

CENTENNIAL Somerse

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SOMERSET, PA., MONDAY, JUNE 24, 1895.

SALUTATORY.

In making my bow to the public as editor and business manager of the CENTENNIAL VEDETTE, it may be in order to state the objects of this publication, which can be briefly done, as follows:

To work for the success of the celebration of Somerset county's 100th anniversary; to acquaint the general public with numerous facts pertaining to our county's history, its great resources, etc., to offer business men, mechanics and professional men an excellent opportunity to advertise their business, as the CENTENNIAL VEDETTE will be read by a large number of people that will not be reached in any other way at this time.

Herein I also wish to thank the good people of Somerset and other localities for their hearty co-operation in making this paper a financial success, which without their liberal advertising patronage could not have been attained.

Thanking you, kind friends and patrons, I am yours for the success of the big celebration and our county's future prosperity. Very respectfully,
P. L. LIVENGOOD.

THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET.

Some of Her Past History. Her Resources, Industries, Schools, Population, Etc.

In point of area, Somerset county ranks sixth in the great commonwealth of which it forms a part. It contains 1,102 square miles, or 755,280 acres of land. It is bounded on the north by Cambria county, on the east by Bedford, on the south by the state of Maryland and on the west by Fayette and Westmoreland counties. From the year 1758, that part of the present county of Somerset lying east of the Allegheny mountain—Allegheny, Northampton, Southampton, Larimer and Greenville townships—formed part of Cumberland county, and from 1768 until 1771 all of the region embraced by Somerset county to-day was called Cumberland county. During the twenty-four years succeeding March 9th, 1771, the lands now within Somerset county constituted part of the county of Bedford. By an act of the State Legislature approved April 17th, 1795, Bedford county was divided and Somerset county was ushered into existence.

The taxes collected in 1795 in Brothersvalley, Turkeyfoot, Quemahoning, Milford, Elk Lick and Stonycreek, the six townships which composed the original county of Somerset, were paid into the treasury of Bedford county. Governor Thomas Mifflin appointed as officers of the new county, James Wells, Abraham Cable and Ebenezer Griffith associate judges, and Josiah Espy prothonotary, register and recorder, clerk of courts, etc., whose commissions were dated April 17, 1795. Other county officers were not sworn in until after their election and appointment in October of that year. They were: Thomas Kennedy, sheriff; John Fletcher, John Read and John Leech, county commissioners; Abraham Morrison, commissioners' clerk; Josiah Espy, county treasurer, and David King coronor.

The town of Somerset, which prior to 1795 was known as Brunerstown, was chosen as the county-seat of Somerset county on September 12th, 1795. The county commissioners first met for the transaction of business on October 26th of the same year.

By an act passed in the year 1800 a portion of Londonderry township, Bedford county, was annexed to the county of Somerset, and on March 26th, 1804, an act was passed erecting Cambria county from parts of Huntingdon, Somerset and Bedford, thus changing the county of Somerset to its present size and form.

On October 29th, 1795, the county commissioners entered into a contract with Josiah Espy and John Campbell for the construction of a temporary "goal" to be completed on or before February 15th, 1796. On the same day the commissioners also rented a room from Jacob and Henry Schneider for the use of the county. It was probably in this room that the first term of court was held, and at a rental of \$30 per year the same room was used for public purposes until the completion of the first court house, which transpired seven years after the county's organization.

April 17th, 1798; Robert Spencer, of Bedford, took a contract to build a court house in Somerset for \$5,000 and completed the structure in 1802.

The contract for building the first substantial jail was awarded to Abraham Miller, October 7th, 1802. The building cost \$3,320 and was finished in 1808.

The present court house was erected

by Samuel S. Benson, at a cost of about \$18,000. The structure was completed in 1852.

April 28th, 1856, the contract for building a county jail was awarded to John Mong for \$6,590. This structure was used until a few years ago, when it was replaced by the present jail.

RESOURCES, INDUSTRIES, ETC.

Somerset county, while rich in mineral wealth and valuable tracts of timber, was withal a strictly agricultural county for many years. Gradually, however, the value of her minerals became manifest, and to-day this county holds an important position among the mining and lumbering regions of the state. Somerset county is rich in bituminous coal, fire clay, limestone, potter's clay, etc. Oil is also believed to exist in paying quantities in the county, although this is a source of wealth that up to this time comparatively little effort has been made to develop. Many indications of oil have been discovered, however, and there is little doubt that Somerset county will in due time become an important oil field. Iron ore exists in the county, but not to a great extent. Several iron furnaces were operated successfully in this county many years ago, but they have long since been abandoned, owing to the encroachments of much larger iron works situated in localities more favored for this industry.

The most extensive manufacturing establishments in Somerset county are a large steam tannery at Confluence, fire brick works east of Meyersdale and the Standard Extract Works at Salisbury, where tannic acid is manufactured from chestnut wood, sumac leaves, rock oak and hemlock bark. The county has excellent resources for manufacturing, and capitalists have rare opportunities for profitable investment.

Her agricultural resources have also steadily increased, and while much of her territory is made up of rugged mountain land, there are also numerous fertile valleys and scores of very valuable farms within her domain. So, even in agriculture, old Somerset county occupies no mean position among the counties of the state. Stock breeding is given considerable attention by many of our farmers, and in this connection it may be in order to state that the largest steer exhibited at the Centennial exposition at Philadelphia, in 1876, was the product of a Somerset county farm. This gigantic animal, which weighed 4,740 pounds, was raised by Samuel Barclay, of Jefferson township.

The manufacture of maple sugar is an important industry in this county, and for fine dairy products old Somerset has always held an enviable and important position. Somerset county butter, formerly marketed as Glades butter, has a wide reputation for its purity and excellence.

POPULATION.

The population of Somerset county is principally of German extraction, although the descendants of English, Irish and other desirable nationalities are also quite numerous. Only a very small portion of her population is foreign born. Somerset county has a citizenship that she may well feel proud of. Her sons are a hardy race, honest, industrious, law-abiding and brave. Her daughters are women of brave hearts and noble traits of character, and as good cooks, have a reputation that extends far and wide. Somerset county is well supplied with good schools, churches, newspapers and all that pertains to an intelligent, prosperous and happy people.

Somerset county has produced some great men, and a large number of prominent people that are to be found in nearly every state of the Union. The population of the county numbered 37,317 in 1890, and at present numbers about 45,000.

The Pittsburg division of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad traverses the southern portion of the county, running east and west. At Rockwood an important branch of this railway runs northward through Somerset to Johnstown. This branch is known as the Somerset and Cambria railroad. The main stem of the B. & O. in Somerset county also has three other branches, viz: The Berlin branch, running from Garrett to Berlin, the Salisbury branch, running from Salisbury Junction to Salisbury, and the Confluence & Oakland branch, running from Confluence to Manor lands, Garrett county, Maryland.

A large number of Somerset county people that emigrated to the far west, many years ago, will be in attendance at the county centennial. This great celebration will afford an excellent opportunity to renew old acquaintances and memories of by-gone days. It will be a sort of reunion for thousands of people.

THE TOWN OF SOMERSET.

Its Past and Present.—A Live County-Seat of a Great County.

Somerset was laid out as a town in September, 1795, at which time it was declared the county-seat of Somerset county and has since remained so. On March 5th, 1804, the town was incorporated as a borough.

The town has suffered from three great fires. The first one occurred October 16th, 1833, and was very disastrous, almost wiping the town from existence. The second great fire occurred May 9th, 1872. This fire wiped out the central and wealthy part of the community and entailed a loss of about one million dollars. It was a fearful conflagration, and only those yet living can adequately describe the awful terrors of that May day. The third great fire occurred on May 6th, 1876, and while not so disastrous as the fire of 1872, was sufficiently so as to cause great loss and distress.

Since 1872 the town has enjoyed continued and substantial prosperity. Since 1880 the place has been growing in wealth and population in a most gratifying manner. The population of the town in 1880 was 1,197. In 1890 it had grown to 1,713, an increase of nearly 50 per cent. Presuming upon the same per cent of increase since 1890, the population now is about 2,200. So far as we are able to ascertain, the borough limits have never been enlarged since the town was first incorporated. Consequently, the town has overflowed the borough limits and the streets in all directions run into the township. The municipal limits should be enlarged, say to one mile each way from the square. This would then but include the legitimate limits of the town and the population would be 2,500 in round figures.

In substantial wealth, in business prosperity, and in fact in everything that goes to make up a thoroughly up-to-date county-seat, Somerset is fully up to any town in this broad commonwealth of equal population. Within the last five years city airs and style have been rapidly assumed, and the town's people are enjoying many of the luxuries of city life and advancing civilization. Within the time specified two first-class National banks have been established and are now very prosperous institutions. During the last few years whilst the finances of the country were in a bad way and banks were breaking by the score, and dire distress was present in hundreds of communities in "Uncle Sam's" domain, these banks firmly withstood the shock of the wave of disaster, and Somerset, as a community, scarcely knew anything of the prevailing hard times.

January 18th, 1892, the Somerset Electric Light, Heat and Power Company was incorporated. This company is composed entirely of home capitalists and it has given to the citizens of Somerset an electric light plant second to none in the state. The company has lately enlarged its plant so that it is now able to supply and incandescent lights to a population of 5,000 people. The enlargement is at an expense of \$10,000 and the total investment is \$30,000. All of its machinery, wire, pole lines and other appliances are of the very latest patents and designs. The town is much indebted to the enterprising and liberal stockholders of the light company in risking so large an amount of their limited means in giving to the community such a delightful light service.

Next to the light company comes the Municipal Water-works. These works are the property of the borough and have been put in successful operation within the last two years. The system is first-class in all respects and gives entire satisfaction. The town is supplied with an abundance of excellent water, and for fire protection the pressure is all that can be desired. Two good fire companies have been organized and our citizens no longer dread a repetition of the disasters of 1833, 1872 and 1876. The water-works, completed, cost the town \$25,000, and a better investment never was made by any community.

Closely following the organization of the two National banks, the Electric Light Co. and building of water-works comes the erection of the Hotel Vannear. This elegant modern hotel, with its electric light service, electric bells, passenger elevator, plate glass fronts, waterservice, elegant rooms, etc., would be a credit to any city. Besides, we have the commodious Somerset House with its beautiful grounds, the Commercial Hotel, a large and well kept three-story brick public house, also the West End Hotel, which is right up to the times. Somerset always was a good hotel town and we can now challenge any town in the state of the size

of this place, unless it be a watering place, to rival our hotel accommodations.

Somerset is substantially and compactly built. Its elegant private residences and its numerous first-class business blocks are of brick. Good pavements and well kept private grounds are prominent features. The population is almost exclusively American. It is a question whether there is a town in the United States of equal population that has so few foreigners within its borders. Whilst there are no millionaires in the place, it is a remarkable fact that there are no abjectly poor. Pauperism is unknown and distress from lack of necessities of life occurs with the utmost rarity. Rags and tatters and dirty faces are seldom seen on our streets. Strangers and summer visitors have frequently remarked upon the absence of all objectionable population. Walk the streets of the town as you will, at any time, and you will see nothing but the evidences of a well fed, well clad, happy and intelligent people.

Besides the Vedette, the town is publishing within its limits three very good weekly papers. Good schools and fine churches are well known fixtures. The business of the town is largely commercial. To its enterprising, wide-awake merchants the place owes in a very marked degree its prosperity and growth. Large and well appointed store rooms, great stocks of merchandise, alert, brisk and keenly alive merchants combine to command an extensive trade. The mercantile business extends beyond the county and state lines.

Somerset is situated on an elevated plateau midway between the Allegheny and Laurel Hill mountains. It is the highest county-seat in the state. During the summer months it receives many visitors, tourists, pleasure and health-seekers. Its climate is a health-giving and invigorating one. Its population being almost exclusively American, is highly cultured, intelligent and hospitable. As a most delightful and desirable place of residence it has few superiors. There is not a vacant house or store room in the town. It offers substantial opportunities for legitimate business ventures and its people always extend a welcome to those desiring to settle and to do business in the community.

Pess.

The Town of Meyersdale.

The first plot of this town was made in 1844, when Jacob Olinger caused thirty lots to be laid out. Later on Mr. Olinger and his heirs made other additions to the town, as did also Peter Meyers, Daniel U. M. and William Beachly. The village was known as Meyers' Mills until 1872, when the Olinger and Beachly plots were incorporated as a borough under the name of Dale City. This was about the time the railroad through this section was completed, or shortly thereafter. In 1874 the borough limits were extended so as to include the Meyers plot and the name of the town was then changed to Meyersdale. The first house within the borough limits was erected by Andrew Barntager about 1780. The first store in the place was kept by Peter and William Meyers. The first hotel was erected in 1848, by James McGuire.

Since the completion of the railroad, the town has had a rapid growth. It is no longer the insignificant hamlet of Meyers' Mills, but is now Meyersdale, the metropolis of Somerset county, having a slightly larger population than Somerset, the county-seat. The town is substantially built, and its Main street being handsomely paved with brick, gives it quite a city-like appearance. Meyersdale also has a fine electric light plant and water works, it being the first town in the county to put in modern improvements of this kind.

Among its numerous stores, that of J. H. Pfahler and S. C. Hartley are entitled to special mention. Mr. Pfahler conducts a large exclusive grocery and Mr. Hartley a fine dry goods establishment. Either one of these stores would be a credit to any town of 5,000 inhabitants. Meyersdale lacks nothing that constitutes a good town. It has an excellent class of people and is a thoroughly up-to-date community.

In one respect, at least, Somerset leads the United States and probably the whole world. Here is what the Chambers & McKee Glass Company of Jeannette, Pa., write to C. S. Vannear, proprietor of Hotel Vannear: "The chipped plate glass will go forward on Thursday of this week. In this instance it may be well for you to know that these are the largest lights of plate glass that have ever been chipped, not only in the United States, but we think in the world." The glass referred to is that used in the large sliding doors between Mr. Vannear's dining rooms

SOMERSET COUNTY'S FIRST SETTLER.

An Interesting Sketch From the Pen of a Citizen Well Posted on the County's Early History.

Francis Phillippi was one of the early pioneer settlers who settled in the Milford settlement at a very early day. While he was by no means the first of these early settlers to locate there, we believe it may fairly be held that to him belongs the distinction of having been the first white man who ever penetrated into the territory of what is now Somerset county who afterwards became an actual settler therein.

According to well authenticated tradition, he was along with Braddock's unfortunate expedition to Fort Duquesne (Pittsburg) in 1755 and was a participant in the scenes of that disastrous July day when Braddock's army was practically annihilated by the French and Indians on Braddock's historic field.

Seeing that the day was lost and that it was every man for himself who ever expected to get out of this affair with his life, it is said that he unhooked a horse from a wagon, mounted him and forced his way through the savage horde that was engaged in this indiscriminate slaughter, receiving a bullet in his leg from their fire. He was pursued for some distance by the Indians but finally got clear of them.

When beyond immediate danger he rode on during the remaining part of the day and all through the night, as fast as he could make his way through the woods.

At the start there was no time to think whether he was flying, and at night he could not tell his course. All he could do was to get as far away from the bloody field as possible.

Morning found him far away in an unknown wilderness, his horse exhausted and himself without food.

He now set his face toward the rising sun and bore on all day. But as his horse and himself were both feeble from their long journey and want of food, his progress was very slow and he was compelled to halt and rest for the night.

The morning found him in bad condition for his journey. The horse, by reason of over-exertion, was scarcely able to move and himself in but little better condition.

He therefore abandoned his horse on the western side of Laurel Hill and started on his journey on foot. The great problem with him was the matter of subsistence. True, he had brought off his gun, but for it he had only a single charge of ammunition. For ten days he subsisted on berries. Of game he saw some, but with only a single charge he realized that he must make a sure shot; he could take no risk. Crossing Laurel Hill and descending into the valley, he reached Laurel Hill creek near where the Clay pike now crosses that stream.

Somewhere in this vicinity he had the good fortune to come upon a deer that was lying in the grass within a few feet of him, and was fortunate enough to shoot it dead with his only charge of powder and ball. As the blood flowed from the wound, he applied his lips and drank the blood to appease his raging hunger. Having appeased his hunger, he took as much of the meat as he could well carry and continued his journey and finally reached the eastern settlements.

In passing through the country his attention was attracted by the beautiful region of country, with its fine open glades, in the vicinity where the village of New Centerville is now located. The desirableness of the country through which he had passed appears to have made a lasting impression on his mind, one never to be forgotten, and years afterwards he came back and became a settler here. The lands which he took up were somewhere near New Centerville.

He is said to have been a large-hearted and liberal-minded man and a good citizen. His descendants are still to be found in the neighborhood.

The cemetery at New Centerville is one of the most beautiful in the county. It is difficult to say whether there is another anywhere in the county of Somerset in which so many fine monuments are to be seen. It is said that the ground for this beautiful cemetery was donated for that purpose by Mr. Phillippi; yet, within it, in an obscure part of it, lie the mortal remains of its donor, with nothing but a rough stone without inscription of any sort to mark his grave. If this be true as to his having donated this ground, then we feel like quoting what another has already written on the same subject years ago: "What a commentary on the gratitude of the present generation," in this, the finest monumental cemetery in the county, to allow the grave of its donor to remain unmarked until every vestige of it will be lost in oblivion.

The Town of Rockwood.

Rockwood, situated at the junction of the Baltimore and Ohio and the Somerset and Cambria railroads, is distinctively the railroad center of Somerset county. This town, while much younger than some of the other leading towns of the county, is a very thrifty, enterprising and fast-growing borough. Its business interests are constantly increasing in extent and importance. Its buildings are nearly all new and the town presents a thoroughly modern appearance.

Rockwood was laid out in 1857 by Philip Wolfersberger. The first house within the borough limits was built by P. & D. Wolfersberger, in 1856. It was a two-story frame building used jointly as a residence and store room. The postoffice at this place was established in 1868 and the first postmaster was F. B. Long. The railroad depot was built in 1871. The first school-house in the place was erected in 1858, and the first term of school within its walls was taught by S. A. Will, now an attorney of Pittsburg.

Rockwood was first known as Shaff's Bridge, later as Mineral Point, and finally, after much agitation, the name Rockwood was adopted. Hon. E. D. Miller, P. S. Wolfersberger and B. S. Harrington are said to have been the chief instruments in bringing about the change.

In 1890 the town had a population of 553 and at present has probably no less 800 inhabitants. The town is still growing and is also putting on metropolitan airs. Within the past year an electric light plant has been put in, which is something out of the ordinary for a town of its size, and it goes to show that Rockwood is a close rival of some of the larger towns and that they must look well to their laurels.

About all of its leading business men are advertisers in the CENTENNIAL VEDETTE, and nothing too good can be said of them. They are numbered among the county's most prosperous and reliable people and are fully up to the times in all respects.

Rockwood has the best of school and church facilities, and as a desirable community in which to live is hard to excel. Her people are especially noted for their hospitality and courtesy to strangers. In this respect the town has no superiors and few equals.

The railroads, of course, are the main agents in building up and sustaining Rockwood, and its excellent railroad facilities constitute an important inducement to persons desiring to reside in a town with good train accommodations.

The "Vedette" Advertisers.

We will say right here that the wide-awake and up-to-date firms whose advertisements appear in the CENTENNIAL VEDETTE are to be relied upon as the people to do business with in their several localities. Our readers can rely upon it that all of our advertisers are thoroughly reliable persons—people who will treat you squarely and liberally, and who, if they have a good thing, will share it with their customers. The merchants and other business people whose advertisements appear in this paper represent the very cream of the trade in their respective lines, and our advertisements representing the mechanical arts, legal and medical profession, etc., are all from persons possessing superior ability in their respective avocations. In fact we can say nothing too good for our advertisers, and would space permit, we would be pleased to give each of them a separate and extensive personal write-up. You can't go wrong in patronizing Vedette advertisers, for all of them are liberal, pleasant, first-class people to deal with. We specially request our readers to read every advertisement in this paper, for in them will be found many things of interest and profit to the reader. Besides, it will give you a better acquaintance with some of the best people in the world.

Our Ex-Congressmen.

The town of Somerset has more living ex-congressmen than any other town or city in this congressional district. Johnstown, Altoona and Bedford are not "in it" with Somerset in this respect. The list consists of W. H. Koontz, Edward Seull and A. H. Coffroth. And more than this, it is a fact that Somerset has sent more men to Congress since the formation of the government than any other town or city in this congressional district. As Virginia is the mother of presidents, so is Somerset the mother of congressmen.

Business men who do not advertise are supposed to be dead. In looking over the advertising columns of this paper it will be seen that there are very few dead business men in Somerset.