DAYS WHEN ARKS PLIED THE WAVES OF SUSQUEHANNA

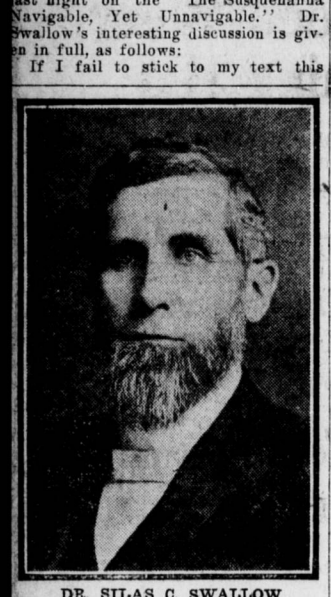
Dr. Swallow Recalls Many Different Forms of Navigation of the Stream

ANECDOTES OF RAFTING PERIOD

He Reads Interesting Paper to the County Historical Society and Confesses That He Has Never Been in the New Capitol

The Rev. Dr. Silas C. Swallow, of Camp Hill, one time candidate for President of the United States on the Prohibition ticket, read a paper before the Dauphin County Historical Society last night on the "The Susquehanna Navigable, Yet Unnavigable." Dr. Swallow's interesting discussion is given in full, as follows:

If I fail to stick to my text this



DR. SILAS C. SWALLOW

Telis Historical Society of Old-Time Navigation of Susquehanna

evening please charge it to my 55 years of wandering habits as an itinerant minister.

I am indebted for some of the data which follows, to the history written by that versatile explorer of the past, Dr. Egle, of whom our Historical Society and in fact our city and county was justly proud. At the dedication of the Maclay school building I witnessed a good natured tilt between the doctor and the colored professor, Howard Day, then president of our School Board, that may be of interest to some of my hearers. We three were to deliver brief addresses. Dr. Egle spent much of his time eulogizing Congressman Maclay; after whom the building is named. He emphasized the blue blood in his veins.

Dr. Day followed by saying, "when I heard that, I looked at the hand of my neighbor sitting on the right, Dr. Swallow, and saw that he had blue blood in his veins; then I looked at the hand of my neighbor sitting on the left and saw that he had blue blood in his veins, and then I looked at my own hand and behold I discovered that I had blue blood in my veins, and then I remembered that a very wise man named Paul had said some eighteen hundred years ago, that 'God hath made of one blood all nations to dwell on all the face of the earth.' By that time both doctors gave facial, if not prima-facie evidence of blue blood tinged with red."

Some Personal Reminiscences

Some of the facts in my paper were culled from the "History of Luzerne County," written by my old time friend, Hon. Stewart Pearce, of Wilkes-Barre, and if you will pardon some more personal reminiscences since I am in the mood, I will say that the Pearce family, now living only in memory, had a somewhat keen appreciation of the humorous. The father, the Rev. Marmaduke Pearce, was one of the most logical of Methodist preachers; a class noted more for the Billy Sunday type of the emotional, than for the logical. He was once approached by an old farmer who said:

"Mishter Pearce, my boy tied. I tried to get Mishter Johnson to preach de funeral sermon, but I couldn't git him. Den I tried to git Mishter Williams but I couldn't git him. Den I tought as I culdn't git anypody else I would come unt see vetter I couldn't git you."

"Well," answered the aged Marmaduke Pearce, "God bless your honest old soul. Since you can't get anybody else, I'll do it," and he did.

Now Marmaduke had a son, John J., who perhaps when still in his teens felt that he had a call to become a preacher of the gospel; and on the evening he was to preach his trial sermon in the old Berwick church, of which I was afterward junior pastor, more than fifty years ago, told his father not to come to the church, as it might embarrass him in preaching his first sermon; but the father went, and while his son John was offering the opening prayer, slumped into a rear seat, with the collar of his old cloak covering not only his face but his head. When his son John came to the parsonage, after the sermon, the father said:

"John, you grunt when you preach."

"How do you know, father?"

"I heard you, for I sat on the back seat from beginning to end."

"Oh! I saw you father, but I thought it was somebody's old coat hanging on the corner of the pew."

Getting to a Subject

John afterward went to Congress on the "Know Nothing" ticket, from the West Branch District, and on his return again became a pastor, then a Presiding Elder, and then he sometimes lectured. The subject of one of his lectures was "Hell." A preacher introducing him to his congregation said, "I assure you Brethren the lecturer of the evening is full of his subject."

I think it was Josh Billings or some other humorist, who in lecturing on "Milk," talked about everything except milk, saying at intervals what he would tell the audience if his subject was not "milk" and he believed in sticking to his subject; which he did by taking a sup of milk every three minutes from a tumbler of milk on the lecture table before him.

My subject is "The Susquehanna Navigable, Yet Unnavigable." If you will be patient a little longer I expect to get to the Susquehanna. It is still some distance away. Permit me to remark that it is an ancient addage that "Too great familiarity breeds contempt." This is true of our home-life, and scenery, and of places of historic interest near us.

In the year 1904 I was the guest, at Hotel Parker, in Boston, of the Honorable J. B. Lewis, a character with characteristics. He now heads the flying squadron holding hundreds of meetings and attacking the liquor traffic front and rear. Arriving there in the evening he said to me:

"Now as you do not lecture at 'The People's Temple' till to-morrow evening, you will have all day to-morrow for sightseeing. Where do you want to go?"

"Well," I replied. "I would like to see Bunker Hill, the old Tea vessel, and where she dumped her cargo in Boston harbor; Old South Church, Faneuil Hall, the old State House, Boston Commons, Harvard College, Lexington Commons," etc., etc.

"Well,' said he, "you don't want much."

Had Never Been to Bunker Hill

"No," I replied, "man wants but little here below, but wants that little strong."

He replied: "You mention Bunker Hill first, so we will take that first in the morning. I have never been there but I know the way."

"How long have you lived in Boston?"

"About —— years."

"And never been at Bunker Hill monument? My! My! My!" But then as I had not been in my own State Capitol's new building, though passing it every day, I bridled my surprise. Of course I got my first applause by telling the crowded audience at The People's Temple that night, that it was a fortunate thing for Mr. Lewis that I had come to Boston to show him the way to Bunker Hill.

Yes, I had passed the new Capitol building three or four times a day while it was in building, without entering, but met almost daily acquaintances from different parts of the State and of the United States who were traveling miles out of their way to look in upon the expensive and extensive finishing and furnishing. Whether they really saw the $75 shoe shine stand that cost the State $1,600 or the $100 chairs, bought by cubic measure, I never knew.

The building was too near me and too easy of access to challenge either my curiosity or my admiration.

It was in 1797 that three foreigners, natives of sunny France, viz.: the Duke of Orleans, the Duke of Monpensier and Count Beaufoleis, having been compelled to leave their native country then struggling in the throes of the great revolution and having wandered in exile through Lapland, Russia, Sweden and other countries, found safety in the Susquehanna Valley and afterward pronounced it one of the finest spots on earth, but many of our own people have not yet discovered its beauties. They must first go to Europe or Asia or Africa.

"Susquehanna Navigable"

But I am reminded that I am to talk about the Susquehanna Navigable. Well, I once, when about twelve years of age attempted with two younger brothers to navigate its North Branch in a small foot boat from our farm shore to the other side in the classic valley and near the village of Wyoming. A terrific wind swiped us, the whitecaps rolled seemingly mountain high, and we, paralized with fear, prayed more fervently than we rowed. I think it must have been such an unctuous prayer as my old friend Rev. Henry Wilson once offered on a chance visit to the Pennsylvania Legislature nearly sixty years ago. The chaplain asked him to offer the morning prayer, which he did with such fervor, force, pathos and unction, that the members' hats, usually worn, came off, and the cigars usually smoked during prayer were removed from their mouths; and one of the members asked my friend, Hon. Lindsay Mehaffey, from the Lycoming district:

"Who did you say in your introduction that preacher was?"

"Why, my pastor at Newberry, the Rev. Henry Wilson."

"Why," said the legislator, "he prays like the devil, don't he?"

This remark revealed that lawmaker's most intimate associate and patron saint. I think our prayer on the occasion of the boat ride was more like that of the old lady whose horse ran away with her, and when asked what she did in such extreme danger, she said:

"I trusted in the Lord till the britchen broke, and then I did not know what to do."

Or possibly our prayer was more like that of the good pastor's wife whose husband went up from a six hundred country charge to preach for a Boston two thousand-dollar preacher, while he took his summer vacation.

Country Parson Makes a Hit

The country parson so pleased the city congregation that they extended to him a call to become its pastor. This greatly incensed the country congregation to think that any preacher, especially their preacher, would be so worldly as to leave a six hundred-dollar for a two thousand-dollar charge, and they called an indignation meeting of the members. One woman, more indignant than the rest, said:

"I will go down to the parsonage and tell our pastor what I think of him."

The pastor's little daughter answered the door-bell.

"Where's your father?"

"Up in the library."

"What is he doing?"

"Praying to find out whether he ought to go to Boston."

"And where is your mother?"

"Oh! she is praying, too, and packing papa's trunk"—which is an evidence that women get answers sooner than men.

Well, we boys paddled and prayed, and I survive to tell the story of that early attempt to navigate the Susquehanna.

The Indian meaning of the name is Broad Shallow River. It is 450 miles long and much the largest in Pennsylvania. Its flow is about 2½ miles an hour at low stage and 5 miles an hour at high stage. Its average fall is about 2 feet to the mile. Rivers have had special attraction for the poets. One of them sings thus:

"See rivers how they run,
Through woods and meads, in shade and sun,
Sometimes swift, sometimes slow;
Wave succeeding wave, they go
A various journey to the deep,
Like human life to endless sleep."

Susquehanna's chief tributaries are the North and West Branches, which unite at Northumberland. The North Branch rises in Otsego lake, the West Branch in Northern Pennsylvania.

Harrisburg a Distributing Center

Harrisburg was the source of grocery supplies for the northern region, even as far north as Wyoming Valley, for many a long year. The farmers drifted down in canoes laden with farm products and, exchanging these for salt and other groceries, pushed with poles the canoes back to their homes.

In the year 1771 the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania passed an act declaring the Susquehanna river a public highway. Portions of the land along the river had been settled and cultivated for many years, and the inhabitants needed some commodious avenue to market for grain and other products. They proposed to pay a certain proportion of the money required to render the river navigable. The Assembly appropriated an additional sum, and appointed commissioners to superintend the work. The gravel bars were cleared away, stumps and trees taken out, a channel opened and towing paths constructed along the rapids. Somewhat different from public operations of more modern times, the river was ready for navigation in a few months from Wrightsville to Wyoming. Not many years later a way for trade was opened from the Chesapeake to the New York line.

The first transportation boat used on the river was called the Durham boat, from the town of Durham, on the Delaware a few miles below Easton. This boat was built at that place about 1750. The Delaware boats were 60 feet in length, 8 feet in width and 2 feet in depth and when laden with 15 tons' weight drew 20 inches of water. The stern and bow were sharp, on which were erected small decks, while a running board extended the whole length of the boat on each side. They carried a mast with two sails and were manned by a crew of five men.

Further on Isaac A. Chapman constructed a boat propelled by poles, operated by horses on a tread machine. This was discontinued as impracticable. Then came the period of keel-bottom boats, known as "broadhorns."

Navigation in 1790

In 1790 over 150,000 bushels of wheat floated down the Susquehanna to Middletown and were thence transported over country to Philadelphia.

In 1794 or 1795 the first ark arrived in Harrisburg. It came from Huntingdon. About the same time the Conewago canal was commenced at York Haven, and was completed in 1797. Trade was then diverted from Harrisburg and Middletown to Columbia. A few years afterward boats reached tidewater, and Port Deposit became the mecca of northern and western grain men.

It was not till 1823 that an act was passed to improve navigation from Northumberland to tide water, and about $15,000 was appropriated for the improvement.

It was about that time that a Baltimore company constructed three light draught steam boats, named, respectively, "Pioneer," "Susquehanna" and "Codorus." They continued to visit Harrisburg and some points north until 1826, when the "Susquehanna" exploded its boilers in an attempt to ascend the rapids at Berwick, Pa. Two men were killed and several injured.

In 1857 a company brought a small side wheel steamer that had been used on the Delaware river at Philadelphia, but not proving profitable, it was sent back to Philadelphia.

In 1833 a strong movement was made to interest Congress in steamboat and sloop navigation from Chesapeake bay to the lakes, but no appropriation being secured it was abandoned.

Rafting on the Susquehanna

To those of minor age who never saw a raft or an ark on the Susquehanna, a statement of the number that passed a given point in a single year on the spring floods, from 50 to 75 years ago, would sound like exaggeration—468 on the North Branch and 470 on the West Branch are numbers given by one historian. I have counted twenty in sight at one time, mostly rafts composed of lumber bound for southern and eastern markets.

The Raftsmen were jolly crews not always mindful of others' rights, and by no means sticklers for the golden rule. It was at the village of Mifflinville, on the North Branch, between Berwick and Bloomsburg that four jolly but hungry raftsmen asked a good housewife to sell them bread and pastry. She brow-beat them as thieves, and they, intent on being what she trusted them to be, put two fence rails under her clay-formed garden oven and carried it, and its half baked bread, pies and cakes to the raft, and then floated; meanwhile watching the contents of the oven that they might not get too well done. They feasted for two or three days. On their tramp return, two weeks afterward, toward their home a hundred miles further north, they stopped and paid the good lady for the oven and its contents, and then tramped on northward. Ever after, it is said, she spoke well of the river men. All the raftsmen of that period knew a pilot known as "Uncle Ben." Some of his descendants live in the vicinity of Harrisburg now. He was a logician of the practical type.

"Uncle Ben" Teaches Lesson

A fellow worker steered the raft on which they were floating, within a foot of a rock, and when "Uncle Ben," the pilot, chided him for so close a call he excused himself by saying "a miss is as good as a mile." "Uncle Ben" dissented and they came near to blows in the hour's argument that followed. Next morning when the steersman awoke, lying on the raft with only a horse blanket for a bed, he was in a rage because some one while he slept had placed a putrid fish within an inch of his nose and he had been smelling the odor all night. "Uncle Ben" condoled with him, but this time chided him for his ill-temper, since "a miss was as good as a mile," and the fish had not touched his nose. Thereafter that particular raft was steered as far as possible from danger.

I think it is now generally conceded by experts that the Susquehanna is too wide and too shallow, and too susceptable to drift to be kept navigable to steamboats, even if Congress could be induced to appropriate the millions that would be necessary to form a channel, build locks around the various rapids, and thus render it temporarily navigable.

Besides an attempt to do so would mean an endless war with the railroads of the State that were unabled long since to perfect their monopoly as common carriers, by blotting out the canal system of the State.

And yet, where is the Harrisburger who dares to deny that the Susquehanna is navigable, when he stands on its shores and witnesses a dozen or more steamboats engaged in mining and transporting black diamonds from the very bottom of the river, and then remembers that, in or near Harrisburg about 15,000 tons of anthracite coal are thus saved and utilized annually, that otherwise would be not only wasted, but left to fill the stream and ultimately force it out of its banks, at flood time, as a destroyer of property.

And then when he remembers the millions of tons already on the way in creek and river channels, due to arrive in Harrisburg long before the present supply is exhausted, he should feel grateful for the providing of Providence and their utilization, through man's ingenuity in appropriating the steamboat; though such boat may be low, leaky and devoid of beauty. This coal though losing much of its carbon through exposure to weather and water is yet a boon to the manufacturer, and a source of joy to the laboring man, who secures his bread through the labor required in lifting and transporting it.

If tired of looking at the uncanny steam coal boats let the fastidious Harrisburger turn his attention to the many sand boats, plying Susquehanna's wave, and then admit that the Susquehanna is really navigable. And who does not know the value of sand? Why there is not a cowardly jingo, or a speculator in human blood, clamoring for an American war, that does not daily pray to his God Mammon, that President Wilson may have more sand. But we are opposed to war, unless it be fought out as Artemus Ward said he was willing the war of his period should be fought out, viz:—by his first wife's relations; but our relations are quite content with Wilson's quantity and quality of sand. Surely President Wilson's sand suits us exactly, as it is used to clog the channels against the warships, rather than to accelerate the speed of the jingo war-train. We are willing that the proverbial chip may be knocked from Uncle Sam's shoulder a hundred times while he continues his frownless smile and continues to keep his pants strapped down and to mind his own business.

The old time Susquehanna Ark of 75 years ago, frequently gave its manager as much trouble as did the one that required 120 years of Noah's labor to construct, and that was finally stranded on Mt. Ararat. Yes, as much trouble as was given to Israel and the Philistines by that little three by three box of shittim wood of Solomon's time, known as the Ark of the Covenant.

A Christian Science Methodist

Mr. Billings, my father's neighbor of 75 years ago, had a small coal mine in Wyoming Valley. He showed his sympathy with the under dog in the world's fight, by naming his son Abel; and he demonstrated his impartiality to combattants by naming another son Cain. The three constructed an ark, filled it with coal from their own little hole in the ground and started to navigate the Susquehanna southward. They had not gone far when their vessel struck a hidden rock and sank. Now Mr. Billings was not only an amiable man, but he was also deeply pious, and something of a Christian Science Methodist. He paced up and down the shore line singing a militantly religious song. It had an even one hundred stanzas. I will not sing them all this evening, but perhaps I had better sing one or two in order to give you the hang of the tune for we little can tell how soon in life's swift current, and amid its rocks, shoals and breakers you may have occasion to use the song and then it will be important for you to know the tune. In fact I am not quite sure that some of you have not long been familiar with words and music. It ran something like this:

"Die on the field of battle
"Die on the field of battle
"Die on the field of battle
"Glory to my soul."
"Well, Cain! Abel! we can't do anything with this wreck till lower water and warmer weather, so we must try it again. You can walk faster than your old dad, so hurry back up home, get up the team, haul some lumber down to the river for another ark, and haul the coal to fill it."
"Die on the field of battle,
"Die on the field of battle,
"Die on the field of battle,
"Glory to my soul."

The Susquehanna is still navigable. The Susquehanna is still unnavigable.

TEN THOUSAND MEN IDLE

Delaware and Hudson Closes Collieries for Three Weeks

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., March 12.—Ten thousand men at eight collieries of the Delaware and Hudson Coal Company have been thrown into idleness by a company order which closes the collieries for the next three weeks. The suspension order went into effect yesterday, the following collieries being closed: Cayuga, Brisbin, Continental, Sloan, Dodge, Hallstead, Avondale and Loomis.

C. E. Tobery, general manager of the company, declares that the coal on hand is much greater than the demand, and that because of a lack of storage facilities the suspension order is necessary.

CITY SAVES IN LIGHTING DEAL

Gets Cheaper Electricity in Every Particular

Reading, Pa., March 12.—At a meeting of Council yesterday five-year contracts were awarded for street lighting. The Metropolitan Company was awarded the park lighting and street illumination. Both bids were reduced, the arc lamp price from $65.40 per lamp to $65 flat. The park lighting bids were reduced from $36 to $24 per lamp.

At present the city is paying $67.50 for street arc lamps. The bid for incandescent lamps is $18.12 instead of $19.20 per lamp. The city will save $21,000 with the new prices in five years.

EX-GOVERNORS AS GUESTS

Lancaster Travel Club Entertains Former Executives of State

Lancaster, Pa., March 12.—The Lancaster Travel Club, at the meetings of which prominent speakers discuss topics relating to various countries, last night entertained ex-Governors Edwin S. Stuart and Samuel W. Pennypacker, Lieutenant Governor McClain and Lancaster's Mayor, H. L. Hunt, all of whom discussed the subject of "Pennsylvania" from a historical standpoint.

The meeting was followed by a banquet with covers laid for 150. President Charles M. Reiling acted as toastmaster.

VERMONT "DRY" TEST LOOMS

Prohibition Referendum Only Needs Governor's Signature

Montpelier, Vt., March 12.—The prohibition referendum bill previously adopted by the House passed the Senate yesterday. If the bill is approved by Governor Gates the question of State prohibition will be decided at the municipal election in March, 1916.

After sixty years of prohibition, the State adopted a local option policy at a special election in 1903.

496 SHIPS IN PANAMA CANAL

Handles 2,367,244 Tons Cargo in Six Months—Tolls $2,126,832—Now Average $400,000 Monthly

Washington, March 12.—In the first six months of its operation the Panama canal handled between the two oceans 496 vessels, carrying cargo of 2,367,244 tons. The tolls levied amounted to $2,126,832. Tolls collected on barges before August 15 brings the total to $2,138,442. The average now is $400,000 a month.

The first six months of commercial operation were completed February 14, 1915. The routes of the 496 vessels were:

Route.	Number of Vessels	Cargo Tonnage
United States coastwise, eastbound,	97	499,439
United States coastwise, westbound,	109	493,272
United States Pacific coast to Europe,	66	444,855
Europe to United States Pacific coast,	16	59,516
South America to United States and Europe,	69	378,386
United States and Europe to South America,	31	128,922
United States Atlantic coast to Far East,	48	287,782
Far East to United States Atlantic coast,	2	14,500
Miscellaneous routings,	13	60,500
Vessels without cargo,	45	.....
Totals,	496	2,367,244

There were 252 vessels and 1,340,625 tons of cargo eastbound and 244 vessels and 1,026,610 tons westbound. More than forty-one per cent. of the cargo handled has been in coastwise trade. More than twenty-one per cent. has been in movement between the Pacific coast of North America (principally the United States) and Europe. Approximately twenty-one per cent. also has been between the west coast of South America and the seaports on the Atlantic seaboards of the United States and Europe.

The six principal commodities have been grain, nitrates, coal, refined petroleum and petroleum products, lumber and cotton.

Republican Praise for Wilson

Springfield, Ill., March 12.—President Wilson and Congress were commended for their strict neutrality in the European war in a resolution adopted by the Senate yesterday. The measure was offered by Senator Jewell, Republican, and urged the President and Congress to remain steadfast in their policy of neutrality and impartiality.

Missouri Lead Mines Resume

Bonne Terre, Mo., March 12.—Announcement was made here yesterday that all the lead mines in St. Francois county would resume operations on full time March 16. Forty-five hundred employes and four mining companies will be affected.

Dutch Dedicate Simply at Fair

San Francisco, March 12.—Dedicatory exercises at the Netherlands pavilion at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition yesterday were simple, as a reflection of the sorrow of the Dutch people over the European war.

Killed Before Natal Feast

Pottsville, Pa., March 12.—George McCullough, of this city, was instantly killed at Buck Run colliery, yesterday, by a fall of coal. This was the twenty-first anniversary of McCullough's birthday, and he was just preparing to leave the mine for a banquet when a two-ton boulder fell upon him.

Boy of 14 to Marry

Reading, March 12.—Emanuel Reber, 14-year-old son of Emanuel Reber, of Tilden township, this county, was granted a license here yesterday to marry Miss Edna F. Moyer, 18-year-old daughter of Harry A. Moyer, of the same place. The wedding will take place on Saturday.

Another Furnace Fired

Allentown, Pa., March 12.—Furnace No. 1 of the Thomas Iron Company, Hokendauqua, was put in blast yesterday morning, giving employment to 140 hands after an idleness of several months. The furnace has a capacity of 225 tons a day.