

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., April 8, 1932.

HISTORIC OLD HOUSES IN HISTORIC BELLEFONTE

From a Paper by Miss Mary Hunter Linn, read before the Women's Club of Bellefonte, on Monday evening, March 25, 1932.

(Concluded From Last Week)

In 1824 Alfred Armstrong came from Carlisle to be principal of the Academy. His reminiscences, given in an address when he came back fifty years later, furnish a very good picture of the town in its early youth. I wish you could read it in its entirety as it is given in Linn's History of Centre County. His description of the individual men, women and young people whom he loved and admired, and in whom he was able to inspire a great devotion, is charming. It is in the town that we are interested and I am going to quote his first paragraph.

"How well I remember the appearance of the old town as it was on the day of my arrival in it. The Academy, then a single, old-fashioned stone building, reared on an eminence in the west. Bellefonte could then, in her infancy, boast of but few public edifices, and they were erected in simple, yet substantial architecture, and with a view rather to utility than ornament and show. The old stone court house then stood, as it does now, on the east side of the town, the same out of which has been reared in modern times, your present elegant structure, rivaling in beauty and convenience any other of the kind in the State. Two other buildings then adorned the town. They were both small stone edifices. The Presbyterian on the northwest, the other, the Methodist, on the north terminus of the hill on the east. The Catholic church, a fine, substantial stone building on the south side of the town, was erected, I think, some years after the time of which I now speak. These were the first and only public edifices in the place, a beautiful and appropriate tribute of respect to law, education and religion, in their regard for which the staid inhabitants of that old town were behind no other people. The private residences were all stone, with a single exception, I think, of one old frame house standing on the Benner property near the center of the town."

Note the omnipresence of stone in this description. The first settlers at once realized the practicability of using the native limestone for building their permanent houses. With the memory of the stone houses they had left in the lower counties they set to work on the new ones, making them, in many cases, copies of the old ones and not one whit inferior in design and workmanship, though they were to be wrought out in the back woods of the State.

With slight variations the houses were built on one of two plans: A single rectangular house with the hall on one side, usually with a back building, or the double house with the hall in the center. Our house is a good example of the first kind and Miss Humes' house of the second. All the houses mentioned in the first part of this paper, as built before 1810, were built of stone. It was not a complete list and many houses were added in the years following, especially in the second decade. Some of these are still showing the faces of their youth, some are so obscured by additions of other materials that their original structure is entirely forgotten, and others have disappeared entirely. I can count thirty-five houses, in the town and its outskirts, easily recognized as the old stone houses. We have spoken of the three houses on the corner of High and Spring streets. There was a fourth one of stone, where the Farmer's National Bank now stands, a "Center Hall" house owned by the Presbyterian minister, Rev. James Linn, who married a daughter of James Harris. Both sides of High street were well built up very early. On the north side the stone houses are still standing, changed but easily recognized. Between the Diamond and Bishop street the only original is the Clevenstone store and residence. On Bishop street we have the Brant House built by Bond Valentine in 1828. Between this and the McClure house are distinctly seen stone houses and some obscured. On Spring street are the Academy group and Mrs. Brown's house, and in addition to those already mentioned, the Widdowson house. Further east on Howard street are the Bower house, the several buildings on the H. P. Harris property and the American Legion home. The houses on Allegheny street, from Howard to Pike Alley, including the Humes and Andrews houses, are all very old and form a solid section of old Bellefonte soon to be broken into.

On East High street are N. B. Spangler's house, the original Masonic hall, with the little house in the rear so lately vacated by Miss Armer; the Heverly-Hoffer property, parts of which, until 1867, formed the old county jail. Also we have the houses scattered in the outer range of the town, the stone house on Willowbank street, between the railroad and the mill race, Burnham, the Forge house, the porch house near the spring, and the Beaver farm. Mr. Armstrong mentions the old frame house on the Benner property, as "The next year." In 1825 a new building material appears. Philip Benner, for his son, Matlack, built the present house of bricks, which, tradition says, were brought from Philadelphia. He also built the brick hotel called the Pennsylvania hotel where the Brockerhoff house now stands.

In 1833 Patrick Cambridge built Dr. Brockerhoff's residence. The Montgomery house, which is plastered brick, H. P. Schaeffer's store, the old McQuiston house, on West high street, were built about that time. Just after brick was introduced to the

town there was living in the house where Mrs. W. U. Irwin's now stands, a rather remarkable man, Charlie Callahan. Besides being a very good tailor he was an architect of much ability, who built houses in several parts of the State. In Bellefonte he built, for Judge Hale, the present J. L. Spangler house, a residence for Edward Humes, which is now the Masonic building, and on the present site of the Bellefonte Trust Company an elaborately ornamented building called the Arcade. These were brick buildings with marble and iron trimmings and heavy stone bases. The Arcade and the Pennsylvania hotel were wiped out in the disastrous fire of 1864.

Mr. Armstrong's memory was a little at fault when he could not recall other frame buildings. For instance, the Macmanus house, lately so well restored by Forrest Tanner. About that time, or a little later, Robert Hays built for a residence, in the neighborhood of his tannery, the Meek house. Later were built many good houses of all kinds of material as the town stretched out in all directions. On Allegheny street Edward Graham built the present Olewine house, Thompson Milliken, the Talleyrand, and Linn Street, in the woods beyond the Red Lion hotel, (Mrs. Hastings' property), was reached in the '50's.

My first plan in writing this sketch was to give some of the details of a few old houses built before 1850 and the personalities who gave them life through the years, for Bellefonte is just as rich in its memories of human life as it is in its old houses, so that you could walk along the street and look on these old houses as individuals. In digging up facts I have come upon, in court house records, in histories and biographies, in newspaper files, and last but not least, in family traditions, such a wealth of material that, piecing together at this time has been impossible. There is much about all the houses that ought to be recorded. It can be done by taking groups of houses at one sitting, telling the story of a neighborhood. This will be attempted very soon, probably by different individuals. If present members of families who lived in Bellefonte before 1860 would write down the traditions some of them have it

POSTAL RATES BOOSTED TO SOUTH AMERICA

On and after April 1 there will be no two-cent letter rate and no one-cent post card rate from the United States to South America, the United States Post Office Department announced Thursday.

Full postage on all letters and post cards must be prepaid, the Department said.

South and Central American countries, as well as the Spanish Republic and its possessions require three cents for each ounce or fraction thereof on letters; two-cents for post cards, single, and four cents for post cards, double. Similar rates apply for Canada and Newfoundland.

All other foreign countries require the following postage rate: Letters, for the first ounce or fraction, five cents; letters, for each additional ounce or fraction, three cents; single post cards, three cents; double post cards, six cents.

—Opening the Nittany Lion spring sports program, the Penn State baseball team will play its first game of the season tomorrow, Saturday, meeting St. Francis College at State College. The Lion tossers have been held back by weather conditions which prevented outdoor practice, and will take the field virtually untried in team play. This year's contest is the second between the two institutions, a single game being played in 1930. Last year a scheduled contest was cancelled because of rain.

Japan recently examined 10,000,000 primary school children and found 22 per cent feeble-minded. The average man weighs 13 per cent more than the average woman, but her heart weighs 22 per cent more.

"Give a sentence using the word 'bewitches'."
"Go ahead. I'll bewitches in a minute."—Judge.

would be a great help in telling a story of the old town woven around its houses.

EVERY BARBER MUST HAVE A CERTIFICATE OR HUNT A NEW JOB

Pennsylvania barbers have graduated to the ranks of the educated specialist who must pass rigid examinations, physical and mental, as prescribed by the Musmanno Barber Act, effective April 1.

If not proficient the applicant will not be allowed to operate a shop or to work as a barber anywhere in the Commonwealth. Likewise, the applicant must be a good physical specimen, not addicted to liquor or drugs, nor unfit to slip a razor smoothly over tender throats and chins or to create that pink glow on the countenance after a massage.

Under the new law, practicing barbers were given until April 1 to file application with the board, together with an affidavit from a physician certifying his physical fitness. This procedure cost the barber \$2.

Any barber or would-be barber not holding the certificate must pay \$5 to obtain his license.

Any applicant must have studied the occupation for two years either under a practicing barber or in a recognized barber school or must have practiced in another State for two years.

Public examinations are held in March, June, September and December in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Harrisburg and Erie by the board.

Passage of the new barber's act and approval of the Governor ends a 20-year fight by its backers. In 1914 the code was passed by the Legislature, only to be vetoed by the Governor.

THE TRAGEDY IN DETAIL

Deacon Callahan had taken his wife to the races. Just as the horses were lined up for the next heat she leaned over nervously and asked him for a safety pin while grabbing frantically at something that seemed to be slipping around her knees.

Just then someone nearby shouted "They're off!" and Mrs. Callahan fainted.

Yes, this happened years ago.

—Subscribe for the Watchman.

MORE FARM LANDS NOW MORTGAGED

A survey of 17,000 representative farms throughout the country reveals that 38 per cent of the mortgaged farms were mortgaged for more than half their value, as of January 1, 1931, according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. More than half of all farms, however, are free of mortgage debt.

Sixty-four per cent of all farms were free of mortgage debt in 1928, according to the bureau's estimate. Although definite figures for all farms are not yet available for later years, relatively fewer farms are free of debt now than four years ago. In this connection, it is pointed out, the Bureau of Census reports that 58 per cent of the farms operated by their owners in 1930 were free of mortgaged debt compared with nearly 63 per cent in 1920.

Twenty-five per cent of the mortgaged farms in 1931 were mortgaged up to 25 per cent of their value; 37.3 per cent were mortgaged for between 25 and 50 per cent of their value; 22 per cent were mortgaged for between 50 and 75 per cent of their value; 10 per cent between 75 and 100 per cent of their value, and 5 per cent were mortgaged for more than 100 per cent of their value. Approximately 42 per cent of all owner farms were reported by the 1930 census as mortgaged.

The most favorable mortgage debt situation was in the New England States, where more than 80 per cent of the mortgaged farms covered by the survey were mortgaged for less than 50 per cent of their value.

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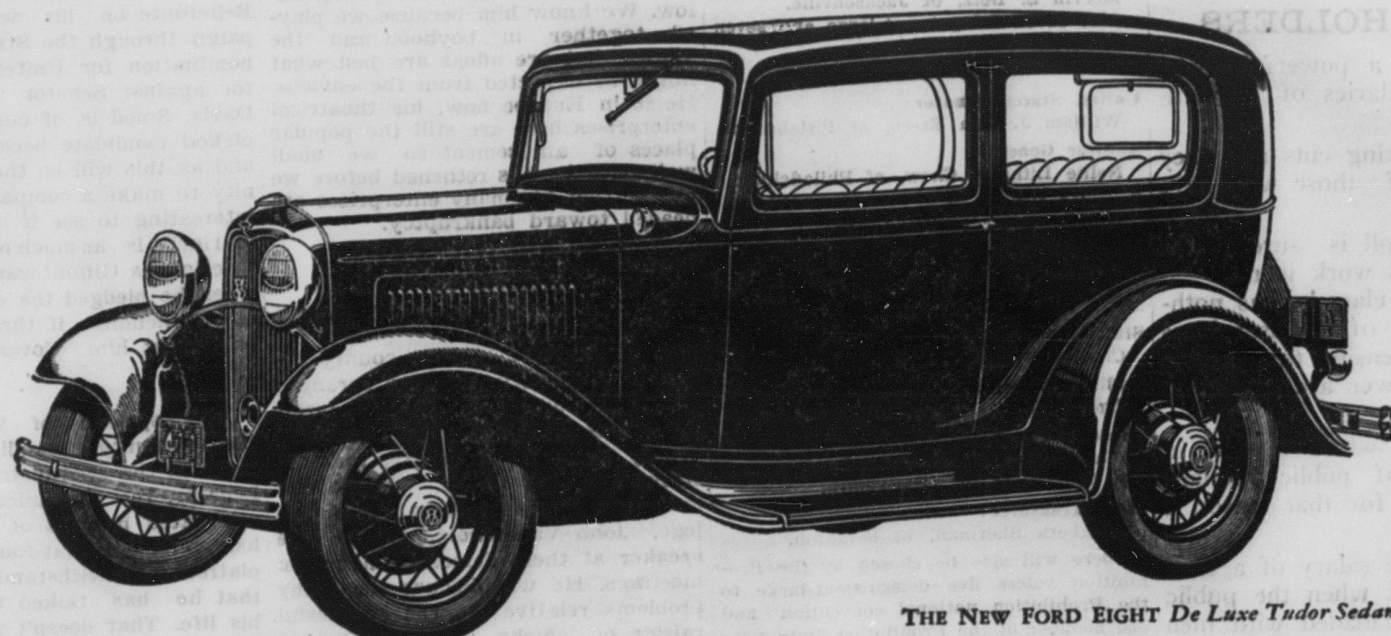
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