

Montoursville

a town in history

Contents *...a snapshot in time of Montoursville history*

The Narrative *Montoursville's history by Don King*

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The Timeline *the when and where of the history*

There is a running timeline featuring key years in Montoursville history beginning on page 2 and continuing through page 11.

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1. ABORIGINAL CULTURE

It was on February 19, 1850 that an act of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania set the borough of Montoursville apart from Fairfield Township. That decision has been both celebrated and condemned by persons since that time. The decision allowed our community to organize for the public good in a manner that the surrounding countryside was not afforded, but at the same time reduced us to a 4.2 square mile parcel of real estate that does not include land Madame and Andrew Montour might have recognized as their home town.

Montoursville is mostly an elevated flood plain; a fact thoroughly understood by those who may have tried to dig a deep trench or even holes for the clothesline posts. The community is located at the confluence of the Loyalsock Creek and the Susquehanna River. Indeed, John



Historic Broad Street

Meginniss, who wrote the early history of this part of the state, claimed that the Loyalsock is actually a mountain river. The name is a corruption of LawiSaquick, meaning the "middle creek." That signifies that it flows between Muncy and Lycoming creeks. The "Sock" drains an area of 490 square miles. Winter snows, drenching rains, steep slopes, narrow valleys, and the folly of man combine to make the creek at times a very wild stream. It was Conrad Weiser, the Moravian pioneer and missionary, who early described a swollen Loyalsock, full of ice, and as we might imagine very dangerous to cross.

Archaeological work done in recent years has demonstrated that for thousands of years, Indians have visited, inhabited, and worked the land we now call home. Unearthed in recent years have been keyholes used to store grain, stockades, and many implements of a fishing and hunting culture in place on this land. On this alluvial land, Otstonwakin (sometimes spelled differently) was situated. The Indians we honor were the last of many groups

to inhabit the land. The Susquehanna was a mecca for fisherman from southeastern Pennsylvania and Delaware. The town of Otstonwakin was basically a Delaware community. The town was situated on both sides of the creek and extended north to Sand Hill. Those Indians were actually vassals to the higher Iroquois lords. The mighty Iroquois were able to control a huge area using an army of about 600 very mobile warriors. They traveled trails that paralleled the Loyalsock as far as Wallis Run. From there, the path cut over Jacoby Mountain to Bodines, where it continued north on what later became Route 14. Access to present New York State may have been easier than believed. The trees were so tall that brush did not have a chance to grow.

As a result, there was much space on the forest floor for paths to become permanent. It was those roads that were used by the early Moravian missionaries who attempted to use Madame Montour's town as their base of operations.

The matriarch of the Indian community was in reality Elizabeth Couc, the daughter of Pierre and an unknown Algonkin wife. We know that she married a chief. We also know that she had a reputation as a leader, and that she was the mother of Andrew Montour. The name Montour was possibly taken as a business name employed in the fur trade. She was paid a soldier's wage to act as an interpreter. Andrew Montour served as an interpreter for Washington's forces during the French and Indian war. Madame Montour probably died at Fort Augusta around 1745. According to the General's own accounts, Andrew distinguished himself at Fort Necessity. Reports were that Montour was an imposing warrior with a prominent European cast. In 1768, Andrew Montour accepted a grant that included the present Borough of Montoursville. The grant contained 880 acres lying on both sides of Loyalsock Creek. The original cost of this tract was \$193.60, or

approximately 22 cents an acre. Andrew Montour was twice married and fathered two sons, Nicholas and John. Andrew was awarded additional lands on the Juniata and on the Ohio in Western Pennsylvania. There is a Montour High School named for him in that area. He died prior to 1775.

2. SURVIVING THE WARS

During the French and Indian War, the former worked very hard to secure this area of the frontier. An expedition designed to cement their hold on the territory camped across from Otstonwakin, while a scouting party proceeded to Blue Hill at the confluence of the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna. The scouting party decided that Fort Augusta, located along the river at Sunbury, was much too strong for their force. They reportedly scuttled two brass cannons near the mouth of the Loyalsock and proceeded over Indian trails to New France in the North. The deep water where the dumping of the cannon is supposed to have occurred is still called the "Cannon Hole." That event did much to discourage the French in this area.

The Loyalsock and Susquehanna were able to sustain a stable population due in part to the numerous species of fish in the waters. King of the fish was the shad. Many early residents of our town kept fish traps that provided a constant source of nourishment for the family. Many of the early settlers were Dutch and Swedish, who had come from New Jersey to escape trouble between the British and colonists. Some of the settlers who inhabited the lower reaches of the "Sock" were Indians who had been converted by the Moravians. Those converts probably made up at least some of the burials in the early cemetery that presently lies under the railroad tracks on the west bank of the creek. As early as 1769, Thomas Brown settled about two miles up the Loyalsock in the vicinity of Snyder's farm.

1768 1769 1775 1777

Montoursville founded First residents settle along waterways Andrew Montour dies The Great Runaway of this year targets area farms

It was the waterpower potential that afforded an opportunity to establish a mill on Mill Creek. This and farms as far as Farragut were targets during the Great Runaway of 1777. The water had sustained the families, but had also served as the highway for the British and Indians who invaded the region and inflicted the greatest inhumanity toward man that this valley has seen. There was much carnage and of special note was the scalping of James Brady on land near Canfield Island in present Loyalsock Township. During the retreat to Fort Augusta, the Susquehanna became a highway of escape. Every conceivable mode of conveyance was used to escape the valley. Men walked along the shore in armed units to prevent the slaughter of their families during the "Great Runaway." Many settlers never returned and those who did waited a few years to resettle their families.

3. EARLY LIFE IN MONTOURSVILLE

It is believed that John Else was the first permanent white settler on land presently occupied by our town. He came here from Bucks County in 1807 with his parents when he was only ten years old. His father bought 200 acres of land on Mill Creek. He developed a beautiful farm that became the Streibeigh Farm on the Susquehanna. He was very active and initiated the Methodist Church in town. Many descendents live in our community today. John Else built many structures in the community including the first actual house. That was constructed for Thomas Wallis, a blacksmith in 1815 near the present post office. One of his buildings stood at the site of the Northern Central Bank building until the 1930's. Mr. Else laid the piers for the first bridge across the Loyalsock in 1812. The actual construction of the bridge was supervised by James Moore, who became well known locally as a builder of bridges. The fact that these bridges were easily destroyed by the ravages of floods provided an opportunity for quite regular work by those so employed.

The man recognized as the founder of Montoursville was John Burrows. This interesting man was born near Rahway, New Jersey in 1760. He had actually carried mail on horseback from New York to Philadelphia at the tender age of 13. When the War for American Independence broke out, Burrows found himself in the thick of the battle. He was involved in the Christmas expedition against the Hessians at Trenton as well as other battles with the British. Young John was at the Battle of Monmouth, where his horse fell with him and was given another by Washington himself.



Home of Thomas Lloyd



Home of John Else

Burrows actually served as a courier for General Washington and spent some fourteen months in the household of our leader. His description of Washington's character lends credence to the lore we all learned in elementary school about the virtue of our first president.

Burrows spent several years farming and blacksmithing following the war. He moved to Muncy, where he engaged in the liquor distilling business for a time. He was appointed justice of the peace by Governor McKean and in 1802, was elected county commissioner. In 1808, John Burrows was elected a state senator.

Following his senate term, he purchased 570 acres of land near the mouth of Loyalsock Creek. Burrows purchased the land in 1812, but did not take possession until the following year. Most of the land was still wooded. About 1820, Burrows laid out the borough and started selling lots at \$50.00 a piece. Thomas Lloyd, whose house stood at Fairview, was involved in the enterprise. The eastern end of the

town was referred to as "Coffee Town" and the western section "Tea Town" due to the products consumed by the German and British inhabitants respectively.

General Burrows was an enterprising man. He succeeded as a farmer and was able to sell produce from the operation locally and in Baltimore. One year saw a profit of \$4000.00 that allowed our founder to pay all of his bills. That city was reached by raft and the products sold included the lumber from the rafts. The gristmill, constructed on Mill Street by the general in 1825-28, was large and served as a stimulant to business in the fledgling community. A few years later, the canal was constructed. A millrace ran from the canal to the mill, which was situated along the creek and across from a modern sand and gravel operation. Near the end of his life, Mr. Burrows sold many lots and died in 1837 at the age of 77. Before passing, he wrote an interesting autobiography for his children. This writing is available from the Historical Society that bears his name. Persons can view the grave of our founder directly across from the auto parts store on Broad Street and a few hundred feet into the cemetery. The stone is a large flat slab of granite. It is appropriate that there are no others resembling it in the grounds.

It must be noted that Thomas Lloyd helped John Burrows lay out the town. Lloyd was a Quaker and built his home at Fairview to the east of the town proper. He was known for his lavish parties and the wealth generated from operation of his mill.

The son of General Burrows, Nathaniel, was the first actual merchant in town. He actually had a store on the northwest corner of Loyalsock Avenue. In 1833 he built the first all brick home in the borough. That home, on the northeast corner of the same intersection, served as the final domicile for John Burrows. At one time General "Devil Jack" Burrows lived in a log home on the grounds of the airport. The house was built of Flemish brick,

1807	1812	1815	1820
Else first permanent settler	First bridge across Loyalsock built by Else	First house built in town	Burrows begins laying out Borough

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made on site. The style of architecture was Federal and the windows were brought from the glass factory in Eagles Mere, packed in straw. The house was torn down during the 1970's to make way for parking spaces along the alley. At one time, the residence was owned by Dr. Nevins, who also owned the land where Colonel Drake discovered oil in Titusville. Dr. Nevins also built the Montour House on the southwest corner of Loyalsock and Broad. This was later owned by the Weaver family. The Weavers owned the livery stable that eventually became a Catholic Church. Today, Montgomery Plumbing is headquartered in the building.

It is the good fortune of our community that the residence of Governor John Shulze has been saved and today proudly carries the sign of a Bed and Breakfast. The federal style building was occupied by the former governor following his immigration to Montoursville in 1829. Governor Shulze enjoyed life to the fullest and did not maintain adequate control of his finances. He had been very community minded and was very active in affairs of the Lutheran Church. Interestingly, the Burrows family saw to the early funding of the Methodist congregation in town.



Home of Gov. Shulze

There is some speculation that the eastern section of the Shulze home was built around 1800. It is known that the home was enlarged in 1840 at considerable expense. A portion of a lilac hedge that serves as a boundary with the Penndot property was planted prior to the Civil War. Later, the property fell into the hands of the Eck family. They had vegetable gardens in front of the building. There exists a small cinder block building on the grounds. That served as a laboratory for two of the Eck sisters, who used an old German recipe to create a frost bite lotion that was used by our troops in the Aleutian Islands during World War II.

Nathaniel Burrows took the contracts to build this section of the canal. His

influence probably led to the canal coming so close to the main street in Montoursville. The waterway turned north from the river and through the present airport runway to just south of the railroad tracks on Mill Street. Behind Kiwanis soccer field was a lock. Here products were loaded and unloaded. Coal was exchanged for products such as shingles, an important forest product from the mills farther up the Loyalsock. Many of the boats that made their way slowly along the waterway were up to ninety feet in length. Mules trudged the south bank of the ditch, pulling the cargo from Northumberland to as far as Lock Haven. The ditch was dug almost entirely by Irish laborers. It was twenty-

eight feet across at the bottom and forty feet at the top. The average depth was four feet. The canal era did not last long, as the steam engine mounted on a locomotive could carry loads at much higher speeds. But it is certain that something has been lost with the advent of speed. The entire Pennsylvania Canal, with the Portage Railroad at Johnstown, was completed in 1836. New York City, with easier access to the west via the Erie Canal, would surpass Philadelphia as the major city in the land.

A favorite activity for young boys from town was to "hitch" a ride on the canal boats. They would ride the ship to the present eastern limits of our community and walk back. Later, young persons enjoyed winter by riding the train to Halls Station and ice skating back to Montoursville via the canal.

The canal crossed the Loyalsock below the railroad bridge. There was a tow bridge built for that purpose. Several hundred yards from the creek one can still see the remains of Lock number 27. A lined well shaft is still visible; as are the sweeps used to open and close the lock. Flat stones can be seen just to the west of the creek. These stones lined the waterway. The canal served a dual purpose, as logs were floated to the

nine-acre pond of the Fisher Mill for processing. Much of the land through the above named area belonged to Benjamin Harris. The Harris family bought the land from Andrew Montour. Their remains are in Edgewood Cemetery.

As early as 1847, the Starr family operated a paper mill in the vicinity of Simmer's Nursery. Power for the mill was obtained from the Loyalsock Millrace. The factory burned during the 1880's. The millrace featured dams and locks. During the 1890's, careless operation of the locks periodically flooded Walnut Lane, a street located where the Beltway loop is presently situated.

A post office was opened and named in Montoursville in 1831. Solomon Bruner was appointed the first postmaster.

4. LUMBER BUILT THE TOWN

When we think of the lumber era, it is natural to think of Williamsport. Montoursville too had a great stake in this enterprise. It should be understood that logs from the Loyalsock watershed would not be floated upstream to the mills along the Susquehanna in Williamsport. It was natural that a thriving lumber and peripheral economy should develop in Andrew's Town, also. In order to have business, factors of production must be present. In our case, there existed ample supplies of white pine, hemlock, and hardwoods. In addition, the steep slopes of the mountains and their close proximity to the streams afforded an excellent transportation system for the logs. A spring freshet was necessary to send the logs on their way. One summer stands out as a disaster caused by "Mother Nature." The summer of 1886 was very dry and business reached depression levels in the community. Many young men left the town, never to return.

Many mills were situated along and near Mill Street. These included the Fisher Mill, the Ripton Mill, and the Emery Mill. The latter sawed up to 15,000,000 board feet of lumber a year. When hemlock became valuable for

lumber and not just for tanning of hides, this commodity kept the enterprise running at capacity. Much of that lumber was shipped via a narrow-gauge railroad to the main line near Jordan Avenue.

The hardwoods made possible the valuable furniture business in Montoursville. We were the home to large factories that made tables, chairs, and cabinets. Oak and maple were favorite raw woods from our forests. Cherry and walnut were also used in the process. Names such as Crandell, Bennett, Porter, Heilman, Woolever, Berry, and Wilson became important for the economic vitality of our town. This was an era when there was a closer relationship between business and community. We saw businesses lend their talent for progress in Montoursville. There was more of a communitarian spirit prior to the era of money managers and program traders on Wall Street.

The importance of those families who operated the mills should not be understated. The Emery family even gained control of Mill Street. The Bowmans provided the July 4th Fireworks from the bridge, and without their capital many projects would never have been attempted, let alone completed. The Konkles operated a planing mill on the property of Montour Auto. They became a very important family.

5. RAFTING ON THE LOYALSOCK

When persons talk about rafts during the lumber era, they usually think of only those that traveled the Susquehanna. The film of the "Last Raft" on the Susquehanna focuses attention on the tragedy of that craft as it hit a pier on the bridge at Muncy; resulting in significant injury and loss of life. The Loyalsock too had rafts. In fact, the last raft on the "Sock" was piloted by Mr. McEwen and floated in 1905. There were many captains on the creek. The trip down the stream during the high water in the spring required great courage and skill.

During the spring log drive, many rafts were seen on the Loyalsock. Some

of the rafts featured enclosed areas on deck. They were held together by pegs. Some of the older houses in town display these peg holes in their rafters and floor joists. Some crafts featured a crew of 4 or 5. Some had horses along for the required work. Experienced pilots were popular and quite valuable. The men would deliver their craft and walk back as far as Forksville to pilot another raft. During the wilder freshets, as the spring flood was called, wrecks would occur quite often. Boys from town were truant from school to watch the process from the bridge. The most entertaining portion of the jaunt was as the raft shot the spillway in the State Dam just south of the railroad bridge. Here, wrecks often happened and men stationed in rowboats served as lifeguards during the process. It took an army of men to capture the errant logs. Some of the product could be channeled into the cribs of the waterway leading to the mill at Emery Island. Logs were directed to the Fisher Mill through the canal. There was a channel that delivered the product to a nine-acre holding pond from there.

It was a lucky lad who was invited to make the final portion of a trip over the dam. Boys who survived this initiation into manhood became models for

their peers. They would wait along the banks for the chance encounter with a willing pilot. What a scene it must have been! Rafts, horses, loggers on the final journey of a parade down the Loyalsock. The spectators would line the bridge and the banks of the stream to feast on this yearly drama. The drive was the predictor of the town's economy for months to come. A good freshet could mean plenty of work in the mills, furniture factories, and the supporting business. A bad drive meant a depressed economy. Much of the lumber was conveyed to the markets

on the coast by the canal and later the railroad.

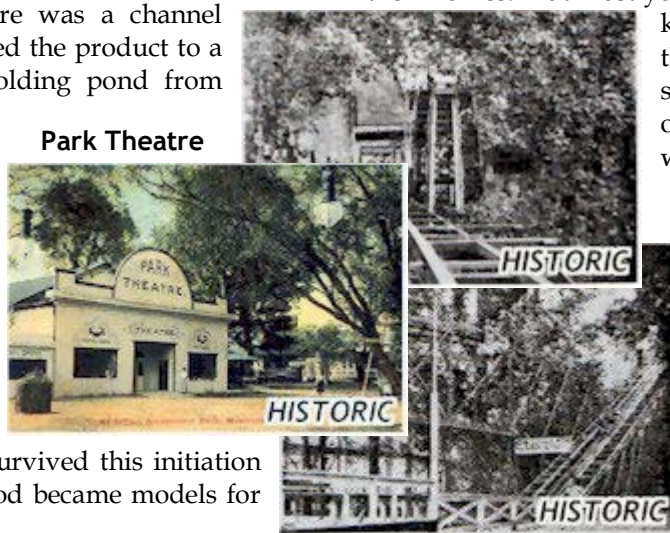
6. THE LAND AMONG THE WATERS GAVE US RECREATION

The waters in and around Montoursville supplied the community with a great deal of recreation. Since fishing was so important to the life of the community from the very beginning, many citizens participated in this endeavor. At one time, shad were running in the Loyalsock and the Susquehanna. Eels were plentiful in the canal and in the millraces. Catfish inhabited the holes under the old iron bridge. Some of these same waters served as swimming holes. The younger boys were confined to the canal. There the waters were shallow and less dangerous. As the boys matured, they shifted to the Loyalsock and even the Susquehanna. It must be remembered that for most, the Susquehanna was some distance from their homes. But most youth from town

knew where the deep and shallow parts of the river were located.

The canal also afforded an opportunity for ice skating. The ice would freeze more quickly on the canal.

Of course, that was a problem for that method of transportation. The canal froze in the winter and sometimes dried up in the summer. We would not stand for such insufficiencies in this age of on-time delivery. That part of the frozen canal called wide waters was later used as a source of ice to cool the iceboxes in town during the summer months. The Brass family ran the ice business for years. Packed in a sufficient supply of sawdust from the numerous mills, the blocks of ice



Park Theatre

Park coaster

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preserved in icehouses lasted through the season.

But of all water-related recreations involving our borough, it was Indian Park that stirred the greatest memories. The following passage is taken from my section of the program dedicating Indian Park on June 25th 1988:

It is June 1910, and the excitement fills the air as the people of Williamsport yearn to make that trip to Montoursville via the Montoursville Passenger Railroad. With five cents in hand, they board the trolley to begin their journey. The electric car passes through Loyalsock Township and rumbles around Sand Hill; the bridge is now visible, the trolley turns onto the structure and the excited passengers peer down at the water. Up Broad Street to Montour; whereupon reaching the north end it circles to proceed on Loyalsock to the vicinity of the Grafius home. The electric car crosses the millrace and then Mill Creek on a much larger bridge. Another one hundred yards and the car stops at a cement platform and the passengers rush across another bridge into the newly remodeled facility.

The more adventuresome have but one aim, the largest roller coaster in the East. The line is long, but never mind. Many of those courting decide on a boat ride; some twenty acres are covered by water. Still others head for the theatre; it seats a thousand people and possibly lines at the rides may thin a bit later.

Some of the elderly rock on the porch, which surrounds the giant merry-go-round. This day there are family reunions and the men and boys play baseball while the women prepare a picnic lunch.

By nightfall the park is lit up like a Christmas tree and music fills the air as couples expend their last energy dancing before beginning that return journey. The sounds of insects and the smell of wildflowers soothe the tired but happy riders as they leave this place of enchantment.

But alas, this age too would pass and it would be years before this great resource would once again reach its potential. With the memory of the past and a vision of the future, the citizens of Montoursville, aided

by many, have sought to make the dream a reality. The hiking trails, gazebo, ball fields, boating, picnic areas and, of course, the band shell will provide many memories for others. There is a hope that what we have done here will evoke the same longing years from now as "Indian Park" did for other generations.

Persons still alive do recall the wonderful times at Indian Park. There was dancing in the roller rink and even on the bridge. Johnny Hazel at one time led the Indian Park band. Black folks from Williamsport held their baptisms on a special day at the park. Many picnics of family and Sunday School variety were held at the park.

Without the passage of the electric light ordinance in 1894, the park that had originally been operated by the Starr family might have remained very small. The electricity allowed operation of new rides at the facility and made possible the Montoursville Passenger Railway Company. The trolley received its power from a plant located along the railroad at the south end of town. The engineering required to build the line was precise.

Later, borough council had to limit the speed of the trolleys through town and keep cattle toward the back of lots to prevent collisions with the motorcars. Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. eventually absorbed the electric company.

It was water from Mill Creek and from the Loyalsock that made the whole thing possible. That was the romance of the place. There was a dam on Mill Creek back of the present swimming pool for the borough. Water added to the excitement as the trolley headed to the park over a hump back bridge. Water under the trolley added to the excitement on the trip over the Loyalsock. But it was water that finally brought the old park to its knees. There

was a flood nearly every year. It wrecked the buildings and the cost of cleanup and reconstruction proved to be staggering. Eventually even the cabins located along Mill Creek were abandoned; and when the trolley ceased operations in 1924, the fate of Indian Park was sealed. During the 1940's there was an attempt to revive the facility as a religious institution.

But today, with the beltway as a buffer, the newly conceptualized Indian Park is enjoying a renaissance. The pond dug originally for gravel by Lycoming Silica Sand Company and improved by students from Pennsylvania College of



Covered bridge

Technology provides excellent fishing. A covered bridge built by the VIP Group crosses the remains of old Mill Creek. The new Mill Creek enters the Loyalsock on the other side of the beltway. A bike path provides an additional method of access. It is still the draw of water that brings people to reflect, recreate, and enjoy!

Years ago there were many cabins along the Susquehanna. Even on Emery Island, summer homes could be seen. They were subject to floods, but some remained until the ravages of tropical storm Agnes. It was the water that drew and continues to draw the people. Today Ellmaker Boat Dock affords an opportunity for more to enjoy the river.

Many persons walk their dogs on the filled part of the old canal or stop to take a snooze along the Loyalsock. Young baseball players might be lucky enough to hit a homerun that rolls into the old canal. Soccer players run in the beautiful fields located along the creek. Bikers along Mill Street may see canoes or even kayaks traveling the stream. Onlookers can fish or even catch a glimpse of the huge suckers in the deeper holes. Teenagers swing from the rope at the site of old lumber works.

It was the lure of fishing that attracted John Hazel to town. In 1923, he built a home on Mill Street near the bridge. He



Indian Park today

1910	1918	1923	1924
Indian Park at peak of success	Fire co. uses first motorized truck	John Hazel moves to Montoursville	Trolley stops and Park sees demise

was of course an excellent composer and musician. A former teacher at the high school, John Hunsinger, has written extensively about Mr. Hazel. Some felt that John Hazel was the finest player of the coronet in the country.



John Hazel

At one time the Loyalsock was one of the great trout streams. There is even a wet fly named for the stream. John Alden Knight, who began the business still located on Broad Street known as the Solunar Tables, was the first nationally syndicated columnist on fishing and hunting. He lived on Sand Hill.

Pollution has curtailed the swimming in the Loyalsock to some extent. During the 1940's and 50's there was a public beach to the south of the Broad Street Bridge. Lifeguards were on duty and even rafts were available. The stream has changed greatly in recent years. Today swimmers are more likely to be seen at the community pool or in backyards. But the "Sock" remains a great draw. Its cool waters attract people from the population centers to our east and swell the population of the valley during the summer months.

But where have all the golfers gone? What fun it must have been to swing a club at the Cannon Hole Golf Club! This beautiful nine-hole course was built along the banks of the Susquehanna on land now occupied by the airport and Kremser's Landing. It featured beautiful trees and plush grass. Layton King ran the facility and John Wentzler and others from town served as caddies on the course. Named for the French Cannon dropped near to the mouth of the Loyalsock, it might have become a very busy place to this day. But alas the lure of the river! That same river that causes one to daydream and think of the sights, sounds, and smells of even Indian days can turn into a tidal wave during floods. It was the 1936 Flood that turned this wonderful possibility into just a wonderful memory.

7. THE BOROUGH WATERWORKS

We know that Montoursville was one of the fastest growing communities in Pennsylvania during the 1950's. Much of the growth was made possible by our excellent and then very inexpensive water. The growth of the community necessitated development of additional reserves. This was accomplished during the 1950's and 60's. Today, our community has won a coveted state award for the management of its valuable resource. During the 1950's one summer was so dry that water had to be pumped from the pits at Lycoming Silica Sand to supply the growing demand.

During the early days, most persons in the town relied on hand-dug wells that seldom reached a depth of more than thirty feet. The wells were lined with river stones and served the community until the water table and pollution necessitated a supply that was more reliable. In November of 1891, the Borough Council met at Weaver and Callahan on Broad Street with Burgess Gilbert to hold a special election on the water works. They decided on a referendum to settle the debate. The vote was 174-56 in favor and 138-72 in favor of the borough and not a corporation managing the facility. That decision has proved to be one of the most important in the development of our community.

Negotiations were held with a James Starr in regard to purchase of the old paper mill property for the water works. Albert Weaver was appointed to negotiate with William Lloyd regarding a site for a reservoir. It is not clear if in the beginning they may have felt that there was sufficient water east of the borough for the project. Indeed, springs did serve as the water supply for homes in that area.

There was another election held to increase the indebtedness of the borough. The result of this special election was 191-115. It is hard to

imagine that they were actually willing to risk at that level, but thank goodness our ancestors had a great vision of the future. In July of 1892, J.S. Laird did a survey of the mountain property south of the river. The Philadelphia and Erie Railroad owned land through which a stream passed that was used for water for their locomotives. The railroad agreed to allow the borough to use the water on August 17, 1892. Their engineer was to supervise the laying of a pipe under the tracks.

It seems that ownership of the land where the reservoir was to be built was under dispute, but two men received the \$500.00 authorized for the purchase: J. Artley Beeber and Addison Candor. A committee of three was appointed to supervise the construction process. Bonds were issued for thirty-year duration to raise the necessary capital.

The bid of James Herdic of Williamsport (son of Peter) for \$14,728 for construction of the reservoir was accepted on October 31, 1892. Mr. Herdic was to keep the system in good order for six months following construction. They were to lay 1700 feet of ten-inch pipe from the mountain to and across the river. From the river to the borough line required 6900 feet. There were even thirty fireplugs included in the project.

The Pennsylvania Canal Co. had not abandoned the Montoursville section, and an agreement was necessary to allow the pipe to pass near to lock number 26. This was signed on December 2, 1892. An agreement with the Philadelphia and Catawissa Railroad was signed on December 2, 1893. The construction was evidently completed in May of 1893, as that is when Herdic was to begin his six-month maintenance. On November 24, 1893, council agreed to settle with James Herdic.

The project did have its detractors. A Mr. Elwell asked to have Mr. Herdic pay him for the loss of his horse that had fallen into an open ditch. The total asked was \$25.00. Council referred the matter to Herdic. Can we imagine the legal possibilities of such a matter today?

1928	1931	1931	1936
Williamsport Regional Airport opened	Present high school built	"Green" bridge completed	The Cannon Hole Golf Club destroyed by flood

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In addition, there were continual problems with Charles Fuller involving the water line passing through his property. A number of farmers within the community resisted the project. The matter ended in court following an attempt by the farmers to secede from the Borough of Montoursville.

A few additional comments on the water system include the fact that construction workers were ferried to the reservoir site for thirty-five cents a load. Interestingly, Montoursville did not rely on an investment banker to issue the bonds. They simply paid Grit a total of thirteen dollars to print the coupon bonds for the water project. It took some time to arrive at a fair method to charge the customers for the commodity. Years passed before meters were used to charge users for water.

8. THE WATER SYSTEM MADE PROGRESS POSSIBLE

One of the early positive consequences of the new water system was the organization of Willing Hand Hose Company on September 4, 1893. The new company originally met at the Good Templar Hall on Montour Street, but moved to the Tomlinson Opera House shortly thereafter. Already, the borough had as one of its most expensive items, the purchase of hose carts and fire hose. The equipment was stored in the Lutheran Church barn. The need to place this apparatus in a central location prompted the search for a new borough building. That building was completed in 1899 and served the community for one hundred years. It was wired for electricity and soon enjoyed a modern furnace. The new modern building located on Loyalsock Avenue has replaced the structure.

The fire company has had a reputation since its inception as one of the finest in Central Pennsylvania. As early as 1918, a motorized fire truck had been placed

in operation. For years the hook and ladder that had been purchased during the early 1930's stood guard to rescue persons from the taller buildings in town. This truck actually won first place at the State Firemen's Convention in 1933. The company has been involved in a number of large fires, including the lumber yard at the Montour Furniture Company burned in 1927, the Masonic Temple fire in 1929, and the Central Hotel fire of 1950.

The Fire Company has been a remarkably stable institution in Montoursville. It has not only fought fires, pumped cellars following floods, rescued persons from their boat, transported the sick and injured to the hospital, but also has provided the youth of the community with a positive image of community service during their years of growth in this town. The annual banquet of the firemen was an outstanding event. Social life in the community was extensive and featured dances, box lunches, and Sunday School picnics.

Interestingly, the adequate supply of water helped to enlarge and ignite new industries in the borough. John Peters ran a meat processing business on Loyalsock Avenue. This facility was on the Nevill's property. As early as 1895, Mr. Peters approached the council to consider the construction of a sewer to eradicate an unsanitary condition at his facility. The leaders of the town felt that the state would not look kindly on the

dumping of sewage into Loyalsock Creek. It appears that there was no follow-up to this proposal and a century passed before clear action was taken on the matter.

The supply of water led to the furniture factories in town becoming larger employers. Water has always been the lifeblood

of industry and with the promise of fire protection delivered, the local economy was granted an infusion of new capital. The citizens themselves saw opportunity and asked that the water lines be expanded to newly opened streets in the community. The development that was to reach a peak during the 1950's was launched by the vision of those who built the magnificent water system.

There were many issues to deal with over the years. The line that had originally been laid by teams of horses in the river often ruptured. There was leakage at the reservoir and a fire at the pump station on Loyalsock Avenue, but council always saw fit to manage these problems even in periods of very limited resources.

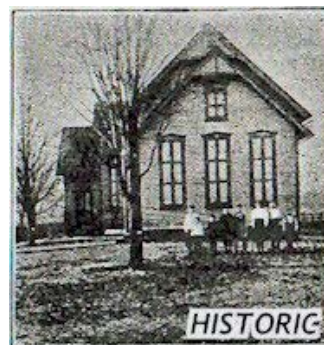
9. SCHOOLING IN ANDREW'S TOWN

It is probably appropriate that the remodeled high school has extended to nearly the foundation of our town's first school. That school building was an octagonal stone building that existed as early as 1816. The building was actually on the same property as the cemetery. The land had been donated by John Rockafellow. Appropriately, the school served also as a church and later as a hospital during a severe smallpox epidemic. It is also appropriate that an excellent school system has served this community for many years. Indeed, it was Montoursville's own Governor John Schulze who first proposed the case for universal public education in our commonwealth. That first building had a stove in the middle and benches along the outer walls. The one consolation for the early scholars was that their school year ended in March. This allowed the children the time to help with farming and other chores.

There were other schools in town. Notable was the building on Loyalsock Avenue across from Nevill's Flowers. The foundations for the houses along that section of the



Old borough building



Loyalsock Ave. normal

1950's

High school remodeled and expanded

1950's

Development of water system reaches peak

1950's

Swimming at a public beach south of Broad St. popular

street are made from parts of that edifice. Children started first grade in the back of the building and worked their way toward the front. There were additional schools throughout the community during the nineteenth century. One private academy was held in the Governor's House and was run by the Lutherans and the Quakers. During the 1880's, another school was organized under the tutelage of Professor John Mason Duncan in the old Union Church. This church was located to the east of the present Flight 800 Monument Grounds. The building had been erected by the Lutherans and Presbyterians. The construction date was 1838 and the builder was John Konkle.

The first class organized for graduation from Montoursville High School was in 1894. The ceremony was held at the Tomlinson Opera House (present location of the Masonic Building) on April the 25th. The graduates were Mary Lundy, Walter Hyde, Maggie Bubb, Creighton Konkle, and Johnson Hayes. Class size doubled in two years. Our most notable educator was Charles Lose. He achieved distinction as a teacher, writer, and lover of the Loyalsock Valley. His book titled *The Vanishing Trout* is enjoying renewed life through a new printing.

The first public high school in town was built in 1868. It occupied the wooded Normal School grounds at the corner of Jordan and Montour. The building was nearly square and the two floors reached a height of 24 feet. There was a bell tower on the top of the hip roof. There were originally two rooms on each floor.

The Montour Street School was built in 1907. Jacob Klepper was the principal at the time and occupied the same home as the present principal of the high school, Ray Huff. John Callahan served as the President of the Board of Education. There were two

assistant principals: Effie Womelsdorf and David Updegraff. The dedication was highlighted by an address by Dr. N.C. Schaeffer, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Students worked their way to the upper floors as their age increased. The third floor featured movable walls that allowed the creation of an auditorium. Many events were held in this space. Previous to the completion of this building, graduations, concerts, and plays were held in the Tomlinson Opera House. Sporting events were contested in The Junior Lodge facility, across the alley from the present Post Office. In 1924, a girl's basketball team was commissioned. Elizabeth Hanner was the coach and assisted by the great baseball pitcher, Tracey Barrett. Both the girls and boys played in the Junior Lodge Hall on Broad Street. Elizabeth Hanner Delong became a centenarian in August 1999.

Our present building was born in controversy. There was a great deal of opposition to the building of a new structure. In the end, those with a view of the future prevailed. The land had been purchased earlier from Weavers and Callahans. It is important to note

The first high school



HISTORIC



Montour Street School

that this project took place during the depression. Montoursville turned down most public funds, but did allow the WPA to level the campus with wheelbarrows and shovels. Charles Adams was President of the School Board and George Lyter, the principal. The entire project of fourteen classrooms, a library, office, teacher's room, auditorium, gym, and showers cost the citizens of the community

\$52,963.00. We have received our money's worth from this endeavor.

A major expansion was completed in 1950. The present E Corridor along with the area encompassing the present library and wrestling room were constructed at this time. Previous to this, the sporting events were held on the extended stage of the auditorium (now the office area) in the original building. The present Guidance Area rests on the old court.



Today's high school

In 1957, B Corridor was added. The math and business departments presently occupy these rooms. The chemistry room and the advanced biology rooms were added. In addition, what now serves as the District Office was constructed as a music room. Ralph Price was principal and able to easily walk the building during classes.

In 1965, growth had necessitated the adding of a second floor to B Corridor as well as the construction of the present cafeteria. The auditorium was built and with this construction, two courtyards emerged.

In 1974, a new entrance to the gymnasium and a locker room atop the structure for girls was completed. The school was bulging at the seams with the "Baby Boomers" filling even basement rooms to capacity.

Mr. Robert Christ and his students had built the agricultural building. It had reached a state of deterioration and inadequacy. A search was begun to entertain additional space for a more functional facility. To the dismay of many, the codes called for updating the entire structure vis-a-vis plumbing, electrical, and handicapped facilities when any addition is undertaken. Thus the conclusion was reached for additional construction.

The present building has a capacity for 1200 students. The gymnasium alone seats approximately 1800. The school features a climate-controlled auditorium, computer rooms, and band

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and chorus rooms. New foreign language rooms have been added at the rear of the structure. Modern shops are located away from the academic section of the school. Locker and Team Rooms have been constructed. Trainer facilities and an excellent weight room are in operation. Much of the school was remodeled and all received a face-lift.



The "Green" bridge

As the Sesquicentennial is celebrated, students have taken their places in the newly remodeled Lyter Elementary School. This facility is first rate and along with a solid middle school building, high school building, and dedicated staff serve as a monument to the vision of Governor Schulze. In addition, it was the language gifts of Andrew Montour that gave Montoursville its start and our name. Can we begin to imagine what persons of those eras would have given for the chance that our students have?

10. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation has always been the reason for the development of towns. It has been mentioned that the Susquehanna and the Loyalsock provided our first avenues to the markets on the coast. Later, the canal improved the ability to exchange our extractive products for luxury goods such as salt, mackerel, marble for buildings, and coal to improve the efficiency of our early manufacturing economy. The packet boats were drawn by mules and featured cargo bays covered with canvas. The canal era also brought an infusion of new blood to our area. Many prominent families in our town including Bennett and Callahan can be traced to building, managing, and working the canal.

Montoursville was one of the earliest towns in this area to have a bridge

crossing a major stream. A possible reason for the erection of our first structure was to provide an efficient means to move troops in the event of an invasion of Canada during the War of 1812. For a brief time there were two bridges spanning the creek. Travel across the creek was so important that during WWI, troops were stationed at the railroad bridge to prevent sabotage from German sympathizers. Supplies from the industrial heartland of our country passed through Montoursville on their way to the ports in New York City and Philadelphia. The present "Green" bridge was constructed in 1931. It carries over 17,000 vehicles a day.

At one time the so-called iron bridge carried both the vehicular and trolley traffic to and from Williamsport. The Montoursville Passenger Railway proved to be a blessing and a curse. There seems to have been a running battle with pedestrian traffic in town. The trolley line lasted only thirty years. In 1924, it ceased operation as Lycoming Auto Transit began a bus service to Williamsport. That company was later absorbed by the



Old bridges

William Bureau of Transportation.

The present railroad tracks running through the borough were originally part of the Catawissa line. The system eventually became part of the Philadelphia and Reading Company, but later was incorporated into the Conrail system. The terminal was located on Loyalsock Avenue and torn down during the 1970's. Heavy freight is still handled by the rail system and the future use of more efficient terminals may enhance

the use of the system.

During the 1970's Montoursville was bypassed by Interstate 180. This necessitated the erection of an additional bridge. The new road brings us much closer to the markets for our products and affords us easy access to New York City and Philadelphia.

The proliferation of highways in our area also gave birth to two large employers in our town, the Pennsylvania State Police and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The regional PennDOT engineering office is a major employer of professionals in our town. Additionally, the FAA Flight Service facility on the site of the former Wilson Chair Factory has provided another major transportation office in Montoursville.

The opening of the airport in 1929 was one of the greatest celebrations in county history. The airport today provides access to the world through its links in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Much freight is handled by the carriers, and as we celebrate the sesquicentennial, the main runway is about

Old view of the airport



The airport today

to be extended and a new access road entering the airport from the west is in design phase. The bridge over the "Sock" is planned to carry both rail and vehicular traffic. An industrial park is planned for inclusion in the project. This project might fit well with the many industries large and small within the borough. Gone are most of the large furniture factories of bygone days. Schnadig and John Savoy remain as important employers. Gone is Sylvania, replaced by General Cable. Gone are the two plants of Warshaw and Sons. Gone is Carey-McFall Company. Gone are most of the independent grocery stores from our borough. Some of those

familiar to many over forty include Spittler's, Eder's, Sperry's, Ed's, Stabler's, and Weaver's.

In this wave of destruction of the old has come scores of small businesses. This is the trend today and the wave of the future. Many of the older businesses have been replaced by service organizations in the post-industrial era. Modern transportation and communication have enabled businesses to be domiciled here and to do business throughout the world. If one were to compare the advertisements in our centennial booklet of 1950 with the present souvenir, he or she would notice that the information economy of the third wave has come to our town. It is the combination of a modern rail, highway, air, and communication infrastructure that has made the new economy possible.

11. TWO GREAT WARS

DOMINATED THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The advantage of hindsight allows us to view the events of the past in a clearer perspective. Indeed, it was the wars and the aftermath of the wars that dominated the history during the period from 1914 through 1953. Our community provided 125 soldiers for the war effort during WWI and 632 citizens took part in WWII. The efforts at home and abroad dominated the scene during the period of military action. Much of the period between the wars was spent in depression. Our American Legion Post 104 is named for Eugene Grafius, who was lost aboard the U.S.S. Ticonderoga on Sept. 30, 1914. Many young men from our town were lost during WWII. The cause of death was usually from hostile action, whereas during WWI many succumbed to disease.

Those who were not involved in direct military action were involved nonetheless. Our transportation through town via the railroad has already been mentioned. Factories were geared to produce war material and all were prepared for air raids and sabotage. The Korean War broke out during the same month as our

centennial. News from the front was foremost on the minds of our citizenry. All of these wars had a major consequence for Montoursville. WWI saw the triumph of the democratic states of the west against the more authoritarian states of Central Europe. The post-war period witnessed the proliferation of automobiles as well as the telephone and radio. WWII led to the post-war Baby Boom that was to ignite unprecedented growth in town, and Korea led to the decade of the 1950's. This period of Ozzie and Harriet, Elvis, and the swept wing cars ended with the death of President Kennedy in 1963.

It is essential to understand that Montoursville was never as isolated as some may think. We acted in concert with movements active throughout the rest of the country. An excellent example of our involvement in the social current was our small part in the push for prohibition. Reform movements of any type don't just happen, they start somewhere. Montoursville serves as an interesting laboratory to test that thesis. It is public opinion that runs our system over time. In 1906, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) requested the use of a room in Borough Hall for a festival to raise money for a drinking fountain to be placed in the center of the town. This improvement was designed to incite men to frequent the fountain rather than one of the saloons. Borough Council granted the request provided that the community incurred no cost in construction, operation, or movement of the fountain.

Action such as this was happening throughout the country. The impetus of similar activities in other communities led to the eighteenth amendment and the Volstead Act that gave it clout. Many times, politicians have to be reminded that the center of power in this country is in the hearts and minds of its citizens and not in Washington, D.C. The amendment mandating prohibition proved to be a disaster that was overturned by impetus from other groups intent on changing the social current.

But in the meantime, some of the financial stock that had been accumulated over years in the local whiskey business was turned into new enterprises. Indeed we are the sum total of our historical experience.

12. VISIONS FROM THE LAST FIFTY YEARS

The Centennial celebration of 1950 was one of the best if not the best organized event in Montoursville's long history. Those of us who recall the event probably have our own set of glasses to view the spectacle. My own portal to the event centers on the parade. The singular event of the parade was Jim Gleason and his exploits using the simple props of corncobs and a privy. This set the stage for celebration. Fireworks were scheduled nearly every night and seniors today will recall Maxine Everett and others on the court during the crowning of the queen at the school park. The energy and organization were probably outcomes of our wartime organization. Civic pride was a natural reflection of the nationalism much in evidence in our country. This pride coupled with a four-digit phone number kept life simple and more personal. I recall vividly the post office when it was domiciled in the present Konkle Memorial Library building. It was a proud moment to have Deaver Everett use the postal stamp on the back of my hand. Of importance too was Bruce Woolever on his twice daily deliveries of the mail. Those deliveries were personal and gave us a contact with our government that was real and comforting. It is important to note that this was not long after WWII and a uniform connected us with a benevolent government.

Indeed, during the 1950's, an annual occurrence was the Memorial Day celebration in the cemetery. Lycoming AutoTransit provided a bus to carry the school band to this important event. For years the borough councilmen were expected to march to the old cemetery on Sand Hill for this celebration. School children carried flowers to decorate the graves. Our Civil War monument, as well as the graves of men from our

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community who gave their lives to that cause, is located there. Graves from our first cemetery on the western shore of the Sock and from the cemetery at the present monument grounds were moved to Edgewood on Sand Hill. Our first Memorial Day was actually celebrated at the cemetery that today is the monument to those who died on Flight 800. It honored those who gave their lives that the union might be preserved.

In 1950, one could set his or her clock by the whistle at Carey McFall. It blew reliably at seven in the morning and five in the afternoon. Swimming took place at the bridge. There was a beach and lifeguards were hired to provide safety to bathing in the "Sock." A ride down Mill Street took one by many homes and cabins. The beautiful stone home of Milt Sheffer stood on the site of John Burrows' mill. Before crossing the railroad tracks, a legionnaire might stop at the post home. The American Legion has always served the youth of our town well. Christmas parties have been on their schedule for as long as most can remember and at one time, they provided an ice rink behind the Coastal Gas Station. They even served the community by providing post prom parties in their headquarters.

Time and traffic moved a bit slower back then. A beautiful brick street known as Walnut Lane had led to the old iron bridge. That street was eliminated, along with some interesting homes and buildings for the construction of the beltway. The street led nowhere, but that was part of its character. One could shop at Weaver's Grocery store at the site of the municipal parking lot by Johnson's and watch Tom or his son neatly pluck a box from the top of a shelf with a long pole. There was no better cheese than that which was under glass on top of the counter. And Weaver's delivered, as did Spittler's and other local grocers. This was the day of stay at home moms and one car

per family. Mr. Heiser, the fish man, delivered fresh seafood to homes each Thursday. His familiar horn drew the housewives to the street as quickly as their children answered the call of Mister Softee.



Flight 800 Memorial

Outside Weaver's were benches occupied by the old men of the town. They provided a sense of mystique with their beards and canes. Charlie Moon's candy store stood across the street at the site of Rosencrans' Bakery. The *Montoursville Monitor*, our weekly paper, occupied that same building. This paper was the heir to the *Echo* that had been published during the previous century. The *Monitor* featured columns such as "When I Was a Little Girl in Montoursville." That column was written by Clara Robbins. She had a fabulous memory of events well into the 19th century. Elizabeth Champion King wrote "Teatown Topics," a popular historical piece. Moving east from that building was Fazler's Bakery. They had the best raisin bread imaginable and served wonderful hot cross buns to inaugurate Lent. Art students from the school painted scenes on the windows of the downtown businesses during Halloween. Life was slower and no one imagined a vicious attack on school students. Friday evenings at the bank provided a wonderful opportunity to meet friends and neighbors.

Next to the grocery store in "downtown" was Lundy's Meat Market. At one time, animals were slaughtered in the rear of the building. But during the 1950's that business featured the sawdust that added to the aroma of all such facilities during that time. The stores were busy places in the era before freezers and pre-packaged foods. Hofer's Restaurant operated where Johnson's Café now exists. Across the street was Snyder's Restaurant. The Central Hotel was situated where the Post Office now stands. Tammy Jarrett operated a barbershop on site and, when the great fire occurred during

1950, ran back into the burning building to retrieve his moneybag. What a reflection of a true conservative in Montoursville! Tammy gave the youth of town a full series of lectures on the benefits of Republican politics and Philadelphia Phillies baseball. It was Joe Mondell's skill at cutting a flat top that made him for a time the most important man on Broad Street. His shop was in the building that today houses the sub shop. Other barbershops included Cooper's on Montour Street and Grant Eder's on Broad.

An A&P Store occupied the location of the present news business and an Acme Market graced what is now Lyon's Camping. The Acme featured Lancaster Brand Meats advertised across the rear of the store. A modern theatre named the Laura opened adjacent to the meat market. *The Wizard of Oz* attracted folks from miles around. Young people were able to see a movie on Saturday for fourteen cents, buy popcorn for a dime and have a penny left to purchase a gum ball from a downtown machine. The Montoursville Merchants brought Aunt Jemima to entertain the youth in the facility. Much later, the theatre became infamous for its X rated shows. This was to become a rallying point for the local ministerium. The case of that body vs. the Laura Theatre reached the books of aspiring law students throughout the country. Later, the Williamsport Players used the Laura for its productions. Occupying much of the first floor of the Masonic Building was Heal's Variety Store. A similar store in Arkansas gave rise to the Wal-Mart chain.

There had been many apothecaries in town. By the 1950's only two were in operation, Perris Pharmacy and Wallace Pharmacy. Both originally had a soda fountain and featured "real" drug store coke and wonderful ice cream served in metal dishes. People were willing to take more time to eat in the era before fast food. Hofer's Restaurant provided a warm atmosphere with its knotty pine paneling and formal dining room.

For years, physicians had been important in the civic life of our community. Dr. Born had been active on council for years and was responsible

for shale being brought to fill the holes in the streets. When the rains came, this material combined with the water and created an ooze dubbed "Doc Born's Salve." Dr. Konkle was very active in borough affairs. He was a brilliant thinker, who wrote 112 articles for the Journal of the American Medical Association. The Masonic organization benefited from his leadership. Dr. Van Horn built the first house in town wired for electricity. That large building still occupies a stately position on Montour Street. Dr. Lechner was a long-time President of the Montoursville School Board.

Doctors in Montoursville during the 1950's included Current, Coffman, Pfeil, Leiser, and Wilcox. A memorable picture of Dr. Wilcox was of him being lowered from a helicopter to save the one survivor of an Allegheny Airlines crash in 1959. That crash killed 26 persons.

The modern airport terminal gave a glimpse of what life would become. Twenty-eight flights a day entered the facility under the names of TWA, All American, and Capital. Betty Bell and her husband operated two restaurants in the building and served many with their daily specials and Sunday family style dinners.

One of the great social events in town was the showing of the new cars at Kaufmanns and Gilbert Brothers. New cars were hidden from view until the official showing date. The introduction of the Corvette was a topic for months. Everyone who visited received some sort of advertising memento. Yardsticks were often used to provide the measure of discipline needed to control errant youth in that era.

Deer season has always been important to this region. A parade of cars moved on Broad Street with deer strapped to the fenders. Modern car engineering has dealt a mighty blow to that method of displaying the trophy.

What is now the J&R Tavern had been the original movie theatre in Montoursville. It was run by the Weaver family. During the decade of the 50's they turned the operation into a

teen haven. The Spot was another popular restaurant for youth. These places replaced the Weaver Ice Cream Parlor that had served their parents a generation earlier. It was located in the building housing Lloyd's Barbershop.

Elmer Kime ran a very successful hatchery on Broad Street. Many youth from town began their years of work tending to the chickens at Elmer's. Today all that remains from the business is a storage building used by Elery Nau.

The borough council fretted over the pitch of the road at Bunce's corner and the opening of Mulberry Street over Coffetown Run. Mulberry Street was gaining new development and the growth of our town was off and running. Residents of the street dubbed their area "Mortgage Lane."

Much activity centered on the school. Bob Winger directed many memorable class plays including *The Great Big Doorstep* and *George Washington Slept Here*. The success of the football and basketball teams was of great importance to the townspeople. Football coaches included Hogan, Bestwick, and Strein. Athletes from an earlier era including Chester and Howard Weaver and Tracy Barrett were relegated to history as players such as Paul Kahler, Ron Stroble, Bill Usmar, Miles Long, and Ray Free gained the limelight in football. Baseball players of note included Ron Thomas and Billy Campbell.

Not all was well during the 1950's! During July and August, the morning report on the radio listed the number of polio victims needing the Iron Lung at the hospital. It is little wonder that parents considered Jonas Salk to be among the most important men in our country. Students at the schools practiced for an air attack from the Soviet Union and some fallout shelters were built by private citizens to protect their families in the event of nuclear attack.

The decade was dynamic! Developers and landowners such as Lundy, Dodt, Fox, Rova, and Brelsford gave rise to the explosion of houses. The cheap water

that had been developed during the 19th century gave rise to the immigration. It was exciting to live in an expanding community. The entire character of the town changed. Streets were opened and paved, water lines were expanded, the school received an addition, and new infrastructure was developed including cable television.

The fifties can not be covered without mentioning "Montour Express." This was the nickname of Bill Myers' garbage business that featured a wagon pulled by two horses. Bill was a character in town, who operated what he called The Lone Pine Hatchery on Walnut Street. Many mothers brought their kids to the supper table by threatening to call Bill Myers. Chief of Police, Stan Zartman saw to it that the children crossed Broad Street safely after school. Traffic was the main law enforcement problem!

The Little League field stood on the site of the present high school auditorium. Previous to that, clay tennis courts adorned that corner of the public land. Summer recreation at the school park was a "big deal." The recreation program was cut following a taxpayer petition. This was an activity-centered borough and much of the activity was centered at the school. Indeed, my organized athletic life began at Saturday morning recreation at the high school. Later, Rick Felix organized a fantastic Saturday basketball league. This league paved the way for some of the excellent teams that our town produced.

As the community moved into the 1960's and farther from WWII, the character of the town and the people changed. The decade saw the building of the Montour Plaza, the new Catholic church, a new post office, and many houses by the Metzger family.

Mayor Rotondi had replaced Carl Wentzler and was very active in civic affairs. This included the fire company. Sylvania boomed with the discretionary income of families increasing for such things as the taking of pictures. The First National Bank became one of the most modern such institutions in the area under the presidency of Charles Adams, and Dr. Leiser saw to the

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socialization of the youth in town by taking charge of the "Night Train" dances at the Firemen's Social Hall. The Lutheran Church initiated the "Salt Cellar" as a haven for youth and the Sub Shop and Hurr's became stops of importance for teenagers.

The 1970's witnessed a new Methodist Church, as well as a new middle school on the eastern peripheral of the borough. The Presbyterians constructed a new edifice on Elm Street. Montoursville swelled to 6,000 souls with the baby-boomers making family life of paramount importance. Montoursville as well as the nation saw the Vietnam War as a dominant backdrop to much that occurred in the community. Our school gave dearly to the conflict in Southeast Asia.

Water again assumed great importance through the destruction from tropical storms Agnes and Eloise. The former established new benchmarks for zoning here and in other communities. The beltway was constructed and took much traffic from Broad Street, but at the same time announcing to Montoursville that we were no longer an isolated small town free from the worries of the world. Through the efforts of councilman Ted Strein, a swimming pool was constructed. Many youth preferred to spend their time at Taylor's Pool Hall located on Montour Street.

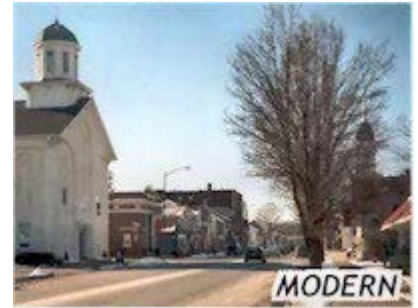
The past twenty years has seen the proliferation of small businesses in and around Montoursville. One such industry, Bowser Manufacturing, actually uses two separate buildings south of Broad Street. Small engineering businesses such as Lou Bassler's design business and larger firms such as Larson Design have reached out to a large market area. Four different banks have chosen to have a branch in town. Business in town is healthy and the spirit of the town has been sparked by Mayor John Dorin. The borough crew has been able to do many jobs to improve the infrastructure at a reduced cost to the town. The VIP Group headquartered at the park has been responsible for many improvements. They have been

energized by such men as Bill Fry, Paul Free, and Anthony Rotundi. The recreation area along Mill Street as well as Indian Park and the bikeway have provided a place for physical activity and rest to thousands. Dedicated volunteers have worked tirelessly to foster ideals in the youth through scout troops, cheerleading, football, soccer, and baseball involvement.

We have witnessed two of our young men arriving in the major leagues. Tom O'Malley played for several teams before having a fine career in Japan. Mike Mussina became one of the premier pitchers in baseball and thrilled the community with his performance in the 1999 all-star game. Others from town, such as Mike Myers, have become company presidents. Some such as Maryann Weaver have become authors. Dr. Hugh Van Horn became the Director of Astronomy for The National Science Foundation. Charles Follmer, Paul Converse, the McCreary brothers, and Dennis Derr became members of the clergy. Others have worked without publicity to build the capital that will afford future generations a better life. The most important among us have chosen to work hard and to raise children of character and promise.

The significance of water has been mentioned in this writing in a number of paragraphs. Indeed it was water that made our community possible. First it was the river and the creeks; then it was the canals and millraces; later it was the water system itself; and now a sewer system to eliminate the wastewater from the borough. That investment too will change the borough in ways not yet imagined. Impetus for a levee to protect the western end of town has come with the proposal for a new airport access. The ferocity of the floodwaters in 1996 mandated that action be taken. But it will take good leadership with a vision to allow Montoursville to maintain the high quality of life that has made us the envy of many. That is the challenge for the next fifty and one hundred and fifty years. We are a most fortunate people to have inherited the capital and good will created by those who preceded us. Will

we have the strong leadership that will elevate community interests above narrow individual self-interest? How well we answer this question will be the subject of the writer of our celebration in 2050.



Broad Street today

Created April 2003.

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