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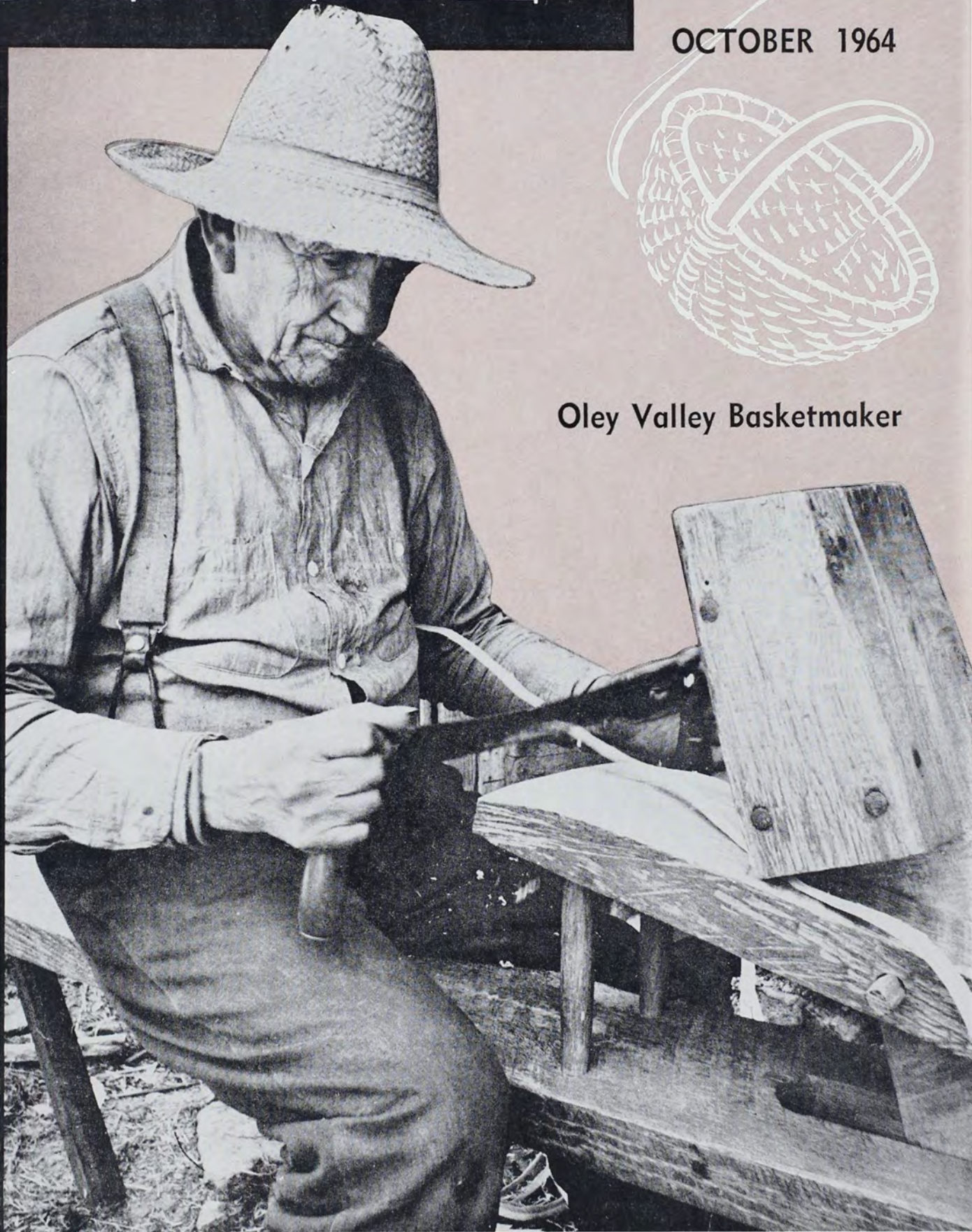
Pennsylvania **FOLKLIFE**



OCTOBER 1964



Oley Valley Basketmaker



Cover: To make sure there are no splinters and that the strips will weave evenly, Fred Bieber, Oley Valley, Berks County, shaves them smooth on the shnitzel-bunk. (Picture G).

Pennsylvania FOLKLIFE

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Picture B—Shaving smooth a rough split of wood on the *shnitzel-bunk*, so that it may be made into rims and handles for baskets.

The Oley Valley

BASKETMAKER

By RICHARD H. SHANER

Nestled in the hills of the Oley Valley in Berks County at the edge of the forest is the farm of Freddie Bieber, basket-maker. Like so many of our Pennsylvania Dutch folk, Freddie's life and farm have not changed since the turn of the century. However, because of Fred's almost complete rejection of the modern world he stands out as possibly the number one folk personality of the *gay* Dutch.

Without benefit of electricity, automobile or any automation he works and takes pleasure from the same things as did our ancestors a hundred or two hundred years ago. He lives in a traditional 18th Century field-stone bank home, with a central walk-in fireplace. In the cellar of the home a spring gushes out of the wall into a stone-lined trough

where home-canned fruits are placed for lack of modern refrigeration.

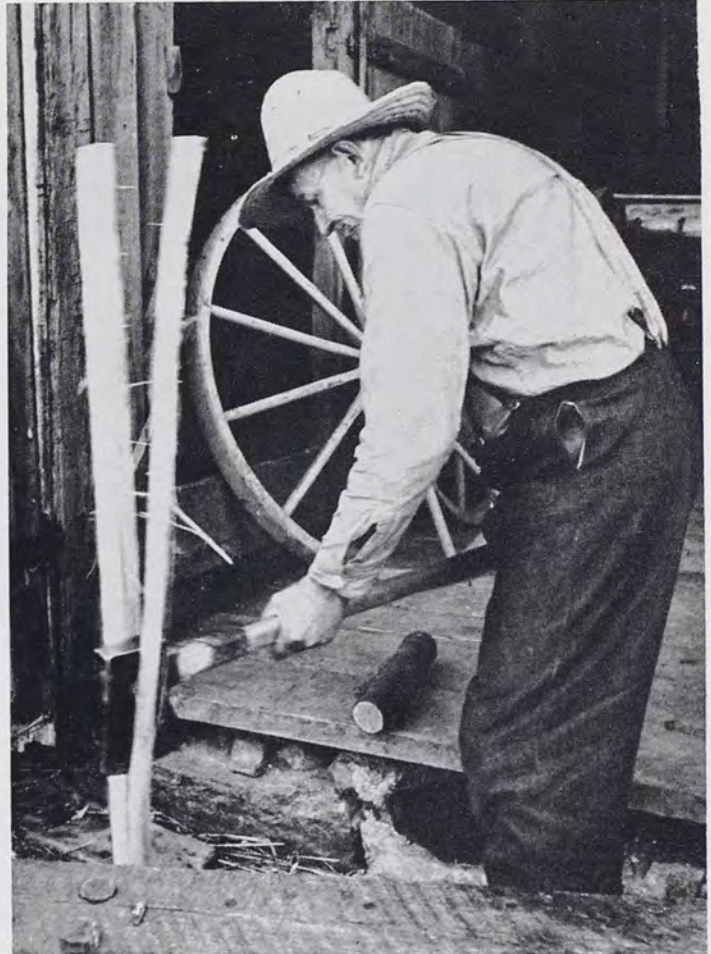
The large bank barn, once used to store crops on the 80-acre farm, is now just a source of straw for Fred's mattress.¹ Fred speaks only Pennsylvania Dutch, and can understand very little English. His communication with the outside world is usually limited to ordering seeds and hunting

¹ Since the early part of this century, with the advancement of agricultural automation, Fred could not compete on the market with the small crops he and his horses were able to raise. Realizing that his farm land was too hilly for a modern tractor at that time, he let his farm fields grow back into forest. With the exception of a few acres of tilled land, Fred did not actively farm the 80-acre farm, and was dependent on his basket trade.



Picture A—Fred Bieber splits the inner core from a quartered log using an improvised mallet to hit the axe.

Picture C—Fred splits the outer wood of the oak quarter for weaving strips.



equipment from mail-order houses.

Fred, a typical member of the Dutch Country, makes his living entirely from the sale of baskets. He has been a basket-maker in the Oley Valley for over fifty years. Now, at the age of 79, he is one of the few living basket craftsmen of the early American tradition. Up until a few years ago Fred's wife, Annie, helped him weave the baskets and market them at local vendues and general stores. Since her death he has continued basket making, but has not been able to produce as much as before. Although most of Fred's land is wooded, he finds it difficult to get enough white oak trees suitable for basket-making. There is indeed a great quantity of oak trees in *Bieber's Loch*,² but not very many meet the standards of this basket-maker. Fred uses only white oak for baskets and accepts no substitute. The white

oak tree is chosen because of its quality of splitting and its durability. In recent years it has become necessary for him to travel as far as two or three miles on foot to find good oak trees.

Not just any white oak tree possesses the proper qualities for the basket-maker, and therefore certain judgment must be exercised in selecting them. First of all the tree must be young and not over about ten inches in diameter. Ideally it should grow straight and not have any limbs for the first ten to fifteen feet of the trunk. If there are limbs, or were limbs, the knots made by them in the wood will prevent proper splitting and cause a waste of wood.

After a tree has been found it is chipped with an axe to check the grain of the wood. This second requirement is the most important. If the circles shown on the chip are too far or too close to each other, the oak wood will not split for the proper thickness of baskets. Fred has found that oak trees which thrive in the swamps are the most difficult to

² *Bieber's Loch* is a Dutch term used by neighbors for the large hollow owned and settled by the Biebers. At one time Fred's father, Frank, owned over 500 acres of the Oley Hills.

meet this requirement. Through his years of experience Fred has developed an ability to walk through the forests of Berks, and pick by sight the trees which will be good for baskets.

Provided a tree has been found, he will measure it according to the size baskets he anticipates making. Bushel baskets of course demand that the initial logs be cut at about six foot lengths, and smaller baskets at smaller lengths. When the tree is felled he will measure the logs to be cut, with his axe handle and hands. So accustomed is Fred to measur-

ing with his hands and fingers, that he never takes a foot ruler into the forest. All the measurements for the logs and baskets are so much a part of his memory that he is seldom if ever wrong. If a tree will not yield a certain number of logs, Fred will not suffer it to the axe. When the cutting of the tree has been completed the logs will be loaded on a wooden wheelbarrow and taken home. In places where there are no paths through the forest, Fred will sometimes walk blocks with an oak log on his back.

When Fred arrives home with the cut logs he stores them

Picture D—Here Fred is splitting the wood by working it against a barnyard post, breech-shtuck.



in the spring cellar of his home so that they will not dry out too quickly. Should the "green" wood dry out, it will be extremely difficult to work with and much will be wasted. For this reason the basket-maker cannot keep a large supply of logs on hand.

While using the logs from the cellar, each log is kept whole until it is time to split it. At that time the log will be cut in half lengthwise and then quartered. Each quarter will be removed from the cellar as it is needed. In utilizing the wood for the baskets the inner core of the log is used for the ribs, rim and handle. The outer layers are used in the weaving of the basket.

During the operation of splitting, the craftsman must be aware of the grain of the wood at all times. First the inner part of the core is removed from the quartered log (Picture

A). This triangular piece of wood will be split several more times and shaved into the skeleton parts of the basket. Since most of Fred's baskets are round, a piece of this wood will be shaped into a loop, and soaked in water to retain the shape. This rim will be the major part of the basket to which the ribs will be fastened. The ribs will be shaved down to about a sixteenth of an inch and shaped similar to a crescent moon. In Picture B, Fred is shaving a section of wood on the *shnitzel-bunk* which will be split for rims and handles. Notice his left foot which applies pressure to hold the wood secure on the bench.

After the skeleton parts of the basket have been made, the outer part of the remaining quarter section is again split several times. However, it is now split against the circular grain and this wood will be used for the weaving strips (Picture C). Once another piece of wood has been split from the quarter, it is no longer split by the axe but is more cautiously worked by hand. To split the splint into smaller parts Fred breaks the wood by working it against a post in the barnyard called a *brech-shtuck* (Picture D). Although this process is not as fast as with the axe, the craftsman is certain to have the wood separate in the correct manner. Depending on the size of the splint it will separate into three or four smaller splints (Picture E).

From this point on, the work done by the craftsman shows his true patience and skill with wood. Each of the smaller splints must be split into thinner and more pliable parts. If by this time the wood has lost its moisture it will be almost impossible to split for weaving strips. To split the smaller strips into thirty-second-inch-thick strips, the grain of the wood is started with a pocket knife. After that step, Fred must pull the strips apart very slowly, making sure the strips are splitting even and not tearing at dry spots (Picture F). When the very thin strips (about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide) are made, they are taken to the *shnitzel-bunk* to be shaved smooth (Picture G). If the thin weaving strips are not smooth they will tend to split when they are woven around the ribs of the basket.

The art of weaving a split oak basket is not as easy as it may appear. In order to produce a tight basket, the weaving must be done in two or three sittings. During the weaving of the baskets it sometimes is necessary to dampen the thin strips with water so that they will not break or split. The proper way to weave the basket is to weave in from both ends of the basket (Picture H). On an eight-quart basket³ the two ends are woven to the middle to within about two inches of each other. The weaving is then stopped and the basket is hung at the kitchen stove and allowed to dry overnight. The following day after the woven part is dry and has shrunk, it is drawn tight together, and the remaining two-inch opening (now about three inches from shrinking) is woven shut.

When making a large bushel basket the weaving may be interrupted several times to allow the woven sections to dry, and be drawn together. As the baskets are woven the ends of the various weaving strips are worked in, and thus there are no nails or glue needed to fasten them. For each basket there are approximately three nails used—two to fasten the handle to the rim, and one to keep the rim ring closed. Usually Fred makes his baskets with an odd number of ribs, and the average number is thirteen. To enable the

³ Most of the baskets which Fred makes are the eight-quart size because they are most commonly used by the hill folk. This size is just right for gathering eggs, vegetables, berries, etc.



Picture E—Fred examines the splitting wood to make sure it is following the grain.

circular baskets to sit straight, he weaves two extra ribs on the bottom of the basket. These ribs act much the same as runners on a sleigh, and do prevent the basket from tilting.

In the production of large baskets, especially square ones, two people are needed. When Fred's wife was living they produced all sizes and styles. Now, with her gone, he hesitates to take orders for large baskets. In the fall and winter months of the year, Annie would do a great deal of the weaving and Fred the splitting. In those years (1950's) they were able to keep as many as fifty assorted sizes of baskets on hand. Out of one good tree could be made as many as thirty oak baskets. These baskets in later years were stored in the attic and when visitors came to call, they were allowed to buy the size they wished. Usually the price of an eight-quart basket was about one dollar. In recent years the price has gone up twenty-five cents. Previous to about 1950 most of the Bieber baskets were sold privately by the two of them, and only a few were sold at the general stores of the locality.

Many of the baskets at that time were sold at local vendues. The most frequently visited sales by the Biebers were those held by John Frey⁴ at the Fredericksville Hotel two miles away. Since the hotel in those days had a general store, the couple could not only sell baskets at the sale but also buy certain foodstuffs which Fred would then wheel back home in a wheelbarrow. Like many of the hill folk of the later 20th Century, Fred could not financially afford to keep a horse for transportation. Even though he had a wagon shed filled with top buggies, spring wagons, and buck-boards, it was not practical to feed a horse on his meager income. At one time Fred bought a horse but it soon became dissatisfied with its boarding and ran away into the Oley Valley. For the past twenty or more years Fred and Annie had to be contented with traveling by foot. Their world did not consist of more than two townships. Rarely did they ever get into the large Dutch cities of Reading and Boyertown.

Since Fred and Annie lived a simple life from the income of their basket craft, it was necessary for them to become almost self-sufficient. In the spring of the year both of them worked hard on a large vegetable garden, which supplied them with all their vegetable needs. Fruit from apple, pear, and other trees was also canned for the entire year. Fred was a good hunter and shot many a groundhog, deer, and other animals (in season) for their meat needs. Both Fred and his wife made their own clothes and patched their shoes from old harness left in the barn. With the exception of chewing tobacco for Fred and baking materials for Annie, the two of them were not too dependent on the outside world. Even the gun shells and slugs for Fred's hunting guns were made at home.

Of Fred's immediate neighbors, the one he most often visited was Uni Day. The Days and the Biebers were the original inhabitants of the hill country and were good friends. In fact the father of Uni, Jonas Day, was the person that taught Fred how to make baskets. Old Jonas could make both oak and willow baskets. He was the best basket-maker in his time. Both types of basket-making were taught to Fred, but the willow involved more time than Fred had patience. After the death of old Jonas his *shnitzel-bunk* was acquired by Fred and used up until the 1940's. The *bunk* which Fred is now using was made by himself from oak planks on the Bieber farm. In Fred's

younger days he enjoyed working in the forest and having fun with the Day boys—Allie, Uni, and Charlie. One time Uni, Charlie and Fred hammered spikes into logs which were marked in the forest for the barrel-stave mill. After the logs were cut and dragged to the mill by mules, the boys secretly followed to see and hear the logs jam and ruin the saw. When the teeth of the giant saw were damaged work in the mill had to stop until they were repaired. This gave the boys a chance to chat and have fun with their neighbors that worked in the mill. However, this particular time they were found out, and their parents made to pay the damage.



Picture F—Having started the small split with a pocket-knife, Fred pulls the thin strips apart for weaving strips.

⁴ In later years (after about 1927) the Frey vendues were continued by a new owner of Fredericksville, Milt Trumbauer.



Picture H—Fred finishes the weaving of the basket for the first sitting, making sure it is tight.

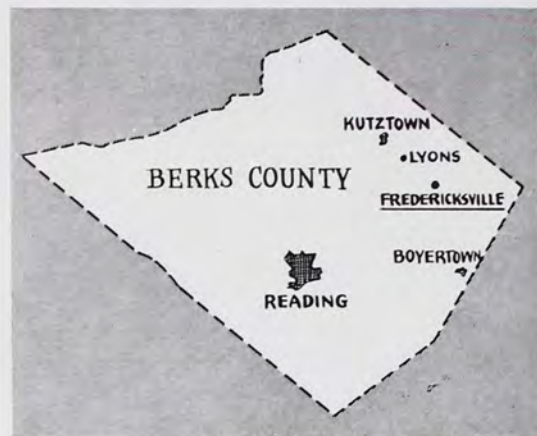
The only real excitement experienced by Fred and his wife were the Ascension Day Vendues held at Fredericksville. As is the custom in all of the Dutch Country, including today, no work is done on Ascension Day.⁵ It is a day when the country folk go visiting, attend sales and the boys go fishing in the mountain streams. In the hills of Fred's part of the Oley Valley, all the folk would gather at John Frey's Ascension Day Vendue at Fredericksville. This small village consisted usually of only nine families, and the owner of the hotel owned the town as well.

⁵ For an excellent account of the Ascension Day tradition see Alfred L. Shoemaker, *Eastertide in Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1960).

On this particular day in spring the population of Fredericksville would swell to several hundreds. Top buggies and spring wagons lined the main road and dotted the small meadows around the village. To accommodate the large crowd the hotel owner would set up two additional bars for serving. In the morning a huge hay ladder-wagon would arrive from Lyon's Station filled with a good old Pennsylvania Dutch Band. Among the bands that played, the *Haymakers* of near Reading were the largest, numbering almost thirty musicians. The folk music and marches they played were just about as old as the odd-shaped instruments which they were performed on. In the village would be two auctions, one for livestock and the other for house-



Fred Bieber and his wife, Annie, at their farm in the hills of Oley, 1950.



Location of Fredericksville area.

hold goods. In the early part of this century the horses, cows and other livestock would be herded up from Reading and Lyons in droves. To get to Fredericksville the drovers often had to pass *Bieber's Loch*. The noise of the animals reminded Fred and Annie that the big day was not too far off.

On Ascension Day Fred and Annie packed what they had to sell and headed for the vendue. When they owned a horse they went by buggy but in later years they had to go on foot and use their wheelbarrow for the baskets. Annie was a short woman and walked with two canes. At one time she fell into the fire at an apple-butter boiling, and suffered a back injury. Probably she looked forward to the sale and talking with her neighbors more than Fred.



The iron stove in the kitchen where Fred dries his baskets in the preparation for the final weaving.



The home of Fred Bieber at the edge of the forest shows the meager income of this old family.

Once they arrived at the vendue they conducted their sales very conservatively. After all, when you are the only suppliers of baskets in an area, there is no need for high-pressure selling. With little difficulty the two of them would manage to sell their crafts, and Annie would hold on to the revenue.

While at the sale neither of them indulged in buying many of the household goods and other equipment, on occasion Fred would buy a few laying chickens for the farm. When it was time to eat, they warded off their appetite with an inexpensive ice cream. Even with the festive mood of the crowd, the couple kept within the meager confines of their income. In the hotel and on the street people would be dancing and especially good at the jig was old Jonas Day. To all the country folk it was not only a day without work, but a sort of celebration of spring.

After the last of the great Fredericksville vendues passed out of existence, and the automation of the modern world was felt in the hills, Fred and Annie found it increasingly difficult to find a market for their baskets. From about the mid-1940's to the present day, the sale of *shmitzel-bunk* baskets had dropped off considerably. Of course Fred was too old to change his occupation, and there was little else

to do in the hills. Therefore the art of basket-making was kept up, but was of little value to Fred financially. The old-timers that once bought his baskets still had them, and their children were using more modern items for containers. The major downfall of Fred's business was that his product was so durable and quality-made, that it could withstand a century of use without wearing out. Indeed, the oldest baskets still surviving in the Dutch Country are the split oak baskets. Although the number of hours that go into the making of a basket are several, Fred still finds it difficult to sell his baskets locally at a dollar and a quarter. Fortunately, the Biebers owned vast tracts of land in the hill country, and as Fred's income warranted he could sell some of it.⁶

Today in contemporary Dutchland, Fred is finding that if he widens his market, from the old-fashioned general store to the modern gift shop, there is still a demand for his craft. Today, more than ever Fred is realizing that his craft and product are a proud part of the American tradition, and continued interest by the American public will keep him contented in the hills of Oley.

⁶ In order to meet expenses in recent years (especially taxes), Fred sold tracts of land in *Bieber's Loch*. Today only a few hundred acres of land is still held by the Bieber family.



Copper warming pan with brass cover in a favorite Dutch Country design. The long handle is of iron.

Heavy, straight-sided copper sauce pans with equally heavy riveted iron handles.



Copper candy kettle, shown mounted on a cast iron kettle ring. The rim of the kettle is rolled over iron. Note the massive iron handles.

The Sheen of Copper

All articles shown are from the Robacker Collection

Photos by Karas of Yonkers





Teakettle by John Kidd of Reading, Pennsylvania, made during the first decade of the 1800's. The name is stamped on the handle.

By EARL F. ROBACKER

In 1659 a Dutchman named Claes De Ruyter took or shipped a piece of copper ore home to Holland as a specimen of what was to be found in the New World. This particular piece was never actually refined, but made its way to the Amsterdam Museum, where it has reposed for more than three centuries. The ore came from what is still known as "the old copper mine" at Pahaquarra, New Jersey. Pahaquarra—or "Pack-quarry," according to local pronunciation—may once have been a village, but now, abandoned to the rattlesnakes, is simply a spot along the road which parallels the Delaware River on the Jersey side, part way between the Delaware Water Gap and Flatbrookville.

The Pennsylvania side of the river has a corresponding parallel road—the River Road between Shawnee-on-Delaware and Walpack Bend. Tock's Island, the name deriving from the Dutch surname "Dach," lies in the Delaware between the two roads. At some point—and no one can any longer be sure exactly where—the River Road, which existed as early as 1664, went to the river's edge on the

Pennsylvania side, picked up again in Jersey after a ferry crossing, and continued to Kingston, New York. Known as the Old Mine Road, it was built for the purpose of transporting copper ore from the Delaware River area to Kingston, from where it was transshipped to Holland. It is believed that there may have been other copper mines in this area, but if there were they were worked out long ago and their location forgotten. As a matter of fact, none of them, including the one at Pahaquarra, could ever have been very extensive.

It seems highly unlikely that after so long a time locally made copper utensils, notably apple-butter kettles of mammoth proportions, could be identified as of Pahaquarra or possibly Shawnee origin; yet such stories are heard. Credibility becomes even less when one remembers that the Pahaquarra ore was never processed in America; it went to Holland, where it was made into copper sheets, these sheets then being put on the market for any who wished to purchase them. Some, we must suppose, came back to America—but it would be pretty hard to say of any sheet of copper that the mother ore had been dug in one particular spot.

Coppersmithing was a very early craft in the American

colonies. The circumstance is hardly surprising; the copper was here, and metal workers, trained in Europe to handle iron, tin, copper, pewter, and brass, were operating in the mid-1600's. Whether the copper was imported or whether it was native we do not know—but it was used on a fairly large scale over a large territory.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Albany rejoiced in a copper weather-vane in the form of a rooster in 1656—three years before De Ruyter's lump of ore arrived in Amsterdam. This is believed to have been the first American weather-vane of copper.

Perhaps most famous of the early coppersmiths was Shem Drowne, of Boston. It was he who made the celebrated grasshopper weather-vane for Faneuil Hall, well before the end of the 17th Century. There is, in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society, a weather-vane depicting an Indian and a bow and arrow, also the work of Drowne. While few artisans have been immortalized in literature, Nathaniel Hawthorne performed this service for Shem Drowne in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Other New England coppersmiths were Henry Shrimpton, William Mann, and John Baker.

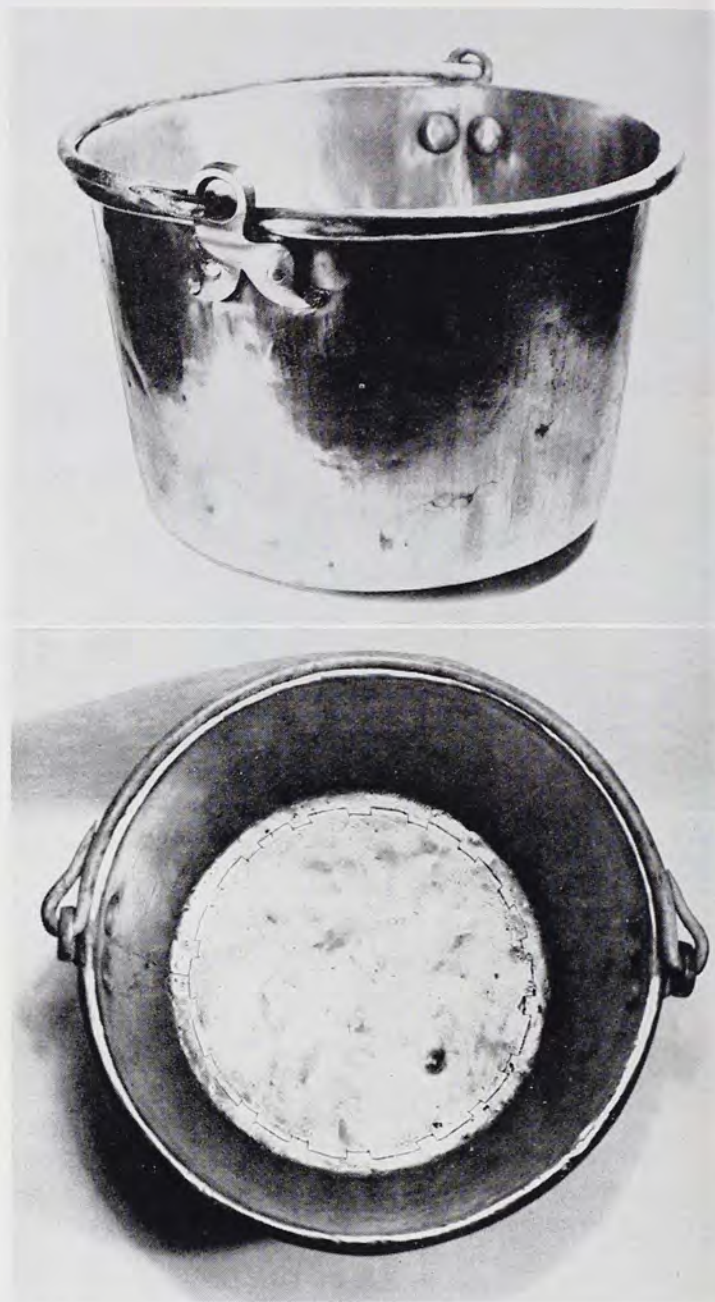
To get back to Pennsylvania, one should perhaps note that in 1727 Christ Church in Philadelphia was roofed with copper. While we do not know who did this job, we do know that Henry Harburger and Peacock Bigger, both Philadelphians, were working in 1738, and that about the same time F. Brotherton and Frederick Steinman were working in Lancaster, where the term applied to them was "*Kupferschmidt*." Steinman was a stepson of Johan Christopher Heyne, the eminent pewterer. Benjamin Harbeson of Lancaster was working in 1765, and Peter Getz in the very early 1800's. John Kidd, of Reading, worked in the first decade of the 1800's.

As was the case with pewter, new metal was hard to come by, and when a copper object wore out, the metal had a strong chance of being salvaged for re-use. Early newspaper ads which advertise the work of metal craftsmen often made a point of the fact that they were in the market for old pewter, copper, and brass.

One of the major uses to which copper was put is one which hardly concerns the antiques collector—the still. Stills started out as legitimate enterprises in the beginning, and were used in the process of turning surplus grain into a form which could be marketed easily. All over southeastern Pennsylvania there were distilleries—sometimes owned by one individual but oftener by several persons jointly—which supplied the cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore with top quality whiskey, peach brandy, and other spirits.

Later, the stills went underground, so to speak, and while some of them were undoubtedly destroyed and the metal re-used, it appears that some just remained in hiding. Still in hiding, some of them saw a second period of service during the Prohibition Era, much, much later. Though there seems to be no evidence for the claim, there are those who maintain that an enormous copper still of Pahaquarra copper is still in operation, making applejack—"Jersey Lightning," so called—somewhere in the Pahaquarra region.

While the collector tends to think of copper in terms of cooking vessels and the like, some of the best specimens of craftsmanship were intended for permanent use outdoors. (Copper exposed permanently to the elements turns green—a fact not always remembered by the amateur.) In addition to the weather-vane designs previously mentioned, one

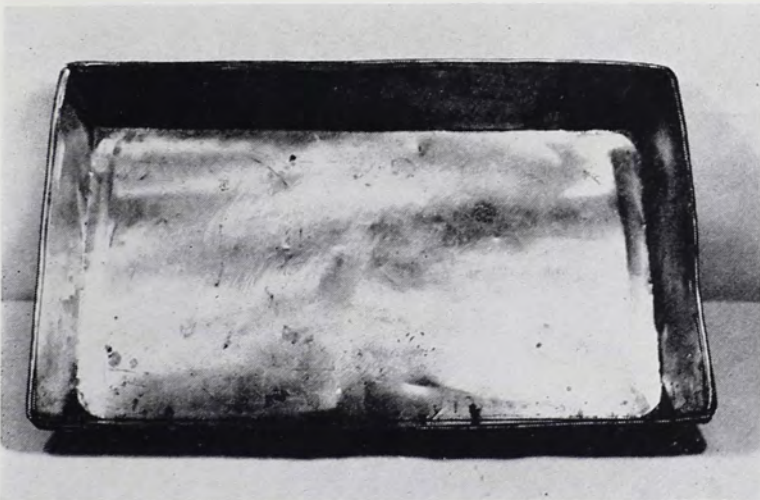


Exceptionally desirable apple butter kettle of ten-gallon size. The bail goes through loops of solid brass in the shape of tulips. The brass is fastened to the kettle with copper rivets. Inside-bottom view of the same kettle (below), showing Wall of Troy joining.

of the angel Gabriel was particularly popular. In New England the fish was a well-liked symbol. Not infrequently, parts of three-dimensional weather-vanes were cast separately and then soldered together. Sometimes a single weather-vane might combine copper, brass, iron, and zinc. The eagle was a favored emblem in copper, as he was in iron and in wood—not for weather-vanes, however, but as a mount for the top of a tall pole. The itinerant Jacob



Copper measuring funnel with brass mountings. This implement was part of the necessary equipment of the old-time still.



Copper baking pan about fifteen inches long, possibly European.

Schimmel did some of his best carving on eagles to be mounted on poles—not to serve any special purpose, but “just for because.”

Perhaps because it is soft and easily dented, copper was at once easier and more difficult to work with than were some of the sturdier metals—easier because it was so malleable but more difficult because it was so easily scratched or marred. However, by the time a youth had put in the customary seven years of apprenticeship at his trades, he should have been able to handle not only copper but also pewter and brass with considerable facility. In the economy of days gone by, there was no place for an imperfect piece of work; if a thing did not turn out well, either it had to be done over or, if that were not possible, made to serve anyway. There were no discards, and there was very little waste.



An unusually graceful copper dipper with iron handle. About sixteen inches long.

Smithing was often a family affair, with tricks of the trade and especially adept practices passing from father to son, sometimes to the fourth or fifth generation. In the beginning, most objects of consequence appear to have been made on order, but with the passing of time family businesses gradually grew out of objects accumulating as surpluses and eventually marketed. Probably most of the copper apple-butter kettles used in southeastern Pennsylvania came from the Diller Copper Kettle Works in Lancaster.

If there is any one piece thought of with affection by native or expatriate Pennsylvanians, it is probably the great apple-butter kettle, pink and shining and bound with iron to give it strength. A ten-gallon kettle was a mere peewee; the twenty-gallon kettle was more usual—and thirty-gallon containers were by no means unknown. As anyone who has tried his hand at making apple-butter knows, the simmering mass of apples and cider must be stirred constantly in the day-long operation, or a burn will develop which not only ruins the flavor of the apple-butter but damages the kettle itself. For many families, a copper kettle was too expensive for individual ownership and had to be shared by two or more parties. It was always the “other” party who allowed the kettle to scorch!

The prospective purchaser of a copper container of any size today can frequently distinguish between an article of American make and an imported one by the way the sheets of copper have been cut for soldering. The preferred American method was that known as the “Wall of Troy” joint, which looks like the slightly angled dovetailing of the cabinet-maker. For large kettles of any kind, and for cooking pots or sauce pans with straight sides, the Wall of Troy joint adds markedly to the desirability of the piece in the thinking of most collectors.

A piece attractive in itself but somewhat difficult to use without a frame to hold it is the candy-making pan, which has a capacity of two to three or more gallons. These pans have rounded bottoms, apparently so made that they might fit easily the circular apertures of the great stoves on which the candy was made. They are usually bound with heavy iron bails and rims, as were the apple-butter kettles. The ironwork and the copper have been riveted together with heavy copper rivets. In some especially important pieces, iron, brass, and copper are combined. The pink of copper rivets against solid brass mounts, with the black of the iron as a foil, makes a very effective combination.

Copper kettles which are offered for sale at country auctions are not always recognized as such by the novice, since they are likely to be dark with age inside and black from the fire outside. Even the owner of such a kettle has occasionally been fooled! A favorite anecdote has to do with an especially beautiful apple-butter kettle borrowed for a display of antiques in conjunction with a meeting of a certain historical society. The borrower’s comments were so flattering that finally the owner could contain herself no longer. “You yourself once owned that kettle,” she said. “It was bought from you when you had an auction to dispose of the effects at your house”—and she named the place at which the auction had occurred.

“Oh, no,” declared the borrower. “We never had a kettle like that; if we had, I should not have allowed it to get out of my hands!” The fact is, of course, that the kettle had been sold in its black, unbuffed condition.

Buffing or burnishing, incidentally, is not a job for the amateur. One may refinish furniture, or mend old fans, or



Copper candle sticks. These may have been intended as the bases for a silver-plating job which never took place; may have been plated and the plating later removed; or may actually have been intended to remain as copper.

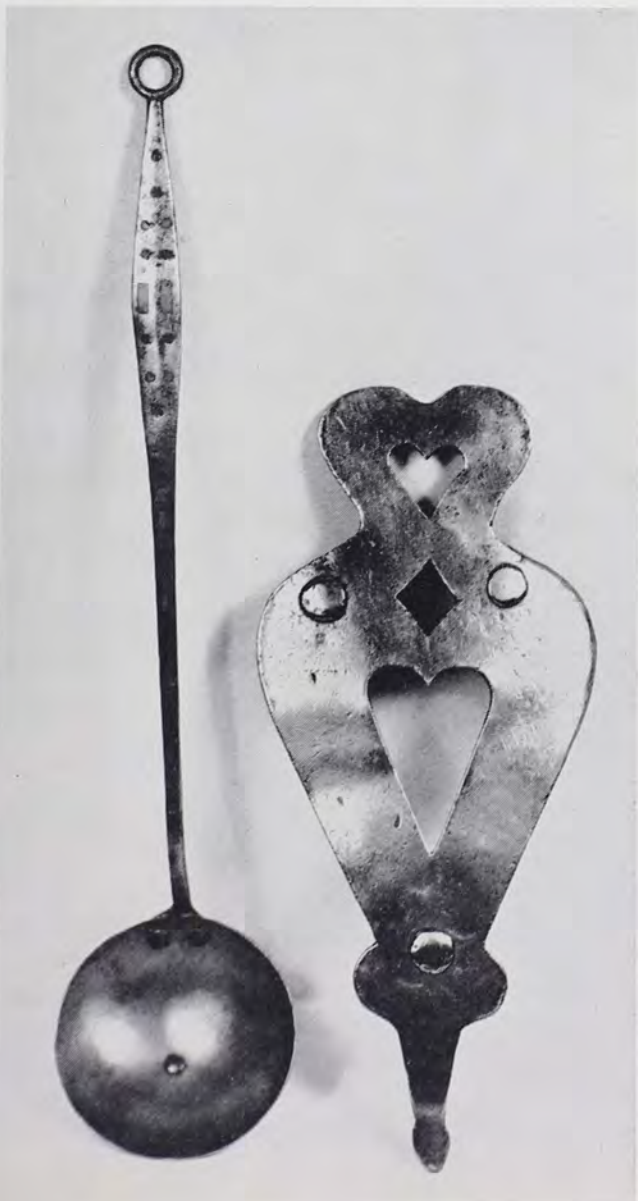


A copper-bottomed pudding mold in the popular sheaf-of-wheat design. The bottom has been tin plated; the sides are of tin.



Colander from Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Stamped-out tiny hearts are decorative as well as functional.

Small brass ladle has round brass and oblong copper inlays neatly fitted into the iron handle as decoration. The beauty of the brass trivet is enhanced by solid copper legs, the tops of which have been treated as rivets.



do a dozen jobs of repairing or restoring, but china and copper should be touched only by professionals—china to be mended, and copper and brass to be burnished. Burnishing may be followed by lacquering or not, as the owner prefers. Unlacquered pieces will darken slowly and eventually will need reburnishing. Lacquered pieces cannot be washed or used for any purpose except for ornament, but will stay bright and shining.

Warming-pans were usually partly copper, partly brass. The long handle needed for passing the container of hot coals under the sheets of the bed to be warmed was of iron in earliest times, and of wood later. Only the lid of the warming pan, usually brass, was ornately decorated, though the sides of the copper receptacle itself were sometimes chased or stamped.

Copper candlesticks are rarities, for all that the term is a familiar one. However, it should be remembered that much Sheffield silver plate is silver-upon-copper, and once in awhile a pair of candlesticks which have escaped the costly finishing touch of silver may be found.

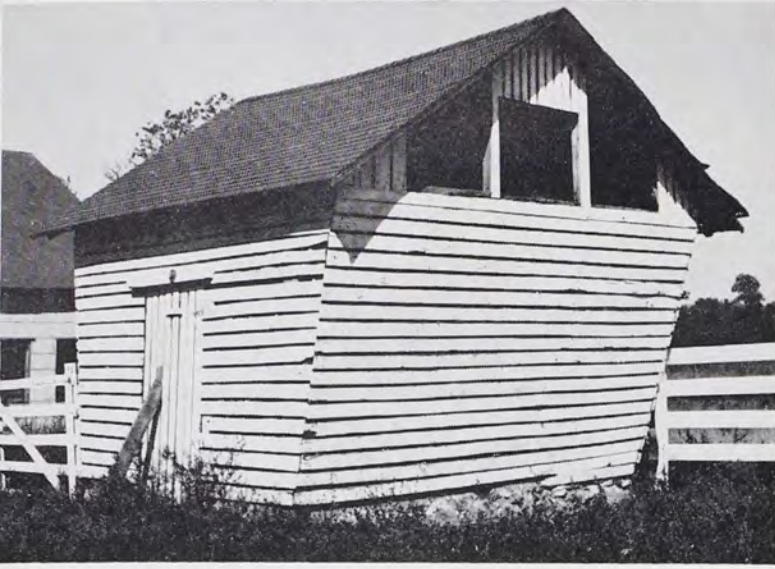
Copper vessels in which food had to stand for any length of time were often coated with tin, so that no danger of metallic poisoning might result. No matter how large or small the pot or skillet, the tin coating was present. On the other hand, ladles, candy pans, and baking flatware were of all-over copper, since nothing remained in them for any length of time.

If one could have but a single piece of copper for his collection, his choice would probably be the copper teakettle. Customarily of four-quart size, but sometimes smaller, this vessel might have either a stationary handle or one which would fold down horizontally. The name of the maker was stamped on this handle when it appeared at all—and it appeared when the coppersmith had done a superior piece of work. Actually, there is probably no more graceful piece of copper work in existence than a skilfully executed teakettle.

Readers interested in exploring further might wish to consider some of the following works:

- Andrews, Charles M., *The Colonial Period of American History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938.
- Christensen, Erwin O., *The Index of American Design*. New York: Macmillan, 1950.
- Fuller, John, *The Art of Coppersmithing*. New York: David Williams Company, 1911.
- Hamilton, Henry, *English Brass and Copper Industries to 1800*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926.
- Kauffman, Henry J., *Early American Copper, Tin, and Brass*. New York: Medill McBride, 1950.
- Kauffman, Henry J. and Zoë E., *Pennsylvania German Copper and Brass*. No. 25 in Home Craft Course series, Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania: Mrs. C. Naaman Keyser, 1947. The two Kauffman works are most useful.
- Kelemen, Pal, *Mediaeval American Art*. New York: Macmillan, 1946.
- Landis, Henry K., *Early Kitchens of the Pennsylvania Germans*, Vol. XLVII of the Pennsylvania German Society *Proceedings*, Norristown, Pennsylvania, 1939.
- Lichten, Frances, *Folk Art of Rural Pennsylvania*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946.
- Lipman, Jean, *American Folk Art in Wood, Metal, and Stone*. Meriden, Connecticut: Pantheon Books, 1948. Authentic and well illustrated.
- Smith, R. Goodwin, *English Domestic Metalwork*. London: F. Lewis, Ltd., 1937.

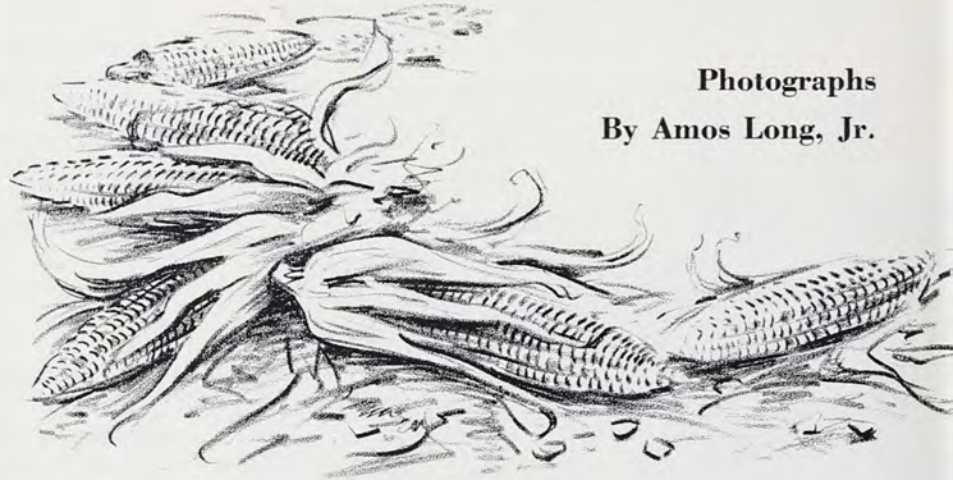
This 20-ton capacity early corn shed is located on the Irvin H. Frantz farm, Route 1, Bethel, Berks County.



Early corncrib, now the property of the Pennsylvania Folklife Society. Note vertical slats and tin fastened along bottom to keep out vermin.



This corncrib, located on the farm of Paul Balsbaugh, near Buffalo Springs, Lebanon County, features an unusually steep roof.



**Photographs
By Amos Long, Jr.**

Rear-view of corn shed on property of William Reichel, Route 1, Lenhartsville, Berks County. Dimensions: 24-ft. length, 20-ft. width and 20-ft. height.



Pennsylvania Corncribs

By AMOS LONG, JR.

Methods of storing corn or maize, as it was known in the New World, are as old and varied as the cultivation of the crop itself. Raup in his study of the Pennsylvania Dutch element in Northampton County, points out that "some items of material culture of strictly Indian origin . . . have found their way into the Pennsylvania-Dutch cultural complex. Inevitably the Germans took over the entire practice associated with the cultivation and use of maize, even to the method of storage in corn cribs."¹ Through the years, vari-



Contemporary corncrib, using old design, on Lebanon-Lancaster border.

ous and crude structures were devised, from those of the aborigines and early settlers to the many recent and improved types found on our modern farms. These enclosures served to protect the corn crop against the natural elements, wild animals, and vermin until it was fed or otherwise disposed of.

These structures varied in shape and size as the reader will note from the illustrations pictured. They were designed to meet the need and desire of the farmer and to provide

for convenient storing as well as protection of their contents. The size was determined largely by the acreage devoted to corn and the productivity of the soil.

The cornerib (*welshkarn gripp*, *welshkarn heisel*) used by the early settlers was constructed with rough, round, or split logs. Usually heavy stones, portions of a tree trunk, or blocks of wood were placed on the ground at what was to be each corner of the structure. On these corner supports, heavy timbers, round or squared, were placed lengthwise. Crosswise over these two parallel timbers, other split logs, the width of the crib were placed. To anchor the bottom portion, long thin poles, the height of the crib, were driven into the ground at an angle against the horizontal timbers. These were placed along each side from eighteen to thirty-six inches apart, depending on the dimensions of the structure, and extended outward at the top. This was done to allow the rain water to drain away from the interior. Between these poles, thinner saplings were spaced close enough to prevent the corn from falling out. Most of the earlier cornercribs were wider at the top than at the bottom.

The sides of vertically angled poles, because of the scarcity of nails, were fastened to other horizontal poles or saplings at the top to bind the crib. Materials such as hickory bark which was cut into narrow strips, or thin willow withes similar to those used in basket weaving, were used for this purpose. Both these materials are soft and pliable when green. They can be easily wound and have been found to be nearly as strong and durable as wire.

Many of the early cribs were without roofs. Sometimes, after the corn had been husked and put into the crib, a roof of bark, thatch, or corn fodder was added. If bark was used, it was peeled from the trunk in as large sections as possible, placed on top of the corn and weighted down with stones or other heavy objects to keep the covering in place and from being blown off. If thatch was used, it was tied on over a network of saplings so as to allow drainage away from the crib. Corn fodder was placed over the corn in heavy enough layers to provide drainage and prevent the water from soaking through.

Many of the early structures were of a non-permanent nature. Some were built for temporary storage and were hastily assembled because of the lack of sufficient time or funds, or because of an exceptionally large corn yield. Some of the cribs were portable so they could be moved near to the livestock where most of the corn would be fed. There are probably many readers who can recall the task of setting-up an empty, unsupported cornercrib after a severe wind-storm or gale had blown it over. To prevent this some posts or heavy props were leaned against the structure after the corn had been removed.

When inquiring as to the reasons—other than for better circulation of air, and drainage—why these earlier cornercribs were so top-heavy, wider at the top than at the bottom, one of those contacted said he was told, "That way they could upset more quickly!" He probably knew what he was talking about because so many were held up by props.

Many of the later cornercribs were similar to the earlier types in design except most of them were the same width

¹ H. F. Raup, "The Pennsylvania-Dutch of Northampton County: Settlement Forms and Culture Pattern," *The Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia*, Volume XXXVI, Winter 1938-39, reprint, p. 6.

at the top and bottom. They were also larger, sturdier, and more durably built. Most of these, in addition, were anchored firmly to a solid base or foundation. Usually the sides were covered with vertical or horizontal slats which varied on different cribs from two to five inches in width. These slats many times were beveled on one or both edges. When both edges were beveled, one edge was cut the reverse of the other in order to allow the water to drain off more readily and for better circulation. The slats were spaced and nailed to the supporting timbers approximately one-half inch apart to provide sufficient ventilation but not far enough apart to allow vermin to enter.

There were generally several openings conveniently spaced on one side of the crib which were used for filling and for removal of the corn. The apertures provided for filling in the corn were located in the upper area on one side just below the roof of the crib. The number and size of the openings were determined by the dimensions of the structure. The openings were spaced between the upright studding so that the corn could be filled in evenly without too much difficulty. The size of the openings varied; usually they extended downward as much as half the height of the cornerib.

The slats or boards, similar to those used elsewhere on the crib, used to cover the openings, were often likewise beveled on the edges. The ends of the slats were cut to reach near to the center of the upright stud so that they could easily be removed or replaced as necessary. The slats were inserted in an inch-wide opening between the studding and a board which was attached vertically to keep them in place. The slats were replaced from the bottom of the opening as the corn was being filled in. On the bottom edge of the slats, near the ends, small beveled blocks of wood, squared to the thickness of the slat, were attached to provide ample space for ventilation between the slats as they were inserted.

On many of the corneribs, there were other side apertures, in the lower portion, just above the floor, which were used for the removal of corn. Although there were various arrangements, many of the openings, above and below, were closed with a hinged door which proved not too practical because if not all the corn was removed, there was difficulty getting the door closed again.

A larger hinged door which allowed entrance into the crib was located at one end of the structure. The door was approximately the height of a man and two or more feet wide, depending on the width of the crib. Usually, behind the door, there was an arrangement similar to the upper openings described. These boards or slats which were fitted into place before the corn was filled in could be removed as the corn pile diminished to allow easier access. Had it not been for this arrangement, the entrance door could not have been closed after opening while the crib was filled because much of the corn would have fallen out. Beside the door there could usually be found one or more sturdy turn knobs or a hasp to keep the door securely closed or locked.

Most of the later cribs had a shed or slanted flat roof which was covered with wooden or other type shingles, or tin, for protection.

Very little provision, if any, was made in early years to keep mice, rats, squirrels, and birds out of the cornerib. In some instances, tin was nailed to the upright posts or timbers and then flared out to keep the vermin from ascend-

ing. Some of the later, more carefully constructed cribs had tin or sheet-metal attached along the lower edge. Most of the later corneribs are larger and stationary. They have a solid concrete floor and have one-quarter or one-half inch mesh hardware cloth on the sides to prevent rodents and birds from gaining entrance. This wire was nailed on the studding before the slats were attached or it may have been fastened over the slats after they had been nailed to the studding.

As more land was cleared of trees and stumps and devoted to the production of corn, many of the larger farms had more than one cornerib or a corn shed (*welshkarn shup*), also known as the corn barn. This was particularly true when the farm owner became too old to cultivate the land and he turned it over to a son, son-in-law, or tenant. Since the land was then generally farmed on a share basis, the corn yield, like other grain crops, was divided equally. It was possible then to unload a wagon into the one crib and the next load into the other crib.

Many times the two corneribs, one on each side, were jointly supported and strengthened by the overhead beams which held the roof. Most of these cribs with single-roof structure were constructed with an opening between at both ends. These openings were sufficiently large enough to allow a wagon to drive between the cribs. In addition to the crib on either side of the shed, some had a third crib at one end. This allowed only one open end. The cribs in those sheds which were not large enough to allow a wagon to be backed in and unloaded under the roof were filled from the outside.

In the area between the cribs, there were to be found such items as the corn-sheller, baskets and bags of various kinds, half-bushel and bushel measures, shovels, scoops and other implements and utensils. Also familiar to some of the readers were the tarred strings usually kept in this area found hanging on a peg or slung over a rod. These strings, about the length of both arms outstretched, were used to tie fodder together after the corn had been husked. The strings were tarred to discourage vermin from biting them through while on the shock and as a protection against rapid deterioration from the weather.

The Corn-Sheller

The operation of the mechanical, hand-powered corn-sheller found on so many of the early farms, generally belonged to the older children. It was their responsibility to have enough corn shelled for the chickens and hogs at all times. Not all farms had a corn-sheller and many times the corn had to be shelled by hand. Many simple and convenient methods were devised for accomplishing this. In order to prevent blisters and wear on the hands, a corncob or an ear of corn was conveniently held and pushed against the kernels on another ear to loosen them. This was usually done over a container so that most of the kernels would fall directly into it. The author recalls having done this numerous times. By dislodging just two or three vertical rows of kernels from the cob, it was simple to remove the balance of corn from the cob by hand. "Farmers shelled much of their corn on a spade by placing the sharp end of a spade over a half-bushel measure or a sawed off barrel, then sitting astride the handle and pulling the ear of corn over a sharp spade. If there was much to be shelled at a time, they would spread it on the barn floor and tramp it off with horses or thresh it off with a flail."²

The size, shape, capacity, and operation of the shellers

² Matthias H. Hall, "Notes at Random from My Life's Experience," *Bucks County Historical Society, Proceedings*, VI (1932), 82.



Corncrib on the property of Mrs. Alfred W. Lake, R. D. 1, Lenhartsville, Berks County. Frame of crib is constructed entirely of hand-hewn timber, pegged, with vertical slats and side openings.



Corncrib with attached implement shed on Roy Dundore farm, Route 5, Lebanon.



Small, 15-foot long, corncrib on farm of J. E. Martin, Route 1, Sheridan, Lebanon County.



Empty corncrib, temporarily propped against heavy winds, is an auxiliary crib on author's farm, Lebanon County.



A cornsheller operated by Marlin Rinehart at Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival, Kutztown.

varied. Usually they contained two toothed plates which revolved at different speeds in opposite directions. As the handle or flywheel was turned these plates revolved and the one plate which revolved most rapidly pulled the ear of corn through while the kernels were being removed by the other plate. The velocity of the flywheel helped maintain the necessary speed as the ears of corn were dropped into the openings provided. A certain amount of skill or knack was helpful in turning the handle or wheel and in the general operation of these machines. There are many readers who can recall both fond memories and hours of sweat and toil while using them as a youth.

A number of good shellers were placed on the market during the years in which these machines were most used. Charles Smith of Alburtis, R.D., Lehigh County, told of an early type sheller in which the shelled corn and cob fell directly through the same opening into a container. Later more improved models allowed the shelled corn to fall directly through the bottom into a container and the cob was forced out a front opening or carried forward on a shaking conveyor until it fell out the front. The Champion and Fleetwood Shellers were among the most common models to be found in Pennsylvania.

One could usually find a pile of corncobs in the area between or near the cornercribs which were saved for starting fire in the fireplace or stove, to be ground fine for use as a litter in the stables or as a mulch on the garden. Occasionally they were used to burn a caterpillar nest or for personal use in the privy.

Fogel has an interesting bit of lore concerning corncobs. "*Di grutze fum blanz welschkaern daerf mer net ferbrenne oders welschkaern grikt der brant*" (If the cobs, from which seed corn has been taken, are burned, there will be much cornsmut).³

The Cornerib Loft

These corn sheds had an additional loft above the area where the wagons were driven for unloading and loading and where they were kept over the winter months. If there was a heavy yield of corn, this overhead space was utilized for storing the surplus.

Usually the seed corn was also hung in this area of the shed to dry. While husking, the farmer always chose the best ears from the harvest for seed to be used the following year. When he came upon a good, large ear, the husk was stripped back, not removed, and tied into a knot. The ears were then hung on a thin sapling or wire in the loft of the shed. This area provided an ideal place for drying and was difficult for the mice, rats, and other rodents to get to it. The loft provided an excellent hideaway for children during a hiding game or when temporarily in trouble. How many other interesting experiences and tales could be told concerning this area!

On many occasions after all the corn was husked and had been put into the cornercribs, if there was only one wagon and if it was to be used for hauling the fodder in from the fields, the wagon box, in which the corn was hauled, was raised or hung in the upper portion beneath the loft of the corn shed. There were a number of devices used to get the wagon box from the floor to this overhead level.

One of the simplest methods used was to drive a heavy peg or bolt into the girders overhead above each corner of the box. A rope or chain was then hung on the peg or bolt,

the box was lifted up, and an iron rod was slipped through the two chains at each end to support the box. This was a simple enough device for holding the box but it was a difficult process to raise the box to the necessary height for storing. Usually there were enough hired men or members of the family available, however, so that this could be accomplished without too much difficulty.

Another method used to lift the box consisted of attaching ropes near each corner of the box. These ropes were then fastened vertically to a round, horizontal, overhead, turning beam above each end of the wagon. Around the center of the turning beams were holes, approximately two and one-half inches in diameter and deep enough so that a hickory or other strong sapling about three feet in length could be inserted to turn the beam, twine the rope, and raise the box.

There was another horizontal, stationary beam just above the one which revolved, so that a second sapling of like thickness and length could be inserted in the turning beam in the hole located nearest to the stationary beam. This allowed the movable beam to return slightly until the sapling was against the stationary beam which held the wagon at its raised height. The other sapling was then removed from the hole into which it was inserted and another part turn was given using the same procedure. After the box had been raised a foot or more, the same procedure, with two saplings, was followed at the other end. This was done alternately to both the front and back of the wagon box until it was raised to the desired height and out of the way. This practice required a certain amount of skill and stamina. Only those who have shared in the experience can really appreciate the work and effort necessary to accomplish it!

In later years, because of the increased number of implements used on the farm and because of the better corn yields, a larger and higher type of shed—known as the wagon shed (*waga shup*)—were constructed to provide more spacious cribs and additional space for storage of the wagons, equipment, and tools. Here, the cribs were similarly constructed on one or both sides and the space to the side or between the cribs allowed for ample storage and for convenience in unloading and loading the corn crop. This arrangement proved to be particularly advantageous during the days when the weather was hot or inclement.

The boards or slats used on the exterior side or sides where the cornerib was located, were usually beveled and separated about one-half inch to allow for circulation of air. On some of the sheds, both slats and welded wire, one-half or one-fourth inch square, were used. The wire was usually nailed against the studding before the slats or boards were attached. This gave added protection against vermin from entering. On the inner side of the cribs, wooden slats or welded wire were nailed against the upright studding.

To remove the corn from the crib for shelling, feeding, or in preparation for the new crop, one or both of the small gates or openings on the side near the bottom were opened. More often the opening between the floor and the lower slat behind the entrance door in front, after it had been opened, allowed the corn to fall through freely.

In autumn, just before the new crop was to be stored, all the husk and other debris which remained in the crib had to be cleaned out. This many times was also the work for the younger folk and involved a considerable amount of time, particularly if all the remaining corn had to be shelled and put into bags or containers. Many of our readers will

³ Edwin M. Fogel, *Beliefs and Superstitions of the Pennsylvania Germans* (Philadelphia, 1915), p. 203, No. 1007.



This wagon shed contains a corner crib on one side. Many sheds of this type have cribs on both sides. Note smaller doors in the large doors. Located on Paul Hartman farm, Route 1, Sheridan, Lebanon County.

recall their hesitancy as children in cleaning out the crib, because of the spiders and cobwebs, or wasps which were still active. Others will recall the fun and anxiety when knocking down and destroying the nests of the mud-daubers which were so prevalent.

Like many Pennsylvania Dutch wash-ladies who on Monday wanted to avoid being the last to wash and hang up the family laundry, so many a farmer wanted to get his corn husked and into the corner crib as early in the season as possible.

Corn-Husking

Usually the corn was husked right off the shock, out in the field. The husking continued during the day until such time that all the husked corn which was lying on the ground could be loaded in the box-wagon and put into the corner crib the same day. Frequently it became the task of the children to pick the corn from the piles into bushel baskets while an older person emptied the baskets into the wagon-box. Sometimes the corn was thrown directly from the pile into the wagon-box. If there was more than one wagon and team available, and if there were several doing the husking, the hauling began early in the day and someone shoveled the corn from one wagon into the corner crib while the other wagon was out in the field being filled.

Shoveling the corn into the crib is a tedious and back-breaking task, but today with the use of elevators, the time and effort involved in loading and unloading the corn crop has been reduced to a minimum.

On fewer occasions, the corn was brought into the barn and dumped on the threshing-floor to be husked later. This was particularly true when the farmer was behind in his work and his wife was expected to help. It was much more comfortable inside the large barn, between the mows, than out in the field in the wind and cold. The corn was husked, as time permitted, by the farmer with the help of his family.

The Husking Bee

On occasions, there were husking bees or matches in which as many as eight people, working as teams, husked in the field. A larger number were present if the corn was to be husked on the upper barn floor. Barn huskings were held after dark; whereas, the field huskings were held during the day unless during the fullness of the moon.

Gatherings of this kind provided an occasion for fun and frolic for neighbors and friends, especially the younger folk with their girl-friends or boy-friends. This also provided an opportunity for gossip among the older folks and eating and drinking for all. The drinking was usually limited to sweet cider but at times stronger drinks were included.

Although the husking bee provided an occasion for a good time, the farmer was concerned that his corn was being properly husked. If one in the party was careless, he was soon reminded in a clever and joking manner. Many times at these huskings, an older person sat among the younger ones to see that the work was being properly done. In addition to removing all the husk, it was important that all the corn silk or hair was removed so that if any mice or rats got into the corner crib, it could not be used for building nests.

It was customary while husking, to have a husking pin, known as a *bosht-helsel* if it was made of wood or *bosht-eisa* if it was metal. Fewer of these husking pins were also made from bone. Some were made so that the middle finger could be inserted through a strip of rawhide which was attached through small openings in the pin. Others were made to fit right over the hand. They were used to grasp and loosen the husk at the top or end of the corn containing the silk, making the task easier and not so harmful to the hands.

Helffrich in his book, *Lebensbild aus dem Pennsylvanisch-Deutschen Predigerstand*, describes the husking matches as follows: "The farmers haul their corn with the husk onto the threshing floor; when everything is in place, the neighbors, particularly the young people, are invited to the husking. The lamps hang in the threshing floor area; the boys sit next to their girl friends and the threshing floor was often full. The husk is pulled from the ears of corn and the ears fly gaily in arcs over their heads to a place, where piles of them are quickly heaped up. So it goes on amid merry chatter until ten or eleven o'clock, when for several hours they play *bloomsock*, or now and then dance.—Now, this Fall, encouraged through some who still had the frolic-devil seated in their hearts, these applebutter and corn matches were worked up into regular frolics, where things went just as roughly and wildly as at the inn-keepers' drinking frolics."⁴

⁴ William A. Helffrich, *Lebensbild aus dem Pennsylvanisch-Deutschen Predigerstand* (Allentown, 1906), p. 188.

Fischer, in his book 'S *Alt Marik-Haus*, in part describes the husking matches.

Es ware so viel narrische Schtreech—
 Ich kan's net all ferzäle;
 Was nährisch war, meen ich känn't m'r doch
 Fiel besser meinde—weesch't du noch
 Wie's war am äpel-schäle,
 Un Welschkorn baschte mit die Mäd?
 Sel war als unser gröschte Fröd.

Am Welschkorn-baschte war's die *Rule*
 So bei die junge Leut—
 Hot een' 'n Rother Kolwe g'funne
 Dan hot'r a'h'n Schmuzer g'wunne
 Fom Mäd'el bei d'r seit;
 Die Rothe Kolwe hen n'r g'schpaart
 For Soome—'s was so'n gute Art.

Was Rothe Kolwe! Rothe Baeke!
 Ich meen ich seen sie noch;
 En Rother Kolwe war em lieb,
 Un O! was schlaue junge Dieb,
 Un glücklich war m'r doch!
 Wie mir noch hen so schmuze derfe,
 Un wer dh'et nau so'n *Rule* ferwärfe?⁵

A classic passage on husking parties is treated in Joel Barlow's *Hasty Pudding*, which was written in the winter of 1792-93.

The days grow short; but though the falling sun
 To the glad swain proclaims his day's work done,
 Night's pleasing shades his various tasks prolong,
 And yield new subjects to my various song.
 For now, the corn-house fill'd, the harvest home,
 The invited neighbors to the husking come;
 A frolic scene, where work, and mirth, and play,
 Unite their charms, to chase the hours away.

Where the huge heap lies centered in the hall,
 The lamp suspended from the cheerful wall,
 Brown corn-fed nymphs, and strong hard-handed beaux,
 Alternate ranged, extend in circling rows,
 Assume their seats, the solid mass attack;
 The dry husks rustle, and the corn-cobs crack;
 The song, the laugh, alternate notes resound,
 And the sweet cider trips in silence round.

The laws of husking every wight can tell—
 And sure no laws he ever keeps so well:
 For each red ear a general kiss he gains,
 With each smut ear he smuts the luckless swains;
 But when to some sweet maid a prize is cast,
 Red as her lips, and taper as her waist,
 She walks the round, and culls one favored beau,
 Who leaps, the luscious tribute to bestow.
 Various the sport, as are the wits and brains
 Of well-pleased lasses and contending swains;
 Till the vast mound of corn is swept away,
 And he that gets the last ear wins the day.⁶

There have been many pleasant customs and traditions attached to the red ear of corn which have become lost in obscurity. It has been told that it was a custom in the New World among some of the Indian tribes during the ceremony of marriage that "the man gave the woman a deer's leg, and she gave him a red ear of corn, signifying that she was to keep him in bread and he was to keep her in meat."⁷

Lucky was the person who found a red ear at a husking! It was said that if a single woman found several red ears while husking, she would soon become engaged or if a woman husked several red ears in succession, she would become pregnant.

⁵ H. L. Fischer, 'S *Alt Marik-Haus Mitten In D'r Shtadt, un Die Alte' Zeite'* (York, 1879), pp. 98-99.

⁶ George Lyman Kittredge, *The Old Farmer and His Almanack* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1920), p. 170.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.



Fence-rail stacks were used in earlier days to store corn temporarily, holding many tons. Photographed at Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival, Kutztown.

Uses of Corn Husks

Fogel offers the following belief concerning corn husk: *Wanns bascht am welschkaern dik is, gebts en haerter winter; wanns welschkaern zum bascht raus waxt gebts en gelinder* (Thick husk on corn foretells a hard winter; if the husk is so short that the ears protrude, the winter will be mild).⁸

Use was also found for the corn husks; some of them were used for making shoe mats. These were made by a member of the family or many times an itinerant who did it in return for his board and lodging. After the husks were well soaked in water, they could be braided in strands, coiled, and then sewed together. This formed a rather coarse surface and served well for cleaning boots and shoes. Similarly made, although not as practical, were the baskets which were also made from this material.

The dried corn stalks (fodder), which remained after the corn was husked, was hauled in from the field. Some of this fodder was stacked against the outside cellar wall of the house or along the sides of the buildings to help keep out the wind and cold. Most of it was stacked against the wall of the barn-hill or a nearby fence to be used during the winter months. The stalks were then shredded, mixed with chop and fed to the cattle and horses or it was used as a bedding for the livestock.

There were numerous temporary structures provided for the storage of corn or to handle the overflow crop until a more permanent structure could be erected. A custom during earlier years was to store the corn between the logs or fence rails which had been stacked on top of one another to the desired height, somewhere near the barn, in the shape of a triangle or rectangle, for drying or until they were used for building or repairing fences. Here many tons of corn could be stored until it was fed or sold. The disadvantage with this type of storage was that the corn was not protected from vermin or the elements and much of it was wasted.

Today when there is an overflow corn crop and the farmer prefers to keep it over the winter for feeding or for sale in spring, he may erect a temporary storage area with several snow fences placed on top of one another. As one circular area is filled, another section of like size is set on top. This corn was usually disposed of before that which was put into the cribs.

⁸ Fogel, *op. cit.*, p. 231, No. 1187.

The cornerrib also had additional uses. Alfred Ruth, R.D. 3, Kutztown, Pennsylvania, told how the brooding hens or "clucks" were nestled with some eggs in the cornerrib until the chicks were hatched. Sometimes the "clucks" were confined within the cornerrib until they were over their broodiness. Frequently fowl were caught several hours or the night before they were to be killed and dressed and confined in the cornerrib. Others told of placing the onions in the cornerrib to dry thoroughly, after they were removed from the garden in August, until they were to be stored for the winter months. One informant told of being penned in the cornerrib, as a child, for what seemed like several hours because of misbehavior. One farmer told of penning his female dogs in the crib during certain periods. Many readers will also recall the enjoyment of chasing and catching the rats and mice that somehow gained entry into the crib.

Outwitting Cornerrib Thieves

Many interesting stories have been told relating to the cornerrib or its contents. Mrs. Urias Urich, R.D. 4, Lebanon, Pennsylvania, tells of an incident involving a farmer who after realizing that his corn was disappearing from the cornerrib at a more rapid rate than he was feeding it, kept a closer watch to learn what was happening to it. After patiently watching and waiting for some time, he heard an unusual noise one night, so he quietly left the house, quickly approached the cornerrib and locked it, penning the thief inside. After shining the lantern into the face of the intruder and recognizing him as a neighbor, the farmer decided to keep the thief confined inside the crib. The dog which was usually kept inside the stable was tied just outside the door until morning, to guard against any attempted escape.

The neighbor pleaded to be left out to return home to his family but the farmer insisted that he would have to remain inside the crib until morning when he would be taken home. In the meantime, the farmer returned to the house and remained there until morning. After he had finished his chores, he drove the thief to his home on a manure sled guarded by the dog, through a nearby hamlet; thereby informing onlookers that he had finally caught the thief who was taking the corn.

Mrs. Ella Kleinfelter, R.D. 1, Annville, Pennsylvania, told of a farmer who thought some of his corn was disappearing. After a time when the corn pile still seemed to be vanishing, the farmer asked the hired man who was employed by the day, to help set a bear trap before he left for home. After placing the trap in what the farmer thought to be the most ideal spot, the hired man suggested what he thought was a better one. The farmer consented to have it changed, but after the hired man left, the farmer changed it again to where it had been placed originally and back again in the morning before the hired man arrived. This procedure was followed each day for several days. The hired man would release the trap in the morning and set it each evening before he left.

One night, not too much to the farmer's surprise, he checked as he usually did, and found the hired man in the trap. The hired man insisted that he should be shot, but the farmer assured the thief that this wasn't necessary because he learned his lesson from the embarrassment suffered.

Mrs. Elam Becker, R.D. 1, Lititz, Pennsylvania, recalled as a youth, how her father, after becoming aware that a thief was stealing corn from the cornerrib, put walnuts in a bucket and hung it on the door in such a way that if any attempt was made to open the door, the bucket would tilt, the walnuts would fall out on the individual and into the

cornerrib causing noise enough to be heard in at the house. She further stated that it worked because they learned who the thief was.

Mrs. Becker told of another instance concerning a neighbor who tied a heavy piece of metal to the door in such a way that when the door was opened, the metal would fall, striking the intruder as he attempted to enter. This also proved to be effective because the metal struck the thief who was not only embarrassed but hurt as well. She told how vividly she remembers his remark, "This could have killed me!"

Another story is told of a landlord who had the habit of visiting his tenants when no one was found to be at home. The farmer realizing that his grains were disappearing more rapidly than normal, began to pay closer attention. On several occasions, when the rest of the family went away, the farmer remained home and hid in the barn. It was on one of these occasions, that he became aware that it was the landlord who was entering and stealing from his cornerrib and granary.

Victor Dieffenbach, "*Der Oldt Bauer*," Bethel, Pennsylvania, told of the many rats which were always present in their cornerrib at home on the farm when he was a youth and the constant struggle to catch them. He recalled how his grandfather took a barrel, which was open at one end and devised it with a lid so that it would revolve vertically. When a rat jumped on the lid, it would tip and the rat would fall into the barrel. This device, he said, did not prove very effective. His father concocted a box trap so that if the rats entered they could not gain exit. The trap was placed at what was thought to be the most opportune spot, but this likewise was ineffective because few rats entered it.

"Vic" told how he observed and studied the situation for some time, watching the route traveled by the rats. He noted that most of them departed from a certain opening, crawled on to the top rail of a nearby fence and jumped over toward the pigsty into a number of openings. He told how he got the idea of using a heavy straw mattress bag (*shtroh-sock*) which he quickly arranged into position with sticks, boards, and a broom shortly before dusk. He was excited even after these many years when he told how successful his innovation proved to be. He said that he caught dozens of rats when he chased them that night; most of them following their regular route of travel jumping right into the *shtroh-sock*. "The most fun," he said, "was drowning the rascals."

In the files of the Pennsylvania Folklife Society, there is information relating to the custom of stacking ears of corn in the cornerrib. The author could learn nothing of this practice among those contacted, except that several stated that corn was occasionally stacked along the outer edge of the opening on top of the cornerrib and then the corn was thrown or shoveled over and in back of the stacked corn to prevent it from rolling out the opening if it could not be closed.

If any of the readers are familiar with this practice or any lore relating to the cornerrib, will they please contact the author or editor and make it known?

The size of the cornerrib is still a good indication of soil fertility. The early Pennsylvania cornerrib, like many out-buildings on the farm, has been left to deteriorate, many having been dismantled through the years because of non-use; or it has been replaced by a larger one, different in design, many times in metal, as the farmland devoted to corn or the yields increased.

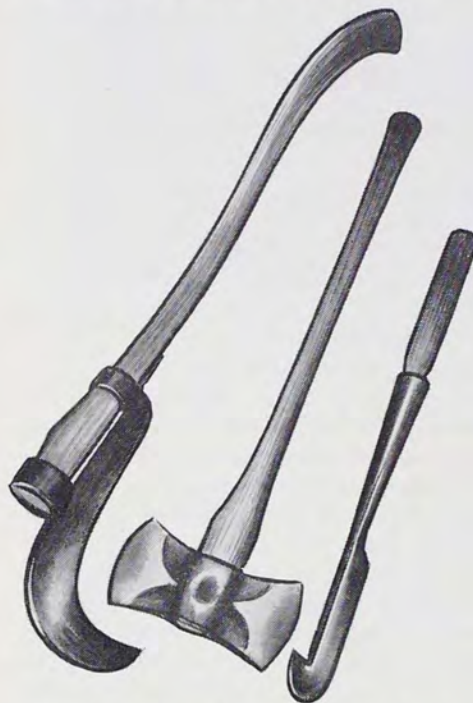
LAND-CLEARING *in Lyco*

By **BERTON E. BECK**

Tree stumps were a primary obstacle to the early farmers of America from Maine to Washington, and various procedures and mechanical devices were developed to cope with the problem. These ranged from the primitive method of burning the tops of the stumps, grubbing and chopping at the roots and pulling them with a team, to later years when heavy equipment was developed to pull the largest of stumps from the ground. When it was learned that the stumps and roots of white pine were resistant to decay and that they made good fence material, the idea of the stump fence was born.

No one knows just when or where the stump fence originated but at the turn of the century they were common throughout many parts of the United States and parts of Canada. Even today one can occasionally find a stump fence or what remains of it. In the early 1900's stump fences were as numerous in Cogan House Township, Lycoming County, as were stone walls in nearby Jackson Township.

That stumps were a serious problem, is attested to by the fact that from 1790 when the United States Patent Office was established, to 1890, there had been close to three hundred patents granted for some kind of extractor, or stump-puller. In the compendium of patents issued, many were listed as extractors for pulling small stumps and roots and the illustrations indicated they were mostly hand-operated. For the pulling of large stumps, there were huge wooden-framed machines that were operated by horse-power, though a few were powered by steam engines.



Brush hook and axe used in land-clearing. The chisel-like tool is a spud, used in peeling bark from hemlock trees. The bark was sold to tanneries where it was ground and cooked to extract the acid for tanning leather.



The Lycoming County area referred to in this article.



ing County, Pennsylvania



Picture taken in 1897 of the farmstead of the author's father, John S. Beck, Cogan House Township, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. One hundred acres of virgin forest were purchased in 1875. The house was built in 1878; the frame barn, 50 by 58 feet square, in 1886, to replace a round-log temporary barn which was torn down after building the new one. Note the split rail fence and the board fence in the foreground and the many stumps in the background. The author and his sister are in the buggy, dressed as though going to church. Even the horse is wearing her Sunday "bonnet."

As the homestead appeared in 1962.

Photograph taken in 1904. Author's brother without hat and his partner with axe, ready to saw down a big hemlock tree.



The hardy pioneers who left the established settlements along the Atlantic seaboard and went into the interior to make their homes, devised a method of clearing the forest into fields that was generally used for the next two hundred years. Soon after 1900, very little farm land in Lycoming County was cleared from the forest.

I cite the following incident from my youth to show that the methods used by my father had not changed in about one hundred years. In the late 1890's my father was clearing the last few acres he wanted to add to his farm land. I was "helping" though I cannot say just how much my help amounted to. We had been working several hours and took a short break to go into the woods and see how cold the water was in our water jug which we had placed in the shade. While resting I got my father to tell us how his grandfather and father had cleared their land in Jackson Township. I knew my great-grandfather had been one of the early settlers in Jackson Township in 1815, and my grandfather had started clearing his farm in 1846.

My father said, "We are doing it just as my grandfather and father had, except we are using horses instead of oxen, but our hand tools and chains are better and more numerous. Also we had cut and sold the best of the big timber, so we did not have so many big logs to handle."

The removal of the virgin forest and producing arable land might well be considered under two headings. First, clearing the land, and second, taming the land. I have never heard the expressing, "taming the land," but once. A man had cleared a few acres to sow some oats. He remarked, "I know it is too late to expect a crop of oats, but it will help to tame the land."

Land-Clearing

I have been unable to locate any written articles of how the early pioneers cleared their land. About the only thing I have read the writers merely said, "The hardy settlers went into the forest and cleared their farms." To me that always seemed like a great understatement.

As a growing lad in Cogan House Township during the latter part of the 19th Century, I was familiar with the methods used there to convert forest land into fields. I will admit my knowledge is based more on observation than on actual experience.

Cogan House Township was organized in 1846, by a group of lumbermen who were primarily interested in the many groves of white pine found growing there. The township is mostly mountainous, with a fertile valley in about the center that is suitable for farm land. This valley is about ten miles long east and west, by about two to four miles wide. The land is mostly rolling, and is well watered with many springs and small streams; the streams flow southwestward and are the waters of Larrys Creek.

This future farm land was bought in quite large tracts by lumbermen and a couple of land speculators. After the pine timber was cut off, the land was surveyed into farm plots of about one hundred acres and sold to persons looking for farm land.

One of the speculators was William Bache, who owned what was locally known as "The Thousand Acre Tract." This was surveyed into twelve plots ranging from seventy-five to one hundred acres each. The reason for the different-sized plots was to arrange the farms so that each was well watered by springs.

Before selling any of the farms Bache sold the pine timber, but stipulated that there were to be two pine trees left on each farm, so the future owners would have pine lumber for the finishing wood of their houses. But the men cutting the pine timber took all of it, leaving only the big pine stumps for the future farmers.

In 1875 my father bought one hundred acres of heavily timbered land from Bache's tract, and began at once cutting trees to be sawed into lumber to build a house. A few years later he had some cleared land, a plank house and a small round-log barn. By 1886 he had more land cleared and had built a large frame barn. After that he sold the best of his timber as he cleared his land. Four years later he had about seventy acres cleared and the fields fenced with the conventional "stake-and-rider" rail fences.

When father's grandfather began clearing his land in 1815 there was no market for the lumber, so all his trees, large and small, were burned. My father was more fortunate for there was a demand for his timber and a greater demand for the bark of his hemlock trees, which was used in tanning leather. The hemlock bark had a greater money value than did the wood of the tree.

The Lumberman's Axe

The axe is a product of very early civilization, and over the centuries its shape, size and the quality of the steel in the blades was improved until the popular lumberman's two-bladed axe was developed. At first they were made by the local blacksmith; using a piece of steel the shape of the eye of the axe as a mold, the blacksmith forged malleable iron around this mold to form the eye of the axe. Steel was welded to the iron to form the blades. When the blades were properly shaped and tempered, the steel mold was driven from the axe, and it was ready for the handle and to be ground sharp.

In an old account book kept by a blacksmith named Broughten at Salladasburg, Lyecoming County, about 1850, is the record of his making an axe for a customer for \$1.25. Broughten also kept axes in repair. To "dress" an axe, he charged twenty-five cents for one blade, and fifty cents for the two blades. To "steel" an axe, the charge was fifty cents a blade.

Dressing the axe, was to reshape the blade when it had been worn by sharpening, so the blade was short and thick. When too badly worn, new steel was added, and that was to steel the axe.

One blade of the axe was ground thin and to a keen sharp edge, and was referred to as the sharp blade. The other blade was left thick, with a bevel of about one and one half inches ground to a sharp edge. This was called the dull blade and in my youth it seemed that all the stumps in the fields showed that the trees had been cut with the axe rather than with a saw. In later years the saw was used almost exclusively to cut the trees. The tree was notched with the axe on the side where the tree was to fall, but the notch was very small, less than an eighth of the thickness of the tree. Using the saw, the tree that leaned to one side could be wedged to influence the fall of the tree in the direction desired.

A woodsman often fell in love with a particular axe and lavished on it his devoted affection. It may not have looked any different than any other axe, but the shape of the handle just suited his hands, the axe was properly balanced, and the steel in this particular axe was the very best there ever was. He jealously guarded his treasure and resented the use of it by anyone else.

The one blade was ground thin and sharp, to be used

only when cutting in clean clear timber. The other blade was left thicker and a bevel of about an inch and a quarter ground to a sharp edge. This blade was used to cut the branches from fallen trees, as to use the sharp blade on those hard tough knots where the grain of the wood was curled, would dull the sharp blade or might even break it.

In chopping down a tree the sharp blade of the axe was used to cut almost to the center of the tree, on the side where the tree was wanted to fall. The second cut on the opposite side was started a little higher than the first one. If the second cut were too high or too low the tree was likely to fall in the opposite direction. This procedure was used on all trees regardless of size.

What thoughts went through the woodsman's mind as with axe in hand he approached a forest giant? Did he ponder on the many years, two centuries or more, it took for this great tree to grow from a little seedling? If he was a very early pioneer before there was a market for his lumber, he no doubt looked on this tree and all the others as an enemy, standing between him and the cleared ground needed for raising food for the family. This big tree and all its neighbors must be destroyed.

In the last quarter of the 19th Century, what were my father's thoughts as with his axe he approached a big hemlock tree? He loved his woods and trees, and in later years carefully guarded all small trees growing in his farm woodlot. But at the time before he had sufficient cleared land, economies, like a serpent, raised its head, and he needed money. He may have apologized to the tree, saying, "Your hemlock bark will weigh close to a ton and a half, and will be worth nine dollars when delivered to the tannery. Your wood will measure close to two thousand board feet of lumber, and will be worth another six dollars when delivered to the sawmill."

Selecting the final resting place for the tree the first cut with the axe was started. Father was an expert with his axe and the blade always seemed to go right where he wanted it to go. As the axe beat a steady rhythm the chips accumulated in a pile at the base of the tree. The first cut neared the center of the tree and then the second cut was started.

As this second cut neared the center of the tree, it began to sway in the breeze, bending towards the side of the first cut, then righting itself again. Always it seemed to bend a little farther before coming to an upright position.

As the chopping continues, the tree finally bends so far that its top has gone beyond its former center of gravity, and the tree can no longer return to its upright position. There is the sound of splintering wood as the uncut part breaks, and the tree starts slowly on its fall. As the falling giant gains momentum, there is the sound of rushing air like a strong wind, but increasing in violence until with a loud crash like an explosion the tree comes to rest on the earth.

Any small trees in the path of the falling giant are crushed to the earth, and all the neighboring trees sway and wave their branches in the wind, as though they were bidding a last adieu to their fallen neighbor.

Dead branches on the falling tree were often caught on live branches of neighboring trees, those dead branches being broken loose and catapulted backward by the live branches, to fall in a shower about the stump. At the first sounds of splintering wood, the woodsman beat a hasty retreat sideways from the tree. Men were sometimes injured or even killed by those flying branches, and in the lumber woods they were often jokingly called "widow makers."

The author cultivating corn, about 1916.





Lycoming County lumberman, John S. Beck, and his mountain farm (1897).



A similar view of the homestead 67 years later.

Trees did not always go where they were supposed to, and various factors often influenced their fall. A tree might lean to one side, there may be more heavy branches on one side, or a gust of wind might come from the wrong direction just as the tree was about to fall.

In making the second cut the woodsman often tried to compensate for these various factors. If the tree leaned to the left, that side of the second cut went deeper, leaving more uncut wood on the right side. This tended to pull the tree to the right.

As the tree started to fall it looked to be going to the left but that extra thickness of the wood on the right side would pull the tree to the right. During the first quarter of the descent one could actually see the tree start going to the right.

A "lodged" tree was one that before it had gained much momentum caught on another tree and hung there. In that

case the second tree had to be cut. This entailed some danger as the first tree might loosen its hold and fall, or the tree being cut might fall long before one expected it to. It was well in cutting this second tree that all obstructions were cleared making a path for a hasty get-away.

Under-Brushing

In the late 1800's when my father and his neighbors were clearing their land, they first cut and sold all the marketable timber on the area they wanted to clear. A man working alone might need two or three years to market the timber on a ten-acre area. When all the saleable timber had been taken off, there came the work of cutting all the rest of the brush and remaining trees.

The small brush and trees were cut and this they called "under-brushing." Where the small brush was thick it was placed in windrows as it was cut; otherwise it was more or

less placed in piles. The axe was used for this work, but they also had a "brush hook," and "brush scythe." The brush hook was a sort of machete, ending in a hook, with a handle about three feet long. The brush scythe had a short heavy blade with a handle or snath that was much heavier than the ordinary mowing scythe.

When the under-brushing was finished there came the work of cutting the remaining trees. There was a lot more to this than simply cutting the trees. All the branches were cut off and the tree cut into logs of a length that could be handled. The bigger the tree the shorter the logs were made. A small tree might be cut into twenty-foot logs. Trimming the branches and cutting the tree into logs took much more time than just cutting the tree. The trees and brush that were cut on an area to be cleared were called a "slashing."

The slashing was allowed to dry for about six months and then burned. At the time of the burning the weather conditions should be just right; there should have been no rain for about a week and the day of the burning the less wind the better. All the neighbors came to help with the burning, as the fires were to be started on all four sides at once, so they would burn towards the center. What a hot and roaring fire it made! The extra help was wanted too, in case the fire got out of control and spread to the adjoining woods. A fire break was prepared in advance between the slashing and adjoining woods by clearing all combustible material from a strip a couple of rods wide, and decayed or dead wood was removed from the woods near the fire break.

After a couple of hours the fires were dying down and some of the men could go home. But it was necessary for someone to be on guard in case a fire did get started in the woods.

One always hoped there would be some rain soon after the burning to extinguish all smoldering fires and settle the ashes and dust.

The terms, "slashing," "foller," and "new ground," were interchangeably used to denote a field being cleared. But "slashing" generally meant the area before the burning. "Foller" was undoubtedly a corruption of the word fallow, an uncultivated field. "New ground" primarily meant a recently cleared field to distinguish it from a previously cleared field. If no other fields were cleared for ten years, the last one cleared might by some be spoken of as the new ground.

"Logging" was the work of placing all the logs and unburned brush into great piles to be burned. This was done as soon as the fires had all died out after burning the slashing. The tools needed in logging were few and simple. The axe was always at hand and often needed. A couple of cant-hooks for rolling logs was a must. For the team, their equipment was only the double-trees and a couple of log chains.

For logging a crew of four men was most advantageous, though two or three men could do a creditable job at it. A man working alone was at a great disadvantage. Handling those charred and blackened logs was a very dirty job and soon the men were as black as the logs they were handling.

In starting a log pile, four or five logs were placed side by side and other logs piled on top of them. Other logs were placed on the ground and the pile went higher to a height of five or six feet. Very large logs were burned best by placing them higher in the pile, but this entailed more labor. All the unburned brush was placed in piles, and when the logging was finished these log heaps and brush piles were burned. This often was a hotter fire than the burning of the slashing.

All the logs were not consumed in burning the log piles, and they had to be repiled a number of times.

Finally, all the logs and trash were burned, and the farmer had another cleared field. But what a sorry looking field it was! It was full of blackened stumps, and beneath the ground surface the myriad number of roots of the stumps made a veritable network. The surface of the ground was rough and uneven, being full of knolls and hollows. The knolls were formed over the centuries by large trees being uprooted by heavy wind storms, the roots bringing up a great mass of subsoil, leaving a large hole or crater that might be five or six feet deep in places and fifteen feet or more in diameter. Over the centuries the tree and all its roots decayed leaving the subsoil in a mound or knoll beside the crater. Erosion partly reduced the size of the knoll and partly filled in the crater. It took quite a number of years of subsequent plowing and harrowing to level off all those knolls and fill in the low places. In the very early days with the kind of plows and harrows they had, those knolls and hollows plagued the farmers for many years.

One might well ask, "How could a person plow and cultivate such a wild-looking field?" The answer is, "He didn't and couldn't, as we know plowing and cultivating today." In a later article I will try to tell how the farmers in Cogan House Township "tamed" their newly cleared fields.

The average size of new grounds cleared in the township might be placed at ten acres, though I know of three that were close to forty or fifty acres. One of these big slashings was located on adjoining farms, and I well remember the day of the burning.

About ten acres of the slashing was on the farm now owned by Allan Taylor, but was then owned by his grandfather, John Taylor. About forty acres was on the farm now owned by Lester Lowe, but then was owned by Lafayette Maxwell.

Part of Taylor's slashing was quite close to our house and barn and the day of the burning, great preparations were made for the safety of our buildings. A large number of men were on hand for the burning and a half dozen were assigned to help my father. The fires were to be started at one o'clock, and that morning father's helpers came and ladders were placed so that the men could get onto the roofs of the buildings. Two barrels of water were placed on the roof of each building, and when the fires were started two men took their place on each roof. Other men patrolled around the buildings and in the barn. Fortunately the water in the barrels was not needed.

There were a couple of other houses quite close to the slashing, but they were not damaged. But I am sure precautions were taken there.

There was woods on a farm adjoining ours, and a fire brand from the burning slashing was carried by the wind across a field and fell in this woods. A fire started but men were soon there and controlled the fire before any damage was done.

Though the virgin forest presented a real challenge to the persons wanting to establish farm homes in Cogan House Township, the products of the forest aided greatly in providing money to pay for the land and erect the farm buildings. After the marketable timber had been cut and sold it still required a vast amount of work to convert this forested land into cleared fields. To one who had visions of some day having really arable land, his labors had only begun. He had still to "tame" his "wild" land.

FUNERALS

in My Childhood Days

By PAUL D. BRUMBACH

[These reminiscences of a Pennsylvania Dutch preacher's son, describing the funerals he remembers attending as a child in the favored position of the pastor's son, provide valuable insights on rural Pennsylvanian attitudes toward the minister and his role in the community. In several instances, the mixture of standard German and Pennsylvania dialect found in the preacher's statements reflects the fact that in the period involved some Pennsylvania ministers did accommodate their pulpit German to the dialect spoken by their parishioners. This linguistic mixture deserves much more serious study than it has thus far received.—Editor.]

I am the son of a minister of the Gospel, and my opportunity it was to be present at funerals which my father was called to officiate at for members of his congregations. The funeral director or members of the family or even friends and neighbors used to call at our home to arrange for the funeral. The Pastor was always called upon for the day and time of the funeral in order to complete arrangements for that particular funeral. It was always an important factor, even as today, that the Pastor be contacted before announcing the time of the service.

In earlier years the pastor was told of any special arrangement such as texts if selected by the deceased or family. Hymns were also very often selected. However, today these requests are seldom being made.

At the appointed time the Pastor came to the home for the service which began at the house with further services in the church and interment in [the] adjoining cemetery or a nearby cemetery. Arriving at the house the Pastor was greeted by a hostler, who took charge of the team and tied it at some convenient spot for the Pastor to leave without any delay after the service was concluded at the house.

The Pastor entering the home was greeted by the Undertaker and escorted to the family which was usually upstairs. At this time he filled out the obituary. After a consoling talk to the family the Pastor went to the first floor again. Usually the organist of the church and the designated number of singers were in one of the rooms downstairs and the hymns selected were given, or if not any selections were made, the minister and organist selected the hymns for the occasion.

At the appointed time the family and relatives were brought downstairs and placed in the room where the deceased lay. In my earlier years the bier was often found in the center of the family's best room, which they called the parlor (our living room of today). When all was in readiness the Pastor started the service, which in Pennsylvania Dutch was called "*die farmauning*." The Invocation was given in German which was called the Bible German or the language used in the German Bible. The opening sentence was this: "*Herr Gott, Du bist unsre Zuflucht für und für. Ehe denn die Berge geworden, und die Erde, und die Welt geschaffen worden, bist Du, Gott, von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit.*" In English: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all

generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." These were a part of the first 12 verses of the ninetyeth Psalm.

Later in the passage we had: "*Unser Leben währet siebenzig Jahre, und wenn es hoch kommt, so sind es achtzig Jahre, und wann es köstlich gewesen ist, so ist es Mühe und Arbeit gewesen; denn es fährt schnell dahin, als flögen wir davon.*" In English: "The days of our years are three score years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away."

The last verse says: "*Herr, lehre uns bedenken, dass wir sterben müssen, auf dass wir klug werden.*" In English it is: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Very often they continued their discourse with this passage, "*Nun aber ist Christus auferstanden von den Toten, und der Erstling geworden unter denen, die da schlafen.*" In English: "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." Another passage which I so vividly remember was, "*Tod, wo ist dein Stachel? Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?*" In English: "O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

After some suitable passages were read, a prayer was offered for the condolence of the family. A hymn was then sung and the conclusion of the service were announced by these words, "*Lasset uns jetzt in unserm Christliche Ordnung nach dem Hause Gottes ziehen, wo fannera Gottesdienst gehalten wird.*" In English: "Let us now in our Christian way proceed to the house of God where further services will be held."

The Pastor left the house and took the route of the funeral procession. The casket and family procession was made up as we still do today in our community. The Pastor arriving at the church, they usually went into the church edifice and sat near the church chancel, so when the tolling of the church bell, which was done when the hearse, drawn by two black horses, was seen approaching the church, followed by carriages and buggies which bore the family and near relatives to the church. Now of course here were the hostlers again taking care of the teams.

The tolling was done by ringing one single ring of the church bell with a special gong attached to the bell. These single rings were made every fifteen seconds until the hearse reached the front door or gate nearest the door. Tolling was also done in announcing the death. When the sexton of the church received notification of the death, he rang the church bell for a short time as you and I hear it Sunday morning. After an interval, the day of service was tolled by the number of days intervening between time of funeral and time of death.

After the coffin or casket was taken from the hearse the



Undertaker Brumbach atop hearse
at Kutztown Folk Festival.

bearers carried it into the vestibule of the church. The family was taken into the sanctuary and seated in the proper place designated for them at the time of a funeral. The relatives and friends followed until all were seated. A hymn was then sung. The Pastor then read a portion of scripture. He introduced it in this manner: "*Lasst uns jetzt edliche Obschnit ous dem heiligen Wort tsu unserm Trost jalasen.*" In English it meant: "Let us now read several portions of the holy word for our comfort and consolation."

Very often they read the twenty-third Psalm which began "*Der Herr ist mein Hirte, mir wird nichts mangeln. Er weidet mich auf einer grünen Aue, und führet mich zum frischen Wasser.*" In English: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He leadeth me to the green pastures, etc." A few more passages were read suitable for the occasion,

and a prayer said. Another hymn was sung, after which the Pastor gave the sermon. The introduction was this: "*Die Worten des Textes das sind aufgeschrieben in Philipper das erste Capitel und das einundzwanzigst Farst. Denn Christus ist mein Leben und Sterben ist mein Gewinn.*" In English: "The words of the text are found recorded in the first chapter of Philippians and the twenty-first verse, 'For me to live is Christ, to die is gain'."

Some of the other texts used were: "*Bleibe bei uns denn es wird Abend werden und der Tag hat sich erreicht*"—"Abide with us for it is toward evening and the day is far spent." "*Was ich thue, das weisst du jetzt nicht; du wirst es aber hernach erfahren*"—"What I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter." There were a number of beautiful texts used for funerals and [these] were selected to fit the occasion.

After the discourse and words of comfort and a eulogy of the dead [had been] given the sermon was closed by a prayer. The obituary was read giving the important dates of the deceased's life, i.e., name of deceased, name of parents including the maiden name of the mother, date of birth, place of birth, date of baptism, name of pastor, and name of sponsors, date of confirmation, in what church the confirmation took place, and by what pastor it was performed, the date of marriage and by whom performed, the number of children the union was blessed with, both alive and deceased, the sickness and length of sickness, date of death, number of survivors, and an invitation to the home or inn at which the meal or dinner was given. An invitation was given to view the remains once more and was thus announced in this manner: "*Nach dem Singen von dem nächste Lied wird eine Gelegenheit nachmal gegeben werden, diesen Verstorbenen nach einmal zu sehen*"—"After the singing of another hymn there will be given another opportunity to once more view the remains of the deceased."

The hymn being sung, the undertaker took the friends first, relatives and family were last. Final respects were paid and the casket closed. The bearers taking their part took the casket into the cemetery. The procession was made of the family following the casket. When arriving at the grave the casket was placed on two two-by-fours suspended over the grave. Two straps were also placed over the grave. At a signal from the undertaker the casket was raised in the straps with enough space to remove the grave sticks. The casket was gently lowered into the grave, and very often the bearers held the straps by their feet.

The service began and the committal was said. The committal service closed with these words: "*Ich hörte eine Stimme vom Himmel zu mir sagen: Schreibe: Selig sind die Toten, die in dem Herrn sterben von nun an. Ja, der Geist spricht, dass sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach*"—"I heard a voice from Heaven say unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which are in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." A hymn was sung and the usual hymn was "*Nun bringen wir den Leib zur Ruh', und decket ihn mit Erde zu*"—meaning that the loved one would be laid to rest and covered with earth waiting for the general resurrection and the life to come. It was closed by the benediction.

After the cover stone was placed and the grave half closed the family left for the home or the inn for the *Leicht-essa* or funeral meal. That was a family reunion but some people often tried to get in the meal who were just attending the

funeral for a good meal.* Three ways for serving meals were: one, by caterers, or by neighbors of the family, or at the nearest inn.

The hymns used were such as "*Was Gott thut das ist wohlgetan, Es bleibt gerecht sein Wille.*"

After the meal was served and a reunion by conversation was made the day concluded.

I remember a funeral that I had been at about four years of age. We were driven by a friend of ours to the funeral in a Ford touring with a brass radiator shell. The meal was made at the nearest inn to the church where the service and interment took place. There were so many people eating at that funeral that some of the people went home without any dinner. It was said that they were still eating at 5:30. There were over five hundred individuals counted but nevertheless we still had people not fed. Our driver happened to be one of them.

One sunny day we had a funeral and the weather being very nice my father harnessed our horse with a new harness which he had received as a present from one of our congregations. I can distinctly remember that I watched the new harness on our horse whenever we used it because it had been a little different than our older harness. I can remember us going toward the funeral house and as we came to the funeral house there was the windwheel pumping and the roosters crowing to their hearts' content. The windwheel of course was used to pump water into cisterns for watering the horses and cattle and animals around the farm, also [it] was used in the house, usually by a hand pump or if enough pressure a spigot or faucet. Whenever I hear a rooster or roosters crow early in the morning I think of the earlier days at funerals.

Sometimes I think of the scenes of the horses and buggies or surreys as some people had and can very often picture the horse-drawn hearse setting beside a shed or outer building near the barn where funerals had been conducted. I remember that one of the undertakers that served the community in our charge had two hearses. It was my interest as we came to the home [to see] which hearse he was using. He had one with the urn top, and one without the urn. I would say to my parents, "Today 'Benjy' used his new hearse," or "Today he has the old one."

I remember the same undertaker having a baby funeral with my father. Both were driving sleighs. The undertaker had a small truck sleigh, we had our pleasure sleigh. Going home from the funeral we followed him home as we had to go the same road as he had to. Every once in a while he would call back to my father and they both had a pleasant trip home joking with each other, and one thing I can distinctly remember—the undertaker leaving the remains of a chew of tobacco by occasionally browning the snow with tobacco juice.

Speaking of chewing tobacco, I was at a funeral once that as the undertaker left the church with the family, walking along the side of the church, he removed with difficulty the pack of tobacco out of his left pocket and chewed tobacco on his way to the grave. He left the remains of tobacco juice beside the grave, spitting noisily during the committal service. These were however two different undertakers but the last incident was an amusing fact to me.

During the summer of 1920 there was a funeral at one of

* Lowry Ruth of the Historical Society of York County used to refer to people who attended every funeral, some undoubtedly for the copious meal served afterwards, as "funeral runners."—Editor.

our churches and the undertaker invited my father to go along with him. I wanted to go along too, so I asked if I could go along and Jake, as he was known, was always good to me. He left me go along. Coming to his home before the funeral he put his cutaway coat on, and his silk or beaver hat as they are called. He had a smaller pink hat inside the beaver hat and to make me laugh he put the pink hat on. He of course knowingly said, "I have the wrong hat on." We left for the house where the funeral was to be held. Of course we came to the house in plenty of time. He asked me to help to remove the top of the casket. Having helped him on that the undertaker said, "You will become an undertaker some day." To my dad he said, "Here stands a little undertaker." Lo and behold, here I am an undertaker. I did not go with the hearse from the house to the church. I went with another party to the church due to the procession with the family. But after the service was over at the church, I again went with the hearse to the next village inn where the funeral meal was served. This was my first experience on a hearse. This however happened to be on an early type auto hearse in 1920. I was ten years old.

One might wonder what was used for children. Children were often taken on the undertaker's pleasure car, either a touring as they use to be or on a sedan, depending upon the type of car owned by the undertaker. In horse and buggy days the buggy driven by the undertaker had the box of the buggy opened in the rear in the center with a small latch in the center so that the infant's casket could be slid into the box of the buggy extending forward under the seat, depending on the size of the child. This would help not to use the adult hearse.

In rural communities it was slightly different. Not every undertaker had hearses for children. They usually painted the old ones white when they thought they should have new hearses. However researching on old accounts of tragedies and catastrophes one will find that there were different sizes of hearses, even in infant's sizes. Those however were only used in larger cities, probably owned by liveries that served more than one undertaker. In larger cities such as Philadelphia and the like, liveries furnished the hacks and hearses, thus getting more use out of a hearse than the individual hearse man or undertaker.

Coming back to my personal experience, there are quite a few views that happened of which some are amusing, others sad. There was a funeral in a small village near my home town. Dad and I went to the house, going to the door we met the undertaker. The husband was the only near relative. The husband being on the eccentric side of the life a person should lead normally he had been simple and seemed not to realize just what should be done in the case of his wife's funeral. The service was arranged for an afternoon service at the house.

The service was started a little late because the undertaker could not make the man realize that he had to dress up for a funeral. He was barefooted when we came to the house, in a carpetless home, the floor unfinished and looking very rough. Oddly he buried his wife with good taste and also substantially for the years that we were passing through. The chorister was a blind man and being on the heavy side. He however was a good musician and had a beautiful male voice. He and two women sang the hymns at the house. Having concluded the service at the house with the idea that the only remaining part of the service was the committal service on the cemetery, all were under the impression it was concluded. As the usual procedure to the cemetery



Undertakers, Paul D. Brumbach and Mabel Snyder, with "mourners," re-enact a child's funeral. Note six-sided coffin and 19th-Century hearse.

was done we arrived at the church cemetery. The husband said to my father, he would like to have a church service in addition to what had already been done.

After some discussion with one of the main standbys of the church membership at that church and who also was the organist of the church, the man was told under what condition he could have the use of the church, for they were delinquent members and had not attended church for years. Upon the agreement of the husband the fee was paid and the church was opened, and a church funeral service was given. This however was a quick thought affair for the minister. I was actually too young to realize what it all meant for my father but at the beginning of my teens, as that had been, I had all confidence that it was no difficulty for my father to take care of that because I thought, Pop knows how, those years. After the funeral was over one of the bearers came to my Dad and said, "I wanted to see if you would use the same text at the church as at the house, but you didn't." I still like to relate that story whenever possible.

We had gone on vacation one year to the home town of my birthplace. Sitting with our hosts one evening toward the end of our vacation, the telephone rang. The host answering said it was for us. That message notified us of

a funeral. Coming home Dad prepared for the funeral service. After he contacted the family at almost the time of the service he was told that he had to give his services in the German language and an unusual text was selected for the funeral text. However he came out on top. The funeral service was taken through as any other service. The undertaker wondered what Dad would do but it made no trouble as nothing was noticed by the public.

On a hot summer day there was a funeral of a young man who was killed by trying to start his Model T Ford. The community was shocked by the incident, because of the fact that he was a young person and that the death had to be in an incident as that was. We were still using our horse and buggy. It was so very hot, a person almost fell asleep driving along the road.

The church at which place the service was to be held was under renovations. There was another church with a smaller seating capacity nearby. They offered their church and the service was held there.

Being so hot it was very uncomfortable to even be in the building. The family of course as most of us know thirty, forty years ago, they still wore black clothes with veiled hats. When the time came to leave the church, it appeared that the ladies in the section where the family sat had

taken their black bordered handkerchiefs and laid them on the pews so that the dresses would not stick to the varnish. Whether they were varnished shortly before the funeral I could not tell but at any rate fringes of both black and white were seen on the pews after the funeral.

I was asked about the wheat sheaf of years gone by at funerals. Yes, I remember them. I still remember the use of them. They were placed near the casket during the service of this young man who was buried on that hot day.

After the service the relatives and those attending were invited back to the house for dinner. I can still hear the caterer's wife say to my mother, "This is the eighth shirt I am hanging out on the line to dry." Expressions such as that can always be remembered when reminiscing on funeral work.

The funeral of that young man's mother was entirely opposite as to weather conditions. At the mother's funeral it was so snowy and cold the people could hardly get through the snow. I remember my father saying how he hired a man with two horses and a sleigh to take him to the funeral. The man who owned the team lived on a farm and had two fine black horses. They were very fast horses and were always willing to travel at the owner's command. They also took with them shovels, axes, etc., so that they were prepared to take care of any emergency that would arise. He often says that they opened fences and drove

through fields to get to the house, and remarks what a contrast in traveling conditions at funerals.

Another experience that my father had was a water experience. I however was not taken along that day for some reason, I cannot tell why.

My father had catechetical lectures in the morning at one of his churches and a funeral in the afternoon with the service and burial at another church. As he traveled from the church where the catechetical lectures were held to the house where the service began he came to a road beside a creek and actually the road and creek were side by side for a short distance. Arriving at that point of the road the water became deep and the vehicles had to be taken through there in order to travel that road. The water became deeper and deeper until finally the water came to the bottom of the buggy body. Icebergs were floating around the horse but the horse was very gentle and made no disturbance about that. After the water reached the height of the buggy body it receded, being [that] the road was on a higher point. When my father had gone through the water a man approached him driving a horse. The man asked him, "Can I get through?" My father answered, "I just go through." The service was held and as my father went home from the cemetery he passed that same man. "Aren't you going through that water again?" he asked. The man answered and said, "Once is enough."

Enactment of funeral procession, complete with mourners and undertaker Brumbach.





FOLK MEDICINE

from Western Pennsylvania

By PHIL R. JACK

The rural folk of northern Indiana County and southern Jefferson County, in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, used a considerable amount of traditional medicine on themselves and on their livestock. Medical help was not always readily available, and the farmers often called upon their own experiences and beliefs.¹ I suspect that an aspect of habit was involved also; the people felt that certain elements were not worthy of medical attention. Perhaps it is more to the point to say that a great many of these people just did not think in terms of what we in the 20th Century call medical science.² For instance, in the account books of two families, practically no mention was made of medical matters in the period from the 1830's to the 1870's. In one case, a vial of ear drops was purchased, and in the only other note, a man bought a small amount of whiskey to use as medicine.³ At the same time, a certain empirical element was involved; the reader will recognize some of this, I am sure. Within the limits of this article, though, I do not intend to discuss the rationale of these folk practices, for that would require attention to a great many variables. Space here and lack of knowledge about the people involved forestall such an attempt for the present.

Rather, I would like simply to describe some of the practices which I have noted in the past. For instance, I will mention that the editor of a country newspaper chose to tell his readers that frequent bathing during the hot season was "conducive to death," without my discussing his reasons for so doing and without going into the thinking processes of the readers who accepted or rejected his advice.⁴

Apparently the people of the area and time mentioned above operated on three somewhat distinct folk levels: (a) they held and used certain knowledge which was com-

mon, or potentially so, to the rural community; (b) they made use of the talents of particular individuals who were said to be unusually gifted or knowledgeable; and (c) they resorted to the services of persons who possessed what were considered supernatural insights and proficiencies, and who were willing to use these abilities to help others.⁵ The first two categories were different chiefly in degree; the second group was adept in the materials of the first. There is probably no good name for the first of the three groups. A newspaper item of 1886 referred to a practitioner of the second type as a "home-made doctor." The term "pow-wower" was used to describe one who was versed in the lore of the third type, although the usual reference was to some individual reputed to "have the power" to do whatever was being talked about at the moment. An interesting point was the quick reference by informants to people who were skilled in treatments of the second type (that is, non-magical) with respect to livestock. Perhaps my questions elicited such responses more quickly; perhaps there were more such people than existed for the alleviation of human ills.

In the treatment of human aches and pains, the people were devoted users of teas and poultices made from many sources. Among the teas were pokeberry, tansy, goldenseal, bloodroot, catnip, onion, sage, boneset, sassafras, spiceweed, dogwood, red pepper, mullein, red clover blossom, pumpkin seed, hops, saffron (euphemism for sheep manure), pennyroyal, horehound, pipsissewa, and queen of the meadow. Poultices—"plasters" as they were often called—were made of blackroot, may-apple root, flaxseed, catnip, slippery elm bark and root, buckwheat flour, onions, horseradish, thistle-root, fresh cow manure, or red clover blossom.

At various times I noted in sources (usually newspapers of the period) or was told by informants that herbs were used in farm households for purposes other than cooking. However, the specific uses were not given. Basil, burnet, garlic, pot marjoram, thyme, lemon thyme, orange thyme, mint, parsley, tarragon, summer and winter savory, chervil,

⁵ See Maria Leach, ed., "Medicine," in *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* (Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1950). To these three levels, probably there should be added a fourth one, standard medical doctrine accepted by various people and used properly (scientifically) by them. A study of this level should involve scientific medical development and its transmission (e.g., the impact of public education on a larger and larger scale, and the role of the newspaper and magazine, especially the agricultural press).

¹ For instance, in the Worthville column of the *Brookville Republican*, October 13, 1910, it was noted that there was no doctor in town. The closest M.D.'s were in Coolspring, four miles away; in Summerville, eight miles away; in Perrysville (Hamilton), eight miles away; in Punxsutawney, eleven miles away; and in Brookville, eleven miles away.

² The basic ideas of Crane Brinton's "spectrum of thought" and Robert Redfield's statements about the interactive aspects of peasant groups should be applied to the study of folk cultures in Western Pennsylvania. See for instance, Brinton's *The Shaping of Modern Thought* (New York, 1963), and Redfield's *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago, 1956).

³ Account book of Peter Dilts, Jr., North Mahoning Township, Indiana County, and account book of George Shiffer, West Mahoning Township, Indiana County. Copies of these are in my possession.

⁴ *Punxsutawney Plaindealer*, June 23, 1870.

and fennel were listed in this respect. My informants mentioned, too, that butternuts and ginseng were used in treating illnesses.

People in Western Pennsylvania, in addition to the teas and poultices, used counter-irritants on the theory that one agent would counteract another. Some counter-irritants were croton oil, cow-itch, pokeroot, and fly blisters. Of course, the ever-present patent medicines were to be found, but cannot be considered here. Pine tar was made commercially in the area. To digress a little more, women used sage and mullein for cosmetic reasons as well as for food preparation and medicine. The former was used to darken graying hair, and the latter was used to give color to young ladies' cheeks.

Treatments for Illnesses

Arthritis sufferers took doses of pokeberry tea, while those plagued by rheumatism imbibed teas made of king (queen?) of the meadow, rattlesnake root, or bloodroot. Cancer patients were told to use a tea or poultice made from red clover blossoms. Children who were believed to be coming down with measles or chickenpox were given saffron tea, one informant adding that the tea was effective in "bringing out the spots." Asthmatics smoked mullein which had been dried and ground.

To fight the common cold, people took teas made from boneset, whiskey and rock candy, pennyroyal, horehound, a mixture of boneset and horehound, or a combination of horehound and pipsissewa. Those who were troubled with coughs used mullein tea; those with sore throats gargled with red pepper tea.

Other respiratory ailments had their share of cures. For croup, a newspaper editor recommended that a dozen stalks of lobelia be boiled in a pint of water for twenty minutes. The mixture was to be strained until a half-cup of liquid remained. Then a half-cup of molasses was to be added, and a dose of one tablespoon was to be given every ten or fifteen minutes if the case was severe. In addition, the parent was to put the baby's feet in warm water and to cover its throat and chest with warm cloths.⁶ For the relief of catarrh, an annoying nasal condition, dry snuff was prescribed; that is, it was to be inhaled in the nostrils. A patient with quinsy was to breathe the vapors caused by pouring boiling water over hops which had been placed in some sort of a spouted vessel, or he could use croton oil as a counter-irritant. These rural folk applied flaxseed-meal poultices for pneumonia, and they drank slippery elm tea for consumption or "lung trouble" in general. To make the tea, they soaked the inner bark of the tree for several hours.

Individuals with stomach troubles, often of a vague sort, took teas made from hops, catnip, boneset, queen of the meadow, and dried, grated Indian turnips. The people ill with "gravel," or kidney difficulties, could be given teas of queen of the meadow, pumpkin seed, or pipsissewa. To ease pain caused by hemorrhoids, the country people made a salve of dried mullein blossoms fried in lard, and they put a flaxseed in a sore eye. After heating a bag of salt in an oven, sufferers with a toothache would place it next to the sore jaw. Workers in fields who had gotten a nettle sting could squeeze dock leaves on the skin to kill the pain. Vinegar applied to the affected area had the same effect.

Anybody with a fever could have it reduced or broken

⁶ *Plainsdealer*, March 18, 1869. I have used newspaper materials when the recommendations and terminologies specified seemed to be consistent with the traditional practices of the area as told to me by informants. To say the least, the editors' "exchange" propensities make this a dangerous business.

by taking pennyroyal, slippery elm, or boneset tea. Pennyroyal tea was said to cause profuse sweating if taken just before retiring for the night; hence, it was used for colds and flu also. Fussy or ill babies were treated with catnip tea; the same plant, used as a poultice, served duty as a painkiller. Ill babies drank cambric tea, a mixture of milk, sugar, and water. In fact, this tea was given generally to children who were not feeling fit. Women plagued with "bealing" breasts used poultices made from the roots of queen of the meadow.

People felt that flaxseed meal or fresh cow manure poultices kept maggots out of sores. They used slippery elm poultices to treat irritated sores, and they poured turpentine on cuts. However, the farmers did not use that liquid on "grains"—scrapes caused by friction between the skin and some other surface. Individuals with swellings applied mullein plasters and put hot vinegar mixed with salt on sprains.

An editor spelled out a recipe for a remedy said to be good for the care and treatment of wounds, bruises, sprains, and swellings. A pint of vinegar, a pint of soft soap, a handful of salt, and a tablespoon of saltpeter were to be mixed and applied.

Housewives who got burned on the ever-hot coal or wood stoves treated burns, particularly on the hands, by thrusting the seared member into a crock of applebutter. After that, a bandage could be put on. I was not told just what happened then to the crock of applebutter.

Men who cut themselves pulverized earth and put it on the fresh wounds. An aged man, reminiscing about the days of his boyhood, recalled that a thin rye batter was spread all over him when he had the itch, then he was wrapped in a sheet and put into bed for the night. In his words, "they had to soak me for sometime before the dried batter would wash off."⁷ This same boy was dosed with cream of tartar and sulphur mixed with molasses, but for what ailment he did not say. (Other sources of information gave the usual answer: blood purification.) He related also, "For a physis, mother gave us castor oil, and for worms, vermifuge."

Every spring, parents faithfully administered medicines to thin, purify, and strengthen the blood. Their favorite teas were made from sassafras, bloodroot, or goldenseal. They tried to stop bleeding by putting brown sugar on the cut; or by putting brown sugar on a hot stove and permitting the smoke to play over the wound before binding it up; or by sprinkling gunpowder on the cut; or by slicing puffballs in two and putting half on the injury; or by using cobwebs gathered from the barn. Children who had finicky appetites had tansy tea given to them.

Blood-Stoppers

Besides using the somewhat ordinary methods of stopping bleeding, the injured, particularly in severe cases, turned to individuals with supernatural powers. Once I was told of a method which consisted of a chain in which the secret (repeating *Ezekiel* 16:6) was to be passed from a female to a male and then to another female and so on. The actual curing process involved the "bloodstopper" touching the wound and silently saying the verse. Unfortunately, the secret had been told to an atheist, and all the power in the chain had disappeared. I was told by the informant that since the male non-believer had told him the whole thing, all the cure's efficacy was gone, and there was no harm at all in my being told.

⁷ George W. Porter, *Autobiography* (Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, 1929), p. 22.

The same informant said that he had had an uncle who was a blood-stopper, with powers great enough to operate over considerable distances. The uncle merely had to face in the direction of the afflicted. Definitely, I was made to understand that the uncle was truly out of the ordinary and that his power was innate, not learned. This element was absent from the cure told by the atheist. There, it was a matter of acquiring the correct information in the proper manner and applying it as required.

It has been my experience that informants born before 1900 know of or have been told about bloodstoppers; it has been my experience that informants born since 1940 are practically unanimous in disclaiming all knowledge of the practice. Another item of interest: informants were always more willing to talk of blood-stoppers than of other types of practitioners of the supernatural arts.

Transference of Disease

The residents of northern Indiana and southern Jefferson Counties used magical cures for other than cases of bleeding. They attempted to rid a child of "tissie" (asthma) by standing him against a tree and boring a hole into the trunk just at the top of his head. Then the healer put a lock of the child's hair into the hole and plugged it with a piece of wood. After the child grew to a height at which his breastbone passed the plug in the tree, he was cured. Nothing was said about there being any necessity for having someone with special powers do the work; apparently there was a body of magical knowledge common to the group.

In a similar vein, while commenting on a story that three horse skulls had been found in the walls of a house built in Kittanning in 1814, an editor explained that the practice protected the inhabitants of the home from quinsy. There was no implication that any special power was needed, just the knowledge of what to do. The newspaperman added the information that "matter" taken from the horse's head or jaw would cure the same illness. He did not specify the nature of the matter nor did he say how exactly it was to be used.⁸

Tom Sawyer-like, boys, and others as well, tried to get rid of warts by using magic. A bone was rubbed over the spot, and then it was buried where the water dripped from the eaves. I suspect that another cure—this time for convulsions in a child—was magical in nature. At least the informant passing on the information thought so. Sauerkraut was piled atop the child's head.

Treatments for Livestock

Another realm of medicine existed along with that mentioned in the foregoing section. Livestock suffered maladies from time to time which had to be taken care of. Calves ailing with "scours" (diarrhea) were given white oak tea or sour dock tea. "Stob" wounds—those caused when cattle injured their hoofs on the small stubs left in brushed-out areas—were treated by applications of turpentine, or by holding the hoof over a pile of burning chicken feathers. One man said that the relief was so great that the animal would hold its hoof over the fire of its own volition. Farmers who had cows with udder infirmities employed poultices of queen of the meadow. When a straw stack fell on a cow, the owner's attempts to restore life by breathing into its nostrils failed. I was told that teas made from pennyroyal and queen of the meadow were given to cattle for some

unspecified diseases.

To people of the present day, the most peculiar sicknesses associated with cattle were "wolf in the tail," "hollow horn," and loss of the cud. Wolf in the tail was that condition in which cattle would not get on their feet, surely a symptom and not a sickness. The basic cure consisted of cutting the tail close to the end and putting some material in the slit. Some people put salt, or pepper, or a puffball in the cut. Hollow horn was a catch-all term to cover any trouble not readily diagnosed. While there were those who just bored a hole in the horn with a gimlet, others poured in pine tar or turpentine. When a cow lost its cud, it could be restored to health by giving the animal a greasy dishrag, a wad of dough, a clump of salted grass, or "anything that tasted good" to consume.

Horse-owners used turpentine for the relief of colic, and put a mixture of salt and hot vinegar on sprains. Also, they tied onion poultices around the bridle bits to ward off "epizootic" (distemper) and gave rattlesnake root tea and queen of the meadow tea when their steeds did not appear to be fit.

The principal disease of hogs (i.e., on a folk level), was "black teeth." This trouble was cured by either knocking out or pulling the teeth. In an unrelated situation, a newspaper reported that a dog which had been injured battling a groundhog had its tail and sore ears greased with cream from the family cream crock. Another dog was treated with some sort of pill made with linseed oil. A quarrel had developed between the dog's owner and the man who had treated the animal. The "doctor" had not been able to collect his five-dollar fee, a goodly amount for the treatment of an animal in 1886.


Magical practices were used with animals as well as humans. Hogs were castrated when the zodiac "sign" was "in the feet." When a cow gave bloody milk, the disturbed farmer did not treat the cow, but instead he tried to get at the witch behind it all, plunging a red-hot poker into the milk in an effort to kill the witch.

"Poll-evil" in horses, that is, painful abscesses on the head, could be cured by taking the animal to an individual skilled in the mystery. The practitioner took the horse and a newly-ground axe out of sight of any human habitation. All the while he moved in an easterly direction. When he had reached a suitable spot, he drew the sharp axe first along and then across the abscess. He made the cuts deep enough to draw blood. During this maneuver, the man uttered "mystic" words. Upon completing the cuts, he buried the axe just below the head of the horse, and then he took the animal back to its owner. From the time that the horse was delivered into the doctor's hands until it was returned to the owner, no one was to say a word on any subject except for the recitation of the formula while the cuts were being made. The doctor took the axe from the earth the next morning at dawn, and in "due" time, the horse was supposed to be cured.⁹

Here, then, are a few of the practices of folk medicine found in the area of northern Indiana and southern Jefferson Counties as they were used in the period from about 1870 until 1920. From studying other sources of information, it is clear that many avenues remain to be explored. However, I hope that I have been able to indicate a few possible leads for any future field work in Western Pennsylvania.

⁹ From the *Spirit*, September 14, 1894, as cited in W. J. McKnight, *Pioneer History of Jefferson County* (Philadelphia, 1898), p. 536.

⁸ *Punxsutawney Spirit*, August 5, 1912.



Peddlers I Remember

By **VICTOR C. DIEFFENBACH**



[In this article Victor C. Dieffenbach, "Der Oldt Bauer," retired farmer and octogenarian dialect columnist of Bethel, Berks County, continues his memoirs of his boyhood days in the northwestern area of Berks County. Other chapters in his reminiscences have appeared in our columns from the very earliest issues of *The Pennsylvania Dutchman*. This chapter has great value in suggesting the relation of the itinerant peddler to the Pennsylvania Dutch farmer and his family. Part of these sketches are pen portraits of assorted peddlers the author himself remembers from the 1880's and 1890's, although a few of the items are folktales and others border on the folktale. The opinions expressed in the sketches are the author's own although in many cases they undoubtedly reflect common rural attitudes toward outsiders in the community. In a future issue we hope to supplement this pioneer article on the Peddler in the Dutch Country with an historical study of the same subject tracing the role of the peddler in the Pennsylvania Dutch folk-culture from colonial times down to the 20th Century.—EDITOR.]

Peddlers were common on the highways of Pennsylvania years ago. I remember how they came, some on foot, some in wagons. They were loaded down like regular pack mules. It was no unusual sight to see a little man, with a pack on his back, as big as an ordinary cooking-stove. Whatever it contained—clothing, dress materials, hosiery, notions or whatever it all was—it was packed in layers with cardboard in between, and the whole lot enfolded in a big piece of striped bed-ticking, then it was all pulled in a compact bundle with a heavy harness of leather; to this were fastened two strong shoulder-straps for the peddlers' arms to go through. When he was ready to go to the next place he would place the enormous bundle on two chairs and kneel in front of it—slip the shoulder-straps over his shoulders and grab the edge of the table or anything that was within reach, for support and aid in getting up on his feet. I am sure that some of those packs weighed more than the man who carried them. They made money; if they came on foot for a few years, then they got a good wagon and a good horse; then instead of one pack, they would have three or four; and the more packs the more money. It was just a matter of a few years with a team, and they wouldn't come anymore—they had a big store in the county seat town.

Most, but not all of them, were Jews. Some were Italians, others Germans, Tyroleans, and other nationalities. But all of them were individuals, and their visits were looked forward to, not only for the yardgoods and household items they carried, but also for the news of the outside world and the laughter and good humor which their visits brought to the Pennsylvania farmhouse.

Their sales techniques varied. When young C. came, and we didn't buy, he would cry. He said if he came home and had not sold all the goods, his father would beat him. We always just called him Little C. He had an older brother called A., and he had a good wagon. One day when he left Father's place, and opened a big heavy gate to go in to the neighbor's farm, he had to hold the gate so the wind wouldn't blow it shut, and let the horse enter the lane by himself. We watched him, for this was right on top of a windswept hill, and the day was raw. When the horse was about halfway through the gate the wind blew the gate so hard that it upset the man, so that he rolled over. The horse got scared, and started to run away. The man tried to grab the lines, and got his foot in it and fell, and pulling the line the horse hit the side of the fence, and upset the wagon on top of the man. We ran out and caught the horse, and helped him to get out. He was a sight. He was all bloody, and had his face half skinned by being dragged on the frozen ground. We got him in the house, and gave him what aid we could. Luckily he had no bones broken. In the evening the doctor came to see my grandmother, who was sick in bed. He cared for the peddler, and told him to stay there for a few days; so he did. But then Grandma took worse, and died. The peddler realized that it wasn't suitable for him to stay any longer; he left for the place he was bound for when the accident happened. He gave my parents lots of things because they had cared for him in his need.

The Peddler's Big Pack

But the pack peddlers, the foot itinerants, were the most interesting of all.

I think that in such a lengthy discourse I should tell you of the contents and the make-up of the peddler's huge pack or bundle.



Meanwhile holding it with his left hand up to his nose.

Once he opened it up you would see a whole layer of men's suspenders, all styles and of different colors. Next would be stockings for women and children—then men's socks, and hankies for both sexes. Towels and doilies came next, and then tablecloths, and you were down to the box in the middle of the pack. This box was no box—it really was more of a wooden tray about three inches deep, and twenty inches wide, and 36 inches long. It was made of thin and light, but strong boards, and divided by very thin partitions into a lot of compartments of various sizes. Here were razors, brushes, scissors, combs, needles, pins, thimbles, hair-curlers, and pocket-knives galore; lead-pencils, steel pens, soap, perfume and shoe-strings; they were strings in the full meaning of the word—they were round like a rope.

Below the tray came the more bulky goods—muslins, white and (unbleached) yellow; gingham and dress-goods, and later there were men's ready-made over-alls—all one color, hickory-stripe.

And no one of them ever carried a tape or a yardstick to measure the yard-goods. He would ask how many yards you wanted; then he'd grab the stuff at the end with the right hand and push it out away from his face as far as he could reach, meanwhile holding it with the left hand up to his nose, and that was exactly one yard.

"Little C." had a short arm (he wasn't even full-grown) so he'd turn his head to the left, thus giving an additional inch.

One peddler had very long arms. Granny used to say of him: "He gives such a long yard." It wasn't the dollar and cents value of the extra inches, but their idea of getting more for their money.

The Italian Peddlers and the Mule

Years ago when Ed D— lived on the neighboring farm we were plowing for Fall seeding. We had nine mules in three plows. It was very hot, so we stopped under the big cherry-trees on the hill, close to the road. There was a gentle breeze under the trees, and we were in no hurry to leave. There came two peddlers—young Italians. They were not of the usual kind of peddlers. They each had a box or chest made of boards. It was about all of it drawers on top of each other—all full of jewelry, watches, pocket-knives, needles, scissors, etc., etc. And the entire thing was covered

with black oil-cloth and had a leather thong for a shoulder-strap.

They spoke broken English. One of them was admiring the off-side mule in my team. He looked at me and pointed at the mule, and said, "What you call?" I said the mule's name was Jack. Striding over close to the mule he said, "Jack, he da nice-a mule," and he reached out to pet him.

Now lots of mules don't like to be petted by any one—they are *one-man-mules*, and lots of them don't want any petting. Jack was one of the latter kind.

So when Tony reached out there was a flash of light and a cloud of dust, and there stood Tony and he had no box on his shoulder. The mule had hit it with his hind foot in a sideswiping movement, and all that was left was a pile of splinters. Gold watches and bejeweled rings were scattered all over, and halfway up in the cherry-tree hung a bracelet on a limb. That boy made more noise than a guinea-rooster with the hiccoughs.

He insisted that we pay for the stuff and we just laughed at him. He picked up most of the odd pieces and left; and we got in late for supper.

Der Brilla-Graimer (The Eye-glass Peddler)

About twice a year he came down the road—in the Spring and in the Fall. He was a big old fellow, fat and red-faced, and had red, curly hair. He was a German, and all he had was eye-glasses. One day he came to old Maria R—, a tall skinny old lady. When their deal was over he owed her half a dollar change.

"Oh well," said she, "you can give it to me the next time you come." But he forgot to save the coin so he still owed her this amount when he left.

"But next time I'll be sure to have it," he said. So when he was going over his route, and was getting close to her home, he kept a half-dollar in his watch-pocket, ready for her. He came there on a Saturday morning, and she was out in the yard washing off the concrete walk.

As old Fritz entered he got the half-dollar out of his pocket, and he hollered, "Maria, this morning I can fix you up!"

"You red-headed old — — — ! You're gonna fix me off? Ha! Ha!"

There she swung the wet broom over his head and just

before he got to the gate she grabs a pail full of water and lets him have it in the rear.

And as much as *I* know she doesn't have that half-dollar yet.

Fritz meant all right; but she misunderstood him and got an entirely twisted meaning out of it.

The Tinware Peddler

He would always come in the Spring and he had a big pack of tinware, all strung together with a string.

To my dying day I can remember the racket that he made when old Sam Light's dog came out in the road and bit him in the leg. He was galloping up the hill until he was out of breath and then he came a-hopping and the cups and funnels all jingling and he gulping down air and spitting out curses.



Tinware all strung with a string.

He had all kinds of utensils, and hardly any of them would cost more than a dime. He was not very bright in his reckoning, so when Granny asked him what the little corrugated pans were, he said they were ten cents a piece. She said she'd take a dozen of them. He only had eight left, so he said that he would let her have them at eight cents each and then he started to figure, and said, "eight times eight is eighty-eight," and she paid him.

When the peddlers came to our house, they always came first to my mother's kitchen for it was closest to the road, and once Granny would hear a peddler talking then she'd come out from *her* kitchen. My mother always paid whatever price they asked; but Granny was a bargainer. She'd sit and look at things; and offer about two-thirds of what the peddler asked; if he said he couldn't do it—it wasn't enough, she'd say she must go in and get the pies

out of the oven or some such excuse and when she left for her own side, they would throw the goods after her.

The Boneman

When Dad was butchering to go to market I had to stay out of school two days a week—one to help at butchering, and one day going to market. I rebelled. So he told me if I helped he'd let me sell all the bones for spending money. We usually killed two beeves a week and from eight to a dozen, up to twenty hogs, depending on their weight. And I saved all the bones. I put them in the chickenhouse so the dogs could not drag them away.

And in the Spring came old R.; he was an old Jew and he came just before noon. He had a one-horse wagon and said he'd pay me 50 cents a hundred pounds for bones. He put the horse in the stable and started to load; it filled the box—almost a ton. He tied a canvas over it so the other Jews would not see that he hauled bones.

We had a chicken that had just died, but he refused to take it along. When he went in for dinner I stuffed it under the cover and put bones on top. If he'd have taken it along he could have thrown it in the woods; but now he took it all the way to town. He left wagon and all out in the yard until Monday morning and then when he came out the turkey buzzards sat on top of the cover. He gave me quite a lecture on his next trip.

Perils of Peddling

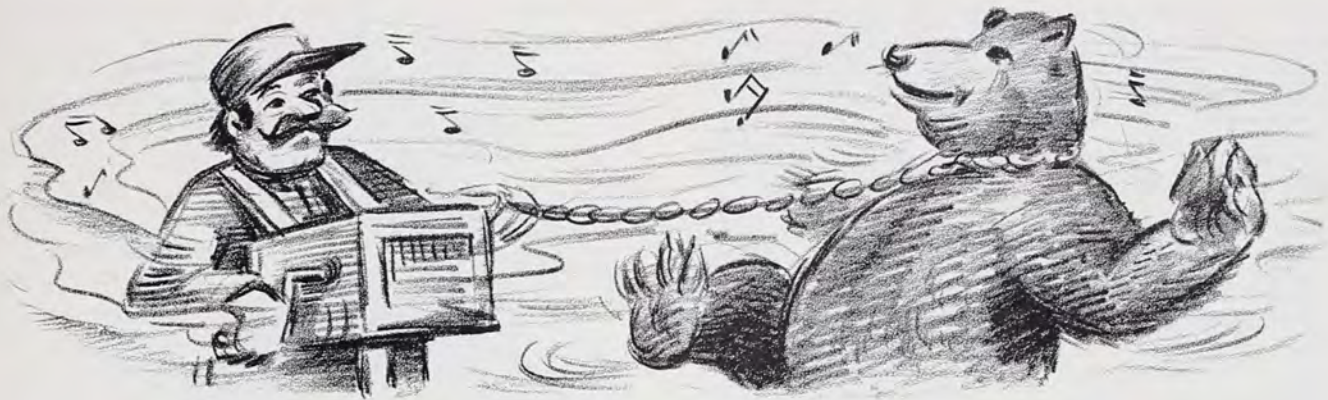
Near Frystown lived an old maid, employed as housekeeper and companion to a helpless old lady. One time the maid started to get very stout and she complained. Although single, she was in a family way and she insisted a Jew peddler had raped her.¹ When her time came the Doctor said he wouldn't help her until she said who was the father of the child and she replied, "You are him."

But we, who had seen a man who had a lot of horses stabled there, and who took all forenoon to feed and groom those nags, every day—we could see him from our desks in school—we had other ideas. And when the child grew up and was hired to a farmer who also was a horseman, she would ride or hitch up any kind of horseflesh that none of the male help would touch. And to my knowledge, most Jews are none of the best of horsemen.

There were tales without number of peddlers who were murdered; some of them had simply disappeared and nobody cared, because he had "only been a Jew." One poor fellow drove down a steep bank into the Swatara Creek near Greble and was drowned.²

¹ This charge, often heard but rarely substantiated, was earlier applied to the Yankee peddler who circulated in the middle colonies from New England. One of the earliest versions appears in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 13, 1753, copied from the New York newspaper. In this story, sometimes attributed to Benjamin Franklin, the betrayed woman takes vengeance by destroying the peddler's pack. For the story, see Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents—Eighteenth Century* (Cincinnati, 1959), pp. 1-2. Often, as Marcus points out, such charges circulated as folktales, or imbedded in folktales. See also Maxwell Whiteman, "The Colonial Jewish Peddler," in Meir Ben-Horin, Bernard D. Weinryb, and Solomon Zeitlin, eds., *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 503-515.—Editor.

² The disappearance or murder of peddlers, immigrant workmen, tramps, and other itinerants in 19th Century America is borne out by a reading of 19th Century newspapers, the violence and scandal reported in which, especially in the period after the Civil War, is a good historical antidote to the common view that those were the "good old days."—Editor.



And they gave him a few coins for the amusement they had.

The Bargain Spectacles

When the red-headed eyeglass peddler came to old Amelia F. she told him that she needed a pair of glasses—she had broken hers. So she tried all of them on—all he had—and none fitted her. The man was shrewd and she was not. So he gave her another pair and told her they were made especially for folks like her. He said, "If they fall down they'll never break. You never wipe or clean them or you will spoil the lenses. And they will be very good for your eyes!"

She tried them on and she cried out, "Oh, is it possible I can get these—I can see as well as I ever could! And if they don't break, then they will last for a long, long time!"

She paid the man five dollars for them. And at every quilting-bee or funeral or any social gathering she'd tell all the women of her wonderful bargain, and that she never needed to clean them. And they all smiled, but only she did not know that there never were nor had been any lenses in the frame.

The Hurdy-Gurdy Man and the Dancing Bear

I am not sure whether the man with a hurdy-gurdy (grind-organ) and a bear would be listed in the same category as a peddler. He sells nothing; and in a way he *does*—he plays and the bear dances and amuses the children (and some adults) and then they give him a few coins for the amusement they had.

Anyway the story is too good to miss, so here we go. My uncle lived nearly a mile away from our house; one day in June I was sent over on some errand; and as I neared his home I saw a man and a big bear come down the road, and the man had a hurdy-gurdy. My uncle was a bee-keeper, and he had just hived a big swarm of bees. I did not mind them, so I was right with him in the bee-yard. Previously he had been sharpening the scythe, preparatory to cutting the grass in the yard. This all happened before the lawnmower had been born.

As soon as this man came to my uncle's gate he came into the yard, set the organ on a stick of wood and turned the crank. The notes came out and the bear rose up on his hind legs and began to dance. My uncle swore; he said he wanted to cut the grass, "and once that bear is finished God Almighty himself couldn't cut it any more."

So he goes in the old shop and gets a piece of wood or slat from under the work-bench, and ran towards the bear. He was a big man and strong; as soon as he could reach the bear he let fly and hit bruin with that slat in the small of

the back for all he was worth; and the bear retaliated. He was a big ungainly brute; and he was muzzled, but he charged like a mad bull. Three or four jumps, and Uncle John was back in the shop and slammed the door so that he almost pinched the bear's nose in it. He said he'd get the gun and he'd shoot the — — — bear. And the bear meanwhile crawled up on the sidewall of the old log building and clawed it so that the splinters flew.

My cousin told his Dad that he had no business to hit the bear, and Uncle said he hadn't known that bears could run so fast.

Thereafter, when we kids asked Uncle John and said, "Can a bear run?" then we better run too.

The Peddler Goes Coon-Hunting

Years ago there used to come a peddler, a Jew by the name of W., in a wagon and two horses and he bought up all the hides and furs that he could get. He had his lodging place with old Sam T—, the noted coon-hunter, near Schaffner's Store at Host.

In the morning he'd start out, leaving his stock of furs in the barn. The F— boys who had their home with old Sam, would open the bundles of furs, select a few of the best, and make a new bundle, and sell it to the peddler at night, claiming the furs were their own catch.

So one night old Sam takes the peddler along to hunt coon. They treed one and Sam told the peddler to climb up and catch the coon, and put it in a sack. When the coon went out on a limb, the peddler followed and when the limb broke and coon and peddler and all fell down into the creek, the pack of hounds jumped on the pile in full cry.

When the poor half-drowned peddler complained old Sam said, "I thought you would know that much and not go out too far."

The Chromo Peddler

There used to come to my father's house a tall young man selling pictures, when I was just a kid. They were very nice colored chromos—mostly of religious subjects and they had a frame made of some kind of card-board or molded wood-pulp. They did not cost much money those days and he usually gave my parents several to pay for his night's lodging.

Another fellow, a big old man who looked much like Buffalo Bill, and had a tin box to hold his wares, claimed he was an herbalist. He never offered to sell or give us any of it, but kept coming several times a year.

It so happened that one night the two came to our house almost at the same time. The old fellow lost no time inquiring as to young man's trade. He told him and then kindly said, "And what is *your* business?"

The old chap said, "I have my business in my box!" And from that time on we called him "the fellow with the business-box."

The Ventriloquist and the Tomcat

Yes, I almost forgot to tell of the slick chap that came to my father's house while I was still a kid. He was selling a patent right to a thing called "The Harvey Bolster-Spring." He had pictures and a model; all it was—it was a coiled steel spring—well, two of them to put under the front part of the wagon-box to prevent the bumping of the farm-wagon while driving. He had a good line of talk—you could go to church or to the Pic-nic on the farm-wagon once it was equipped with these springs and you'd think you were riding in a Pullman sleeper. Uh huh!

But the best part that the fellow played on me—he was a ventriloquist which I did not know of, nor even what it meant at that time. But I had a big yellow-striped old tomcat. He picked it up—he stuck it under his arm—tail forwards; and when he grabbed the cat by the tail, and turned it like a crank, fine music came out of the cat's rear end.

After he had gone, I also held Tommy, and I did like he did—I turned and twisted his tail, but failed to hear a single note. No music came out, but Tommy left a nice sketch of the Brooklyn Bridge across my ribs; he used his claws for pencils.

When the others tried to tell me what he had done, I said, "Like hell he did. I saw the notes come flying out of Tommy's hole!"

Singing Pete

Can you hear me come a-singing
As I ramble down the street?
Can you hear the song a-ringing?
Can you hear the notes so sweet?

I never come in the morning!
I never come too late;
I always give you warning,
And I'm ready for my fate.

I travel through the woodland—
O'er hilltops, brown and bare.
From mountains to the seashore,
I travel everywhere!

I sell finger-rings and watches,
Combs to put into your hair—
Fine goods in silky swatches,
And jewels fine and rare.

I'm always singing, singing,
While I'm coming down the street.
I sing because I'm happy—
Just call me Singing Pete!

And that is what we did. He was a strapping young fellow—a real athlete. He could have carried a horse instead of riding it. He looked that strong to my eyes then, although the entire stock of his wares would hardly have weighed forty pounds. Folks liked him—yes, loved him because he was always so jolly and well-behaved.

You never heard him swear or say an angry word to anyone. When old Bensinger's dog upset a tray of jewelry



Turned it like a crank.

he sat on the porch-floor and laughed till the tears came. Finally he bellowed forth: "Just look at the dirty old so-and-so, trying to get that link off of his tooth!"

Old Rover had bit into a watch-chain and had a big tooth caught fast in one of the links.

Once when my Granddad asked him of his nationality he replied, "Tyrolese!" Since [we thought] the Tyrol was in Switzerland we decided that he was a Swiss.

With the advent of the auto, came the report that he had been run over by a car and had been so badly injured that he died from it. It was said to have occurred at some distant place the name of which I do not remember, although I'll remember Singing Pete as long as I live.

Whistling Joe

Yes, that is what we, and about everybody else, called him. He was a big husky man of Italian descent, and once you heard someone whistling in a high key and slurring a note, like a cornet when it's full of spit, and next he'd be trilling notes and be warbling like a bird—that would be Whistling Joe.

He would stand in front of a canary's cage and he'd imitate it until the bird would shut up and refused to sing a note for several days.

Most of his stock in trade consisted of pipes; and since none of our family used the weed, he seldom stopped at our house. He would stop for a cool drink at the old wooden pump, but he hardly ever tried to make a sale.

Grandfather was very fond of home-raised fruit, and few were the varieties that he did not possess. One day in the Spring when he was ready to go out in the orchard to set up a few grafts, along came Joe, and he came in for his

customary refreshment. He saw the old man's basket with the grafting tools and wax, so he sat down and looked it over. Then he asked if he was allowed to go along and watch the grafting. Granddad gave his consent.

They went up in the orchard with yours truly in tow. He did nothing but watch the old man cut and place the scions in the cleft until only a few were left in the oiled paper; then he asked if he might set them up.

Granddad nodded and Joe got a knife out of his pocket, and proceeded to cut and trim the scions. He cut the lower end to a wedge shape and the cuts were as smooth as glass. He looked all around before he placed the scion, so as to ascertain the direction of the prevailing winds, and set the scion with the terminal bud to point in that direction.

He said that later when it grew it would be the leader of the tree and would continue to point into the wind, same as a weather-vane.

Granddad passed on in 1905 A.D. Joe was a middle-aged man at the time of this occurrence, so he could hardly be living anymore and I think the trees also are among the missing.

Der Bobblemoul!

All the peddlers and tramps that came down the road and stopped at our house had their own special designation in our vocabulary. This particular individual was continually talking, so we called him "*Der Bobblemoul*," in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect—or in English, "Blabber-Mouth."

From his talk and some peculiarities of behaving we concluded that the man was partly demented—not quite up to par mentally. He always behaved and he was very clean and tidy.

He had no pack or satchel or luggage of any kind whatever; still he would continually talk of the value of his stock and the volume of his sales and all we could hear was his monotonous tale. Hence the name.

Whatever he was called by folks outside of our area I do not know, but in our neighborhood that was the handle that we gave him. Whether he had ever sold or peddled any kind of article or utensils is a matter of conjecture.



He would continually talk

Der Bindle Graimer (The Bundle Peddler)

He was a big fat old German, bulky as a bear; and the bundle or pack he carried was also huge. Whether he was a peddler or just a tramp is hard to tell. He claimed that he had lots of medicinal herbs but never offered us any, and methinks he'd have been refused the offer—he was very dirty.

One time he came in a blizzard and he stayed at our home for three days. While most of these nomads preferred to sleep in the hay-mow, he said he wanted to be in the basement of the barn—close to the cattle so as to be warm. We put him in the feed-entry. We had a big trough for mixing feed and it had a flat lid on it. There he unpacked the big bundle and re-sorted it. He had dozens of packs the size of a man's head—all tied with string. When he opened one of them it was full of smaller bundles that looked like, and were, men's socks, each containing a lump the size of a fist. What was inside we did not find out.

But he'd open a dozen of these and take a few of the smaller ones from each, and put the lot of them in an empty sack, thus forming a new bunch.

"Yes, such things make a lot of work," he said to us as we looked on.

In Summer's heat he'd sweat so he almost drowned in it. But he was a busy chap; he'd go out to the woodshed and saw wood into stove length and split it, and by dinnertime he had a big pile; then he asked Dad if that would pay for his meals and lodging. He said it would.

"Well," said that fat old boy, "I know that I eat a lot—I'm a big man, and need a lot to live. The saw is sharp and it splits good (it was ash-wood, as straight in the grain as a string), so if you don't mind I'll stay another night and cut some more."

And he did; and later we found out that he told our neighbor that he wished he could always be at our place. "They have such good food and such very good schnitz-pies." And he said that at one place he was never allowed to sit at the table and eat a meal with the family—they only gave him a handout to eat on the porch; and one time he said it was only dried-up meat and a piece of custard that was moldy.

Dad never asked any peddler to help with chores; but the tramps, or as he always called them—"Die Rum-layfer"—he told to cut and split wood; some got mad and didn't stop at their next trip.

The Adjustable Shirt

And I almost forgot big old Jake L.; he was a jolly fellow.

When he tried to sell a shirt to a man, the man told him it was too short. Jake said: "It will stretch."

"Yes, but the sleeves are way too long!" said the farmer. "Oh, they'll shrink," said Jake.

All this was in dialect, so the farmer said, "*Des muss ovver en ferdommts hem sei!*" (This must be a damned shirt).

Wind-Meela!

Sometime in the late Summer a man would come around to the farmers and he had a little fanning-mill on the wagon, to clean the seed-wheat. They did a fine job getting the weed-seeds and cockles out of the grain. They were not exclusively for wheat but were mostly used for that purpose. Later on I met an old friend of mine—a schoolmate and

neighbor's son, at a farm sale and such a grain-cleaner had just been sold.

I had moved away from the old neighborhood and had not met this man for years. He was very friendly so he told me of his experience with the cleaning machines.

He said one Fall, late in the evening a man came to his farm and wanted to sell him such a contraption for \$75.00. The farmer said it's too much money and he didn't need one—the wheat had all been sowed.

"Well," said the agent, "I know that. It's like this—I have these left over. I'm from Lancaster County and I do not want to carry them along home—it don't look well. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you have room to store these mills over Winter I'll pay you well for storage. You are a man of influence in the community—you can sell some of them privately to friends you meet at these sales. And next Spring when I come again, then I'll allow you ten dollars commission on each one you sold; that and the money I pay you for storage, you have your mill free of cost." And the farmer agreed. They stored the little mills up in the loft of the big corn shed—seven of them.

The man was almost ready to leave, when he said, "I almost forgot something. You know any man can die—some very sudden. So in case anything should happen to either of us in the meantime, I want you to give your consent so that any man in the employ of this company can come and get these fans; and also in case of fire, so we can get damages. Sign right here," he said and held out a big sheet full of fine print; and the farmer signed.

"A couple of weeks later," this friend told me, "there came two strangers and demanded \$525.00 from me. I asked what for, and they said, "Your note is due." They got it out of a brief-case and showed the note with this man's name on it. It was a swindle-note—the lower part of the big sheet which he had signed that night to give his permission for removing the fans; only the upper part had been torn off and they had the lower or the most important part. He owned several big farms and he had to pay; and he did. He was a Dunkard (Church of the Brethren) but after he had told me this he said—"Ferdommt sei, nimmy may wind-meela."*

The Chicken Delouser

I remember the day that Dad and I were busily employed in powdering or dusting the potato-bugs in our patch back of the barn, and a man came walking with a pack slung on his back. He was a good-looking young chap and he came in and put the rucksack on the ground and opened it. He had a small wooden butter-churn in it, and he said it was a chicken delouser. You put the lice-killer in the churn, put in a hen, closed the big square lid on top, and turned the crank. The reel of wooden slats inside would revolve and the chicken would be turned around and around until the powder went between all the feathers.

Dad told him at once that he did not want one, and we thought the man had left; and there he was again, and this time he had a chicken in his hands. He had caught an old cluck (broody-hen) on the nest, and he was now going to demonstrate. He put a lot of his powder in the churn, put in the old hen and closed the lid.

When he started to turn the crank the cluck squawked

*The implication here, of course, is that a member of this particular religious group was not supposed to swear, but did so this time. "Damn it! No more windmills," he said.—Editor.

and Dad went for him. He got him by the neck and he choked the guy until he almost dropped; he had his tongue sticking out when Dad delivered his final kick on the poor bugger's rear end, and threw him over the fence into the road; and the box he threw on top of him.

"Never come in here again with your — — — outfit. *Bree-glooka pulfera!*" he hollered. "You must know that they also have nerves and feelings."

The poor fellow picked up whatever was left of the churn—the old hen having flown the coop as soon as the lid flew off. He went at a dog-trot down the road and he gave no demonstrations in our whole area as we found out.

Dad was a hot-headed Dutchman; and if one stroked him the wrong way, he'd get very profane. He told that fellow a lot, but most of it would be unprintable, if I jotted it down here.

The Lamp-Chimney Cleaner

One day when we came home from our work in the field, Mother had all the coal-oil lamps standing in a row on the table. All were nice, clean, freshly filled, but all had a blue sediment at the bottom of the kerosene-bowl.

When she saw that we noticed it she said, "Now we will not be bothered any more with smoky lamp-chimneys. A man was here and he sold me this blue stuff; it only cost ten cents a pack. I bought six and he said he has only two left and if I give him a dollar he'll tell me how to do it."

She had given him a dollar and got eight envelopes, each containing a spoonful of table-salt, saturated with indigo. It prevented smoking, but she had paid plenty for the recipe.

The Pain King Man

Years ago a young man by the name of Jennings used to come around and sold Porter's Pain King, a patent medicine or liniment that was very popular among the farmers of upper Berks County. The man spoke English and did not understand a word of the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect. When he came to a place at Host old Amanda Umbenhauer was there boiling soap. He asked her to buy some liniment but she did not understand, for of the English he spoke she knew no more than he did of her lingo.

So she said to a young man who was there to tell her what this fellow had, Robbie told her.

"*Oh, du Gott! Ich nemm sex buddla!*" He told the peddler that the lady would take six bottles of Porter's Pain King.

She paid for it. Then the salesman, realizing his handicapped speech and also knowing by previous experience that he was losing a lot of business through it, asked this young man what he was doing.

Robbie said, "I'm unemployed."

"Would you go along with me and help me out? I'll gladly pay you and I can learn this Dutch talk too. And do you know where I can get a decent boarding-place, private—with a farmer—while I canvass this section?"

"Yes," said Robbie, "I'll say 'yes' to all of your questions. If you go to Herb Fidler you can get of the best eats and also a bed; and I'll go with you and I can teach you how to talk to these people."

"O.K.," said the salesman. "Who are you?"

"I am Robbie Troxel. My Dad is the barber and he is also a good coon-hunter, and —"

"Do you drink?"

"Oh, once in a while," said Robbie.

So they went out on the road. Robbie did most of the talking and they sold a lot of stuff. The salesman tried to learn to talk like Robbie—he could imitate the sounds, but he seldom knew what the words stood for.

One day they came out close to the Blue Mountain near Schubert, often called Seven Stars. A man was plowing and it was very hot and dry and he could hardly keep the plow in the ground. He had never heard of this Porter's Pain King. Robbie was telling him about it and how good it was and the salesman he just stood there at the fence, outside, and the farmer on the inside and Robbie in between.

All at once this Jennings gets the idea of going to show the farmer that he also speaks the dialect; so he says to the farmer, "*Leck du mich Gott ferdammt im orsch!*"

"*Was? Dich dummer, grosser, ivver-gawoxner dunner-wetter im orsch lecka? Ei du sull mich en —*

"*Halt! halt! hold it!*" yelled Robbie.

The farmer was coming out over the fence, and the poor dumb peddler, not realizing what he had said was undecided as to what to do.

Robbie was for a few minutes as busy as the proverbial cat on a tin roof, trying to translate and tell the farmer what had happened and at the same time, keeping the big son of the soil inside the fence.

Robbie said that when they came home that night Jennings gave him an extra buck for saving his skin. It is no crime not to speak the dialect but at times it's devilish inconvenient.

Der Shtrimp Moyer (Stocking Moyer)

He was a tall man and a very voluble talker. He'd sign his name J.J.J. Moyer, and then he'd explain what all the J's stood for. He'd say, "My name is James Jacob Jesus Jerusalem Moyer, then he'd stutter, and look puzzled, and say, "I guess I used one "J" too many."

We all had to laugh. He had a big telescope-case full of home-knit stockings that he himself knitted on a small machine in Womelsdorf where he lived. The stockings were of different material—some were wool, some cotton, and some half and half. They varied in price, as well as in style; and Jake swore that they would all stay up, and not slide down your shins, because they were all made in the up of the moon, i.e., when the horns of the moon point up. He insisted if you set a hen in that period, she'll never stay on her nest.

If folks were short of ready cash he would trade on anything he could use, and he usually had quite an assortment on hand; and he would trade any of it for anything you had to spare, and invariably he'd have the best of the bargain.

But one bitterly cold day he made a misdeal. He traded hose with a farmer on a jug of booze—white-mule—thinking it would help to keep him warm. Jake was used to being out in the cold, but he wore as many coats as an onion has skins; and the crafty backwoodsman had spiked the jug.

Going out the lane Jake took a decent swallow, holding the jug with one hand and the lines in the other. After a while he took another one, and soon thereafter he felt uneasy in his stomach. He was out in the sticks and some places there was nobody home—there was a funeral nearby—so that he kept driving. There was snow on the ground so he figured on using some farmer's outhouse. It was before there were rest rooms, and he was miles away from any hotel.

Seeing a small copse of trees ahead he decided to make use of them as a windbreak, and then saw to his horror a woman peeling bark from a log and he drove on.

"If I can only get to Wintersville," he said to himself. "I'll stop with old Gereon Deisher at his hotel."

But alas! He got into a rut with one wheel of his wagon and he upset in a drift and by the time he got out of the blankets and some of his coats it was all over—past human aid.

When old Jake told us about this mishap he said, "It was all over but the shouting. There was nobody there to shout, but I swore!"

We always felt warm and pleasant when we saw him coming for he was always full of fun. He told us one time how the name of Moyer originally came to be. He said that one time the hogs were so scarce and high in price that hardly anyone could afford to buy them. So a couple of moneyed men made a machine to make hogs. It was run by steam and had a big hopper on top where they put in old harness, boots, rags and what have you and at the bottom the hogs would come out.

The first one did not look quite right so they kept it for their own use. "It growled like hell," said Jake—"and when it was older it was nothing but a big jackass and they called it Moyer."

A Short Session

My Dad had a brindle heifer that should have been owned by a rag-picker—she was that fond of devouring any and all kinds of woven material she could get a hold of.

Even as a calf she'd try to chew my sleeve while I gave her milk to drink. Many a coat or vest left hanging on a fence-rail to dry out, would disappear into her maw. If Dad got a new hand to help on the farm he would invariably tell him to beware of the heifer.

She was almost full grown, and her appetite seemed to keep up with her increased size and weight.

There was a drive-way going through our fields to the next farm, and I was in one field with a land-roller when I saw the peddler coming out from the neighbor's farm through the gate and slip the big pack off from his back, and set it on the ground. Next he hung his coat and vest on the gate, and the last I saw of him he went back of a big elm tree, and slipped the suspenders down.

I could not get down in the next field because of a wire-fence, and I was too far away for him to hear me, but I could see that striped body slipping through the bushes. I got up on the roller and I hollered for all I was worth. Finally he stuck his head out. I pointed to the sneaking cow but he couldn't see her; but she saw the clothes on the gate. Then she saw the big bundle; some of the outer wrappings were sweaty from the peddler's back and she liked the salty taste. She gave a tug, and I could see the rip in the cover.

Old Isaac might have been halfway through his act of nature when he heard the rip. He came rushing around that tree like he was on a merry-go-round, and he yelled and cursed in Hebrew, Yiddish and Latin. He was holding up his pants with one hand and galluses and shirt-tails a-flying, and I laughed so hard that I almost did what he had done. By the time he had got rid of a lot of the disagreeable mess the leaves were off the bushes, and then down at the creek he completed his toilet.

It was close to supper-time and I unhooked the team and went home. When he came in to our house I teased him,



Next he hung his coat and vest on the gate.

saying that he had a short session, like the congressmen sometimes do. He laughed and said he wished he could get that — — — — animal down to Washington and let her loose among them.

Undoubtedly she would have caused quite a stink among the law-makers.

"Sack-coat—Me Miss Him"

Two brothers, Italians, and *not* the two who had the mishap with the mule, but very similar to them, would come about twice a year, with their leather-covered boxes of jewelry and notions. They were always there together—one coming in and one sitting in the shade when it was warm. They looked like twins and could have been so.

They were always clean and never said a word out of place. One day one of them came a-running; he burst into our kitchen and all out of breath he started to talk.

"Brother, he come here?" he asked. We assumed that they got separated in some way or other. We told him we had not seen his brother since they had called the previous time. It was a nice morning in early Spring but the boy was shivering—he was in his shirt-sleeves. When he saw that we noticed how uncomfortable he looked he made as if he was slipping on a coat, and said, "Sack coat—me miss him!"

When he realized that we could not tell him about his brother, he left; but he seemed to be excited.

Later we found out where they had been overnight with a farmer's family several miles away, and one of them got beyond his rights with a teen-aged girl, and the old man chased them off. Still later they came again to our home, but seemed to be different, and much more serious.

It was very seldom that such things happened—that is, that the misdeeds were due to peddlers.

The Peddler's Ghost

Long ago a few dirty rogues killed an old peddler at the Tulpehocken Creek near Womelsdorf (then called Middletown). At that time it was the route taken by the Sunbury

Post Rider, who rode on horseback from there up through the mountains to Sunbury.

They held up the poor old peddler one night and knocked him on the head, and robbed him after he had expired. His body and the wagon they threw into the creek. The harness they tore, and let the horse run away, so that it would look as if he upset into the creek at night, and drowned.

When he was found later on, he was buried there on the bank of the stream. Some said it seemed funny because he had no money in his pockets. But the stream being swollen by the recent heavy rains, and the water was very deep, it was impossible to search in the creek for money.

From that time on people claimed that the place was haunted. Some said they had seen the peddler searching for his money. Some asserted that they had heard an awful groaning and had seen a light in the bushes on the bank of the creek at night.

It was a bad place to go through at night. There was no bridge there; at the ford it was not so deep—they had thrown a lot of big stones in the water so that one could pass through quite easily. But beside the ford it was very deep, and with the trees and bushes it was very dark at night.

There was a family by the name of Beckey or Becker, and they lived somewhere at the Summer Mountain. One day they found out that Mose Dissinger had camp-meeting near Womelsdorf, and they walked all the way until they came to the creek. It was quite low and they could cross by stepping on the big stones that were not covered by the stream. But while the meeting was a-going there came a thunder-storm; it rained that the water seemed to come down by the bucket-ful.

After the storm was over these folks started to go home; when they came to the creek it was a roaring torrent, deep and wide. It looked like a river and of the ford nothing could be seen. The man had taken a lantern along to light them on the way home. He told his wife to stay where she was—on dry land, and he would look around a bit.

Soon he saw a log swimming in the current; he hooked it with a pole, and drew it over to the bank of the stream. He had poles to use for paddles or oars, so he said they would take off their clothes and would straddle the log—she was to hold the clothes up to keep them dry and he could steer the log and so they could get over. And then they'd put on the dry clothes and go on home.

So off they went—the man sitting in front with a pole in each hand, trying to guide the log; at the other end she sits, and holds the bundle with one hand above her head, and in the other she has the lantern. But the current was too strong for their frail craft, and although he did his best to get to the opposite shore, they were rushed still farther down. They go underneath a big branch, and it tore the lantern from her hand, leaving them in that darkness. The moon was dim, and hidden in the clouds. Once they came so close that he could grab the low branches on the bank, he shouted back to her, "Now if I get off, then I'll hold the log and you slide front. Don't fall in. We must still wade a piece but it isn't so deep there. Hold fast—don't let go!"

There he got off backwards and sat in front of the log to hold it. And right there comes something wet and cold and rough over the small of his back.

"Thunderation, what was that?" he yelled. He turned around and he saw two fiery eyes back of him. He gave a yell and sprang into the water. The log rolled over and there

she was right with him. It wasn't so deep but he didn't want to go very far in the dark. Then something started to make a noise in the bushes and they heard a chain rattling.

He took his wife and tucked her under his arm and plunged ahead on the bank, and "Wootsch!"—he was in a deep pool. He could swim and he helped her out. They waded out to dry land and dressed in a hurry, but their clothes were not dry any more.

Later they found out that a farmer's cows were there at the ford because it was the only dry place, not under water; and when he squatted down in front of the cow she gave him a lick just as cows do.

"The only good thing about it," said the man when he got into his pants—"there was plenty of water to be had to wash off any and all results of the accident."

Now a nice state highway is there and a large concrete bridge spans the stream.

The spook may have been drowned, for it is never seen nor heard anymore. Or don't the spooks drown? Who knows?

The Rat-Poison Peddler

Some fifty years ago there lived in the little town of Mt. Aetna (formerly *Wohlaivershteddel*) a man by the name of Helm; I think his first name was John. He made rat-poison, and this he peddled out among the farmers, and he sold a lot of it. It was very good and he guaranteed to rid the premises of all rats.

He put something in that looked fiery in the dark, and when you opened the box of poison it smoked.

He was a slick customer, and he knew a lot of tricks. One day I met him at a hotel, where both of us had dinner.

After the meal was over we were in the bar-room, and this man goes back into the kitchen; when he came back he held an egg in one hand, with the pointy end of it towards his wrist. He was a tall man, a six-footer, and quite husky. Lifting the hand with the egg in it, on high, he brought his hand down as though he was going to put a hole into the top of the bar. But when his hand was almost down, he put on the brakes, as it were—he opened his hand,

and there on the bar stood the egg on its pointy end—just dented so much that it kept in an upright position, without support of any kind. And not a drop of either white or yolk could be seen. He knew to a split hair, how much pressure to put into the downward blow, and when to apply the brake.

There was a toper in the room, and he watched this performance. He said, "I can also do that. You are not the only one."

So *he* goes and gets an egg, and he tries it. But alas! He did not know when to put on the brakes and the egg was scattered and spattered all over the back bar. The hotel-man told him to leave, or he'd throw him out.

"Mr. Bones."

As a boy of twelve, I had a strange experience, bordering on the supernatural and/or mystical order. Neither then, nor now, have I ever believed in what are commonly called spooks. It has never seemed to me as being possible for a person, after being dead for a number of years, their bodies decomposed, to come back in any form, so as to be seen by any one.

Yet, having heard tales of ghosts, witches, spooks, and goblins, times without number, I sometimes had my doubts.

Near to our home was a large tract of woodland; it was the Gerber farm, originally owned by my great, great, great, great-grandfather, the pioneer organ-builder. It was tenanted at the time of this occurrence by Henry Light; his sister, Mrs. Gerber and her spinster daughter owned it, and also lived in a part of the huge old house.

In this woods, close to the road, stood an immense old oak tree—a veritable giant. It was at least four feet in diameter, and it was hollow. It had been hit by lightning, long ago; it had a scar all along the trunk, and at the lower end a big piece was missing. There was a hole in the tree, round, and it always seemed to me to look like a gaping, black mouth.

Years and years ago, an old peddler had stayed at this farm overnight; and the next morning he was missing—he had mysteriously disappeared. I do not remember the name of the tenant at that time. But from there on the story was told that beyond any doubt, he had been murdered by the farmer for his money. No trace of the peddler's body, nor of the wagon and horse could be found.

Folks, passing through the road at night, said that in the woods, close to this big tree, they had seen a headless skeleton walking or crouching in the deep shadows. The stories varied, as all such stories will. But time and again some belated traveler would tell at the mill, the tavern or at the smithy of having seen this apparition; so finally they referred to it as "Mr. Bones."

When old Jake Moore was renting his farm, some one of the family would come to our house on some errand or maybe just on a neighborly visit. They invariably would continue to go down the road, when on their way home, and once across the creek, they would go through the field and orchard to their home. They did not go in what is still locally known as "Sand Lane"—the lonely road that went past the big tree.

When some one of our family remarked on it, they always had a fitting excuse—"There are mud-puddles in the road through the dark woods," they said. Or, "The snow is drifted as high as the fence in the Sand Lane," old Ed Schaeffer would say when he lived on this farm.



He knew a lot of tricks.



Next morning he was missing—mysteriously disappeared.

Thinking of all this, and rehashing all of it at a later date, I arrived at the conclusion that they all of them were trying to avoid passing the tree at night. Some of these tales about Mr. Bones even were that the beholder had seen the skeleton going on all fours and groping in the leaves, trying to find his missing head, and then to vanish from sight back of the tree, and presumably going through the hole in the tree.

"Witches live in hollow trees, so why not spooks?" said one bewildered yokel.

As a kid I several times had to pass this spot at night. I did not scare about spooks, since I did not believe in their existence. But in the big tree lived an old screech-owl. She would fly all around my head, snapping her bill, screeching like an Indian, and then swoop down underneath the overhanging straw-hat, almost knocking it off of my head and let out a blood-curdling yell. I was more scared by the damned old owl than by all of the spooks in creation.

Dear readers, I am not digressing—I am not wandering from my narrative—I'm just going step by step to the gruesome culmination of this tale.

One of the worst nights that I can recall, I was aroused from my bed by someone pounding on the door and hollering for admission. Being in late summer, I went downstairs without dressing to see what was going on.

As I opened the door there stood an old man, holding a horse, and surrounded by half a dozen dogs. He was seared almost out of his wits, he could hardly talk intelligently.

"I want to stay here in your barn overnight," he said. "I had a shack down in the woods, but the roof leaks, and then when I got into the big old hollow tree there came this — — — spook and says he is looking for his head."

"The spook?" I stammered.

"Yes, the damned old spook. Have you seen him?"

"No! But I've seen the owl," I said.

"Well, she won't scare you nor anyone—I killed her. But I cannot kill the spook; and I cannot live there anymore. Can I stay?"

By this time Dad had heard us and came down the stairs; he had partly dressed. When we told him of all this he agreed that they could stay overnight, or till the storm had abated; and the following day the old German and his outfit went down the road.

Years later, when the old lady who owned this farm still lived there, she sold the timber to a lumberman and he

moved in with a sawmill—a brand new outfit. He was old Jim Kalbach, of Myerstown, a veteran sawyer and a real woodsman.

When the men who felled the trees got close to the big hollow tree, the old lady told him that he was to cut down the big tree also, even if it could not be converted into lumber, she said.

"I want it to be out of the way," she said. "There are so many dumb stories about it—I want to get rid of it!"

So when they cut it down one day, I was there to see it fall; it crashed down like a carload of bricks. It was only a hollow shell; but in the rotten wood and trash in the bottom of the stub, I found a pile of bones. They looked to me as if they must have lain there for a very long time; and they appeared to be the bones of a human being.

So I went and I told old Jim of my find. He accompanied me to the scene. He looked at the pile of bones, and he said, "That's only a calf!"

"Calf, like hell!" I said "If that is a calf, then I am one too."

I showed him the big leg-bone—the femur. I said, "If a calf has a leg-bone like that, his head would stick up out of the barn-roof by the time it was full grown. That was a man!"

I gathered all the bones that I could find. Some of them were even sticking in the cracks and splinters of the giant tree. I could easily identify a lot of the bones, but I could find no human skull—nary a trace of one.

I got a shovel and dug a hole there in the woods, nice, and clean, and deep. I put all the bones in that hole and covered them with soil and leaf-mold.

I do not believe that I will ever know or find out as to what or whom I buried. But I'd swear that it was no calf.

As to what others saw, or claimed to have seen I do not know—I only saw as I have told in this tale.

The old man with the horse and dogs was old "Wald-fogel." Whether it was his real name or not, I cannot tell, but it was an appropriate name for him—he was a veritable bird of the woods.

At the head of the little grave I stuck a flat stone into the loose dirt—minus any inscription; for what *could* I have put on it?

As I stood there in the cut-over, looking at the setting sun, I somehow felt sorry for the unfortunate critter whose remains I had interred. *Requiescat in pace!*

