

Mrs. Edward Brant

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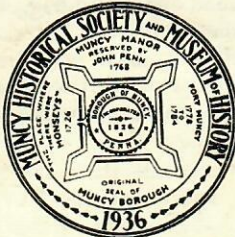
Now and Then

ESTABLISHED IN 1868
Quarterly Magazine of History and Biography

Published by the Muncy Historical Society and Museum of History and its Affiliates: The Muncy Garden Club and the Muncy Public Library.

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SOCIETY'S HOME
10 N. MAIN ST., MUNCY, PA.
EXTRA COPIES OF NOW & THEN
50c EACH — \$2.00 PER YEAR

VOLUME X

APRIL, 1952

NUMBER FOUR



Photograph of a replica of David Zeisberger's Cabin on its original foundations at Schonbrunn on the Muskingum showing how a typical Mission cabin was like.

JOHN HECKEWELDER'S TRAVELS
Paul A. W. Wallace

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

In presenting this sketch of John Heckewelder's travels, I have no thesis to advance, no problems to solve, no interpretation to render either of the Moravian Church of which he was a member or of Heckewelder's own character and beliefs. My object is simply to give you a travelogue, taking incidents as they come, and allowing the beautiful but tragic theme of the wandering Indian mission which he served to provide as much in the way of background and motive as may be needed to give the travels point and coherence.

Let me begin with something that occurred on the afternoon of September 3, 1781, at Gnadenhutzen, Ohio, when Heckewelder was taken prisoner by Indians under the Wyandot Half King and a Delaware Chief called Captain Pipe, who were in alliance with the British. He spent his first night of

(Unsigned articles are to be attributed to the Editor)



N.
W. ————— E.
S.

The Old Pottery at Pennsdale built previous to 1807 and demolished in 1933. It stood in the meadow just west of the "House of Many Stairs" and near the line fence. No trace remains today except a slight depression at the N. E. corner and the "Borax-Spring".

THE ELIZABETHTOWN POTTERY; ROCK COTTAGE (THE HOUSE OF MANY STAIRS) AND JOB PACKER

The Editor of *Now and Then* has been so deeply indebted, in the past, to the mind and pen of Miss Elizabeth Whitacre, now of Media, Pa., that her late offerings on the subject of the old Pennsdale Pottery; Rock Cottage (The House of Many Stairs next door) and the unique character, Job Packer, that he reproduces her letters in toto as they have been received by him since January 1, 1952. Material of this sort has been the specialty of *Now and Then* through-out its nine volumes as both of its editors have passed-by annals already safely in print and favored the reminiscences and family records supplied them by still-living amateur or semi-professional historians. Pennsdale, being originally a Quaker settlement, has been an unusually fertile field for research and up until lately there were plenty of able and willing writers to contribute to *Now and Then* when asked namely, Miss Elizabeth Warner; Miss Katherine E. Kirk; Mrs. Charles Ecroyd (all now deceased); but still living, Mrs. Henry Kirk and her sister, Mrs. Louisa Starbuck of Media (both Parkers by birth) and lastly, Miss M. Elizabeth Whitacre, the most productive contributor of all. She writes: "I will soon be eighty-four years of age and my mind works somewhat slowly and it is easy to forget; so I am tied to my notes very closely, made many years ago. I keep them in my *Pennsdale Folio* and from now shall not trouble to write further and soon my 'scraps' and scattered notes will be useless to any one and can be thrown away. If I were younger, I'd try to write up *Elizabethtown* [Pennsdale] to *Now*—but that cannot be, &c., M. Elizabeth Whitacre.

ELIZABETHTOWN POTTERY

"It is surprising and very pleasant, when going over notes made many years ago, to find oneself as often satisfactorily answered after so many years of question—when distant from place and time. As I said in my recent letter to thee, I'd often questioned the initials 'J. S.' that were on the stone over the door of Rock Cottage [now known as "The House of Many Stairs", put in a state

of perfect repair by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Morris. Ed.] with 'D. W.' David Walton, and 'S. M.' standing for Silas McCarty. But on the very day of writing thee, I found the following note: 'Jno. Sykes sold this property to Thomas Brown in 1810.' I concluded at once that J. S. owned it in 1807 and helped in building the house and that his initials are those over the door. I found thro' a further item in regard to the *pottery*, this morning, in a series of letters written by Joseph Meyers, the Warner family genealogist. [The following is the item:]

"He, John Jones, was a fairly respectable citizen then [1866 to 1873] when J. Meyers was a little boy tho' I understood he had been a drinking man in his youth."

"To the west of this stone house [in the meadow] stood what was known as the *Old Pot House* where Ellis Jones (John's son) lived. It was used as a bivouac for the men employed in grading the railroad [the W. and N. B.] bed. The tracks were not laid until some years later—I think in the fall or winter of 1871-72. If thee would like to use my notes on Job Packer [His identity shall be revealed later on in this article] and if not, kindly return them M. E. W." The editor, considering that all notes on Pennsdale and vicinity by Miss M. E. W. are important, is including the Job Packer data later on in this article which was planned to cover the *Old Pottery* only, and especially since it dovetails so closely with that history. Job Packer, must of necessity, be continued in the July quarterly.

THE ELIZABETHTOWN POTTERY and THE BULL'S HEAD TAVERN

[Taken from a paper written by Elizabeth Warner of "Sunset Hill", Pennsdale, from information secured from her father. Ed.]

THE POTTERY

(A contemporary description of the building)

"The house is divided into two rooms by a board partition and these communicate by a rude wooden door. The rooms are floored and the attic floor makes the well-known early settlers' ceiling. A person of medium height can easily reach the heavy joists with upstretched hand. The east room has a window and a door in front and the west room two windows and a door in front and a window in the end. [Note the "cat-hole" in this door for the convenient entrance and exit of the family cat *but* the editor is told this hole was cut not for the cat but for the chickens when the building fell into such a low estate that it had become a chicken house.] Each room has a large fireplace. Under the northeast corner is a small cellar reached by a trap door in the floor and in the northwest corner there is a very narrow and very winding stairway. The attic is not partitioned nor ceiled and it has five front windows." Miss Whitacre here resumes her own description: "There were no windows in the back or north side. In the center back, opening off the second floor, was a heavy door which had once been the office of a portcullis. As the house stood close to the foot of the hill, there must have been a tram-way or bridge leading to it. My mother and I once *camped* during two summers in the stone house—now the House of Many Stairs. When I spent summer vacations there from teaching in Philadelphia, we 'poked' around both of these ancient houses with much curiosity and interest. In front of the pottery was a spring of excellent soft-water, or what is called *borax-water*, as mother called it. All the other houses on the Pennsdale Main Street had springs or wells of very hard limestone-impregnated water. This spring alone was soft. In your old photograph, boards cover the opening of this spring located between the two words *pottery* and *Pennsdale*. The hole in the door, thee called a cat-hole, was made for ingress and egress of chickens during Joseph Masters and Mary Chappell's [Mary Warner then] occupancy of the House of Many Stairs. The photo also shows the three posts that upheld the chicken wire that enclosed the chicken-yard."

"The Pottery and the House of Many Stairs have always been on the same

property. In *Now and Then*, No. 2 Vol. IV is an advertisement that describes the property at the time Job Packer sold it. Job Packer had added the east end of the stone house. He bought the property from Joels McCarty in 1819. [Joel McCarty moved about this time to northwest Sullivan County settling on what was to become McCarty's Ridge between Lincoln Falls and Shunk. He first married Ellen Roberts who was or soon became a noted Quaker preacher, founding the Meeting near their home. Both the Joel McCarty log home and the meeting house are still standing and in use. See "Elklands, p. 168 Vol. IV]

PHOTOGRAPH OF AN OLD ADVERTISEMENT FOUND IN THE
1835 MUNCY TELEGRAPH

**VALUABLE TOWN LOTS
FOR SALE,**

in the village of Elizabeth Town, better known by the name of "Goosetown."

THE Subscriber will offer at Public Vendue, at the premises, in Muncy township Lycoming county, at the house of Job Packer, on Saturday the 14th day of November next,

House of many Stairs

14 Town Lots,

in the above named village, which is beautifully situated in the heart of a rich, healthy and fertile settlement, called the Quaker settlement—on the great road leading from the village of Hughsville to Williamsport, and near the State road leading from the borough of Muncy to Towanda. It is about two and a half miles from the borough of Muncy and one from the Pennsylvania canal—on one of the above lots is erected

**A LARGE & COMMODIOUS
STONE DWELLING HOUSE**

The Muncy Telegraph, edited by J. Potter Paterson, preceded the Muncy Luminary founded in 1841. Evidently an early name was the *Quaker Settlement*; the first P. O. was "Wolf Run" because located at the Ellis house "Wolf Run", now the Rothfuss home. The name *Goosetown* was founded on an early law-suit over a goose. The *State Road* was the *Genesee Road* of 1799. The *borax water* came from the surface drainage from the hill to the rear.

"An article that appeared in a Williamsport newspaper, taken from the Philadelphia Times Magazine about the fall of 1887, had this to say: 'An object in Pennsdale that attracts the attention of visitors is an old two storey structure which stands on the north side of the main throughfare, partly concealed by an ancient apple tree. This was once the Elizabethtown Pottery, an industry established in 1829 by Job Packer and which furnished the pioneer settlers with many of their crocks and household utensils.'"

"I have always thought the clay used in the making of the pots, pie-plates and milk crocks came from the field in front of Charlie Moyer's lot for just across the road and opposite the open lot between the present Moyer house and the Swarts' house was a pond. We called it the *Frog Pond*. It marked a place from which clay had been dug. It was quite large and was always a marsh in summer bordered by sedges and it made a good place on which Pennsdale children learned to skate. I conclude that the clay for the pottery [and perhaps

30 by 46 feet, with 10 rooms and 2 cellars, at the door is a well of first rate water. There is also, a stone smoke house and a good barn with overshoot and carriage house and an excellent garden.—It is a good situation for a tavern. On another of the lots, there are erected

**A small Frame House and
STONE SHOP.**

AND A

FIRST RATE POTTERY, with a kiln, kiln house and all the necessary fixtures and appurtenances. It is now in operation.

All the other lots are cultivated and in fine order. An excellent *Run of Spring water* passes through part of ~~the~~ of them. A Plot of the town can be seen at the office of the subscriber, in ~~the~~ borough of Muncy, at any time, and at the premises.

Sale to commence at 10 o'clock. The terms will then be made known—they will be liberal.

WM. A. PETRIKIN.
Muncy, Oct, 5, 1835. 26.

for a brick-kiln¹ was taken from there to the pottery. It was hauled by horses to the rear of the log house and from there on wheel barrows across the bridge or tram-way through the great door to the upper storey of the pot-house where it was dumped into the hopper of the horse-powered mixer operated from below. This would account for the portcullis-like door and floor which was strong enough to support several hundred pounds of clay. The bridge or portcullis must have reached to the hill-side behind. The Potter's wheels and moulds must have been in the lower storey or at least the west room. Where the kilns were for the firing of the product, I can not say: [Could one or both of the immense fire-places have served?]

"Later, the Masters family used one end (maybe the east end) of the house for a laundry. They found, when they came there in April 1868, a huge kettle on the crane in the east fireplace. They converted the other end into their chicken house, hence the *cat-hole*. Mary Warner who later married Randolph Chappelle of Philadelphia, also used the west end for chickens and manufactured the rope halters in the house which she sold.

"Another photo which I send to thee is taken from a slightly different angle than yours. It shows more of the tree at the east end and reveals the west end of the stone smoke house that was built when the House of Many Stairs was built. I think this is still standing and restored by the Morris couple. The buildings whose roofs show in your photograph [the one in the illustration] are barns; that one farthest to the right is on Dale Gray's land across the lane or alley way—the one to the left is the roof of the stone barn just north of the garden of the House of Many Stairs.

"I think the Pottery House was built of great chestnut logs. Ask Narber Fry for he demolished it in 1932 or '33.* The logs were hand-hewn and it was splendidly built, the doors and window joints all fastened with wooden spikes or pins. I think not a nail had been used in its construction and it would have stood another hundred years easily. Joseph Masters bought it, after John Jones occupied it. I always admired its lines and its soft brown colored logs overhung with *five-finger* [Virginia creeper?]. I searched through the fallen structure after Narber Fry had set off dynamite, stick after stick of it, in order to bring it down. I sat on Sue Mendenhall's porch all afternoon and could have wept to see it go. It took Mr. Fry from 5 o'clock A. M. to 5:30 P. M., to finish his task. I have a note that says the Williamsport Grit of June 9, 1895 has a picture of the old pottery. I wonder who wrote it?

"I do not know how the crocks, &c, were marketed tho' I fancy the red crocks with their deep insides glazed that I found in houses of Grandfathers Warner and Whitacre were made there. We have one here in the Cope home that we prize. It is about 10½" tall and 11" in diameter and a soft brick-red in color, really the original color of the plaster on the Masters house.

"The two houses, the Elizabethtown Pottery and the House of Many Stairs, have always, since white-man developed the town, been part of the same property. The latter stone house was painted or coated with a grayish pink clay that I think came from the same clay pit already described. Bits of the shelled-off clay lay on the ground when mother and I spend our summers

* Narber Fry, now a prosperous farmer and a large land owner, was asked and confirms Miss Whitacre's surmise and tells the editor the chestnut logs were much in favor then because of their resistance to decay. Also for fence-posts. Mr. Fry added that much of the material, even after a hundred years, was still sound and that several logs were incorporated into his barn across the road from his present home on Wolf Run. The editor thinks the original *Genesee Road* of 1799 followed the left or south bank of Wolf Run all the way from the old crossing of the "Sunbury-Williamsport" highway (not far from the river) until it reached William Ellis's stone house and mill and the ford there, now a stone bridge. Mr. Charles Ecroyd is inclined to share this belief. Short traces of it can still be made out.

First section built 1790
 Second " " 1807
 Third " " 2

there. On your postal-card picture is the name Rebecca Beeber. [The message to Miss Rebecca Beeber of Hughesville of Feb. 24, 1910, reads as follows: 'Hello: I am at Pennsdale today. Will be up to play cards tonight. E. G.'].]

I do not know who she was but probably also from Hughesville. In the Seminary, Jan. 17, 1952, an Elmer Beeber is mentioned in the Hughesville Mail section. The E. G. might well be Ed Gray or his sister "Elcie". I think both photos were taken by Walter Ecroyd. My mother, whom I have been quoting, was always a careful village observer and a grand story teller. Harriet Masters Rhoads is still living and over 90, with a good memory for her early Pennsdale life. There are five names by which the village has been known: Elizabethtown; Hickesville; Goosetown; Pennsville; and Pennsdale. As I have said, a paper on the Pottery should be accompanied by one on Job Packer, a long remembered character. I'll try and send thee notes on him next week. Sincerely thy friend, M. Elizabeth Whitacre. [And so she did but lack of space shall make it necessary to reserve Job Packer until the July issue.]



AN EIGHTY FOUR YEAR OLD LETTER WRITTEN BY
J. M. M. GERNERD TO HIS FRIEND FLEMING SHOEMAKER IN 1868.

FOUND IN A PACKAGE OF OLD LETTERS GIVEN TO THE EDITOR BY
MISS JESSIE SHOEMAKER.

This letter from Jerry Gerner to Fleming Shoemaker, dated at Muncy, Pa., April 3rd, 1868, contains no material of historical importance. It only gives one a glimpse of the young Gerner at a time when he was only a run-of-the-mine Muncy business-man, not having yet dreamed of a *Now and Then* devoted to preserving the early history and the trivia of the life of a small town—but destined to continue for twenty-four years and to become the inspiration for six more volumes added to his own three volumes. It was to eventually lead to the creation of the Muncy Historical Society and Museum of History having over 600 supporters. As this letter discloses, written only three months before his *Now and Then* was launched in July, he had no idea as to what it was to be (or become) as he confides to a personal friend—"If I undertake to issue a 'Journal of Science, Literature and Religion', will you subscribe?" The generally accepted idea of his issuing a pamphlet merely as an advertisement of a music store every *now and then and* as the mood suggested, cannot be supported in view of his written words here. "A Journal of Science, Literature, and Religion". Note that *Local History* is not mentioned in this very first expression of his inmost thoughts. Things grow in men's minds as time goes on and as first conceptions are moulded and developed by the passage of time. When he wrote this letter, he was only 32 years old and he thought of himself as fitted by nature to be a leader of thought in the lines of science, literature and religion. His letter shows that indeed he had a natural command of language—a literary style—he already was able to write an interesting letter to a humble friend and his newly-wed wife and have his family preserve it for 84 years and to be proud of it. So far as science and religion are concerned, he is not specially noted, *but* as a delightful chronicler of history he is a joy even to the present generation and his three volumes of *Now and Then* are highly prized possessions and are still read as if they were written yesterday. A young man's ambitions and beliefs in himself are not always valid and lucky is he who discovers his real *bent* early enough to develop it. He lived in an age of Muncy when a country newspaper (The Luminary) offered the only outlet for expression that was boiling up inside of him. To see a column of print in a newspaper with his name at the end was the acme of his ambition and he could write endlessly on any topic—his only check being the space allowed him by G. L. and I. P., the editors and printers of the Luminary. Just think, articles of 3½ columns, and he was perfectly right in thinking that his stuff and that