

In 1810 the Great swamp, which extends over a considerable portion of Buck, was purchased by a company of Philadelphia speculators. A president and eighteen councilmen were elected; and the "City of Rome" was laid out, 100 miles from the seaboard, in a dark, gloomy swamp, called the "Shades of Death" by those who fled through it from Wyoming after the massacre in 1778. Three or four shipbuilders and a number of artisans of various trades were actually induced to purchase lots and remove to the "city," where reptiles and wild beasts should alone have habitation. A respectable merchant of Philadelphia, meeting a citizen of Wilkes-Barre, seriously inquired, "Will not the new and flourishing city of Rome become a dangerous rival to your town?" Hon. Charles Miner had considerable trouble, through his paper the *Gleaner*, to expose the fraud.

The township originally contained fifty square miles and is in the southeast corner of the county; its east line is Lackawanna county and its south line is the Lehigh river. It once had an important population in the way of sawmills. The township was cut in two by the formation of Lackawanna county in August, 1878. The east and west sides are rough and mountainous and all between these mountains is swamp. This was the "Shades of Death" to the Yankees as the poor fugitives often fled in terror toward the Delaware. As sparse as is and has always been its population, yet it has never been able to raise enough farm products for its own supply.

Stoddartsville is its only hamlet. In the heyday of its prosperity it had forty houses, beside its mills, and a population, largely transient, of 200. The county line divides the place, so that a portion of the town lies in Carbon county. It was laid out by John Stoddart in 1815, when he erected the large stone grist and sawmill, the ruins of which to this day show that it was built to defy the tooth of time. It was a great improvement at that time, perhaps the most expensive in southern Luzerne county, costing over \$20,000. In addition to his mill he kept the first store and tavern, the first blacksmith wagon and cooper-shop. The town site was the property of Mr. Stoddart and Thomas Arnott.

The era of prosperity of the place was from 1835-65. Here was the place of the crossing of the Lehigh river and the Wilkes-Barre Eastern turnpike, where Sullivan and his army crossed on their way to Wilkes-Barre. The great freshet in the Lehigh river of 1865 swept away the old canal works along the river and with them went the hopes and prosperity of Stoddartsville. It now is very nearly the existing type of the "Deserted Village."

BUTLER TOWNSHIP

Bears the name of the immortal Col. Zebulon Butler, always the first historical and cherished name connected with that of Luzerne county. It has a superficial area of thirty-one square miles, and the larger part of, in fact nearly the entire section, is arable land—the land of plenty and the quiet of the prosperous farmer's life. It is principally a part of the Sugarloaf valley, once the name of the entire valley along the Nescopeck. Here for more than a century the farmer has gone afield and tilled the soil. Originally it was all upland and valley, covered with a dense forest, and was a prolific hunting ground; then the woodsman came and felled the trees, and the numerous early sawmills along the creek cut the timber and it was carried away to market.

Butler township was made from territory of Sugarloaf in 1839. A part of the south of the township was taken off and added to Hazle township in 1861. The belief of Stewart Pearce, who was a careful historian, and he is confirmed by Moses Compeer and others of Northampton county's Revolutionary authorities, is that John Balliett was the "solitary and alone" first comer to make a home in this beautiful valley. Pearce says he had been one of the burial party who came to bury the victims of the Sugarloaf massacre, and, seeing that place so soon after the troubles and dangers were over, came and located. But the truth is now known

that Balliett had intended to be one of the party, but was prevented by sickness from coming, that he was deeply interested in the expedition, and when the party returned he spent much time with different members thereof and made close inquiries as to what they had seen on the trip. These described to him the valley in which they had buried the dead, the beautiful Nescopeck, flowing nearly through its center, the fish, the game and the broad, smooth, level acres of land on each side, and this fired Balliett's imagination, and very wisely he determined that he would seek it out and here make a home for himself and his posterity. The results of this determination, after more than a century, are with us to-day in the numerous descendants of John Balliett in this section of the county, who are and have always been among the prominent people of Luzerne county. Balliett, with wife and two children, came here from the south or Northampton county in 1784. His possessions were packed on the one horse he possessed, and the two small children, one of whom was probably Stephen Balliett, were in beegums strapped across the horse's back, while the husband and wife trudged afoot. In another place is given an account of the memorable voyage of this *avant courier* of the coming hordes of men, and the writer was shown by Mr. C. F. Hill the probable spot on the side of Buck mountain where the strap broke and the children in their respective "gums" went rolling about the mountain side. John Balliett, the first day after his arrival, built, put up, erected or constructed, as you please, the first residence, home, castle or dwelling in the valley. The architecture was "simple and sublime"—poles leaned against a big tree and covered with brush and leaves—and here the family slept, the boys, no doubt, too tired to even have nightmare dreams that they were still fast in the "gums" and rolling and tossing about the steep mountain side. John Balliett and wife dreamed in sweet content of their future home and its abundance and happy content—brave, as were all the pioneers, as to their ability to meet and overcome the obstructions that lay in their way, the years of toil and loneliness and the inevitable deprivations and of the distance from the world's older settlements. John Balliett settled here in 1784. It has been asserted, and has so found its way into print, that G. H. Reip (sometimes written Reab) came here as a settler in 1782, two years before Balliett; that he located on the Joseph Woodring place, and that he died in 1794 and was buried in the old German church cemetery. Those that followed Balliett, whether the same or the next year, is not certain, were Benner (Harry), Shobers, Dolphs, Hill, Bachelor and Spades. There are now numerous descendants of these pioneers still here and in other parts of the county. The name of Spaide has been and is still spelled different ways. The early chroniclers generally spelled it S-p-a-d-e, but Spaide, Spaid, Spayd and Spayde are some of the many variations. Among the early settlers were Philip Woodring, Henry Davis, Andrew Mowery and George Drum. The latter's son, Abraham Drum, was high sheriff of Luzerne county at one time. His son, George, was father of Hon. G. W. Drum, of Conyngham. This was so long a part of Sugarloaf township that the reader is referred to the list of early settlers, as given in the account of that township, for the particulars of who were here up to 1835. Pearce says that Samuel Woodring as early as 1788 built the first saw and gristmill on Nescopeck creek. Both were very small in their way; the gristmill had one set of stones, which were "home made." Other authorities say that Woodring put up his mill on the Big Nescopeck, on the mill site of Straw & Sons, in 1813. The latter is the more reasonable story, as Mr. Stephen Balliett remembers, when he was ten years old, of going to mill many miles, over to Lizard creek, to Sultz's mill. Some time after 1800 the ancient mill story might have been repeated of the settlers of Butler, where the man and ox team went to mill, and in the long way and long wait had eaten every grain of corn, the load that the cattle could haul, and had to return home for more to grind. In the meantime the wife and children, waiting and looking for the man's return, were living along by calling "the fat part meat and the lean part bread."

There were no "roller process" mills here in the other century, no more than was there a prevalence of gout or other diseases of the rich and fashionable Four Hundred. John Balliett located on the present John Beisel farm, about one mile from the village of Drums, west.

For an account of the Indians that lived at the mouth of the Nescopeck from 1742 to 1763, and also a reference to the Scotch and Friends who settled in the lower end of the valley, see account of "Sugarloaf massacre."

Two years after John Balliett had built the first log cabin in the valley, the house and contents were burned. He rebuilt, and he was so energetic and prosperous that in a little time he built the first frame house put up in the valley.

Little Nescopeck creek runs in the southwestern part of the township. Here Redmond Conyngnam—perhaps the most prominent man of the early settlers—in 1809 built his sawmill on the M. Beishline land. In 1814 he built at the same place, on the opposite side of the creek, his gristmill. In 1820 Redmond Conyngnam built a small gristmill on the Big Nescopeck, on the site of Straw's sawmill,

Sawmills were one of the early necessities. The valley, in order to be made, farms had to be cleared of its heavy growth of timber, and it took many sawmills to do the work. John Cowley was one of the enterprising citizens in this line, as he had several mills along the creek.

The necessary first carding-mill was built in 1810, on the Little Nescopeck, a short distance from where is now the "Mountain Scenery" house; the neighborhood was then called Ashville. The name is now unknown. The locality of the old carding-mill may be fixed in the mind by the information that it was on the Linderman land. The first woolen-mill was put up in 1835, by Philip Drum, a short distance from the carding-mill.

The pioneer schoolhouse, built of logs, stood near what is known as the German church, and went to decay many years ago.

John Balliett was the pioneer tavern keeper.

The first merchant in this township was Henry B. Yost, in 1832, on the place now owned by D. W. Jenkins, Sr. Mr. Yost was also the pioneer postmaster. The mails were received once a week, and the name of the office was East Sugarloaf. This was previous to the formation of the township of Butler.

George Hughes' sawmill, above Straw's, was built in 1833, and is still standing. The house where William B. Doud lives, owned by Mr. Straw, was built in 1812. The first weavers here were Michael Klouse, Elias Balliett and Jacob Schaubert. They all lived a little southwest of Hughesville. The oldest graveyard in this township is the one in the corner of the lot opposite the Methodist Episcopal church.

At St. John's (Hughesville), called the latter name for George Hughes, Henry Benner built his sawmill in 1836, and in 1853 George Hughes built a gristmill, and in the spring of the year commenced to turn out a superior article of flour. It was for a long time known by no other name than Hughesville, situated about three miles north of Drums. Sheide & Werner opened soon after the first store in the place, and Henry Bermer a blacksmith shop; in 1868 J. W. Woodring opened a boot and shoe shop; in 1870 Stephen Krehns opened his tavern. The Germans built their St. John's church here, and when it came to naming a postoffice, necessity compelled a change of the name from Hughesville, and so it became St. John's—quite a little trading point for the surrounding farmers. The St. John's church was organized in December, 1799.

Drums is the principal village in Butler township. It is in the heart of a rich agricultural section and is on the old State road leading from Hazleton to Wilkes-Barre, about six miles from the former, its natural trading point, and between Big and Little Nescopeck.

Honey Hole is the name of a hamlet in the east part of the township on the Nescopeck, where is quite a pond near the junction of the forks of the creek. Quite a collection of houses here and a sawmill that was one of the mills of A. Pardee &

Co. The road from Upper Lehigh passes northwest through Hell Kitchen on to Hovey Hole, and from there to St. Johns (Hughesville).

The noted mine tunnel, described elsewhere, is dug through the valley to empty into the creek. It looks like a young canal, except there is a brisk current to its waters.

The "Mountain Scenery" house is built on the mountain side, and from the upper portico is presented an entrancing view of the valley and the opposite hills.

A view from this point richly repays the visitor.

CONYNGHAM TOWNSHIP

Is one of the young and small townships in the way of population. It was formed in 1875, taken from Hollenback township, is thinly settled, and quite rough and hilly, less than one-third being arable land.

The first settler was Martin Harter, who came in 1795 and made his improvement near the mouth of Little Wapwallopen creek. His immediate followers were James McNeil, James Santee, Philip Fenstermacher, John Andreas, Michael Weiss, John Fenstermacher and Jeremiah Hess. These came up from Northampton county; were nearly all Germans, whose descendants are now the leading men in the township. The first white child born in the township was John Fenstermacher, Jr., a grandson of the first settler, Martin Harter; birth, 1804. The first settlers cut a road along the river, and this was the one common outlet for all. In 1797 Martin Harter built the first frame house; his old homestead went by descent to the heirs of Absalom Heller. In 1822 Philip Fenstermacher built the first brick house, which in modern times became the property of A. K. Harter. This descent of properties gives a correct idea of the intermarrying of the descendants of the early settlers. In 1829 George Fenstermacher built the first stone house on the old homestead of Martin Harter; afterward a frame addition was added and a hotel opened in it, and was successfully run for several years. The first store was opened in 1805 by Philip Fenstermacher. It was not run a great while. In 1836 John Heller was the merchant. Jacob Romick, the first blacksmith, had his shop where was built the stone house. Romick's successor was Peter Mauer, who had learned his trade with him. A widow, Mrs. Frances Lewis, built the first gristmill; it stood a short distance above the present Samuel Heller mill on Wapwallopen creek. Her title to the land is dated in 1806. When this was worn out and decayed a three-story stone mill took its place, built in 1825 by the McPherson brothers. Philip Fenstermacher built the first sawmill in 1811 on the small spring stream near A. Boyd's farm and residence. John Fenstermacher built an early-day distillery near by Romick's blacksmith shop. The first school was German, 1808, taught by a man named Kroll, in a building belonging to Martin Harter. In the course of time this temple of learning became the pigsty of A. K. Harter. An English school was opened in 1811 in a house belonging to Michael Weiss. A schoolhouse was erected in 1813.

Wapwallopen village is in the extreme south corner of the township. Its various names indicate much of the place's history; as, the "Glen," "Powder Glen," "Hellertown," "Powder Hole," etc. The Dupont powder mills constitute pretty much all there is of the place.

There are three different collections of houses, but all combined are Wapwallopen. The powder mills, as said, with a store and a merchant mill and a small cluster of houses, have been known as Hellertown. The railroad station is the main business center. About 300 hands are working in the powder mills, and this gives quite a population. Altogether there are 3 general stores, 1 hotel, 1 saddler shop and a blacksmith shop. G. P. Parish & Co. came here and built the powder mills near the mouth of the creek and operated the same until 1857, and sold to the Duponts—the largest powder manufacturers in the world.