, Mother put it in a savings account so that when John came home there was a sizeable amount in the bank which Mother turned over to him. He wanted to do something for the house with some of the money, so it was decided he [would] buy a Victrola.

Peter, Tillie, and I had fun and contests with it, singing along with the records; especially on winter evenings. I don't see how Mother put up with all that racket, 'cause to us, loudest was best. John really lived it up for awhile with the rest of the money until it was all gone. I do not know if he gave Mom any of it back or not. When the money was gone he went back to work in the coal mines. [John got a mining certificate in 1921.] I was away from home so don't know too much about his married life. [John married Gertrude Kissinger August 12, 1930.] After his wife died he broke up his house where he lived (in Frackville) a few years. He wasn't working and [he] drank and we took care of him until he died in 1939 (age 46).

Anthony's insurance money provided a regular source of income:

I don't really know why he took out the insurance. Maybe they were all doing it; and maybe he wanted to ease his conscience because of the way he left home. [Anthony enlisted without telling anyone.] As to why he enlisted, he wanted to fight for his country.

It sure was a Godsend to Mother because when Dad died they still owed \$1,300 on the house, [and] that was a lot of money in those days. Even though they had sold the other two houses, it would have been hard for Mother with three of us still in school. The insurance paid \$50 a month and the government gave her \$20 "compensation" per month which enabled Mother to go on without being destitute. I can still hear Mother saying, "Maybe Anthony knew. This is blood money because he had to shed his blood for us to receive it." (Anthony took out \$10,000 insurance and Mother received \$57.50 a month for twenty years, then help monthly from the government.)

It is not certain that Ann made regular financial contributions:

Ann had been a dressmaker for a number of years but I guess she got tired of it and was working in the bank. She had her friends and kept busy and I imagine she gave mother money to help out but it was never discussed in my presence.

Bill paid, but his contributions were shortlived as he soon married and supported his own family:

I remember Bill worked for the railroad so when war broke out he did not have to go in [the] service. He had a lot of friends [and] was interested in taking pictures. Dad had a long, fur-lined coat and fur hat. He also belonged to some society where they wore formal suits and high silk hats; he [also] had a cane and gloves he used with the suit. Bill and his friends loved to take pictures in these clothes.

Bill played a violin and a guitar. The boys bought a pool table with folding legs which was kept against the wall in the kitchen . . . and on Sunday afternoons and some evenings their friends would come to the house to play pool. Those not playing would gather in living room; Bill would play [and] the rest would sing along.

Bill bought a Ford Touring car — I think in 1919 or early 1920 — first one on the hill. When he couldn't crank it we kids would push it down the alley and jump on the running board as the engine started. We felt so grand when we went for a ride Sunday afternoons. Peter had to learn to drive the touring car and was so proud when he could sit behind the wheel — we were all proud of that car. Though Bill bought it we all felt it belonged to us.

They also had boxing gloves which they used in the back yard. Bill and Peter bought a crystal radio set when they first came out. I think it was a kit that they put together. Always looking for something new.

Bill must have married in 1919, or 1920, because his first daughter was born in February of 1921. Bill later worked in the mines but I don't know what year he started.

* * * *

While it would seem that many factors contributed to Peter Kowker's decision to go to work as a breaker boy

in 1917 — the ready availability of work, family precedent, a perception that his earnings would be significant to the quality of family life, and a conviction that the decision was his to make; all seem to have played a part — Peter viewed the decision to quit school as “his idea” and describes his decisions afterwards as part of the “natural process” of his life: “McCann School was my idea, and going in[to] the world of business came naturally as I got interested in salesmanship and did that after I graduated from McCann’s School . . . things fell in place naturally without any help from anywhere . . . [I did] whatever was on the program from day to day, year to year, until I retired in 1965. And then I did what was necessary: K of C work, garden work, church work, helping friends; as I was in good shape financially, all the work was free etc.”⁵⁰

His early decisions reflect the social and economic structure of the region. It was estimated in 1904 that chances were 19 to 1 that a boy in the anthracite region would be compelled to enter the mines for a livelihood.⁵¹ Even if William Kowker had survived, in 1919, 55.7% of all thirteen-to-sixteen year old children with Lithuanian fathers were working; and 90.9% of the sixteen-year-old boys in the Frackville area who had foreign-born fathers worked full-time — more than 18 out of every 20.⁵² After William’s death Petronella had options, but other than Anthony’s monies, they did not include support from non-family resources. (Pennsylvania had passed a Mother’s Assistance Act in 1913, but a 1922 Federal Children’s Bureau labor study concluded the provisions of this act were not met locally and “there was no organized private relief agency to supplement the inadequate public relief in this area.”⁵³) The cash from William’s small insurance policy and the sale of the two houses in Maizeville, plus Anthony’s policy payments and government compensation, provided an income of about \$930.00 per year. But with Bill married and away from home, Anna not substantially contributing, and John’s allotment saved, it fell to Peter, and to his earnings added to the insurance money, to account for a family income that reached local miners’ average levels.⁵⁴

Dedication to the family — to maintaining what the family had achieved despite the loss of the main household wage earner — these responsibilities fell to Peter.⁵⁵ The economic structure of the region, in so far as work opportunities and social service support were concerned, made it highly probable that, given his age, gender, position in the family, and ethnicity, Peter would continue to work in the breakers. But the opportunity presented by Peter’s working was also to maintain the family income and position. Family values influenced Peter’s decision to begin picking slate in 1917, and family values influenced his decision to stay in the area as a working family member after 1918.

There was no inconsistency in Peter’s decision to quit school in 1917, and then to begin night school in 1919;

to join the union and switch jobs for better pay, and then to abandon the union and switch to day school during the “six months” coal strike of 1922. Peter did what was “necessary and natural,” achieving a balance by timing personal decisions so there was a minimal tension between his family needs and responsibilities, and his personal needs and ambitions. He did not attend McCann to gain “American” as an alternative to “Slav” values, nor did he later become successful because McCann School values supplanted lessons learned at home. His success was founded in the values of his immigrant family.

As he continued to live in Frackville after 1918, Peter gradually became the household head of an extended family. That family was at times scattered throughout the United States, but it tended to have returning members emotionally centered in Frackville, at the family homestead. For nearly seven decades the homestead served, and continues to serve, as a family center for emotional, physical, recreational, and financial support. Given his decision to stay, education was the key to mobility and success in the region, providing the means by which Peter could stay at the homestead and effectively support these ongoing family roles and responsibilities.

From 1919, McCann School provided him with an associational group which promised socio-economic change through education and a career, but Peter attended McCann and did well as a student and a salesman because he had the ability, and the desire to work out of the mines, to “make something different of his life.” The McCann School’s philosophy was well suited to his own. In the six months coal strike of 1922, it would appear that family values were not synonymous with identifying with that occupational group; in 1917, 1918, 1919, and 1922 we see Peter acting consistently, satisfying personal ambitions that are not at odds with the values of his family.

In 1929, after he had already declared his intention to care for his mother, and after he had already joined the Knights of Columbus, the opportunity to work as an insurance salesman was ideally suited to his interests and values, to his training and life experiences. The agent’s role of assessor and counselor meant analyzing other families’ economic needs and goals, and making adjustments for family life changes to determine adequate coverage. Successfully selling insurance required common sense, assessment skills, an ability to work well with people, business sense and business skills, and an empathy for local financial requirements.

Peter’s early life experiences with insurance involved both his father and his brother Anthony; working in the breaker, he had first-hand knowledge of its potential importance. If we define his career as a community activity which enabled others to substitute financial security for financial insecurity by preserving the basic economic value of the individual earning potential for a

family or business, then Peter's work might be seen as fostering local community self-sufficiency — equalizing risk in a region where self-sufficiency could be a necessary but precarious state, and where risk was endemic. The job required personal effort and initiative. Peter believed selling life insurance was important and helped people. Working hard and drawing on his own experiences and McCann business training, he was very successful at it.

Despite the strong probability that young men beginning work in the breakers and staying in the region would spend their working lives in the coal industry, Peter Kowker followed an alternative path which allowed him both personal financial success, and the opportunity to serve the needs of his family, his church, and the community of Frackville. Peter's activities before 1929 were founded in both self-interest and in service to family needs, and tended to support and build the Lithuanian infrastructure in Frackville. After 1929, he joined other community groups, and involved himself in service to the wider community as well. Peter's story reflects the way in which family roles and expectations might create the boundaries of ethnic identity, yet still support the wider ideology of personal achievement in the general culture. Ethnically, his actions created occasions for group contacts and strengthened ties among community groups, enhancing the wider community. Throughout his life, his actions consistently and quietly enriched and contributed to the development of culture and community in Frackville, while also enriching the lives of his family and friends. They have been so acknowledged.

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ENDNOTES

¹Practically speaking, in 1917 Federal law had not clarified the issue of child labor, and the enforcement of what state and federal laws did exist fell between the State Commission of Labor and Industry and the Pennsylvania Department of Mines, with regular inspections having been made by neither. The U.S. Supreme Court declared child labor

laws unconstitutional in 1918 and 1922; subsequent efforts at constitutional amendment failed. It was not until 1938 that the Wages and Hours Act passed, banning employers engaged in interstate commerce from employing workers under sixteen, or eighteen in hazardous occupations, with fourteen-sixteen year olds employed only under specified circumstances in after-school hours.

For a treatment of legislation pertaining to the anthracite region see Alexander Trachtenberg, *History of Legislation for the Protection of Coal Miners in Pennsylvania 1824-1915* (New York: International Pub, 1942); also Peter Roberts, *Anthracite Coal Communities: A Study of the Demography, the Social, Educational and Moral Life of the Anthracite Regions* (New York: MacMillan, 1904), p. 175; Perry K. Blatz, "The All Too Youthful Proletarians," *Pennsylvania Heritage*, Winter, 1981, pp. 13-17.

²In 1917 coal was mined in thirty states, its production considered essentially private and in no manner affected by a public interest. The state of Pennsylvania was the only anthracite coal producing state. Employment figures for Pennsylvania show a drop in the number of employed from 180,899 in 1914, to 156,148 in 1917; coal production figures there never surpassed a 1917 high of 100,445,299 tons. Where national figures for the employment of children generally increased during the war period, declined after the armistice and later increased up to 1920, in Pennsylvania, in Peter Kowker's coal district the employment of children generally increased. See "Investigation of Wages and Labor Conditions in Coal-Mining Industry," *House of Representatives Report No. 1435* (February 6, 1917), pp. 2-3; Harold Aurand, "Social Motivation of the Anthracite Mine Workers: 1901-1920" *Labor History*, v. 18, no. 3 (1977) Table I p. 361; Table II p. 362; and U.S. Department of Labor, *Children's Bureau "Child Labor and the Welfare of Children in an anthracite coal-mining District"* Bureau Publication 106 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), pp. 9-12.

³Traditional sources of extra income in the hard coal region are "huckleberry picking" and "coal picking" particularly during strikes and depression. See *Shenandoah Evening Herald*, "Glimpses into Yesterday: Thank God for Huckleberries" [1902] (April, 20, 1983), p. 4; "Glimpses into Yesterday: Huckleberry Picker's Picnic" [1922] (December 23, 1980), p. 4; "Huckleberry Pickers" [1925] (April 28, 1980), p. 4 photograph of Anna Kowker Reese, Tom Reese, and Matilda Kowker Petrosky.

⁴In his letter of December 5, 1985, describing the odd jobs he did as a youngster, Peter also says that huckleberries sold for between .5 and .10 a quart, and on the way home he bought a sticky bun for a penny.

⁵Harold Aurand, "The Anthracite Miners: An Occupational Analysis," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 104 (1980), pp. 462-473, p. 465.

⁶Interview with Peter Kowker by Barbara Knox Homrighaus, August 12, 1985.

⁷"Certificate of Baptism," Church of St. George, Shenandoah, Pa., Registry entry number 48. Interview with Peter Kowker.

⁸F. W. Beers and A.B. Cochran, *County Atlas of Schuylkill Pennsylvania From Recent and Actual Surveys and Records* (New York: Beers & Co, 1875), pp. 25, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34.

⁹"A Tribute to the Boom Years," by Beth Fogel and Barbara Knox Homrighaus, June-July, 1985, funded in part by the Schuylkill County Council for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission.

¹⁰I am indebted to Lorraine Stanton, Frackville historian for her generosity and willingness to provide information about the community of Frackville from her personal files.

¹¹I would also like to thank Helen Maknis Kowker for her hospitality as I interviewed Peter and learned about his family. The Kowker family pictures do not neglect the activities of Helen's side of the family and I do not wish to leave the impression that close relationships were restricted to Peter's immediate family members at the expense of Helen's. Time and the somewhat arbitrary limitations of this study focused inquiry on Peter and his circumstances.

Helen was born December 20, 1900, in Shenandoah to Felix and Martha Cheskevage Maknis. Her parents were Lithuanian immigrants, and she worked as a clerk for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company; she married Peter Kowker on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1937. For the past seven years Helen has been in ill health and is cared for at home by Peter.

Readers should consult SCCA files for interview tapes and full documentation of Peter's composite statements.

¹²See Munsell, W.W. & Co. *History of Schuylkill County, Pa.* (New York: Munsell & Co., 1881), pp. 374-376; Zerbey, Joseph H. *History of Pottsville and Schuylkill Co., Pa.* (Pottsville, Pa.: J. H. Zerbey Newspaper, Inc., 1934-1935), Vol. II, pp. 561-582; and Lorraine Stanton, "Old Frackville Tales: Mahanoy Plane was a wondrous sight" *Shenandoah Evening Herald* (August 9, 1975), p. 12; *Ibid.*, "Plane Played big part in town's history" (February 28, 1975), p. 9; *Shenandoah Evening Herald*, "Glimpses into Yesteryear: the role of coal at Mahanoy Plane" (July 9, 1983), p. 4; *Ibid.*, "Historic Mahanoy Plane: Rise and Fall of Mahanoy Plane" (July 6, 1983), p. 4; *Ibid.*, "Railroad Locomotive" (October 24, 1975), p. 9. Also *Report of the U.S. Coal Commission: Part I Principal Findings and Recommendations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), pp. 84-86.

¹³See Arunas Alisauskas, "Lithuanians," Stephen Thernstron ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1980), pp. 665-676. And Ewa Morawska, "For Bread and Butter: life worlds of peasant-immigrants from East Central Europe 1880-1914," *Journal of Social History*, 17 (Spring of 1984), pp. 387-398.

¹⁴Alisauskas, *Ibid.*, p. 668.

¹⁵For a description of change and its impact on a western Pennsylvania community see Matthew S. Magda, *Monessen: Industrial Boomtown and Steel Community 1898-1980* (Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1985), pp. 3, p. 10. Magda notes change included not only the introduction of new groups of people, but also a shift from rural to urban life: in 1870, 74.3% of the nation's population lived in rural areas and 25.7% lived in urban areas. By 1920, 48.8% lived in rural areas and 51.2% lived in cities.

¹⁶Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *The Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 181. An excellent, comprehensive history of the hard coal region.

¹⁷Roberts, pp. 2, 4, 14.

¹⁸For hard coal views at the turn of the century, see Julian Warne, "The effect of Unionism Upon the Mine Worker," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XXI (January 1903), pp. 20-35; Warne, *The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers: A Study in Immigration* (New York: Jerome S. Ozer, 1971 reprint of Lippencott, 1904 edition), pp. 98, 133, 209-211; Roberts, p. 345; also Henry Rood, "A Pennsylvania Colliery Village," *Century Magazine* (1897-1898), pp. 809-821 and H. L. Nelson, "Life in the Coal Villages," *Harpers Weekly*, p. 458.

For a broader perspective see Charles R. Spahr, *America's Working People* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1900), and Gerd Korman, "Americanization at the Factory Gate," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (1967) pp. 396-419.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, hard coal conditions attracted Americanization and progressive social reformers. A listing of those who studied conditions for Peter and his parents would include Peter Roberts, a Schuylkill County Congregationalist South Wales minister who became International Secretary for the YMCA, and acted as a very influential proponent of the need for Americanizing immigrants, Annie Marion Maclean who conducted a YWCA sponsored study ("Life in the Pennsylvania Coal Fields: with particular reference to women," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14 (1909), pp. 330-351); and Owen R. Lovejoy, Assistant Secretary of the National Child Labor Committee ("Child Labor in the Coal Mines," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. XXVII (1906), pp. 293-299; "The extent of child labor in the anthracite coal industry," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. XXIX (1907), pp. 35-49; and "The Coal Mines of Pennsylvania," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. XXVIII, (1911), pp. 133-148. Both Maclean and Lovejoy researched Schuylkill County conditions, referring to Roberts, and using his concepts. Helen Wilson (whose ties were with social progressive reformer Sophonisba Preston Breckenridge) and the Abbott sisters conducted a study in 1919 for the Children's Bureau on child labor conditions for thirteen-to-sixteen-year-olds in Peter Kowker's community the very year he turned sixteen.

As Peter's story is presented, it will help to keep in mind that he grew up in the aftermath of the strike of 1902, in the anthracite region, near one of the strike centers of unrest. His parents were working class Lithuanian immigrants with ambitions of their own. And, as he grew up, our nation reformed its social views of unions and child labor.

When Peter recalls his work and education in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, his story is one of many to be told by the native-born children of the Slav invasion.

¹⁹Rev. William J. Walsh, *The United Mine Workers of America as an Economic and Social Force in the Anthracite Territory* (Washington D.C.: National Capital Press, 1931).

²⁰Miller and Sharpless, p. 243.

²¹Robert J. Cornell, *The Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1957). See especially chapters two and nine. Also, unlike historians at the turn of the century, historians today credit Slavs for their role in the success of the strikes of 1900 and 1902.

²²Miller and Sharpless, pp. 270-271, 282. *Shenandoah Evening Herald*, "The Old Days, Glimpses into Yesteryear: Troops in 1902 strike" photograph, July 26, 1979, p. 4.

²³Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of January 29, 1986.

²⁴It should be noted that stories about William and Petronella, with few exceptions, came from Peter's sisters, Helen and Matilda. Peter repeatedly stated that he did not discuss with his parents how they felt about immigration, work, etc. Helen Kowker remembered incidents in which she was personally involved with parental reactions. Matilda recalled most clearly being told stories repeatedly by her mother as an adult. Family role, position in the family, gender, and personality appear to all be factors in what information is available to family members, and how that information is communicated to outsiders.

²⁵Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of January 29, 1986.

²⁶Matilda Kowker Petrosky, letter of April 5, 1986.

²⁷Interview with Peter Kowker. Peter claims all the children in the family worked from age fourteen. However, both Helen and Matilda worked part-time before turning fourteen; both quit school to work full-time after their fourteenth birthday. Helen wrote that Bill's daughter remembered her father saying he worked from age eleven. Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of January 29, 1986; March 6, 1986; April 3, 1986; June 7, 1986. Matilda Kowker Petrosky, letter of April 5, 1986.

²⁸Statistics show that the Kowker family was not alone in deciding that Frackville was a desirable community nearby to move to. Where Frackville added only 813 people to the census rolls between 1880-1890; only 74 between 1890-1900; and only 524 between 1900-1910; in 1920, 2,422 people joined the borough, and in 1930, another 2,444 settled there. Frackville's population maintained itself during the 1930s and 1940s, but the 1950 census shows a decline of 1,494.

Conversely, nearby Gilberton Borough slowly but steadily lost population after the census of 1910 and every decade thereafter, losing 645 in 1920, 539 in 1930, 517 in 1940 and 1,069 in 1950. In the years between 1920-1930 Frackville tended to gain residents, whether they were "native white"; "native white with foreign born or mixed parentage"; or "foreign born white" (+ 1,233, + 981, and + 225 respectively). But Gilberton Borough lost overall population [-539] — "native whites with foreign born parentage" (-209), and "foreign born whites" (-500) — even though it gained native whites (+ 170). When the Kowker family moved in 1916 from Gilberton Borough to Frackville they were part of the 645 people Gilberton lost, and the 2,422 people Frackville gained. Statistics provided by John E. Geschwindt, sections head, Government Publications, State Library of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg for the Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Twentieth Census of the United States.

²⁹Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of January 29, 1986; Peter Kowker, letter of December 5, 1985; interview with Peter Kowker.

³⁰Interview with Peter Kowker.

³¹Catherine Kowker was the third child in the family, born November 20, and baptized December 1, 1895, but she died at 1 or 2 years of age, before William was born in 1898. Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of April 3, 1986; Ann Uzupis, letter of September 15, 1986, from St. George Church, Shenandoah, PA.

³²Interview with Peter Kowker. Peter Kowker, letter of December 5, 1985. "I stayed with mother and lived in the old Homestead with her and I got married on Thanksgiving Date Nov 25, 1937 and had my wife Helen Macknis from Shenandoah move in with us and help with the work etc. and mother lived with us and we with her until she died." *Ibid.*, letter of August 12, 1986.

³³Peter Kowker, letter of November, 1985.

³⁴For a discussion of opportunity for upward mobility in the an-

thracite industry during the years Peter worked see Harold Aurand, "Social Motivation of the Anthracite Mine Workers: 1901-1920" *Labor History* Vol. 18 No. 3 (1977) pp. 360-365. Interview with Peter Kowker.

³¹Night schools teaching everything from the alphabet to preparation for mine foreman certification were open in Gilberton Borough as early as 1874. *Zervey History*, p. 568. Pennsylvania "continuation-school" law required 14-16 year olds to attend school eight hours a week. Of 1,220 children who began regular work before age 16 and were required by law to attend continuation-school, only 146 ever attended. The classes were discontinued in Gilberton in 1917, and in Shenandoah and Frackville in 1918. *Child Labor*, pp. 40, 41.

³²McCann School first opened in a room in Mahanoy City entrepreneur and brewer Charles Kaier's Opera House Building. The school long remained a family enterprise run by the McCann sons, Dwight, a 1912 Cornell graduate, and Charles, a 1912 Yale graduate, eventually locating additional centers in Reading (1908) and Hazleton (1923).

³³The following, taken from an undated McCann publication (*McCann School of Business*, Mahanoy City, Hazleton, Pa., p. 16), sets forth the school's aims and philosophy.:

Every student receives separate and individual instruction just when he needs it. Bright and ambitious students are not held back with their work on account of dull or lazy pupils. Each student stands on his own merit. Our methods are thorough, practical, and interesting. For those who are unable to attend our day sessions, we have provided an evening school . . . the student who toils all day and then comes to school at night to advance himself, certainly is to be commended. However, one does not need to tell these students about an aim in life. They have already set their goal . . . The same instruction is given in the evening school as is found in the day sessions. It takes very much longer to finish a course in the evening school than it does during the day time because of the fact that the sessions are about two hours long.

It is well understood that the ability to use spare time profitably marks the difference between men and women who are successful and those who are unsuccessful. Almost all employed people waste several hours a day either through negligence or by reason of devoting themselves to those things that are unimportant or in many cases definitely harmful. An hour of directed study each day will make the difference between the uneducated and the educated. The McCann School of Business Night School affords this opportunity for study under careful supervision. Whatever you sow, you surely will reap. If you sow idleness in your youth, you will reap the reward later on in your life. Look about and you will see that the great men of this Nation have achieved success by studying. You can be whatever you want to be. IT IS UP TO YOU!

³⁴Interview with Peter Kowker. Local high schools did offer vocational training, but a large percentage of children left school before they reached high school. The *Child Labor* study found that 331 of 3,136 children had attended vocational classes — 49 of them in business. Information about the number of working children attending McCann Night School, and the percentage of those who were colliery workers is unavailable. *Child Labor*, p. 40.

³⁵For a thorough discussion of the strikes of 1902 and 1922 see Thomas Kennedy, "Wages, Hours and working conditions in the anthracite industry," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. CXI (January 1924), pp. 43-52; also Miller and Sharpless, pp. 259-283, 288-291. For the strike of 1902, Cornell. For the strike of 1922, Harold K. Kanarek, "The Pennsylvania Anthracite Strike of 1922," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol 99 (1975), pp. 45-71.

³⁶Interview with Peter Kowker.

³⁷Interview with Peter Kowker.

³⁸Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of April 3, 1986.

³⁹Peter's membership in Annunciation BVM Church in Frackville dated back to shortly after 1916, as the church was forming. He attended the first celebrated Mass in December, 1917, with his parents, and remembers that his parents were "in on" early parish location controversies described in *Annunciation Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Frackville, Pennsylvania: Golden Jubilee 1917-1967* (Sunday

September 10, 1967), "History of the Annunciation B.V.M. Church" p. 1.

The Kowkers previously belonged to St. George's Church in Shenandoah, which was one of about thirty Lithuanian Catholic parishes founded nationally by 1900. When the St. Louis parish was organized in Maizeville in 1907, the family attended services there. St. Louis and Annunciation BVM were thus two of the more than one hundred parishes founded by 1920 as Lithuanians continued to build the ethnic infrastructure of their new communities. Peter Kowker, letter of January 21, 1986; Alisauskas, p. 669.

⁴⁰Stanton, "Old Frackville Tales," *Shenandoah Evening Herald* (February 7, 1976), p. 7.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, *History of Frackville Elks Lodge No. 1533* (Ashland: Creative Printing Co) January 22, 1977, p. 8; *History of Goodwill Hose Company* (St. Clair: Kelly Printing Co.) September 12, 1982, unpaginated. Frackville Elks was founded June 3, 1927, and Goodwill Hose was organized October, 1910.

⁴²Peter Kowker, tape of "Man of the Year" ceremonies, July 9, 1983.

⁴³Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of March 6, 1986; April 3, 1986.

⁴⁴Peter Kowker, letter of December 5, 1985.

⁴⁵Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of January 29, March 6, and April 3, 1986. Bracketed information from Peter Kowker, letter of January 21, 1986 and February 10, 1986.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, letter of February 10, 1986.

⁴⁷Roberts, p. 292.

⁴⁸*Child Labor* . . . 86% of the sixteen-year-old boys were working (Table 4, p. 11); 64.5% of all boys with foreign-born fathers were working, whereas 44.3% of all boys with native-born fathers were working (Table 5, p. 13); 55.7% of all Lithuanian children ages thirteen to sixteen were working (Table 6, p. 14); and 90.9% of the boys age sixteen with foreign-born fathers were working (Table 7, p. 14).

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

⁵⁰*Child Labor*, p. 29: "In 1919 altogether 95.6% of the mine workers estimated that they received less than \$1,850 during 1918, 63% received less than \$1,250 and 16.6% less than \$850.00."

⁵¹The contrast between family expectations for Peter and those for his younger sisters was pronounced. Helen remembers that her mother refused to accept money from her and wanted her to be independent, to support herself, and "to cut the apron strings and be on her own." She worked after school at the age of thirteen, and full-time away from home in an ice cream parlor where her hours were from 10 am to 10 pm for board and \$5.00 per month, the summer she turned fourteen (1920). After a conflict at school, and another at home about her motives for returning to school, Helen quit school to work full-time. She stopped working when her employer refused to allow a day off for her birthday. Helen next worked at an overall factory locally, and then left the area to work at the Mental Hospital at Schuylkill Haven, under-age (1921). She eventually left the region entirely to live near her sister in New York and train to become a nurse there. After successfully completing her studies, she married in 1929, age 23.

Matilda remembers a sheltered life after her father died. Just before Peter shifted to day school at McCann [1922], Matilda started her first job at a night-shirt factory, and then coaxed her mother (January 11, 1923) into letting her quit school to work full-time. She remembers that the family was very much against it, but that she would work in the winter, and in the spring she would stay home, taking care of the house so that her mother could have free time for planting the garden. Matilda later worked in an ice cream parlor, and then lived with relatives in Pottsville so she could train to be a waitress at the newly remodeled Necho Allen Hotel. She married in 1928, age 19.

The girls' employment opportunities were less lucrative than Peter's. Both Helen and Matilda had seasonal work; both returned home for personal reasons. Both were encouraged to work away from home, to live away while working, and to pursue jobs and training away as needed. Both left the region, married at younger ages than Peter did, and established separate households elsewhere.

Peter worked while living at home. He and Petronella supported the youngest family members emotionally and financially as they were away. Peter delayed marriage until 1937, age 34. He never left the region, establishing his household in the "homestead" while gradually assuming full responsibility as the household head of an extended family in the decades after his father's death in 1918.

Helen Kowker Corbin, letter of January 29, 1986, March 6, 1986, April 3, 1986. Matilda Kowker Petrosky, letter of April 5, 1986.

DIAMOND NOTCHING IN AMERICA AND EUROPE

by
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The highly distinctive Pennsylvanian, or Midland American, log carpentry tradition is derived from the colonial Delaware Valley and subsequently spread to many parts of North America, allowing the imprint of Pennsylvania to attain a far-flung distribution.¹ The tradition is easily distinguished from other New World types of log carpentry, such as that of the French Canadians and New Mexico highland Hispanics, because it contains certain unique form elements. One such diagnostic trait of the Pennsylvanian tradition is the type of corner timbering known as *diamond notching*.² Our purpose in the present article is to draw attention to this largely neglected element of Midland American carpentry and to identify its European origin. In so doing, we hope to contribute to the understanding of the

beginnings of Pennsylvanian log construction at large. Our findings are based mainly upon field and archival research carried out as a team in Europe during the summer of 1985.

American Subtypes and Distribution

Diamond notching is the least common Midland American type and occurs principally in one rather confined area. The notch derives its name from the pared down, diamond-shaped projection, six inches to a foot in length, that forms the notch and carries through to the crown of the log, permitting the highly distinctive shape to be visible on the butt ends (Figs. 1, 2).

Two principal subtypes occur — a round-log variety and a somewhat less common hewn-log form.³ In neither subtype is the crown allowed to project much, if



Fig. 1: Round-log diamond notching on a barn in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama. It represents type D on Fig. 10. (Photo 1978, courtesy of Eugene M. Wilson, University of South Alabama.)



Fig. 2: Hewn, undersided diamond notching in Franklin County, North Carolina, representing type F on Fig. 10. (Photo by T.G.J., 1983.)

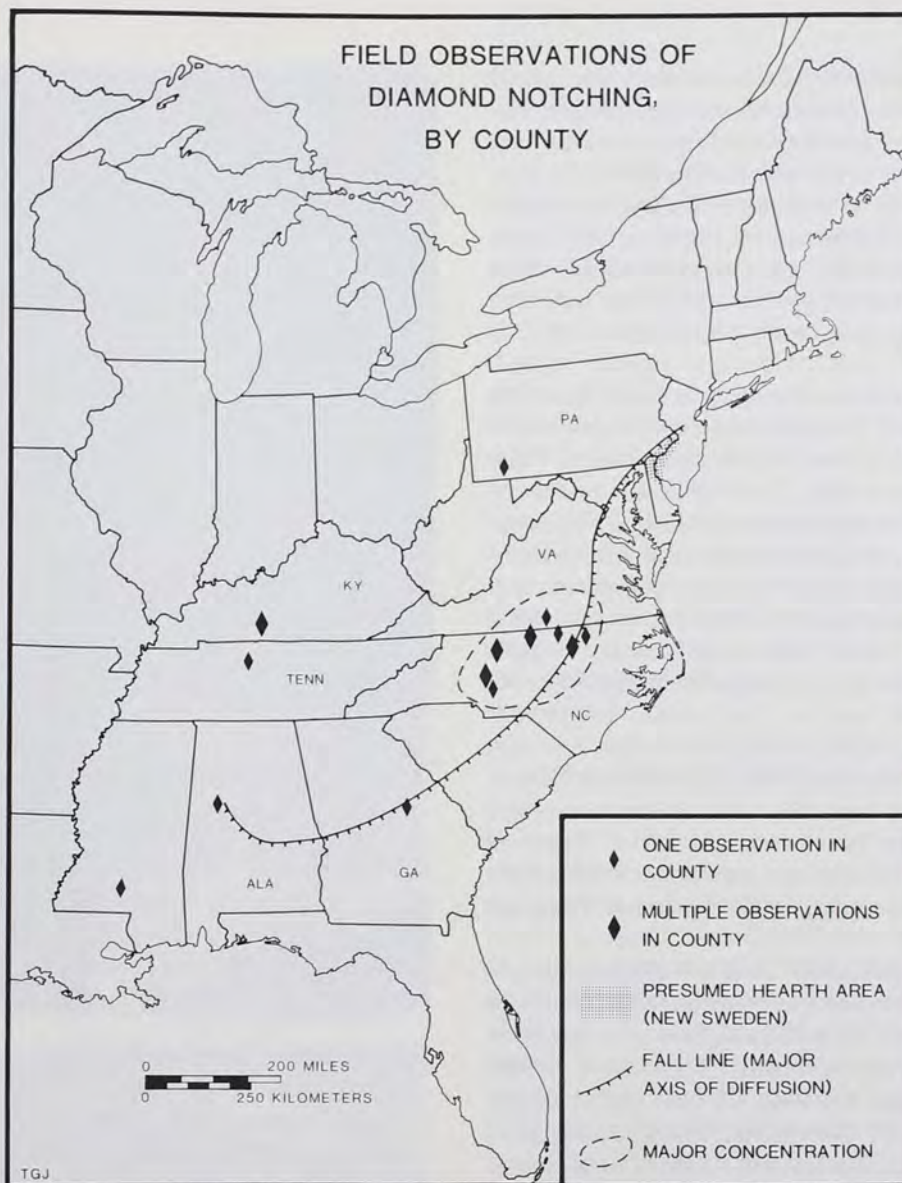


Fig. 3: By no means is the map complete, and the distribution revealed is clearly relic. Sources: Charles M. Stotz, *The Architectural Heritage of Early Western Pennsylvania: A Record of Building Before 1860* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), p. 41; Peter R. Kaplan, *The Historic Architecture of Cabarrus County, North Carolina* (Concord, N.C.: Historic Cabarrus and City of Concord, and Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981), p. 202; Davyd F. Hood, *The Architecture of Rowan County* (Salisbury, N.C.: Rowan County Historic Properties Commission, 1983); T.H. Pearce, *Early Architecture of Franklin County [North Carolina]* (Freeman, South Dakota: Pine Hill Press, 1977); John Linley, *The Georgia Catalogue Historic American Buildings Survey: A Guide to the Architecture of the State* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), p. 20; Lyn A. Yeager, *Log Structures in Warren County, Kentucky* (Bowling Green, Kentucky: Citizens National Bank, 1977), pp. 12, 13; Gwynne S. Taylor, *From Frontier to Factory: An Architectural History of Forsyth County*

(Winston-Salem: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Historic Properties Commission, 1981), pp. 23, 239; *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Tar-Neuse River Basin, Appendix for Region K* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1977), pp. (7) 13, 22; (8) 2, 9; (26) 14, and also appendices for Regions J, L, O-P, and Q-R; Ruth Little-Stokes (ed.), *An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Caswell County, North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1979), pp. 12, 15, 16, 107, 112; Anita Clinton and Lynn Lofton, *Pioneer Places of Lawrence County, Mississippi* (n.p.: Lawrence County Historical Society, 1981), pp. 10-14.

The map is also based upon field research by T.G.J. in 1983; data provided by Eugene M. Wilson of the University of South Alabama, Mobile, and the files of the Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

any, beyond the corner of the structure. The actual notch, V-shaped to accommodate one apex of the diamond, is cut into the pared projection. Most diamond notching is *oversided*, or cut into the top side of the projection, but a minority of specimens displays *undersided* notching (Fig. 2). Clearly, all of these variant forms have a common origin, though the undersided variant may have been influenced by the much more common type of Midland American corner timbering known as V notching.

The diamond notch occurs mainly in North Carolina and adjacent southern Virginia, along and on both sides of the axis of the Fall Line, in the inner Coastal Plain and eastern Piedmont (Fig. 3).⁴ Individual outliers in Georgia and Alabama also lie close to the Fall Line, suggesting diffusion in part along the old road linking Richmond, Raleigh, Columbia, Augusta, Columbus, and Montgomery. The sole known Georgia example, along this path, appears on a Washington County dogtrot house built of hewn logs and probably dating from the 1790s.⁵ Toward the end of that route, geographer Eugene M. Wilson reports “only one instance of diamond notching in Alabama,” on a Tuscaloosa County barn built of round logs (Fig. 1).⁶ Other researchers have found a lone hewn example on a house in Lawrence County, Mississippi, but no examples have been noted further west in the Gulf Coastal Plain, including Texas.⁷

In the interior upper South, one hewn diamond notched structure has been recorded in the Nashville Basin of Middle Tennessee — the Harding house on the Belle Meade estate in Davidson County (Fig. 4). Its builder came from Powhatan County, Virginia, close to the main concentration of diamond notching.⁸ In the Kentucky Barrens, only one cabin and a nearby smokehouse displaying diamond notching have been observed.⁹ Obviously, the notch failed to attain a significant westward diffusion. None have been observed in Missouri, though several unverified Nebraska examples are mentioned in the literature.¹⁰

The connection of diamond notching to Pennsylvania is demonstrated by its occurrence on the hewn-log Fort Gaddis, also called Gaddis’ blockhouse, dating from the 1760s or early 1770s and located near Uniontown in Fayette County. This is the only known example of diamond notching in Pennsylvania (Fig. 5).¹¹ The fort was established by Thomas Gaddis on a tract surveyed in 1769. The founder came from Frederick County, Virginia, in the Great Valley of the Appalachians, and many other early settlers of Fayette County also came, via the Catawba Trail, from the northern Virginia back country and adjacent Berkeley County, West Virginia.¹² These currents of migration strongly suggest that diamond notching reached Fayette County from southeastern Pennsylvania via a detour down the Great Valley, rather than from the Virginia Piedmont and inner Coastal Plain. Genealogy and Fort Gaddis tell us to



Fig. 4: Hewn diamond notching, mixed with V notching (at bottom), on the Harding house in Davidson County, Tennessee. (Photo: Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, 1940, by Lester Jones.)



Fig. 5: Hewn diamond notching; Fort Gaddis, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, circa 1765. It represents type F on Fig. 10. (Photo: courtesy Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, item no. F1-107d.)



Fig. 6: Hewn diamond notching, on a house built about 1800 in Franklin County, North Carolina. (Photo: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, Catherine W. Bishir, 1974.)



Fig. 7: The arrow indicates where the outer ridge of the diamond projection extends beyond the hewn wall surface in an awkward manner; Franklin County, North Carolina. It represents type F on Fig. 10. (Photo: T.G.J., 1983.)

look to the Delaware Valley for the origin of diamond notching and that we view today a mere remnant of the former distribution of this cornering technique.

In the North Carolina-Virginia concentration, diamond notching appears most often on outbuildings, particularly tobacco barns, and the round-log variety prevails on such structures.¹³ We believe round-log diamond cornering was linked, along with saddle notching and round-log V notching, to the early pioneer or "cabin" stage of log construction, a stage best preserved, in eastern seaboard states at least, on outbuildings. Transition to the postpioneer or "house" stage proved difficult and infrequent (Fig. 6). Hewn specimens of diamond notching often appear awkward, with the outer side ridge of the diamond projecting beyond the surface of the flattened wall (Figs. 5, 7).¹⁴ In some instances, this visually offensive ridge was planed off, producing a more aesthetic corner lacking the distinctive diamond shape (Fig. 8). Such evidence strongly suggests that hewing did not occur in the prototypical form of the notch.

NORTHERN EUROPEAN ANTECEDENTS

Very few students of American material culture have addressed the question of diamond notch origin. Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie proposed that it "seems" to be or "is likely" an Americanism, derived from V notching.¹⁵ Indeed, the diamond shape does approximate a double V notch, and in some individual structures these two types of notch both appear (Fig. 6). Kniffen and Glassie admitted the possibility of northern European origin, noting that the diamond notch "bears a superficial and probably accidental similarity" to certain Scandinavian types.¹⁶ Both Kniffen and Glassie are well known for their Germanist proclivities in the matter of American log construction, and in that light their remarks concerning possible Scandinavian origin are surprising.¹⁷ More recently Jordan, on the basis of 1981 field research in northern Europe and two field seasons in German-speaking lands, provided additional evidence that Swedes or Finns brought the notch to colonial America.¹⁸

In the summer of 1985, Jordan, accompanied by Kaups and Lieffort, carried out two additional months of field and archival research in northern Europe. Our findings supported and refined Jordan's earlier conclusions. We therefore propose that diamond notching was derived in round-log form from Sweden, probably the province of Dalarna, and entered America through the colony of New Sweden on the Delaware about 1650.

The Swedish prototype, we propose, is the notch variously called in its evolutionary progression a *rännknut* (groove notch), *gotisk* (Gothic) *rännknut*, or *sexkantsknut* (hexagonal joint) (Fig. 9).¹⁹ In common with round-log diamond notching, the Swedish type is shaped only towards the ends of the log, displaying a



Fig. 8: The projecting ridge of the diamond notch has been planed away where necessary on this Franklin County, North Carolina, structure. (Photo: T.G.J., 1983.)



*Fig. 9: Hexagonal notching (*sexkantsknut*) on a structure built about 1590 in central Dalarna province, Sweden. It represents type C on Fig. 10. The building is now in the Skansen open-air museum, Stockholm. (Photo: T.G.J., 1985.)*

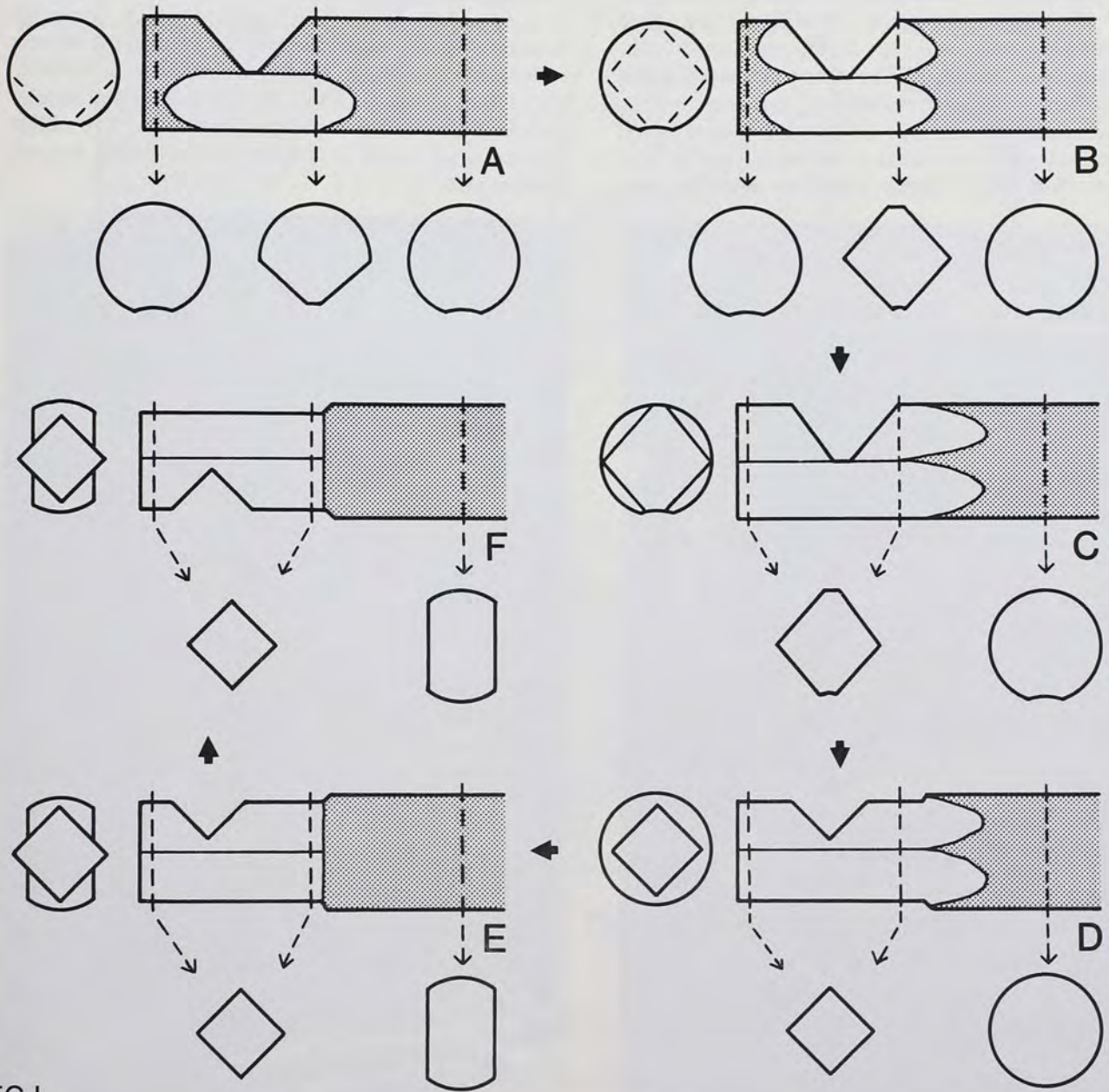
double necking virtually identical in appearance to the American form (Fig. 10). The only essential difference between the Old and New World types lies in the flattening of the top and bottom of the Swedish notch, yielding a hexagon rather than a diamond. This flattening facilitates the normal Scandinavian chinkless construction and would be without purpose on American chink walls.

The evolution of the Swedish hexagonal notch has been carefully studied by Swedish ethnographers. Medieval specimens, the oldest surviving examples, were necked only on the underside of the log (Fig. 10, sketch A), but in the late Middle Ages, necking of the top side developed, initially "on the head and later on the body of the log inside the notch" (Fig. 10, sketch B).²⁰ Initially the hexagonal shape occurred only within the notch, and a crown retaining the natural round shape of the log was left at the butt (Fig. 10, sketch B).²¹ By the end of the Middle Ages, craftsmen were carrying the hexagonal shape to the end of the log, and one Swedish ethnographer referred to this as the "Renaissance notch" (Figure 10, sketch C).²²



Fig. 11: Diamond-like hexagonal notching dating from 1574, central Dalarna province, Sweden, now in the Skansen open-air museum, Stockholm. It represents type C on Fig. 10. (Photo: T.G.J., 1985.)

EVOLUTION OF DIAMOND NOTCHING



TGJ

Fig. 10: Key: A = medieval type, Sweden and Norway; B = late Middle Ages, Sweden; C = Renaissance hexagonal notch, Sweden; D = oversided round-log diamond notch; E = oversided hewn-log diamond notch; F = undersided hewn-log diamond notch. Types A, B, and C are Scandinavian; types D, E, and F are Midland American. Sources: Field research; Lars Levander, *Övre Dalarnes bondekultur under 1800-talets förra hälft*, vol. 3 (Lund: Carl Bloms Boktryckeri, 1947), pp.

118, 122; Erixon, "North-European Technique," pp. 15, 19, 38; Boëthius, *Studier i den nordiska timmerbyggnadskonsten*, pp. 60, 64, 124, 284; Erixon, "Schwedische Holzbautechnik," p. 77; Arnstberg, *Datering av knuttimrade hus*, pp. 97, 99, 141; Hermann Phleps, *Holzbaukunst: Der Blockbau* (Karlsruhe: Albert Bruder, 1942), p. 57; Nordiska Museets Arkiv, items no. E.U. 16029, E.U. 48748.

However, many such postmedieval Swedish groove notches have an almost perfect diamond shape, rather than a hexagon. Even as late as the end of the sixteenth century, notching with quite minimal flattening at top and bottom remained common, particularly in Dalarna Province (Fig. 11).²³ Then, in the 1600s, the trend was to steepen the sides of the notch, while at the same time broadening the base and top. In this manner the diamond gave way to a true hexagon and ultimately to the vertical double notch.²⁴ Abundant examples of the older, diamond-shaped type of Swedish groove notch survive, and some continued to be made even in later centuries (Fig. 12).²⁵ Surely American diamond not-

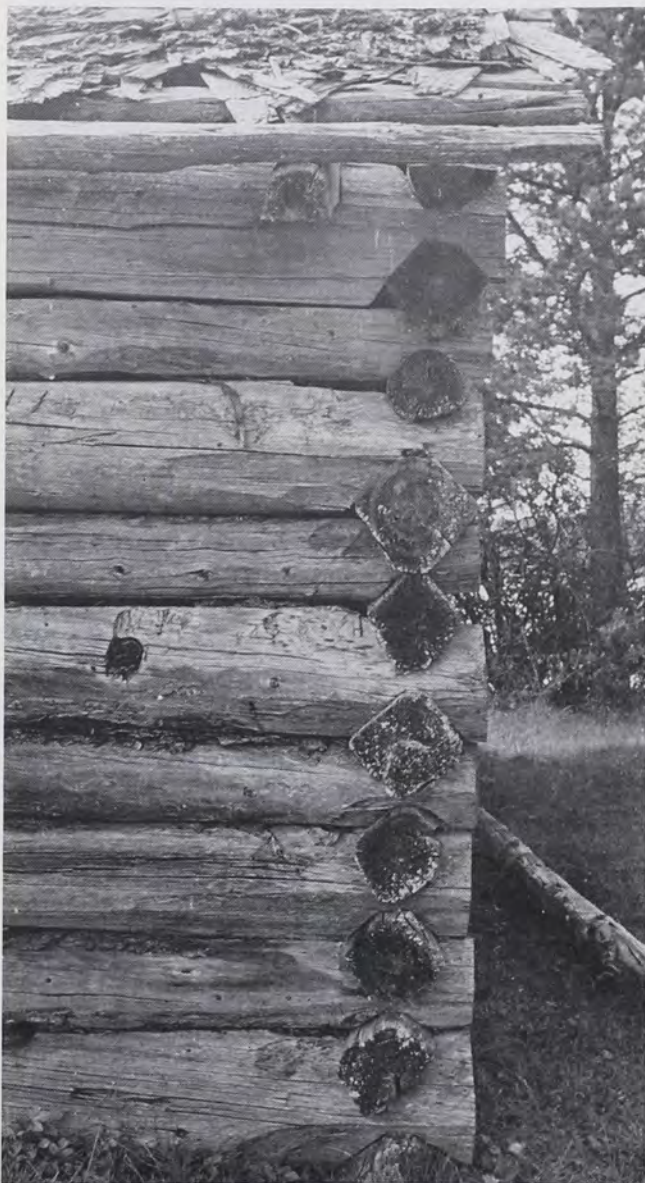


Fig. 12: Undersided, diamond-like hexagonal groove notching, dating from the nineteenth century in Kilvamsbodarna, Tasjö parish, Ångermanland province, Sweden. (Photo: John Granlund, 1932, courtesy of Nordiska museet, Stockholm, Arkiv item no. E.U. 17202, photo no. 150.K.aj.).

ching derives from this archaic post-medieval variety of groove notching. Nearly all of the Swedish examples are oversided notches, in common with most of the American offspring, but undersided specimens can occasionally be found (Fig. 12).²⁶

Hexagonal and diamond shaped groove notching occurs principally in a rather confined region of central Sweden (Fig. 13). Dalarna is the focus, and the densest concentration is found around Lake Siljan, in the middle of that province. Adjacent Härjedalen and nearby Jämtland also offer numerous examples. The oldest specimens are found in Dalarna and bordering western Hälsingland.²⁷



Fig. 14: Diamond-like hexagonal groove notching on a chimneyless hut in Finland. The structure is in Levijoki community, Alajärvi Parish, Pohjanmaa (Ostrobothnia), east of the city of Vaasa. (Photo: Väinö Tuomaala, 1955, courtesy of the National Museum of Finland, Helsinki, photo no. 3195:4a.)

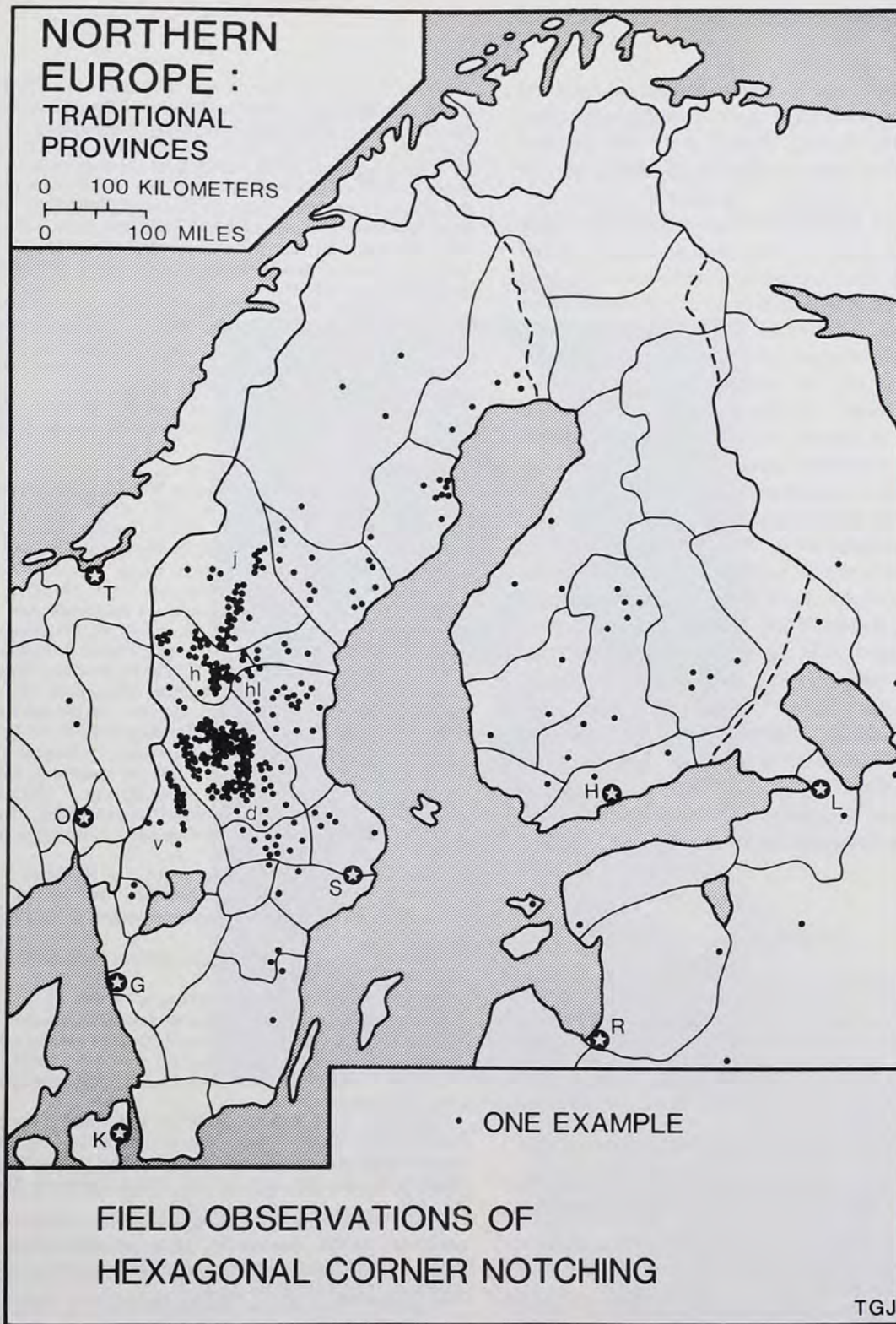


Fig. 13: Sources: Field research; Åke Campbell, Sigurd Erixon, et al, eds., *Atlas över svensk folkkultur*, vol. 1, "Materiell och social kultur" (Uddevalla, Sweden: Niloé, 1957), p. 41; Erixon, "North-European Technique," pp. 21, 27; Boëthius, *Studier i den nordiska timmerbyggnadskonsten*, pp. 60-65, 69, 106, 124, 168; Vuorela, *Suomalainen kansankulttuuri*, p. 408; Albert Hämäläinen, *Keski-Suomen kansanrakennukset* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seuran, toimituksia 186, 1930), p. 247; Nordiska museets arkiv,

Stockholm; Kansallismuseo archives, Helsinki; Zorn-samlingarna, Mora, Sweden; and the following open-air museums: Skansen (Stockholm), Seurasaari (Helsinki), Dalby (Värmland, Sweden), Funäsdalen (Härjedalen, Sweden), Hede (Härjedalen, Sweden), Jämtli (Östersund, Sweden), Orsa (Dalarna, Sweden), Strömsund (Jämtland, Sweden), Vemdalen (Härjedalen, Sweden), Laukaa (Keski-Suomi, Finland), and Putkinotko (near Savonlinna, Finland).

Without question, the northern European diamond or hexagonal groove notch is most common in Sweden, though it is conspicuously absent from the Finnish-settled parts of that country. The notch occurs in Norway, though less commonly.²⁸ Hexagonal groove notching, often with a near-perfect diamond shape, is also found in Finland (Figs. 13, 14). Similar corner timbering has reputedly been present in southwestern Finland since the 1400s and is said to prevail in some areas there still today. It may represent a Swedish introduction.²⁹ However, the prototypical groove notch, necked only on the underside (Fig. 10, sketch A), is also an old Karelian Finnish type.³⁰ To the south, in Estonia, hexagonal notching is known both as the "old Estonian corner" and the "Swedish corner."³¹

These East Baltic occurrences aside, we feel that Sweden is the most likely source of American diamond notching. We propose, then, that the postmedieval or Renaissance groove notch spread from Sweden to the Delaware Valley colony about 1650, most likely brought over by an ethnic Swede. The person or persons responsible probably came from Dalarna, but possibly from Jämtland or the valley of the Klarälven in Värmland Province. Emigrants from Dalarna, Jämtland, and Värmland, including both ethnic Swedes and Finns, did help colonize the Delaware Valley.³² In any case, the diamond notch provides yet another link between the Pennsylvanian and Scandinavian log carpentry traditions, yet another material refutation of the Germanist myth.

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THE CENTENNIAL OF A FIRST CLASS TRIP ON PENNSYLVANIA CANALS: The Voyage of the Molly-Polly-Chunker

by Ned D. Heindel



*Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933).
(Rare Book Collection, Lehigh University.)*

It was the era of opulence, of the amassing of tremendous fortunes by an emerging upper class still lacking the talent, taste, and tradition to wisely spend their money, of flamboyance and of excess. Diamond Jim Brady, the bellhop who became a railroad millionaire, raised gluttony to obscene heights. The Gibson girl set the impossible standard for waspish waist, stately bearing, and physical beauty. The Unsinkable Molly Brown, the Astors, the Vanderbilts, and the countless others of the American *nouveau riche* spread their newly-made American dollars among a decaying European aristocracy and returned from shopping on the continent with the jewels of royalty, priceless statuary of Carrara marble, great masterworks of painted art, and centuries-old furniture in the classic tradition. The Metropolitan Museum was erected to house and display their artistic philanthropies.

To celebrate the opening of his new stable, the millionaire horse enthusiast, C.K.G. Billings, feasted his comrades of the New York Riding Club on a multi-course dinner served to each on horseback in Louis Sherry's Grand Ballroom, redecorated with sod and plants to resemble an idealized woodland. A series of wooden ramps terminating in horse-high mini-tables provided access by waiters and busboys to each mounted guest while each sipped champagne through tubes connected to pouches hung as saddle bags on their horses.¹ These late American-Victorians spent the last two decades of the 19th century seeking, spending, and celebrating. Trips round the world, expeditions to Egypt, Crete, and Africa, and holidays in Newport, the Riviera, and the developing resorts of Florida's East Coast became the hallmarks of the period.²

One particular holiday excursion, taken from June 15

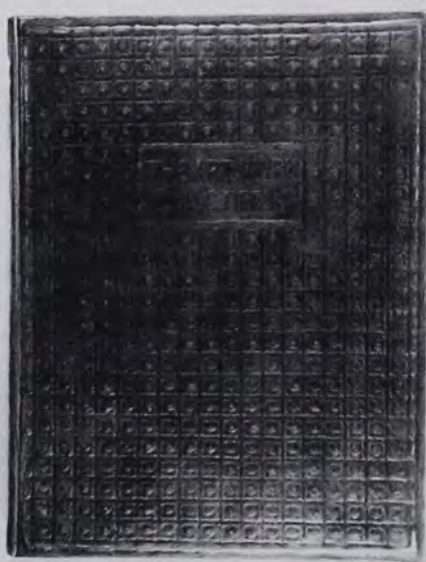
One of Louis Tiffany's favorite paintings was entitled "Mr. Tiffany Among the Flowers" by Senor Sorolla. Tiffany, a lover of bright colors, hung the original in his Oyster Bay home and included a full-color reproduction in his authorized biography. (Rare Book Collection, Lehigh University.)



to 29, 1886, by a group of New York socialites, was something special. It was something its participants would long remember. It produced a written record which historians could point to as a unique chronicle of a bygone age, the canal era. This journey by rebuilt mule-drawn barge up the Delaware and Lehigh Canals from Bristol to Mauch Chunk was conceived and organized by Louis Comfort Tiffany, heir to the Tiffany jewelry fortune and creator of the even more famous Tiffany stained glass craft. Tiffany called his canal-barge lark, "The Perilous and Thrilling Adventures of the Good Ship Molly-Polly-Chunker." The published log kept of that century-old journey provides a unique insight into the life style of the American-Victorian upper crust and a priceless historical

documentation of Pennsylvania canal life.³

In 1886, Tiffany, a vigorous, socially prominent New York artist, was a 38-year-old widower whose wife of twelve years, Mary Goddard Tiffany, had died two years previously and left him to care for their three young children.⁴ He was courting Louise Wakeman Knox (1851-1904), friend and relative of his business partner and daughter of James H. M. Knox, eighth president of Lafayette College. Just as his father, Charles Louis Tiffany (1812-1902), had achieved fame, success, and wealth a generation earlier with his innovative gem styles, stone settings and jewelry patterns — he was also noted for creating the 0.925-fine alloy of silver which came to be known as "sterling" — so Louis Comfort Tiffany's invention in 1875 of a process for



In 1914 Tiffany arranged the publication of an authorized biography of his life and his art. He personally designed the cover, had 492 copies printed on heavy rice paper, and inscribed them to his children and prime customers. (Rare Book Collection, Lehigh University.)

Lehigh University's copy of Tiffany's biography was the result of the artist's personal relationship with Robert Sayre, long time chairman of the Lehigh Board of Trustees. Tiffany also prepared stained glass works for the University and for the heirs of its founder, Asa Packer. (Rare Book Collection, Lehigh University.)

To the
Lehigh University Library
with the best wishes of

Louis C. Tiffany

The party lounging in the saloon area of the boat is photographed in "the most characteristic picture of the boat and our life upon her." (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)



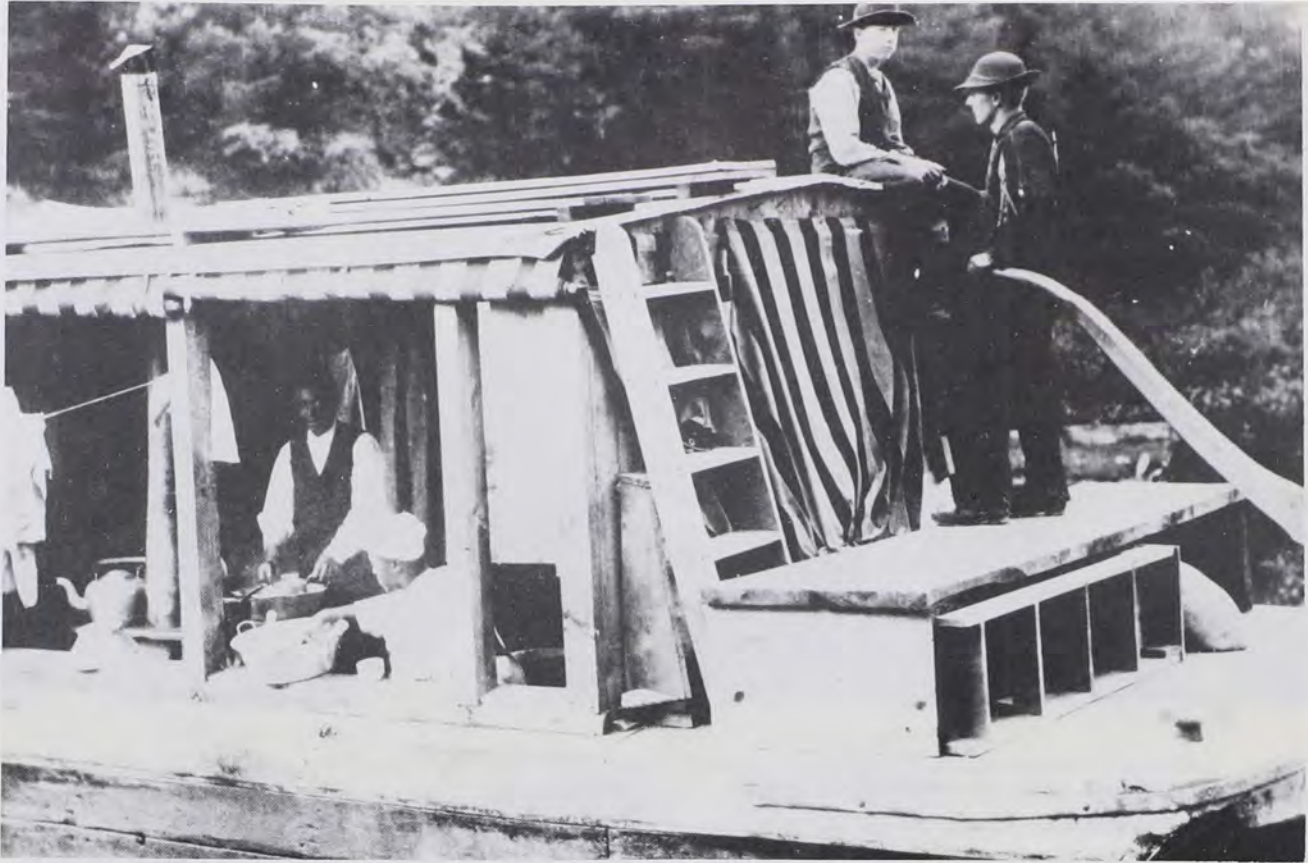
manufacturing stained glass by working pigments directly into the molten mass had made him a wealthy and sought-after artist. The uses in lamps, windows, and *objets d'art* to which he put his product, which he called Favrile glass, brought him commissions, acclaim, and a very public life style.⁵

The two-week tour up the canal was designed to give Tiffany some precious time with Louise away from his children, her parents, and the general public. True to the standards of Victorian morality, the jaunt was conducted with seemingly heavy chaperoning but with numerous private playful moments for the lovers. The trip took the couple and their companions through rural scenic beauty that was familiar to both — the Delaware River Valley, the Forks area, the Lehigh Gap, and Mauch Chunk.

Bristol, where the trip started, had been home to Louise Knox from 1873 to 1883 while her father was pastor at the Presbyterian Church. The Reverend Knox held the post until his election to the presidency of Lafayette College and his relocation to College Hill (October 1883).⁶ Thus, Louise was familiar with Easton from her family's residency there the last three years. Louis Tiffany himself was no stranger to the Lehigh Valley. He had designed and created the beautiful stained glass west window of the Packer Chapel at Lehigh University, whose construction was underway in 1886, and he had in 1881, with Packer family money, done the windows in St. Mark's Episcopal Parish House in Mauch Chunk.⁷ It was no accident, therefore, that Louis Tiffany and Louise Knox were able to greet friends, entertain relatives, and announce their forthcoming wedding to associates at many stops of the Molly-Polly-Chunker. The trip represented the kind of creative audaciousness typical of the well-to-do of the late 19th century.



Louise Knox feeds the two mules, Molly and Polly, at their stable in Bristol just prior to commencing the journey up the canal. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)



David, the cook ("Officer de Bouche"), in the kitchen, Captain Albert Boyer at the helm, and John Cosman, the mule driver ("Superintendent of Motive Power"),

seated on the roof. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)

The barge was a specially rebuilt former gravel-hauling scow of the largest dimensions then allowed on the canal. It was 87.5 feet long and 10.5 feet wide and had been roofed over with a promenade deck. The interior had been divided into rooms including a kitchen, a saloon, a dining room, and three sleeping rooms. Colorful side-projecting drapes of black and yellow canvas, curtains, white tablecloths, fresh flowers in the windows, and two blue blazer-dressed butlers left this particular barge only a distant resemblance to the freight and gravel carriers of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company. The Tiffany expedition christened their "good ship" noting that "The boats going to Mauch Chunk are called Chunkers. This one drawn by (mules) Molly and Polly is therefore distinguished above all other Chunkers by being the Molly-Polly-Chunker."

The trip log went on to add, in typical tongue-in-cheek fashion, that "Some idea of her appearance may be obtained from the illustrations [68 photos accompany the log] but her lines are guarded as a secret for fear of foreign naval powers appropriating them for their cruisers. Under favorable conditions of wind, current, and motive power she has been known to accomplish as much as three knots an hour." The record of the entire voyage has a similar light-hearted flavor, and each member of the group including the kitchen servant, the butler, the mule driver, and the captain was

annointed with a comical title:

1. The Lord High Admiral Commissary General and Commander-in-Chief [Robert W. de Forest].
2. Royal High Chaperon [Mrs. de Forest]
3. First Honorable Assistant Chaperon [Miss de Forest, sister of Robert]
4. Second Honorable Assistant Chaperon [Miss Holt, sister of Henry Holt]
5. "Charge" of the Chaperons [Miss Louise Knox, bride-to-be]
6. Honorable Artist of the Expedition [Louis C. Tiffany, bridegroom-to-be]
7. Double-Acting Photographer and Lord of the East Wind [Walter C. Tuckerman]
8. Scribe [Henry Holt]
9. Captain and Sailing Master [Albert Boyer]
10. Superintendent of Motive Power [John Cosman]
11. Butler [William]
12. Officer de Bouche [David]

Robert de Forest (1848-1931) was a member of the New York bar, held a law degree from Columbia University, and rose in the corporate ranks of the Central Railroad of New Jersey from attorney to corporate general counsel, to vice-president and director. He was a

Tiffany and companions spent Saturday night and all day Sunday (June 19 and 20) tied up at the Black Horse Tavern about four miles south of Easton. They took many photographs, rowed a small boat on the Delaware River, read, loafed, and observed the Sabbath. A considerably remodeled Black Horse is still in operation today under another name. (From the Collection of James Lee, Stewartsville, N.J.)



long-time president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and with his wife, Emily Johnson de Forest, gave the American Wing to the museum.⁸ At the time of the trip he was general counsel to the CRNJ.

Henry Holt (1840-1926) served as scribe for the expedition and kept most of the log. From comments in it, however, it is apparent that others (including Tiffany) wrote portions of the text. Holt was a graduate of Yale (A.B., 1862) and Columbia (LL.B. 1864) and in 1873 had organized the Holt Publishing Company which he headed until his death. He was a well-known patron of the arts and presumably arranged the limited, private printing of the Molly-Polly-Chunker's log.⁹

The Chunker's voyage began at 6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, June 15, 1886, at the canal basin at Bristol. Friends and townfolk "formed a procession and escorted us triumphantly down the towpath. Several of them with a truly oriental observance of the solemnities of the occasion, had, like Moslems entering a mosque, removed their shoes." Tiffany and the photographer (Tuckerman) took several photographs that day and, after dark, as the scribe wrote in the log, "the Artist and the Charge-of-the-Chaperons tied themselves together in a little bag which they called the developing-tent and amused themselves therein until midnight, 'handling plates,' as they told us. But nevertheless, the Royal High Chaperon, first thing next day ordered a developing tent big enough to include her too." On the second day, outside Morrisville, the Chunker was stopped while a por-

tion of the party rode off to a store in Trenton to buy more fabric and construct a larger "developing tent." By late on the 17th they'd reached New Hope and "A Mr. Weyhenmeyer, superintendent, or collector, or chaplain or something else to the canal, boarded the boat and took it past the huge paper mill and up to the [New Hope-Lambertville] Bridge." The Admiral departed to return to work catching a train on the Lambertville side. He rejoined the merry crew on June 23 at Lehigh Gap. The rest of the party tied up and slept overnight amidst comments by the scribe about the bad smell hovering over New Hope and the canal. The origin of the odor was not noted.

Above Lumberville, which the Chunker passed at noon on June 18, canal traffic increased, and the log reported numerous amused comments by other working barges passing the Chunker. One captain, seeing the colored canvas drapes and being reminded of the circus shouted, "Are there any animals in there?" Another, noticing through the open windows the sleeping areas, cried out "Beds!" As he passed by and got an even better look, "More beds!" On Saturday they passed Kintnersville, through the locks at Raubsville, and tied up at the Black Horse Tavern below Easton. The scribe caught a rowboat across to Carpentersville, New Jersey, fare five-cents, and boarded a train for New York to return to work. Similarly, the photographer departed for another job and Tiffany himself continued the picture taking.



Tiffany, in the act of photographing the locktender and his goats at Lock #4 near Mauch Chunk, was captured on film by the official trip photographer, Walter

Tuckerman. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)

After covering virtually no distance on Sunday, June 20, they reached the guard lock at Easton by mid-morning on June 21. Louise Knox arranged a tour of College Hill and Lafayette. The student paper, *The Critic*, carried an account of their visit:

The Rudder Grange people and the Tile Club have found disciples and imitators in a party of New Yorkers who are journeying to Mauch Chunk by way of the raging Pennsylvania Canal. They have had a canal-boat roofed over and fitted up with awnings, curtains, etc., in such a way as to rob it of much of its uncouth appearance; and, with a cook and other servants at command, are prepared for any fate that may befall them. A newspaper paragraph reports that this new thing in canal-boats "has made a great commotion among the tow-boys, and has frightened more than one veteran mule." It is "moored at night-fall in convenient places along the route, and the evenings are spent as pleasantly as possible." The party consists of Robert W. De Forrest and wife; Louis Tiffany, the artist; Henry Holt, the publisher; Walter Tuckerman; and Miss Knox, daughter of Pres. Knox, of Lafayette College.

President Knox, his wife and young son, Mason, returned from Lafayette with the group and boarded the Chunker for a brief afternoon ride up the Lehigh Canal. They had lunch on board with their daughter, future son-in-law, and their companions and were met by their carriage at Chain Dam. The group continued on to Bethlehem where they were met by Robert Sayre, General Manager of the Bethlehem Iron Co., who gave

them a personal tour and allowed them to try some inside photography of a spark-belching furnace. Tiffany left the group at Bethlehem, caught a train to New York to attend a wedding, and returned to the group two days later at Weissport. Meanwhile, Scribe Holt, Lord High Admiral de Forest, and the photographer had returned. De Forest brought with him Mr. J. S. Harris, president of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, who was the guest at dinner with the rest of the Chunker's travelers.

The evening of Thursday, June 24, found the party reaching Lock #4 just below Mauch Chunk, where their night's sleep was disturbed by "the vigorous salutes of passing freight trains. Our way at this point lay between two mountains and was shared by two lively but inartistic railroads, one on each side of the Lehigh River." Much of Friday morning was spent visiting with the locktender, his wife, and their eight children. The scribe's description of domestic life around the lock, "the eight goats that fed on tin cans and chipped rocks," the truck garden, a barnyard filled with rubbish of different kinds, and the humble furnishings of the locktender's house — all outlined in words of virtual disbelief that such things actually existed — provides a fascinating glimpse of life by the canal.

Late on Friday, June 25, they tied up at Mauch



The party spent the morning of Tuesday, June 22nd, in Bethlehem on a tour of the furnaces of the Bethlehem Iron Works. They were guided by Robert Sayre who arranged "appropriate fireworks in our honor which were duly photographed." (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)



The Molly-Polly-Chunker enters the Coalport Lock on the Lehigh Canal about a mile above Jim Thorpe (Mauch Chunk). (From the collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)



Tiffany purchased a large flowering pink cactus weighing more than 100 pounds from a private home near the switch-back railroad outside of Mauch Chunk. Under the supervision of his bride-to-be, Louise, and the mule-driver, Cosman, he packed it for shipment home. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)



The Molly-Polly-Chunker in the Delaware Canal near Tullytown. Captain Boyer is poling from the roof. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)



Molly and Polly with mule driver, Cosman, at a covered bridge crossing on the Delaware Canal. The Chunker's passage always drew crowds of the curious. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)

Chunk, took a ride on the switchback railroad, toured the town, bought a flowering cactus weighing over 100 pounds, dressed and dined on deck at formal table amidst the curious gazes of "small boys and girls and children of a larger growth," and bemused a local reporter for the Mauch Chunk paper who inserted the following article in the next day's press. The scribe clipped and inserted it in the log noting that the wrong railroad was cited as de Forest's employer.

A PARTY OF LADIES AND GENTLEMEN ENJOY A
TRIP
UP THE LEHIGH

The canal-boat containing the tourists from Bristol arrived at lock 4 last evening and tied up for the night. This morning the steward came up to town and bought in a stock of provisions. The party recently left Bristol on the Delaware canal. The following ladies and gentlemen are on board: R. W. De Forrest and wife, attorney of the Reading Railroad; Henry Holt and Miss Holt, Miss L. W. Knox, daughter of President Knox of Lafayette College; Mrs. L. C. Tiffany and W. C. Tuckerman, and Miss De Forrest, all of New York. The boat used for the purpose is a handsome barge conveniently arranged into six different apartments, kitchens, etc. The inside decorations consist of Japanese designs, lanterns and bric-a-brac generally; the sitting-room is well fitted out with books, maps of the different counties in the states through which the party is to pass, photograph apparatus, etc. The floors of the different rooms are carpeted, and the culinary department is presided over by two colored servants.

With Coalport as its terminus of the trip, the Molly-Polly-Chunker turned around and headed down-canal to Easton, arriving on Tuesday, June 29. The friends spent their last days together mentally planning an even grander Chunker (one which, alas, was never built), celebrating their journey with champagne toasts, and making a short stop in Bethlehem where "the Artist went off to find some lights and shadows he left there the week before." Their last night was spent on the south bank of the Lehigh at the Chain Dam Lock "in sight of the blaze from the chimneys of two great smelting furnaces, [where] in the darkness [we] could enjoy the bursts of flame without the sight of any of the ugliness that is the invariable accompaniment of a great manufactory." Although the group disbanded at Easton on June 30, 1886, the scribe made one last entry in the log, dated November 9, 1886.

Under the heading "Epi-log" he wrote: "The power of any stream is developed by judiciously checking its course. The stream of Love is no exception. The Chaperons know all this, and regulated their Charge accordingly. Their wisdom was justified in the end. On this auspicious day, all the company of the Molly-Polly-Chunker assisting, the Artist and the Charge were married (with the bride's father officiating) and 'lived happily ever after.'" The wedding itself was a high-society



The last night of the Chunker's cruise was spent tied up in the Lehigh River just upstream of the Chain Dam lock. The party spent the evening planning a new and better Chunker which was never built. They noted in the log that the blaze from the stacks of the Keystone Iron Works was most impressive against the dark night. This picture shows the lock and the furnace as it existed in

the late 19th century. The furnace site is now the Ashland Chemical Co. of Glendon, PA., and the lock and the locktender's house have been restored as part of the Hugh Moore Park, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa. (From the Collection of the Pennsylvania Canal Society, Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.)

affair and was held at the Brick Church, 39th Street and Fifth Avenue, New York. The Tiffanys honeymooned in the South.¹⁰

Louise and Louis enjoyed 18 years of happy married life. Their union was blessed with twins, Julia and Comfort, and a daughter, Dorothy. From a commercial and an artistic viewpoint, it was Tiffany's most productive period. From 1902 to 1904, the Tiffanys designed, built and decorated the house of their dreams, Laurelton Hall, at Oyster Bay, Long Island. In summer 1904, while finishing artistic touches were being added, Louise Tiffany died. Louis, a fifty-six-year-old widower, and his three teenaged daughters moved sadly into their new

estate. Tiffany also survived his two male shipmates from the Chunker (de Forest and Holt) and died a wealthy and honored man on January 13, 1933, barely a month from his 85th birthday.¹¹

The voyage of the "Good Ship Molly-Polly-Chunker" was unique. As a prenuptial trip by lovers with and among friends, it was a social success. The 40-page log it left behind provides not only a glimpse of the life style of wealthy Americans of a century ago, but also a well-crafted documentary of the beauty and the bleakness, the color and the squalor, of life on the canal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The entrance to Laurelton Hall, Oyster Bay, Long Island, as it looked shortly after the opening of the home in 1904. Louise and Louis Tiffany had planned the mansion as their dream home, but she died just months before its completion. (Rare Book Collection, Lehigh University.)

ENDNOTES

¹*American Heritage Cookbook and Illustrated History of American Eating and Drinking*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1964, pp. 366-367.

²Excellent general discussions of the lifestyles of the well-to-do American Victorians can be found in F. C. Jaher, *The Rich, The Well Born, and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1973, and also S. Birmingham, *The Right People: A Portrait of the American Social Establishment*, Little, Brown Publishers, Boston, 1968.

³A copy of the *Log of the Good Ship Molly-Polly-Chunker*, inscribed as a gift from Emily Johnson (Mrs. Robert W.) de Forest, is in the rare book collection of the Bucks County Historical Society. The log is accompanied by a set of the photographs. Existence of this unique historical record was made known by C. P. Yoder in his *Delaware Canal Journal*, Canal Press, Bethlehem, PA, 1972, pp. 205-210. The Canal Museum, Easton, Pa., also owns a copy of the log and its photographs.

⁴Biographical information about Louis C. Tiffany has been obtained from the following sources: *New York Times* (obit), January 18, 1933, p. 19; and *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 36, James T. White & Co. Publishers, New York, 1950, p. 168.

⁵The art and times of Tiffany are covered by R. Koch in *Louis C. Tiffany: Rebel in Glass*, Crown Publishers, NY, 1964. Furthermore, Tiffany's own privately published book which he commissioned his art critic friend, Charles deKay, to prepare, *The Art Work of Louis C. Tiffany*, is an illuminating guide to his life and art. It was published anonymously in 1914 by Doubleday, Page, and Company with a cover designed by Tiffany himself. Lehigh University owns a copy autographed and dedicated by Tiffany.

⁶Biographical information about the Rev. James Hall Mason Knox

(1824-1903), Eighth President of Lafayette College, and his daughter Louise can be found in the following sources: *New York Times* (obit), January 23, 1903, p. 9, and in David B. Skillman, *The Biography of a College*, Vol. II, Lafayette College Press, Easton, PA, 1932, pp. 36-75.

⁷Information on chapel window at Lehigh University was provided by the Reverend H. L. Flesher, University Chaplain, and George Beezer, Director, Office of Publications. Tiffany was well-known to Robert Sayre, Chairman of the University Board of Trustees, and to the heirs of Asa Packer, University Founder. Sayre hosted Tiffany's visit to Bethlehem on June 22, 1886, when the Packer Chapel was under construction. The Packer heirs arranged for Tiffany to prepare the windows for the Episcopal Parish House in Mauch Chunk. While no specific written documentation can be found in University Archives which ties Tiffany to the west chapel window, art historians and university publications have long attributed the piece to his craftsmanship. The documentation for the Tiffany windows in Mauch Chunk Episcopal Church was provided by Charles Lauckenbach, Historian, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Race Street, Jim Thorpe (Mauch Chunk), PA.

⁸Biographical information about Robert W. de Forest (1848-1931) can be found in *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 42, 1958, p. 15.

⁹Biographical information about Henry Holt (1840-1926) can be found in *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 31, 1944, p. 50.

¹⁰Their wedding was reported in the *New York Times*, November 10, 1886, p. 5, and in the *Easton Daily Express*, November 10, 1886, p. 3.

¹¹Details of the marriage of Louise and Louis Tiffany and of Tiffany's later years are available in H. F. McKean, *The Lost Treasures of Louis Comfort Tiffany*, Doubleday and Co., Garden City, NY, 1980, Chapters 2 & 7.



Wallace Stevens as a boy (Courtesy of Holly Stevens).



Margaretha Catherine Zeller Stevens (Courtesy Henry E. Huntington Library).



Stevens's gravestone (Courtesy of J. R. Harrison).

JOURNEY HOME: Pennsylvania German Ethnicity in Wallace Stevens

by Dennis Barone

Some important American authors have reflected on their Pennsylvania German or, as it is colloquially known, Pennsylvania Dutch ethnicity. William Dean Howells, Theodore Dreiser, Wallace Stevens, and others incorporated aspects of this heritage in their work or traced, to varying degrees of thoroughness, their family lines back to their colonial American or European sources. These authors' recollections and searches often came late in their careers (frequently after serious disillusionment). Usually these authors were Pennsylvania German only on their mother's side, and sometimes they perpetuated commonplace inaccuracies regarding Pennsylvania Germans. Finally, except for Stevens, most of these authors did not live for any substantial amount of time in their lives in the center of this ethnic group — Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Wallace Stevens's identification with his Pennsylvania German ancestry was a lifelong one. It peaked,

however, in the 1940s when he read works on this ethnic group, traced his genealogy in a multi-volume work in progress on Stevens, Barcalow, and Zeller lines, and wrote a number of poems that grew out of this research. One reason he gave for his almost obsessive interest in his family's past was that "the way to read American history . . . is to interest yourself in your family."¹ This reason, however, seems less significant than others that have been provided by Holly Stevens and Peter Brazeau and even by Stevens himself. In his *Parts of a World: Wallace Stevens Remembered*, Brazeau has noted that the poet said "my grandparents Benjamin Stevens and Elizabeth Barcalow, were like figures in an idyll to me. When I was a boy my father took me down from Reading to the farm at Feasterville to visit them occasionally. It was my remembrance of them that interested me in finding out about their own parents and grandparents."² And Stevens's daughter has suggested yet another reason for her father's late-life interest in

genealogy. She has suggested that her father's search for his past became so important to him in the 1940s because she had disappointed him when she dropped out of college and because soon after this his sister Elizabeth died. "He was, thus," Holly Stevens has written, "without a family beyond his wife for the first time, and his correspondence reflects this"³

Stevens now became the family patriarch. He attended family ceremonies and invited family members to his Hartford home. According to Peter Brazeau, this was a role that Stevens enjoyed and this, too, with a corresponding vanity, may have encouraged his interest in the past. Brazeau has observed also that Stevens's wife, Elsie, traced her family lines and that her "interest may have finally piqued his own."⁴ To these reasons may surely be added one more: Stevens's search of the past corresponded with his interest in the order of things and the nature of reality. It can be said with the utmost certainty that his genealogical interests were not at odds with his poetic ones. Rather, they were commensurate. Especially in the war torn 1940s, the study of the past offered that poet a means of suggesting some different order altogether. Stevens was not nostalgic, however. In the Pennsylvania German poems the spirituality of his ancestors succumbs to a purely intellectual order.

Wallace Stevens was born and bred in Reading, Pennsylvania and both his maternal and paternal ancestors were inhabitants of this region. Unlike Howells and Dreiser, who were born in Ohio and Indiana and who were Pennsylvania German only on their mother's side, Stevens had direct experience in this ethnic culture. Prior to his high school education, he attended a Lutheran parochial school. As a young man in New York City he wrote in his notebook, "Here I am, a descendant of the Dutch, at the age of twenty-five, without a cent to my name."⁵ Years later he recalled meeting one of the Sisters of the Ephrata sect. "She was then 90," he wrote, "and her father could very well have gone back to the time when the vital characters were still alive."⁶ In short, Stevens both knew and identified with the Pennsylvania Germans in a way that other authors did not, and because of this, his depictions of the members of this group — their customs and culture — in his letters (the only "memoir" he left to us) were accurate and precise.

Consider Howells and Dreiser. Howells's memoirs of his childhood are very imprecise. In *Years of My Youth* he wrote of his Pennsylvania German grandmother and his fondness for her. Yet, in another memoir, *Impressions and Experiences*, he made no mention of this dear grandmother and stated that his first memories were of much later events than his grandmother's visits. In his fiction Howells depicted Pennsylvania Germans as prosperous and happy as long as they remained farmers. In an urban environment, according to Howells, they failed economically and morally. For example, in *A Hazard*

of New Fortunes Howells wrote that Dryfoos's "moral decay began with his perception of the opportunity of making money quickly and abundantly, which offered itself to him after he sold his farm."⁷ Howells, then, stereotyped his Pennsylvania German characters and used them as pawns in his own game of nostalgia.

Theodore Dreiser, unlike Howells, went to Germany to visit the graves of his ancestors. Like Howells, he incorporated memories and experiences into his work and yet he shunned much of his past. Indeed, in *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser recalled that while driving through Pennsylvania on terrible roads he tried to recollect one significant American that came from that state. Not only did Dreiser express a dislike for Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians, but he also disliked institutionalized religions — including those associated with Pennsylvania Germans. In his memoir, *Dawn*, Dreiser inaccurately groups different Pennsylvania German sects together. For example, he wrote that his mother "was the daughter of a prosperous Moravian farmer, of Dunkard or Mennonite faith."⁸ And in *A Hoosier Holiday* Dreiser condescendingly referred to his mother as a "pagan mother taken over into the Catholic Church at marriage."⁹ Yet, although Dreiser belittled his ancestry, in *A Traveller at Forty* he described a journey to his father's German birthplace. He did not search for his maternal origins even though his relationship with his mother was better than that with his father. He wrote that there were no Dreisers living in the town of Mayen when he visited there. Yet a German Dreiser scholar has claimed that "there were four families living there by the name of Dreiser and two additional women relations. One family was living exactly opposite the house where Dreiser said he stayed for the night."¹⁰ Dreiser's investigation seems half-hearted then, a mere afterthought while on a European tour. Indeed, Dreiser noted that getting "a look at the Kaiser if possible" was more important to him than visiting his father's birthplace. Half-hearted interest and mockery characterizes his interest in his ancestry as evidenced in his memoirs.

In his fiction Dreiser used many characters of German or pietistic origin and his treatment of them resembles that of his own ancestry. Unlike Howells, who in his late-life Christian socialism envisioned the old ways as the saving ways, Dreiser often considered inherited forms and customs repressive. For example, in his novel *Jennie Gerhardt* the failures of the father are distinctly associated with his religious practices. Like Dreiser's own father, Jennie Gerhardt's father's "deep religious feeling made him stern with his children."¹¹ Father Gerhardt read German Lutheran papers and favored German Lutheran parochial schools. His faith resembled that of his father's, a Lutheran minister.

Yet, in Dreiser's last novel, the posthumously published *The Bulwark*, a religious idealism similar to

Howells's prevails. For Solon Barnes, the Quaker protagonist in this novel, the dilemma is how old ways can survive in an everchanging world. Yet, unlike Howells's Mr. Dryfoos, the source of the problem here is more internal than external. Barnes is not corrupted by nearby Philadelphia, but like Dreiser's own father or Jennie Gerhardt's father, by a too strict adherence to traditions that interfere with personal relationships in the contemporary world. Barnes has too much faith and not enough love. In this, his final creative work, Dreiser said that old customs must bend with new conditions.

Stevens's use of his Pennsylvania German ethnicity in his creative work was not clearly nostalgic like Howells's or whole or half-heartedly condemning like Dreiser's. Stevens found in his ancestry another means to manifest his frequent theme of man's attempt to impose order on chaos. His accurate and meticulous research directly resulted in the creation of a number of poems. "The Bed of Old John Zeller" exemplifies Stevens's use of the past as a means to examine the order we call reality. The poem parallels the difficulty he had tracing this part of his past. In one letter he noted that his

grandfather joined that Church in 1843 by a profession of faith. His name was entered on the records as John Zellers, Jr. The letter *s* is probably an error, but the Jr. is important because it clearly indicates that the name of his father was John Zeller. The job, then, is to find, probably in Berks County, some one by the name of John Zeller who could have been the father of my grandfather . . . This new generation is important because it, and probably the next one back of it, will determine whether I fit into the line, and how.¹²

Evident in the poem is a similar quest for the order, chronology, and structure necessary for the poet to see how he fits the line more than how he fits into the line. In other words, the genealogical line is but a way to arrive at the poetic one and to make a statement about the power of the intellect to do so. In the poem, too, there is a despair and frustration that resembles that evident in the letter. For there is always "the next one back of it" — whatever "it" at any particular moment may be — that remains unknown and to know the connective idea as well as the thing itself — the whole line as well as its parts — results in nothing. In any pursuit, there is always more; therefore, a boundary must be drawn. As Stevens put it once in his genealogical correspondence: "While there are many Barcalow lines, one has to stop somewhere."¹³ The best one can do is, as Stevens said of Marianne Moore, to establish a reality of one's own particulars.¹⁴ It would be a vain folly to claim that, as Stevens put it, "any image of the world . . . was the chief image."¹⁵

According to Stevens, the Zellers and their fellow original settlers "were fanatics."¹⁶ Their religion was mere wishful thinking; intellectual formulation out of particulars, Stevens said, overpowers spiritual faith in first causes and ultimate schemes.

This structure of ideas, these ghostly sequences
Of the mind, result only in disaster. It follows,
Casual poet, that to add your own disorder to
disaster

Makes more of it. It is easy to wish for another
structure
Of ideas and to say as usual that there must be
Other ghostly sequences and, it would be, luminous

Sequences, thought of among spheres in the old
peak of night:
This is the habit of wishing, as if one's grandfather
lay
In one's heart and wished as he had always wished,
unable

To sleep in that bed for its disorder, talking of
ghostly
Sequences that would be sleep and ting-tang toss-
ing, so that
He might slowly forget. It is more difficult to evade

That habit of wishing and to accept the structure
Of things as the structure of ideas. It was the struc-
ture
Of things at least that was thought of in the old
peak of night.¹⁷

("The Bed of Old John Zeller")

This use of Pennsylvania German ethnicity that grew out of careful study is not the nostalgia of Howells or the condemnation of Dreiser, but is the ambiguity of a poet looking for the real itself.

The idea expressed in "The Bed of Old John Zeller" and other Pennsylvania German-inspired poems parallels that found in Stevens's poems composed of different subject matter. The genealogy and the poetry worked together. In his genealogical search and in his journeys to graveyards Stevens was, as he said of Marianne Moore's commensurate fondness for animals, "transported into the presence of a recognizable reality."¹⁸ When he visited the graveyard that contains the Zeller stones he found things in disorder. Some years later he heard of plans to spruce up the graveyard and this greatly pleased him.

When I first saw it — I mean the old yard — it looked forlorn, a place full of forgotten and abandoned people whose lives were almost without the slightest memorials. In particular, the two Zeller graves in which I was interested, off to one side, more or less alone, seemed isolated, as if they were the graves of two strangers. All the graves in the yard were like objects that had ceased to be part of time.

The plans will accomplish two things. They will create from this sense of things completely lost a kind of community Denkmal. The pride and love of those now alive and of those to come will put an end to the indifference of

which I have spoken. And, then, secondly, the plans will bring the people buried there back to life in a way; and will keep them alive at least in the memory of the families to which they belong.

Moreover, I think that the plans will accomplish a good deal for the church. They will reinvigorate it.¹⁹

Order is temporary. Chaos always beckons. According to Stevens, to know the first cause, the ultimate origin is impossible, but still the quest to know, to organize — whether it be placing a jar on a hill in Tennessee or a gravestone in a graveyard in Pennsylvania — gives temporary meaning and purpose to life.

Shortly before he visited Pennsylvania on a trip that inspired the well-known poem “Dutch Graves in Bucks County,” Stevens wrote his friend Henry Church, “True, everything seems to be in disorder now-a-days, but the disorder of poetry is its history.”²⁰ “Dutch Graves in Bucks County” attempts to impose some organization on this disorder. It alternates between five line stanzas of the present and two line refrains of the past:

Angry men and furious machines
Swarm from the little blue of the horizon
To the great blue of the middle height.
Men scatter throughout clouds.
The wheels are too large for any noise.

And you, my semblables, in sooty residence
Tap skeleton drums inaudibly.

There are shouts and voices.
There are men shuffling on foot in air.
Men are moving and marching
And shuffling lightly, with the heavy lightness
Of those that are marching, many together.

And you, my semblables — the old flag of Holland
Flutters in tiny darkness.

There are circles of weapons in the sun.
The air attends the brightened guns,
As if sounds were forming
Out of themselves, a saying,
And expressive on-dit, a profession.

And you, my semblables, are doubly killed
To be buried in desert and deserted earth.

The flags are natures newly found.
Rifles grow sharper on the sight.
There is a rumble of autumnal marching,
From which no soft sleeve relieves us.
Fate is the present desperado.

And you, my semblables, are crusts that lie
In the shrivellings of your time and place.

There is a battering of the drums. The bugles
Cry loudly, cry out in the powerful heart.
A force gathers that will cry loudlier
Than the most metal music, loudlier
Like an instinctive incantation.

And you, my semblables, in the total
Of remembrance share nothing of ourselves.

And end must come in a merciless triumph,
An end of evil in a profounder logic,
In a peace that is more than a refuge,
In the will of what is common to all men,
Spelled from spent living and spent dying.

And you, my semblables, in gaffer-green,
Know the past is not part of the present.

Although “the past is not part of the present,” in stanza nine the past has a message for the present:

Who are the mossy cronies muttering,
Monsters antique and haggard with past thought?
What is this crackling of voices in the mind,
This pitter-patter of archaic freedom,
Of the thousands of freedoms except our own?

Although the past has a message for the living, the living must seek out their own orders, their new order:

the mobs of birth
Avoid our stale perfections, seeking out
Their own, waiting until we go
To picnic in the ruins that we leave.

Yet, the poem also states, “And you, my semblables, whose ecstasy / Was the glory of heaven in the wilderness—” and the poem ends:

These violent marchers of the present,
Rumbling along the autumnal horizon,
Under the arches, over the arches, in arcs
Of a chaos composed in more than order,
March toward a generation’s centre.

Time was not wasted in your subtle temples.
No: nor divergence made too steep to follow
down.²¹

So, the relationship, the continuity of past and present seems ambiguous. Stevens wrote, “humble are they that move about the world with the lure of the real in their hearts,”²² and the lure of the real necessitates a search for the true and usable past in an everchanging present.

As well as Howells, Dreiser, and Stevens, proud Pennsylvania Germans have claimed Max Eastman, Willa Cather, and H. D. for their own.²³ Eastman's heritage does not directly appear in his creative work. In his autobiography, *Enjoyment of Living*, Eastman included a chapter entitled "Pennsylvania Goodness" in which he explained the inaccuracy of the term "Pennsylvania Dutch" and described the "load of virtue" he inherited from his mother's side of the family. Yet in this chapter he indiscriminately grouped all Pennsylvania German religions together, and it appears that Eastman was not aware that most Pennsylvania Germans are Lutheran or Reformed. Eastman was only two when his Pennsylvania German grandmother, Catherine Stehley Ford, died. The direct influence of "Pennsylvania Goodness" on Max Eastman seems negligible. Likewise, to claim Willa Cather for the Pennsylvania German bandwagon may also be an exaggeration. Cather's last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, takes place in the "Valley Dutch" region of Virginia. This is where she was born, and this novel is her only one centered in that locality. Lastly, the poet H. D. returned to her birthplace late in life and signed the church register "Baptized Moravian." In between the day of her baptism and this day she saw very little indeed of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Unlike these authors, Wallace Stevens's interest in and use of his Pennsylvania German heritage was more than a brief mention in a memoir or the locus for some final work. Although better known for his career in Hartford, Connecticut than for his childhood and adolescence in Reading, Pennsylvania, Stevens himself noted that "one's home is where one grows up."²⁴ Stevens's letters demonstrate the extent to which and the seriousness with which he searched his past; not only his Pennsylvania German ancestry but all his European ancestry. He corresponded with Mary Owen Steinmetz who did genealogical work with the Berks County Historical Society. He hired Lila James Roney, a genealogist who had done work for the Roosevelts, to do genealogical research for him. He had the Cummington Press print a small folder to accompany a portfolio of family portraits. He joined or tried to join a number of societies such as the Holland Society and the St. Nicholas Society. He had a bookplate made from a photograph of a stone given to the Trinity Tulpehocken Church by a member of his mother's family. In one letter, he clearly showed his enthusiasm for this heritage when he wrote: "During the last few weeks I have been reading a life of Conrad Weiser . . . a local hero in my part of Pennsylvania. It has been like having the past crawl out all over the place. The author has not corrected his spelling. When he speaks of pork he spells it borck. This is pure Pennsylvania German and, while it might bore anybody else to shreds, it has kept me up night after night, wild with interest."²⁵

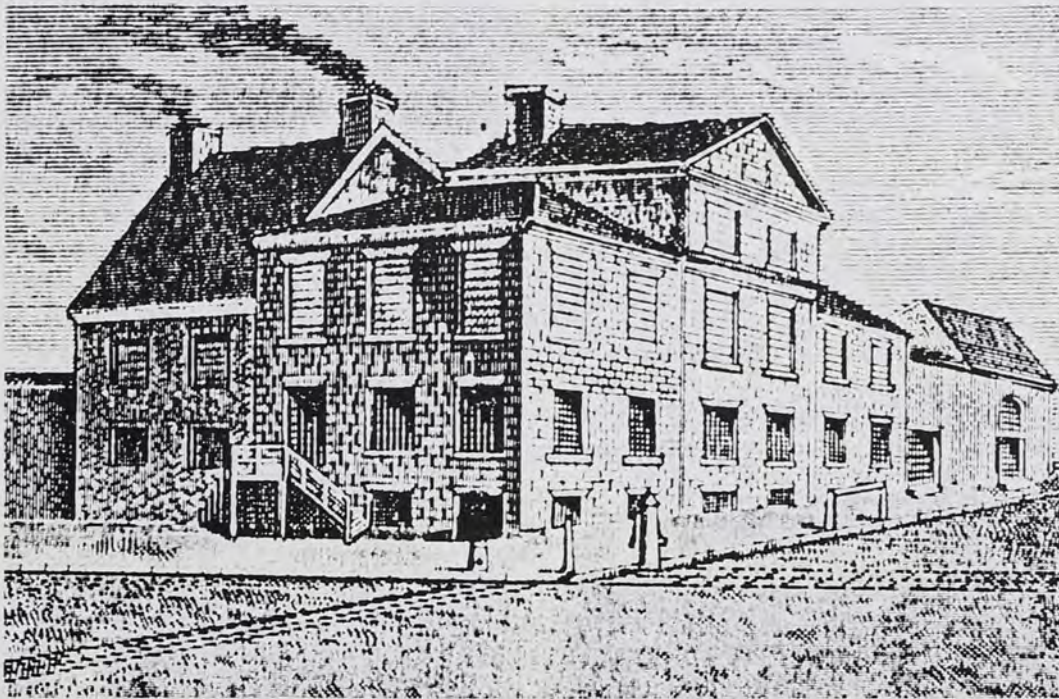
Stevens's origins, ancestry, and heritage were significant to him. He never forgot Reading nor his family's past and, indeed, at one point in his life the recollection of it nearly became an obsession. Out of this near-obsession came many memorable poems such as "Hymn to John Zeller," "Extraordinary References," and "Two Versions of the Same Poem" as well as those already mentioned. Holly Stevens has remarked that for her father "the past was merely a frame of reference for the present and the future."²⁶ In the war-torn 1940s that "frame of reference" provided at least the possibility for a comforting order — if only in the mind. For Stevens believed that "nothing illustrates the importance of poetry better than this possibility that within it there may yet be found a reality adequate to the profound necessities of life today or for that matter any day."²⁷ Stevens's father once told the young Wallace that "these old hills of ours are far enough away from the old ocean to protect us from the blasts she blows."²⁸ For that protection Wallace Stevens journeyed home.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Wallace Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, Holly Stevens, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 479.
- ²Stevens as quoted in Peter Brazeau, *Parts of a World: Wallace Stevens Remembered* (New York: Random House, 1983), 270.
- ³Stevens, *Letters*, 398.
- ⁴Brazeau, *Parts of a World*, 270.
- ⁵Stevens as quoted in Holly Stevens, *Souvenirs and Prophecies: The Young Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 128.
- ⁶Stevens, *Letters*, 511.
- ⁷William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1890), 226.
- ⁸Theodore Dreiser, *Dawn* (New York: Horace Liveright, Inc., 1931), 4.
- ⁹Theodore Dreiser, *A Hoosier Holiday* (New York: John Lane Company, 1916), 50.
- ¹⁰Renate Schmidt-von Bardelben, "Dreiser on the European Continent," *The Dreiser Newsletter*, II (1971), 6.
- ¹¹Theodore Dreiser, *Jennie Gerhardt* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1911), 56.
- ¹²Stevens, *Letters*, 448.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, 474.
- ¹⁴Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 95. Elsewhere in this volume Stevens said that "the imagination is the power that enables us to perceive . . . the opposite of chaos in chaos" (153).
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, 152.
- ¹⁶Stevens, *Letters*, 534. Peter Brazeau has discussed Stevens's search for and use of his Zeller ancestry in *Parts of a World*, 272-275.
- ¹⁷Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 326.
- ¹⁸Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*, 103.
- ¹⁹Stevens, *Letters*, 782.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, 467.
- ²¹Stevens, *Collected Poems*, 290-293.
- ²²Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*, 99.
- ²³See for example Fredric Klees, *The Pennsylvania Dutch* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1950), 266-268.
- ²⁴Stevens, *Letters*, 753.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 521.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 398.
- ²⁷Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*, 102.
- ²⁸Stevens, *Letters*, 18.

QUAKERS IN THE LANCASTER GAOL, 1778

by A. Day Bradley



Artist's rendering, Old County Jail, Lancaster. (Courtesy of the Lancaster County Historical Society.)

We are united that consistent with our religious Principles we cannot comply with these Laws and be instrumental in setting up or putting down a Government. (From the Meeting for Sufferings of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to the Executive Council of Pennsylvania, 1778.)

On the 29th of 6th month, 1778, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting recorded that six Friends, "Jehu Hollingsworth, Thomas Ruckman, Charles Dingee, James Smith, Jr., Stephen Howell and Joshua Bennett had been in the Lancaster Gaol for some months because for conscience sake they cannot take the test or affirmation of allegiance and abjuration."¹ The Meeting for Sufferings, appropriately named for those times when Quaker testimonies and governmental policies came into sharp conflict, carried on the business of the Yearly Meeting, when the latter was not in session.²

In common with other former Colonies, Pennsylvania required the oath or affirmation of abjuration and allegiance, an early form of the loyalty oath. Male citizens above the age of eighteen were required to renounce allegiance to Great Britain and declare their loyalty to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The penalties for non-compliance were severe; holding office was prohibited, as were transfers of property, and the crossing of state and even county lines. All teachers were required to take the oath. The Friends position is

well expressed in a letter to Joseph Miller, one of the Justices for Lancaster County, from six members of Western Quarterly Meeting:

Now respecting what thou expressed about giving allegiance to the Government we humbly think that our peaceable Conduct and Character is a much stronger assurance of Safety than any oath ever devised by Man. 21st of 7th mo. 1778. Signed by John Perry, Benjamin Mason, James Gibbons, Jacob Lindley, William Downing and John Lamborn.³

Not only did Quaker testimonies prohibit "any part in setting up or putting down a government," but direct or indirect participation in military matters was strictly prohibited. Consequently, Friends were distrained or imprisoned for failure to pay the militia fine, for refusing to pay for a substitute and even for accepting payment for property taken by the military forces. Deviation from the pacifist principles incurred disciplinary action by the Monthly Meeting.⁴

A Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings visited the prisoners in 8th month 1778, and appealed to the committing authorities for their release. The Committee conferred with Henry DeHuff, who had committed Stephen Howell. Howell was released at once. They also "had an opportunity with Joseph Miller, [but] with not as much satisfaction as we could have desired, but appeared an opening for further labors."⁵ Howell had

been required to pay £52/10 for a substitute fine, but as the letter of his fellow prisoners shows, he was released without payment:

These may certify to whom it may concern that Stephen Howell, late of Chester County, being a considerable time a fellow prisoner with us, was discharged by a verbal order from Andrew Cunningham, the present Gaoler, without any demand for Fees or otherwise, he refusing to give any Writing. Lancaster Gaol, the 29th of 8th mo. 1778. Signed by the five remaining Quaker prisoners and Wendell Bowman.⁶

Jehu Hollingsworth, a member of Wilmington Monthly Meeting, had gone to Lancaster on business matters and was taken by William McCullough before William Henry, a Justice of the Peace. In an order committing the prisoner — an order it is said he signed with some reluctance — William Henry clearly stated Hollingsworth's "offense."

To the Keeper of the Common Gaol at Lancaster: I herewith send you the Body of Jehu Hollingsworth, an inhabitant of one of the adjoining States, who by his own confession hath not taken the oath of allegiance to any of the United States of America, and the oath of allegiance having been tendered to him, refused to subscribe to the oath. Signed 22nd of August, 1777 William Henry⁷

The case of Thomas Ruckman was quite similar to that of Jehu Hollingsworth. Ruckman, from Maryland, was apprehended in Colerain Township, Lancaster County, and brought before Joseph Miller. Miller believed Ruckman "to be an honest man" but ordered John Long, deputy constable, to deliver the prisoner to the Lancaster Gaol on the 4th of September 1777.⁸

Charles Dingee, who was guilty of crossing county lines, wrote an account of his capture: "My being taken Prisoner by armed Militia in the Township of Kingsessing within two miles of the Ferry on Schuylkill as an Offense against the Laws for being out of the County." Dingee was kept under guard from the 29th of 11th month 1777, until the 15th of last month 1778, when he was sent to prison.⁹

The prisoners Hollingsworth, Ruckman, and Dingee were released on the 27th of 12th month 1778, without explanation:

Now these may certify to whom it may concern that I do remit the fees of the within named Jehu Hollingsworth, Thomas Ruckman and Charles Dingee, respectively, and they are hereby fully, and otherwise pursuant to the within order absolutely discharged from their confinement. Witness my hand and seal 12th mo. 27th 1778.

Andrew Cunningham, Gaoler¹⁰

James Smith, Jr. of Sadsbury Monthly was fined £40 and costs "for not going with the Militia." He was in prison from the 8th of 11th month 1777, to the 20th of 8th month 1778, when he was told by the gaoler that he "was at Liberty to go Home without any Demand in Fees." No reason was given and it was supposed that those who had been instrumental in jailing him assisted in his release.¹¹

Joshua Bennett, also a member of Sadsbury Monthly Meeting, had taught a school for the children of the

Meeting. He had refused to include children "of those not of our Society" because of space limitations, and also because the inclusion of children of the "world's people" would alter the purpose of the school. John Brisben, whose children had been refused, turned informer. Taken before William Henry, Bennett "alleged that he did not think teaching children to read the Scriptures and to write was transgressing any just Law." He was indicted in 8th month 1778, and declared guilty after a jury trial. Bennett was fined one hundred pounds and ordered to remain in prison until the fine and costs were paid. However, "the Executive Council, so-called, remitted the Fine, but he was delayed until the Gaoler remitted the Fees. Thus the Lord made way for Deliverance from the Penalties of an unjust Law."¹²

The experiences of these six Friends, who did not compromise their religious principles by taking the oath or by paying fines and fees, can hardly be regarded as typical of the treatment of the conscientious objector during the American Revolution. Indeed, the right of conscience has not yet been universally recognized.

ENDNOTES

¹*Manuscript Minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings*, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. All manuscripts quoted are in this library.

²Some explanation of the duties of the various types of meeting in the Society of Friends is necessary. The monthly meeting which includes the meetings for worship in a certain area is the primary meeting for business and discipline; it records membership statistics, approves and oversees marriages, receives new members, and transfers and receives members to and from other meetings. In former times the monthly meeting exercised strict supervision over the membership, and when it was deemed necessary disowned those who strayed from Friends' principles and testimonies. Monthly meetings in a larger area constituted a quarterly meeting, and several quarterly meetings were included in a yearly meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting included and includes meetings in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

³This statement is recorded in *Miscellaneous Documents of the Meeting for Sufferings*. Document #21, 1778. These documents are hereafter cited as M D. Documents are numbered according to the year of filing, not always the year in which the documents were written. Joseph Miller was appointed a Judge of the Lancaster Court, March 31, 1777, for a seven year term. Ellis & Evans, *History of Lancaster County*, p. 221. Hereafter cited as E E.

⁴The standard reference for Friends and the Revolution is *The Relation of the Quakers to the American Revolution*, Arthur J. Mekeel, University Press of America, 1979. See Chapters IX and XI for the situation in Pennsylvania. This article describes in some detail the imprisonment and eventual release of the six Friends. Many of the references cited here are given by Mekeel.

⁵*Minutes of the Meeting for Sufferings*, 4th of 8th month 1778. Henry DeHuff was Chief Burgess of Lancaster in 1778, 79, 83, 84, 85; E E p. 370. Lancaster Court Records for this period are lacking.

⁶M D, Documents 21, 21A, 1778.

⁷Jehu Hollingsworth of New Castle County on the Delaware married Deborah Phillips of Sadsbury Meeting the 22nd of 2nd month 1779; *Sadsbury Monthly Meeting Vital Records*. William Henry was appointed a Justice of the Lancaster County Courts for a seven year term July 4, 1777, and was President of the Court of Common Pleas, November 18, 1780; E E p. 224. M D Document #8, 1777.

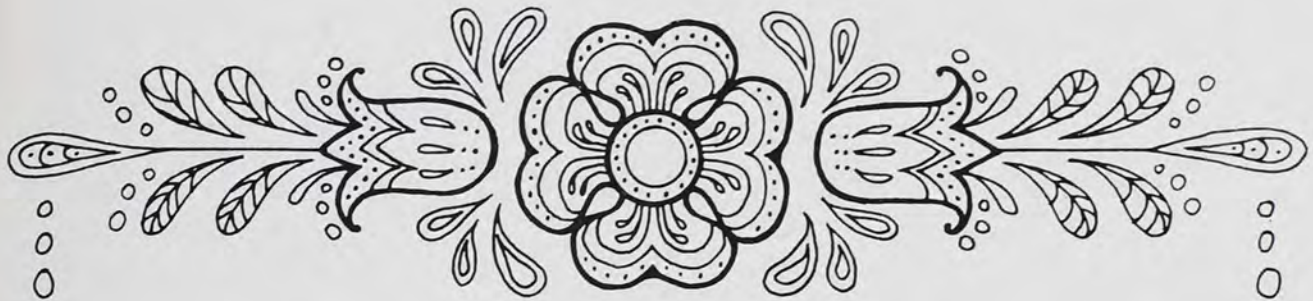
⁸M D Documents # 7 1777, # 9, 1778.

⁹M D Documents # 80, 81, 82, 1779.

¹⁰M D Document # 13, 1779.

¹¹M D Documents # 56, 57, 1780.

¹²M D Documents #25, 43, 1778.



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