

Now and Then

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An Invitation

to join

The Muncy Historical Society

"We pursue local history to find out about the people who occupied the Muncy area in earlier times—how they lived, what they thought and talked about and believed, the houses they built, the schools they attended, the vehicles they rode, the churches they worshipped in, the stores they kept, the land they cultivated,—even what they wore and the games they played and what they ate for breakfast. In this way, the past becomes real to us and we understand its relation to the present."



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Deaths—1882

April, 1882

- 1—in Muncy Walter son of S. D. Renn aged 5 mo
- 13—in Muncy Mrs. Tillie Corson aged 21 yrs
- 16—at Hughesville David Frantz aged 70 yrs
- 15—in Clinton tp., Benj. Wilson son of Henry & Mrs. Fry aged
4 mo
- 15—in Clinton tp., Maggie Winder aged 3 yrs
- 18—in Clinton tp., Mother Sarah Hartman aged 74 yrs
- 19—at Elimsport, Robert Dunbar aged 78 yrs
- 21—in North'd co Eva Adella Huffman aged 9 yrs
- In M. C. Tp., infant child of Wm. L. & Mrs. Ritter aged 7 wks
- 26—in Muncy Mrs. Phoebe Cooks wife of Jacob aged 74 yrs
- 28—at Watsontown, Mrs. Hannah Kramer wife of Jos. P. aged 68
yrs
- 28—near Phila. James Hall

May, 1882

- 2—Mrs. Mary Strieby wife of J. P. at Newville, Cumberland co
aged 25 yrs
- 5—in Muncy Mrs. Mary Barnes wife of Albert aged 41 yrs
- 5—in Moreland tp., Charles King son of Chas. & Sarah King aged
9 yrs
- 6—in Pennsville, Ida Johnson wife of G. A. Johnson aged 16 yrs
- 9—in Upper Fairfield Chas Drick son of Geo & Elizabeth aged
9 mo
- 20—at P. R. Mrs. Fannie Marshall Soars aged 87 yrs
- 25—in Hughesville, Samue Runtz aged 70 yrs

June, 1882

- 7—in N. Y. Willie son of Chas & Kate Carpenter aged 5 yrs
- 14—in Sul co Godfrey Bay aged 62 yrs
- 16—in Lower Fairfield tp., Letitia Gray aged 74 yrs
- 25—in Wmsport Mattie Stead da of J. R. aged 18 yrs
- 24—in Moreland tp., Catharine Confer aged 71 yrs

—O—

1907

TALES OF BULL'S HEAD TAVERN

By Elizabeth Willits Warner

EDITOR'S NOTE—“*Tales of Bull's Head Tavern*” and “*Memories of an Old House*” by Elizabeth Willits Warner are the second in a series of short stories taken from *THE WARNERS OF MUNCY VALLEY* an anthology written by Warner descendants of the Pennsdale Quaker Settlement.

Seventy years ago the temperance wave had only just begun to roll, and the Bull's Head Tavern in Pennsdale, and its results were matters of course. The tavern was in the east end of the stone house adjoining the Elizabethtown Pottery. The west end of this

house is very old. The two front windows are small and high, and the fireplace has magnificent proportions. The cellar is back of this room in the side of the hill, and the stairway to the rooms above is in the cellar. There are two rooms and a narrow hall on the second floor, and they have the distinction of being the only two rooms in the house that are on the same level. There is evidence that the larger of these two rooms was once divided by a partition. The back door of this upstairs hall opens into the garden. The rest of the house was built by Job Packer, a famous character in the village seventy years ago. You go down one step to get from the old kitchen to the other front rooms, now used as a sitting room, but once used as a barroom. You go up four steps from the sitting room to the parlor in the rear, and the parlor windows open against a high bank, on top of which is the garden. The second floor is equally irregular.

Seventy years ago there was no fence around the yard, and a row of sheds stood where the west fence now stands. These sheds were for the convenience of convivial customers, who came with horses and wished to stay awhile. Some horses stood there all day. The tavern sign was fastened to a post at the southeast corner of the yard. It was the head of a brown bull with white horns, and the head had a yellow circle around it. One night a wag tore down this sign and nailed it to a smokehouse. This was considered a good practical joke.

The bar extended from the door almost to the north wall, and the rear counters and cupboards still remain. The room above the barroom also bears evidence of being used as a storeroom, for liquors. There was a porch in front of the barroom door, and a bench stood under the west barroom window. The pump was near the west end of the porch.

One day a young fellow entered, and as the chairs were all occupied, he seated himself on the broad windowsill east of the door. Just in front of him sat old X, who had reached the quarrelsome stage. Presently X rose to shake his fist at the bartender and otherwise abuse him. His demonstrations were so violent that the young fellow was afraid the chair would be upset, so he put it against the wall. Presently X sat down again, on the floor, with a violence that made the house shake and the glasses rattle.

Ha ha ha ha! resounded from a humorous comrade in the southeast corner, where he sat between the window and the stove. Of course X was furious. He sprang to his feet, shook his fist at the laughter and screamed:

"You're a ----- liar!"

Fights in the barroom or the yard were of frequent occurrence, and caused neither surprise or comment. Two close friends, both farmers, always fought when they became intoxicated. The next morning A. would say to his wife:

"Well, I had another fight with B. last night." Then he would go to B's house to make up the quarrel.

The atmosphere of the barroom was blue with tobacco smoke. It is impossible to imagine any other atmosphere in a barroom. And the regular frequenters spun the usual marvelous tales, each trying to outdo the others in reach of imagination. They were in nowise a breaking of the ninth commandment, and it would be as incorrect to call them lies as the tales of Kipling or Jules Verne. One prom-

inent member of the group boasted of his prowess in hunting. Someone said of him that if his stories could be believed, he had hung a deer on every tree in the Allegheny Mountains. His tales were harmless, and his neighbors knew that, while he could shoot a squirrel in the top of a tree with a rifle, he could not hit a deer at 50 yards. He once told the following tale to two young men from Philadelphia who were visiting in Muncy Valley:

One day when he was hunting on the mountain he stepped over a log, and found himself astride a big bear that had been asleep on the other side. The bear started down the mountain, and the hunter seized him by the ears and held on till they reached the foot. The man failed to tell what became of his gun, but the visitors swallowed the tale eagerly, to the joy of steady customers.

Job Packer was past his prime seventy years ago, and the oldest inhabitants remember him as a little bent old man. His stories were of the Munchausen order and have been handed down. The following dog story is a fair sample.

One day he was out hunting and his dog started a fox. The dog ran so fast that when he struck a sapling he split in two. Job hurried to him and clapped the two halves together. In his haste he got two legs up and two down; but that made no difference; the dog ran on. In fact, it was an advantage, for when two legs got tired, he could turn the other two down and run on them.

This is almost equalled by his wild pigeons story. It savors of the time now long past when wild pigeons came in clouds every spring. On this occasion he went into the woods with his gun and found the limbs of the trees loaded with pigeons. If he aimed at the pigeons, he would get only three or four; so he aimed at the limb, split it open and caught the toes of the whole limbful.

Another story was of a head of cabbage that was planted in the middle of an acre field. It was so large that the cows ate the outer leaves through the fence. Sometimes Job's friends tried to outdo his tall tales. A woman Friend later told Job of an immense copper kettle that had eight men working on it. The kettle was so large that they could not hear the sound of each other's hammers.

"What did they want such a big kettle for?" innocently asked Job.

"To boil thy big cabbage in." was the reply.

Another good story was told at Job's expense, at the Broad Mountain House. This was a famous stopping place for teamsters from Pottsville to Catawissa. The floors as well as the beds were frequently filled with lodgers. One evening Job had entertained the guests with a choice collection of romances, and the company had gone to bed. Someone coming in aroused a man who was lying against the door. The sleeper yawned, and said he had had such a queer dream. He thought he had died and gone to heaven. He was looking over the books there and found page after page of entries:

Job Packer for lyin'

Job Packer for lyin'

One man, now past middle age, remembers that when he was a small boy he was sent to the tavern for two bottles of whiskey for the harvest hands. A farmer who did not furnish whiskey in harvest would have been thought stingy and mean.