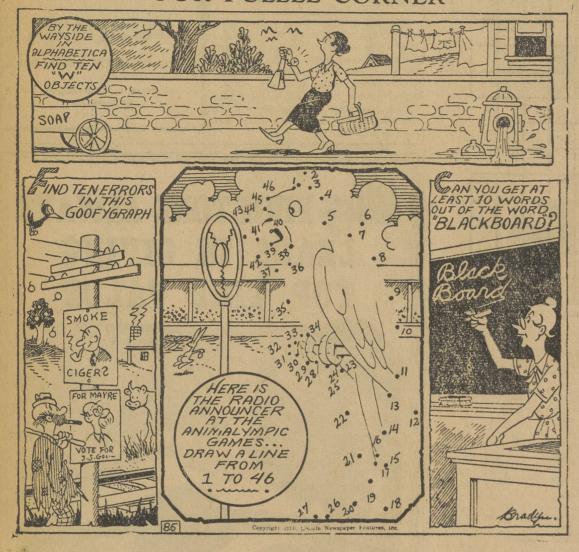
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OUR PUZZLE CORNER









EXCERPTS FROM **THE HISTORY OF DALLAS** By WILLIAM PENN RYMAN

(William Penn Ryan wrote this history of Dallas first as a paper for Wyoming Historical and Geological Society in 1885. It filled such a long-felt need for a permanent record of the development of this section that he was asked to enlarge it. He set upon that task and had finished it except for a final chapter on the Civil War when, on July 31, 1889, he died.— Editor.

Up to the present time, local historians have found so much of interest connected with the settlement and growth of Wyoming Valley that they have neglected to note many important events in the rise and progress of the country surrounding. There is, no doubt, a vast deal of interesting historic material connected with every township in the present county of Luzerne, which, years ago, could and should have been recorded and given permanent place in its annals, but which, from long neglect is now either lost forever, or so poorly and inaccurately handed down to us to be comparatively valueless. In some parts of the country the work of collecting this material has been too long delayed to make it possible now to get anything like an accurate account of men and events from the date of the first settlement. The men who know of their own knowledge, who lived and had experience in the earliest days, are gone, leaving us only the children or grandchildren to relate what was told them by the ancestors. This kind of hearsay and tradition lets in an element of uncertainty which should not exist in any historic record.

With this view and purpose of writing down what I can learn, at this late day, concerning the "over the mountain" or hill country West of Wyoming Valley, and especially of the present township and borough of Dallas, I began in the year 1885 to make some effort to collect these materials and data from every source known to me, from examination of records, from conversation and correspondence with those whose memory runs farthest back and is clearest, from monuments, maps, deeds, etc., and have, in the following pages, recorded as best I can the result.

I have endeavored to collect abundant proofs and the best evidence to be had before putting down any statement herein as fact. For the reasons given above I have not been able to entirely exclude hearsay or tradition; but whenever relied upon it has been fortified by the testimony of more than one witness on the same point.

The township of Dallas originally embraced all the territory of Luzerne County northwest of the present boundary lines of Kingston, Plymouth and Jackson Townships, extending to the present Sullivan, then Lycoming, county line It included all of the township of Monroe and parts of Forkston, North Branch, Northmoreland and Eaton Twnships, in present Wyoming County. All of Lake and Lehman townships and part of Ross, Union and Franklin townships in present Luzerne County.

Dallas Township originally joined to Kingston Township, as it now does, on the line of the Southeasterly side of certified Bedford Township. The northern portion of present Dallas Township is drained by Leonard's Creek, which passes through the village of Kunkle to Bowman's Creek, and with that into the Susquehanna River near Tunkhannock. The southern and larger portion of present Dallas Township, including nearly, if not quite all, of certified Bedford, is drained by Toby's Creek,





which passes, by an easy grade, through a cut or gap in the mountains to Wyoming Valley at a point near the center of greatest population and activity. This is noted as important because the first immigrations to a country always follow the streams. This opening through the mountains made the country about the head waters of Toby's Creek very accessible to those living near its outlet. As soon as the settlements in the valley increased so that neighbors lived near enough to see each other, there were some restless souls who felt crowded and began to seek homes farther back into the woods. The soil in the valley was sandy and not very rich. The trees that grew upon it were scrubby and small, while the higher lands about Dallas the soil seemed stronger and was covered with a heavy forest of very large trees. Some who first settled in the valley reasoned from this that the soil about Dallas, which could raise such very large trees, must be richer and better for farming purposes than the soil of the valley, and they sold their farms in the valley and moved back. Of course the anthracite coal of the valley was not known of or considered then.

The difficulties of settling Dallas Township were very great. It was comparatively an easy thing to cut a path or road along the banks of Toby's Creek and find a way to its source, but to settle there alone, many miles from any clearing, and meet the wolves, bears and other wild animals, which were terrible realities in those early days, saying nothing of the still pending dread of the prowling Indians, was a very serious undertaking.

When a young boy I heard Mr. Charles Harris, then an old man, tell some of his early recollections. which ran back to about the time of the battle and massacres of Wyoming. He told us of the Indians who once came into the house where he and his mother were alone, and demanded food. There being nothing better they roasted a pumpkin before the fire and scraped it off and ate as fast as it became soft with cooking. He also told us about his father's first settling on the westerly side of Kingston Mountain at what is still known as the "Harris Settlement" about two miles north of Trucksville. He said that his father worked all the first day felling trees and building a cabin. Night came on before the cabin could be enclosed. With the darkness came a pack of wolves and, to protect his family, Mr. Harris built a fire and sat up all night to keep it burning. The wolves were dazed and would not come near a fire, and when daylight came they disappeared.

To pass one night under such circumstances required bravery, but to stay, build a house, clear a farm and raise a family with such terrors constantly menacing exhibited a courage that commands our highest esteem.

(Continued next week)