

Huntsville

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that are more than a century old within a square mile area around the "Five Corners." Their home, "Damsite," overlooking the Huntsville Dam, is the township's oldest.

"Many of the original homes and stone walls were built in the distinctive Connecticut style, because the early settlers of the region came here from there," Mrs. Hogoboom explained. "Huntsville was ideal for settlement, with plenty of natural resources and springs available to supply water power for sawmills and gristmills."

Settlement of the area was delayed for over a century, until the end of the Yankee-Pennamite Wars resolved a dispute over who actually had a right to settle Pennsylvania - the Connecticut settlers, granted the land in 1662 or William Penn, accidentally granted the same land 19 years later.

"The Baldwin family came to the Back Mountain in 1795 and built the original wing of our home in 1796 in the style of the traditional Connecticut half-house," Mrs. Butler said. "A small kitchen

and living area occupied the first floor, with sleeping quarters in the loft."

As successive owners enlarged the home, other wings, each with its own architectural style, have combined to make "Damsite" truly unique. For example the dining room, part of the original half-house, has eight doors leading to other rooms, added later.

The home was sold in 1845 to Dr. Joel Jackson Rogers, the area's first physician, who used part of the original first floor "half-house" wing with its low ceilings as a drugstore for his patients.

The Victorian-style front wing opens onto handcut stone steps leading through the stone wall, both more than a century old, down to Huntsville Road.

Just across the "Five Corners" from the Butlers' home is an old storefront home, the former Hunt family's general store and site of the first Huntsville post office, established in 1889. Records aren't clear about what Mr. Hunt's first name was, although the post office was named for his family.

Barely a stone's throw up Huntsville Road from the old post office stands the Hayden family's home, "The Follies," at the corner of Follies Road. Built in 1830, it still has its original iron latches and locks, sturdy hand-hewn beams and wooden pegs used instead of nails.

Mrs. Lenore Hayden isn't sure how the house first came to be called "The Follies," whether it was from a derogatory nickname, "Her Folly," given by a former owner who didn't agree with his wife's love for the place, or from the girls of the famous Follies Bergaire, reputed to have used the home as a summer hideaway.

Mrs. Hayden recalled that when she and her husband, Ken, first bought the house, it had been vacant for many years. The living room ceiling had fallen in, the furnace didn't work, the foundation wall needed attention and the roof leaked so badly that there was water in the ceiling's light bulbs.

"The contractors had their doubts; they said that it would take an ungodly amount of work to repair it. But I had such a feeling about this house - I knew that it would turn out fine," she said.

Through all the necessary restoration, the Haydens kept the house's original notable features: the 12-inch wide floorboards in the studio, wrought iron heat registers, a 5'-11" doorway into a bedroom and even a trapdoor to the basement through the living

Local lore

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Although residents speak quite knowledgeably of a creature resembling "Nessie," the Loch Ness monster, which lives in the Huntsville Reservoir and has supposedly been spotted by several people, no one will confirm or deny its existence.

"We tell our guests to look for it," said Mrs. Lindsay Butler. "When it was built, the reservoir flooded several old farms and swamps. You never know what's been living there all these years."

Overlooking the Huntsville Dam, the Butlers' home, "Damsite," was the first home built in Huntsville, by the Baldwin family in 1796, a year before the establishment of the historic Nathan Dennison Homestead.

It was later sold to Dr. Joel Jackson Rogers, the area's first physician, who used one side of it to dispense prescriptions to his patients.

If "Damsite" could talk, what tales it might tell. Or maybe it can talk. Tony and Lindsay Butler related how they began to hear voices at night shortly after they moved there in November, 1971.

"They would wake me up in the middle of the night, a man and a woman talking downstairs in the front living room," Tony Butler said. "When I went to the top of the stairs, the voices would abruptly break off. After about a year, they stopped."

"They weren't doing anything, so I wasn't scared," Lindsay Butler added.

Maybe it was the spirits of former owners, concerned about how the Butlers would treat the home. No one knows.

Colorful names, a ghost and a mythical monster - all that quiet little Huntsville needs to complete its colorful history is a UFO sighting. There has been talk of one, but no one will say for sure.

Huntsville historical trivia

Whether documented facts, local tradition, or folklore, these interesting, if little-known facets of Huntsville's history give it a special regional flavor.

How the Back Mountain got its name: The wilderness area "in back of the Plymouth Mountain," populated mainly by wolves, bears, wildcats, foxes, catamounts and rattlesnakes in the early days, was first documented in deeds in the mid-1700's.

It was mistakenly decided to two separate owners: Because he wasn't familiar with local geography, King Charles II of England mistakenly granted a large section of Pennsylvania to the Connecticut Colony in 1662 and 19 years later to William Penn. The question was finally settled in 1799, after the end of the Yankee-Pennamite War.

Oldest house: The Jared Baldwin home, built in the style of a Connecticut farmhouse, was erected in 1796 - a year before the Nathan Dennison homestead was established in Wyoming Valley.

How Huntsville and Chase got their names: Huntsville was named for the Hunt family, who opened a store at the "Five Corners" near the Baldwins around 1800.

The post office at Chase, originally called Brown's Corners, was renamed to settle confusion about two post offices with similar names in other parts of the state. Attorney Chase, who settled the matter, named the post office after himself.

First road into the Back Mountain: Until about 1800, the only road into the Jackson Township section of the Back Mountain crossed over Plymouth Mountain. In 1821 a public road to Harvey's Lake was laid out, followed in 1823 by the road to Dallas. The mountain road's importance had decreased by 1864, when the Kingston to Dallas Turnpike along Toby's Creek (the present Route 309) was opened.

In 1889, trains of the Lehigh Valley Railroad began running through Dallas to the Noxen tannery, ice ponds and lumber-producing areas of Dutch Mountain, Stull and Ricketts Station.

Oldest cemetery: Valley View or Huntsville Cemetery, the oldest in the Back Mountain, was established in 1798 on an acre of land along what is now Sutton Road, donated by Benajah and Catherine Fuller after their son, Philetus, was killed by a falling tree. He was buried on the spot where he died and is the only person in the cemetery buried facing north to south. All other grave plots are lined up east to west.

Reservoirs: Construction of the Huntsville Reservoir Dam was completed in 1892, flooding at least eight farms, a cranberry bog and a large swamp.

Ceasetown reservoir was completed in 1918 and enlarged in 1929.

The first telephones: Barely two years after it was invented, the telephone arrived in Huntsville, courtesy of William Penn Ryman, whose telephone line ran from his law offices in Wilkes-Barre to his father's store in Dallas, then to a cottage at Harvey's Lake. In 1904, two women, Ella Bulford and her cousin Myrtle Bulford, became the area's first two female telephone operators. Until that time, men and boys had served in this capacity.

In 1907, many small independent telephone lines were merged to form the Commonwealth Telephone Company's first system.

by Grace R. Dove



FIRST POST OFFICE - This home was once the site of Hunt's general store and the Huntsville Post Office at the "Five Corners."

PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDSAY BUTLER

community.

Originally calling for a complete reconstruction of Hillside and Chase roads, all lined by stone walls and buildings at least a century old, the county's road improvement plans have now been placed on hold for at least a year

until a historical and archaeological study is done, according to Jim Brozena of the Luzerne County Road and Bridge Department.

"Anything more than 49 years old is considered historic," he said.

Lehman U.M. auction March 13

The Lehman United Methodist Church is having their 8th annual Parsonage Fund Auction, March 13, 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m., at the Lehman United Methodist Church, Lehman. All proceeds benefit the parsonage. Come out and give us a bid on new items and homemade crafts. Doors and snack bar open at 5 p.m.

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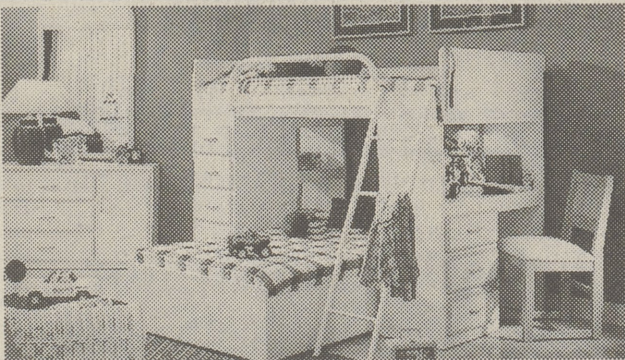
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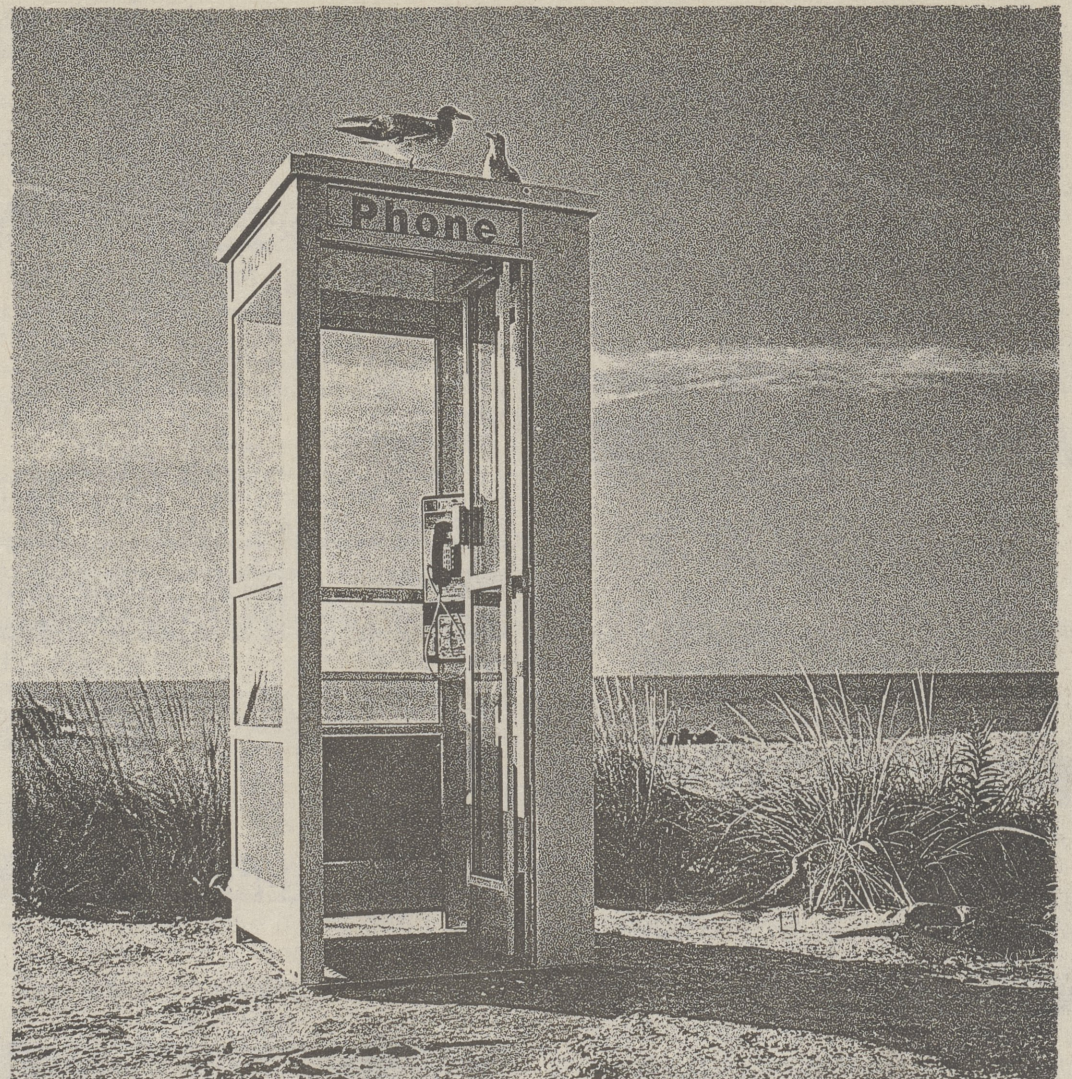
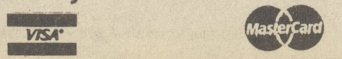
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