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CENTENNIAL. A. D. 1876.

HISTORICAL ADDRESS.

BY SAMUEL D. IRWIN, ESQ.,

Member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

It was a strange remark—that of Walpole—when he said, "tell me not History, for I know that it is false." Did such uncertainty truly exist, it would be dreary nonsense, upon this Centennial day, to read of the past, but might dwell in the present, or speculate on the future.

July 4, 1876, marks the 100th year in our political calendar as a free and independent nation. Yet at that time our Country was in the Indian Territory—unclaimed from the savage—and was not invaded by the white man, save a travelling missionary, or an intrepid trader, but was the hunting ground of the Red man, who claimed it as his birthright.

Eighteen years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, that is to say, in April, 1794, came the Surveyors, with their chains and the old Rittenhouse Compasses, to survey the lands taken up by the Old Holland Land Co., and which were afterwards patented, and titles perfected, to a large portion, by the Hollanders.

What a field for reflection; What an expanse of land in 1781, with its rivers, hills, plains and valleys; What a diversified population,—the Quaker, Moravian and Presbyterian on the east side, and the Indian savage on the west, worshipping the "Great Spirit,"—hunting, fishing, living and dying, as his fathers had done for hundreds of years before him.

Forest Co. also has a copy of his life, presented by the same society. The History tells of the pow-wows and rookeries the Indians got up; of the struggles of this good man with one Wangomen, who opposed his messages.

He left for a short time in 1768; came back, and by this time found a few bad traders in the camp. How the Indians early in 1769 destroyed more than 2000 deer on the Allegheny river,—how it was determined on account of fresh outbreaks of the pagans at Gosh-go-shunk to remove to La-wun-ak-hanek (East Hickory)—as the word is translated, "meeting waters," (Beaver and Hickory) and how a mission was established there, on the eastern bank of the river, and a few miles above the first mission where Senseman and the civilized Indians removed in April 1769.

In 1860 the population consisted of 898 inhabitants, all told. This territory was doubled in area, and quadrupled in population in October 1866, by the addition of 5 townships of Venango, and under the Act of October 31, 1866, the Commissioners appointed under the Act viz: Jacob Ziegler, of Butler Co., James A. Leach of Mercer Co., and Cornelius Fulkerson of Ve-

nango Co., made Tionesta the county seat of the county as remodelled, it being the centre of population, and for other reasons, appearing in their report, too voluminous to mention. In 1870 the population numbered in the county 4010. This much for the reconstruction of the county. I cannot afford to dwell on its physical features at all, save a few incidental references to the changes made by man.

Beyond doubt, the earliest incidents connected with the History of our little county of Forest, are those recorded in the plain and truthful annals of the Moravian missionaries,—true this carries us beyond the century a little, but we have a very well defined and plainly marked history by a truthful and vigorous writer.

The records contained in the life of David Zeisberger and in Lockiel's History, are of too extraordinary a complexion to be passed over in silence, and while it sometimes reads like a romance, it has truth for its foundation, well defined.

Zeisberger was an Austrian, and the best linguist of all his people. He understood five or six Indian languages, which gave him great power with the savages of our land. That admirable book, his life by Bishop Scheintz, consists of over 700 pages, and his notes show the endurance and energy of the man. Fortunate for history, Zeisberger kept full notes.

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Fort Pitt, where they arrived before the 1st of May. This is the substance of our earliest history. Gladly would we amplify this narration from the History of the Pioneer missionary, did time and space permit, and tell of what he discovered and wrote about the oil springs at that early day, and other matters of importance.

In the history of Forest, published in the Forest Press in 1868-9, a slight mistake occurs in the fifth chapter relating to the first white settler, where it is made to appear that Eli Holeman was the first bona fide settler of Forest county. This the writer has found to be not technically correct. What is written of early settlers should be of a definite type, while in tracing the sayings and doings of an uncivilized and barbaric people on the other hand, the mark is not always hit exactly.

The first settlers east of the Allegheny, within the limits of what is now Forest Co., (said Judge Holeman to the writer) was John Range sr. He settled at Tionesta, on the bank of the Allegheny river a few rods above where the bridge now stands. He came about 1815. From the late Jacob Shriver of Tionesta, I obtained the following particulars of John Range sr.; He was born in the eastern part of the State in 1746. He died in Tionesta in 1826, aged 80 years. He was a Lieutenant in the Revolutionary war, and in 1785 he obtained a land warrant for his services, which was taken out in the name of Tobollas Range his eldest son. He examined the country in 1808, in company with other soldiers, and afterwards located at Tionesta in 1816, with his family. The lottery warrant No. 511, dated May 17, 1785, includes 252 acres, taking in a large scope of bottom land extending from Tubbs Run to include the flats on which Geo. W. Dithridge now lives. This whole tract was called by the name of "Sa-qua-lin-got," which is, by interpretation, "place of council." Council Run takes its name from the fact that near its mouth Indian Councils were formerly held. One work of his skill still remains, that is his "Canal," as he was pleased to call it, which, although filled up in place, can be plainly traced by the eye to this day. It was a large drain beginning at the swamp just back of Col. Thomas's residence, and ending at Jacob Wenk's lot on the back channel of the Allegheny river. To-day it teaches us a lesson on industry. No engineer could have laid out with his levels a better grade or devised a scheme to effect the object any better.

Mr. Range used to relate concerning a party of about 100 settlers who pursued Indians from Allegheny and Westmoreland counties into these parts. This party found the Indians they were after, in the woods up the Allegheny; the scouts all hid behind trees, each man selecting his victim. All the Indians who were not killed by the first fire were pursued and shot while crossing the river. This corroborates the statements related by David Walters jr., which are published in the 12th chapter of the History of Forest County where the whole circumstances are given in detail, as they were related to Mr. Jeremiah Bonner, who kindly furnished the writer with a statement from the venerable Wm. Walters himself, to him, Bonner, in the year 1851.

Although a digression, we quote from Mr. Walters, a brief of the circumstances: In August, 1768, the settlers of Westmoreland county were attacked by Indians and a few cabins burnt. But before sunrise the Indians made their escape. The alarm was given, the settlement aroused, and the citizens volunteered to pursue the robbers who had fled, as was found by their trail, up the Allegheny river toward the mouth of the Tionesta. On the evening of the third day the pursuers reached the mouth of Tionesta creek and on the morning of the fourth day they proceeded but a short distance up the river when they discovered the smoke from the wigwams on the opposite side of the river. The Indians could be seen crossing the river in canoes to the west side preparing to camp. Every precaution was taken by the riflemen to prevent discovery and not alarm the Indians. The riflemen fell back to Tionesta by a circuitous route, crossed over the river by a rapid march, flanked the Indians in the night, forming a semicircle around them as they were encamped on the river bank. In the morning the riflemen were not slow to discover by the preparations the Indians were making, that a new raid was contemplated. Said Walters, we crawled quietly down the hill making our lines closer until we were within rifle shot and lay quiet until daylight. Previous arrangements had been made to count off right and left and to fire upon them each man selecting his victim accordingly. The arrangement was so effective that when the

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company fired but few of the enemy escaped; only two of the Indians succeeded in getting away after they were driven into the river. One of these alarmed the Indian village at East Hickory. Among the slain was a large Frenchman who had been with the marauders. We then went to the village but no one was there except an old squaw, sitting in a wigwam and crying. The troops consulting concluded to burn the village and destroy the crops of corn. This was summary vengeance. It was doubtless justifiable as the settlers had been tormented to such an extent that "endurance had ceased to be a virtue."

To return to John Range: he left two sons, John and James, and two daughters. Many of the Range family are still living in our county. George Tubbs settled in 1800. He girdled Middleton's apple trees excepting two, which can be pointed out to this day. The Valentines have all removed from this section.

Poland Hunter came from Westmoreland Co., and settled at Tionesta in 1805. He had a large family. He died in 1840, at a good old age, in the midst of his kindred. Of his children Wm. Hunter is the only survivor. His first settlement was on the island known by his name. He afterwards removed to the west side of the river opposite the island. Although not a man of education, he was a man of strong mind.

Asa Dodge came in 1815 and settled on the Daniel Stow place. He lived alone and followed basket making for a business. Judge John A. Dale tells me he has known of his making an entire set of harness out of oak splints. After living in various places within the limits of this county, he froze his feet, and becoming discouraged, returned to Genesee Co., N. Y., from whence he formerly came.

In the year 1800 the first township officers were elected (said Judge Holeman) when the territory now embraced in the western half of the county, was all included in the township of Allegheny. It was about this time the first taxes were assessed. Col. Samuel Dale was the deputy surveyor. Dale was succeeded by Hon. John Irwin who carried on the surveys from 1802.

Ebenezer Kingsley (after whom Kingsley township was named) was one of the pioneer settlers on Tionesta creek. He had wandered from Genesee Co., N. Y., came down the river on a raft; was not slow in perceiving that all kinds of game abounded. He first settled at Oldtown, but soon removed to what is now called Newtown. He was a man about six feet in height, and well proportioned, possessing good judgment, yet lacking education. His kindness and hospitality is well remembered by the early settlers on Tionesta creek. He gave most of the names to the streams in the vicinity of his settlement. As for instance "Jug Handle," because he broke the handle of his jug there. "Jake's Run," from the name of a man who built a shanty on its banks. "Bear Creek," so named because he killed a bear near its water. "Salmon Creek," because he shot a salmon near its mouth. "Lamentation Run," because the pioneer heard doleful cries of animals near its mouth, &c. Kingsley wanted no neighbors, two or three settling within a mile of him. He sold out his lands to Hamilton Stow, who was a man of great energy of character, and correct business habits. He was joined by Wheeler & Dusenbury who turned the resources of the forest to account, as they lumbered on a scale that had not been known before their time.

Another of the early settlers was Henry Gates, who came to the country and settled near Oldtown about the year 1806. That year was a very cold one throughout. The settlers were obliged to dig up their seed potatoes to subsist on. He came with his son John and his son-in-law Anthony Cousin, and for many years after in conjunction with Holeman and Hunters, supplied the surrounding country with corn, and gave the Tionesta creek settlement the name of "Egypt." He died and was buried on the mountain side near Oldtown.

About the year 1816, Hon. John A. Dale and his brother Joseph G. Dale, now an Associate Judge of Forest Co., and grandsons of Henry Gates, came to the County from Centre County, and they attended the first school on Tionesta creek.

Mark Noble and his family strayed into this region shortly after Gates came, and with his family settled near the mouth of Tionesta creek. Major James Hullings came here from Allegheny county. He took an early and active part in the settlement of this section. At Tionesta he built the first hotel in 1824. He is well remembered by our oldest inhabitants. He died at Tionesta in 1860, at the advanced age of 73. Contemporary with Major Hullings, came Rev. Hezekiah May, who settled first near Oldtown, which was the