

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

West Deer Township 150 years of History

WEST DEER TOWNSHIP HISTORY

as told by those that lived here a updated look.

(rev 1)

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Notes regarding the publishing of this book.

First let me introduce myself. My name is Ken Lewetag son of Ernest Lee Lewetag (a miner) and Victoria Baron (worked at Palmers and delivered milk from the "Barons" in Superior). My Grandfathers (Ernest J Lewetag and Stanislaw "Stine" Baron) were both miners as was their fathers. I was born in 1954 and lived in Russellton until 1965 when I moved to Oregon. I have always called West Deer my home and have remembered it fondly. My mother received a copy of *WEST DEER TOWNSHIP A CENTURY AND A HALF OF PROGRESS 1836-1986* from a relative in West Deer. In 1999 I began to research my roots and found this book and read it cover to cover. In March 2004 after many attempts I finally was able to contact **Mrs. Dorothy Voeckel** and **Mrs. Ruth Graff** the only remaining authors of that book. I explained that I would like to use their book in part for a new book that would be publish in an electronic form and possible in a printed form, which received their blessing

The reason for this publishing, printing and electronic publication is that so few copies of WD150 are available to libraries and schools to research and learn about the coal mining regions of Pennsylvania; specifically of my hometown Russellton and those of my family in Superior and Curtisville. In addition major omissions on the mines within WD150 and needed to be included. My hope is that by publishing this book in electronic form in addition to the printed version more acknowledgements of our little part of the word will be more wildly known.

Since much of the text of the WD150 book was scanned and optical recognized there will be some errors. I have tried to keep these errors to a minimum but inevitably there will be some. If any errors are found please feel free to contact me so that I can correct these mistakes.

With the advent of computerized publication, and the ability to better manipulate content, I have taken the liberty of reorganization the pictures and some text of the WD150 book to help the electronic and print reader and to fit the new publication. Also we have added additional text from personal knowledge of events that directly related to my families (Lewetag, Baron and Scully) and others have added their information as well. In addition to some of the original text we have taken the liberty to add some comments where appropriate.

Include in this book are many more pictures as well as a index to help researches more easily find this items within this book and make them also searchable items. We have attempted to add more information on the mines and the miners although they were not the first to live in West Deer they had a remarkable effect on our Township.

In conversation with **Mrs. Graff** she told me of an additional picture book of the 150-year celebration and additional older photos that did not appear in the original book. She sent me a copy of this book and its older photos are also included in this book with her consent.

Since the main reason for publishing this book is for the use of the educational use, research, and the general public and not for commercial gain: Free usage of this publication and it's content is allowed with credit given. However NO part of this publication may be used for ANY commercial purpose without the express written consent of the publisher, contributor and myself.

Most of the pictures scanned from the original book (s) due to the limitations of the printing process I was limited in what I could with what was given to me. I did try and correct levels and compensate for some problems within the pictures to make viewing easier. I did crop several of the pictures and straighten them to make the object level or at the correct angles.

I would like to thank **Dan Angeloni** for additional and original versions of pictures without the help of Dan this book would not be near as rich in pictures and history.

I would like to thank **Kenneth White** and the **Arch-Dioceses of Pittsburgh** for the picture of Transfiguration Church.

I would also like to thank the family and friends that took their time and supplied their photos and history as well.

In reading this book it seems that some history were passed over to avoid controversy. One of these items is the miners strike of 1927. To this end I recommend R.S. Sukle *Bucket of Blood*, the *Ragman's War* published by iUniverse. Although a fictional account it is based on direct information and tells the tale of what it was like during the strike in Russellton #2.

To the miners we have tired to add as many pictures of the mines and the miners we were unable to find pictures of Russellton #1, and Bairdford mines.

Additional note: For those not from the area, there are five towns that can be confusing Russellton #1, Russellton #2, Curtisville #1, Curtisville #2 and Curtisville #3 (AKA Bairdford). Russellton and Curtisville used without a #1 or #2 normally mean Russellton #1 and Curtisville #1 respectively. Russellton #2, Curtisville #2 and Curtisville #3 normally have the #2 or #3 attached.

Like all publishers I would like to thank my wife Teena and my children Zachary and Jacklynn for putting up with my intensity doing this book and the hours I did not spend with them.

I would also like to dedicate this book to my Mom Victoria (Vicky) Baron Lewetag without her initial support and time sharing the history of her life in West Deer much of the inspiration and information would have been lost forever.

Ken Lewetag



The West Deer Township Municipal Building

The 150th Anniversary Committee

Several years ago as West Deer Township was approaching this significant birthday, the Park and Recreation Board was given the task of planning this coming celebration. The first step was recruiting and organizing a group of people who would dedicate them to this goal.

This committee had its beginning in 1984, and after several changes in membership and leadership, emerged as an organized group with definite goals in mind.

The Park and Recreation Board no longer exists, leaving the Anniversary Committee as a somewhat independent organization with support from the Board of Supervisors.

Doris McDonald is chairman, Gladys Hess is secretary, Roberta Spichy is treasurer, and John Graff was appointed Historian. James Catherwood was put in charge of an auction to raise funds necessary to begin various programs. John Graff was placed in charge of producing a comprehensive history of the township with the help of George and Dorothy Voeckel. Graff had previously written a Masters Thesis on parts of West Deer's history and the Voeckels were researching a history of Culmerville as a personal project. This book is the result of much labor on the part of this committee.

Other major goals are to arouse public interest for suggestions and participation, to give local residents an opportunity to demonstrate their talents and abilities, to promote better unity in all parts of the township, and to stimulate interest in local history and record and preserve that history for future generations.

Doris McDonald
Chairman

WEST DEER TOWNSHIP HISTORY

A expansion of

WEST DEER TOWNSHIP A CENTURY AND A HALF OF PROGRESS 1836-1986

Much of this history was compiled by John Graff, retired West Deer teacher, with the aid of a number of others whose names appear with their contributions.

Many thanks to the
The 150th Anniversary Committee
of
West Deer Township
1986
Second Printing

WD150 material copied in spring 2004 from Book # 184 with permission of the remaining
150th Anniversary committee

Preface

It has been one hundred and fifty years since the name West Deer was first applied to this area. Some phases of its history have appeared in other publications at one time or another. It is our attempt here, during this sesquicentennial, to gather all we can find that has been written and some that has not, and to put it together well enough so that our future generations may have a better understanding of how West Deer Township came about. We know that there will be errors, omissions, and other mistakes and we do apologize for them. It is our best effort and we hope that it is something that you will want to read, keep, and pass on to your descendents. The committee is grateful to all who contributed and extends many thanks for their help.

Much of the research on the development of the mining towns was done for John Graff Masters' Thesis in the late 1950's and served as a background for part of this history. It required another year's part-time work to complete it his part.

The Culmerville Area section was started several years ago by Mrs. George (Dorothy) Voeckel as a personal project and was completed for this publication. The other, smaller contributions throughout the book have the authors' names listed with their works.

Each organization in West Deer was invited to submit its history and most of them did. However, a few did not and therefore their history is not included.

The Family Histories section includes most of the families whose history appeared in the 1903 publication, "Memoirs of Allegheny County", and was expanded to include a number of others. These others were families who had been in West Deer over a hundred years and had enough information available to include them. In some cases complete histories were already written and were printed as such. Others were written by this author from notes furnished by the families.

Limited advertising was solicited only from those individuals whose businesses or residences were in West Deer Township. An effort was made to contact all but some may have been missed.

At this point in our community's history, when we have paused to look back, let us for a moment appreciate the toils and tribulations of those who proceeded us and who laid the foundations of our community as we have it today. Their life was hard but it was not unfruitful. What they have given us must not be forgotten. It is called heritage. Now, it is up to us to pass it to our children. This book will help.

John Graff

Acknowledgements

From the farmers and coal miners, the housewives and merchants, the teachers, the preachers, and the senior citizens of West Deer have come the facts, fancies, and stories, which have made this book possible. What these people have told the authors of this book is passed on to you for the future. It is now yours to pass to your descendents. Perhaps by the year 2036 one of your children will improve and update this record.

Much credit and many thanks goes to **Dave Mathewson** for his excellent work with the photographs. From faded pictures and fragile negatives he has produced most of the fine pictures in this publication. **Clarence Monnier** has let us use the valuable glass plate negatives which his father, **Leonard Monnier**, took perhaps eighty years ago. **The Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad** generously permitted me to search their extensive photographic files and loaned negatives and pictures dating back to 1912 but mostly from 1921 to 1937. **Mary Leggins** loaned us a number of 1920 Curtisville pictures. There were many people who loaned or gave us a few pictures or wrote a historical account of their family or organization. **James Norris** helped make the aerial photos possible. **Clarence and Mary Etta Monnier** were helpful in locating many of the older homesteads and places of historical interest. **The staff at the Township Office** was very helpful in obtaining information, sending solicitations for organizational histories and advertising, financing the publication, and in typing manuscripts. **Lisa Tomsko** did much of the typing. The Culmerville Area history was prepared by **Dorothy Voeckel** who spent many hours on this work. Her husband George, a retired printer, helped with the publication. **Judy McKrell** spent many hours proof-reading the manuscript. Shelby Hill did the artwork on the cover. This design also appears on the T-shirts and other articles, which we have sold. **Donna Gizienski, Zora Carroll, and George Voeckel** helped with the advertising. **Roberta Spichy**, our treasurer, had much work to do with the advanced orders for this book and in the record keeping for all orders.

The entire Anniversary Committee worked to generate funds, helped to obtain pictures and printed material, and was responsible for the distribution and sale of this book. To all who helped. Thank you!

John Graff

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Picture 1 – Map of West Deer



The Written History

In the last quarter of the last century there was an increased interest in writing local history. It was probably influenced by the centennial celebrations of our nation, many of the eastern states, and a number of local counties and municipalities. West Deer was included in two Allegheny County histories and a "Memoirs" book. One of the histories is known to be the "Warner" history, published in 1889. The actual authors are unknown. The "Memoirs of Allegheny County", published in 1904 by the Northwestern Historical Association, included the resumes of a number of local men. This has been used as a background for some of the family descriptions given in this book and updated by their descendants living here. In 1937 the Rev. H. M. Hughes, Pastor of the Deer Creek United Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. A. B. Weisz, Pastor of Bull Creek Presbyterian Church, compiled a hundred year history of West Deer Township as a centennial publication. This book is often quoted here and credit given to the authors. Rev. Hughes was the father of Margaret Girdwood, who taught in the West Deer schools for many years.

In the early 1950's Leonard Freedman, Russellton merchant, wrote a master's thesis in geography on West Deer Township and it should be in the University of Pittsburgh library. In 1957-58 this author (John Graff) wrote a master's thesis on "Settlement Patterns in West Deer Township 1900-1950". This, too, should be in the Pitt library. This thesis dealt primarily on the development of the mining towns and provided the background needed for writing much of this book.

Quoted here is the complete text on West Deer believed to be from the Warner History, 1889, followed by one comment and three paragraphs from the other county history, author and publisher unknown.

West Deer Township

Deer Township was erected in 1796. From Gapin's and Moore's surveyors' districts, and comprised the eastern part of Rich/and. West Deer, the greater part of East Deer, part of Hampton, and the whole Fawn and Harrison Townships.

West Deer was erected in 1836, from the western part of Deer, as it then existed. Its territory has since been much diminished by the erection of Hampton and Richland.

The first settler in West Deer was Benjamin Paul. He made a clearing, built a log shanty, and planted apple-trees on land afterwards settled by James Hazlett and now owned by John Hazlett. Several of his old apple-trees still remain. He was probably there in 1796. He never owned the land on which he squatted, and he left the country quite early with his family. He was a native of Pennsylvania.

The Thomases, Thompsons, Porters, Watts, Hazletts, Jacks, Carnahans, and McConnells were among the earliest settlers who came after Paul. Robert Porter was in the township in 1800. He settled on a tract of two hundred acres, now owned by Daniel Simons and others, on the Kittanning road. William Thompson came about the same time. Elias Thomas was then living near where Gray's Mill now stands, and had been some time a resident of the township on Porter's arrival. James Hazlett was an Irishman, and settled in 1799 or 1800. William McClelland was of the same race, and located quite early on land now owned by Joseph Norrison. Andrew Jack settled on land now owned by Hugh McCutchen, and John Carnahan on the tract now owned by his son John, on the Kittanning road.

The first blacksmith in the township, and for miles around, was Robert Glasgow.

The first schoolhouse was on land now owned by John Hazlett, and was standing there as early as 1800.

Thomas McConnell kept a tavern very early, on the Harmersville road. It stood on land now evened by Samuel Herron, near Deer Creek, and was the first in the township.

The first church was Presbyterian, and was on Bull Creek. It was a little log building, and stood there as early as 1806. Rev. Abraham Boyd was the first pastor. There are four churches now in the township. The United Presbyterian building is near the land of Joseph Norrison, and was built in 1850. Bull Creek church has been rebuilt.

There is one post office in West Deer, called Rural Ridge. The first post-office was established at William Porter's house, on the old Kittanning road. William Porter was first Postmaster. A post-office was established at Culmersville about 1850, but was subsequently discontinued. The Rural Ridge office caught fire August 23, 1874, and everything in it was destroyed.

The usual quiet of West Deer was interrupted by an alleged murder, which occurred near Culmersville several years ago. Previous to the late war there was a tavern kept at that place by William Lackey. There was a little house near it, occupied by a man named Fox. His stepfather, John Fox, lived near Culmersville, and one day he called upon the young man after having imbibed quite freely at the tavern. Some difficulty arose, when the old man struck his stepson a violent blow. The young man was taken sick immediately afterwards, and died, and his physician stated that his death resulted from the effects of the blow. From this circumstance Culmersville was dubbed Brimstone Corners, a name which still clings to it. It is merely a crossroads. There are no villages in the township. The township has six schoolhouses.

There is an oil station of the Columbia Conduit Company on Bull Creek, near Fawn Township.

For years West Deer has been noted for its quiet, and lack of excitement of all kinds.

Note: McConnell's tavern and mill were believed to be forerunners of Gray's Mill. "Little" Deer Creek was probably intended. From the other History of Allegheny County:

Robert Thompson was an early owner, and probably the builder, of a gristmill on Deer Creek, in the southwest part of the township. It long since went to decay. There were in the township several small mills, driven by horsepower.

Deer creek, Little Deer creek, Bull creek and the Connoquenessing have their sources in this township, which is the largest in the northern part of the county, being about five miles square; and it is also one of the most fertile and wealthy. The

population in 1860 was 1,865; in 1870, 1,299; in 1880, 1,438. Oil and gas have recently been discovered in West Deer, and prospecting is in active progress. Visions of great wealth in the near future arise in the imaginations of many, and the price of real estate is consequently enhanced. It is still too early for confident predictions.

Of the three post offices, Rural Ridge was first established in 1853. Culmerville dates from January, 1854. Lewis was so named from Jane Lewis, who was appointed to the office in 1883. With the possible exception of Culmerville, there is no village in the township. A murder was once committed near this place, which was afterward popularly called "Brimstone Corners." a name which is not yet quite obsolete.

The Indians

The first human beings to have walked upon the land in this area were believed to be the "Mound Builders". Although there is no evidence that they ever lived in West Deer, there is archaeological evidence of their existence in Western Pennsylvania. They did leave some evidence at village sites and in the mounds, which they built. These were found mainly in the Youghiogheny and Monongahela Valleys. When these people came, or when or why they left is not known, but a few facts about their lifestyle are known. They did not weave cloth but they did have beads made from mussel shells, the origin of which was the Gulf of Mexico. They also had copper beads and the nearest copper was in the upper Great Lakes region. These items would indicate that some far-ranging commerce did take place. Nevertheless, historians classify these people as barbarians rather than as savages, as the later Indians are classified. These Indians did appear to pay more attention to the burial of their dead and be of a more sedentary nature than the later tribes to occupy this area.

When the white man came to America with his ability to record history and with his missionaries and traders who penetrated the wilderness to the west, we enter what is called "Historic Times". Within this early-recorded history there were two distinct periods of Indian occupation in this area, with a relatively empty period between of almost seventy-five years.

The first of these were Erie Indians of Iroquoian stock. They were not related to the Mound Builders, whose remains indicate that they were Algonquian. Although related, these Erie Indians did not join the Five Nations which made up the Iroquois Confederacy, and were regarded with suspicion and distrust because of this. They were eventually destroyed by their relatives, the Iroquois, in an aggressive "defensive" warfare to rid the area of potential enemies. Their remnants either fled west or were adopted by their conquerors. The Iroquois then reserved this area as a hunting ground. While little evidence indicates that Indians ever lived here, the area is not far from the Allegheny Valley where there were sites of Indian Villages.

The seventy-five year period of no permanent occupation began with the defeat of the Eries in 1656 and lasted into the 1700's when Indians from the east were pressured by settlers into moving farther west. If we used modern political or military language to describe the empty area of Western Pennsylvania, we would say that it was a "buffer zone" between the unfriendly Indian tribes to the north and south of it. It was also between the areas of influence of the English, French, and Dutch whose traders and missionaries were making inroads before 1700.

The second occupation began as early as 1724 when Delaware Indians from the east were believed to have settled near Kittanning. Soon afterward a band of Shawnees came west and settled at the present site of Tarentum. This band was led by a half-French Indian named Peter Chartier whose town bore his name. In addition to these Delawares and Shawnees in the Allegheny Valley, some Senecas of Iroquois stock and Wyandot of Huron stock also settled at other places in the valley.

Although Indian population was not dense, it was very mixed with regard to tribal origins. Villages were not too permanent because Indians at this time were in a migration similar to that of the White settlers. Both were moving west. Pressure from the advancing settlers was keeping the Indians moving ahead of them. It would be only a matter of time until this area would belong to the army of settlers and frontiersmen who were slowly moving west over the Appalachian Mountains. It would change from an area of English to French influence, then back again to English, and finally to American.

As far as West Deer is concerned, it was still a hunting ground. Permanent Indian villages were at the present sites of Tarentum, Kittanning, Satsburg, Vandergrift, Johnstown, and within the city of Pittsburgh.

The era of important Indian trading began about 1725. There was much friction between the English and French over prices and areas of influence. The area where we now live was claimed by both English and French, by both the colonies of Pennsylvania and Virginia, and by the Iroquois who regarded the migrating Delawares and Shawnees as intruders and under their jurisdiction. It is now order then, that for the next seventy-five years, this area was in a continuous period of strife, war, and danger to all who lived here, whether Indian or settler.

One of the earliest problems was that of the traders bringing rum to the Indians to trade for furs. It was so serious that the Indian chiefs requested the governor of Pennsylvania to help.

During the 1730's and 40's the French influence became more evident. In 1745, Peter Chartier, the half-breed who settled Chartier's Town, led an Indian revolt, attacked other traders and led his Shawnees away from the Allegheny Valley. The Iroquois then became the dominant influence and were usually pro-English. In 1753 at the Council of Philadelphia they signed peace treaties in light of the coming of the French to the Ohio and Western Pennsylvania areas.

In 1755 Penn's treaty was broken and Indian uprisings occurred in many places. This was the time of "Braddock's Defeat" and a period of tribulation for settlers in this area. In the several years that followed, the Indians raided and destroyed most of the settlements in Western Pennsylvania.

Our history books call this the French and Indian War. It was not until after November 1758 when the French deserted Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh) that the English again became strong enough to dominate Western Pennsylvania.

Peace at the end of this was short-lived. In May 1763 all military posts west of Lake Erie were attacked in a conspiracy called Pontiac's War. Forts Pitt and Ligonier were the only safe places in Western Pennsylvania. Military people and settlers were massacred or taken prisoner. The Battle of Bushy Run was the turning point in this war. Peace came a year later but the problem of Indian relations was far from settled. The Indians claimed the land where we now live and it was not until 1768 that they gave up claims to it by treaty. This area had not been open for settlement for some time by agreement between the Indians and both the colonies of Pennsylvania and Virginia. This did not, however, keep out the many settlers who moved to the area south of Pittsburgh in ever increasing numbers.

From the beginning of Dunmore's War in 1775 to the end of the Revolution in 1782, Western Pennsylvania was in danger from Indian attacks. Additional treaties with the Indians in 1784 and 1785 made the specific area north of the Ohio and west of the Allegheny free from their claims, but it did not open it for settlement at that time. As such, it would be another decade before any significant settlement would come to our area. In 1790 there were 75,000 people in southwestern Pennsylvania with more than 10,000 of these in present day Allegheny County. There is no record that any of these lived in West Deer. One of the reasons for this was the fact that this area was reserved for a special purpose which will be explained in the following chapter.

The Depreciation Lands

By the end of the Revolution a number of changes had taken place that would determine the future of what would become West Deer Township. Pennsylvania and Virginia, now states resolved their differences and the present boundary of southwestern Pennsylvania was fixed and surveyed. English claims were gone but not so the Indian claims. Although treaties made in 1784 and 1785 did relinquish these claims, the frontier's problems were still serious and it would be unsafe for another ten years. The victory of General Wayne over the Indians in 1795 finally made this area safe for settlement.

Beginning in 1780 Pennsylvania soldiers were paid with bills of credit which depreciated slowly until they were almost worthless. An act of March 12, 1783 reserved 720,000 acres west of the Allegheny River and north of the Ohio to be sold to these soldiers, who could- pay for them with their worthless "Depreciation Certificates". These lands which they could buy became known as the "Depreciation Lands". They were laid out in districts and named for the surveyor assigned to survey them. This surveying for our area was done in the summers of 1785 and 1787. West Deer is in James Cunningham's district No. 4, containing 485 tracts varying in size from over 200 acres to almost 400 acres. The western boundary of the district began at the mouth of Pine Creek and ran due north, well into what is now Butler County. The eastern boundary began at the mouth of, now in Tarentum, and ran north, parallel to the western boundary.

Because of Indian problems the lands were not bought or taken-up by the war veterans and were sold instead to speculators. These land jobbers were, for the most part, unsuccessful in their endeavors and most lost all the money which they had invested.

For eleven days in March, 1786 the land in James Cunningham's district No. 4 was put on the block and 71,309 acres in 309 tracts were sold. Robert Norris, an important and patriotic American, was one of the land speculators, later serving over three years in debtors' prison. It may be assumed that he bought some, but not all, of the depreciation lands which make up the present West Deer. After his death in 1807 his land here was sold at a Marshal's Sale in Philadelphia, the purpose of which was to settle his estate.

Stephen Lowrey of Baltimore bought 107 tracts at this sale and became the owner of much of what is now West Deer. He had appointed a Pittsburgh attorney, Thomas Collins, as his agent to both buy and sell this land. Collins later married his daughter, Sarah Lowrey. Many of the original tracts in West Deer show the deed transfer from Stephen Lowrey while others are from a Dunning McNair. The title search of deeds here show the names of the North American Land Company, Pennsylvania Population Company, Holland Land Company, and the McNair brothers of Pittsburgh.

West Deer Gets Its Name

The Pennsylvania Legislature in 1788 took some of the area of Westmoreland and Washington Counties and a considerable amount of the Depreciation Lands north of the Ohio and west of the Allegheny to create Allegheny County. Additions to the county a year later did not affect the northern area of which we are a part. At this time Allegheny County was composed of seven townships, one of which, Pitt Township, made up most of the northern part of the county.

In 1796 this large area was divided into Pine and Deer Townships. The dividing line was the western edge of James Cunningham's district mentioned in the previous chapter. This line ran north from the mouth of Pine Creek, from which we may assume Pine Township got its name. Within Deer Township was Deer Creek, both the creek and the township bearing the name "Deer", which came from Chief Deer, one of Guyasuta's sub-chiefs. The latter was an Iroquois leader before the Revolution with sub-chiefs Bull and Deer under his authority. These two Indians left their names on the creeks, roads, and churches of West Deer Township.

When Indiana Township was formed in 1805, it removed at least half of the area of Deer Township. The remaining Deer Township extended in an east-west direction about sixteen miles from the present day Freeport to Bakerstown, with its north-south boundaries parallel, and about six miles apart.

Deer Township was divided upon petition of its citizens in 1836 into eastern and western halves to be called East Deer and West Deer. This is how West Deer got its name, but the final size and shape were not yet determined. In 1836 Bakerstown, or the few houses which made it up, and the Butler Plank Road, yet to be built, were within West Deer.

While new townships were being erected all around West Deer, the boundaries remained intact until 1860 when a narrow strip was removed from the western boundary to be added to other Pine lands to form Richland Township. It has been said that this took all the rich land from West Deer, thus giving Richland its name. A year later in 1861 Hampton was formed, taking a small southwestern corner of West Deer plus land from Indiana and McCandless Townships. This realignment also annexed to West Deer a narrow strip on the southern border from Indiana Township. Thus by 1862 West Deer was complete in name as well as size and shape.

The 1860 census shows 1,865 people living in West Deer while the census of 1870 shows a drop of 566 to a total of 1,299. This was due to the change in political boundaries. By 1880 the population had grown to 1,438.

Life in the New Township

There remains only one log cabin today where one may look and imagine what life at home might have been like in early West Deer. This cabin, originally built on what is now Rittman Road only a few feet inside the northern boundary of the township, has been moved and is permanently on display at Ira Woods' Tour-Ed Mine near Tarentum. **All the material in this chapter is quoted directly from the Hughes-Weisz "One Hundred Years of Progress".**

The homes of the earliest settlers were built of round logs, notched and saddled at the ends to fit neatly, leaving the cracks between the logs as small as possible. The cracks were "chinked" with wood and filled in with plaster or just plain mud. The rafters were small saplings smoothed off on one side and lath was the same material held onto the rafters by wooden pins. The roof was covered with "clapboards" which were split from oak logs and smoothed with a drawknife. They were held on by "weigh poles". Nails were difficult to obtain as they were made by the blacksmith and iron was not plenty.

The rooms of the cabin were small and few in number, one room doing duty as parlor, living room, bedroom, wash room and kitchen. The main bedroom was usually a small "lean to" or an unfinished attic sometimes called the "glory hole".

The great fireplaces were made to take in large "back logs" which were fronted by smaller pieces of wood held in place by andirons made by the local blacksmith. The fireplace was fitted with a crane on which hung pots for cooking. The "Dutch oven" was made of iron, circular in form, and was covered with a heavy iron lid. Three short legs were attached so that the oven could be set over a nest of glowing coals. In this oven was done the roasting of meats and the baking of pone. The tops of the huge chimneys were of sticks and mud and the floor of the cabin rough wood held to sleepers with wooden pins. For windows there were small openings cut through the logs and covered with greased paper instead of glass. These served for light and portholes when needed to disperse the occasional attack of Indians.

The doors were of heavy boards held together with buttons pegged to the door boards. Hinges were of wood. For a latch a stick pegged at one end onto the inner side of the door was used. The other end extended beyond the door and was free to be lifted into a catch fastened to the doorjamb. A short distance above the latch a small hole was bored through the door for the latchstring. This was a piece of raw hide passing through the hole in the door and fastened to the wooden latch. A vigorous pull on the string lifted the latch and the door opened. During the day the latchstring was always out and at night it was pulled in and a bar placed across the door so that the family was secure for the night.

Furniture was crude but well made as every settlement had its cabinetmaker. Many of the families had their great-grandmother's "spool bed" with cords instead of slats. No home was complete without the "doughtray" for the storing of flour and the working out of bread. In many homes was the old rocker in which their ancestors sat to rest a bit in the cool of the evening before going to bed. There was the old "trundle bed" made low, fitted with rollers, and pulled out in the evening from under the parent's bed for the smaller young ones. In the morning it was made up and pushed under the bed out of sight for the day. There was also a cradle made of walnut and fitted with rockers for the "wee bairns". In a corner of the kitchen was usually found a three sided cupboard made of walnut or cherry.

In one corner was the spinning wheel or "Jenny". It was used to spin yarn for clothes, stockings, and bedding. There was usually a rack over the fireplace for the guns and knives. The muzzle-loader, flintlock gun sometimes made the difference between life and death. There was usually a bullet mold. A homemade powder horn rounded out the accessories.

The spring near the house furnished refrigeration for milk and butter. The churning was done in the "up and down" churn. Clothes were washed in a homemade tub with or without a washboard. Early settlers did not have this luxury.

Soap was made of lye produced from the drippings wood ashes. These were collected in devices, which the early settlers were skilled in using. This lye, when added to animal fats, produced a soap, which would chap the hands' burn the face, but left them clean.

Cattle, sheep and pigs ran in the forest. The cattle and sheep wore collars with bells so that they might be found when needed. The pigs roamed at will, coming home when they pleased. They fattened in the fall when acorns and other foods were available. When the farmer wanted pork in the fall he got his rifle and went hunting for one of his pigs. We sometimes hear stories of shooting the wrong pig and getting into trouble with one of his neighbors. There were home remedies for most illnesses. The lack of physicians made this necessary. Many a mother suffered sorely through the years and came to an early grave from lack of medical care. Many children died of diseases in those years that present little danger today.

One of the evening chores for the boys was gathering and bringing in wood. There was no other fuel and the old fireplaces used a great deal of wood. The family would gather around this fireplace in the evening doing a lot of the little tasks such as repairs to shoes, which could be done by the light of the fireplace. A rifle could be cleaned or lamps trimmed and filled. More candles could always be made as well as a number of small household repair jobs. One of the never-ending jobs was spinning yarn. The yarn sometimes had to be dyed. These dyes were made from the bark of the walnut, butternut,

oak, and hickory trees, and from the outer skins of onions. Wool and sometimes linen garments were steeped in the dye until the color was set.

Candles were made from beef tallow. The tin molds were used which made several at one time. Wicks were inserted and the hot tallow poured in. After the candles were cooled they had to be reheated slightly to get them out of the mold. Candles had to suffice for sewing, reading, and any schoolwork, which had to be done.

Social activities were generally neighborhood activities. Clearing land, building a cabin or barn out of logs, making apple butter were among these events. They not only got the job done but boys met girls, women talked about "women" things and the men discussed politics, farming, and the news.

On an ordinary evening when bedtime came, an event had to take place that today's youngsters never did. A sleepy boy would take the bootjack from its nail on the wall and put it on the floor. He would place one foot on it and the heel of the other into the "v" shaped groove at the end. After a number of tries he would secure the heel then with some effort would wiggle and pull until the boot was off. Then he would repeat the effort for the other boot. The boots would possibly be wet and would be set before the dying embers of the fireplace to dry overnight. The jack would be left on the floor for the other members of the family. The last one to use it would have to hang it up. No home could be called complete without a bootjack. The old custom, family worship, depicted in Burn's "Cotter's Saturday Night", was transplanted to these early homes in the wilderness. Before the children had grown too sleepy, the Bible was taken up by the father, a family circle made around the fire, and readings made from the scripture. This had stayed the faith of their ancestors in Scotland and Europe and would be the mainstay of their faith here. A prayer would follow as every day they gave thanks for the tender care and mercies of God.

All Day Sunday

A brief history of each church will be included elsewhere in this book. This chapter will be general in content and will attempt to give the reader some idea of what a Sunday was like in rural West Deer in the last century.

The two churches, which were here when West Deer became a township, had existed from the beginning of the century. For about forty years they sufficed for the needs of the Scotch-Irish who had settled here. Both churches, Bull Creek and Deer Creek, were of the Presbyterian denomination, there being a number of "varieties" which became one over a century later.

Each church had an outside pulpit at its beginning with the members sitting on logs placed before it. This was followed by a log church built of un-hewn logs which, in turn, was followed by a better log church of hewn logs which could be chinked better for cooler weather. Winter services were held in the cabin of one of the members.

In the middle of the last century each church built a more permanent structure of brick made in local kilns. By that time, about 1853, they had been joined by two more Presbyterian churches in the area, which also built brick structures at about the same time. These churches all have records and do show considerable progress from that time. The East Union church served the farmers who found the other two too far away. The Pleasant Unity church, located on the Fawn-West Deer border, served a number of local families.

But now, we must go back to one of these early churches for a look at a typical Sunday. In the very early 1800's the services were held outdoors and the members usually came to church carrying their guns. Legend tells us that an occasional Indian would come along, stick his tomahawk in a log, sit down and listen for awhile, then go about his business. There are no records of any attacks after the churches were organized but the presence of armed men was probably a meaningful deterrent. These services always lasted all day with a break for lunch. Every family brought their own food and got to church any way they could. Since few roads existed and the trails were often muddy, most just went through the woods in the shortest way.

There have been a number of descriptions of Sunday services, but for our purpose here we should think of one of these red brick churches when our township was perhaps only twenty-five years old but with well-established churches.

Only necessary chores were to be done on Sunday. The tasks such as cleaning and blacking boots or baking pastries in the kitchen or over the fireplace were forbidden. The animals had to be fed and watered and that was all. After this was done, the family properly dressed in such clothes as they had, then proceeded to church in whatever way they could. The farm wagon, a buggy, horseback, and walking were the common ways of getting to church. It has been said that children walked barefoot until near the church, then put on their shoes and stockings.

Sabbath School for the young people was held first in the morning, sometimes as early as nine o'clock. Following this was a short break before the morning services. These services lasted until time for the noon meal, which each family brought with them. In the words of the day, each family did "eat their piece". After lunch the young people were usually engaged in furthering their social acquaintances. This was one of the few places a young man or a young lady might establish a social relationship, which would lead to the altar. Groups of boys and young men were said to have strolled about in the groves, looking over and at the young ladies who were often with their parents where conversation might be difficult. To quote an unknown author from the past concerning these young gentlemen "At first sound of the opening service, these groups of men and boys would make a rush for the church, and go thundering down the uncarpeted aisles in their farmer boots, making as much noise as a drove of horses." After lunch came another church service and lengthy sermon. When this was over there were many good-byes and all headed homeward, the duties and devotions of the Sabbath being over.

Some Presbyterians held a Harvest dinner in August, which was more of a social affair and was held on a weekday. The people would gather at the church in the morning for a service but go to the homes of neighbors in the afternoon where they would celebrate the Harvest Thanksgiving with a bountiful dinner.

The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who settled here did not celebrate Christmas in the same festive way in which the German and English settlers did. As the Scotch phrase had it, these Presbyterians were inclined to "take their pleasures sadly".

Trails and Roads

The roads in West Deer were named or renamed when the centennial was observed in 1936. Each township road was supposedly named for the oldest family residing on that road. Although there may be some question about the oldest family, the names given then are used today for the most part. There are some differences in spelling but those names given fifty years ago are those on the signs on the township roads. Since the history of our roads given here is quoted directly from the 1937 history, some editorial comment, given in parentheses, is added to update and clarify some locations and names.

The earliest roads were so only by name, being mere trails through the forest. They followed the hills, avoiding the valleys with their mires and swamps. Tradition has said that in the first survey of roads, the surveyors climbed the nearest hills, sighted their instruments in the direction of their objective, took a drink from their jug, moved straight to the top of the next hill, took another drink, and so continued until they reached their destination. The authority for this legend suggests that this will account for the curvature of the roads through the township.

One of the first roads was the old Bull Creek trail. Leaving the river at Tarentum, it followed the ridges, passed the Bull Creek Presbyterian Church, through Culmerville and across the northern part of the township. The western end is now known as the Culmerville- Bakerstown Road. Later the way up Bull Creek through Millerstown was laid out. The old Bull Creek road continued to the Ohio River at Ambridge. The Little Deer Creek road left the river at Harmarville, entered the township at Rural Ridge and joined the Bull Creek and Kittanning roads at Culmerville.

The next road south and west was the Logan road, beginning at the present site of Springdale, opposite Logan's Ferry, from which it derives its name, it traversed Crawford's Run, crossing the ridge onto Little Deer Creek, joining that road some distance below Russellton. At the upper end of Russellton the road turned west, intersecting the old Kittanning Pike at the present Dayen property, following the ridge and intersecting the Culmerville- Bakerstown road at the present Hazlett School, entering Butler County at the home of the late Stephen Donaldson, crossing the Middle Road at the property now owned by Floyd Mahan and connected at Cooperstown with the old Plank Road. John Donaldson kept store near the Butler county line on this road. The property is now owned by Mrs. John Rittman. (This is actually a northwest direction. It entered West Deer at the coal washer in Russellton, turned left at the present McKrell Road, crossed the Saxonburg Road on what is still called Logan Road near Vic's Garage, and continued on it across Kaufman Road to the Culmerville-Bakerstown Road, and across it to the present Rittman Road to Butler County, near the Sandy Hill Golf Course. At this point, just a few feet inside West Deer stood the log cabin mentioned previously which now is at the Tour-Ed Mine.)

The old Kittanning Pike left the river at Sharpsburg, passing through Dorseyville, it entered the township near Snitzer's corners, followed the ridge past the Blacks, Porters, Magills, McIntyres, intersecting the present Baird road east of the Kissek farm. The Pike turned east, crossing the Logan trail to "Little Italy", thence to Culmerville and to Butler. (This followed the present Starr Road to the VFW. then on the McIntire Road. now closed. then over the hill east of the water tank on a road, long ago abandoned, to the junction of the present Kaufman and Logan Roads, then to what is now Little Italy, and north. (This road was replaced by the present Saxonburg Road.)

The present highway known as the K.D.K.A. Boulevard from Snitzers Corners to "Little Italy" was not a part of the old Kittanning Pike but was a later survey. The original road from the Baird intersection to Dayen's farm has been permanently abandoned. (Dayen's farm was at the Kaufman-Logan intersection.) From Snitzer's corners a trail led to the east over the hills through McConnell's Mill (Gray's Mill), to Freeport. Near "Little Italy" a trail led north from the Kittanning Pike past the Loves. Porters and Hazletts, crossing the Culmerville road, passing on out of Butler County and joining the Three Degree or Middle Road. (This may be the present Shuster Road and Armstrong Road.)

The Three Degree or Middle Road left the old Plank at Tunnel Hill, Stewartstown, now Etna, climbed out of the valley and entered the township at the southwest corner. After two locations had been abandoned the present location was made permanent. The survey was made by John Muder of Saxonburg. The first mile of this new survey was fitted for travel under the direction of James Hughes, supervisor at the time. The next year another mile was made fit for travel by neighbor Caldwell who was then supervisor. Thus by slow stages were the trails fitted for travel. This road intersected the Culmerville road at Deer Creek near the United Presbyterian church, joins the KDKA at Ivywood and is said to be the most direct way from Pittsburgh to Butler.

Other roads led to the north from the Culmerville Road, via the Glasgow and the Cunningham farms. The Dawson Run road leaves the Culmerville road running south past the site of the first grist mill in the township (near the Burton Stevenson residence on Shephard Road), built by William Dawson on the farm now owned by Alexander Hunter. The mill race is still to be seen (1937) on the opposite side of the stream. A few bricks, an old burr stone, a depression in the earth is all that is left to mark the site. This road crosses the hills to the old Plank Road near the Hampton United Presbyterian church. Other roads cross the township making all points easily accessible. Good roads now (1937), but 100 years ago mere trails through an almost unbroken forest. The old Plank Road traversed the original West Deer township and was incorporated into a toll road in 1849. The road was completed from Butler to Pittsburgh in 1851. The lumber for the plank used in building this road was taken from the farms along the way. Think of the tremendous amount of timber used to lay an oak floor eight feet wide and four inches thick from Pittsburgh to Butler. The completion of this road brought the markets nearer the farmers of the northern section of the county and the road soon became one of the busy highways leading out of the city. Old settlers tell of

the long line of wagons loaded with hay and farm produce to be seen every market morning slowly moving city-ward. The hay going to the old hay market on the North Side, the produce to the South Side of the Allegheny or the triangle. During the winter the farmers living off the improved highway would load their hay the evening before and double team with their neighbors to the Plank Road making ready for an early start the next morning. It was a long drive and market day was a long day. This new road meant much more to our fore-parents than our new three-lane cement highway does today. (Route 8 in 1937.)

This might be a good place to add a little story of interest concerning the hay market and the Plank Road. This may or may not have happened but it has been told many times. When the young, single men took a load of hay to the hay market near what is now Allegheny Center, they were seldom ever able to sell it the day they took it there. This forced them to stay in the city overnight and sell it the next morning. The horses could be tied to the wagon, the boys could sleep on the hay and, of course, take in the town that night. They never seemed to have any difficulty selling the hay the next morning, after which they headed home, perhaps with a headache. When their fathers took the hay to market they were always able to sell it and get home the same day. Which all goes to prove that human nature hasn't changed much since 1851.

Evolution of Agriculture in West Deer

Dr. Benjamin Rush, colonial patriot, physician, and author gave his description of the successive types of settlers who moved across Pennsylvania. We can make some excellent comparisons when we consider the early settlers of West Deer Township.

He describes the first settler as a hunter-pioneer of a somewhat unsociable nature. He was poor economically, owned a limited number of poor quality livestock, farmed only a few acres, and never had a large cabin or shelter for his animals. He lived more by hunting than he did by farming. His lifestyle was more like that of the Indian than of the permanent settler. His only grain crop was Indian corn. When neighbors began appearing he generally moved on. We may have called him a squatter because he never actually owned the land and never improved it much. This hunter-pioneer made a beginning in the process of creating a farm. He was usually succeeded, according to Dr. Rush, by a second type who enlarged the cabin and other buildings using hewn logs. This second type cleared more land, planted fruit trees, and raised wheat and rye in addition to Indian corn. He was more sociable and built primitive schools and churches. Often, though, he did not become a permanent resident but sold out and moved on. He never accumulated much capital.

The third type, which often consisted of the grown children of the second, were the ones who became permanent residents. They built barns and houses of a more permanent nature. They used all the land they owned to a better advantage. Better and more animals and a wider range of crops were grown. These people had something their forerunners did not have; surplus goods and a market of sorts. The first two groups had neither a surplus of goods nor a market and thus were never able to accumulate capital.

Many of this third group came to the area with money enough to buy land. Some brought it from Europe while others got it from selling their holdings farther east. This group built better fences, kept their cattle on their own land, raised more vegetables, often built a spring house, and took pride in their livestock.

These three types did not occur in any uniform manner. Often they blended together in a heredity succession, the same family continuing into the next stage of cultivation.

If we now attempt to compare these types with the settlers of West Deer, we do see some interesting comparisons. Since the settlement of West Deer occurred at least forty to fifty years after the area to the south in Pennsylvania, this pattern did have some variations. Our land here was reserved as Indian hunting lands until the 1780's and then was unsafe until after 1795. Since settling was either illegal or unsafe, it remained unattractive to all but a handful of very rugged pioneers until almost 1800.

History records a brief account of Benjamin Paul, who probably represented a combination of the first two types. He was a squatter who planted an orchard.

The fact that Hazlett School and the Bull and Deer Creek churches had their beginnings about 1800 indicates that there was a goodly number of the second type who settled within a few years after 1795. A number of these claimed their depreciation lands early or bought warrants from some who did. The depreciation lands bought by Robert Norris were in limbo until after his death in 1806. Beginning in 1807, Robert Lowery bought this land at a Marshal's sale, then began to sell large plots to the ancestors of some of our families today. Lowery lands were sold up to the time West Deer became a township in 1836.

Early census records for this area, not necessarily just West Deer, show some interesting statistics concerning the farmers.

The average farmer of that day owned two horses, three to four cattle of which two may have been oxen, and an ample supply of swine and poultry. Two-thirds of the farmers owned sheep, having four or five. There were, however, a number who owned only one cow and one horse. Farmers used their horses more for transportation and the oxen for plowing and heavy farm work.

The quality of their cattle and sheep had deteriorated from the parent stock of the English type. Oxen were used less in Western Pennsylvania than in the east. Every tenth farm had a still. Germans tended to make more wine and beer. White laborers were scarce but usually were either indentured servants, apprentices, or orphans of the court. There were no slaves north of the Ohio River but there were some in Washington, Green, and Fayette counties.

After looking at these facts we may conclude that these early farmers did not have an easy life. They had a subsistence living at best. They were probably the second type described by Rush. They plowed like the ancient Romans and threshed grain like the ancient Egyptians. Agriculture had not come a long way in 2000 years.

Let us now look at agriculture in West Deer when it became a township in 1836. The 1840 census shows 1414 people living here on perhaps twenty thousand acres. West Deer was larger then, extending beyond Route 8. If each family had seven members, a conservative figure for that time, then two hundred families would be living on an average of one hundred acres each. Strangely enough, almost the same figures held true sixty years later in 1900. These people represented the beginnings of the third type of settler. They also represent the ancestors of many of our citizens today.

Available accounts of a number of families coming to West Deer around the mid-point of the last century show that the farms varied from seventy to over two hundred acres. Starting in the 1850's, these families built houses of brick and sawed timber, which are still standing. They replaced their log barns with larger, timbered structures and gave much more attention to the improvement of livestock and agricultural practices. We find among them the names Cunningham, Monnier, Hughes, Ferguson, Scott, Stirling, Aber, Hazlett, and Marshall.

By the 1850's the population had risen to over 1700. There were possibly three taverns, several blacksmiths, and a good road (Butler Plank Road) to the market area of Pittsburgh. Farmers could now sell surplus products more easily. Mail service was coming to West Deer, churches and schools were established, and the peaceful business of making a living on the farm was well established.

The landscape of West Deer just before the Civil War would have been agricultural. Rail fences, log houses and barns, dirt roads and a variety of livestock would be seen everywhere. Horses had replaced oxen on the farm. The new invention of Cyrus McCormick was replacing the cradle in the grain fields. More market goods were moving toward Pittsburgh.

It is not the intent of this chapter to give details of pioneer and later farm life. The textbooks and encyclopedias do that very well. It is the purpose here to simply describe the transition of agriculture from its very early stages to the present state in this residential suburban community. In other words, a historical account of local agriculture.

Many West Deer farmers answered their country's call in the Civil War. Some are buried in the local church cemeteries and some remain in the battlefields of Virginia and other places.

By the end of the Civil War, West Deer had lost her western farms to Richland and Hampton Townships and had gained some on the southern border from Indiana. Some say that Richland got its name from the farmer's complaint that the new township was taking West Deer's rich land.

Toward the end of the last century several changes were taking place on the farms of West Deer. The steel moldboard plow was coming into use. Better plowing meant better crops and better crops meant better living. The crude reaper was being replaced by a binder drawn by three or four horses. Barbed wire was available but was not as popular as in the west. Rail fences cost little money and didn't cut the livestock. Shipping farm products by rail was now possible from Tarentum or Creighton.

From the Civil War until the turn of the century, the population of West Deer remained stable and was estimated to be 95 percent agricultural. West Deer had reached the peak of agricultural settlement by the time the mining industry was becoming established. These new towns furnished a close market for a number of farm products.

Several early farmers had supplemented their farm income by operating small country bank coal mines. At least three of these farmers employed several miners to work their mines, while others had only a family operation. Another source of income to more than several, farmers was the gas and oil wells on their property. Leased rights never gave the farmer a high percentage of the income from the well, but he was spared the expense of drilling, which often was unproductive. A number of farmers enjoyed an extra income and a number of people had full or part-time work with the wells, but there is no record of anyone becoming a "Texas" type oil baron. A few were known to have built comfortable houses and barns during the oil boom.

This author made a study of this local agricultural pattern in the early twentieth century as part of a Master's Thesis for the University of Pittsburgh. The following comes from that study.

In 1904, before the present town of Russellton was started, there were 260 dwellings in West Deer, of which 237 could be considered as farmhouses. Twenty-three were residences not directly related to farming, although some of these people provided services to the farmers. Fifty years later in 1955, when this study was made, 200 of these 237 houses were no longer on full-time family farms. They were now on part-time farms, lived in by non-farmers, or had been removed without replacement. As the mining industry intensified, its influence on the agricultural pattern became more evident. Farmers went to work in the mines, miners bought land or parts of farms, and the farmers were getting a better cash market for milk, eggs, and other produce. Also, a number of more affluent "city" people began buying places in the country where they could live part-time. The full-time farmers tended to become mechanized and intensified their operations.

These intensified operations tended to specialize and farmers were changing from a general operation to that of producing just a few goods for the market, but in large quantities. Dairy farms, poultry farms, vegetable farms, orchards, and nurseries were more common. The subsistence farm of the last century could not survive in this day of specialization. The farmer became dependent on gasoline, electricity, and expensive machinery and farm supplies and had to have a higher, dependable, cash income in order to survive. When one views the many acres of West Deer in brush and woods it is hard to realize that this once was farmland. It is obvious that a number of farms did not survive.

The thirty-seven farms, which supported the families who lived on them in 1955, are fewer in number today. After thirty years of house building, land sales, and few new starters, the number of full-time farmers has decreased. Those who remain, with high taxes and labor costs, have an even more difficult time surviving. With the increasing demand for land and continuing high prices, those farms with no high degree of specialization face a difficult future. The small part-time farms, on the other hand, will undoubtedly continue as they have in the past, as long as their owners have other sources of income.

Early Mills, Kilns, and Mines

By: the Revs. H. M. Hughes and A. B. Weisz

There is no better collection of stories about these early industries in West Deer than that given in the Hughes/Weisz history, "One Hundred Years of Progress". It is given here in its entirety, with closing remarks by this editor. JG

There have been several small industries in the township from time to time, begun to meet the needs of the growing community. These have ceased to exist as facilities for transportation of these products from other communities were developed. Brick making was one of these early industries. The years around 1853 were noticeably active in this line. The evidence is found in the number of brick buildings which date from the year 1853. Three brick churches were built that same year: The Deer Creek United Presbyterian, the Bull Creek Presbyterian, and the Pleasant Unity Cumberland Presbyterian. A schoolhouse at Culmerville was also built of brick about that same time. Other dwellings also date from that period. This industry was largely in the hands of the Norris family. One kiln is said to have been located on the site of the present town of Curtisville No. 1. Another near Culmerville, and a third, and perhaps the largest of the three, near the present town of Blanchard on the Adam Norris farm.

Grist mills also were found to be an ever present need among the early settlers. These mills were built along the main creeks within the township. Dawson's Run, now Deer Creek, Little Deer Creek, and Bull Creek each had their share of mills. Dawson's Run had at least four of these mills within the bounds of the township: Upper Dawson, Thompson, Lower Dawson, and the Lambie Mill. All of these families have been prominent in the history, both industrial and otherwise of the township. Nothing is to be seen of these mills at the present time but a few remains of the millraces. Some of these were also worked in connection with sawmills by the owners. Much of the lumber needed by the early settlers and those of much later date was sawed in these local mills. It was a very different matter in those days to get the grist ground or to get the needed lumber. Much of the work of hauling to the mills was done by ox team. "Buck and Jerry" made slow going through the deep mud of the poorly constructed roads, leading across or around the hills to the valleys where the mills were located. The millrace leading from the mill dam some half a mile above the mill itself. The water on the days when logs were to be sawed or when grain was to be ground, was let out of the "gate" in sufficient quantity to turn the great water wheel, either undershot or overshot, as conditions suited. The grain was thrown into a great hopper, passed down onto the buhrstones, stones fitted and dressed in such a manner that the grain was crushed and ground into flour. The crushed grain fell into a revolving cylindrical frame covered by finely woven cloth, called bolting cloth. Here the fine meal was sifted through leaving the coarser material to pass into the shorts bin and the feed bin. Late in the afternoon the oxen would wind their way back home, after a full day's work.

Little Deer Creek had a gristmill on the present site of the drug store in Russellton. It was first owned by the McConnell family. Later it was bought by the Grays. They gave their name to the village here. Grays Mills, and to the schoolhouse located nearby. Nothing remains of this mill but the remains of the millrace along the new cement road north of the town. Mr. Robert Porter also traces a part of the old race below the town of Russellton on his property.

Another grist and lumber mill was located on Bull Creek just outside of the present bounds of the township, near Millerstown. This mill supplied the needs of the people in that part of the township. It was owned by the Dawson family.

The following is an excerpt taken from the "Country Rambler". Pittsburgh Gazette, November 23, 1917: "Standing the other day by the bank of a small creek. I saw an old millstone lying in the water at the side of a pool. If there is one old time structure more than another that stirs the heart, it is an old mill or the remains of one. A farmer told me that the old millstone in the creek was all that remained of Thompson's Mill on Upper Deer Creek. He is not an old man, either, somewhere in the sixties, perhaps, but he does not remember the time when that burrstone was in action.

In those days there were millwrights whose business it was to set up mills over the country. They were busy men, pioneers of industry, men of expedient and craftsmanship. Out of logs and stone they would rig up a machine that would grind flour. Substituting a flat plate of steel for stone, they would harness a handsaw that worked it's way up and down chewing a slit through great logs."

The passing of these mills and the brick kilns left no major industry in the township until the beginning of the oil and gas drilling about 1885. Following the gas and oil industry came the coal mining industry. It was largely because of the drilling of test wells here and there that the value and extent of the underlying coal seams was discovered.

Early in the history of the township the settlers learned of the existence of the coal seams, and in a few cases had made use of the outcroppings. The first load of coal from Martin's Mine was sold to Daniel Thompson. The neighbors had been digging coal for their own use from the outcropping in the bottom of the creek as early as 1861 and 1862. The Dawsons on the Dilliner farm mined for coal for their personal use as early as 1840 at what is known as Dawson's Knob, from the Pittsburgh No. 8 seam.

Later in 1846 Ralph Dawson mined from the outcroppings of the Freeport seam. The account book in which he kept a record of his business is in the possession of Mrs. Lineman, a great granddaughter of Ralph Dawson.

Most of the brick houses referred to in the first paragraph are still in use and are at least one hundred and twenty-five years old. Most are in the Curtisville- Culmerville area.

The great-grandfather of Russ Montgomery built the house now occupied by Gertrude Ekas with money he saved while in the army during the Civil War. There are three other houses in the same area built about the same time, out of brick from the same kiln. In Blanchard, the Hemphill house, later the Stewart house, has been lived in by Don Stewart and Bill Erskine. Also in Blanchard is the Lebbioni house, now lived in by Alex Caponi, dating from the same period. The Norris house, now owned by Samuel Knoch is unoccupied and faces the Blanchard Road.

The John Consolaro house, behind the Consolaro garage, was built in the same period. The Gilmore Hazlett house, now the home of James Snyder, is near the West Deer Municipal Building in the Curtisville area. In the Curtisville area also is the

Monnier home, known to have been built in 1854 from brick made near where the telephone building now stands. This house is now the Hammerman home. Some family histories indicate that the brick houses in the Curtisville area may be about ten years older than the Blanchard houses.

Two other brick homes in West Deer built in this period would include the Kaufman house on Kaufman road, occupied for many years by the Boden family. The other is the Ben Hughes house on Middle Road Extension. There probably are more, but they are unknown, to this author at this time.

A number of frame houses in West Deer date back to Civil War times or longer. They were all farm houses built from locally sawed lumber. The older ones will have hewn beams and lumber sawed on an "up and down" saw. Several of these houses are now lived in by Glen Hemphill on Hemphill Road, Mrs. Jennie Camanini on Kaufman Road near Little Italy, and Joe Aber on Saxonburg Road near the West Deer No. 2 Fire Hall. There are probably many more but these three are known to be typical of those built at that time.

Another former farm house known to be quite old is the stone house used as the office for the Pittsburgh Auto Salvage Service near the Deer Creek Church. It has hewn beams in its construction.

A hundred years or more ago Deer Creek was called Dawson's Run and vice versa. It is not known when the names were changed.

The first gristmill is credited to James Dawson and was located along Shephard Road just upstream from the bridge on Glendenning Road. It was near the present residence of Burton Stevenson. James Dawson was the great-grandfather of Mrs. Clarence Monnier of the Culmerville area. He and his son James operated the mill for two generations and also served as the area's undertakers. The Dawson family history records that at one time some of the children played in coffins that were stored in a shed.

The Dawson house, although not mentioned in the previous paragraphs, dates back to the very early brick homes. It is not known where or when the bricks were made, but other construction details place it in the 1850- 1860's period. It has pole rafters upon which laths were nailed to support the slate roof.

Dawson's Knob referred to in a latter paragraph was probably what we call Dillner's Knob. It is southwest of Bairdford and has the MCI tower on it. This knob and the one south of East Union Church are the only places in West Deer where it is known that any coal was mined from the Pittsburgh seam. The coal near the church was removed by stripping many years ago.

Perhaps the last of the old mills to operate in West Deer was that of Bryson's sawmill, located across the road from Bell's School on the Bakerstown Road. Some of our oldest citizens may remember it in operation. It is now known what type of power was used, but it was probably either a steam or natural gas engine, gas being available from local wells at that time.

On a more modern note, one saw mill was known to operate in West Deer for several years in the mid-1950's. James and Lyle Hemphill operated a portable sawmill on their family farm near Blanchard and did some custom sawing. They used a large gasoline engine for power. Today one would probably have to haul logs for many miles to get them sawed.

West Deer's Oil and Gas Wells

Sometime near the close of the Civil War a number of farmers in West Deer formed the Farmers' Oil Company with shares selling at \$1 5.00. How much its assets were worth is not known. Oil had been discovered at Titusville only a few years before and many people were anxious to get into the oil business. Why they thought there was oil here is not known, but they were serious about what they were doing. The first well was drilled along Lick Road and the second near it on a hill. One of these wells was 150 feet deep with no oil. The disappointed farmers then hired an "oil smeller" to smell out a better drilling site. He smelled oil on the Huey farm and that was where they drilled next. After several hundred feet of drilling they began to withhold payment to the driller. After 650 feet of well they suddenly appeared to find oil. Suspecting it might have been put there, they stopped all payments and went to court. The farmers won their case and the well was abandoned.

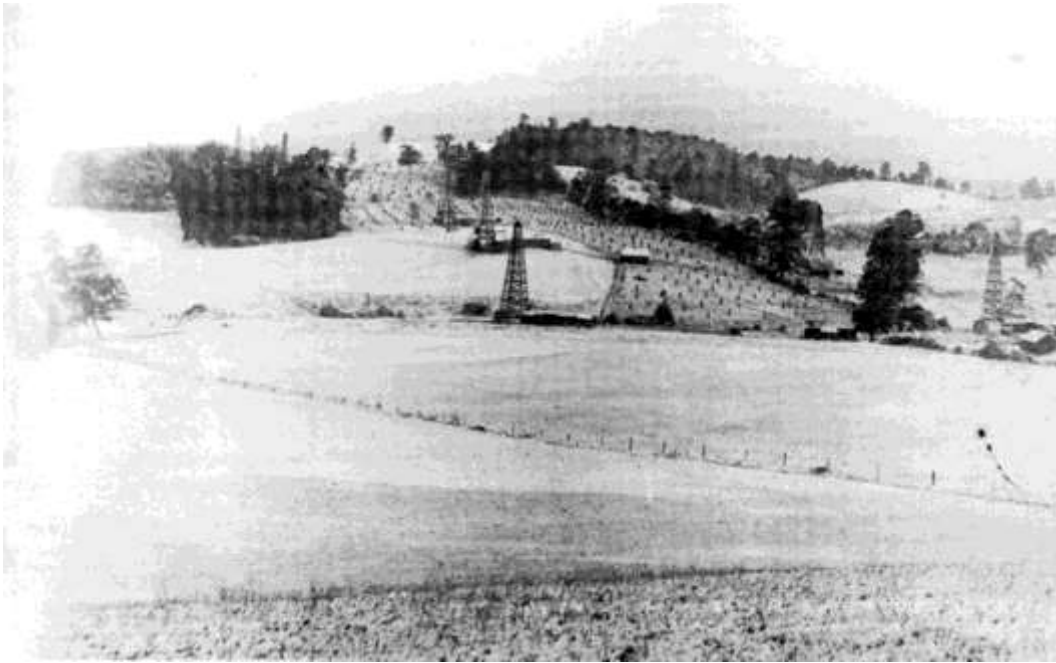
The first producing oil well came in about 1888 on the Montgomery farm. From then until after 1900 a number of oil and gas wells were drilled, mostly in the northern and western part of the township, but later in all parts. There may have been as many as a hundred wells in this township at one time. The picture found elsewhere in this book makes a few of the farms look like Oklahoma. Drilling continued at a steady pace until about 1916. Some of the better wells kept this production up for a month, producing 3000 barrels. Wells had numbers like mines. There would be names like Sterling No. 1 or Hazlett No. 4. Depending on the topography, depth would vary. At one place oil was found in a six foot thick layer of sand at 1803 feet. Another well struck gas at 2700 feet. Some spoke of their wells being drilled to the "fourth" or "fifth" sands. Some of these wells produced oil as late as 1984. In general terms, most of the wells were not highly productive, most were between 1400 and 1800 feet deep, and none made any local millionaires. They did, however, add to the local economy and make life a little easier for a number of farmers. Both oil and gas were piped out of the township to other, larger, pipelines.

The power used to drill the early wells was the steam engine. Later gasoline engines were used to pump the wells and in some cases natural gas engines were used.

These early wells were made by pounding a bit through the rock. The rotary drill was not used until perhaps the 1930's when two deep wells were drilled for gas. One of these was on the Magill Farm behind the present Deer Lakes High School and the other on Cedar Ridge where the housing development of that name now stands. While that well was being drilled so many local people came to see the huge drilling rig that the driller began charging by the carload to watch him work. Both these wells were dry. The local joke of the day was that the driller was going to cut the hole in small pieces and sell them for postholes.

It is interesting to note that many of these early wells produced both oil and gas. Many of the wells being drilled in Western Pennsylvania today do exactly the same. Indiana County, fifty miles to our east, leads the state in the number of new wells. None have been drilled in West Deer recently, although the possibility exists at a future date.

Picture 2 – Oil wells Monniers 1905ish - winter



These two photos, taken by Leonard Monnier, on glass plate negatives show the same general scenes in the winter and summer but may not be in the same year. Note the shack in picture 2 where the pumpers lived and have their laundry hanging out to dry. Picture 2 may have been taken a year or two later since it shows more wells. This scene is near the present Monnier Road and was probably around 1905. Leonard Monnier was the father of Clarence Monnier, retired teacher of West Deer and Deer Lakes High School who furnished these pictures.

Picture 3 – Oil wells Monniers 1905ish - summer

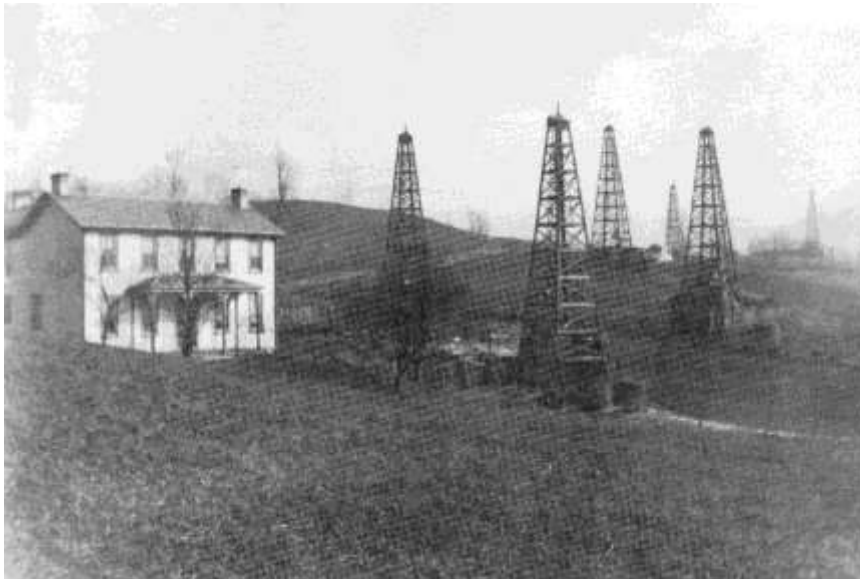


Picture 4 – Oil wells – John Schwab house early 1900's



These two oil well pictures, also taken by Leonard Monnier were taken in the same general locality as pictures 1 and 2. Picture 3 shows the CA. Porter farm on the extreme right and the shown Schwab house in the center. This house burned some years later. Picture 4 is a close-up of the Porter House. Both pictures were taken in the early 1900's.

Picture 5 – Oil wells -- Porter House



Postal Service

By: Gladys Hess

One hundred and fifty years ago West Deer had no post offices. Farmers had to ride horseback to Stewartstown, now called Sharpsburg, through dense forests on the Kittanning trail to get their mail. In 1836 any mail directed toward West Deer would be sent to one of the settlements in the Allegheny Valley from where it would be picked up by someone coming this way.

The first post office to be established in West Deer was on the farm of William Porter in 1853. These early post offices were usually in the kitchen of a farmhouse or on the wall of a general store or trading post. This one, called Rural Ridge, was in a farmhouse, now gone, which sat across the road from the present VFW on Starr Road. How long it stayed there is not known but a few years later it was moved to the Aber house on the present Saxonburg Road, now lived in by Joe Aber. From there it was moved to the Ackley property at the junction of Logan Road and the Kittanning Pike. Our history also tells us that there was a blacksmith shop there which outlasted the post office by many years. When the post office was located there it was in a store operated by a Mrs. Leslie. The post office was located there possibly in the late 1860's.

This same Rural Ridge post office was moved again to the George Magill farm for a few years. This farm later became the Harry Magill farm and then became Magill Heights. From this location it moved to Gray's Mill (Russellton) where it was destroyed by fire a few years later. This fire took place on August 23, 1874. We must assume that it was rebuilt or placed in another building because it remained at Gray's Mill until Russellton became a town. The post office received its mail deliveries once a week, probably from Sharpsburg or Harmarville. About 1905 the Rural Ridge post office was moved into the company

store called The Bessemer Supply Company. Two years later in 1907 it became the Russellton post office and the Rural Ridge name was moved several miles south where it is located today. The Russellton post office then remained in the company store building until the store burned in August 1930. Suburban Hardware now occupies this spot. After the fire the post office was located in the back part of the bank building next door and remained there until about 1935 when it was moved to the Long Building to the room now occupied by Russ Montgomery's business. At this time Mrs. Willis Saloman was postmaster. It remained in the Long Building until the 1950's when it was moved to the Bongiovanni Building where a larger space was available. This space is now occupied by the Trevellini Distributors. It is interesting to note that in the 1950's the government paid \$35.00 per month rent.

Needing even more space, the post office moved into the building formerly occupied by the Bizyak Hardware when it remains in that location today.

West Deer had two other post offices of historical interest. In 1854 one was established in Culmerville. It was located in the Campbell house, now gone, which was located across the road from where the Benke Garage sits. How long this post office operated is not known but it was not for a long period of time.

The other post office which operated in the last century was the Lewis post office. It was located in a store operated by William Donaldson at the southeastern corner of the Deer Creek Cemetery. It opened in 1883 and was named Lewis post office after Jane Lewis, a member of the Hunter family who lived nearby. Later it was moved to the house of James Hunter, across the road and down the hill a short ways in the direction of Bairdford. It is not known how long it remained in operation.

The post offices of Bairdford and Curtisville came with those mining towns. Each has made minor moves within the town and remains in operation today with the names that they have carried for more than seventy years.

The post offices of Bairdford and Curtisville came with those mining towns. Each has made minor moves within the town and remains in operation today with the names that they have carried for more than seventy years.

The late Rebecca McIntyre, who lived to be a hundred years old, often told her family how she rode horseback from her farm near Bairdford (now part of the West Deer Community Park) to the Rural Ridge post office at Gray's Mill (Russellton) for the mail. One would only go for the mail once a week because the post office received mail only that often. This would have been in the latter part of the last century. Mrs. McIntyre was the grandmother of Dr. Alien, the well-known Oakmont obstetrician.

Some of our older residents remember hearing their grandparents speak of the post office at the junction of Kittanning Pike and Logan Road.

West Deer is a very large township in area and has a large number of mailing addresses. Besides the post offices at Russellton, Curtisville, and Bairdford there are rural deliveries out of the Tarentum, Cheswick, Gibsonia, Allison Park, and Saxonburg post offices on at least eight RFD's.

There has been a movement for many years to establish a single West Deer PO but it never got beyond the talking stage. Perhaps one day...

Recreation and Leisure Time

When we speak of recreation and leisure time we speak of something almost nonexistent in the lives of our earliest citizens. For the first half of West Deer's existence, that is up until early in this century, most of the residents were of Scotch-Irish descent and were Protestants, usually Presbyterians. These people lived by the Protestant ethic. The influence of their religion and economic necessity required that they be frugal, temperate, thrifty, and deny themselves most of the pleasures of life. Anything that gave pleasure, other than producing goods and family, was regarded as forbidden and sinful.

Thus, any pleasurable activity was not done for the pleasure of the activity but for the productive work or the church activity, and the recreation or pleasure came as a secondary reward. For this purpose we can list a number of nineteenth century "community" activities. There were "barn and cabin raisings", "log rollings", harvest activities, all day Sunday church, and a few others whose purpose was not necessarily social.

As the farm population became greater and neighbors lived closer to each other, other rural activities became popular. Horses replaced oxen, more land was cleared, and time moved into the twentieth century. School houses were dotting the countryside and were closer together, as were churches. More rural activities involving "neighboring" were commonplace. Neighbors helped each other butcher hogs and beef, thresh their grain, husk corn, make apple or peach butter, and with many other tasks, particularly if a neighbor were sick or injured. Husking bees and pie socials were part of the social climate.

These husking bees were sometimes simply a social get-together, but were often held to help an injured or sick neighbor. The stalks of corn with the ears unhusked were put in the barn or shed and lanterns hung high away from burnable materials so that the husking could be done after dark. All the men and boys would husk corn while the ladies served cider and cookies. Sometimes they helped too, but just being there was part of the game. It was the custom when a young man found a red ear (of corn) that he could kiss either the nearest girl or the one of his choice. The more corn he husked, the better chance he had of finding red ears. Some people think that work incentive is a modern innovation! These husking bees were sometimes followed by a barn dance.

A pie or box social was held as a fund-raising activity. Young ladies would prepare a pie and other tasty treats in a highly decorated box with their identity unknown. The boxes would all be auctioned, each going to the highest bidder, who got to eat lunch with the girl who prepared it. Supposedly, he would not know who it was until he bought and opened the box. Every young

man would, of course, try to get a certain girl's pie box. The game of the day was competition during the bidding when a young man's "friends" would pool their money and try to outbid him.

The schoolhouses were the places where most of the pie socials took place. Some were also used for literary societies. These meetings served as a cultural exchange for local talent in music, poetry, and drama. Aber school, with its lamps, was well suited for these affairs.

Another very popular social affair of earlier years was the church picnic on the fourth of July. It was held on the actual date, usually not Sunday, and had no church service. It was a good time for food, talk, romance, and patriotism. At all these affairs the older people talked of farming and the practical aspects of life, including politics, while the young people had other interests: each other. The chance to meet and talk to each other did not come too often. Our concept of modern-day dating and meeting other young people had not yet developed.

It must be remembered that the two "place" names in West Deer's history were Culmerville (Brimstone Corners) and Gray's Mill (Russellton). These two crossroad communities had stores, blacksmith shops, taverns, and one, a mill. They were "gathering" places for past generations and would also serve as "gathering" places for later generations.

With the coming of the mining towns to West Deer, there were many other changes, which would influence the social structure of the community. The people coming to these new towns were from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There were more and better roads and autos and busses to run on them. Electricity was being brought to places like West Deer. There were theaters, roller-skating, bowling, a YMCA, ball games, and new ideas about recreation.

The management for the Ford Collieries mining towns appeared to have much more concern for the personal lives of their employees than the other coal companies. Ford Collieries built a YMCA at Curtisville and this building was the center for much recreational activity. Mr. A. R. Pollock is given much credit for this. He also helped organize and taught a Community Men's Bible Class described elsewhere in this book.

Baseball games were popular in the mining towns. Another popular activity was the excursion to Conneaut Lake Park. The Bessemer railroad ran excursion trains to their park at the lake and round trip fares were not expensive.

The Culmerville Hall, sometimes called Staley's Hall, was an early dance pavilion or hall and was also used for roller-skating on other nights.

In the Hughes-Weisz history, a Lyric and Davis theater is mentioned that was in the area of the Siwicki Funeral Home. It states that in 1924 it was converted to a skating rink but later became a Union Hall. It was known to contain bowling lanes before it burned some years later. The other theater in Russellton was opened by the Griffiths in 1920 and remained in the movie business until the late 1940's. Two other places in Russellton were known to have bowling alleys in the past. They were on the location where Bibri Appliance and the Post Office now stand. There was also dancing on the second floor of the building where the Owls Club is now situated. There were also bowling lanes at one time in the YMCA in Curtisville.

The young people's organizations at each church were very popular with the youths of that church. They were usually a combination of religious and social activity.

As transportation improved and the young people of West Deer began attending high schools in Tarentum, Springdale, and Etna, the recreational picture began to change. The outside world was no longer outside. Sports, cultural activities, and education in Pittsburgh were within range. Better theaters, skating rinks, dance halls, and other recreational activities in the Allegheny Valley were also within range, even for an ancient Ford or bus. West Deer was no longer isolated or dependent on the railroad.

Present day recreational activities are literally unlimited for the young people; school activities are as inclusive as any high school in the area. Local sports involvement includes all ages and sports. For adults, the proximity of Pittsburgh and the modern auto gives an unlimited range to sports, cultural, and educational activity.

Barons' Grove

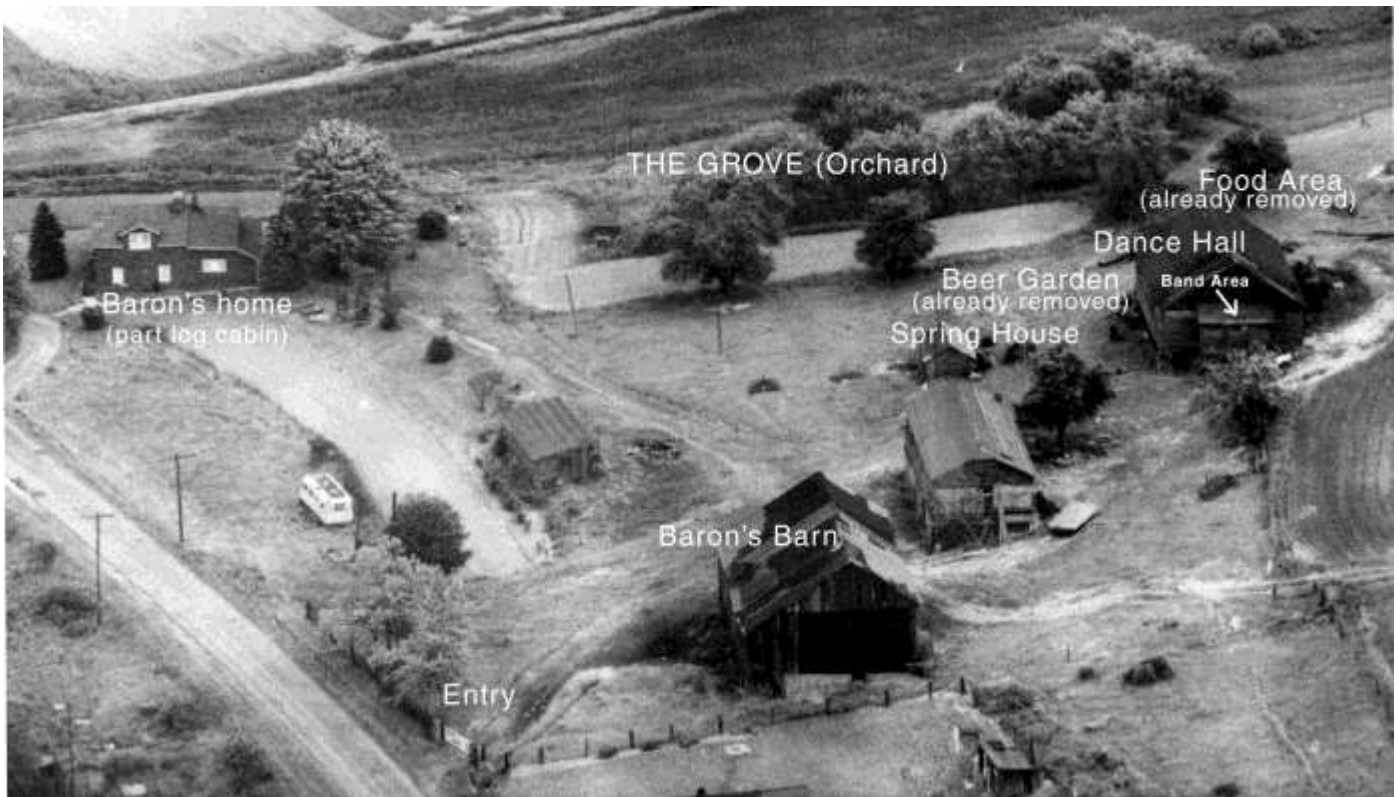
When old timers get together and talk about the "good times" they had back during depression days, the name "Barons' Grove" invariably is mentioned. Many of our older citizens from age sixty up from both farm and mining town remember the good times they had at Barons' Grove.

The Barn was originally the mule barn at the Superior mine. It had been used to stable the mules when they were above ground. In 1934 it was purchased by Stanley Baron, Sr., then torn down and rebuilt on his property not far away, on a site, which is now part of the Deer Lakes Park. Baron rebuilt the barn similar to its original size except that the interior was more open and covered with a good maple floor suitable for dancing. Stanley, along with his wife, Babina, operated the barn and grounds as a rental concession from 1935 until 1948. There were picnics, dances, and wedding receptions held there.

The barn had electric lights inside and around it, running water from a well with an electric pump, but no heat for winter operation. There were several large outbuildings used to dispense food and refreshments. The usual outside toilets were there also.

Lodges such as the Russian Club, the Polish National Alliance, and the Italian Club did not have their own facilities in those days and would rent the Baron Barn for their own picnics and for public dances as fund raising activities. The Barons received anywhere from \$15.00 to \$25.00 for a day or evening rental. They also stayed around to insure proper behavior at their grove. Reports indicate that there were some very good bands, which played for these dances. *(ALL profits went to Transfiguration Church as a donation from the Baron's, Vicky Baron Lewetag)*

Picture 6 – Baron's Grove (Farmstead)



This is an aural taken in about 1966 of the old Baron Farmstead. In the in 1920's - 1940's this was the location of many a dance and parties. Although some building were already removed when the picture was taken the approximate locations of the various building are shown, located SW of the junction of 908 and Beacon Rd. Torn down by the Park service late 1960's. Photo from Ken Lewetag

Many of the people who attended these dances during the depression and World War II walked from their homes in New Kensington, Tarentum, Cheswick, and Springdale and walked home again after midnight. Although no dress code existed people attending these affairs usually dressed rather well.

Dances and picnics were held from May to October when the weather was suitable. The Grove was simply shut down in winter.

In the fall, when apples were ripe, everyone had free apples from trees surrounding the barn.

Most of the social activity at Barons' Grove was on Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays. Activity would start early in the afternoon and generally ran to midnight or later. At picnics there generally were outside games and races.

The Grove closed in 1948 and the barn was torn down some years later when the Allegheny County Department of Parks purchased the Baron farm. Many of those who attended affairs at Barons' Grove have fond memories and often make the comment used with a popular TV show. "Those were the days."

The Schools of West Deer

In compiling a brief history of the West Deer Schools, it will frequently be necessary to quote from the Hughes-Weisz, "One Hundred Years of Progress", 1937. This reference will be referred to by "H/W". Their quote concerning the first school: "The first school erected within the present bounds of West Deer Township was the Hazlett School. The history of Allegheny County records that it was erected prior to 1800. This school is located on the grounds of the original Hazlett farm, midway between Culmerville and Deer Creek, at the junction of the Culmerville and Bakerstown and Logan Roads."

These authors refer to an early school in the area where Bairdford is now located that was abandoned about 1848 and converted into a house by the Gray family, but was finally torn down. It was a stone building. This school was probably in use in 1836.

We may assume that in 1836 West Deer had at least two schools, Hazlett and Ritz, and possibly two more, Gray's Mill and Culmerville. History does not give us the facts. We know that by 1900 there were six schools and districts in West Deer. For the purpose of this history, each school will be treated separately. After 1900 with the building of the mining towns, the old names, with the exception of Culmerville, were dropped and new names and numbers given to the schools.

The No. 1 district was the McGowan School. To quote H/W, "The McGowan School was located just west of the Deer Creek Church on the Bakerstown Road. Mr. McGowan gave a grant of land for the building, but later, when plans were made to

rebuild, a plot of ground was bought outright from the Bells. This school was also abandoned a few years ago." Many of our older citizens will remember Bell's School and Bryson's sawmill near it. The school was closed when the Bairdford Consolidated School went into operation.

At that period in our state's history, school districts were urged to "consolidate" their one-room schools into larger, more modern schools and were given subsidies as an incentive to do so. Thus, Bairdford, or "West Deer Consolidated School" as it was called then, got its name. The Bell School building was converted to a dwelling and at present is the home of Harry Arbuthnot. The No. 2 school district was the previously mentioned Hazlett School. To further quote H/W, "Four buildings have been in use on or near the present site. The first was a log building with benches. The second, a frame building, was located on the Logan Road. A third building, erected in 1906, on nearly the same site, was burned down in 1922. The present building was erected the same year, and is now used in connection with the consolidated school at Bairdford." The building was closed later, converted to a dwelling, and is now the home of Mrs. Evans.

The Culmerville School was in district No. 3. According to H/W, "The Culmerville School likewise has a very old history. The first building was a log building like most of the others, and was located near the home of Jamison Norris. Later a brick structure, made of bricks burned locally, was erected across from the Milt Norris home. This was finally torn down and a frame building erected just below the site of the present school. Some time after the Bessemer railroad was built through this section, the frame building was abandoned, and sold to the Norris family. They moved it to a location at the rear of the Hose House, and having remodeled it, used it as a dwelling. The present building, located on the hill east of Culmerville, was built about 1921." The school remodeled as a dwelling is now the Mildred Norris home. The "present" building as mentioned in 1937 was not quite the building that followed this last one. It was replaced by a two-room building with a bell tower. It is pictured elsewhere in this book and in a recent Bull Creek Church history. This building was moved in 1922 when the railroad tunnel was "daylighted". It was moved up the hill behind it to a permanent location and two more rooms were added. As one old-timer phrased it, "They drug it up the hill." This building was included with the 1951 school closings of substandard buildings, it was used as a dwelling for a while but later it was burned by the No. 1 Fire Company for practice. The site was cleaned up and sold to another party. It now holds the home of the George Golojuhs.

Picture 7 – Culmerville School



Photo from Grace Abbs and C. Monnier

The No. 4 district was Gray's Milt school, which probably existed when West Deer was born. It was a log building and was situated on the Gray property, either on the site of the present railroad or so close to it that it had to be moved. We know it existed before 1850 and that it was moved when the railroad was built in 1896-97, to the Russellton No. 1 site just south of the Thomas Mower Shop. On this location it would undergo many changes in size and be called the Russellton No. 1 School, it would be expanded to six rooms plus several pre-fab buildings before its closing in 1951. Many memories of this school include the fire drills, the eighth grade yearbook, and the associations of fellow students and teachers. More information is given in the historical account of Russellton. All buildings have been removed and the area cleared for new construction.

Aber School made up the No. 5 district. The H/W account states, "The Aber School was organized prior to 1850. Mr. R. E. Aber is said to have been taken to visit the carpenter who built the second building, about the year 1859. The carpenter lived there and built the school on the grounds, living in it. Mr. Aber had also attended school in the previous log building. The last building was erected about 1905. The school was closed the first Monday of November 1929, and the pupils who attended it were transported to Culmerville, books and all. The building and property then reverted to the Leslie family, who had bought that part of the farm of Mr. Aber."



Teacher Frank M. Hunter died 1918

*Martin's School, No. 6,
West Deer Twp., Allegheny
County, Pa.*

1902 - 1903

PUPILS

Elda Black	Walter Brown
Elma Black	Agustia Davis
Eva Black	Cora Davis
Elizabeth Black	Ida Davis
Lawrence Black	Lillie Davis
Robert Black	Clifford Campbell
Albert Black	Bertha Campbell
Wilda Black	Raymond Campbell
E. Chester Black	Willie Weber
Carrie Koethe	Charles Weber
Fred Koethe	Myrtle Weber
Frank Koethe	Robert Weber
John Koethe	Willie Drum
Emelie Koethe	Otto Drum
Freda Setzpfandt	George Drum
Fred Setzpfandt	Louis Dillner
George Setzpfandt	Joseph Dillner
Elma Setzpfandt	Fred Dillner
Anna Setzpfandt	Florence Love
Carl Setzpfandt	May Love
Myrtle Wise	Ida Schroder
Mary Wise	Clyde Schroder
Willie Wise	Harry Baumgartel
Harry Bonin	Anna Cook
Viola Bonin	Gilbert Scheerbaum
Irene Bonin	Thomas Hitchel
Bertha Bonin	Rose Reining
Harry Bonin	Willie Reining
Sophia Brown	Elodia Lucas
David Brown	Grove Lucas
Albert Brown	Eva Hamilton

OLIVER BLAVK Local Dir.

PROF. S. H. HAMILTON County Supt.

Compliments of

F. M. Hunter Teacher

Frank Hunter, the teacher pictured here, died in the flu epidemic of 1918. The list of pupils includes four of West Deer's five oldest native residents, all past ninety. They are Bertha Bonin (Mrs. William Gray), her sister Irene Bonin (Mrs. Joseph Dillner), Joseph Dillner, and Otto Drum. Our other senior resident, Boyd McKrell, our oldest male, attended Gray's Mill School.

(Pupil's include – Baumgartel, Harry Black, Albert, E. Chester, Elda, Elizabeth, Elma, Eva, Lawrence, Robert, Wilda Bonin, Bertha, Harry, Harry, Irene, Viola, Albert, David, Sophia, Walter Campbell, Bertha, Clifford, Raymond Cook, Anna Davis, Agustia, Cora, Ida, Lillie Dillner, Fred, Joseph, Louis Drum, George, Otto, Willie Hamilton, Eva Hitchel, Thomas Koethe, Carrie, Emelie, Frank, Fred, John Love, Florence, May Lucas, Elodia, Grove Reining, Rose, Willie Scheerbaum, Gilbert Schroder, Clyde, Ida Setzpfandt, Anna, Carl, Elma, Fred, Freda, George Weber, Charles, Myrtle, Robert, Willie Wise, Mary, Myrtle, Willie)

Picture 9 – Hazlett School with Jim Catherwood



These are pupils who attended the Hazlett School. The serious looking boy in the lower right is Jim Catherwood, well-known retired farmer, who lives between Culmerville and Deer Creek.

Picture 10 – Hazlett School on Logan Road



The Hazelett School located on Logan Road. Photo from Sarah Porter Drum

Superior had two one-room buildings for grades one through four. The older pupils walked to Russellton.

The last school used had several features not found in most of the one-room schools of the day. It was used by Oak Valley Grange for their night meetings as well as for pie socials and other evening events, and was equipped with oil lamps. More surprising, it had indoor chemical toilets. Each had a tank under it to which chemicals were added periodically. Each one was piped to a cesspool some distance away from the school pump. It also had a vestibule in the front of the building from which the bell rope was pulled to ring the school bell. As in the others, it had one large furnace to keep it warm in winter.

This building was converted to a dwelling and has lost the appearance of a school. It is located in Allegheny Acres on the bluff across from Grubbs Road near the Roth Refrigeration business. It is now the home of the Kiesewetter family, who has lived there since 1959.

Picture 11 – Superior School Class 1923



Photo from Grace Abbs and C. Monnier

(Grades 1st through 3rd comment by Vicky Baron Lewetag)

No. 6 district had the Martin School. The Martin family had given a grant of land for the school. The site, not now recognizable, was just south of Route 910 between the Bairdford (Oak) Road and the intersection of Martin Road. It was east of the bridge over Deer Creek. When it was closed and abandoned is not known, but would certainly be no later than the opening of the Consolidated School near Bairdford.

After 1900, with the building of the mining towns, the elementary schools had to make rapid additions. The term "portables" is a familiar word to many of our older citizens. These were prefabricated buildings having one room and no permanent foundation.

The Curtisville No. 1 School, started about 1910, was a four-room building, which had three "portables" and two "outhouses". It was closed in 1951 with the other old schools. The Curtisville No. 2 School was a two-room "portable" built with the town but closed in 1951.

When Bairdford was built in 1914, a five-room school, with necessary outbuildings, was constructed at the edge of town. It, too, was closed in 1951.

Russellton No. 2 school was built in 1917 along with two prefab school rooms which were used until 1925 when the new, yellow brick school at the southern end of the No. 1 town was built. The old buildings were sold to a farmer who used them to build chicken houses. According to **Sophie Pogornik Pensack** these class rooms were located on the top of Russellton #2 hill.

The new Russellton School still carried the No. 2 label and had ten rooms. Later two substandard rooms were put in use for several years, carrying the name "chicken coop class room". The building was closed in 1973 and for a year stood empty. From 1974 until 1982 it was used for the school district warehouse. At present it is unused.

As previously stated, rural districts in this state were under pressure from Harrisburg to consolidate their one-room schools. "Consolidated" School was a result of this pressure. It was built in the 1928-29 years and was put in operation in 1930 or 31. Since then, it had had two major additions. In 1956 four rooms and office spaces were added and in 1967 five more rooms were added, as well as a cafeteria-all purpose room. Declining enrollment caused this school to be closed in 1982 along with the Curtisville School. It remains closed and unused.

In 1942 most of the construction work was done on the West Deer High School building as described separately in this book. Additions were added in the 1952-54 period with minor additions to the gym later.

In 1969 it became the Deer Lakes Senior High School, containing grades nine through twelve. When the new high school building began operation in the fall of 1973, the old building went through a two-year renovation at which time the entire inner structure was changed to include some "open space" classrooms. It then became the Deer Lakes Junior High with seventh

and eighth grade classes. This lasted until 1982 when further internal changes converted it to an elementary school, which is its present use. It is now called the Deer Lakes Elementary Center.

Picture 12 – Culmerville School before move



This is the Culmerville School before it was moved up the hill when the tunnel was taken out.

The ten-room Curtisville Elementary School was opened in September, 1954. It replaced the old frame and prefab schools in both Curtisville villages and received pupils from Allegheny Acres. In 1956 two rooms were added. This school remained active until 1982 when major changes in the school district took place because of decreased enrollment. Curtisville School was closed as a school building, remained empty for a year, and opened as the West Deer Township Municipal Building.

In the early 1960's when pupil population was still growing, a new building was planned and built to absorb the expanding seventh and eighth grades. Called the "annex" it was, on paper, the annex to a future high school building. It served, as a junior high from 1965 until 1969 when the jointure went into effect and it became annex to the senior high, serving primarily for ninth grade classrooms. When the senior high moved into the new building in 1973, it reverted to the elementary and became the East Union Elementary School with several rooms of each grade, one through six.

With the aid of a federal grant, applied for in 1975, this school received a number of new rooms and service facilities, with most of the construction work being done in 1977. In 1982 when the last major changes in school assignments took place, this school became a K through 2 building and the former high school became the Deer Lakes Elementary Center.

Although the East Union School was built with considerable public resistance, the citizens of West Deer have a bigger bargain in this structure than any other building in the township.

The present Deer Lakes Jr./Sr. High School was built in the 1971-73 period, being open for classes in the fall of 1973. It was built at a cost of seven and one-half million dollars and can accommodate about 1300 pupils.

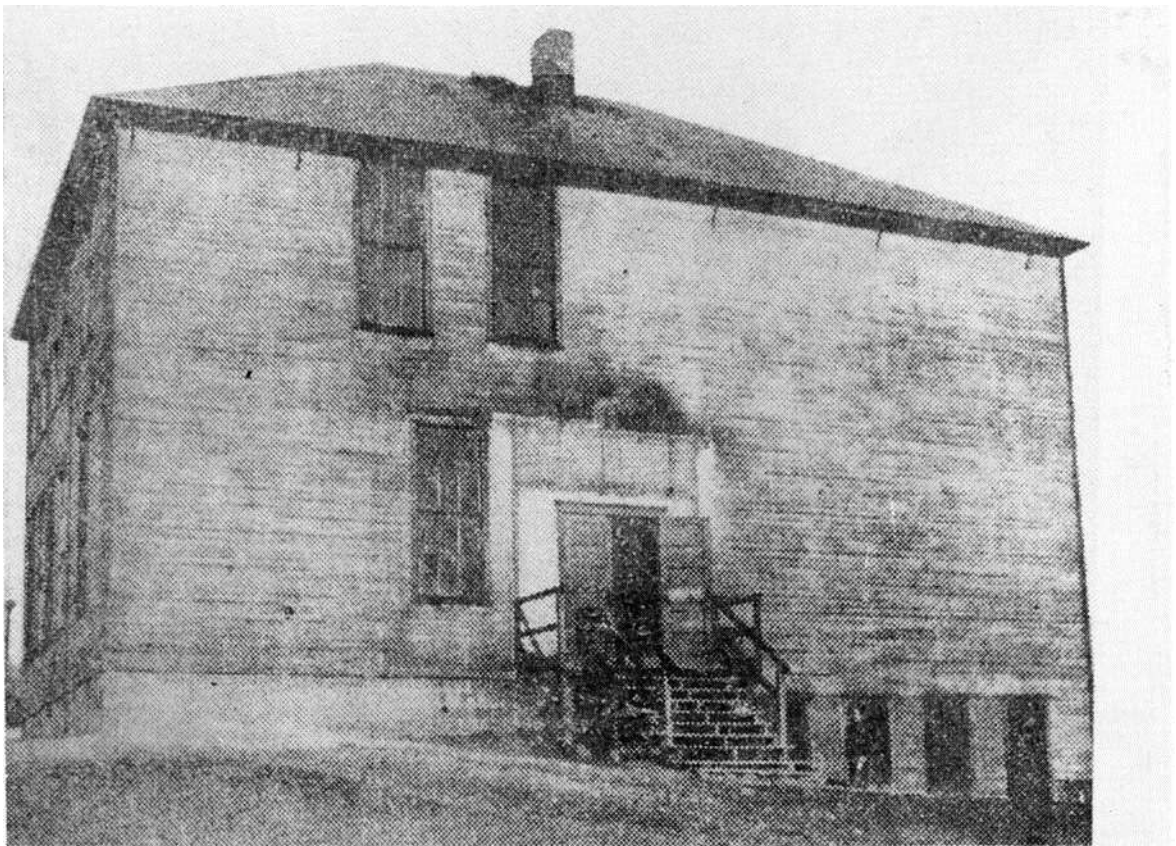
Since West Deer became an independent school district in 1946, there have been five superintendents. The first, Mr. Clarence Norris, was followed by Mr. William Burns, who in turn was followed by Edgar Holtz. Dr. Holtz left before his term was completed and it was finished by Mr. Burton Stevenson, who was acting superintendent the last remaining months of the West Deer school system. The new Deer Lakes district elected Dr. B. W. Norris who was followed by the present superintendent, Mr. Anthony Marsico.

Picture 13 – Aber School



*Aber School looked like this a number of years ago. Note the bell in the belfry and toilets on each side of the vestibule.
Photo from C. Monnier*

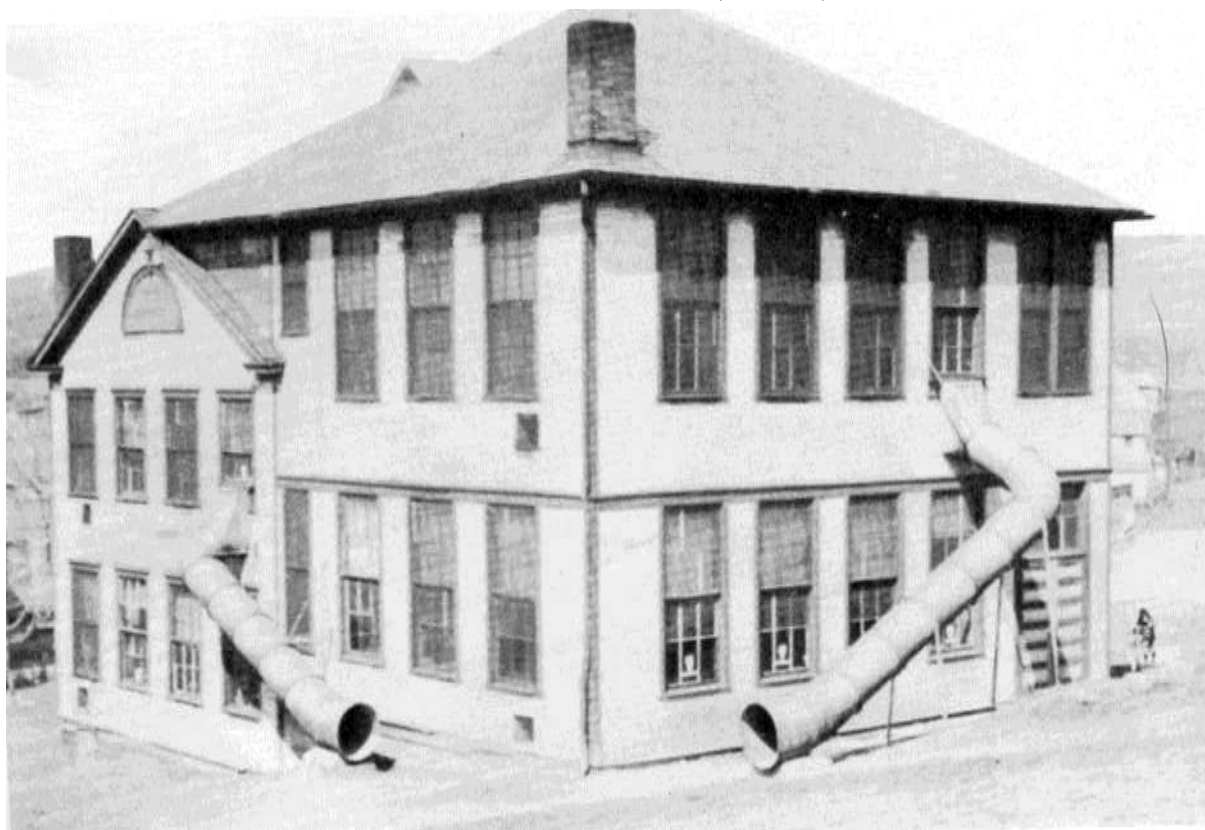
Picture 14 – Old Bairdford School (side view)



This is a side view of the old Bairdford School
Picture 15 – Russellton #1 School (Front View)



The Russellton No. 1 School in its prime.
 Picture 16 – Russellton #1 School (side view)



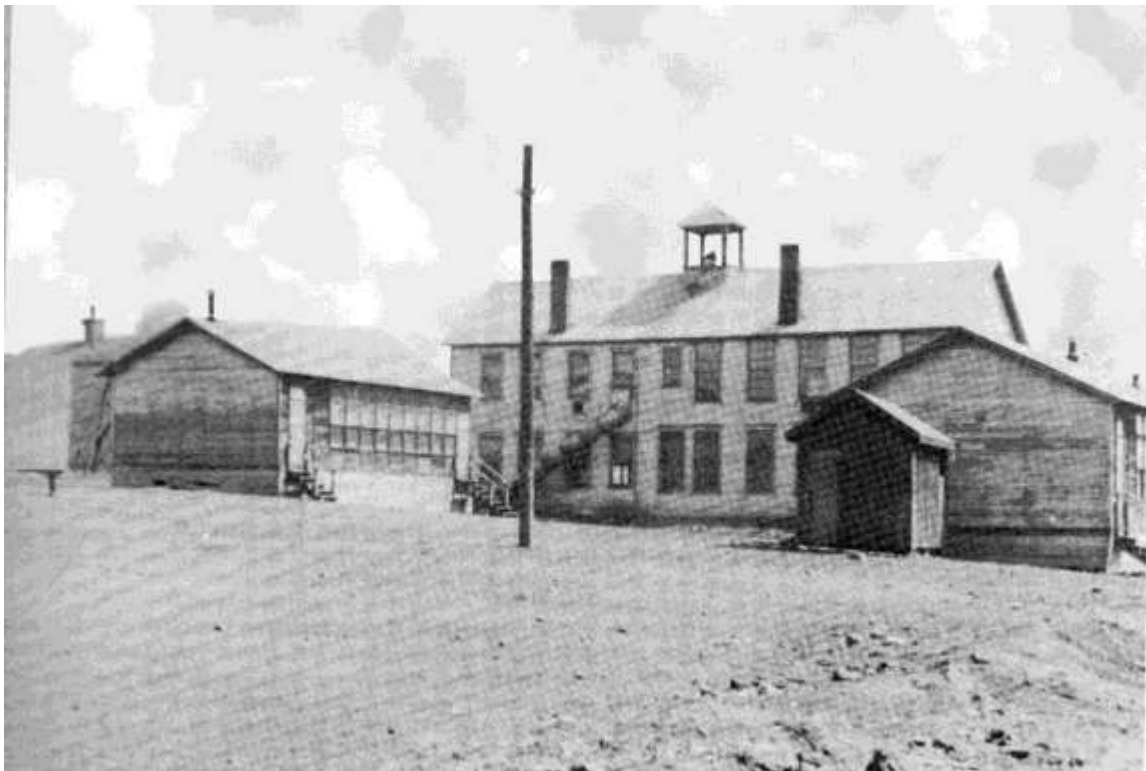
Notice the fire escapes on this Russellton No. 1 school building. Photo by C. Monnier

Picture 17 – Curtisville No. 1 school



Front view of the Curtisville No. 1 Elementary School. Note the portables on either side. Photo from Clarence Monnier

Picture 18 – Curtisville No. 1 School



Here are the Curtisville No. 1 school buildings. These were four portable and one large building taking care of all eight. (note the fire escapes at least one kid was up to no good when he went to the bathroom in one just before a fire drill, my dad still laughed and told that story many a time KEL) Photo from C. Monnier

Picture 19 – Curtisville No. 2 School



The two wooden buildings in the foreground are Curtisville No. 2 portable buildings where grades one to four were taught. In the far distance you may locate the Culmerville School after it was moved up on the hill. Photo from Mary Etta Monnier.

Picture 20 – Russellton "Yellow" school house



Russellton "Yellow" Elementary (56 Chev is Dan Angeloni the color was the talk of the town) Photo Valley Daily News

Picture 21 – Curtisville Elementary School, built in 1954



(Photo Dan Angeloni)

Picture 22 – Entire faculty of the West Deer Township schools about 1938



The picture above is the entire faculty of the West Deer Township schools about 1938. See if you can find several who are presently living in West Deer. They are: Florence Hunter Snitzer, Ruth Hunter Cunningham, Theresa Long, Mary Etta Dawson, Clarence Monnier, Clarence Norris, and Burton Stevenson. Photo from Burton Stevenson.

West Deer Township High School

The following account of the West Deer Township High School was written several years ago for another purpose. It will be included here because almost three thousand young people graduated and many of them live here. Although this was written primarily for teachers, it should be of interest to anyone who was ever associated with West Deer High. It is hoped that it will bring back memories of high school days for many. It is with sadness that we remember that a number of these graduates and a number of their teachers and administrators are no longer with us.

Picture 23 – West Deer High during construction



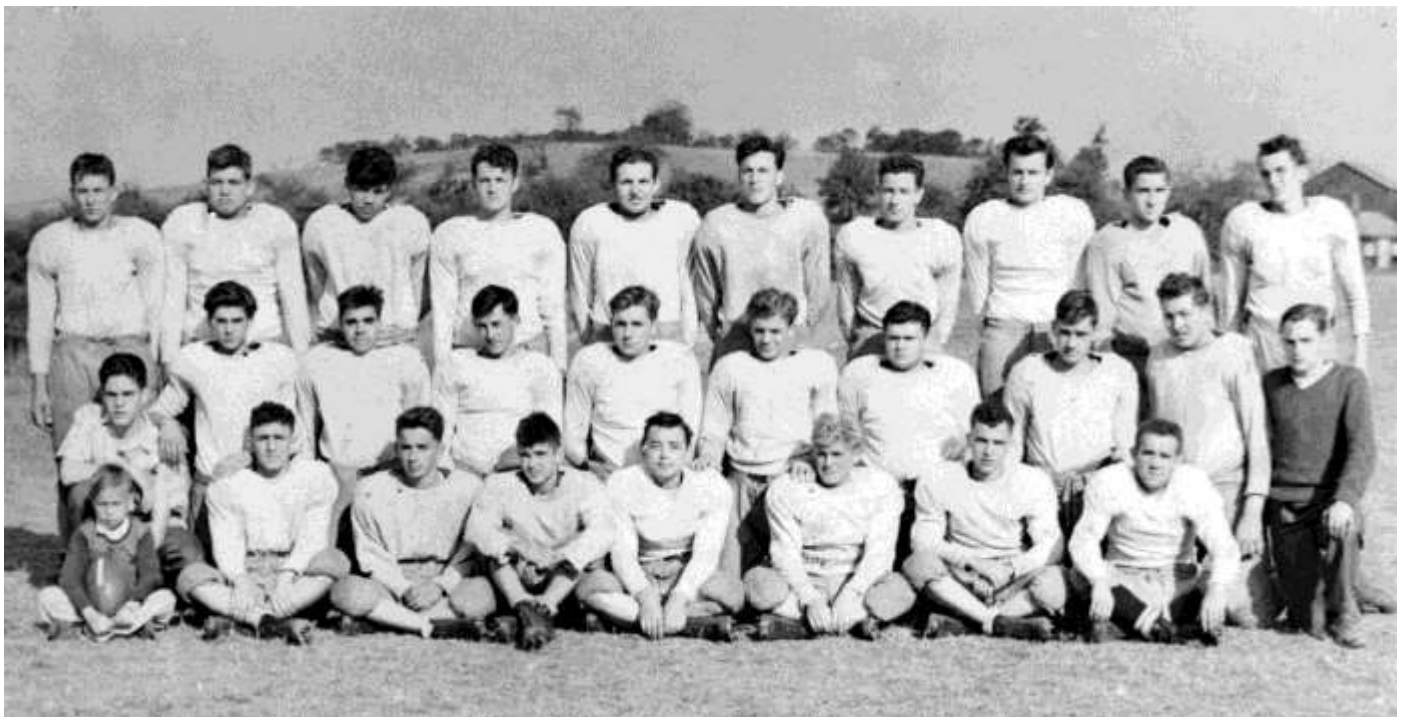
West Deer High during construction in the far left Migalls farm is still in operation (Photo courtesy Dan Angeloni)

Picture 24 – West Deer High during 1940's



West Deer high after construction industrial building and other additions are present and the bottom left road leads to West Deer Manor (photo courtesy Dan Angeloni)

Picture 25 – 1943-1944 First Football team



Leon Goodlow	Ed Bittner	Vince Salvati	John Polc	Ernie Lubatti	Al Lewetag	Fig Soster	Joe Stegner	Andy Logut	John Biser
Augie Thalman	Jim Murry	George Allen	Nello Colpo	Bill Rodgers	Wade Stepp	Joe Contie	Morris	Ed Czwalga	Ed Silcox
Carl Trusiak	Frank Grill	Joe Chabal	Ralph Buttyan	Joe Gbur	Jim Yeloushan	Clayton Evans	Joe Bohatch		

Not Shown: Coach Fred Schenley, Ass't coaches William Burns and Maesh Silverstein

(photo courtesy Dan Angeloni) spelling come from handwritten captions that were originally last names only and then first names added making it hard to read if any misspelling occur I am sorry)

Picture 26 – Front of West Deer High



Built in 1942-1943 First Class - 1945 Last Class - 1969 (photo courtesy Dan Angeloni)

It is for those who remain, and their children, who by now have attended or graduated from the old West Deer or the new Deer Lakes High Schools that this review is presented. It is also with fond memories that I have known twenty-three of those twenty-five graduating classes.

In January 1943, the new West Deer Township High School opened its doors to pupils for the first time. Only six rooms were finished on the second floor and construction on the rest was continuing. Pupils in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades made up the new high school. The tenth graders would graduate with the first class in 1945. Juniors and seniors who were attending neighboring high schools would continue there until they were graduated.

During this first spring a baseball team was organized and began playing exhibition games. A band was established and began practicing. They had no uniforms of any kind and a number of instruments were missing, but they had a remarkable start with the new principal, William Burns, in charge.

By the time school opened in the fall of 1943, the remainder of the building had been completed and was open to pupils from the eighth to the eleventh grades. There were about 500 pupils in the building at that time.

World War II was a long way from being over and West Deer High was operating during a time when our nation's future was being decided on the battlefields of the world. Patriotism was very evident in the student body. War Bonds and Stamp sales were high, and a mounting number of blue stars were being changed to gold. For you who missed this generation, a flag with a blue star was often hung in a front window when as on went off to war. If the son was killed, the star was changed to gold. In West Deer, like most high schools during wartime, the major reason for quitting school was to join the armed forces.

School activities included the organization of a basketball team and the making of plans for many more student activities for the next school year.

Part of these plans became reality the next fall when the first football team was organized and a mascot picked. The Indian Brave would serve as mascot from the fall of 1944 until the formation of the Deer Lakes District in 1969. A yearbook staff was selected, the first Junior Class Play was put on, and the school got its first motion picture projector. This class of 1945 was West Deer's first graduating class. They were proud of their class, their new yearbook, and their new school.

The high school office was beginning to be a busy place. B.F. Edlund was the district superintendent and had his office in the high school. Louise Camanini was the first school secretary and worked for both Mr. Burns and Mr. Edlund. Louise would later become Mrs. Dineff and continue working for both West Deer and Deer Lakes school districts.

When school began in 1945 there were about 420 pupils in attendance. Clarence Monnier was the only science teacher in the school and would be the only teacher to remain on the faculty as long as West Deer High would operate. Editor of the yearbook was Bill Roger who would later serve the school district as a member of the Board of Education. The yearbook was called the **Coalagra**, after the two main sources of livelihood in West Deer, coal and agriculture.

School supplies were stored in the basement room on the way down to the boiler room. The Agriculture room and shop occupied the present three rooms between the office and the gym. Several rooms were not used, including the "art" room upstairs. The cafeteria was used for band practice and storage. There were eighteen teachers on the faculty.

When school started in the fall of 1946, Mr. Burns welcomed 440 pupils and twenty teachers. Two of these twenty teachers were new and were going to stay with West Deer for quite a while. One was a dynamic Latin teacher from Etna and the other a young college-type with bushy hair from Dormont. This was the beginning at West Deer for Stella Jarema and Bill Powers. In January, a new agriculture teacher was hired. He was a tall, thin, farm boy, just back from military service. John Graff had been added to the faculty.

This class of 1947 had a number of veterans in the senior class. In a shop class of seven there were four veterans. Some "old-timers" might remember the high school then as a single building. There was a football field but no fence, bleachers, or lights. It was so easy to sneak into a football game that it wasn't any fun. The Agriculture class in those days raised tomatoes. In 1947 they raised eight tons and made eleven dollars. Very little money was made, but rich experiences and many wonderful tomato battles were benefits. The treasurer of the freshman class that year was Albert Sabatini, whose father was West Deer's only policeman. Young Albert would later become a teacher himself and would serve on the West Deer School Board.

Beginning in February, 1947, West Deer had a teacher's strike, which closed the high school for several weeks. Your author had been teaching a week and didn't know of an impending strike until the day before it happened.

The next school year saw many changes in the faculty. Only half of the twenty teachers returned. In one semester your author moved from number twenty-one to number eleven. This was probably the fastest rise in seniority in teaching history. To move the next ten places would take a lifetime of teaching.

With the ten new teachers was a young-lass from Sharpsburg. Just out of college was Angeline Narcisi. In case you don't recognize the name, she became Mrs. Schuster, Junior High Principal. The President of the senior class that year was a young fellow named Daniel Angeloni. The band used East Union Road to do its marching. There was little traffic and it was seldom that they had to get off the road. Your author remembers watching them pass by a large tree which stood where Reaghard Drive now is, and two boys regularly dropping out for a smoke, then dropping back in on the way back to the school. Possibly Bob Jackson remembers also. What he doesn't remember was that the whole Agriculture class was watching while working in the fields where East Union Elementary School now stands.

The Agriculture classes were busy between 1947 and 1949 planting the school grounds with pine trees. The beautiful pine forests around the school today are a result of this effort. The huge, unsightly gullies above the football field are gone and few will know or remember how it was once.

The football team won four and tied one for the best record to date. Fred Dinner's car, a flashy Model A, was the most envied car in school. A few seniors may remember their picnic at North Park when Fred lost his keys while playing ball. The whole class looked for them and when Fred's best friend found them, he took a load of girls for a ride while Fred was still up on the hill at the ball field looking for the keys.

We got a new brick entrance to the school parking lot. It was built by Mr. Camanini who told your author, "Don't build anything for your club, church, or school. Too many bosses." It seems that he had too much advice on how to build it. Another activity that was begun at West Deer was the annual summer trip for the Agriculture seniors. The summer of 1947 saw a three day trip to Lancaster County. Vic Valletto couldn't ride a car longer than fifteen minutes without having to stop at a lunch stand.

1948 was a great year for new faculty faces. More teachers started that year, and stayed, than in any other year of the high school's history. Vincent Antonelli was the new coach and physical education teacher. Hannah Ekas, Ray Fortun, Elizabeth Keppel (Mrs. Cunningham), Joe Unites, and Leo Zilla all started that year. Other changes took place too. Our field got a new fence, bleachers, and lights. Our student body was becoming larger and the word "crowding" was being used commonly. We had about a hundred tuition students from Indiana Township and about five hundred of our own. These were all in the upper four grades. There were no eighth graders in the high school at this time.

In the fall of 1949 there were no new teachers who stayed in the High School. Mrs. Jaloski began teaching that fall and would later teach in the elementary schools. Charlie Grottenthaler was class president. He is now a school superintendent near New York City. Forty-nine was the year with the football records. Seven wins under Coach Antonelli has never been equaled and will therefore stand as the all-time West Deer record. We also had a great baseball team under Coach Zilla which won the section championship.

"In Service" meetings for teachers began with the 1950 school year. Faculty events of note included a Christmas dinner and a North Park picnic later in the spring. This was the year of the "big snow" when West Deer got thirty-one inches on the Friday after Thanksgiving. School was closed for a week.

Ruth McCredie wrote a poem in the 1951 yearbook entitled, "Our Teachers". Bill Suvoy was Senior Class president. This was not a record-breaking year in sports. West Deer was "building".

When school opened in 1951, a new home economics teacher was on the job. Joan Kraft was beginning her teaching career. Margaret Girdwood, who had taught earlier in the high school, returned to the faculty. Mabel Mallory, later Mrs. Daniel Angeloni, was the school secretary. Bill Powers and Vincent Antonelli will be remembered for their handsome heads of hair. Where has it gone now? The senior class president was John Grottenthaler, now the superintendent of Brookville Area Schools. The Grottenthaler family from Russellton had two sons who achieved their Doctorates in Education and are both school superintendents. Andy Massimino from Rural Ridge was also a member of this senior class. He would be the only West Deer High graduate to be graduated from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Almost thirty years later, Robert D. Speer of Magill Heights, Deer Lakes High Class of 1980, would also graduate from the Naval Academy.

This year the agriculture boys got their first tractor and were getting "driving" lessons while the drivers' training classes were getting their driving lessons under the patient direction of Joe Unites. During August the Agriculture seniors spent three days in Gettysburg and Washington D.C.

In September 1952 we had a new school nurse, Annabelle Yeloushan, and a new teacher by the name of Daniel Angeloni. Another new teacher was Sylvia Mariotti who would later leave and return as Sylvia Radovitch. This was the fall that the eighth graders came to the high school along with three gentlemen whose names are familiar to West Deer students and graduates. George Sipes, John Piazza, and James Marsili came to the high school from several of the elementary schools. Several of the oldest buildings were closed and the remainder went on split sessions for two years while a construction program was underway. A new school was being built at Curtisville as well as new shops and an agriculture building behind the high school. Also a new kitchen, cafeteria, band room and a boardroom were added to the high school building itself. A new garage for West Deer's bus fleet was being built. We were beginning to modernize!

Larry Murray and Ed Yaworski were seniors. After college, both returned to our elementary schools and remain on the faculty. In sports football was 3-5-2, basketball 12-10, and baseball 6-0. The most exciting event that winter was the explosion in the agriculture shop. It blew out the windows, scared the pupils in other rooms, started a small fire, and one boy received minor burns. Fortunately damage was not great and there were no serious injuries.

When the pupils and teachers returned to the high school in the fall of 1953, the elementary schools were still on split sessions. Aside from crowded classrooms, high school life was fairly normal. Three familiar names were among the football seniors; Steve Paskorz, end, Frank Yenca, tackle, and Jim Yaconis, quarterback and co- captain. After college, all three would return to teach at West Deer.

In January 1954, just a few months before the Salk Polio vaccine came into use, a heartbreaking tragedy struck at West Deer High. Three pupils were stricken with polio. Clark McCredie, Rod Hohman, and Ernie Baughman were hospitalized with that disease. Ernie escaped without permanent crippling and was the only one who did. Rod suffered damage to one leg. Clark was hospitalized for most of the remainder of his life. He died in August 1975 in his thirty-ninth year. Those who knew Clark are aware of his suffering and how he was sustained by his abiding faith.

In sports that year football was 2-8-0, basketball 12-8, and baseball 7-2.

Things were better in September 1954 when the whole school system returned to normal. This was a big step in West Deer's school history. Gone were the outside toilets, the cold rooms in winter, and the schoolhouses with no water supply. The old frame elementary schools which had served the mining towns in West Deer were closed permanently. A new brick school at Curtisville and additions to Baird Consolidated were in operation.

The high school was now a complete Junior-Senior High School with grades seven through twelve. There were thirty-nine teachers. William Kernan started in the wood shop and Albert Mauroni began as band director. In the office, Mabel changed her name to Angeloni. We began eating in the cafeteria. Nelson Tonet was editor of the **Coalagra**. He would later serve on the Board of Education. We had 812 pupils in the building and, in spite of the building program, were feeling somewhat "crowded". Paul Tomiczek was a senior. He would be our only graduate to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. He is now retired after serving many years in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In the summer of 1955, there were only three Agriculture boys to make the trip to Washington. Clarence Monnier, John Graff and the three boys toured Gettysburg, Harpers Ferry, and Washington on the last of the FFA Summer trips. The Agriculture classes were being phased out and few seniors would be graduating.

When school opened that fall there were no new teachers who would stay at West Deer. What was new, were lockers in the hallways. There was also a new print shop in the new shop building. Jack Tady, a musically inclined senior, graduated that year. A good football season was followed by a great basketball season under Coach Zilla, who boasted a 16-6 record.

Jolene Cecchini (DiGiralomo), David Whartenby, and Katherine Williams were new faculty members in 1956. Judy Zonarich and Walter Cesaretti were seniors. Walter now teaches at the Elementary Center and Judy (George) holds forth in our biology department. We now had four sections in each grade and 42 teachers on the faculty. Our six district-owned school busses were always crowded. The drivers-ed class had a brand new 1957 Pontiac. The Agriculture classes bought a used Farmall tractor.

1957-58 was a newsworthy year. We saw the first sputnik, we were hit by the Asian Flu, and we started to talk about an East Deer-Frazer merger. Donald DiMarco came to our metal shop that year and Mickey Vitkay joined the science department. The prom was held on a large boat on the Ohio River. Mr. Angeloni's journalism class went to New York City. The Tamburitzans performed in our gym. The Agriculture classes went to the Farm Show and while touring the capitol building were personally greeted by Governor Leader. The general science classes came up to the school at night to look through the telescope that John Graff built. We won three football games. This just wasn't our year for sports. It was a year for rebuilding.

It appears that every so many years changes take place that have more significance than others. In the fall of 1958, William Burns became Superintendent of Schools and Matthew Petrina came to our high school as principal. Arnold Capellman joined our shop staff. We were graduating more seniors every year and more were going to college. More emphasis was being placed on college preparation.

At the turn of the "decade" when we entered the sixties we saw several new faces in the high school. Joseph DeFazio came to us from the elementary school and Mary Kay Molnar started in the math department. Several familiar names were in the senior class: Dee Charney, Bob Beitko, and Joe Yourish. The first two were combined and now Dee Beitko, who did teach in the biology field, now does some substitute teaching. Joe Yourish is now on the High School faculty. The Junior class this year had a great auction. Fawn Haven was now the home of a growing number of our students. John F. Kennedy was running for President and a number of our students met him in Pittsburgh at a special conference. The shops were entirely remodeled and new classes added. The agriculture courses were "phased out" and John Graff was teaching science and geography. The drivers-ed car was a '60 Rambler. "Operation Jag" caught 825 students in the arm. The biology classes got their second microscope. We had an archery club. Daniel Angeloni moved from the **Antler** to the **Coalagra**. Football was 3-7, basketball 9-13. Donkey basketball came to

West Deer and with it some sore spots on several areas of the faculty. The prom was at the Hilton, the first prom to be held at this new hotel. The management was pleased with our conduct. We were making plans for a Foreign Exchange student. This was a good year.

The fall of 1960 heard a new phrase, "How sweet it is." Everyone was excited about the Pirates and the Pennant. Anthony Marsico joined us as guidance counselor. Joan Voskamp was new on the scene. Steve Paskorz came home to West Deer after teaching in Arizona. Dick Sekanick began teaching after working for several years in industry. Giovanna Montafani became one of "us" and graduated before returning to her home near Milan, Italy. There were lots of student activities and field trips. YFC (Youth for Christ) was a byword. Football finished with a 6-3, basketball with a 13-10. The Junior Class had another lively auction. The prom this year was at the Hillcrest Country Club. These auctions financed bigger and better proms.

When school started in the fall of 1961 John Pastorek was new in the art room. There was also a new personality in the library. Geraldine (Mrs. John) Piazza began her career as West Deer High's librarian. Chris Lambert resigned after spending a number of years in that position. Mildred Collier was Mr. Petrino's new secretary. We had a foreign exchange student from Indonesia. The prom was at the Alcoma Country Club. The sports record was satisfactory.

The 1962-63 school year showed several signs of things going up. Most noticeable was the skirt length. Knees began to show. Another secretary was hired for the office. The job went to Florence Kondrak. Al DeCapite began teaching science. This was not a great football year. We finished with a 4-5 record. Basketball fared considerably better. Coach Marsili's team brought home the WPIAL section crown with an 18-4 record. The prom went to the Churchill Valley Country Club. Bobbie Grass was our official 2000th graduate.

Dora Zilla and Len Scimio joined our ranks in the fall of 1963. School got off to a good start. The football season ended with a 4-5, the same as the previous year. Our nation was under the leadership of a popular young president. No one will easily forget that awful day in November. The tragic death of President Kennedy was a blow to every student. This event left a certain sadness which lasted much of the school year. The prom the following spring was held at the Royal Ridge Field Club. The class of '64 had 138 members. It was the 20th West Deer graduation and the coldest in school history.

September, 1964 found only a few changes in the faculty. Hannah Ekas returned after having been gone for several years. We now had forty-three teachers and 1083 pupils. Construction was underway on a building which would be called the Annex. It would serve as West Deer's Junior High for four years, then as part of the senior high, and eventually as the East Union Elementary School. This was the year that the Chorus went to the New York World's Fair to sing during Pennsylvania Week. Basketball made a 13-7 record and baseball a 12-3. The prom this year was on the Gateway Clipper which was boarded at Oakmont. The senior class graduated 141, which exceeded the previous year's record by three. It was an outside graduation ceremony on the football field but was interrupted by rain and had to be finished in the gym. When it was over West Deer had graduated a total of 2282 young people.

It had been quite evident for some time that West Deer High needed much more classroom space. There were 1200 in a building engineered for half that number. Crowding was not just classrooms. It included hallways, toilets, drinking fountains, stairways, cafeteria, doorways, safety considerations, ventilation capabilities, and much more. The new Annex building, under construction for more than a year, was the result of much controversy as to what would best suit the need.

In the period between 1960 and 1965 when college students were making headlines with their protests, many of our citizens were doing almost the same at public meetings and in the press. A local "shopping news", frequently labeled the "fish wrapper", was the media by which local groups and individuals swapped insults and criticism. This was especially true right before the '63 and '65 primary elections for local offices.

There was so much criticism in those days that it is indeed surprising that we got any building at all. Although subject to severe criticism at the time, this building would eventually be recognized as one of the better "buys" made by this school district. Much of the credit for this addition to our schools must be given to Nelson Tonet.

The summer of 1965 was one in which several major changes could be observed taking place. The new Annex building was being finished for the opening of the fall term. Angeline Schuster was elected Vice-Principal of the high school to be in charge of the seventh and eighth grade. This was her official title, but in reality she was the new junior high principal. Since your author was a junior high teacher this writing will be more concerned with the junior high than the senior high, although both will be included for the next four years.

By this time we were up to six sections of each grade. This made scheduling difficult because each teacher taught five sections. This meant that a few teachers would be "stuck" with a number of preparations. Howell Steve Paskorz remembers! To further add to scheduling problems, all "round robin" and gym classes had to be held in the main building. Also, all lunches would have to be eaten in the cafeteria. This caused considerable movement between buildings in all kinds of weather, also, one senior high math class and a study hall had to be held in the Annex. The study hall was held in the back hallway and gave more meaning to the term "study hall". Even with a brand new building, we were still crowded.

The Junior High had its own library with Marden Dahlstedt at the helm. She would later leave and become an author of children's books, but not before she organized our library. Teachers' aides were new this year and were part of a new federal program to help education. Anthony Marsico had the job of setting up this program as an assistant administrator. Everyone agreed that a good job was done. It was indeed difficult to match the aide to the job.

Many junior high activities were organized and put into action. The yearbook for the next four years would include the junior high. Cathy Bocek was this year's editor. Wynn Kenyon was senior class president. At graduation, 158 seniors received diplomas, bringing the total to 2440 in twenty-two years.

This was not a good sports year. A heartbreaking football season ended 0-9, the only winless season in West Deer history. Basketball did a lot better with a 14-6. This was one better than the previous year which took the section crown. Baseball had a good season with a 10-3. Several players gave a good account of themselves. Lon Stock batted .435 and struck out sixty-one in seven games.

The Junior class had a Powder Puff game to help raise money for the prom. Your author heard comments at the game that his daughter Bonnie and Adriann Hazlett should have been playing for the varsity. The prom was held at Holiday Inn and was termed a huge success by those who were there. I

In the spring of 1966 William Burns announced that he would retire from the superintendence. After much consideration, a new one was chosen, Dr. Edgar J. Holtz, of the Monroeville area.

The summer of 1966 for your author was a significant year, having spent most of it touring Europe. The return to school that fall was a quick trip back to reality. The Left Bank became the left hallway down to the library.

The Junior High by now was well established and operating efficiently. Several events highlighted the school year. The library sponsored a book fair and the eighth grade was invited to participate in the Junior High Quiz on TV. Ricky Wirtz came to our new junior high and photographed a number of scenes for the TV show. Our team won the round championship but failed to win the coveted grand prize, a three-day Washington trip. Through the efforts of several teachers' aides who solicited local funds, the team did get to spend three days touring Gettysburg, Washington, and Harper's Ferry. Their sponsor (me) and Joe Yourish chaperoned the kids through three busy days of sightseeing.

The Junior High pupils watched a project the fall of 1966 that they will probably never see again. The football field was plowed and harrowed just like a farm field. Since it required a great deal of work on it in the way of reseeding, there were no home football games. All the "home" games were away, including the homecoming game, which was held on the Richland field on a Saturday afternoon.

The football team won one game this fall. Ozzie Kenyon was the most valuable player. Basketball won five, lost twelve. The baseball season ended with an even 6-6. Golf and track teams were organized, trained, and began competition.

Marlene Georgic, now one of our elementary teachers, was Homecoming Queen. Ozzie Kenyon and Bonnie Graff were King and Queen of Sports. Tom DeMartini was senior class president.

Senior High activities included the Tiny Tim dance and Christmas baskets. A new Pep Club under Bill Powers direction began cheering loudly when the situation required it. The shop boys of Don DiMarco built a unique choo-choo and won recognition at the Industrial Arts Fair.

Spring graduation presented 165 diplomas and brought the total to 2605. Each graduating class was just a little larger than the previous year's class.

The school year of 1967-68 was not one of great events or happenings, but rather one of steady growth. We were growing larger and more crowded, and the conning merger was only two years away. Most future planning was being done with that goal in mind. Much had been done and much more had to be done before this merger would become a reality.

The Junior High continued to grow into its own identity. A program of feature movies was instituted. Since it was very difficult to have separate assemblies, increased effort was made to have similar programs within the building. The library and its adjoining classroom opened to a space large enough to handle each grade. The student council under Joe Yourish began to take greater interest in their own affairs. Granny dresses, hot pants, and slacks were still banned for student wear. After considerable planning and groundwork, the eighth grade, under the sponsorship of Joe Yourish, made a long one-day field trip to Gettysburg. It was the beginning of what would be other, longer field trips, which would include Harrisburg, Hershey, and Washington, D.C.

In the Senior High the biggest news was a new football coach. Coach Boulton was on the job. The most intensive training program in years yielded only one win. Don DiMarco's basketball squad finished with a 12-10. Pinky Victain racked up 466 points. Baseball held its own with a 4-3.

Stanley Pitman was president of the senior class. The treasurer was Dotty Jamison. They liked the arrangement so well that it was made permanent. Mrs. Dotty is still the treasurer. The band got a new director, Roger White. The student body was shocked when George Metzler's untimely and tragic end came on February 19th of viral pneumonia.

The year ended with the prom being held in the ballroom of Chatham Center. The after-prom party was held on the Gateway Clipper. This year's graduates numbered 174.

September, 1968 was the beginning of the final year of the West Deer Township High School. Sports wise it did not finish in a blaze of glory. Football showed some improvement with a 4-5 record. Basketball was 8-15 and baseball ended with a 4-10. Bob Parasso was the last senior class president. Another tragic death of a student came when Lester Linamen, a senior, was killed in an automobile accident.

West Deer did make a name for itself at the Industrial Arts Fair at Kaufmanns. A 1903 Cadillac built by Lance Molnar and Ron Leggens was judged "Best of Show".

In the Junior High the Explorers' Club was getting underway with John Graff and Charley Mann as the sponsors. Although active since 1961, the club had never given itself a name and was more or less "underground" in its activities. Several caves were explored by the group that year.

Again, the eighth grade was invited to participate in the Junior High Quiz. This time the team, composed of a rare combination of brilliant young minds, went all the way, winning the Grand Championship, another trophy for the school, and a great trip to Washington for themselves, their principal, and their sponsor (me). In this manner, the Junior High did finish in its own little blaze of glory.

Dr. Holtz resigned the superintendence as of January 1, six months before the merger with East Deer was to take place. Burton Stevenson was named acting superintendent until July 1 and an immediate search began for a new super. The board's final selection was Dr. B.W. Norris, who was hired on March 3 to begin duties the following July as Deer Lakes Superintendent.

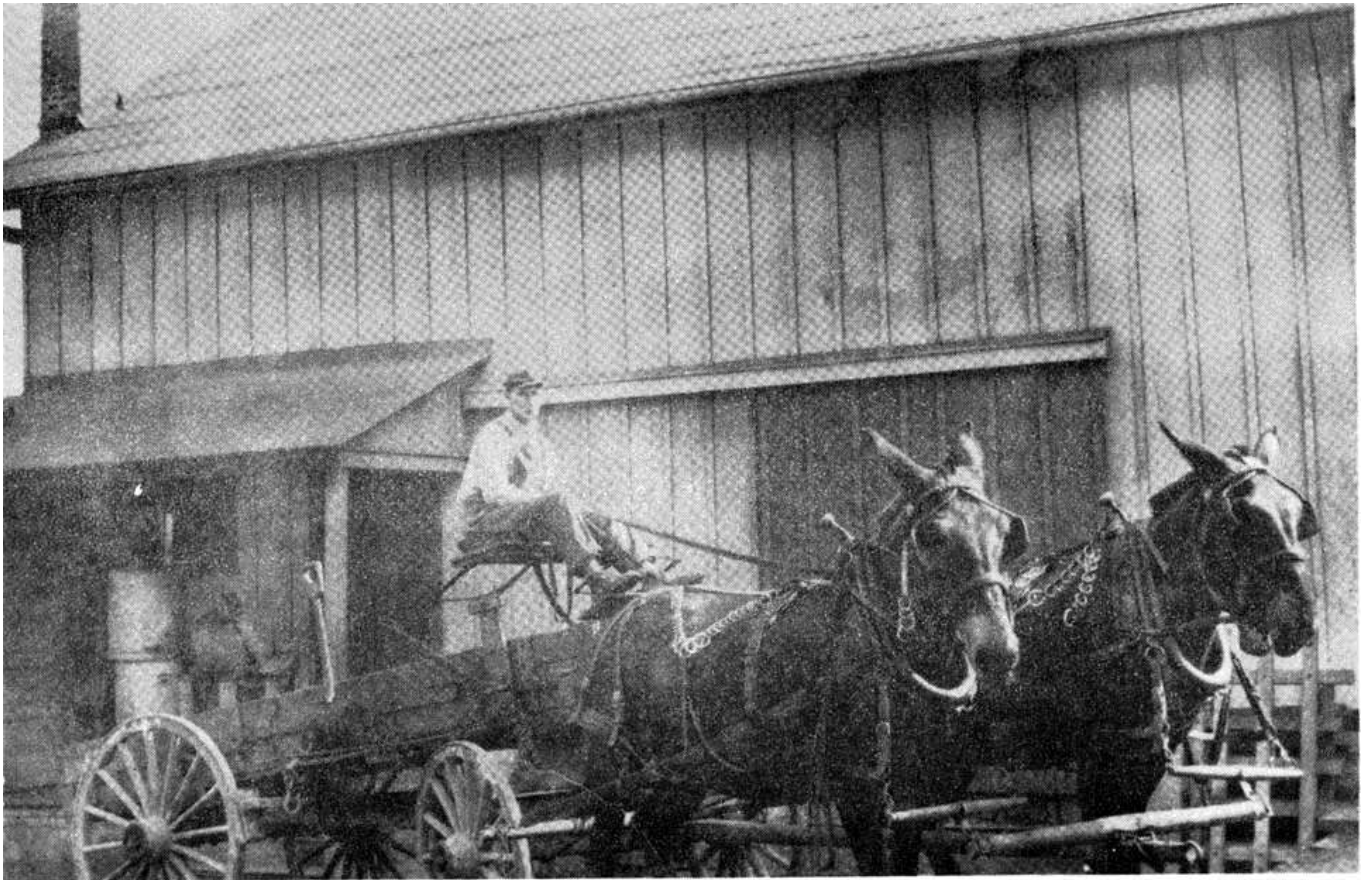
Much of the spring 1969 activity in the high school was centered around the choosing of a new name for the coming merger, new school colors, new mascot, new team name, new yearbook name, and many more.

The largest class in West Deer history was graduated in June 1969. 177 seniors received their diplomas, bringing the grand total to slightly less than three thousand. There had been twenty-five graduations in the twenty-six-and-a-half years of the high school's history. Only one member of the faculty, Clarence Monnier, had been with the high school through its entire history.

The final event for the juniors and seniors was the prom, held in June, after graduation. This gala affair, held in Webster Hall, was a fitting climax for the West Deer High School. The after-prom party, back in the high school gym, was the last affair in the West Deer Township High School. Thirteen days later it would lose its identity.

At a five hour joint meeting of the school boards held on June 23, the districts each ended their own identity and accounts. One week from the next day, July 1, 1969, the official Deer Lakes School assumed all credits and liabilities of the two members. Dr. Norris, elected earlier in March, then became the Superintendent of the Deer Lakes District on active duty. That meeting also assigned the official titles to the administrative staffs of both districts.

Picture 27 – Coal delivery



*This is the way coal was delivered to the company houses in the early days of the mining towns. The driver here is believed to be Jim Peacko.
Photo from Mary Leggens.*

Transfiguration School

by: Sister M. Bernadette Giba, O.S.F.

September 1, 1964 - Opening of the new Transfiguration School with the Children's Liturgy at 9:00 A.M. Rev. Stanley Piekarski officiated at the mass. School opened with two grades; fifty-eight children were registered for grades 1 and 2, thirty-two for grade 1 and twenty-six for grade 2. Sister Rosalia Barabas, O.S.F., was the first Principal.

On December 29, 1964, Rev. Francis Weaver replaced Rev. Stanley Piekarski as pastor of Transfiguration Parish.

June 13, 1965, seventy-three children received their First Holy Communion. Twenty-six were from Transfiguration School Grade 2 and forty-seven from CCD Grade Three.

Each year a grade was added at Transfiguration School until Grade 6.

On September 3, 1968, Transfiguration School opened with six grades, 1-6, with a total of 188 pupils.

On April 24, 1969, the Sisters moved into the new convent next to the school. Due to the death of Sister Rosalia on May 12, 1969, the office of Principal became vacant and Sister Francis Kopas became the second Principal of Transfiguration School, a position which she held until June 1976. In September of 1976, Sister Geraldine Pavlik became the third Principal of Transfiguration School until June 1979.

On August 29, 1977, Transfiguration School opened its doors for the first Kindergarten class with 24 pupils. The total number of students for grades K-6 was 124

On August 28, 1979, Sister M. Bernadette Giba, O.S.F., was assigned new Principal of Transfiguration School. The year opened with 58 boys and 58 girls in grades K-6, a total of 116 children.

This year, 1984-1985, Transfiguration School has an enrollment of 131 children was nearly half of the students from eleven neighboring parishes, Catholic and non-Catholic.

In addition to the excellent quality education Transfiguration provides for the future citizens of West Deer, it also boasts of an excellent CCD Program under the direction of Sister M. Joyce Burkhart, O.S.F.

For twenty years, Transfiguration School has continued to provide outstanding men and women for the community and will exert every effort to provide the children with the best Catholic and academic education because the staff realizes they are here to train and teach the whole person" spiritually, physically, emotionally and academically.

Russellton

The land upon which the town of Russellton now stands was purchased in the early 1800's by a Mr. Porter. His total holdings were 238 acres of which he later sold a part to men in the Griffith family. This was the northern part of his land, which again was sold, in part, to the Gray and Geisy families.

There seems to be no well-known name given to this area before Gray's Mill. A McConnell family operated a mill on this site, later selling it to the Gray family who gave their name to the mill, the crossroads, and the log school there. There is no record of the McConnells and it is not known if they held ownership of property.

Over the years, with the moving in of more families, a blacksmith shop was opened by the Griffith family, who later sold it to the Geiseys. The Griffith also had a general store and a livery stable. Records tell us that a Rural Ridge post office was located in Gray's Mill. A log schoolhouse also existed on the Gray property. This all transpired before the railroad came through in 1896-1897.

In 1884 a test hole was drilled in the vicinity of Gray's Mill which indicated a rich vein of coal. Some years later, about the turn of the century, George Love came to Gray's Mill to buy coal rights. He was the son of a pioneer family and former resident of the area. Altogether he purchased the coal rights under about a thousand acres for the price of \$29.00 per acre. He also bought a 67-acre farm upon which the town and mine of Russellton No. 1 would be built. The land, which he bought, was formerly Griffith-Gray holdings. It extended south to the Porter land and was on both sides of the valley. At this time the railroad and the coal were known facts. The mine and the market were yet unknown.

Little consideration was given in 1903 to town planning. In the beginning no dwelling faced a public road. All were built on private paths, back from the road. One row was built north of the mine and the remainder in several short rows to the south and across the roadway. These houses were constructed without basements, plumbing, or electricity. Since no miner owned a car or a horse, only footpaths connected the houses with the mine or the public road. There was no class distinction in housing. The mine owner lived in a cottage on the hillside opposite the mine. All mine foremen and workmen lived in the double houses provided for them. The only class distinction, which existed, was that of location. Some rows were considered to have a higher prestige value than others. In later housing class difference became greater.

These first miners were recruited from other Western Pennsylvania mines. Later many would come directly from their homelands in eastern, central, and southern Europe.

By the end of 1904 the mine was in operation. Twenty-five double houses and seven singles had been completed and occupied. Many of the early families boarded one or two more. Several local men also labored at the mine, making a labor force in the neighborhood of a hundred men.

This coal operation was known as the Bessemer Coal and Coke Company. A subsidiary operation known as the Bessemer Supply Company was set up about 1905 to serve as the company store. It must be remembered that the local store and post office had been in operation before the mining town was built. The company store was built facing the public road near the

mine plant and also served as the mine office and post office. When the post office, formerly called Rural Ridge Post Office, was put in the company store building it was renamed Russellton Post Office, and the Rural Ridge office moved several miles to the south in Indiana Township. This happened in 1907. For several years previous to this the railroad station which served the village was called Russellton Station. In this same period a private grocery store and meat market was built at the southern edge of town, the land most likely coming from the Porter farm.

In the period between 1904 and 1910 many new company buildings were erected. A boarding house was built and around it a dozen double houses. Several short streets were laid out at right angles to the road and lined with double houses. A United Presbyterian Church was built. A school addition was added north of town to handle the increasing enrollment. A Roman Catholic Church was added several years later.

Class distinction came with the addition of these newer houses. The "New Patch" was considered more desirable than the "Old Patch". Houses facing the public road were the ultimate. The first row built in 1903 in the northern part of town became "Blue Row" when they were painted blue. A new row facing the road was painted yellow and became "Yellow Row". The row by the church became "Church Row". Another row was built on a muddy public road leaving the main row in the southern part of town and became known as "Muddy Row". A short row was built on the bank along the road consisting of single houses with basements. These had the highest prestige and were occupied by mine foremen. A few houses were built as late as 1917 but the town form, row names, and such prestige values that existed were already established.

These houses, for the most part, were without basements, plumbing, electricity, or central heating. Water was supplied from wells placed at intervals along the paths, which would later become company streets. Heating was by open fireplaces unless the miner could afford a heating stove. A total of eighty-five houses were built, of which twenty-one was single and the rest double. No Company doctor was provided for several years until a new house of good quality was built to serve as his residence and office. A similar house was also built for the mine superintendent.

Until 1912, the town of Russellton in appearance was that of a mining town. The original crossroads store and blacksmith shop was still serving the rural trade, undisturbed by the mining town not very far away. The land to the north was unoccupied except for the schoolhouse. A mile to the north was the mining town of Curtisville No. 1 with more residents than Russellton and even fewer business enterprises. This was the setting upon which the commercial part of Russellton was to grow.

North of the mining town was two farms which, up to this point in time, were not for sale. In 1912 lots became available for the first time. Free enterprise could now show itself. The railroad had changed management and was known as the Pittsburgh, Bessemer, and Lake Erie Railroad. Considerable reconstruction was done in the 1906-1910 period. During these years a work train and several temporary living quarters were in use along its lines near Russellton. With this work finished, the operation of mine run crews required that the trainmen be quartered in Russellton. In 1913 the railroad bought several acres on the bluff between the road and the tracks south of the school property. On this site it constructed seven two-story houses for key people. Four years later a three-story hotel was built for the mine run crews.

In 1900 the school building had one room. When the company houses were occupied more rooms were needed so a second floor was added in 1904. Several years later the lower room was divided into three smaller rooms. In 1912 two additional rooms were built and the divided room restored to a single large room. In 1915 two more rooms were constructed. At the beginning of Russellton's commercial development the school contained six rooms.

Within the 1912-1916 period considerable progress was made in all sections of town. The Coal Company had built a modern brick building to house its offices and a bank. The second floor served as a hotel for office employees and visitors. A livery stable had been built beside the blacksmith shop and now offered taxi service to New Kensington, Springdale, and Pittsburgh. A shoe store, barber shop, and drug store were in business. A dentist opened an office and a doctor built a residence and office. A local bus line began operating on a somewhat irregular schedule. The early stores were characterized by the proprietor having his living quarters in the rear or above the store. The bank had built a house for its manager because of the isolated position of Russellton.

The Little Deer Creek Road had been improved in 1910 but was still not considered a dependable road. Russellton was considered remote. The railroad was the only dependable line of communication and connections were not too convenient. The cost of taxi service to New Kensington was \$9.00 and to Pittsburgh, \$10.00. These were considered all-day trips and included any reasonable number of riders, a reasonable wait in town, and the return trip. We can laugh now, but that was the way it was in those days. In 1916 bus service was available to Springdale but the trips varied with the road conditions and the number of passengers.

The period from 1916 to the early twenties was one of continued progress in the business district. Several stores changed ownership, several failed, and some new ones were started. This period saw two theaters operating with silent films, barber and beauty shops, hardware, several groceries, a new drug store (Miller Drug Later Palmers) and a number of houses added to the business district. The first theater was moved by rail from Numine, Pa. and reconstructed in the northern part of town. It had its own power plant and opened in 1920. It was used as a theater on certain nights when folding chairs were set up and on other evenings as a roller skating rink. There were possibly thirty residences in this part of Russellton by this time. They were owned and occupied by miners, railroaders, and businessmen.

Picture 28 – Russellton #1 Bank and "the Playground"



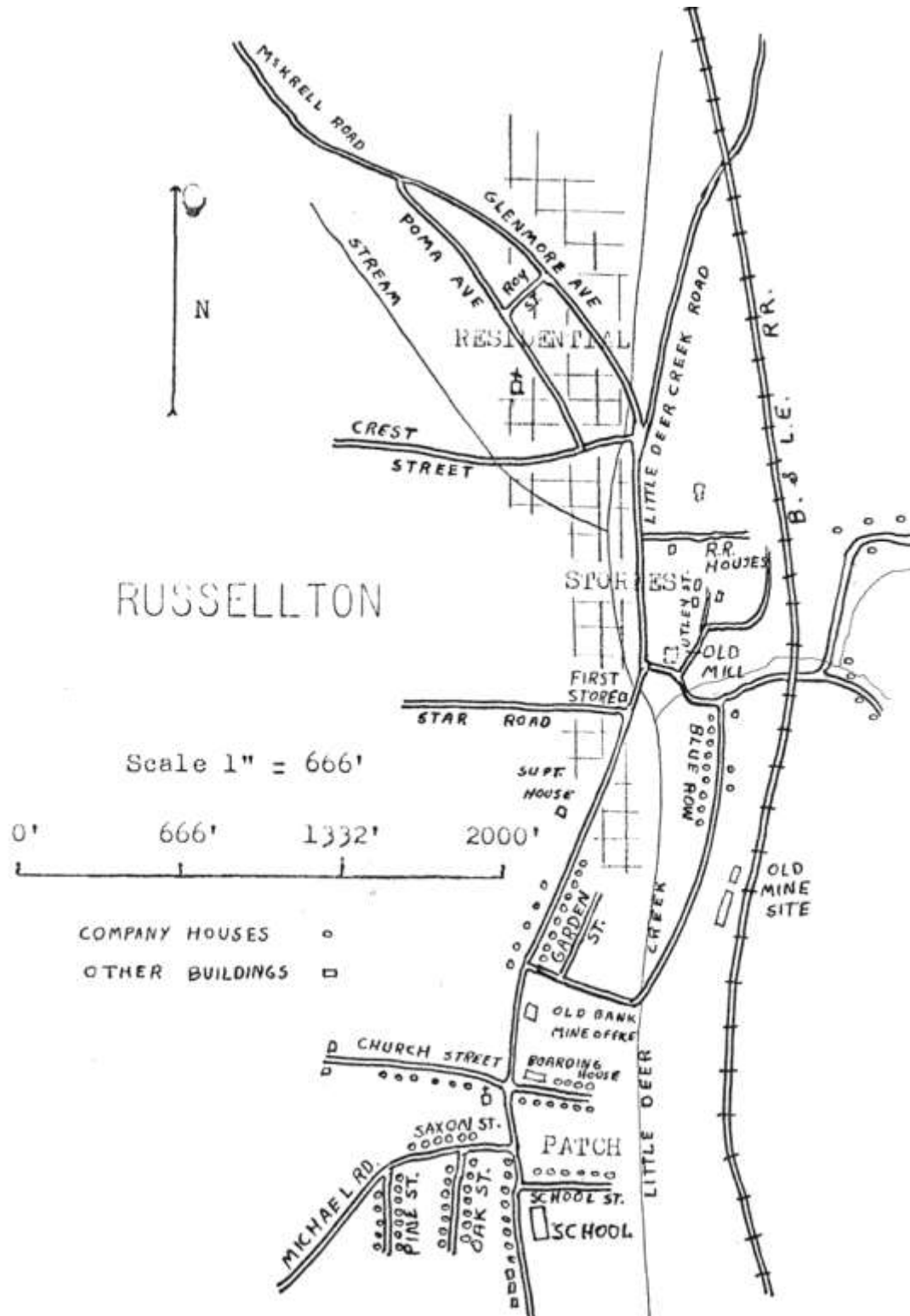
Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle

Picture 29 – Russellton #1 Main Street 1920's



This is Main Street with the company store looking North from about where the bank was the sign on the porch reads "US Post Office Russellton, Pa." (Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

Picture 30 – Map of Russellton



The period from 1916 to the early twenties was one of continued progress in the business district. Several stores changed ownership, several failed, and some new ones were started. This period saw two theaters operating with silent films, barber and beauty shops, hardware, several groceries, a new drug store (Miller Drug Later Palmers) and a number of houses added to the business district. The first theater was moved by rail from Numine, Pa. and reconstructed in the northern part of town. It had its own power plant and opened in 1920. It was used as a theater on certain nights when folding chairs were set up and on other evenings as a roller skating rink. There were possibly thirty residences in this part of Russellton by this time. They were owned and occupied by miners, railroaders, and businessmen.

One gasoline station had an early beginning beside the company store in the early twenties, it was operated by the chauffeur of the mine owner. Considering that in 1920 there were three autos in this town and little through traffic there was little need for more than one service station.

By this time (1920) electricity had come to Russellton. Unlike the other mining communities, no electricity was generated at the mine plant for the tenants. This was a late date for this service, keeping in mind its nearness to centers of population. It made life more enjoyable but had little influence on progress. It probably influenced the building of a modern theater in the late part of 1920.

The 1920 Decade

The early and middle part of this decade was a period of economic difficulty in most of the local coal mine's. During the First World War business had boomed. Now there was an oversupply and the government had imposed a price ceiling in 1921. The Bessemer Coal and Coke Company had by this time been sold to the Republic Steel Corporation and was completely captive, thus making it dependent upon prosperity in the steel industry. In the meantime a second shaft called Russellton No. 2 had opened with additional coal rights and a more efficient operating site, making the closing of the No. 1 mine an obvious fact. The closing took place in 1924 and the miner reported to the new shaft. He did not experience the economic hardship common to other mines. In the twenty years of its operation the No. 1 mine produced about eight million tons of coal.

The coming of the auto and better roads brought several service stations. A billiards parlor and a bowling alley opened for business. Another grocery store was established. This grocery was the only one of these businesses to operate for a long period of time. Several new houses were built each year. This construction was in the private development of Russellton north of the company town.

The two greatest social stories which could be written about Russellton in the 1920's would concern prohibition and the great coal strike of 1927. They are both part of the history of the town. The strike story will appear elsewhere in this book.

Trying to imagine what the commercial town of Russellton looked like in the early 1920's is difficult for a newcomer but I have tried to put together other people's remembrances. Geisys lived where Bochecks now live and had their livery stable just to the south along the road. The blacksmith shop was across the road beside what is now Sal's Styles Unlimited. The Griffith Theater was nearby on what is now an empty lot. The Lyric and Davis Theater to the north was used for skating and later became a union hall before burning down. The drug store went up about 1925. The Roccas had a barbershop where the liquor store now is and were known for their music. The remnants of the dam and millrace for Gray's mill could be seen where James Marsili now lives. The Catanese family had a fruit stand near the junction of McKrell Road. Several portable school buildings were placed near the large frame building. They were needed for the Russellton No. 2 children until the current unused No. 2 building was built about 1926. The Griffith house where the Claus family now resides had some stained glass in the windows, which can still be seen. Abe and Nathan Rutstein had a grocery and general store not far from the present dry cleaning plant. Farther north toward the school was the Dompe store along the road. There are probably many places left out of this description but these are a few which some remember. Local people did not always drive their Model "T's" to Russellton to buy supplies. Roads were often so bad that it was easier to walk or use the more dependable horse and buggy.

The 1930 Decade

The early years of the depression had the same effect upon Russellton that it had upon most other mining towns whose economy was geared to a single base. Mine work was not always steady. There was widespread unemployment, business failures, and some emigration back to Europe. In the town of Russellton this was a period of fires. Between 1929 and 1930 the business section of town was almost eliminated. In the fall of 1931 there were seven major fires. The majority of the buildings were eventually rebuilt, some as modern brick structures. Business starts, changes, and failures were common during this period. The bank closed in 1932 and, although it had been in good financial condition, never reopened. A State Liquor Store opened in December 1935 and has operated since in the same location. A real estate and insurance office opened in 1932. An auto repair shop opened in 1936 and has been in operation since then. A small grocery opened and later expanded into a large supermarket. A beauty shop opened in 1935 and remained in the same location for many years although under different management. Two taverns, a beverage distributor, and several clubs originated with the end of prohibition. Other enterprises which ended during this period included a bowling alley, fruit market, jewelry store, a dry cleaning place, and a local office for an out-of-town funeral home. In 1935 natural gas became available for home heating.

By 1940 Russellton was established as the only retail center of any size in West Deer and drew customers from other parts of the township. By this time there were about seventy houses in Russellton in addition to the company houses.

Picture 31 – Street scene Russellton 1930



Street scene in Russellton about 1930. Andrew Mass(mine) is on the left and to the right, Steve, Roger and Charles Catanese. The Long building is the large building in the center with the State Store and the Post Office in it. William Ganas' Esso Station is beyond it and on the extreme right is Tom Marsili's Gulf Station. Photo from Pete Catanese

Picture 32 – Main Street Russellton 1930



The Junik Gas Station and Central Garage, Main Street, Russellton about 1930 Photo from Melan Junik

Picture 33 – Russellton train Station



The Russellton train station in 1937. Bessemer and Lake Railroad photo

War and Post-War Russellton

Soon after our entry into the war, city water was brought to Russellton, narrowly escaping the steel rationing. Building had to end with the war but local residents were now working full-time, locally, and commuting to other jobs, and were accumulating the capital for building in later years. A hardware (store) was opened in 1942 and developed into a modern, well-stocked business. A poolroom and bowling alley opened and operated for a few years. The most important local change came in 1944 when Republic Steel sold all of its houses to those who lived in them. Company streets became township roads along with other changes. About ten more houses were built in Russellton in the post-war period. More people were working at places other than the mines and were no longer under the "company" influence. Other changes came too. A dry cleaning plant and an auto salvage yard were opened right after the war. After several tries by others, a local man took over a funeral home and was successful; this was followed by a floral shop. A few years later, in 1953, an appliance shop with repair service was added. A modern medical center was established in an old store building, but later moved out of the township. In 1955 a lumberyard opened, in 1956 a restaurant, in 1957 a studio. The hardware store moved into a new, larger building, the lumberyard expanded, and the drugstore enlarged to several times its former size. The dry cleaning plant opened retail outlets in other towns and enlarged its cleaning facilities. One change from the "old days" was evident. Many of the new enterprises had the owner living in a house somewhere else, not above or behind his business.

As Russellton moved through the sixties and seventies, the business district placed more emphasis on bringing in more trade to the area. Leonard Freedman, whose store on the main road had burned, built a new, modern building to house a bank, variety store, and supermarket in addition to a restaurant on the same property. After so many years of traveling to other areas, local people could do their banking in Russellton. The restaurant eventually converted to a savings and loan association, giving Russellton two banking institutions. The post office had been moved to the Long building, then the Travellini building and finally to its present site in 1974. A large lumberyard flourished for about ten years and burned in one of the largest fires in Russellton's history. A number of businesses and services were established in this period but all did not survive.

In the late seventies a large commercial building was built in the valley just south of town. The local supermarket moved to this location which also housed a new drug store while another grocery was established in the Freedman building. Soon afterward it was replaced by a chain supermarket. It was obvious that Russellton's growth in business was bringing in customers from farther away. Many of the older one-of-a-kind businesses were now multiple and competition was real. Russellton now had two grocery supermarkets, drug stores, auto parts stores, banking institutions, funeral homes, hardware and building suppliers, plus a growing number of other stores and services. This mining town had come a long way since 1910.

Picture 34 – Street scene Russellton 1955



Russellton street scene about 1955. To the right with the cream cone is Palmers Drug.

Picture 35 – Russellton Aerial view South end



This is a view of the mines "downtown". In the far right center is Russellton # 1 mine. Center is the Russellton Elementary "yellow brick school house" The commercial downtown is off the picture to the right.

Picture 36 – Giesy Blacksmith



The Giesy Blacksmith Shop was a West Deer Landmark for many years. It served the area when it was known as Gray's Mill before the name Russellton was given. This old picture from the Valley New Dispatch shows Mr. Giesy as he looked many years ago.

Picture 37 – Aurora Movie Theater



Many of our older citizens remember attending this theater when they were children. Valley New Dispatch photo.

Russellton No. 2

Russellton No. 2 is a former mining community of a hundred houses located on a high hill above the former Republic Steel Corporation mine of that name. Unlike some of West Deer's other mining towns it does not have any significant commercial or residential district next to it. In that respect it is dependent on the mother town of Russellton No. 1, almost a mile away. The Coal Company needed adjacent land for gob piles and none was available for private building.

This mining town has its beginning during the First World War. With the purchase of more coal lands and the need for a better shaft site, the Bessemer Coal and Coke Company made the decision to sink a shaft at the present location early in 1916. In June of that year construction of the shaft was started plus the engineering work for the community which was to be built near the mine. It was laid out on a steep hill above the mine and has a greater difference in elevation than any other mining village in this township. All the nearby valley locations were to be needed for the gob piles and, being unsuited for this purpose, this steep hill then became the most logical location for the town. The elevation ranges from 920 feet to 1140 feet, leaving a difference of 220 feet. In 1917 the factor of slope in company streets was of little concern when very few miners owned cars and didn't need them to get to work. Currently, this slope requires extra attention in winter when snow and ice are present.

In 1917 a construction firm began the building of the fifty-seven double houses and thirty singles which were to house mine officials and miners. Since the object of this new shaft was to connect and operate with the underground workings of the No. 1 mine, the same men could be sent to either opening. In fact, it was not until several years later when the mine tunnels were connected that all the houses became occupied and this mine operated at capacity.

In March of 1917 the first coal was hoisted from this shaft and it became a commercial mine. With the basic houses completed and the mine operating, the ownership of the Bessemer Coal and Coke Company passed to the Republic Steel Corporation on January 1, 1918 and was under its management until it was sold again to the LTV Steel Corporation in the early 1980's.

The structure of No. 2 as a mining community had several variations from the typical. Aside from a company store it depended on the No. 1 town for almost all the company and commercial services.

By 1918 a small commercial core had become established in Russellton No. 1. The company doctor, bank, other administrative units, and mine offices were centered there also. Therefore the function of No. 2 was not complete in itself from the beginning.

Difference in housing was not as expressive as in the Curtisville communities. In Russellton No. 2 there was only one basic difference in housing. Single houses with basements were built along the main Company Street from the bottom of the hill to a point about halfway to the top. Double houses without basements were built along side streets toward the top of the hill. All were wired for electricity but none had running water. All had to be heated by heating stoves. Three of the first single houses had an extra room for a future bathroom. The single houses starting at the bottom of the hill were occupied by supervisory personnel and all the rest by miners. All families had four rooms.

Water was supplied by wells located at convenient points along the Company Street. However, in 1923 a hydrant system was put in which carried unfiltered mine water for fire protection and washing. Mine water was pumped to two reservoirs above town and flowed by gravity to all points. A year later a filtration plant was put in so that this water was clean enough for drinking and cooking purposes. When the hydrant system was installed the company furnished pipe to the miners so that they could pipe the water into their homes. Thus, by 1924 every house in No. 2 had running water. Sewers drained wash water from the single houses and later included all.

Every house had been wired for electricity and each family paid a flat rate for this utility. This current was purchased by the mining company from a commercial producer and resold to their tenants.

All heating was done by coal burning heating stoves. Years later natural gas lines were run to a few of the single houses for heating water and cooking only.

The mine superintendent's house was built close to the mineshaft for his convenience and so that he would be very close to all operations. The company store was built along the main highway at the foot of the Company Street. Thus another compensation for being in management was not having to carry groceries and supplies all the way up the hill.

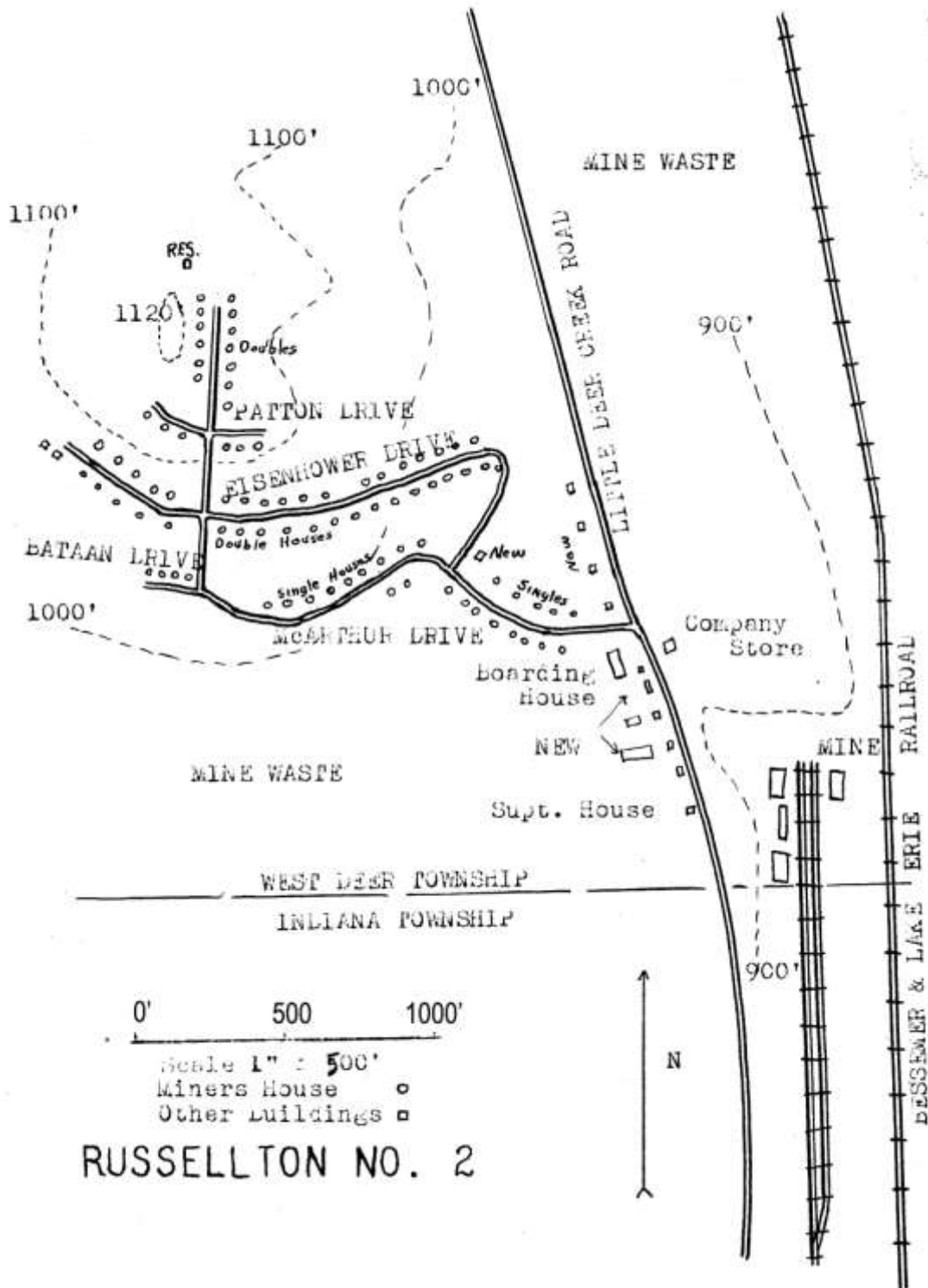
A large boarding house was built in 1917 with the rest of the town but was not used as such until 1924 when the town was just becoming fully occupied. Between 1917 and 1924 the superintendent lived in the boarding house and the assistant in the "Super's" house. When underground operations were connected in 1924, operations were nearly normal and housing was used for the purpose for which it was intended. The mine office and boarding house were put into operation in the No. 2 location and the function as a mining town became complete except for a few business and commercial services, which were never to leave the No. 1 town.

In 1917 two pre-fabricated one-room schools were built to accommodate the growing number of children. As the houses became occupied these were not enough. In 1925 a modern twelve-room elementary school was built at the southern edge of the No. 1 town within walking distance for the children of either town. The pre-fab schools were not converted to housing but sold to a farmer and moved away to become poultry houses. The school buildings had been used at an early date for union meetings until the Union hall was completed south of town in the next township.

No church was ever built in No. 2. At one time some services were held in the Union Hall but other than that there were no permanent religious organizations. The one Protestant and one Catholic Church in Russellton No. 1 were ample to meet the religious needs of this community.

This has described the organizational make-up of the original community. A review of the topographical setting would aid in a more complete understanding of this operation. The mine plant was situated in a narrow valley through which ran a hard-surfaced road. Superintendent's house, company store, and boarding house faced this road. From the company store a street ran up a steep hill branching out in several places. The single houses were on each side of the street along its lower half. The doubles were at the top of the hill. The map included here, shows the town layout.

Picture 38 – Map of Russellton No. 2



Picture 39 – Russellton #2 line January 1949



*Republic Steel Mine, Russellton #2 - January 1949 (Photo from Dan Angeloni Russ Mongrmory
(Tavern outside or picture to the right Coke sign at north entry)*

The coal strike of 1927 had the same basic effects on Russellton No. 2 as it had on the other mining towns. Several barracks were built nearby on rented land and the town was cleared of its tenants until the strike terminated. During this strike the Coal and Iron Police were housed in the boarding house.

In 1928 when operations were resumed the houses again were occupied and the activity of a normal mining town returned.

There were no significant housing developments in No. 2 from the time of its founding until 1944. A few houses had been built south of town in the next township but none in the immediate vicinity. All of the immediate land was held by the Coal Company and the only other land between No. 2 and No. 1 was a farm, which could not be purchased. At one time an attempt was made by the company to purchase part of this land for the expanding gob pile.

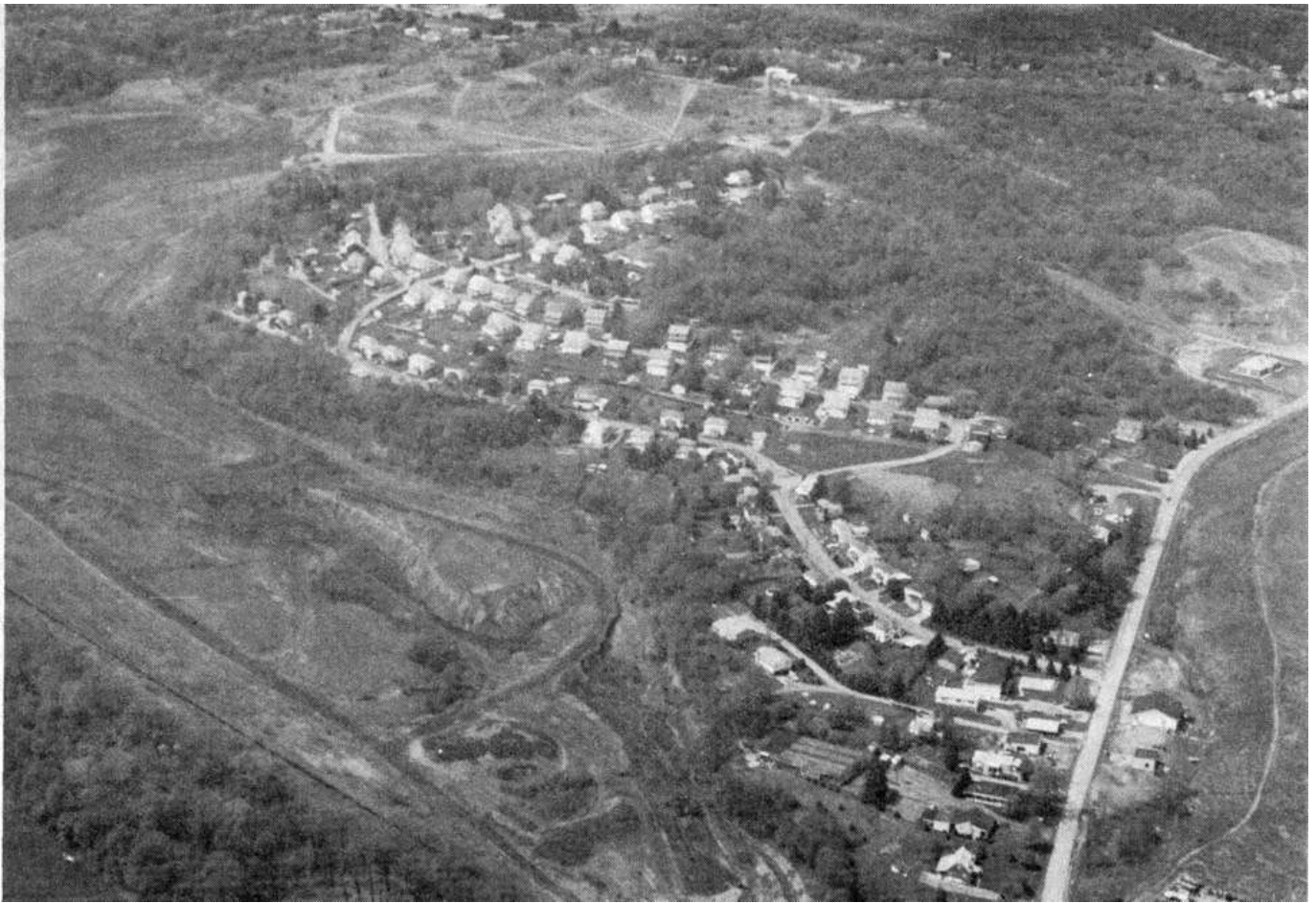
In 1944 the majority of the houses were sold to their occupants. At this time several changes took place. The old waterlines were sold to a water company, which began supplying this utility from a better source at a flat rate per tap. Electricity was purchased directly from the utility company. The former company streets became public roads and each new owner began paying real estate taxes. small amount of real estate frontage along the highway was purchased by a mine official and resold as building lots. Since that time several houses have been built, mostly by former miners. This has been the only expansion in housing in No. 2 in forty years.

Several commercial additions were made. A small grocery was started in 1944, a beverage distributor shortly afterward, and a toyshop in 1948. The latter developed into a cabinet shop specializing in kitchen work and has grown in size and reputation. A tire retreading shop also started. A company-owned gasoline station was modernized and leased to private management. Not all of these enterprises survived.

The boarding house was sold and converted into several apartments. Six of the single houses were retained by the company but were sold at a later date.

The gob piles were large but built scientifically to prevent their burning. Those along the highway have been a factor in the prohibition of commercial growth there.

In the 1950's Republic Steel purchased additional coal rights and an old shaft in the Superior area. The shaft was improved, hoists and outside plant built, and the mine put into operation. All coal was then removed from this site rather than at No. 2. A large coal washing plant had been built at No. 2 and the coal from this new mine taken there for cleaning before it was shipped out.



Russellton #2 mine is off the picture but would be lower right. The larger building on the right side of the road is the company store, and across the street is the old boarding house. Gone is the old boney dump that was behind the company store.

This operation worked rather steadily until the summer of 1962 when it shut down for about nine months. Then after a brief period of operation it shut down again for a similar period. Since this mining operation depended on how well the steel industry was doing it had a somewhat uncertain future. Work through the sixties and the seventies was more or less steady. In the early 1980's Republic Steel sold their holdings in West Deer to the LTV Steel Corporation. The mine was shut down in October 1982, idling about 170 miners. About twenty men remained at the cleaning plant, which processed coal from the Newfield mine owned by the same company. When that mine went on strike in October 1984 because of no contract, the cleaning plant, with no coal to clean, had to shut down, leaving West Deer with no operating mines or employed miners producing coal within the township. In 1946 it was estimated that over 1200 men worked in the mines of West Deer Township. Now there were none.

Curtisville No. 1 and No. 2 (Benjamin - Francis)

Curtisville today shows many signs that it was once a company-mining town. A few buildings are gone and a few new houses have been built, the streets have been paved and underground water lines, sewers, and gas lines have been installed, but otherwise the rows of houses are still quite evident. Aside from these changes Curtisville is still almost a classic example, in physical layout, of an early twentieth century mining town.

The West Deer area became coal conscious around the turn of the century. The drilling of gas wells had revealed the presence of a thick seam of high-grade coal. The exploitation of this resource presented a challenge to a number of investors. One of these, a Mrs. Louella Eisler of Butler, Pennsylvania, had taken options on coal rights on about 6500 acres in the central part of the township. In 1908 these options were purchased by the Michigan Alkali Company for an average price of fifty dollars per acre. In early 1909 its agents came to this area and began preparations for the opening of two mines. More coal lands were purchased, bringing the total to about 8000 acres.

After numerous drilling tests the sites were selected for the first two mines. Since most of the original purchases provided clauses for land options, the sites could be located and the land purchased without difficulty.

Several factors governed the location of the shaft sites. Since the coal sloped upward to the north and varied from east to west, low points were chosen so that loaded coal cars could be drifted to each shaft's bottom. Such sites were located generally so

that each shaft would remove about 2000 acres of coal. Each would also be located where the shaft would not be too deep, a shallow shaft requiring much less time for raising and dumping coal than a deep shaft. Lastly, and very importantly, was the proximity of such sites to the existing railroad lines in the area. These mines would be shipping huge tonnage of coal and would require spur lines and small shifting yards.

Thus the shaft sites were determined after considerable research and planning. Since these sites were the primary consideration, the community, which would take form, resulted from secondary planning on such land that would be purchased near the mine plant.

It must be understood that such villages were planned as company towns and were designed for the efficient operation of the mine. They were not planned as model communities but as private towns built on private property and including only such streets, utilities, and conveniences that were judged to be necessary and economical at the time.

Curtisville No. 1 was to be the first and largest of the Ford Communities. As such it was to contain certain buildings and facilities not to be found in the other mining towns. The majority of these buildings were dwellings or offices for special personnel who were to provide certain services for all the Ford communities. These would include medical, police, fire protection, house maintenance, and others.

Contracting firms were hired to sink the mine shafts and built the first group of company houses. Later, company carpenters would complete the town, but first it would be necessary to have a number of houses constructed so that workers could be moved in.

This Curtisville mine, named the Benjamin Mine by Ford Collieries, had a valley location. Only a short spur was necessary to join the main railroad. The mine plant itself was placed in the valley bottom, dividing the lands owned by the company. The major portion of the town was to be built on a triangular-shaped hillside between the mine and the main railroad. The administrative center was at the apex of this triangle. It overlooked the mine valley and was near the railroad, the only good transportation around.

The only utilities necessary in an early mining town were streets good enough for a wagon road and water. Such streets were the bare earth, later to be covered with slate or gravel. Water was supplied from a number of wells which finally totaled almost a hundred and which later had to be supplemented by a system of hydrants from central storage tanks. Houses in Curtisville were wired for electricity, which was produced at the mine plant. In this respect they were more modern than local farmhouses.

The administrative section called "bosstown" by some miners, contained two of the most important buildings in the company town, yet two of the first to disappear from the town scene after their use was no longer needed. Across from these buildings were the general manager's house, the mine superintendent's house, and the store manager's house. These supervisors lived right across the street from their work.

The residence of the mine official was usually larger than that of the miner. It contained plumbing and was certainly modern for 1909. Water was piped in from a central source and a large septic tank sewage system was constructed. None of these conveniences was installed in the miner's house. Although all heat was originally from fireplaces, furnaces were later put in the officials' houses. The standard of living in 1909 would not have classified any house in Curtisville as substandard for a rural area. Other mine officials to have modern housing included the foreman and his assistants, the engineer, office men, and company doctor. The tatter's house was large enough for his office.

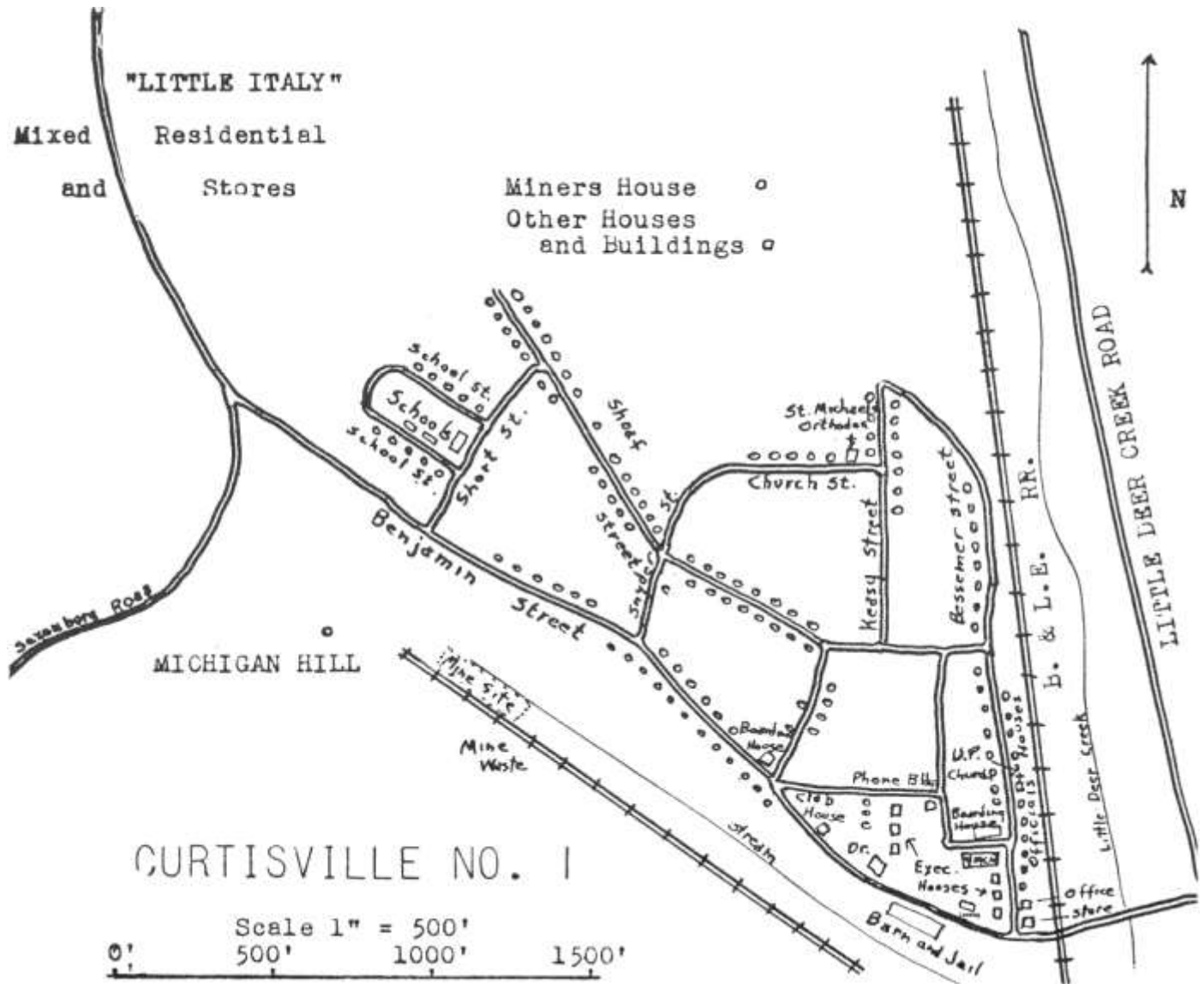
Most mining towns contained a large boarding house where a number of single miners lived. These were large frame structures capable of rooming from twenty-five to forty men. In Curtisville, a second boarding house built to handle non-English speaking men. Today these buildings have been converted to apartments.

The office boarding house or "clubhouse" as it was called was constructed to house the male office workers and any single mine officials. It was also used to house visiting company officials. This building had better plumbing and heating facilities and did not put as many men in one room.

Curtisville had a combination barn and company jail. Horses and mules were needed for dray work outside the mine and a few company riding horses provided the company doctor and high officials with transportation. Part of the barn was partitioned off and cells built to accommodate those employees who drank or fought too much. The tenant was locked up for a day or two and sent back to work without any fanfare. Such details were the duty of the company police.

It must be remembered that this entire town was company property, including all the streets. Farmers were permitted to deliver produce on company streets but those who were purveyors of liquid spirits were not. These deliveries were made to the nearest public road, from which the purchaser carried his refreshment to his house.

Picture 41 – Map of Curtisville No. 1



Provision was made in the boarding house for a barbershop, although it was later moved to the Y.M.C.A. This Y.M.C.A. building was built in 1920 by the Coal Company and operated as an industrial unit. When membership dropped, it was operated by the company as a community recreation center. Later, ownership went to the American Legion, then to a private owner who operated it as a concrete vault plant. Nothing remains today.

About the same time as the "Y" was built, a battery of garages was constructed and rented to those who had automobiles. During this same period a firehouse was built to house a company-owned engine. This engine answered call in the three Ford communities.

About 260 houses were built for the miner and company officials. They were built in an assortment of sizes, shapes, and qualities. The typical miner's house had a foundation but no basement, four rooms, each with a fireplace and a path to the outbuildings in the back yard. Each house was wired for electricity from the mine plant. Wells were located either at the sides of streets or in backyards. Later, hydrants supplemented poor wells. A total of ninety-eight wells were drilled and fifteen hydrants used to insure sufficient water.

Of the total houses, about fifty were pre-cut and were set on posts instead of foundations. These were built during the First World War when additional mine production was needed. They had only two or three rooms and were not designed to be permanent.

Other construction, which was made with the birth of this town, included a four-room schoolhouse, a railroad station and stationmaster's house, two churches, and a parish house. The school facilities were later expanded to include three two-room pre-fabricated buildings. The church facilities are the only ones which remain and are in use today.

In 1924 a series of operational setbacks caused the closing of the No. 1 mine. A number of rock faults among other reasons caused the removal of coal from this mine to be uneconomical. The remaining coal was divided between the No. 2 and No. 3 mines. Some miners were transferred to other mines while many were left unemployed in company houses from which they

had to move. As a result the cheaply constructed temporary houses on Michigan Hill were torn down after about eight years of use. One lone house was left for a blinded miner and for a number of years marked the location of Michigan Hill. Seven or eight houses in town were later torn down and about the same number burned.

The first post office was in the company store but was later moved to the basement of the boarding house. In 1980 it was moved to "Little Italy."

Of the original 257 houses in this community about 200 remain today. Several new houses have been built since Curtisville became a public town.

In 1947 the dwellings were sold, mostly to those who lived in them. This began the rebirth of Curtisville. Basements, bathrooms, kitchen outfitted, paint, shingles, and new roofs began showing. Much effort was made to make one house look slightly different from the one next door. The utilities of water, gas, and, much more recently, sewage, made their way into Curtisville. Although it still retains the physical appearance of a mining town, many of the houses provide just as comfortable homes as those in a modern housing development.

Picture 42 – Aerial of Curtisville No. 1



Looking Westerly, Curtisville #1 (Benjamin) Mine would have been on the far left of the picture. In the lower left just west of the railroad is where the company store was. On the south side of the road is where the old jail was. In the center is the baseball field.

Picture 43 – Close view of Curtisville No. 1 mine entry



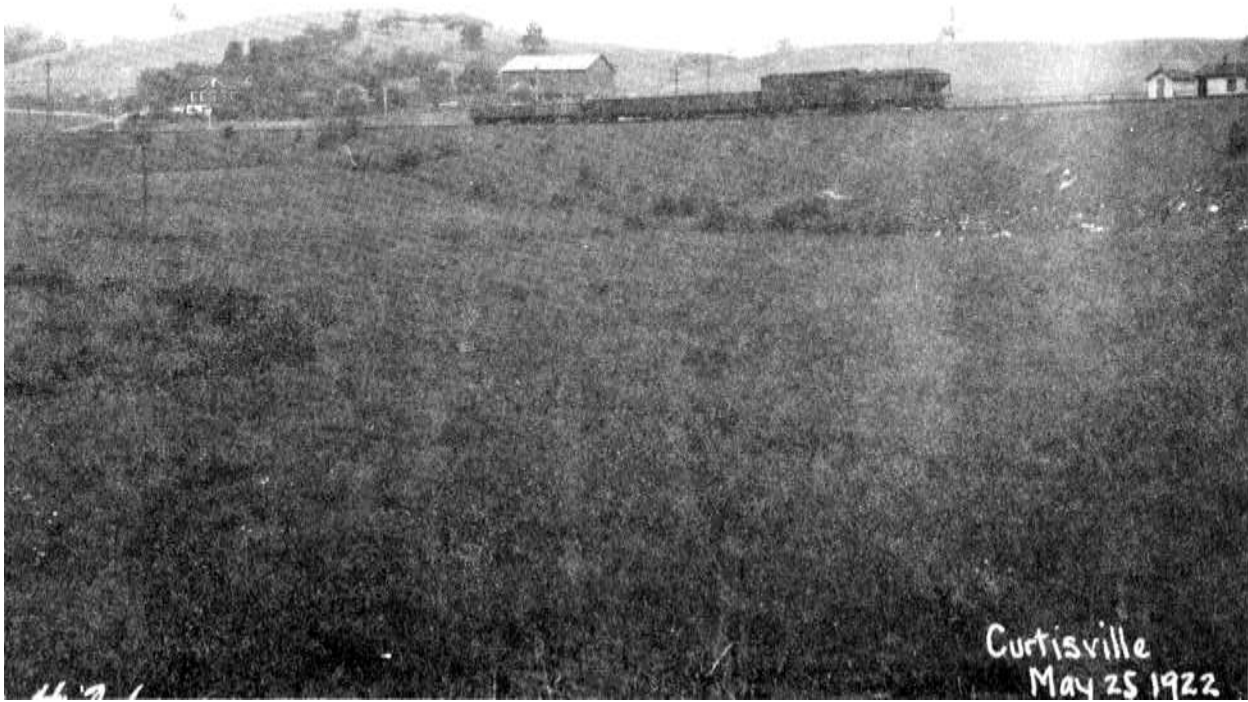
*Workers posed at the Benjamin Mine. Len Schwab is under the X. Ernest J. Lewetag "Dutch" second from left in white shirt.
Photo from Dave Mathewson*

Picture 44 – Large view of Curtisville No. 1 mine



Ford Collieries No. Mine (Benjamin). Curtisville, Pa.

Picture 45 – Entry to Curtisville No. 1 about 1922 #1

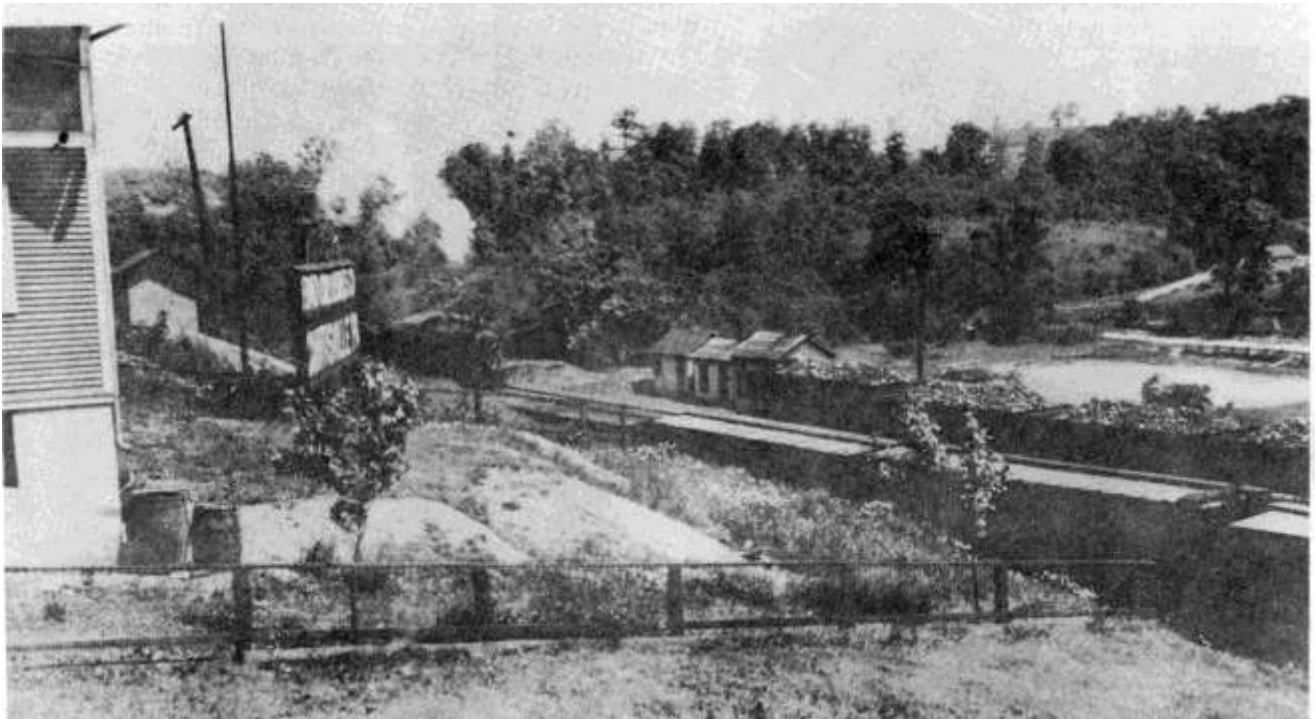


Picture 46 – Entry to Curtisville No. 1 about 1922 #2



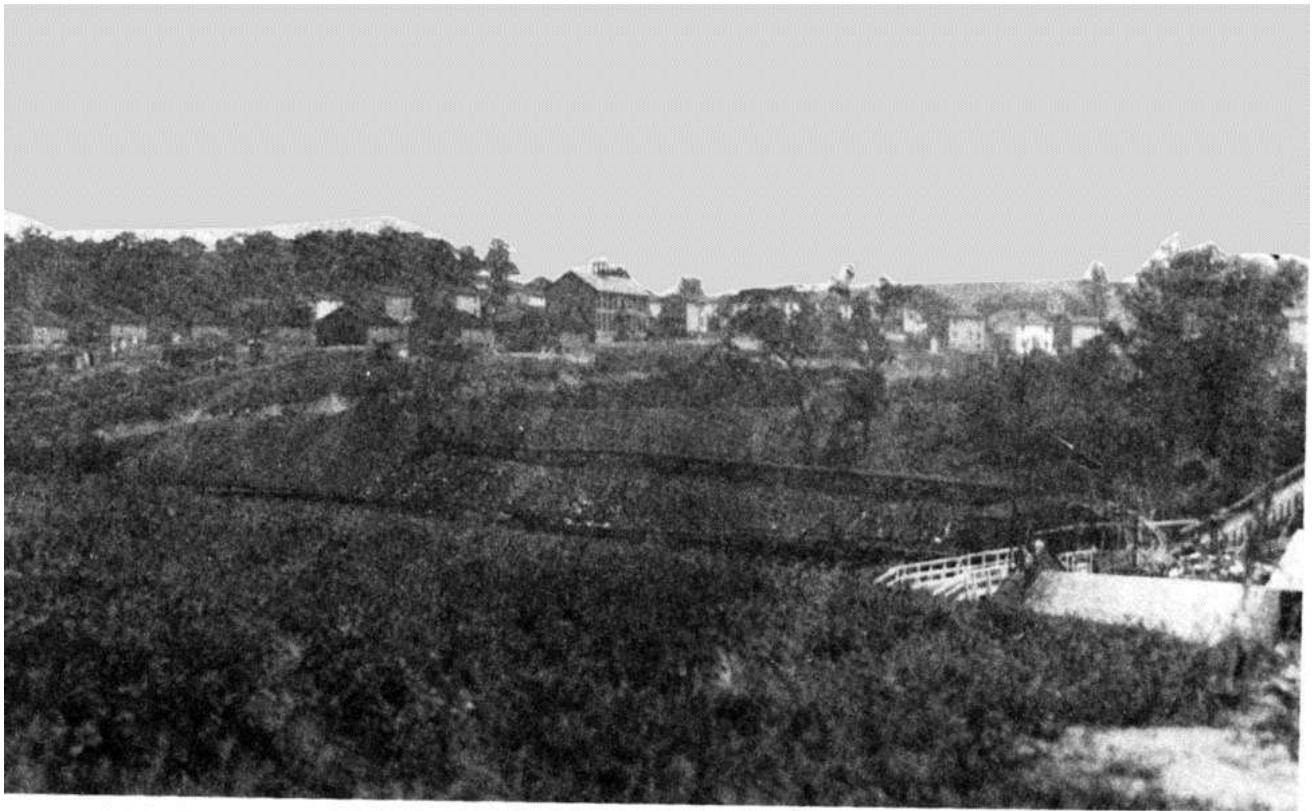
These two photos, both taken in 1922 from almost the same spot where Benjamin Street meets the Little Deer Creek Road, show what Curtisville looked like from there and the peaceful little valley below with the winding stream. The Monnier farm is in the distance across the tracks. Elio Tabbachi, whom many of us know as the barber at Curtisville No. 2, used to trap muskrats along this stream about the time this picture was taken. Both photos courtesy of the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad

Picture 47 – Enter into Curtisville No. 1 Looking to Ball Field



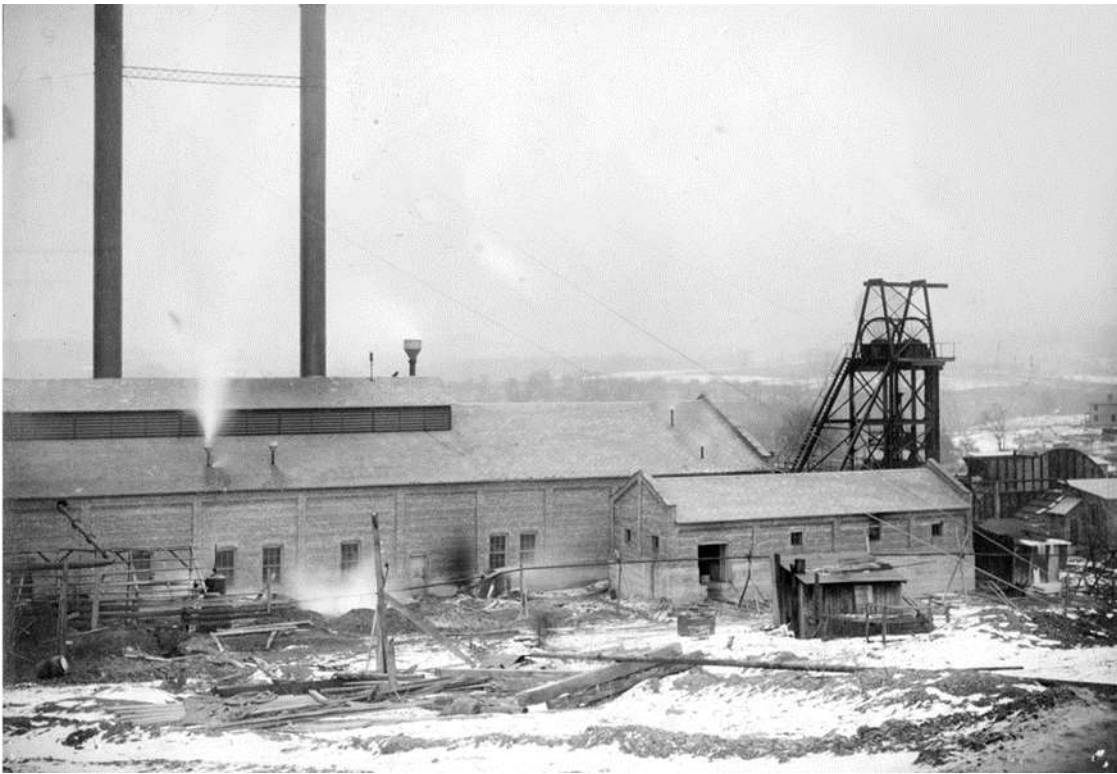
Curtisville ball field in 1920. Behind the bleachers is Little Deer Creek Road. Photo from Mary Leggens

Picture 48 – Curtisville looking from over mine

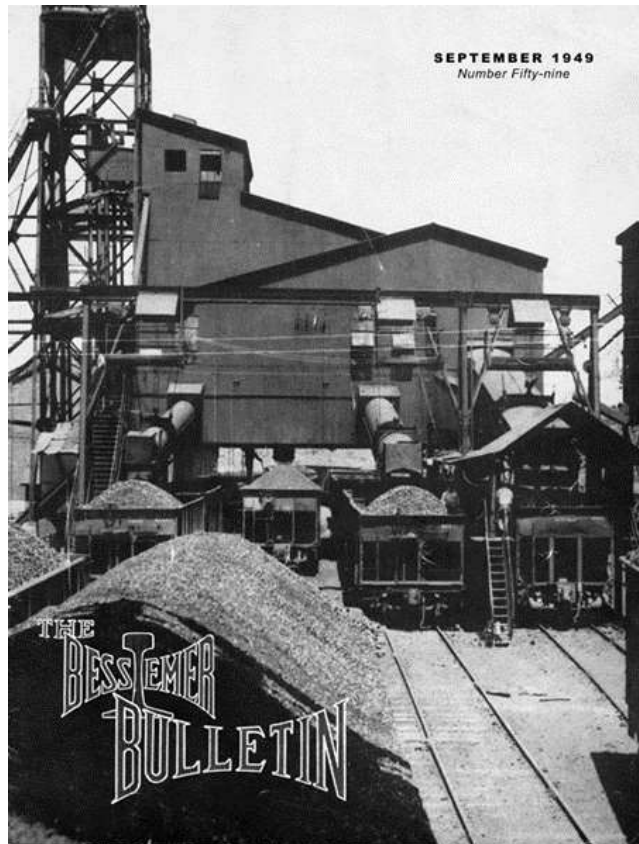


The Curtisville school in the center of the picture. Part of the mine is on the lower right. Photo from Mary Leggens

Picture 49 – Curtisville #1 " Benjamin Mine."

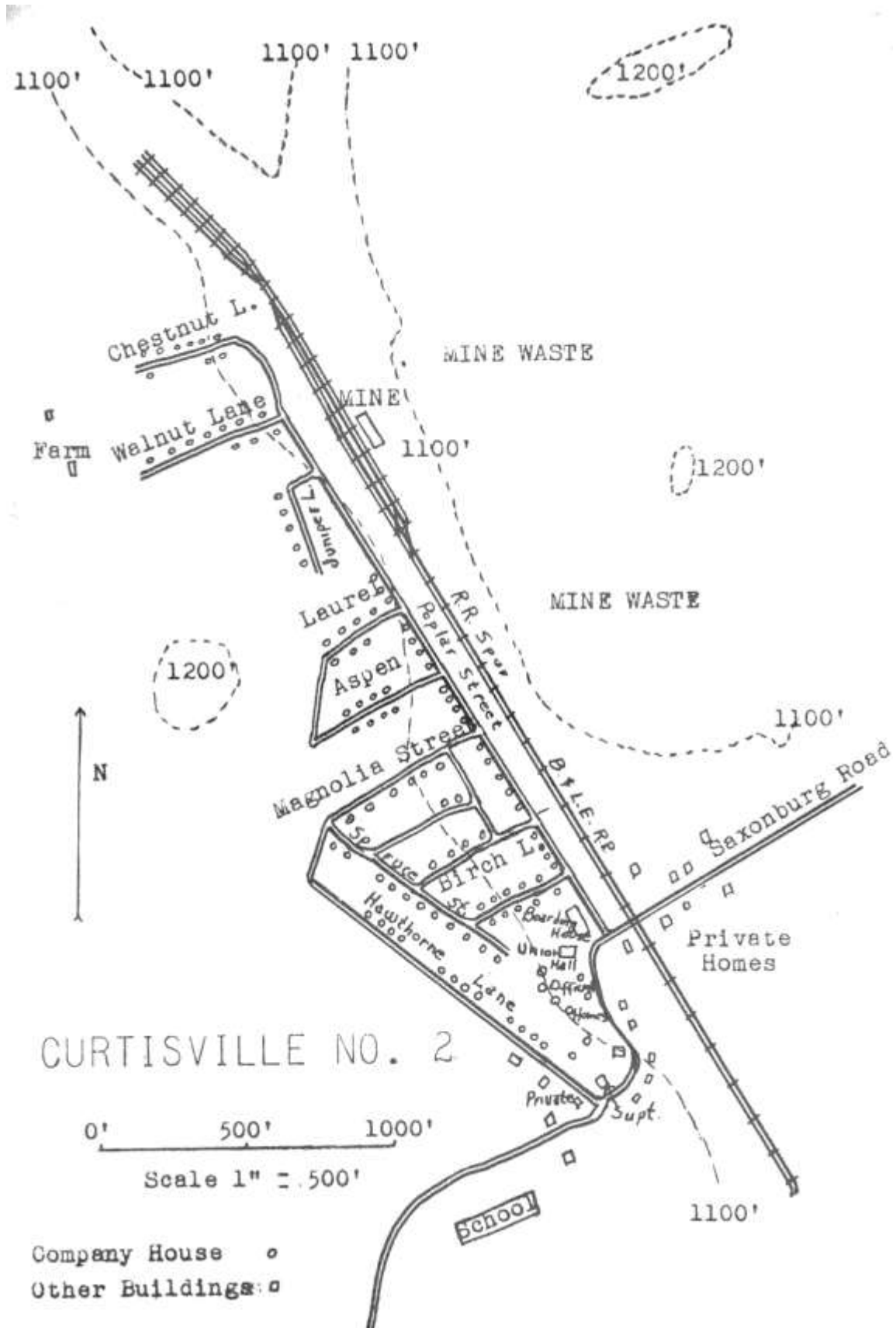


Picture 50 – Curtisville #1 " Benjamin Mine." 1949



When things are going right, the Bulletin's cover is started a month or so in advance, which happened to match these fine looking cars of "black gold" being loaded at Francis Mine near Curtisville against some stuffy, hot, July weather. But now it's Fall and time to start "coaling up" the cover picture was made by Harry L. Bear an employee of the Ford Collieries Company, which company owns and operates the Francis Mine and the Berry Mine in Bairdford.

Picture 51 – Map of Curtisville No. 2



Picture 52 – Arial of Curtisville No. 2



Picture 53 – The man-entry at the Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) about 1920

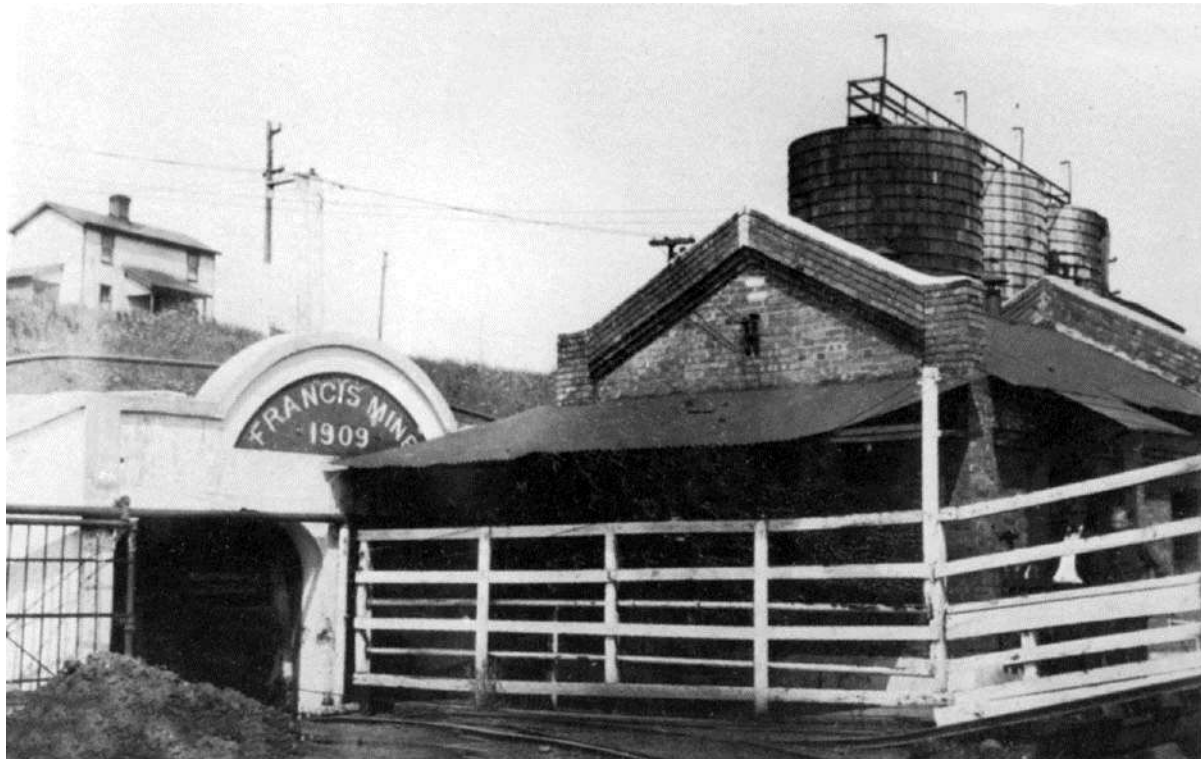


Photo by from Mary Leggens

In 1916 a much larger company store was built facing the public road and the older one was converted into a church. At this time the number of miners' houses was almost one hundred. Seven modern houses were built for mine officials on newly acquired land. The miners' union had also purchased some land and built a union hall.

Picture 54 – Curtisville #2 "Francis Mine" early man entry



*Early entrance at Curtisville #2 mine
Houses L to R Parsko - Selepa - Blaine*

Picture 55 – Curtisville #2 Ford Collieries "Francis Mine" in 1951



Many of these houses had partial basements built for structural reasons because of the steep hillside. They were also built in a variety of sizes and shapes. By 1918 this naming town was complete. It had its own boarding house and company store but all other services and facilities were drawn from the main Curtisville No. 1.

With the building of this town a two-room portable school was set up and operated until 1950, when it was closed as substandard. A new twelve-room elementary school was built between the two Curtisville's in 1954.

As in most other mining towns some private property became available at the edge of town where individuals could build their own homes or open a store, tavern, or other business. When the miners' union became strong and the company hold upon the miners' buying was lessened, private stores could offer competition to the company store.

The No. 1 mine did not remove as much coal as the other mines and therefore had a smaller gob pile. It was in the valley and not the eyesore, which the No. 2 gob pile became. However, most of this No. 2 gob would be removed later since its carbon content was high enough to be mixed with other coal and used in modern boilers.

This has been a brief overview of the history of the Curtisville communities. The reader can supplement the modern history and bring it up to date.

Much of this information was obtained from the last general manager of Ford Collieries, Mr. Calvin Pollock, and from several other former mine officials and senior citizens of Curtisville in the 1957 era. Much of this work was part of my Masters Thesis written in 1958. (JG)

Bairdford (Berry - Curtisville No. 3)

Bairdford is a former mining community of about 175 houses of which about 130 were former company houses. This mining town, sometimes referred to as No. 3, was an outgrowth of the Ford Collieries expansion of the two other Curtisvilles and had been planned from the beginning of their operations as their No. 3 mine.

Prior to 1914 the area was occupied by two farms. One lone building, a Methodist church, was the only other feature on the landscape. A dirt road passed the church, with lanes going in to the farmsteads. After seventy years the church remains much as it was, with steeple and vestibule added.

The development pattern began the same as for many of the other mining towns. The actual building of the town began in 1914 when company carpenters began building the houses and a construction firm began sinking the mineshaft. Temporary railroad tracks had been placed for light duty use in bringing in lumber and other supplies. Later the railroad crews built a permanent track to the mine site

The superintendent's house was built on the hillside overlooking the mine plant. It was a frame house of good construction, including modern plumbing, a feature not to be found in any other house built here at this time. All construction work was timed so that when the mine was ready to begin production a sufficient number of houses were completed to house the superintendent, section foreman, other "bosses", and a number of miners. A large boarding house and company store were included as necessary buildings.

When operations began in 1915, the planned town had taken form. The mine plant and railroad spur were completed. In addition to the "super's" house, six houses had been completed on the main street for the various foreman. These dwellings had seven rooms but no plumbing, each house having its own well, a utility which was shared in the miners' houses.

The typical miner's house was built in four and five room sizes. In most instances they were placed rather close together in straight rows, each looking like the house next door and giving a typical "patch" appearance. The necessary small buildings in the backyard were likewise in rows. Company policy was to have one well and pump for every three houses, the well located on the side of the street for easy access. In the event that these wells did not yield enough water for several families, it was necessary to drill more so that some of the worker's houses had their own wells.

The company store and boarding house were similar to those in other mining towns. In the beginning there was no mine office or doctor's office since the ones at Curtisville were used. A doctor's office did come later.

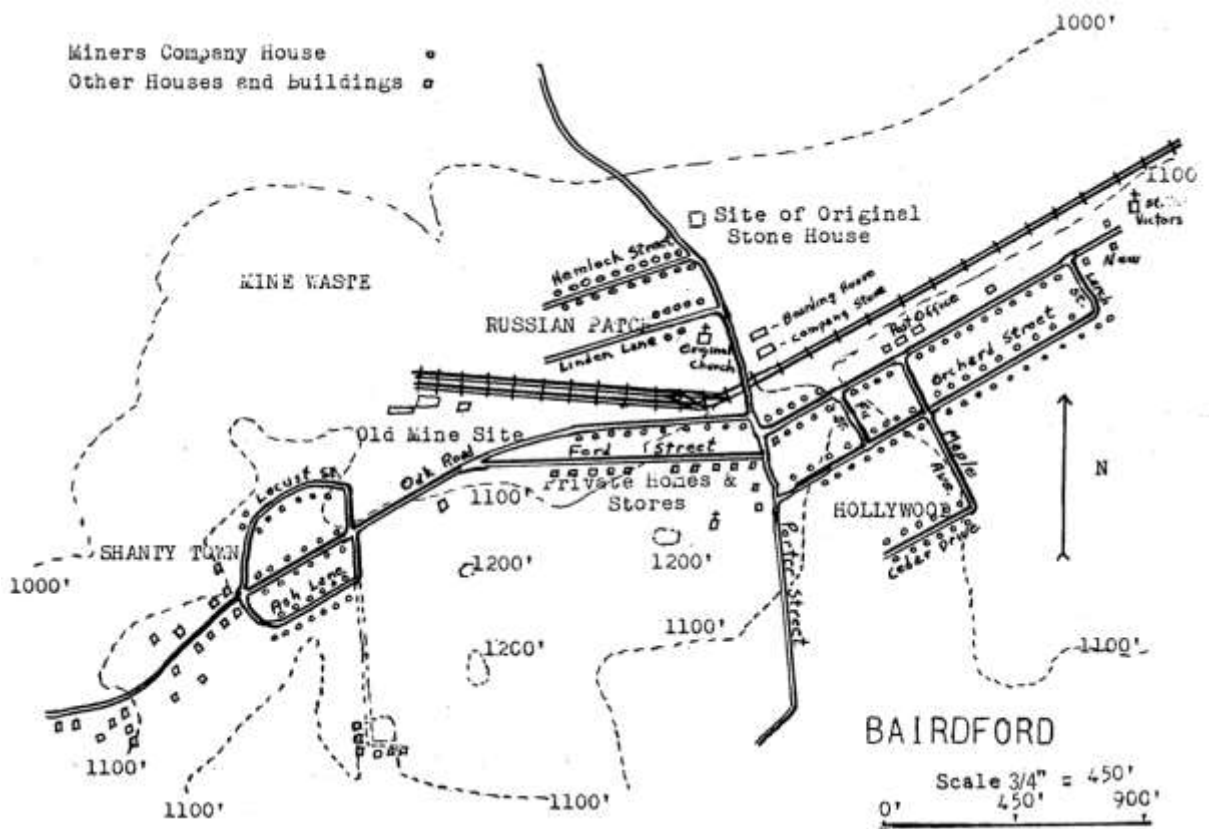
Within the several years following the opening of the mine more houses were added. The "Russian" patch contained twenty-six. "Hollywood," so named because the increasing number of Anglo-Americans desired a higher-class name for their section, boasted twelve houses. "Shantytown," somewhat removed from the nucleus and containing thirty-six small pre-fabricated houses, became part of the Bairdford community. This brought the total to one hundred and thirty-three houses, completing the housing of Bairdford.

In keeping with this development, the local railroad added a self-powered passenger car making two trips daily to the main line near Curtisville No. 1, where it met trains running toward Pittsburgh. Since the Bairdford site was not easily accessible to any paved road, this was the primary link to the "city." When hard-surfaced roads were built later, this train was discontinued. Ironically, the local people also used the tracks for a path out to the Saxonburg Road where they could board a bus for Sharpsburg, thence to Pittsburgh by streetcar. Thus, before hard-surfaced roads came to Bairdford this track served a double purpose.

A doctor's office was built for the company doctor from Curtisville No. 1 to use when in Bairdford. Provisions were made for a post office although it has been moved several times before arriving at its present site. Many remember the sign that was on it for years: "Bairdford, Elevation 1100'."

An eight-room frame school was built in 1915 to handle the large amount of children who had moved there so quickly. A Roman Catholic Church was built on the hill in 1916. The existing Methodist church served Protestant needs.

Picture 56 – Map of Bairdford



Picture 57 – Aerial view of Bairdford



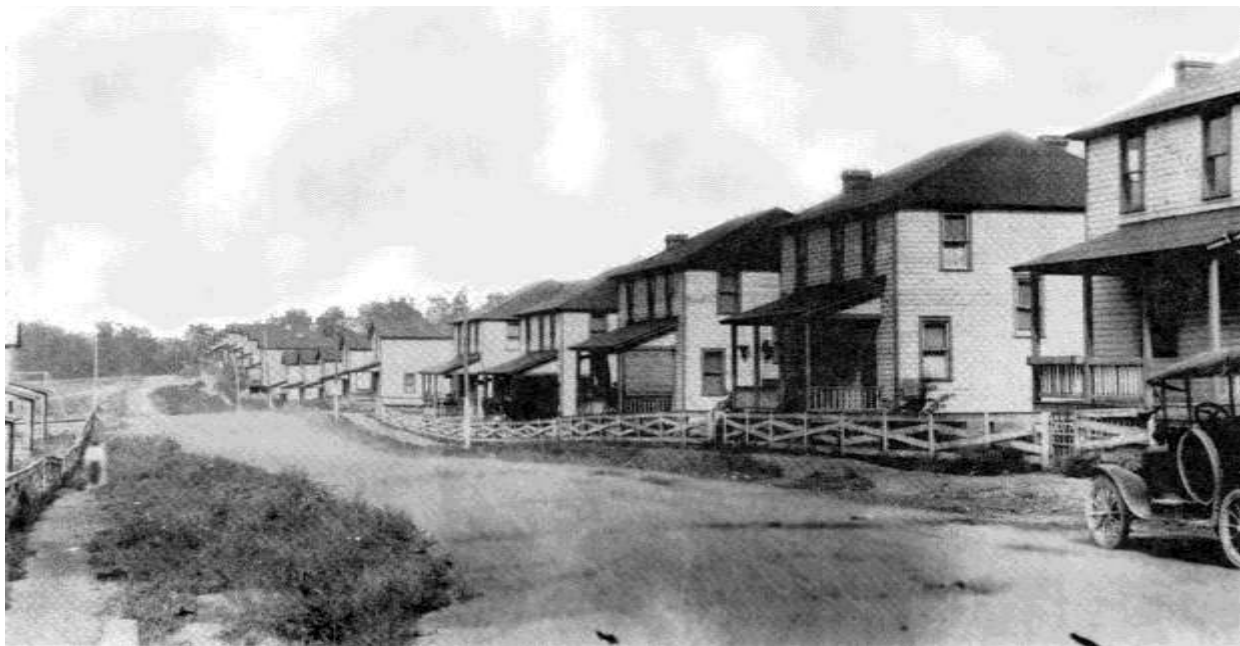
Bairdford from the air. The mine Curtsville #3 (Berry) mine would have been off the picture to the left. The ball field in the park is on the lower right.

Picture 58 – Aerial view of Bairdford "Shantytown"



This part of Bairdford was once call "Shantytown"

Picture 59 – Bairdford Main Street in 1920



This is what Main Street in Bairdford looked like about 1920. It was not a public road but a private company street. Photo from Mary Leggens

Picture 60 – Bairdford Superintendent's House 1920



The mine superintendent's house in Bairdford about 1920. Photo from Mary Leggens.

Picture 61 – Bairdford Orchard Street 1940 with snow



Looking down Orchard Street in Bairdford about 1940. The original St. Victor Church is on the hill.

Picture 62 – Bairdford Company Store



The Company Store building in Bairdford about 1955. Photo by John Graff

Picture 63 – Bairdford Orchard Street 1955



Orchard Street in Bairdford about 1955. Photo by John Graff

In the late 1920's a great strike was in effect, which had great temporary influence but little permanent change on the town. Strikers were ordered out of their houses and had to move into barracks provided by their union. After the power of the

union was broken the miners moved back and continued working, but at lower wages. During the strike the horses of the "Coal and Iron" police were stabled in a building in the center of town which was later converted to the doctor's office and a drug store. Later yet it became the post office and confectionery, at that time being the "social center" of Bairdford. Today it serves only as the post office and is not quite large enough for that purpose.

Bairdford never developed a commercial core. There have been, at one time or another, two insurance offices, two taverns, several grocery stores, a variety store, a garage, a dance studio, and a confectionery.

It must be remembered that Bairdford is seventy years old. Two generations have passed since the original town was built. Some of these two generations have wished to remain in the area and have built homes on the fringes where land could be purchased. At least forty houses have been built for this reason.

Probably the greatest action of permanent significance occurred in 1947 when the company houses were sold. The families living in the mining houses were presented with the choice of buying their house or having someone else buy it. As a result most of the residents purchased the house in which they were living. The company streets were accepted by the township and became public roads. The new homeowners immediately began improvements on their homes. Both interiors and exteriors began to change. Kitchens, bathrooms, basements, walls, carpeting, and painting were all in order.

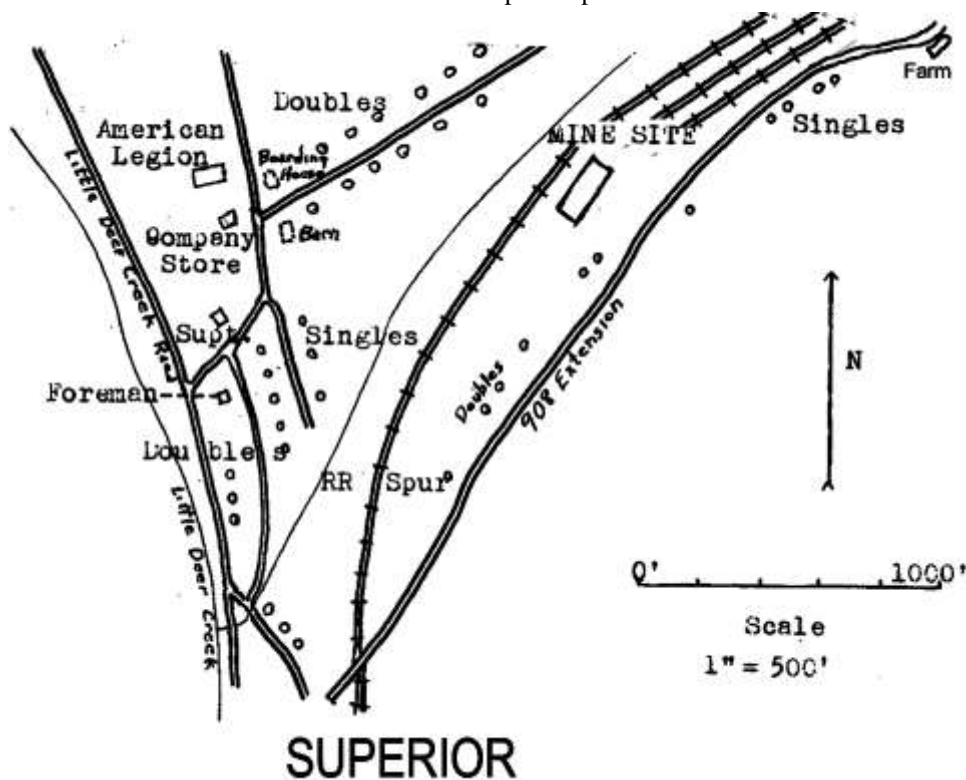
In 1953 the mine closed down permanently and Bairdford was literally changed overnight from a mining town to a residential community. The outlook at that time was not too encouraging. However, Bairdford did survive. The "city" water lines were extended and with the utilities of natural gas and public sewers Bairdford will survive as a residential community. The mining town company houses are seventy years old and, properly cared for, will last much longer. An industrial plant, located in town, gives some employment. Good roads will enable Bairdford to remain a place in which to live yet allow residents to be employed as far away as Pittsburgh.

Superior

The mining town area known as Superior is located north of Russellton in the east-central part of West Deer Township. Although not as large as the other mining towns in the number of houses, it does cover a wide area and it would be difficult to define the "city limits." It has about forty houses but contains at least double that number of families. The majority of the dwellings are double and some of these have been converted to three- unit apartments. The old company store houses four families. Those houses which were used formerly for mine officials plus four bungalows were the only single dwellings in the town.

In 1909 the Monarch Fuel Company purchased coal rights under a number of farms in this part of the township, and in Indiana Township, two miles to the south. It made preparations for the opening of two shafts, the Superior shaft on this location north of Russellton and the Rural Ridge shaft on the southern location.

Picture 64 – Map of Superior



The Superior shaft site was in a valley, lateral to the Little Deer Creek Valley and facing the Little Deer Creek Road. The pattern of the company town was similar to others in the area. After test holes had been drilled, the shaft was located with regard to the railroad, coal slope, and shaft depth. The town was then built on the unused land surface so that it would not hinder coal removal or the piling of mine wastes. A half-mile spur was built from the main railroad to the mine.

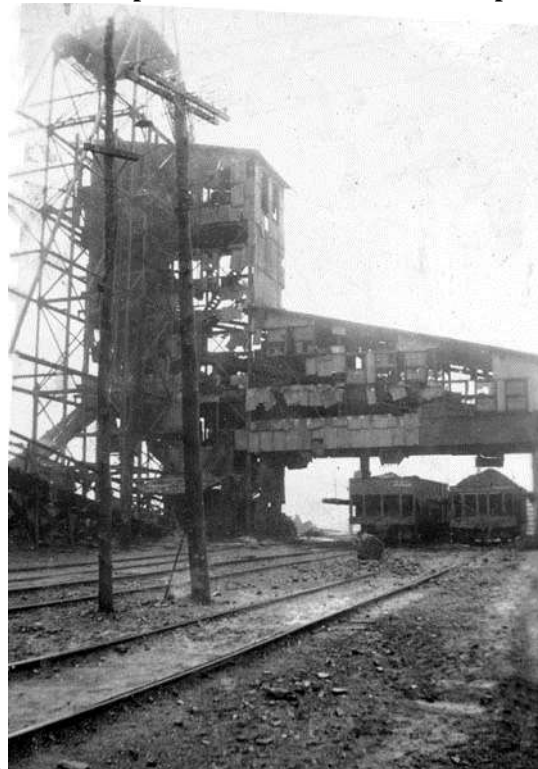
In the building of this town half the houses faced on public roads, the other half on company streets. The first group built were on a company street north of the shaft. There were thirteen double houses, a boarding house, a company store, and a mule barn. South of the shaft and along the public road were placed six more double houses. With these facilities plus four water wells, the operation began in 1910.

The houses were double, without plumbing, central heat, or electricity. Some had half basements and some had none, depending on the slope upon which the house was built. Basements were used at this time to provide a level foundation for the house and not for the convenience of the tenant. Wells were placed so that a number of families could use each one. Houses were heated by fireplaces or heating stoves. Since this mine was not electrified, no electricity was available from the mine plant.

In the five years following the opening of the mine the remainder of the dwellings were constructed. The mine superintendent and foreman were furnished with large single dwellings overlooking the Little Deer Creek Valley rather than the mine itself. Another company street was laid out and along it three single houses for assistant mine foreman and five more double houses for miners were built. Six more doubles were built along the Little Deer Creek Road south of the mine foreman's house. Directly east of the mine plant along the public road, four bungalows were built, completing the mining town. The last two groups built were wired for electricity, which became available from a public utility company. The other houses obtained this utility within a year.

The Superior mine operated continuously from 1910 until 1917 when an underground explosion resulted in a shutdown lasting for a year. From 1918 to 1921 it again operated, but closed temporarily because of a depression in the coal industry. Operations resumed in 1922 and continued until the coal strike of 1927 when this mine closed permanently. Since Monarch Fuel still operated the Rural Ridge mine, many of the miners continued employment there. Others went to the Ford Collieries or Republic Steel mines after the strike

Picture 65 – Superior Mine about 1817 after explosion.



This picture is Superior mine after the big explosion around 1917. (Pictures from R. S. "Sue" Sukle Uncle Paul's album)

In the early 1920's Superior was known to have two very crowded one-room school buildings located near the company store. Mrs. H. John Harper, now living in Natrona Heights, taught in Superior then, and reports that there were ninety-two pupils in the first and second grades and seventy in the third and fourth grades. Mrs. Harper (Melva Christy) taught grades one and two, the first grade in the morning and the second in the afternoon. Back in the 1950's we thought split sessions were something new in West Deer!

The company store was closed, the mule barn and boarding house torn down, and the railroad spur removed (note railroad spur was still in operation as was mine into the early 1950's KEL). As a mining town and operation. Superior was finished. As a town of rented houses it continued with little change for the next twenty years.

At the close of World War II the Republic Steel Corporation purchased the remaining coal lands of the Monarch Fuel Company. This purchase included the surface land around the old shaft site. The houses were all sold to their tenants or others if they did not wish to purchase.

Between 1947 and 1950 considerable remodeling was done by the owners of these houses. The company store was converted to an apartment building. The local American Legion Post built a large hall and ball field beside the old company store. A gasoline station and repair garage had also been built along the main road. As described under Russellton No. 2, the old shaft was revitalized and the mine operated again.

Blanchard

Blanchard is the name given to a group of houses in the northeastern part of West Deer Township. These twenty- nine houses plus a few more built after World War II are referred to as Blanchard, the name coming from the original owner and builder of the town. It was never a complete mining town, containing only houses, and serving as the "patch" for the mine that was a half-mile away and not in sight. The mine itself served as the purpose for the building of more houses elsewhere than are contained in Blanchard, but the name applied only to this one group of houses.

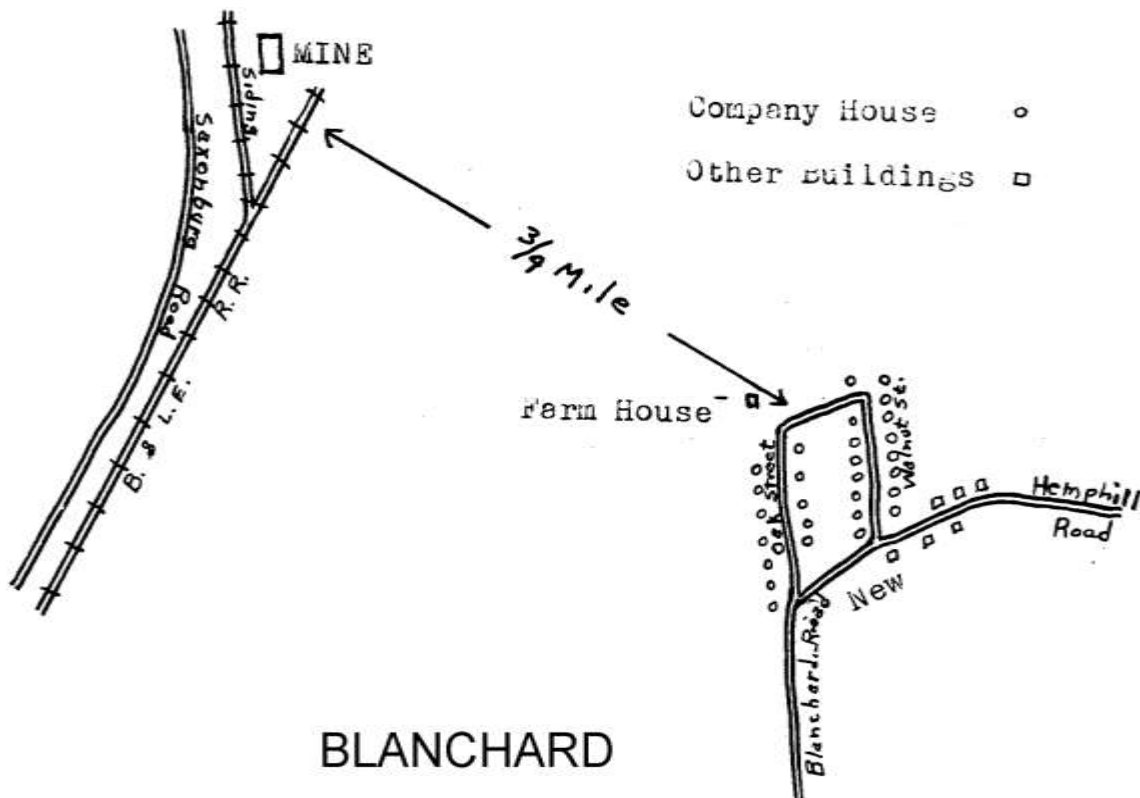
The Blanchard Coal Company was formed in 1921. The coal rights under several farms and the land surface on one farm bordering on the railroad were purchased. It had been determined previously that the coal was "low coal", averaging forty-two inches in thickness. Topography was such that a slope mine could be operated rather than a shaft.

The coal tipple was built beside the railroad and the slope driven eastward and downward toward the coal. It extended 500 feet from its opening before reaching coal.

The farm purchased for the town and mine location was bounded on two sides by private property, on the third side by the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad, and on the fourth by a small frontage on a township road. This boundary was such that the only place where the town could be built was in the remote corner on the township road. This was also the location of the farm buildings of this farm.

In 1921 the Company Street was marked off and twenty- eight single frame dwellings built on both sides of the double rows. The houses were of the pre-cut type and had half basements. Heating was furnished by coal-burning space heaters. No house was wired for electricity. Eight wells along the Company Street furnished the water supply. The houses were all the same and were occupied mostly by miners. The few foreman employer at the time built houses on the Saxonburg Road near the mine. Miners in Blanchard walked the half-mile over the hill to the mine. The old brick farmhouse was occupied by Mr. Blanchard, owner of the company.

Picture 66 – Map of Blanchard



This coal operation was short-lived. After five years of marginal operation, the firm went into bankruptcy in 1926. The coal lands and tipples were bought by the Batchelor Coal Company and the town and adjacent surface lands by the ABCO Realty Company of Pittsburgh.

At this time the town and mine were separated in ownership but were closely allied economically. Mr. Batchelor lived in the farmhouse, a tenant himself. The other occupants remained as tenants of the new owner but continued employment at the same mine. The only major difference was that they could not be evicted if they no longer worked at the mine.

The Batchelor mine was the only large mine in West Deer to benefit from the coal strike of 1927. Being non-union it managed to operate during much of the strike. Its location with regard to public roads and railroad shipping was such that pickets could not halt operations.

The town of Blanchard continued from 1926 to 1946 as a community of rented houses. The old farmhouse served as a residence for the rent collector, who also did the repair work on the houses and streets. It must be remembered that the street was not a public road. One minor improvement came in 1932 when the houses were wired and electricity was first used there.

The residents of Blanchard were, with few exceptions, coal miners, the majority of which worked in the Batchelor mine. In 1945 this mine closed and a diversity of employment soon became evident. Some men went to other mines, while others went to the industrial plants of the Allegheny Valley.

In 1946 The ABCO Realty Company surveyed additional lots in the vicinity of Blanchard and offered all of its holdings for sale. The houses and a few of the extra lots were sold to the residents. Some of the lots took several years to sell.

This sale was the beginning of considerable change in Blanchard. Since only a few of the houses had wells on their lots, a number of wells were drilled. In the ten years following only a few houses were left without water from their own supply. Ten had complete plumbing, fifteen had running water, and those remaining carried water from the old street wells. The street had now become a public road and was improved.

In this ten-year period following the sale, six new homes were built on the lots, mostly by children of residents. By this time there were only three coal miners living there.

Allegheny Acres

Allegheny Acres, or the "Acres" as it is often called, lies on both sides of the Saxonburg Road from the southern border of West Deer near the Valley View Nursing Home northward to the No. 2 fire hall and the Magill Heights area. It includes almost two hundred houses, most of which are less than fifty years old. This area, which originally contained over five hundred building lots on almost four hundred acres, does not have the appearance of an urban development. It is scattered over several long hills and valleys, and has large wooded lots, presenting a rural setting where a number of the houses have only a few neighbors in sight. The houses are not of similar design like many developments. Neither were the motives for building here or the characteristics of the individual builders similar. Unlike the other communities in West Deer, which grew in a prosperous economy, Allegheny Acres was born of the Great Depression.

Few communities have grown without reason or purpose. Fast growth is usually indicative of some strong economic force. Yet here is a community which grew rapidly for no conventional reason and with no strong local economic or esthetic force.

Some of the communities in West Deer Township were developed because of mining activities. Some developed because of building contractor promotion, others because of good building sites and strong local relationships. None of these could be said to hold true in Allegheny Acres. If one were to attempt placing the purpose of origin he would arrive at a combination of circumstances which cumulated in the promotion of an intensive land sales program.

This entire community was to be built on two and one-half farms which, for the most part, had ceased to operate as farms. It covered an area of 393 acres and the only original housing was a farmhouse, a converted grain-house, and an empty schoolhouse.

The largest of these farms, containing 176 acres, was purchased by a real estate dealer specializing in rural properties and farms. This farm had passed in ownership from the original settlers and was purchased for little more than the taxes which had accrued against it. It was the original intent of this new owner to improve this farm somewhat, give it a prosperous appearance by farming it, and resell it at a profit. While this venture was being carried out, the adjacent farm to the east containing 137 acres was likewise purchased for a low price.

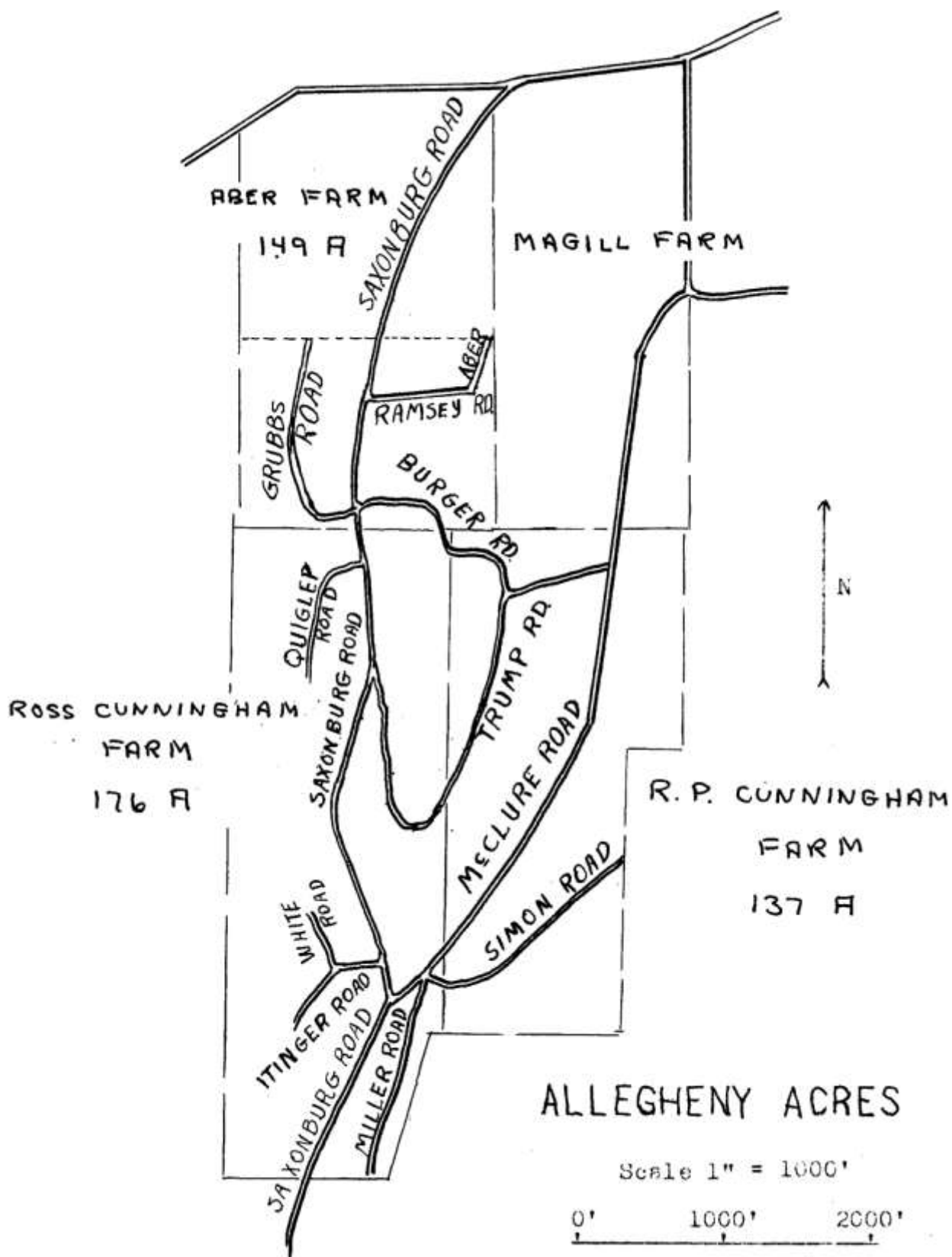
This second farm had been abandoned for many years and had little value as a farm. It had been timbered in the twenties. After the purchase of this farm the total land area in one block amounted to 313 acres, most of which were hilly. The farms were both long and narrow, covering a "Y" shaped valley in its entirety. Public roads were located in the valley bottoms.

Since the owner's primary objective was the resale of this property as a farm, an attempt was made to make the land look prosperous. All abandoned land was fenced and pastured by sheep to clear the brush. Open fields were cultivated by a tenant farmer. All steps were taken so that in a few years these farms would be ready for resale at a profit to the investor.

A series of events was taking place at this time which was to change completely the plans for the disposal of these farms. The year was 1932. Banks had closed, taking the meager savings of many people. Mortgages were being foreclosed, people lost their homes and were forced to seek shelter in crowded slums. Rent in the city was still relatively high and these slum areas were all that many could afford. People accustomed to living in good residential areas were forced to move to these slums.

With the cumulating of these events the plans for these farms were changed. Located on a hard-surfaced road with one mile of double frontage, plus a township road over half this length with double frontage, this area was ideally suited for a low cost real estate development.

Picture 67 – Map of Allegheny Acres



Fifteen miles from Pittsburgh, it was not too far for those who had some employment there. Yet here in a rural scene it was far enough from the city that it could be called a rural community.

The addition of another two miles of graded roads enabled every part of these farms to be divided into lots.

As this development began, another 80 acres bordering on the north were purchased. All land was surveyed and a system of roads laid out. With the beginning of the road system in the southern part a land sales office was opened.

Advertising was carried on in Pittsburgh and thus most of the new owners came from there. It was this advertising program more than any other reason, which brought people to Allegheny Acres. If one were to imagine himself the victim of the economic situation previously described, and reading the glowing account of this new paradise in the country where one could live independently for only \$10.00 down and \$7.00 monthly, he might more easily understand the motives which brought people here. Advertisement made this acre in the country look like something the city dweller had always dreamed about. This type of copy brought hundreds to the country to look over this new development. Many picked a lot, paid the ten dollars, then went home to change their minds. Others bought and later lost their lots before they could build on them. Those who bought lots, built houses, and stayed are the only ones of importance in this description. Their characters, their motives and their choices gave birth to the community of Allegheny Acres.

In the other clustered settlements in West Deer Township the general rule prevailed that most people living there had something in common. They were all employed at the same place or belonged to the same economic class. In the "Acres", however, this rule was not true. Here was a diversity of peoples found in no other community.

Some came because they wanted a home in the country and here was the golden opportunity. Others came to get out of the city slums. Many more came because they had lost their homes in the city and here was a chance to build a cheap house and still be owners of their homes. Their economic classes varied from unemployed to engineers and physicians.

As the people varied, so did the quantity and quality of their individual homes. The phrase common to this settlement, "tiny houses all over the hills," was used by visitors to describe it. These houses varied from one-room shacks to large modern houses. Construction materials varied from those in standard usage to packing crates, cardboard boxes and similar items. One houseboat was brought up from the river piece by piece and reassembled into a small house of the same design. This project was formally underway in the spring of 1932. The roads in the southern part of the project were completed and a number of lots sold. By fall of that year eighteen families had built houses and moved to Allegheny Acres.

This entire tract of 393 acres had now been subdivided into 522 building lots. The lowest sold for \$250.00 and the highest for \$450.00. All of these lots were located either partly or wholly on a hillside. Very few were on level land. Since the typical lot shape was narrow and deep, each could reasonably be expected to contain some hillside. As mentioned, the overall topography was that of an Y-shaped valley. One road was put on the crest between the valleys and all the rest traversed the hillsides.

Some buyers bought a number of lots in one tract and some of the roads were discontinued when they were not needed. These lot sales did not follow any pattern. If a buyer could afford it he bought several lots. Very frequently relatives would purchase consecutive lots. The land sales office was located at the southern end until that area was nearly sold off, then moved a mile north to handle sales there. This took place in the summer of 1933. By that fall one hundred families were living in the acres.

Progress between 1933 and 1938 was slow, but moderately steady. In that period the remainder of the lots were sold, many to people already living in the area. About fifty more homes were added, bringing the total to one hundred and fifty. In 1938 the land sales office was converted to a dwelling and sold.

After this project closed in 1938 there were still a few lot owners who would build homes in the future. There were a great many more, however, who would rebuild or add to their existing small houses. With better economic conditions in the late thirties this would begin and continue until the present time. Immediately after World War II perhaps ten more new houses were added. When this building was completed the total housing in Allegheny Acres was brought to one hundred and seventy-five.

In an overview of this development several factors are outstanding. There was little building done by contractors. Most of the homes were built without much outside help. Although a few were built by local carpenters and a few more by the original developer, the total of speculative homes would not be more than ten. The era of speculative building was not to begin in West Deer Township for another fifteen years.

The "Acres" never developed a business section or commercial core. With several miles of road frontage on a well-traveled highway the potential was there but never developed. A number of enterprises were started but did not remain permanent. Among these were several groceries and a general store. Of the commercial enterprises currently in operation and which appear permanent, are two auto repair garages, a tavern, a heating and air conditioning business, a lumber and millwork operation, and a trailer court holding several dozen mobile homes. For a number of years this was the only mobile home court in the township.

Most of the "Acres" area is served by all public utilities and hard-surfaced roads. There has been some damage to homes from mine subsidence but it has not affected a large number of houses. Neither has it stopped an occasional new house from being built. Growth rate with regard to new housing is slow mainly because of limited availability of good building lots.

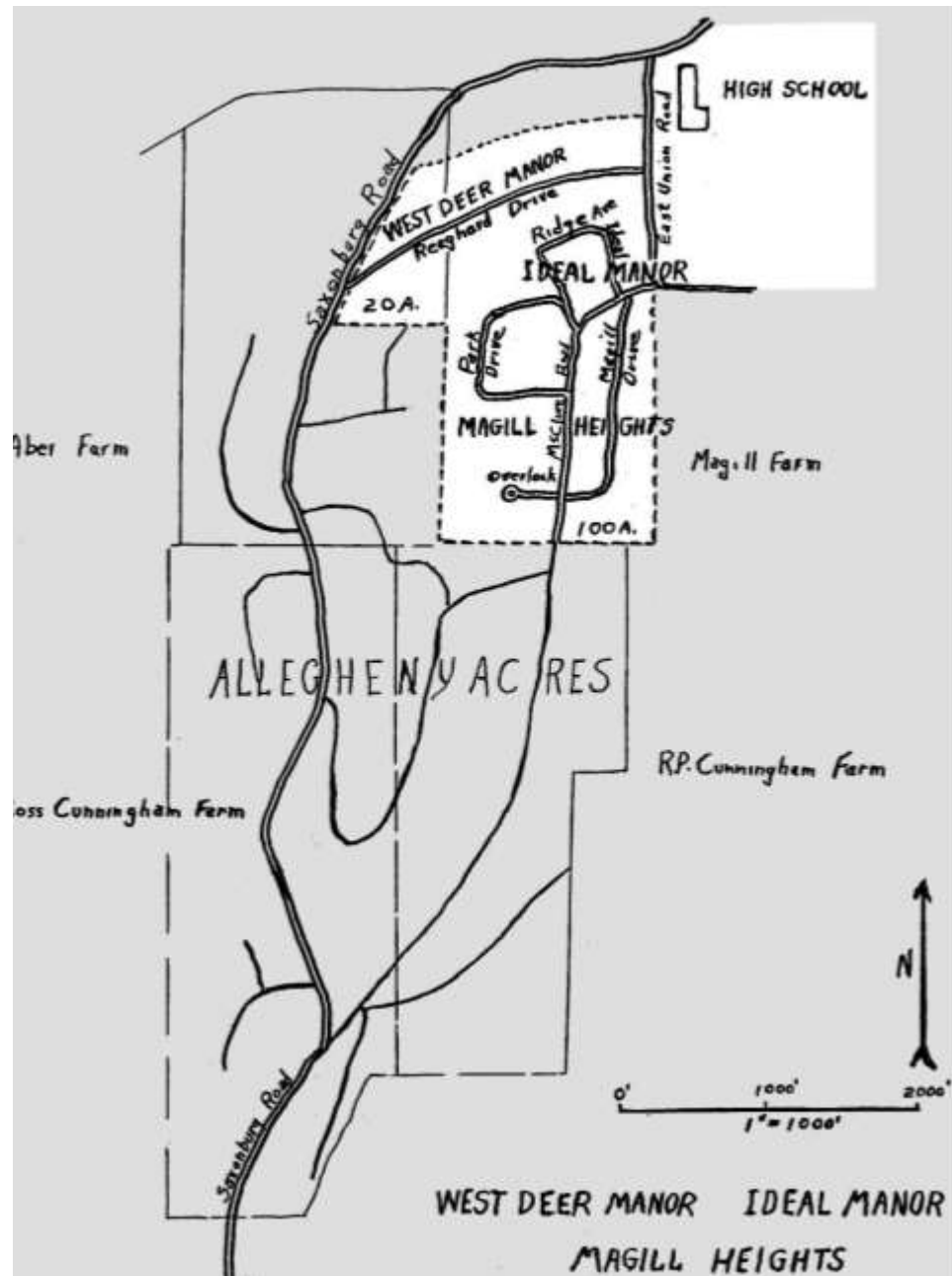
West Deer Manor, Ideal Manor, Magill Heights, & High School Area

Most of the rural townships of Allegheny County experienced periods of rapid housing development in the years immediately following World War II. Many of these building "booms" started in 1946 and have continued, limited only by the availability of building space. Some were extensive in scope while others consisted of only a dozen houses. The majority,

however, did have something in common: they were mass produced houses for sale to the industrial worker and others within his financial capabilities and were within twenty miles of Pittsburgh. This township lies on the edge of such an area and therefore could not be expected to develop as quickly or extensively as the more desirable, closer areas with perhaps more utilities available.

Such post-war building in West Deer Township was characterized by the building of single houses on lots already owned by the new homeowners. There was no mass building or project development until about 1954 when several local carpenters or contractors started small projects, which continued for several years and terminated after a dozen homes had been built in each of several projects. The sites for these were the individual choices of the builders who had considered sales appeal and availability of utilities.

Picture 68 – Map of West Deer Manor, Ideal Manor, Magill Heights, & High School Area



Two of these projects continued into a larger development and are worthy of further description. The number of houses in one continuous group approached 200 and was the only community of such size in West Deer Township having all new brick homes. A new pattern was set, new to this township but common to other areas.

Located in the south-central part of the township, immediately to the north of Allegheny Acres, it was developed on part of one farm on which a section of the "Acres" had been built and on all of another farm just north of the eastern half of the "Acres". These two farms yielded 120 acres on which about 200 houses were built.

The development of both farms was similar. Either the farmer or the builder-constructed streets acceptable to the local supervisors and a water line, so that each of their surveyed lots would have a road frontage averaging ninety feet and have water available. Other utilities were put in upon customer request and financed by that utility company.

The first of these streets was a dead end road through a twenty-acre pasture field. This was the first plan in West Deer approved by the County Planning Commission. Built in 1948 as a lot development, it sold rather slowly until 1954 when the road was continued through the next farm by Mr. H. T. Magill and joined a hard-surfaced road near the present Deer Lakes Elementary Center. When this was completed the entire program moved with greater speed. While the remainder of the first group of lots was being sold to individuals, the new plan, with the exception of one lot, was purchased by two contractors. By the fall of 1955 there were forty-four homes built, leaving only two vacant lots.

Several significant factors became evident in the sales of these homes and lots. Since the township had lost population between 1940 and 1950, during which period perhaps a hundred new homes were built by local residents, it was obvious that certain internal changes had taken place. The large family of the miner had become smaller. His Children had matured, married, and many had built homes within the township for social reasons. Few new people had come here to live and many had left. In this new housing project the observation was made that for the first time since the building of "Allegheny Acres" in 1932- 1937, new residents were coming to West Deer Township from other areas.

A survey of the residents of this development showed that 20 percent of the families came from other parts of West Deer Township. The majority, therefore, had to come from other areas, Pittsburgh and its close suburbs being the main source. The primary reason for their choosing of this location was that of a good housing buy. There were, of course, many other reasons, but this was the most common. Several teachers built here to be close to their work. Several more came because one member of the family had parents living nearby. The majority were employed in the vicinity of Pittsburgh, and, having small children, desired a home in the country. In West Deer Township they found a good buy and thus became residents of this area. Most of the new families had children of preschool age, only a few having children in the upper grades or high school. As a result of this and other similar developments, additional elementary school rooms were added to existing buildings in 1956.

Upon successful completion of this project on the Magill farm, both contractors purchased additional acreage on the same farm and continued their housing development. Almost a hundred houses were constructed in the 1955- 1956 period. Although a few were built to the "customers specifications, the majority were built for speculation. Similar to the earlier project, most of the purchasers were from the metropolitan Pittsburgh area. Here for the first time came retired persons seeking a home with more of a country atmosphere. In general, the new residents were similar to the earlier ones in age, income, and employment.

Picture 69 – Aerial of West Deer Manor



West Deer Manor (Lower end of Reaghard Drive)

Picture 70 – Aerial of Magill Heights



In 1957, hampered by county sewage regulations, this project slowed almost to a standstill. After completion of almost 200 houses, building almost stopped, although about twenty lots were unused.

These houses for the most part were constructed on large lots facing newly constructed hard-surfaced streets. All houses were of brick construction and averaged six rooms. Their selling price averaged \$14,000.

The impact of this development on the township was noticeable. School facilities had to be increased. Sudden interest in schools and township government was observed. A new standard in housing was set in an area where "patch" houses and many self-built homes were predominant. Any new projects in the future would have to match or surpass these standards. The people of West Deer Township looked upon this development as a sign and standard of progress,

Deer Creek

Deer Creek is the name given to the rural community located at the intersection of the Tarentum-Bakerstown Road and Middle Road Extension. Located in the northwestern part of the township it embraces a road distance of a mile in the north-south direction on Middle Road Extension and a half-mile east and west on the Tarentum-Bakerstown Road.

The area, locally defined as Deer Creek, contains about forty houses, an auto repair garage, a tire retreading shop, an auto salvage yard, and two churches. The immediate area of the crossroads contains the businesses, churches and sixteen houses. As new houses had been built along the public and branching private roads, their owners claimed Deer Creek as their place of residence and the locally accepted confines of the community became larger.

The crossroads was known by name in the nineteenth century because of the local importance of the church of that name, the actual creek being three-quarters of a mile away. There were at that time six farmhouses and a school located within a quarter mile of the crossroads. It was not until after the First World War that the addition of other buildings gave it the appearance of a rural village. A sawmill had been built near the school probably in the early part of this century. An auto garage was built before 1920 on a corner location and a grocery store on another corner about ten years later. During the twenties about fifteen houses were built in the vicinity, some by miners and a few by men working in the Pittsburgh area. The depression years, which followed, saw a small grocery and gas station open and a few more houses built.

After World War II about fifteen more new houses were built along the roads in the area. The trend was toward larger houses on nicely landscaped grounds. In general, they were not spaced closely together and the area still appeared rural in nature.

The grocery store on the corner ceased operation in 1955. The other grocery and service station, a short distance away, closed about the same time, leaving Deer Creek with only the auto repair garage on the corner. There were, however, several contractors in the village whose services were available from their homes. One of them constructed and began operating a modern service station in 1957. This was on the site of the present Best Wholesale Tire Co. In 1962 The Pittsburgh Auto Salvage Service set up a large operation adjacent to the Deer Creek Presbyterian Church. They serve as a brokerage for insurance companies and dispose of salvaged vehicles.

The second church, the Fundamental Church of West Deer, Was built on the only empty corner of the crossroads, across from the new service station, and opened in 1968. At just about the same time the other service station was sold and a tire retreading shop opened for business on that location. Best Wholesale Tire Co. has expanded into a large operation. The addition of an apartment building was the only other change in the Deer Creek landscape. A few new houses have been added. There is some city water available but no pubic sewers. Nevertheless, Deer Creek remains a desirable place to live.

East Union

Place names develop in an area through usage. Before 1900 West Deer had possibly four place names. Culmerville and Gray's Mill were welt-known and two churches located near crossroads gave their names to small areas. A third church, not on a crossroads, was also well known. Bull and Deer Creek Churches had been well- known since the beginning of the nineteenth century. East Union, not founded until 1850, became a place name later and today gives its name to a road, a school, and a crossroads. The word "district" has also been used. Some people refer to their place of residence as the East Union "district".

The East Union area has no given boundaries. If someone who lives almost a mile away says that he lives in the East Union area then that is his place of residence.

Between 1900 and World War II there were ten farmhouses and one church manse within a short distance of the crossroads. This was an unusually high concentration of farmhouses and may have originally influenced the location of the church. In the ten years following World War II about twenty-five houses were built in the area, along with an expansion of one business and the beginnings of two more. A service station previously built at the crossroads was enlarged and living quarters added for its operator. A dry cleaning plant was built in 1954 and a bowling alley in 1957.

In subsequent years more houses were added until almost all available frontage was utilized. Mine subsidence had terminated many years ago making this area more desirable than some other areas for home building.

A residential development containing about 160 houses was built about 1975 and a medical center in 1978. These, along with a few other new houses, brings the East Union area to about 225 houses whose residents claim or could claim East Union as their place of residence.

Picture 71 – East Union Crossroads



Culmerville (Brimstone Corners)

By Dorothy Voeckel

It has been said of all the people in the world, we Americans are the most restless, most inquisitive, most energetic and most of all, most dissatisfied. We have always strived for the biggest, highest, longest, fastest, always attacked and overcame the

impossible. Perhaps this is why our pioneers were able to transform the wilderness into useful farmland and farmland into town and factory space.

Our pioneers were in conflict with the Shawnee and Iroquois Indians as early as 1734 and took much wealth from their knowledge. We made their paths the routes of our highways and railroads. We built on the sites of their villages. We learned how to clear the land for crops and obtained some of our seed from them. We learned how to preserve the crops, how to tap maple trees and boil the sap for sugar. Our hunters learned from the Indian how to conquer the wilderness, how to stalk wild animals by keeping on the proper side of the wind so the animal could not get our scent, how to preserve meat by drying and smoking it and how to tan the animal skins for clothing. Most of all, we have taken his land, fields and gentle hills that fashion our community.

The streams and Indian trails were routes to settlements of early immigrants and in later years served as avenues of commerce. Most of the early settlers were English speaking, of Irish descent, Protestant, white and young, as frontier life did not appeal to the middle aged or older. Most families were large even though the infant mortality rate was high.

Most pioneer villages originated around a blacksmith shop and general store.

Culmerville, the oldest village in West Deer Township, is located in the northern part of West Deer Township where Saxonburg Boulevard, Culmerville-Bakerstown and Millertown-Culmerville roads connect. Saxonburg Boulevard was known as the Kittanning Pike and was the wagon route between Pittsburgh and Kittanning.

Prior to 1899, Culmerville was called Brimstone Corners, probably because there was much fire and brimstone. Two inebriated Irish immigrants killed each other in a shoot-out and died on the steps of the creamery. Another recorded story states that in 1858 a man named Fox lived in a small house next to the tavern kept by William Lackey. His stepfather, John Fox, called upon the younger man after having imbibed quite freely at the tavern. Difficulty arose when the older man struck his stepson. The younger man was taken sick immediately afterwards and died. His physician stated his death resulted from the effects of the blow. We do not know when or how the older man died but it is said these four were buried behind the blacksmith shop where Benkes' Garage is now located.

Towards the end of the 19th Century Brimstone Corners became known as Culmerville and assumed the respectability of a quiet country village.

The Culmer family lived in a log house at the crossroads where their daughter, Mary Ann, was born. Culmerville was named for Mary Ann and her family. Mary Ann married Mr. Anderson in Iowa but later they returned to this part of the country. This log house was the stagecoach stop as well as the post office as early as 1854.

There is an 1860 deed conveying Culmerville property from Robert and Catherine Norris to George Staley, which specifies the property as "situated at Norris X Cross Roads." No other reference has been found using this name.

However, the name Norris was not used when Culmerville was named because it was used in the Norristown name. Norristown is named for the part of the Norris clan that settled in the eastern part of the state. One of the first roads through Culmerville came from Tarentum past Bull Creek Church (founded 1794) across the northern part of West Deer Township and lead to Bakerstown which was an underground railway for the runaway slaves in route to Canada.

The area was basically agricultural, basically rural for many years. Farmsteads covered the countryside. The average farmer's investment in tools did not exceed a few hundred dollars, as his basic tools were the ax, cradle, spade and fork. Hand, rather than mechanical devices, remained the rule of the typical farm.

To break the monotony of regular chores, there were frequent festivities such as apple parings, quilting bees, and, of course, barn dances.

The churches were the center of the community life: After churches, the tavern was the next most popular Spot.

Churches

The first churches were the Bull Creek Presbyterian Church founded in 1794 and the Pleasant Unity Church in 1841. There is record of "The Old Covenanter Church" having been located along the Kittanning Pike, close to the Allegheny-Butler County line, about 1875. More information regarding Bull Creek and Pleasant Unity may be found in the church section of this edition.

A custom in the pioneer church worthy of mentioning was the method in which the collection was taken. It was collected in a bag on the end of a pole with a bell attached to be rung to arouse a sleepy contributor.

The log post office was here as early as 1854. The mail service was slow and irregular since the mail was brought by horseback to the post office and had to be picked up at the post office by the receiver. Today, in Culmerville, we have our mail delivered to our homes and businesses. The Grubbs family had a store in the same building. The post office also served as a stagecoach stop.

Enter the railroad

The railroad entered the picture in 1896 when Andrew Carnegie financed the building of an extension from Butler to East Pittsburgh, through Culmerville. This brought about the formation of the Pittsburgh, Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad Company.

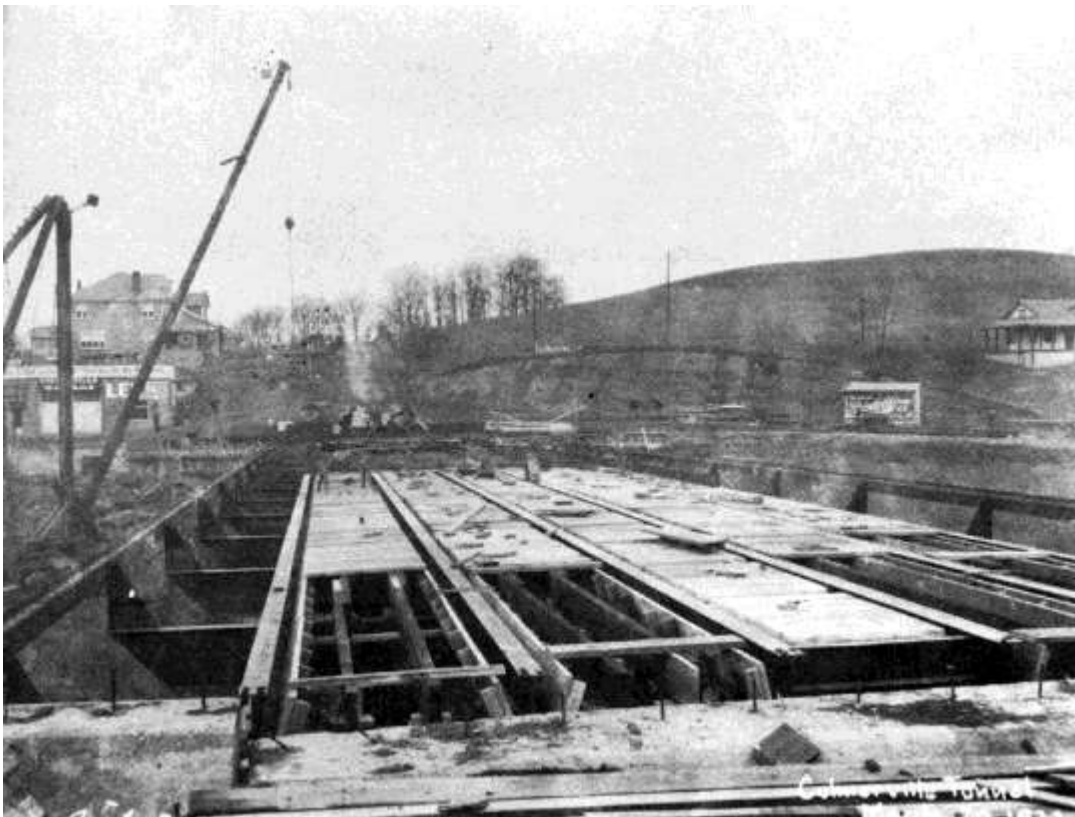
A 400-foot long tunnel was constructed for the trains to transit under the crossroads of Culmerville. The tunnel was expensive to maintain due to drainage problems and proved too small when the larger engines were introduced about 1912. The tunnel was replaced by an open cut and a steel deck truss bridge was installed to carry the public highway that crossed at this point.

Picture 72 – Steam shovel uncovering tunnel



An ERIE steam shovel was used to help uncover the Culmerville tunnel in 1921 and 1922 Picture by B. & L.E. R.R.

Picture 73 – Deck almost completed after tunnel



The bridge deck is partially completed. Notice the Culmerville garage which does not have the second floor. The top of a bus can be seen behind the garage. Photo by B. & L.E. R.R.

Picture 74 – Bridge almost complete



Drainage Problems in the tunnel and the use of larger locomotives required the removal of the tunnel. This 1922 picture shows the bridge almost completed and the tunnel work well underway. Photo from B. & L.E.R.R.

Picture 75 – Bridge Wooden walls exposed



The wood construction inside the tunnel was bracing used to shore the tunnel when it started to cave in. This did not eliminate the problem. Picture by B. & L.E. R.R.

Picture 76 – Culmerville north end during tunnel removal



This picture shows the old blacksmith shop on the left, then the home of Harry Ekas (now Benkes). Just to the right of the pole is the log house that in 1854 contained the post office, stagecoach stop, and the store, as well as living quarters. The picture was taken about 1921.

Picture 77 – Tunnel almost gone looking NW



The tunnel has been partially removed. The bridge is almost complete. Note the Culmerville garage before the second story was added. Photo from the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad

Picture 78 – Tunnel is gone



The tunnel is being removed. The Culmerville garage and Roof Garden Restaurant are on the far left. The Norris's store and apartments are shown a short time before they were torn down. B. & L.E. R.R.

Picture 79 – Bridge complete



The tunnel is gone and the bridge is complete. Picture by B. & L.E.R.R

Picture 80 – Culmerville crossroads



Aerial view of the Culmerville crossroads looking north

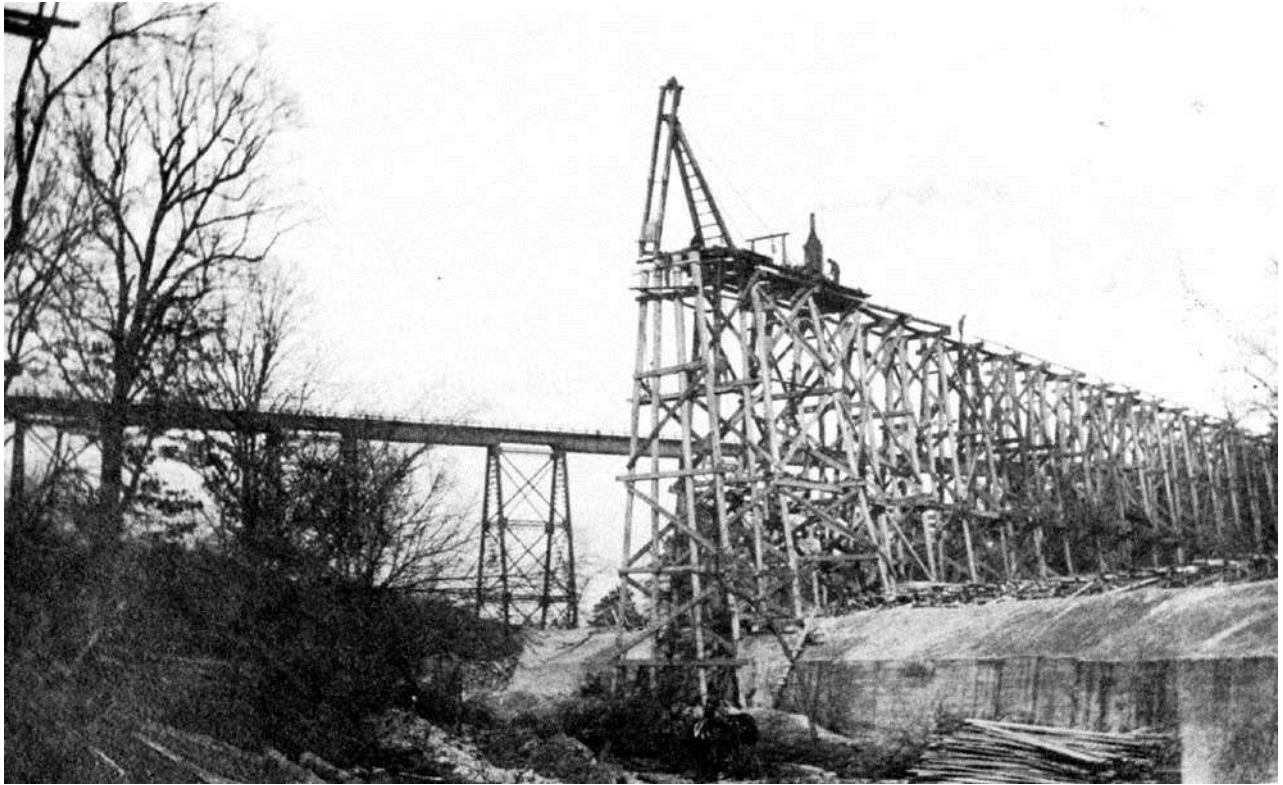
At a location north of Culmerville near the Allegheny- Butler county line a sag in the line presented a difficult operation problem. A major improvement was started. The railroad originally crossed the valley on a viaduct. The viaduct was replaced by a fill about 4000 feet long, which was finished about 1912. This did not eliminate the problem and a higher fill was started beside the existing line and considerable material was placed in it until the year 1927. However, it was not completed because new motive power and changes permitted the use of the line located on the original track.

Picture 81 – Original Trestle over Bull Creek



The original 139 foot high trestle that spanned the Bull Creek Valley at Culmerville. It was used from 1897 until 1912 when the present fill was completed. Picture from Bessemer and Lake Railroad

Picture 82 – Bull Creek Viaduct



In the background is the viaduct where the railroad crossed the Bull Creek Valley. The trestle in the foreground is part of the construction required to make the 4000 foot long fill that is in use today. A higher fill was started beside the existing line but was not needed and never completed. The cement structure on the bottom of the picture is the tunnel on Dawson Road. This 1910 photo from the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad.

Old-timers have told us one hundred mules were brought in to be used on this project. Many blacks and immigrants were hired as cheap laborers for as little as \$.90 a day. It has been told that when a mule didn't do his share of work it was killed and pushed over the side and covered with the next load of fill. If a man died or was killed and did not have anyone to make burying arrangements, his body was disposed of the same way. There was much gambling and fighting. When someone was killed, it wasn't unusual for the body to be put in a train car and shipped out. Several tarpaper-covered shacks were built for the workers to live in. At night the workers played their musical instruments and sang and harmonized such songs as "In The Evening By The Moonlight".

Two homes were built for the switch operators by the Railroad Company. A station and signal tower was also constructed. A telegraph was manned by the stationmaster.

The railroad was used to import farm supplies, feed, building, building materials, large items from the mail order houses, etc. Their main export was coal. Special passenger trains were used for such events as the Butler Fair and Conneaut Exposition Park. Most passenger train service was discontinued before World War II. The train whistle could be heard for miles. Many fires were started from the sparks of the passing train.

Travel, Voting and Doctoring

Travel was slow. If someone chose to go to Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh) from here, he usually got into his best bib and tucker and went by horseback to Harmarville and took a canal boat to the settlement. In 1900 we were still in the horse and buggy era. Watering troughs were built along the roads for the horses. Shortly after 1900 the first horse-less carriage came into use. The horse-less carriage driver was considered "wild and daring". The horse-less carriage was a toy and luxury to the daredevil rich. The car license and driver's license came with the vehicle. The horse-less carriage frightened the horses, as well as the people, and caused much confusion. Since the roads were not hard topped, the cars often became stuck. When the newer models were made, the older ones were referred to as Tin-Lizzies or Flivers.

The Millerstown-Culmerville Road (Bull Creek) was paved about 1910. The stone for abutments and sewer heads was from the local McCullough Stone Quarry. Stone, not satisfactory for construction, was used for field drains.

Voting at Culmerville had been done in several places: a small building beside the bus garage, the upper level of the garage, and in the fire hall.

The doctor traveled on horseback or horse and buggy. The earliest known was Dr. Herron who lived in the vicinity of Bull Creek Church.

Dr. Dan Rowley (1858-1918) moved his office from a stone room built into the hillside in Millerstown where he learned from his father, Dr. Myron Rowley. He moved to Rowley's Corner, which was at the intersection of Millerstown-Culmerville Road and Tarentum-Culmerville Road. Dr. Rowley was a much-respected individual as was his wife Clara Hazlett Rowley. She has been credited as having been an able helper to her husband and a schoolteacher for many years. Dr. Rowley's death was attributed to an illness caused by going out in a freezing rain to tend a patient.

The burying ground for four people was a plot behind the blacksmith shop (now Benkes' Garage). The two Irishmen who had a shoot-out and the Foxes were buried here. There was a small burying ground over the tunnel between the post office and crossroads. This was dubbed the "Unbelievers Cemetery". The name implies the survivors did not believe the scriptures and/or did not choose to transport their deceased very far. However, other factors such as weather, time, etc. had to be considered. Anyone could bury their deceased here. There was also a burying ground where the Crossroads Hotel and parking area are. Some of the graves were on the hillside which was not landscaped. There were brass railings around some of the plots. Some of the local children, including the Norris children, were afraid to go through or pass by one of these cemeteries, as a human limb was visible at one time.

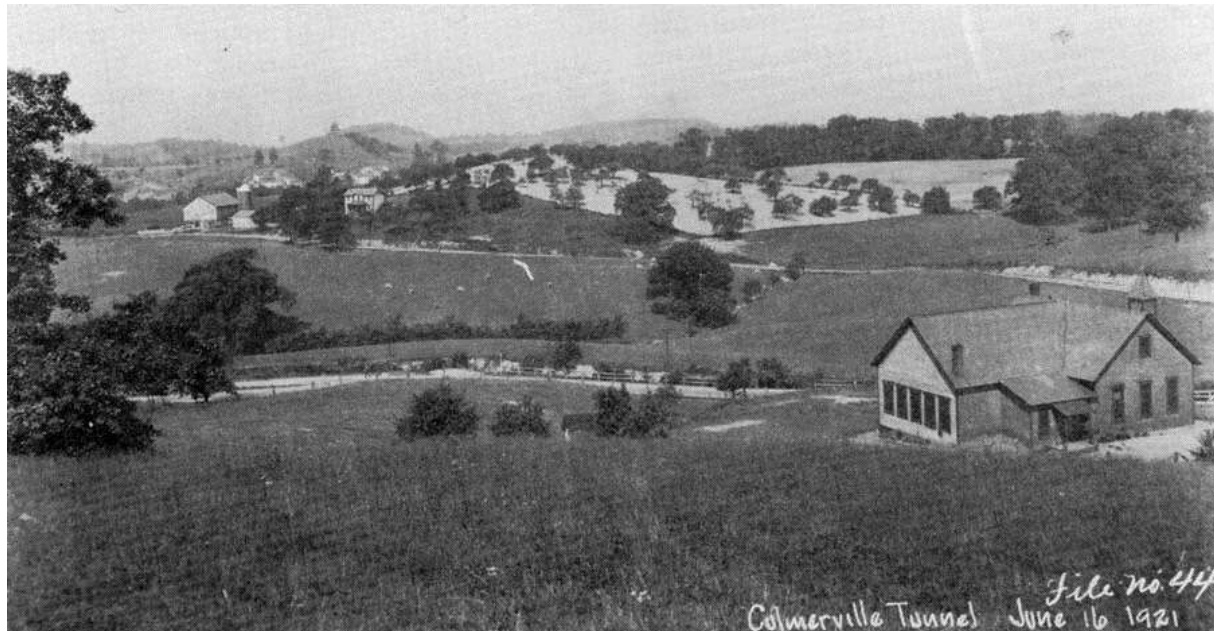
In the will of Robert Norris, it stated that he left "this lot of ground lying north of the Kittanning Road and east of the state road from Tarentum occurring six rods square for a burying ground." The description could be grounds described in the last paragraph. Bodies were moved about 1922, when the railroad reconstruction was begun. Robert Norris's body was moved to Deer Creek cemetery. Frank Norris was moved to Westminster Church cemetery in Clinton Township.

School

There was, of course, the school with the schoolmaster who taught Readin', Ritin' 'n Rithmetic. The boys put the girl's curls or pig tails in the ink well, tied their sashes to the seats, put off firecrackers and drilled peek holes in the girls' privy. Of course, the girls giggled and then retaliated.

The first building was built of logs and situated near the Jamison Norris property. It had log seats without benefit of backs to rest upon. There must have been some type of fireplace to warm the building. About 1853 a brick structure, made of bricks burned locally, was built across from the Clarence Norris home. This was torn down and a frame school erected about 1908 near the Culmerville crossroads. When the railroad was being reconstructed this building was abandoned and later remodeled into a dwelling. It has since been remodeled and until recently, some of the original windows remained in place.

Picture 83 – Culmerville School before move looking down hill.



The Culmerville School is shown here before it was moved to the hilltop. The farm in the background was the H. M. Davidson farm and is now the site of the Deer Lakes Mobile Home Park. Part of Curtisville No. 2 may be seen over the Davidson farm buildings. Photo from Bessemer and Lake Erie R.R.

There was a population explosion in the schools due to people migrating and immigrating to this community seeking employment in the coal mines. Mrs. John Norris (Annie Donaldson) reminisced, having had 75 pupils in her classroom during the 1911-12 and 1912-13 terms. The next building was built about 1920-21 when the railroad changed. It had two rooms and was a few yards from the railroad, which it paralleled. It was moved to the top of the hill and two rooms were added. Along with the traditional bells and belfries were the coal stoves, coal buckets, water pumps, ink wells, slates, hickory sticks, lunch bags and the privy. At times the lunches were frozen and had to be thawed near the furnace. The seats graduated in size according to the size a pupil should be at a particular age. In the higher grades, the seats were double. For a few years, students from Curtisville #2 came

here after fourth grade and some eighth grade students were bussed to Russellton #1 or went to Curtisville #1. After the building was abandoned as a school it was used as a residence for a few years and in 1973 the local fire department burned it down as it had deteriorated and became hazardous to trespassers.

Picture 84 – Culmerville School before move looking up hill.



This is the two-room Culmerville School before it was moved up the hill. Bessemer and Lake Erie R.R. photo.

In the earlier days the boys stayed in school until they reached maturity or were married. They usually did not start school in the fall until the harvest was completed and stopped school in the spring to help with the spring chores.

Summer school was called "normal school" and a tuition was charged. It was not a "make-up" for failing students but a way to further one's education, usually in preparation for a teaching profession. The teachers were paid about ten dollars a month and boarded around. Dr. Dan Rowley taught at Culmerville before the turn of the century in order to help finance further medical education. In 1891, he taught and "doctored" at the same time. Mrs. Clara Hazlett Rowley was a schoolteacher before her marriage. After her husband's death, she returned to her profession.

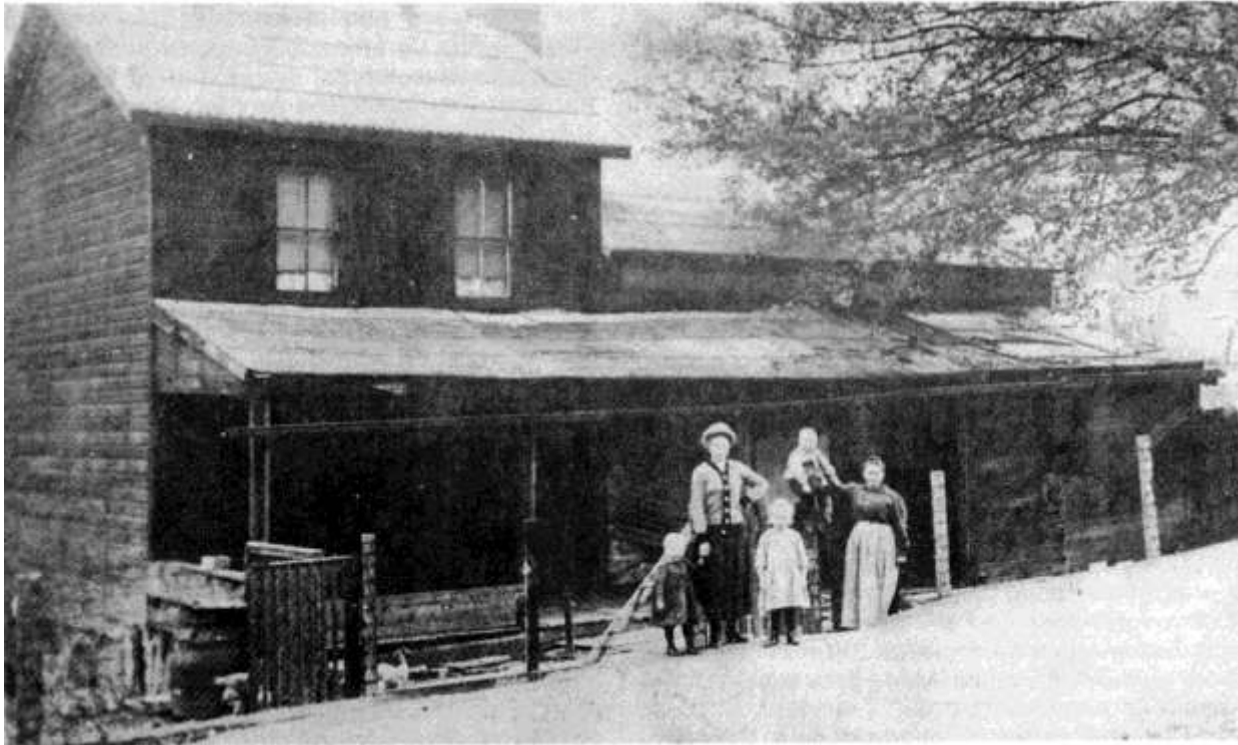
In a deed from Nancy Pillow to Henry Davidson dated Dec. 13, 1893 there is a statement "The school lot may have been conveyed by Robert Norris to W.D.T. School."

[Lands and houses](#)

The first patents (deeds) to purchasers were issued to those who had received warrants from the government in 1786. The remainder of the land was known as Depreciation lands. These tracts were not patented by receiving them but reverted to government and later sold to Stephen Lowrey in 1807 by Marshall sale. Stephen Lowrey owned at least 9000 acres at one time. He willed his Pennsylvania property, of which Culmerville was part, to his daughter, Sarah Collins. Lowrey sold land to John Carnahan in Culmerville on Feb. 15, 1808.

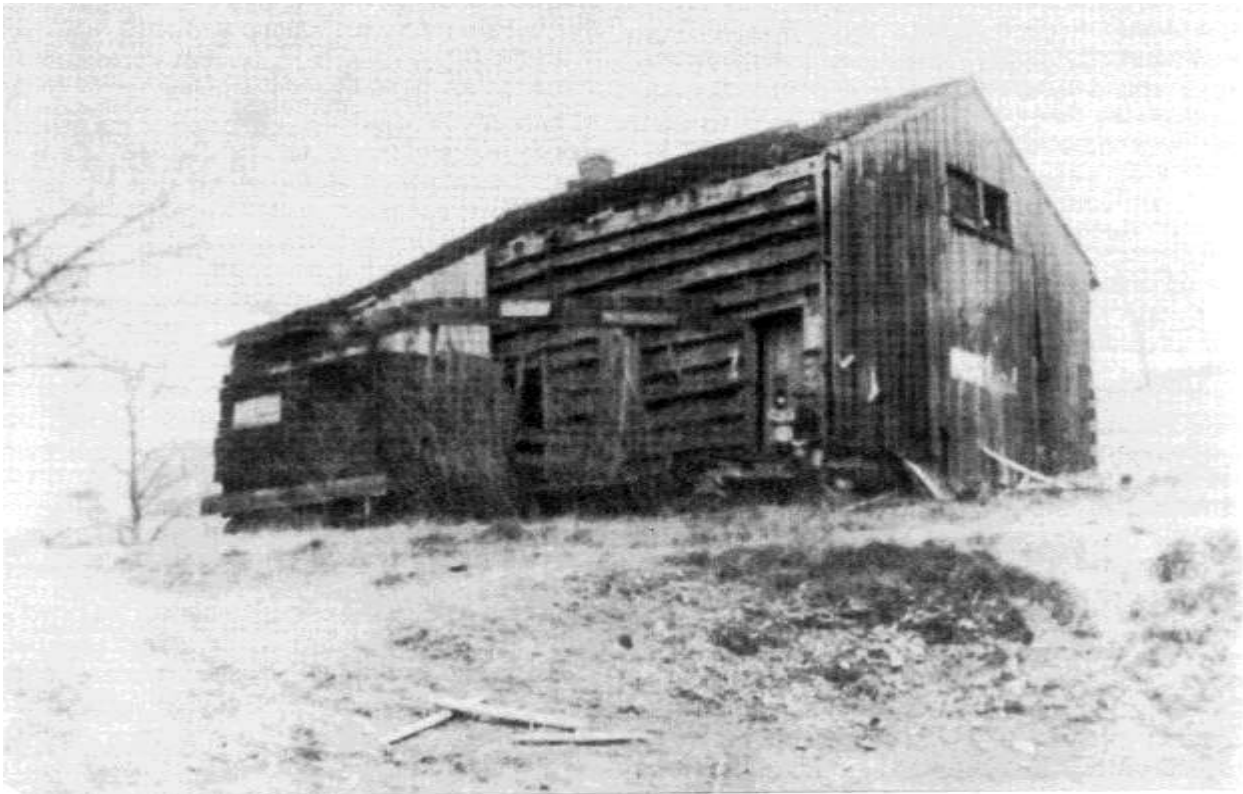
The Carnahans owned land but had to re-buy it and were given a lower price because they were one of the first to come to terms with Lowrey's agent. The Carnahan (Carnaghan) log cabin was built soon after the family came here from Ireland, and is believed to be one of the oldest in the village. Their home was much like others of that era, built of logs, notched and saddled at the ends to leave the cracks between the logs as small as possible. The cracks were "chinked" with wood or just plain mud. The rafters were small saplings smoothed off on one side. Lath was the same material held onto the rafters by wooden pins. The covering of "clapboards", split from oak trees, held in the "shaving horse" and smoothed with a drawing knife was placed on the roof and held on by weight poles overlapped in such a manner to keep out the weather. Nails were difficult to obtain as they were made by the blacksmith and iron was scarce. Pig bladder was used in lieu of glass for windows, sometimes-greased paper, sometimes nothing. The rooms of the home were small and few, one room served as the parlor, bedroom, washroom and kitchen. A new kitchen was added to this home sometime later as it was moved up the hill, beside the new house, to be used as a summer kitchen.

Picture 85 – Mary Ann Culmer Home



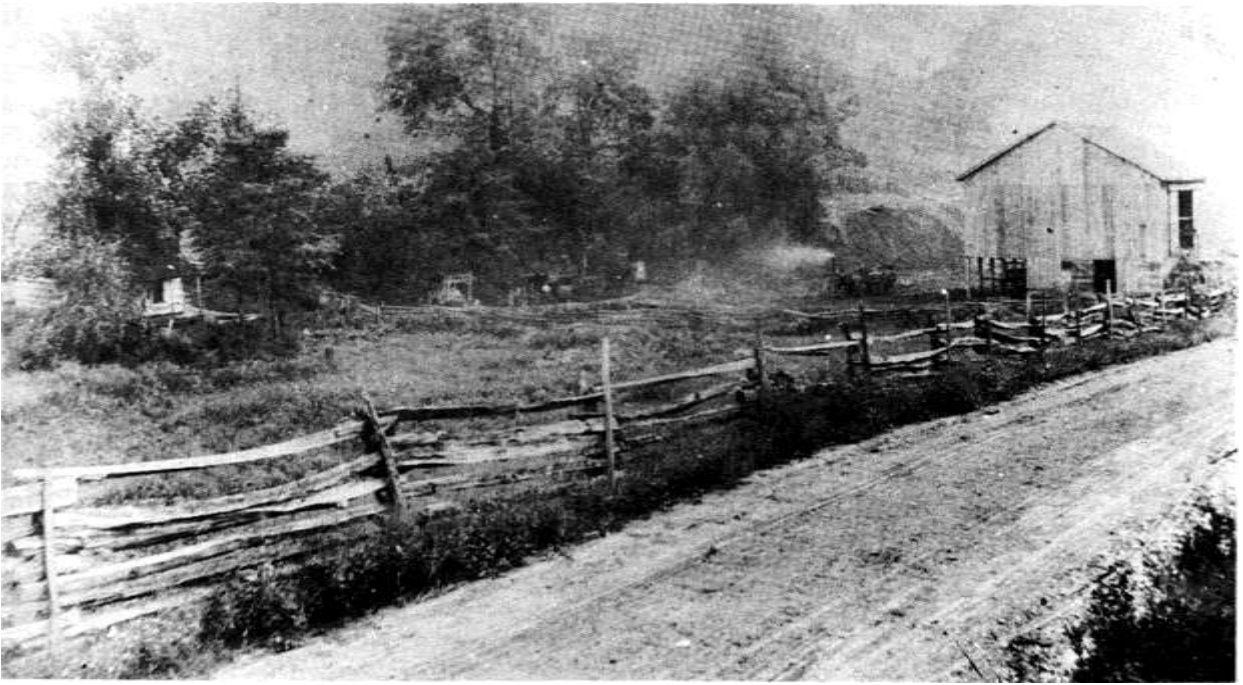
This building was the Post Office in 1854; a store, stagecoach stop and last used as a home where a railroader's widow (Mrs. Louise Campbell- right on the picture) lived. This is the home Mary Ann Culmer was born in. She is the lady for whom Culmerville was named

Picture 86 – The Commissary



This building was known as The Commissary. It housed a tavern and was used as a hotel. Supplies could be purchased here. The picture was taken about 1907 and shows Alex and Mae Norris.

Picture 87 – Robert and Mary Jane Norris farm in 1896



The above picture was taken in 1896 shows the Robert and Mary Jane Norris farm, formerly owned by the Carnahan family. The excavation behind the barn is the Bessemer and Lake Erie R.R. being dug. Also note the steam engine pulling a thresher near the barn. This barn was moved and is the same one as in the picture below. The log house was replaced by the frame house pictured below. The railroad cut came between the house and barn making it necessary to move the barn. This farmstead is now owned by the McWilliams family just north of Culmerville

Picture 88 – The Norris Farm 1937



There was a large fireplace that was used for cooking and heating. They used large back-logs and smaller pieces of wood was held by andirons which were made by the blacksmith. There was a crane to support the kettle for cooking. The kettles were round, made of iron with three small legs so they could set over a nest of glowing coals. A pile of wood was stacked near by. A roll of cord was usually visible on the mantle. The windows served for light and ventilation as well as portholes. The doors were made of heavy boards held together with batons pegged to the boards. The hinges were made of wood. For a latch, a stick was

pegged at one end, on the inner side of the door; the other end extended beyond the door for the latchstring, and was free to be lifted into a catch fastened to the doorjamb. A short distance above the latch a small hole was bored through the door for the latchstring. This was a piece of raw hide passing through the hole, fastened to the wooden latch. The latchstring was left out during the day but pulled in at night and a bar placed across the door to secure the house for the night. The furniture was somewhat crude, as most was homemade. Some folk had a few pieces shipped from England. The kitchen table was large, with benches, and was the meeting place for food, entertainment, study and solace. It was here disputes were settled, lessons were done, financial problems solved, and prayers said.

Soap was made of lye produced from drippings of the ash hopper boiled with the proper amount of fat and water.

The walls were covered with useful herbs. There was also a bottle of root bitters, some whiskey and jug of dandelion wine for medicinal purposes and special occasions. There were bags of dried berries, fruits, corn and strings of dried apples and pumpkins. In winter everyone tried to sit to get the best advantage of the heat from the fireplace. There was a rocking chair and baby's cradle. Since the chores were many and tedious, the mother soon learned to rock in her rocking chair and rock the cradle with her foot as she did a chore. There were trundle beds with straw, feather, or cornhusk mattresses. The parents' bed had either rope or cords instead of slats. The feathers had to be washed periodically; the straw or cornhusks had to be replaced frequently and the ropes or cords had to be tightened. There was a bootjack or two in every home.

There was a musical instrument here and there as they had to provide their own music for entertainment and dancing. This family of Norrises (Robert and Mary Jane Carnahan Norris) was all able to play at least one musical instrument and often played for dances.

The log home did not have a cellar. A spring-house, which was blasted out of rock, took its place. The churning was done there. The water was carried from this spring. In a protected spot near the spring, a bar supported by two posts was used to suspend the large kettles. It was here the water was heated; the butchering was done as well as making apple butter and pumpkin butter. There was a groove for a shelf cut into the rock on which the milk cans fit.

Arrow heads and Indian lore were found and kept as souvenirs.

The bake oven was made from a barrel. The barrel had a tin can and lid placed in one end and all but the section for a door was covered with soft clay and patted securely. A fire was built in the barrel, burning the barrel and baking the clay. Years later a brick oven was built near the new home.

The parlor was used only when the preacher or special company came. This was where the body was laid out for viewing when a death occurred. It was placed on a couch, bed, or in a casket, whichever the family desired. The body was taken to the church for services and burial. A crepe was nailed to the wooden frame of the front door. If it happened to be an infant, who passed away, a white ribbon crepe was used. If a middle aged person died, a lavender ribbon was used, black was used for the elderly. About three yards of the best satin ribbon was used to make a crepe. Long streamers used up about two yards of the ribbon and the rest was worked into a fancy bow to which dried wheat or live flowers were added. The crepe stayed on the doorframe until the last. The crepes were sometimes used more than once with a different floral arrangement.

In 1896 the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad Company got a right-of-way which went between the log house and the new barn. Due to the condition of the log house it was necessary to replace it at this time. In 1897, the Norrises (Robert and Mary Jane Carnahan Norris) had a new 6 room home with a pantry built. The bid for the carpenter work was \$75.00 and because double weather-boarding was used an additional charge of \$8.00 was added. The total price paid to Jim Goldinger for labor and material for this home was \$880.00. There was a stone foundation, a fireplace in every room except the kitchen where a coal stove was used for cooking and heating. When the railroad was being constructed, some of the railroad employees boarded here for \$4.00 weekly.

1920's

A new barn had been built near the log house. In 1921 more ground was condemned because of the railroad tunnel problem and the new barn had to be moved. It was moved to a higher location above the new home. John and Jim Norris did the hauling for which they received \$4.50 a day for their team and \$1.15 a day for their labor. Along with the farming, there was a dairy route in Curtisville and Russellton. Milk was shipped via the railroad from the Culmerville station. There was an icehouse several feet from the barn. The ice preserving process required much labor. The ice was cut as large as possible and put in the icehouse. Saw dust was put between the ice pieces to keep them from freezing together. A pulley and tongs were used to move the larger pieces. There was a wagon shed, a wheel horse behind the barn, spring house and the ever important out-house (privy).

Many families boarded workers to supplement their income. The Angeloni family had a boarding house close to the Allegheny-Butler County lines. The Benkes, the Hazletts, the Norrises and others kept boarders. Some boarders slept in the home; others slept in the barn or even on the lawn and ate at the picnic table.

Beef, pork, potatoes, hominy (corn hulled), dried fruits and vegetables, coarsely ground or crushed grain (usually cooked) were some of the more staple items of their diet. The meat was smoked in the smokehouse or "put down" in brine in crocks and barrels. Such foods as kraut, pickles and pears were put into crocks or barrels.

Sarah Collins sold 107 acres and 117 perches to Adam Norris for \$430.92 on May 16, 1831. She also sold 155 acres to Robert Norris for \$165.00 on Dec. 28, 1830 and another 100 acres to him for \$250.00 on Sept. 16, 1838. A large portion of the Norris land was transferred to Henry Davidson through the Norris heirs. The Robert Norris home was where John Consolaro's home is now; the Adam Norris home is the old brick home on top of Blanchard hill.

Adam Norris owned the land where Blanchard is located and much of the surrounding lands and this has been transmitted to his heirs (listed in the Norris family history).

Buses and other transportation

The Culmerville-Russellton-Cheswick Transit Company was incorporated Apr. 15, 1915 by A. J. Norris. Clark Porter & James Norris became partners after W.W.I.

The first route was from Culmerville to Cheswick. When the mining industry flourished about 1922 special trips were made for the miners.

During the winter the wood busses were heated with oil stoves. The busses had solid tires and could carry as many as 25 passengers. In later years, modern busses replaced the old as needed.

In the 30's the bus route was expanded to New Kensington. A charter service was available from the company.

After the death of A. J. & Susan Norris, their share passed to J. Floyd Dawson. After the death of James Norris in 1943, the owners were J. Floyd Dawson, Mrs. James (Mildred) Norris and son, Harold Norris & Clark Porter.

An auxiliary garage was located at the intersection of Blanchard and Culmerville-Millertown Roads (Burns property now). Another garage was built near the bridge at Culmerville. In 1958 Mr. Norris bought the Culmerville Auto Transit Company franchise. In 1961 he purchased the Mount Royal Boulevard route from Harmony Short Line Company. The greater part of the routes were to Pittsburgh after 1958.

When Port Authority Transit took over Mar. 31, 1964 there were 35 employees and 35 busses.

The Culmerville Auto Transit Company was started prior to 1920 at the crossroads. Dwight Bryan and James Staley bought out the Martin Bus Company. The garage and buses were destroyed by fire along with the Norris store October 1920. The owners of the Culmerville-Russellton- Cheswick Bus Company loaned them enough buses to complete their schedules without interruption.

A new block building was built in 1921 near the site of the original garage. The first buses were wood with solid tires and were chartered to go to Sharpsburg; the Pittsburgh franchise came later. The regular bus routes were to/from Culmerville, Tarentum, Pittsburgh and for a few years were petitioned to haul workers to Allegheny Steel Corporation, Brackenridge for mill turn changes. Many riders were shoppers but most were employees going to and from their place of employment.

The buses were used to bus school students to/from Tarentum and Etna High Schools. At this time, the student was responsible for his own transportation costs. Later when West Deer High School was opened, they were contracted to haul students for the school district.

A second story was added to the building and the Roof Garden Restaurant was opened. The restaurant was not financially productive. Consequently, the space was converted into a social hall to be used for dances, etc. At a later date it was used as a roller skating rink. An office and a smaller restaurant (or food bar) were added at different times and each has since been removed. Candy, tobacco, ice cream, and some auto incidentals could be purchased here. The company was disbanded in 1958, when it was sold to Harold Norris who represented Culmerville- Cheswick-New Kensington Transit Company.

The Railroad Company purchased the damaged Norris store and then sold it to the Bus Company to be torn down. When it was torn down the blocks and the smaller windows were used to add apartments to the side of the garage.

The Vernon Anderson Service Station/Convenience Store and Ultimate Industries, Inc., a machine shop owned by Ray Conway since 1972, has been housed here.

The Norris Store

The first Norris Store, owned by Alex and A. J. Norris, was located in Russellton. The next store was in Culmerville with two apartments on the second floor, plus Mr. Douthett's feed store and a blacksmith shop attached to the side. In October 1920 a fire started in the Culmerville Auto Transit Garage and spread to the store. Both were a total loss.

To keep the store business going, a store was set up in a black building on the opposite side of the tunnel. This store was referred to as "Black Maria."

A new store was built of block on a cement foundation northwest of the present bridge. The foundation cracked due to the faulty drainage system in the railroad tunnel. The railroad bought the building and sold it to the garage owners who tore it down and used some of the materials to add to their building. The show windows were kept by the Norrises and used in the new building.

In 1920, A. J. and Alex Norris leased land from the Railroad Company and built the present building. General merchandise, groceries and farm products were sold. The Robert Norrises bought full ownership in 1933 from J. Floyd Dawson, an heir of A.J. Norris. The Railroad Company leased land to the Norrises at a "reasonable rate" since they were responsible for the damage to the other store. The lease rate was thirty dollars a year plus one hundred dollars a year for taxes. There was a one hundred-year lease, which ran from 1920 to 2020. After Robert Norris became infirm his younger son, J. Leroy and his wife, Janet Jones Norris, operated the store. After Mr. Norris' death they continued to do so until 1970.

The term "on tick" or "on book" was used to acknowledge the financial arrangement for credit buying.

The building was used as a cycle shop and Zeieski's West Deer Home Improvements after the store was closed.

Automobiles were being used more and people began going to town for bigger and better selection, possible lower prices. Gasoline rationing during W.W.II had some influence on where shopping was done. Many women, as well as men, went to work in factories and the class of living was up-graded and less credit buying was necessary.

Gone are the days of penny candy, tub butter, barrel pickles, baskets of eggs and the friendly grocer. The scales were located at the crossroads near the store and were used to weigh wagons.

Picture 89 – The Norris store



This is Norris store was built over the tunnel. It burned in 1920. The girls in the picture are Mea Norris and Margaret Means Henry.

[Brink yard, Oil wells and other business](#)

The Brick Yards were in operation prior to 1853 and were owned by the Norris family. One kiln was located in Curtisville #1 and the larger one was on the Adam Norris farm in Culmerville near where the town of Blanchard is now. Pleasant Unity and Bull Creek Churches and the Culmerville School were built of these bricks. The four early brick houses are: the Adam Norris house which is now Caponi's, the David Hemphill house is now the Stewart-Erskine house, the Dave Norris house is now Knoch's (unoccupied) and the John Montgomery home is now the Mrs. Wilbur Ekas home.

The oil wells first went into production in 1897-98 when T. W. Phillips Gas and Oil Company drilled two oil wells on the Adam Norris farm and two on the Joe Norris farm. After drilling some dry holes in the same vicinity, they pulled out the four and plugged them.

There was an oil station of Columbia Conduit Company on Bull Creek near the Fawn Township line about 1889. There were four oil wells on the John Norris farm that were drilled by Ferguson-Porter drillers. This farm was dubbed the "Seldom Seen Farm" as the home could not be easily seen from the highway.

The Benke Apartment Building was built of concrete blocks in 1924 by Fred Mateer and sold to Benkes in 1927. He had dug the foundation by hand with the aid of a breast drill like those used in the coal mine. He used three wheelbarrows and paid local boys 25 cents a day to push them.

The building is three stories high housing 24 rooms. Each room has a door adjoining the next. This plan allowed for renting an individual room or a series of rooms to form an apartment.

Single rooms were rented to railroaders and miners. Mrs. Mike Benke had a restaurant on the lower level for approximately two years,

The Benke Blacksmith Shop and Garage was started when John C. Benke bought the blacksmith shop from John Poitney, who had bought it from John C. Norris.

John C. Benke went to trade school in New Kensington to learn to be a machinist. He came to Culmerville in 1917, opened the blacksmith shop and hired Paul Risch Together, Mr. Benke and Mr. Risch, shod the mules for Curtisville mines, made and repaired steel wheels and had a wood shop to repair the wooden wheels on the wagons used to deliver coal.

With the passing of this era, Mr. Benke transformed the blacksmith shop into an auto dealership in 1923. He sold and repaired automobiles.

The company has recently been sold to John Orsini but will continue to use the Benke name.

The Creamery was operated by W. David Norris who bought the Blanchard Coal Company in 1926 and changed the name. The Creamery was operated by W. David Norris who went to Penn State University to learn the creamery profession. Culmerville Coal Co. was owned by Joseph Batcher who bought the Blanchard Coal Company in 1926 and changed the name.

The company was started in 1918. The original owners built 28 houses in a group and formed the town of Blanchard. These were some of the best quality owned houses and were rented to Blanchard Company employees. When the Blanchard Coal Company was sold in 1926 the occupants were given the option of buying the homes. Most were sold quickly and have been well maintained and remodeled.

The employees were paid union scale wages. When the mine first operated under the Culmerville name, the wages were approximately \$2.00 a day and when it closed were approximately \$45.00 a day.

There were approximately 250 employees at the highest peak, many less during the depression days.

Most of the coal was lake coal which was shipped by rail to the lake and then to barges on the lake. A small portion of coal was sold to local individuals and truckers. The tippie burned in 1945 but the mine stayed in operation until 1953.

Many Culmerville miners walked to the coal mine which was only a mile or so away.

The company also bought coal from other companies for resale.

Smaller Mines

The Benke Coal Company operated near the Allegheny- Butler County line between 1923 and 1938.

The Henry Coal Company was located on Henry property west of the Kittanning Pike (Saxonburg Blvd. or K.D.K.A. Blvd.) It was owned by David (1824-1900) and John (1854- 1915) Henry as early as 1886. They supplied coal to the local farm people. The mine was given to McClain, Frank and Clarence Henry who were sons of John Henry. They mined it with the aid of another brother Bill and McClain's son, John, along with a few other employees. After John (Sr.) died, Frank worked in the mine in the winter and farmed the family farm during the crop season. Later he and Bill worked elsewhere. After McClain's death, Clarence worked in the mine until 1958.

A coal mine, owned by Charlie Bryan, was located over the hill, behind where the Blanchard Coal Company once was.

West Deer #1 Fire Department

The West Deer #1 Fire Department was started in Culmerville on March 21, 1929. The department raised funds to operate by collecting donations and holding card parties, raffles, dances, etc.

In August of the same year a fire truck was purchased, an American LaFrance for \$6150.00. After the fire truck was purchased, the firemen hauled used lumber from Dorseyville to construct a single bay fire hall on land owned by Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad. An addition was made to this building to accommodate additional vehicles and provide an area for social activities. This building was used from 1929 until the fall of 1969 when a new modern structure was built with over eight thousand square feet of area on the western side of the Culmerville Bridge.

The Ladies Auxiliary had done much to help the department. A junior fire department was activated in 1971.

"The Stand"

The "Stand" was owned and operated by Mary (Molly) McNaughton at the crossroads. The front of the building was constructed so that it could be completely or partially opened. Her homemade food was considered exceptionally appetizing but expensive. Ice cream cones, as well as candy, chewing gum, tobaccos, etc. were available.

Sara Hill had a sandwich shop in the addition on the front of Culmerville Auto Transit garage. The shop was closed after a short time.

The Culmerville Hotel was built in 1947 by owners, Fred and Andy Charney. The hotel consists of twelve rooms, one efficiency apartment, combination dining area, dance floor and bar. The brothers operated the hotel together for two years at which time Andy chose another profession and Fred took over the business. With the aid of his wife Julie, Fred operated the hotel until his death in 1968. After his death Mrs. Charney ran it until 1974. After 1974 she and Glenn Piper operated it until selling it August, 1983 to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bertha.

The Crossroads Hotel

The Crossroads Hotel was built by Anthony and Jean Busin. The two-story tavern was built in 1950 with the sleeping accommodations on the second floor. In 1954 these rooms were used for the second hand furniture business which Busin's also owned. In 1960 these rooms were needed to meet the hotel occupancy requirements and a third floor was added. There are 16 bedrooms on the second floor and an efficiency apartment on the third. The hotel has a kitchen, bar and dining area on the first floor and is now owned by Anthony (Jr.) and Mary Busin.

Culmerville Used Furniture Outlet

The Culmerville Used Furniture Outlet was owned by Anthony and Jean Busin. The first outlet was opened in 1953 in a Quonset hut. The business prospered and the second story of their tavern was used to house additional items. When this space was needed to meet hotel occupancy requirements in 1960 and additional space became available on the second floor of the Staley and Bryan garage, the business was moved across the I highway.

Sometime after 1964, when the buses were no longer garaged in the bus garage, Busin acquired the use of the garage area in addition to the second floor area.

After Mr. Busin's death in 1972, Mrs. Busin and Anthony, Jr. continued operating the business until 1981 when ill health prevented Mrs. Busin from continuing the business.

Hess Garage

The Hess Garage and service station was built in 1935 parallel to the highway, east of the bridge. Eddie DeVando took over the business in 1951 and continued until his death in Dec. 1963. His brother-in-law, Joe Makuta, continued to operate the business for Mrs. DeVando until April 1, 1976. Currently it is owned by Jura, Inc.

Culmerville Airport

The Culmerville Airport was started in 1951 by Fred O. Eiler. From 1951 to 1962 it was used basically as an instruction field and aircraft storage hanger. From 1962 until this writing it held a commercial license but was used for advertising banner towing, a private enterprise. From 1974-1976 skydivers boarded their plane here, jumped and returned to this field, providing entertainment for sightseers. Instruction to become a parachutist was available. An Electronics Company was operated here from 1977 to 1980.

Deer Lakes Mobile Home Park

Deer Lakes Mobile Home Park houses a large number of Culmerville residents. The 35 acres of land on which it is built was purchased by William and Ramona Moretti from Harry Davidson, Jr. and in 1970 preparation was made for road, gas lines, water, underground wiring and their private sewage system. There are nearly 100 single and double wide mobile or modular homes. A post office type mailbox near the entrance of the park has been constructed for convenience and security. The Culmerville Sportsman Club is located on Saxonburg Boulevard near Curtisville #2. The Club building contains a kitchen, dining area and bar. They also have a rifle range where an occasional turkey or ham shoot is held.

Picture 90 – Aerial Deer Lakes Mobile Home Park



Part of Deer Lake Mobile Home Park with Curtisville #2 in the background

Other businesses

From 1916-1924 Stanley Gray had a repair shop and a Model T Ford sub-dealership about 1/2 mile south of the crossroads on Saxonburg Boulevard. After the Ford garage closed, the Star Automobile was sold by "Smitty." Andy Charney had a Prestolite franchise and rebuilt batteries in 1957 & 58. This franchise was taken over by Frank Barlow. The battery operation has been discontinued but an auto- truck repair business started at the same time remains.

A Laundromat was operated near here. The Lloyd Concrete Products Co. and the Lloyd Vault Co. are currently in operation.

Consolaros started as an independent repair and service station in 1939 and continued in this capacity until 1948 when they took the Kaiser-Frazer franchise. They continued until 1954 when the manufacturer became defunct. After termination of this franchise, they were sub- dealers for Ford for a short time. In 1955, they acquired the Chrysler sales & service dealership until they closed in 1972.

John's Service Center and Sales is owned by John Fiorita and has been in a portion of the Consolaro building for the past year. Gallenz Auto Sales is owned by William E. Gallenz. Mr. Gallenz buys and sells automobiles and does auto body repairs. He has operated his business in the showroom section of the Consolaro building since 1972.

The Alex Norris Farm was purchased by the railroad company when the tunnel was removed. It was later sold to David and Mary (Browley) Norris for one hundred dollars. In 1938, the home was moved 600 feet up a steep hill at a cost of \$1 .00 a foot. The family lived in the house during the transition which took little more than a week.

Bell Haven was started in the early fifties by J. O. Elliott on an acre of ground on the Culmerville-Millertown Road. There are many bells on display on the grounds as well as exhibited in the home. The home and bell collection was turned over to the elder daughter, Iva Mae Long, in 1983 after Mr. Elliott's death.

Shady Brook Golf Course was built by Wilbur and Gertrude Ekas on the Ekas farm in 1960 and was used until 1980 when ill health hindered Mr. Ekas from managing it.

All of the land was at one time farmland. During the depression in the thirties some farmers were forced to sell part of their property to help pay expenses. Many of the on- coming generation had become nubile and wanted to build their own homes.

One of the first Pre-Cut Homes is now owned by the Frank Henry family. It is a Sears, Roebuck home that was built for Ed and Clara Henry McGinley about 1915.

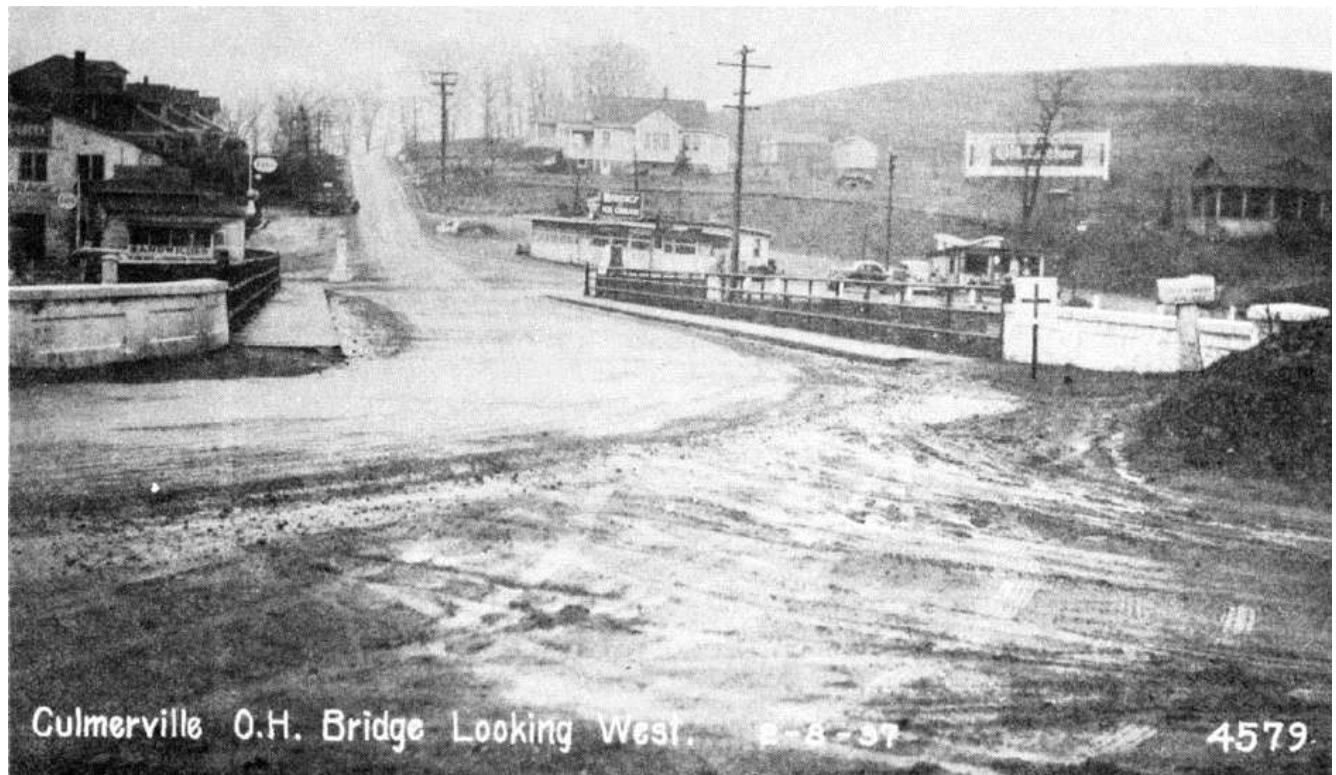
An 82-foot long earth shelter home is under construction by George and Joanne Golojuh on the site of the Culmerville School. The home will be 3/4 under ground upon completion. It contains a thermo hoop, a passive solar system which will cool and heat the home.

The number of new homes has been limited due to the lack of desirable building space. There are some new houses paralleling the railroad on Russellton Road.

We have had many small businesses: beauty shops, service stations, sandwich shops, snack bars, auto sub- dealerships, an ice cream parlor, nursery stock sales, Christmas tree sales, a kindergarten in the fire hall, etc.

Obviously, Culmerville has changed over the past years, usually for the better, but we are always striving for the improvement of our community

Picture 91 – Culmerville cross road 1937



This is the Culmerville crossroads in 1937. Notice the blinker at the intersection on the left and the roofs of the WPA toilets behind the gas station on the right. B. & L.E. R.R.



Fawn Haven #2 with Grouse Run in the background.

Post World War II Housing Developments

After World War II many of the suburban areas around Pittsburgh experienced "housing booms." This period of rapid expansion in some areas did not stop until suitable building land was gone, West Deer, being on the periphery of suburban development, got a late start and then only in the more desirable locations. The availability of water and sewage were also influencing factors.

The Magill Heights area, described previously, was the first of West Deer's major developments. Before this plan was completed, another one called Fawn Haven was under way. Developed by Norman Fry, Fawn Haven was built in three phases, each bearing a number, similar to the mining towns. Almost thirty years later these numbers are still in use.

These Fawn Haven homes were built in the period between 1956 and 1962 and were mostly three-bedroom brick homes. This plan had its own sewage treatment system and used West View water. It would eventually be tied in with the Deer Creek Drainage Basin Authority sewers. Since this development was on West Deer's western border, access to Route Eight was easy. The new residents were more oriented to Pittsburgh employment than that in the Allegheny Valley.

The total homes in the Fawn Haven Two and Fawn Haven Three is about 160. Fawn Haven One is almost entirely in Hampton Township.

Deer Park, a community of 162 homes, lies along East Union Road between the Deer Lakes High School and the East Union Crossroads. Developed by Ryan Homes' land development arm, it was built entirely on one farm, sometimes referred to as the Henry Baumgartel farm. This plan was also built in three phases.

Phase one had seventy-two homes, phase two had sixty-five, and the third phase, built on a single street, had only twenty-five. Most of the building, which had begun in 1972, was finished by 1975. The residents were somewhat divided in employment between Pittsburgh and the Allegheny Valley, both being within commuting distance.

One of the largest farms in West Deer was located in the extreme southwestern corner of the township. Known as the "Backhaus" place, it contained several hundred acres. Many older residents may remember the huge tower on the gas well drilled there in the 1930's. It was developed into streets and building lots by Norman Fry, who had previously developed Fawn Haven.

This plan, called Cedar Ridge, is located on Cedar Ridge Road and is, as previously described, in the southwest corner of the township. On the west it borders Hampton Township, on the south, the turnpike, and on the north, Cedar Ridge Road.

In the planning stage for some time, it opened with the Home Show in June 1978 when a number of homes by different builders were on display. The first residents were this author's daughter and son-in-law, the Stephen Szallays, who moved in during the home show, their home not being on display. A number of others whose homes were on display could not move in until after the two-week show was over.

Picture 93 – Aerial Fawn Haven #3

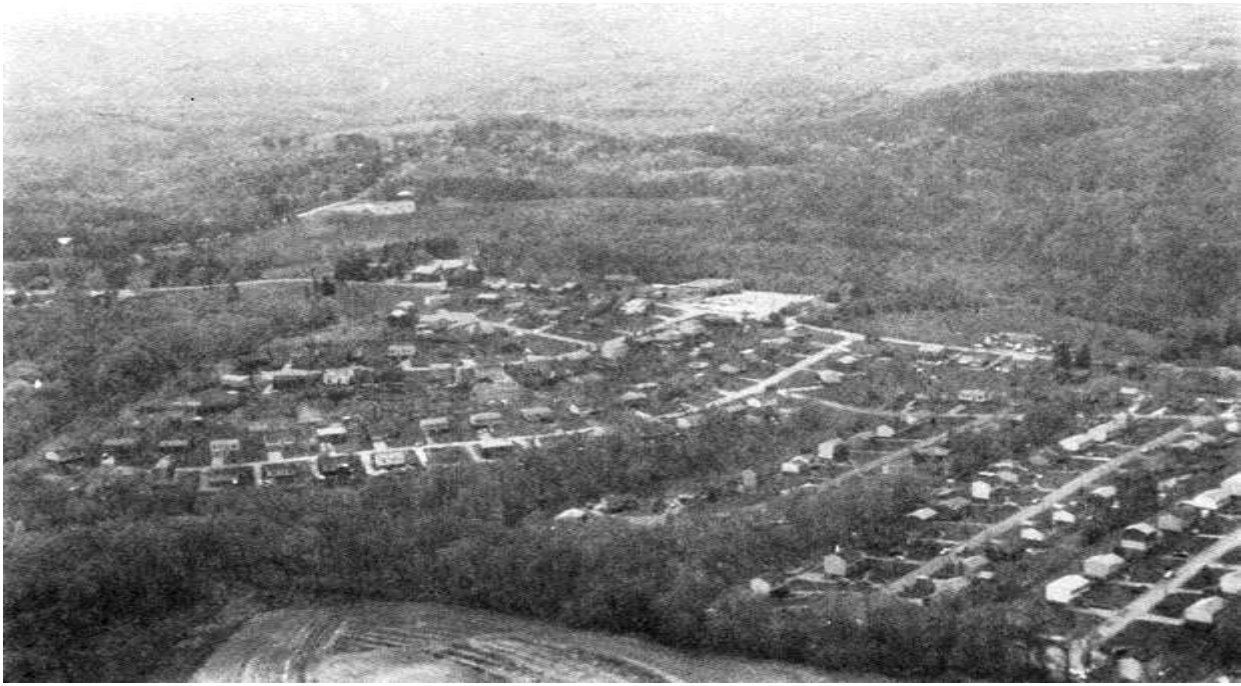


Fawn Haven #3 Route 910 is in the lower right

Picture 94 – Aerial of Deer Park



Picture 95 – Aerial of Deer Park second view



Picture 96 – Aerial of Cedar Ridge from West



Cedar Ridge from West. The street on the bottom of the picture was the site of the 1978 Home Show

Picture 97 – Aerial of Cedar Ridge from another angle



The homes built in Cedar Ridge varied considerably in size and design since a number of builders were involved. It has been noted that a number of these new citizens of West Deer, both here and in nearby Grouse Run, might be classified as "Yuppies," young, upward-moving professionals. Many are employed in the large corporations of the Allegheny Valley and Pittsburgh. Before long their weight must be felt in local government where control has moved from the farmers to the miners and is now moving toward newer residents in the developments.

Cedar Ridge has been, and is being, built in phases. There were seventy-eight lots in the first, ninety in the second, and sixty-nine in the third. The fourth phase is currently being built, bringing the total number of finished houses to about 265. The final phases have room for about 200 more.

Picture 98 – Aerial of Cedar Ridge showing part of the 1985 development



Cedar Ridge showing part of the 1985 development

When one would drive southwest in West Deer on Middle Road, the last farm on the right would have been a large vegetable farm known as the Lager Farm. Many of our citizens remember the large field of vegetables and the hot beds of vegetable plants. A few of our very old residents might even remember when it was called the "TB" farm. It was owned many years ago by the Tuberculosis League and was used as a "fresh air" country place for TB patients.

It was later purchased by the Lager family, who were vegetable growers. About 1977 they sold it to the Ryan people and plans were made for a four-phase development to be called Grouse Run.

These four phases had ninety-four, one hundred and four, sixty-six, and ninety-five lots respectively for a total of two hundred sixty-nine. By the end of 1984 all the lots had been sold, although perhaps two dozen remain without houses.

This location, a short distance from Cedar Ridge, appeals to the same type of buyer. Most are new to the area and wish a home in the country, not too far from the city.

The four plans described here have added about 850 houses to West Deer and have room for at least 200 more. The potential for additional plans is good. In another fifty years this will have to be totally rewritten.

Picture 99 – Aerial of Grouse Run



Grouse Run

Picture 100 – Aerial of Grouse Run another view



Medical Services

In the hundred-year history of West Deer by the Rev. Hughes and the Rev. Weisz, the only reference to medical care is the following:

Physicians were scarce and lived miles from the scattered homes. Many a mother passed through her most trying hours without aid other than the ski/fed hands of a kind neighbor's wife. Many a mother suffered sorely through the years and came to an early grave from lack of medical care or surgeon's skill.

Colds were treated by home remedies. Hot tea, made from pennyroyal, hoarhound, or boneset was a common remedy, the patient drinking a good quantity and was put to bed, covered well and left to sweat it out.

One of the first physicians of West Deer Township was Dr. Herron, who resided in the vicinity of Bull Creek church. Dr. Rowley, the elder, gave much of his time to the township although not a resident. One of the old residents remembering an incident when the Doctor, assisted by his wife, amputated a portion of the foot of Mr. Leslie that had been badly frozen.

Nothing is known now of Dr. Herron. More is known of a Dr. Rowley. He had an office in Millerstown but his home and home-office were near Culmerville. The Larry Murray family now resides in the Dr. Rowley house. It is not known exactly when Dr. Rowley practiced here but it is believed to have been before 1900 and for some time in the early part of this century. After Dr. Rowley passed away his widow taught in the Culmerville School for several years. Their grandson is now a judge of Superior Court.

Several doctors who served West Deer residents are known to have lived and had offices in Bakerstown, Dorseyville, and Ivywood. The names of Doctors Halstead, Stepp, Miller, and Merhson have been mentioned with these offices. Dr. Merhson is known to have made house calls in the Culmerville area in his horse and buggy.

There is no record of any dentists in West Deer before the coming of the mining towns or in the early years of these towns. A tooth simply decayed -until it ached and then it was pulled by the local doctor. The fee most commonly charged for this service was fifty cents.

Several dentists in West Deer are remembered from the early days. A Dr. Smith and a Dr. Kreimer were in practice in the second floor of the Long Building, where several members of that family now live. A Dr. Krumpe had an office in his house on the Bakerstown-Culmerville Road, as well as one in East Liberty. A Dr. Lutz came in somewhat later in the Green River Market (Davis) building in Little Italy (Curtisville). These were the only known dentists until after World War II when Dr. Pettito opened his office in Russellton. Some years later a Dr. Kistler had a part-time practice in his home-office on Shuster Road. His main practice was in Oakland but from 1967 to 1982 he had a part-time practice in semi-retirement. Dr. James Graham, a West Deer native opened his practice in Russellton in the early 1980's. West Deer has produced a number of dentists but Dr. Graham was the only one to "return home."

Not long after the two large mining operations began at the Russellton's and Curtisville's, each of the coal companies set up offices for their "company doctors." These doctors had the entire company's personnel to care for but were always available to the area farmers if needed. The names of these doctors are known to several generations of West Deer families. Among these names are the Doctors McMasters, Dickie, Campbell, Kuntz, Griffin, Cross, Richards, Jose, Allsop, Egan, and Reynolds.

In 1952 Dr. Reynolds resigned as the Republic Steel Company doctor to go into private practice. The Curtisville mines were about to close. This presented a crisis in local medical care which the miners' union took immediate steps to alleviate. Through the efforts of several local members and the district office, the Russellton Medical Group and the Russellton Building Inc. were instituted to house and operate a medical clinic. Dr. Ferrier was the first physician and was assisted by several nurses and an office staff. More doctors and specialists were added as needed. Dr. Fine is remembered as being on this staff.

In the early 1960's it became evident that this clinic could not continue in its present quarters. It was simply too small for the amount of business that was coming to it. Pressure from other areas was too great. This prompted the building of the facility in Harmarville which now serves this area. Many doctors including a growing number of specialists, are available through this facility.

When the Russellton Medical Group moved its operation from Russellton to its new building near Harmarville, West Deer was left without a primary medical facility. People could use this new clinic several miles away at Harmarville but the distance made it somewhat inconvenient. West Deer was left with only one doctor within the township and over 10,000 citizens. This (situation was to continue for about ten years.

In the mid-seventies communication between leading citizens and the St. Margarets Memorial Hospital resulted in the organization of a Citizens Advisory Committee. This committee met with administrators from SMMH and plans were formulated for a family health center. This committee consisted of Rev. Richard Kennedy, Peter Catanese, Gladys Hess, Alien Reid, and William Palmer. The idea of this local health center was very enthusiastically received by the citizens of West Deer.

St. Margarets applied for and received a generous grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This organization is a private philanthropy dedicated to the improvement of health in the United States. The amount received was \$401,944.00, of which \$331,000.00 was for the actual health center and the remainder to subsidize its operation until it became self-sufficient.

In the summer of 1977 a five-acre plot was purchased on the Russellton-Dorseyville Road and construction begun on the planned health center. During construction two trailers were set up so that patients could be cared for until the building was

completed. These new temporary facilities were used from July 1977 until the following May when the new building was completed.

From the beginning this facility was owned by SMMH and operated as a group practice by three physicians on the hospital staff. They called their group the Deer Lakes Medical Association. Doctors Morphy, Marks, and Matthews became familiar names to many West Deer citizens.

Seven years later (1985) SMMH maintains ownership of the health center facility and the center operates as the private practice of the same group, the Deer Lakes Medical Association. A fourth physician, Dr. Baecher, has been added to the group. In February 1985, the 100,000th patient was treated at the facility. The Center now provides a full range of family medical services including pediatrics internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology and geriatrics.

The Deer Lakes Family Health Center open by appointment five and a half days a week and a physician is on call twenty-four hours a day in case of emergencies.

Police History

by Samuel DiSanti

Before the coming of the mining towns to West Deer the only law officers in the township were the elected constables. This office was more of an honor than one of necessity. As one of the county historians in the last century stated, "For years West Deer has been noted for its quiet, and lack of excitement of all kinds." '.

With the coming of the mining towns and increased population there was an obvious need for more police. Fortunately the mining companies furnished their own "company police" and in general took care of their own problems. In fact they had their own private jail. In the 1940's as the coal companies were selling their houses and turning their company streets into public streets it became evident that West Deer would need a police department.

November 4, 1943 marked its beginning. Albert Sabatini became our first policeman at the salary of \$150.00 per month. He was paid five cents a mile to use his own car, properly insured, and the township was to furnish his uniform. He had to keep detailed records and present them to the Board of Supervisors the first of each month.

Three years later in 1946, William "Scotty" Thompson was appointed as an additional policeman under the same conditions as Albert Sabatini. Sabatini was made Chief and both were given raises to \$175.00 per month. Working conditions for police at this time were poor. Pay was low there were no holidays, and they were on call continually

In 1948 conditions improved for the policemen. They were given limited sick leave and a modest pension plan The police and the Lions Club sponsored a wrestling show to raise funds both for their own club and this pension fund. Today this pension program is much improved and is similar to that of state employees.

In 1949 our township police were authorized to cooperate with the State Police, County Detectives, and other municipal police in the pre-investigation of crime but only one township officer was to do so at one time.

The first police car was purchased in February 1949 and was a Chevrolet sedan costing \$1757.64. During the years that followed they bought Ford's, Hudson's, Plymouth's, and Studebaker's.

Patrolman Thompson resigned on November 2, 1950 and his position was filled by Stephen Radage of Bairdford. He would later become Police Chief in 1958 and continue for a total of twenty-eight years of faithful service until his retirement in February 1979. He was the first recipient of the Deer Lakes Business Association Hall of Fame Plaque.

Going back to 1956, Albert Sabatini had just completed a new brick home on Reaghard Drive when he died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Samuel DiSanti was appointed to fill this vacancy. Salaries were now up to \$350.00 per month, considered low by industrial standards. There were many reports now to be made and a policeman was expected to take a wide range of courses on law enforcement, drugs, narcotics, child abuse, accident procedures, first aid, and firearms use, all on his own time. By 1978 these courses had become mandatory with compensating time.

Sam DiSanti had served as a Deputy Constable for twelve years in West Deer prior to his police appointment. In August 1965 he was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant and served in that capacity until he was made Chief of Police in January 1980. In March 1982 he received a commendation from the Board of Supervisors, to be conveyed to his men as well, regarding the arrests of 28 persons and the recovery of over \$50,000.00 in stolen property.

In 1957 an agreement was made with Richland Township for Police Radio Service. There had been a previous agreement with the Pittsburgh Radio Base. In February 1957 Eugene Phillips of Bairdford became a member of our police force. He went on to become Sergeant in January 1982, working and handling his men well. Also in 1957 the police were given six paid holidays.

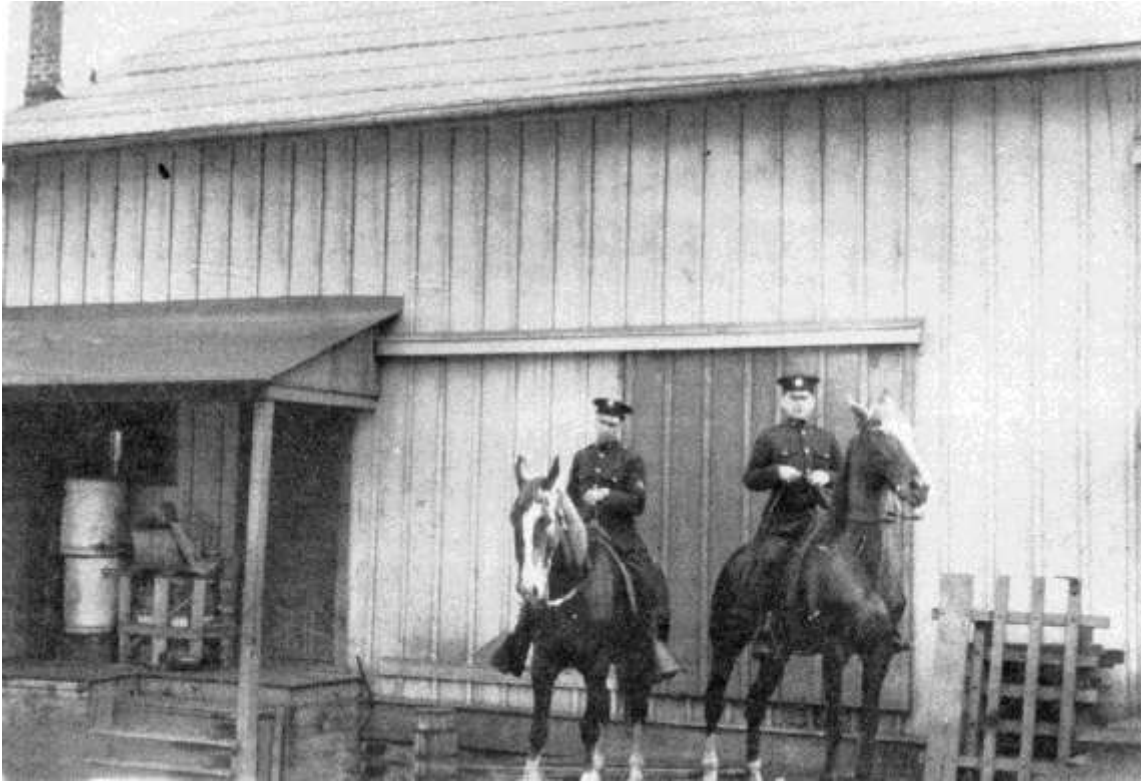
In 1959 Anthony "Tony" Arlott began working on the road department and two years later in 1961 began with the Police Department as a full-time police officer. He has served his community well and has constantly kept up-to- date on courses as well as marksmanship qualification.

On June 4, 1959 we entered into agreement with Richland Township, Middlesex Township, and Butler County for mutual police protection. In September 1960 we entered into agreement with a two-way police dispatch service with Richland Township.

In January 1960 a police work schedule was agreed upon and in addition no police officer was to act as a truant officer. Don Simonetti became a part-time police officer in July 1964 and became full-time a year later. He has served the township well

and has advanced his training at the Police Academy and the University of Pittsburgh. He has received commendations for his police work.

Picture 101 – Company Policeman on their horses about 1920



The upper picture, from Mary Leggens, shows Frank Parker and an unidentified Company Policeman on their horses about 1920. If they had need to lock up anyone then the Company Jail in Curtisville was used. It is shown in the lower photograph, taken by John Graff about 1955. Prisoners were kept in one end of the barn basement and horses in the other end. The cells were made of pre-fabricated steel and were used mostly on weekends when drinking and fighting were more common. Prisoners were usually released in time to go to work on Monday mornings.

Picture 102 – Company Jail in Curtisville about 1955



The West Deer Police entered into an agreement with the KQV New Operation Alert to keep stations informed of emergencies. This duty was given to Chief Radage. The Police also authorized Fawn and Frazer Townships to answer calls and provide protection service in and for the Townships of Richland and West Deer.

Rudy Truckley became a police officer in June 1968, starting first on a part-time basis, then full-time. Rudy has done well in his police work, once receiving a commendation from the Richland Police for his efforts in the apprehension of a burglar.

Many factors are dictating the need for more policemen. In February 1974 Stephen Chearno and Charles (Marty) Fleischer were hired as police officers. Both men had to undergo training and serve a probationary period. Fleischer was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in January 1982 and has been cited for outstanding service. Chearno has also been commended for outstanding work.

Our police department had really grown into something to be proud of. In 1974, Mr. Czwilga, Police Commissioner, received a letter of commendation from Robert Kroner stressing the cooperation and assistance of our police officers in the round-up of fifty-eight drug pushers. Each and every one of our officers had contributed their efforts for such an accomplishment. ,

Our Police Department branched out with the purchase of radar equipment, police photographs through the Photographic Safety Consultants, Inc.; the Block Parent Program; and the Emergency Preparedness Manual. We had also entered into agreement with Shaler for a joint police radio base.

January 1983 brought about the existence of the Crime Prevention Program under the direction of Chief DiSanti, who appointed Officer Chearno to take charge. This program, along with Officer Chearno and his volunteers, has helped our community to see the need for a Crime Watch. They have videotaped our children as well as some of our senior citizens. The senior citizen taping was implemented for those considered to be a problem if they should wander away.

In September of 1982, the Board hired Russell Linderman as a part-time police officer; then in July of 1983, hired Joseph Catanese, Harry Compson, Thomas Czwilga, and Greg Pajavcsik. Paul Wain was hired in September of 1983. On June 14, 1984, Joseph Catanese, Harry Compson, and Thomas Czwilga resigned, followed by Russell Linderman in July 1985. This left Greg Pajavcsik and Paul Wain, who serve to relieve our full time officers in addition to maintaining their positions when off duty. Each is fully trained and works about twenty hours per week.

In addition to the part-time officers, we have had Auxiliary Police. These dedicated men, who have served our Township Police Department in traffic details, parades, stack-outs, and numerous other police responsibilities, I deserve a lot of credit. They have taken proper training and given of themselves without any compensation. These men are: Frank Barlow. Donald Cushman, Harry Compson, Clarence Dillner, John Hammerman, Joseph Hohman, Ernest Koberlein, James Rogers, George Valerio, and Jack Compson.

Our West Deer Police Department from 1943 to the present day has grown to fulfill the needs of the Township. We now have a Police Commissioner, Matt Arena; a Chief, Sam DiSanti, a Lt., Marty Fleischer; a Sgt., Gene Phillips; four full-time officers, Tony Arlott, Den Simonetti, Rudy Truckley, and Steve Chearno; two part-time officers, Paul Wain and Greg Pajavcsik. They are dedicated and honest men of whom we can be proud. Some people took the time to commend some of the Officers, but all of our Officers have done outstanding service to all while expecting no praise. They answer every call with patience and understanding and a great desire to help. At this sesquicentennial celebration we can really take pride in our West Deer Police Department.

The Miners

The Miner Organizes

The labor movement in America was gaining considerable momentum in the years prior to the First World War. In the coal industry in particular, the plight of the miner was such that an organization was needed to speak for him.

The first union charter in West Deer was issued to the miners at the Francis Mine at Curtisville No. 2, in 1915. Later charters were issued to locals at Russellton, Bairdford, Curtisville No. 1, and Superior.

The unions were all chartered in 1915 but were not recognized by the three coal companies involved. Early in 1916 a general strike by the unions forced recognition and the negotiation of a contract which was signed by the coal companies and was endorsed by the United Mine Workers of America on April 10, 1916.

Peace and tranquility never existed in the coal industry. On one hand was a constant demand for higher wages and better working conditions and on the other economic pressures for just the opposite. Labor strife was common. The strike was the only weapon the miner had and he had to use it frequently to better his working and living conditions. He lived in a company house, bought his groceries on credit at the company store, and lived by company rules. He was free, however, to quit his job and work someplace else under the same conditions. On the other hand, the coal companies often were generous in their contributions toward facilities for the miners' health, recreation, and religious welfare. Mining town histories are full of stories of the good, the bad, and the ugly.

When Philip Murray became president of the Executive Board of District No. 5, one of his first goals was to establish some uniformity in pay scales within the area of the Thick Upper Freeport Vein. A conference between the operators and miners resulted in a satisfactory agreement with uniform scales for tonnage, prices, and classifications. This proved satisfactory until April 1, 1927. The resulting strike is a story in itself. It is given here in some detail.

The Miner Strikes

The adult population of West Deer is familiar with the song, "Sixteen Tons," made popular by Ernie Ford a few years ago. Our young people would do well to listen to the words of this song. Nothing reflects the plight of the early miner in West Deer better than the words of the song. The company store, the check-off system, and the economic rut which the miner was always in as he tried to support his large family, make up a very real part of West Deer's history. The coal industry has always been marked by a history of conflict between the company and the miner. These battles were sometimes verbal but more often were of more serious confrontation. The company had many ways to wage its economic war but the miner had only one: the strike.

There have been many coal strikes in West Deer but one stands above the rest. Old timers refer to it as the "Great Coal Strike of 1927." Hughes/Weisz in their "Hundred Years of Progress" give a good account of the background of the union in West Deer and the subsequent strikes.

The laborers, in the mines of West Deer Township began to figure in the labor movement in 1915. The miners congregated for the first time in Oppenheim Hall, Curtisville No. 2, in March of 1915. They selected their officers and immediately thereafter applied for and received the first charter issued by the United Mine Workers of America, in West Deer Township. Later charters were issued to miners at Russellton, Curtisville No. 3, Curtisville No. 1, and Superior. The miners were united and their local unions functioning.

They were chartered by a bona fide labor organization, The United Mine Workers of America. However the operators of the mines would not recognize their union as a medium for bargaining for them. "What are we to do?" they asked themselves. "Strike," they said, and strike they did. Several strikes took place in the early part of 1916 until they obtained recognition of their union and negotiated a wage contract. This contract had been signed by individual coal companies and on April 10, 1916, it was endorsed by the District No. 5 Executive Board of the United Mine Workers of America.

Much confusion reigned in West Deer Township and surrounding mining territory as a result of misunderstanding in the interpretation of a basic agreement made in New York City between the Scale Committee of operators and miners. This situation led to changes in personnel of District No. 5 Executive Board. President Van Bittner and Vice President Patrick Hanaway resigned their positions and Phillip Murray was elected President and Robert Gibbons Vice President.

When Mr. Murray took charge of affairs, his first move was to effect a joint meeting of operators and miners of the Freeport Thick Vein, for the purpose of eliminating differentials existing as a result of contracts previously negotiated by the independent mines. This conference was very satisfactory in effecting a uniform scale for all tonnage, prices, and wages paid for the various classifications employed throughout the territory. From this conference originated an association among the Freeport vein coal operators. The relationship between the United Mine Workers Union and this operators association proved very satisfactory until April 1, 1927.

The coal operators on April 1, 1927, would not sign a wage agreement with the union. This attitude resulted in one of the most prolonged strikes in history. There was much suffering among the miners and their families. The miners were evicted from the coal companies' houses in which they lived. They were forced to seek some means of sheltering for themselves and their families. With financial aid from the treasury of their local and higher offices they bought cheap lumber and built small houses which they called "Barracks." They established temporary relief bases from which they distributed foodstuffs and clothing 'among the miners and their families.

A number of our older citizens lived during this strike and were old enough to be aware of the situation. The following statements are made from discussions with some of these people.

The Jacksonville Agreement, in effect at a number of mines in the United States, called for a basic daily wage of \$7.50 for eight hours work. The local coal companies would not sign and in an effort to break up the union ordered the miners to work at their offer (about \$6.00) or get out of the company houses. Squads of "Coal and Iron" police enforced the order.

Each mining town had its "barracks." They were erected on available private property adjacent to the company town. At Bairdford, the barracks were across the road from the present St. Victor church. The Curtisville barracks were at the site of the present West Deer Alumni Club. At Russellton they were built in the Valley below the town which would place them behind the yellow brick No. 1 school in the direction of the Shop N' Save Supermarket.

Ex-residents of the barracks tell of the cracks in the weather boarding which let in the cold air during the winter of 1927-28 when many miners had to spend the winter in them. Food was distributed weekly from trucks and included flour and potatoes but very little meat. A number of miners went to live with relatives elsewhere until the strike was over.

The coal and iron police, at least in Curtisville and Bairdford, had horses. The Bairdford horses were stabled in the present post office building. The boarding houses in each mining town were used by the police. A number of state police were supposed to have been quartered here for awhile.

There are many stories of the hardships suffered by the miners during this strike. It was a massive effort on the part of the coal operators to break the union and break it they did. As the strike went into 1928 many of the miners were defeated financially and their morale was broken. A few moved away and got work at other mines. Those that stayed slowly moved back to their company houses and went back to work for whatever wages they were offered. While this process went on the coal and iron police kept tight rein in the company towns. For the last holdouts life was not easy. If they were suspected of being union organizers they would never be called back.

In the period between 1928 and the mid-thirties when federal legislation during the Roosevelt administration gave encouragement and protection to union organization every effort was made to keep union organizers out of mines and out of the company towns. There are horror stories of some of the tactics used by the coal companies to get rid of organizers. One such story involved a "planted match, an in-mine search and an ex-employee caught carrying matches in the mine. In those days a fired miner might find his family and furniture at the end of the Company Street and off company property. I

Those days are part of our not-so-glamorous history. Fortunately, most of us have a better way of life today. As we remember, let us not forget.

Picture 103 – Francis (Curtisville #2) Night shift miners.



Part of the night shift group themselves in the lamp-house of Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) before going underground.

Form R. S. "Sue" Sukle

Bloody Harlen, Ludlow, Mattewan, and the Battle of Blair Mountain are all legends of labor history, yet the 1927-1928 Strike in the western Pennsylvania coalfields merits only a paragraph or two whenever a rare reference can be found.

The 1927 – 1928 Miners' Strike lasted sixteen months. Approximately 150,000 miners and their families were put out of their homes to face the harshest winter in 50 years in flimsy, unheated barracks or tents. Inadequate food, warm clothing, bed covers, and sanitation in overcrowded camps allowed disease to run rampant.

Two movies were made about the strike. A documentary, "The Miners' Strike" (1928) shot by Sam Burke in cooperation with the National Miners' Relief Committee, was banned and only shown at Communist meetings or rallies. The other, Black Hell, was written by the highly regarded Judge Michael Mussmano from Pittsburgh. Ceding to pressure from the National Coal Association, Warner Brothers had it redone. The Hollywood version, Black Fury, starring Paul Muni bore little resemblance to the original screenplay. Even so, it still was considered too radical by the censors and banned even after the controversial parts were chopped out. The film soon was "swept under the rug."

Over 150,000 miners and their families who were evicted from their homes, denied civil rights, and subjected to extreme brutality at the hands of Coal and Iron Police. Thousands died, yet the strike was not deemed worthy of documentation and "swept under the rug!" The events were censored into obscurity

[Back to Work](#)

After the miner went back to work, he labored under two serious drawbacks: he had no union to protect him and the nation was in a serious depression. If he quit his job he had no place to go. On paper the miner in West Deer was hardly ever unemployed. The statisticians in Washington were not using the term "part-time employment". Some miners worked only a few days a week while others worked almost daily, usually in summer. When the Great Lakes froze in winter and shipping stopped, so did some of West Deer mines. Work was never steady but the miner did survive. State-sponsored social study in 1937 showed only for families in West Deer receiving welfare aid and only small number on WPA.

They worked without union protection until 1933 where federal legislation gave the rank and file the right to organize and have a union. The local unions were then reorganized under these guidelines. The pictures of Franklin Roosevelt and John L. Lewis were on the walls of many living rooms.

Although unionized, the miner still lived in a company house, bought his groceries at the company store, and lived by a number of company rules and regulations. In a sense he was still a company vassal. The national union did improve wages. Daily wages during at least part of the depression were \$3.76 with no portal-to-portal allowance. Rent and electricity and other items such as coal were deducted first and ran as high as \$14.00 a month. The bill at the company store took most of the remaining pay depending on the number of days per pay worked. Whatever pay was coming was paid in cash. In some areas the miner got paid in company script which could only be spent at the company store.

The miner began buying cars. By the 1930's the second generation was evident and making its own lifestyle. Cars began showing up all over West Deer's mining towns. The Model T and Model A were still popular but newer cars were coming in. Although many of the older people still used the bus and train, their children were in the auto generation,

There were local unions at Bairdford, Curtisville and Russellton. This author wrote in his master's thesis in the 1950's that the strongest influence in West Deer at that time was the miners' unions. They were strong in the economic, social and political influences in the mining towns and in the township. At the time of the schoolteachers' strike in February 1947 there were five school board members, all belonging to the United Mine Workers.

The strike was the chief tool the union had to improve wages and working conditions. The national organization bargained for wages over a large area but the local had to handle smaller grievances of a lesser nature. National strikes generally followed the termination of a contract period. A local walkout could happen at any time for any reason. As one miner said, "We would throw the water out of our pail and go home for some reason and then wonder later what it was and why we did it." These local walk-outs never made any great impact on the overall economy. It was customary in the mines to layoff for twenty-four hours if anyone was killed in a mining accident.

Every union local had its grievance committee, which handled the local complaints. Unions were also active in giving their members safety education but the company generally sponsored the first aid training and rescue work.

In the later 1930's there was one strike which was not for better wages. The steelworkers of Republic Steel were having problems organizing and the miners of the captive mines went on a sympathy strike to aid their brothers in the steel mills.

During World War II, a serious strike led by John L. Lewis brought daily wages to over \$6.00 a day. This strike was popular with the miner but not with the rest of the nation and the men in the armed forces.

After the war the coal companies sold their houses, giving first choice to the miners who lived in them. The company streets became township roads and the grip of the company lessened. The union by then was very strong and both the coal industry and the steel industry were doing well. Although the company stores were still in operation, the miner could buy his groceries where he pleased. There were a number of local, independent grocery stores. Some so-called company stores gave credit, which gave them some advantage.

In 1953 The Bairdford and Curtisville No. 2 mines closed and Ford Collieries leased their coal reserves to Republic Steel. The miners in those towns suffered the unemployment shock thirty years ago that many steelworkers and others are suffering today.

By the 1980's Republic Steel sold their holdings to LTV and in the fall of 1982 the Russellton mine ceased most of its operations. In the almost forty years that this author has been in West Deer, employment in the mines has gone from about 1200 to almost nothing. The very strong unions of the post-war years have faded away. At some time in the future, when demand for coal is greater than at present, the remaining reserves will undoubtedly be removed. Coal will not be king again but it may provide some jobs for a number of miners for a while.

The Geography and Geology of West Deer Township

West Deer Township, Allegheny County, has the shape of a square which is about five and seven-tenth miles in the east-west direction and five and one-tenth miles in the north-south direction. The area of this square is 28.65 miles and the acreage is about 18,500.

The 1980 census places the population of West Deer at 10,602 persons. The 1985 estimate by township officials is much higher, at 12,600. Accounting for much of this change are the four hundred or so new homes built after the federal census. We may safely assume that the population is somewhere between twelve and thirteen thousand.

The one significant change in our population is the rapid decrease in foreign-born residents. At one time this group made up a high percentage of our population. By 1350 it was down to 14 percent and by 1980 was only a few percent.

West Deer Township lies slightly north of the 40th parallel of latitude, between the approximate lines of 36 and 40 minutes. With regard to longitude; it is located at 79 degrees west, between 49 and 55 minutes. If we were to compare it to well-known cities on the same lines we would say that it is as far north as Salt Lake City and is due north of Charleston, South Carolina.

Our township lies within the dissected Allegheny Plateau, south of the southernmost glacial advance and almost entirely within the drainage basin of Deer Creek. Two parallel streams flowing southward have created valleys in the eastern and western halves, divided in the center by a ridge which averages between 1100 and 1200 feet in elevation. These two north-south valleys have smaller dendritic valleys joining them from both sides.

Deer Creek, which flows southward in the western valley, is the larger stream of the two and drains over half the total area. It rises along the northern border at an elevation of over 1100 feet and leaves the southern border at an elevation of about 850 feet. Little Deer Creek, the eastern stream through whose valley the railroad runs, drains about forty percent of the total area. It rises on the northern border at about the same elevation as Deer Creek and leaves the southern border at slightly under 900 feet. It empties into Deer Creek three miles to the south. The combined streams flow into the Allegheny River at Harmarville.

Two minor exceptions to the drainage pattern exist. In the northwestern corner the water from about 100 acres drains to the northwest to a tributary of Glade Run which empties into the Beaver River at Ellwood City. The northeastern corner of the township is crossed by Bull Creek, which drains about a square mile. It leaves the township at an elevation of slightly less than 900 feet and flows into the Allegheny River at Tarentum.

The local relief is about 300 feet. It is not generally marked by steep hills and therefore does not appear to have this much difference. The two exceptions are knobs, which rise to 1267 feet and over 1300 feet. These knobs do appear as high steep hills. If you stand on Route 910 and look at the tower on Dinner's Knob you are viewing the greatest visible difference in

elevation in West Deer Township. From the road to the top of the hill is 336 feet. You are not looking at the highest point, mentioned later in this chapter, it just appears that way.

The soils of West Deer, for the most part, belong to the Gilpin series. They are almost entirely derived from shale and fine-grained sandstone's. The soils are generally not too deep, are naturally acid, and have moderate to low natural fertility. Available moisture varies with soil depth but generally is moderate.

The soil types include *Silt Loams*, *Shale Loams*, *Channery Loams*, *Clay Loams*, and *Stony Loams*. One of the more common soils found on many a farm is the *Westmoreland Silt Loam*.

Both erosion and depletion have taken their toll on West Deer's soils. The landscape is dotted with abandoned fields covered with *Poverty grass*, *Brome Sedge*, and *Scrub brush*. On land where soil conservation and proper soil management have been practiced the productivity varies from moderate to high.

The natural vegetation was that of mixed hardwood with the exception of some coniferous growth in the lower Deer Creek valley. Hemlock can be seen still growing in that area.

Most of the land was cleared at one time with the exception of areas, which were either left for farm wood lots or had soils too rocky or thin to farm.

West Deer lies entirely within the Northern Appalachian Coal Field. The Pittsburgh vein was found in a few high areas. History records that a small mine on Dawson's Knob (Dinner's) operated before 1850. There were also country bank mines on Murdy's Knob south of the East Union crossroads. Many more mines were on this same ridge farther south in Indiana Township. Some say this is why Rich Hill got its name. Stripping operations removed all the coal from Murdy's Knob and lowered the elevation of West Deer's highest point sometime around World War II.

The coal deposit of much greater importance was that of the Upper Freeport vein. It was a high-grade bituminous coal of excellent coking quality. It was used for fuel, chemicals, and coke. The total amount under West Deer was estimated as high as a hundred million tons.

The "Thick" or "Double" Freeport vein is the local term given to that part of the Upper Freeport vein in areas where it is considerably thicker than its normal three to four feet. In West Deer Township this area includes all of the area east of Deer Creek except the Bull Creek Valley. Two-thirds of West Deer had the thick vein while the remaining part had the normal or "low" coal.

The thick Freeport coal averages about six feet in thickness, with a characteristic boney six to eleven inches in thickness and located from two to four feet below the roof. Some cannel coal is found above the roof in local areas but that is not characteristic. The clay floor found in many places is also not persistent.

The coal vein rises slightly to the north but varies somewhat in the east-west direction, although the average elevation is consistent. In general, it has the same conformity as a sheet of corrugated metal roofing, with the longer dimension to the north and elevated slightly.

Prior to the 1900 there were nine country bank mines operated in the township, mostly by farmers on a part-time basis. There was no demand for coal in the summer and therefore mining activity was restricted to cold weather demand. These mines with one exception were located in the Deer Creek and Bull Creek valley areas where slopes into the low coal were used. The entry into the Pittsburgh coal was on a high knob and went in on a level drive. These early mines never furnished a livelihood for more than five or six families at one time. Most were late nineteenth century operations.

After 1903 when exploitation of the coal resources was begun on a large scale, West Deer began to grow into a large mining camp. Five shafts, each employing as many as five hundred, were in operation in the early 1920's. Another mine, a slope into low coal, employed almost 150 men. In later years another large slope mine and two strip mine operations were to open. No accurate measure of the amount of coal removed is available but it is conservatively estimated at 75,000,000 tons.

With the final closing of West Deer's last large mine, most of the coal under the township had been removed. Since the major coal companies owned coal beyond the township boundaries, much of the coal removed in recent years was not West Deer coal.

The 28.65 square miles of West Deer are crossed by a hundred and five miles of township, county, and state roads. Even a short distance of Interstate 76 (the turnpike) crosses the southwest corner of the township. The main roads, with exceptions in the more populated areas, follow basically the same pattern they had at the turn of the century. The roads, of course, have been improved and many are hard-surfaced, but the layout has seen only minor changes. Most houses in West Deer face these roads and in only a few cases are long country lanes evident.

Bus or jitney transportation has been available in some areas since 1914 or 1915-The two bus companies, which served West Deer for many years, were taken over by the Port Authority which now operates the only public transportation available.

The Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad was built through West Deer before 1900. There were stations at Culmerville, Curtisville, and Russellton, which handled freight and passengers from early in this century until 1950 when passenger service was discontinued. Some freight and considerable coal were carried until the last mine closed at Russellton in 1982.

West Deer has two small airfields but no scheduled flights. Taxi and charter service has been available at one time or another.

Public utilities have been an important limiting factor to housing development. City water and natural gas were well on their way when World War II forced a curtailment on expansion. After the war water lines were put in as individuals, developers, and the school district paid for such lines. Several grants helped the township supervisors extend water lines to the mining communities which did not have water and this made it available to many miles of road frontage. Gas lines were extended by the gas companies as new customers applied for gas. Larger housing developments have streets and water lines put in by the developer.

Public sewers have been installed in the more heavily populated parts of the township. There are a few homeowners who have sewers but no water and some that have water but no sewers. West Deer is a rural municipality and will remain so for many years. The size is simply too large and the cost too high to have all utilities available to every one.

With regard to elevation. West Deer lies between 900 feet and 1300 feet above sea level. The lowest point is where Deer Creek crosses the southern border at about 850 feet. The two highest points are Murdy's Knob and a hill on the Alexandrunas farm on Sandy Hill Road, both points being above 1300 feet. Murdy's Knob has long been regarded as the highest point but coal stripping some years ago may have lowered it to about equal with the other hill. The 1908 topographic map indicates that this knob exceeded 1340 feet in elevation. The 1960 map simply shows that it exceeds 1300 feet, with a strip mine inside the contour line. The older maps were made with field surveys and the later ones with dimensional aerial photographs. We simply conclude that both points are slightly over 1300 feet above sea level.

Dillner's Knob at 1267 feet is the most prominent knob in the township, although McCredie's Hill, where the aircraft spotters watched during World War II, is within a few feet of the same height but is not as noticeable.

In general, most of the surface land was not too steep for agricultural settlement nor has it hindered later housing. The climate of this region is referred to as the humid continental, which means that it is influenced by the continental land mass of America with slight modification due to nearness to the Great Lakes and the Atlantic seaboard. The greatest influences to our climate are air masses from the west, northwest, and the Gulf of Mexico.

The ground water in West Deer has been a variable factor over the years. The mines, in a sense, acted as huge underground drainage ditches from which large quantities of water were pumped to the surface to flow away in natural watercourses. This served to lower the water table below its natural level. This caused many wells and some small streams to go dry. Some time after the cessation of mining the water sources were restored, but they were not always as abundant as they had been.

Precipitation is distributed rather evenly throughout the year with about one-fourth of the total falling as snow. The annual average is over thirty-six inches, with June, the wettest month, receiving about four inches and October, the driest, -two and one-half inches. Snow lies on the ground an average of thirty-three days. During summer months the sun shines more than 50 percent of the possible time.

The normal temperature is 50.6 degrees with the January norm 29 degrees and July 72.3 degrees.

For the student of geology or for anyone interested in rocks, some information on the rock structure under West Deer is presented here. Although not easily observed, these rock outcroppings can be seen in road and railroad cuts and in exposed cliffs such as Campbell's Cliffs. Those who have dug the mine shafts or drilled water, gas, or oil wells in West Deer are familiar with these layers of rock.

The rock under West Deer lies almost entirely within the Pennsylvania system and includes the lower part of the Mongahela group and most of the Conemaugh group. The following chart lists the strata with each name and the average thickness.

The Rock under West Deer Chart

Mongahela Group (lower part)	Feet	0	650.5	
Pittsburgh sandstone	20	20	630.5	Murdy's Knob
Pittsburgh Rider coal	1	21	629.5	
Shale	10	31	619.5	
Pittsburgh coal	6	37	613.5	
Conemaugh Group				
Shale and limestone's	35	72	578.5	
Shales	30	102	548.5	
Shales and limestone's	21	123	527.5	
Connelisville sandstone	15	138	512.5	
Shale	5	143	507.5	
Clarksburg coal	0.5	143.5	507	
Clarksburg limestone	3	146.5	504	
Clarksburg clay	8	154.5	496	
Vari-colored clays and shale's	45	199.5	451	
Morgantown sandstone	33	232.5	418	
Wellersburg coal	0.5	233	417.5	
Wellersburg clay	21	254	396.5	
Birmingham shale	30	284	366.5	
Duquesne coal	1	285	365.5	
Duquesne clay	9	294	356.5	
Graffon sandstone	2	296	354.5	
Colored clays or shale's .	15	311	339.5	
Ames limestone, marine	3	314	336.5	
Harlem coal	0.5	314.5	336	
Pittsburgh red beds-clays	30	344.5	306	
Upper Saltsburg sandstone	30	374.5	276	
Bakerstown coal	1	375.5	275	
Bakerstown limestone and clay	10	385.5	265	
Lower Saltsburg sandstone	20	405.5	245	
Woods Run limestone	1	406.5	244	
Woods Run coal	0.5	407	243.5	
Shales and clays	10	417	233.5	Russellton coal Washer
Lower Woods Run limestone	0.5	417.5	233	

Shales		35	452.5	198	
Pine Creek or Cambridge limestone		2	454.5	196	
Buffalo sandstone		25	479.5	171	
Shales		30	509.5	141	
Brush Creek limestone, marine		1	510.5	140	
Shales		10	520.5	130	
Brush Creek coal		1	521.5	129	
Shales		10	531.5	119	
Upper Mahoning sandstone		27	558.5	92	
Mahoning coal, clay, limestone		15	573.5	77	Cherry Valley-Gizienski Store
Lower Mahoning sandstone		25	598.5	52	
Allegheny Group (upper part)					
Upper Freeport coal	(2-10 feet)	10	608.5	42	
Fire clay	(2-6 feet)	6	614.5	36	
Upper Freeport limestone		4	618.5	32	
Shale		7	625.5	25	
Bolivar clay		7	632.5	18	
Butler sandstone		15	647.5	3	
Lower Freeport coal		3	650.5	0	

(NOTE - in the original book the total depth was 680 feet but based on the numbers provided after entering the depths the total is 650.5 ft)

Imagine that you are standing on Murdy's Knob (before the coal was mined and stripped). You would be at the top of the chart. All the layers on the chart (unless eroded in prehistoric times) would be under you. If you were at the Russellton coal washer you would be at one of the shale's a hundred feet above the Freeport coal. If you were in Cherry Valley at the Gizienski stone quarry you would be looking at the Lower Mahoning Sandstone with some limestone on top. Farmers have reported seeing the outcropping of thin coal veins. You will note there are five thin veins of coal between the Pittsburgh and Freeport formation. This is why the Conemaugh group is referred to as the "Barren Measures" by geologists. You will also note the Upper Freeport coal at the bottom of the chart. Miners tell of a fairly solid roof (Mahoning Sandstone) and a clay floor, which could come up on a timber prop. In mining this vein of coal, roof bolts made for safer conditions than timber props.

Far below the surface of West Deer are layers of sandstone known as "sands" to the driller's of oil and gas wells. These lie between 1, 400 and 4,000 feet below the surface. There were possibly eleven "sands" drilled through or into under West Deer, which produced varying amounts of oil and gas. Yields varied from nothing to one hundred barrels a day. These sands were located from about 1300 feet (Murrysville Sands) to 2600 feet (Speechley Sands) below the Freeport coal vein. Earlier wells in West Deer went to the "Fifth Sand" which was about 1800 feet deep. To the geology student most of these wells were drilled in the Upper Devonian and along the Kellersburg anticline. One gas and oil field was known as the Dorseyville field. Another pool was called the Deer Creek Church Pool.

In this area drilling for oil and gas was at its peak from 1886 to 1904, with peak production in the 1890's. Peak gas production in western Pennsylvania came in 1906.

Few fossils of invertebrates can be found in West Deer. The Ames limestone has some but its outcroppings are hard to find. A few are also found in the upper portions of the Birmingham shale. Plant fossils are abundant in several of the lower shale's; especially those exposed along Campbell's Cliffs.

This Old House

Most old houses like the one in the popular song have many stories in their past. They could tell of love, poverty, hardship, and tragedy. The old houses of West Deer were no different than those built in other frontier areas.

Who has the oldest house? We don't really know and chances are, the owner doesn't know either. Some families kept better records than others while other families simply handed down stories from one generation to the next. Facts often get lost in the retelling of stories.

The first house in West Deer, according to historical records, was a log cabin built by one Benjamin Paul. In 1796 log cabins had one room, a dirt floor, often no windows, and a clapboard or sod roof. His was probably typical of the period.

In the evolution of house-building we should consider at least three phases for the farmhouses of West Deer. First was the log cabin such as Benjamin Paul probably built with such family help as was available. The fireplace and chimney were built of logs and lined with about six inches of clay. The roof of clapboards was usually held in place with weight poles.

Next came the log house built of squared, hewn logs. It was often built or "raised" in several days with the help of a number of neighbors. There were generally four windows of glass and a chimney and a fireplace of mortar and stone. The second floor or loft was more sophisticated and often had crude steps leading to it. The floor was generally split logs or sawed timber. The roof had pole rafters and nailed wooden shingles. This type of log housed was in common usage in West Deer between its founding (1836) and the turn of the century (1900).

The third type of housing had more variation. Some hand-sawn timber came into use before this area had sawmills. This was done by two men, one standing in a pit and getting more than his share of sawdust and the other standing on the log or plank. The first sawmills were "up and down" mills and the timber cut there shows a perpendicular kerf. Later mills had circular blades and show a curved cut. Houses built by mid-century were usually of either locally made brick or locally rough lumber. A few stone houses were built of stone quarried near the building site. One local stone house actually is located in the stone quarry, having been built there in 1859. Locally made brick was available from the early 1850's and several houses and churches are

known to have been built then. These buildings usually had pole rafters and slate roofs. Some of the beautiful old farmhouses and church buildings are still in use, although some parts of them have been rebuilt. Between 1860 and 1900 a number of farmhouses of wood, brick, and stone replaced the log houses that had preceded them. Some of these still show a certain colonial charm. If we were to typify one of these we could imagine a two-story, red brick or frame, with a clay floor in the basement. The roof would be slate and would have three or four chimneys coming from the many fireplaces used for heating in the winter. The walls would be of sand plaster and would not be as smooth as walls built today. The pump and well would be close to the back porch or there would be a nearby spring house for water and food storage. The other necessary outbuildings would include the coal or wood shed and the privy. Many had a bake oven outside which had a round or beehive too. Few people today remember these ovens. Some also had a separate wash house with facilities for heating water.

One of West Deer's last log houses, now rebuilt at the Tour-Ed Mine near Tarentum, was removed from its original site in 1974. Close inspection of the photo elsewhere in this book reveals some interesting facts. The logs appear to be hewn and original as well as the rafters. The roof, however, has sheeting boards and roofing paper, which have replaced the original. There are concrete blocks in the foundation, a twentieth century innovation. Look closely at the chimney top. The two flue liners sticking out of the chimney indicate some late improvements.

A little knowledge and some detective work can help determine how an old house was built but could miss the age by many years. Written family records and official deeds are more accurate.

There are several known log houses in West Deer that are covered by lap siding or vertical boards. There are probably others covered in this same manner or by a layer of brick. There may be families living in such houses who are unaware of it. One such house, the Ignored residence on Saxonburg Road, was discovered to be of log construction when a side was cut out to install sliding glass doors in the kitchen (see photos below). Such log houses were generally built between 1830 and 1870, making them, in some cases, as old as West Deer.

So, how old is an old house? If we can't measure it in years, then perhaps we should measure it in memories.

Picture 104 – The Ingold Log Home



When Jerry Ingold cut a hole in the side of his kitchen to install a sliding glass doors he discovered his house was built of logs. Photo from the Ingold Family

The Ritz Family Home

When John Ritz was discharged from the 25th Ohio Infantry he passed through West Deer Township on his way home to Woodsfield, Ohio. He had friends, the Stouffers, who lived where the Christonia Farm is now located. He apparently liked the area because he went home to Ohio, sold his holdings there and returned to West Deer to buy a forty-six acre farm from the Dawson family, who had the grist mill near the junction of Deer Creek and Dawson Run. He then cleared some land and built a two-room log house. Three years later at age forty-nine he married Caroline Frouser from O'Hara Township and added a four-room addition to his log house, making it a two-story log house containing six rooms. The Ritz's had seven children and lived in this log house the rest of their lives. John died in 1917.

His son Charles retained ownership of the farm and lived there intermittently until 1948. Charles' son Charles now owns the farm and has lived there intermittently since 1948.

The original house was built of logs and caulked with mud and straw. The outside was then covered with rough sawed boards placed vertically with strips sealing the joints. The beams supporting the second floor were hand-hewn and are about six inches square. Boards on these beams make up the floor of the second story. This house is in a good state of preservation and with West Deer's 150th birthday will have its own of 120 years. Interesting also, is a picnic table on the lawn, which has, been in place since 1936. It is a millstone from the Dawson Gristmill on Deer Creek. It was dug from the streambed fifty years ago and placed on the lawn on a concrete pillar. Made of hard stone, it has remained unchanged in fifty years.

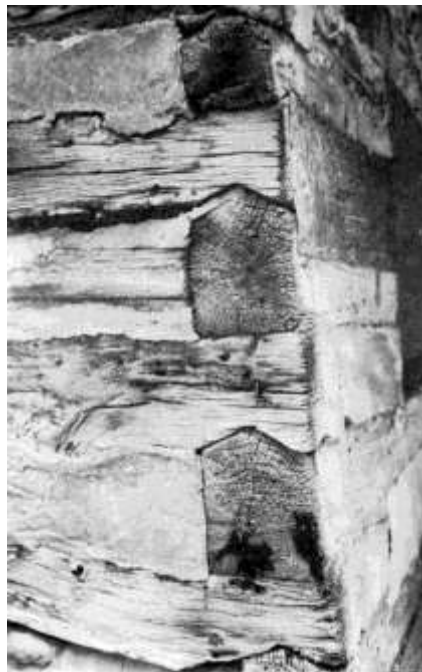
The following photos show the original two-room house and the four-room addition. The half-ton, mill stone picnic table is also shown.

Picture 105 – The Ritz Log Home

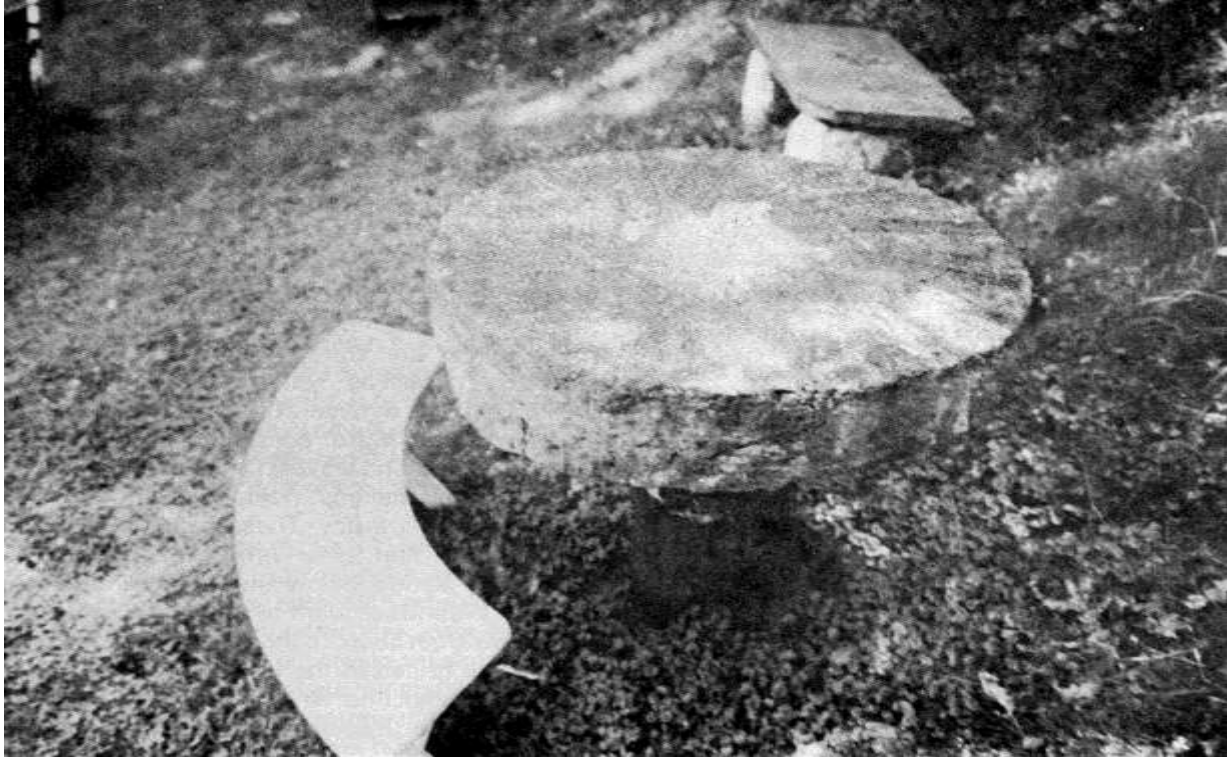


This six-room log house was built in two sections. The smaller part next to the chimney has two small rooms and was built in 1866. The larger part in the background has four rooms and was built in 1820-1869 and is an example of dogtrot construction. Photo by John Graff.

Picture 106 – Close view of Ritz home construction



This close-up photo of Ritz House shows how the logs were notched at the corners. Photo by John Graff



This picnic table is an old mill stone and weighs about a half a ton

A Look Into Yesterday ([Timeline](#))

- 1836 West Deer becomes a township.
There were no post offices, no roads as such, only trails
Hazlett's school was in use.
Bull Creek and Deer Creek Churches were established.
There was a tax collector.
There were polling places and elections.
Bakerstown was in West Deer Township.
There were several grist mills.
A few "friendly" Indians lived in the area.
A number of local surnames were already well known.
- 1839 The first Monniers came to West Deer.
- 1840 The population was now 1414.
- 1846 Records show that the Dawson Mine was selling coal.
- 1848 The Marshall Family came to West Deer. Martin School opened.
- 1849 The Plank Road became a toll road. The Hughes Family appeared.
- 1850 East Union Church founded. Population 1716.
- 1851 Plank Road finished to Butler.
- 1853 Rural Ridge Post Office established. Three churches and a school built from local brick.
- 1854 A Post Office is established near Culmerville.
There is a serious drought.
The Monnier (Hammerman) farmhouse is built.
- 1859 A frost on June 6th killed the wheat crop.
- 1860 Population is 1865. Land was lost to Richland Township, on June 7th.
- 1861 More land lost when Hampton Township was formed on Feb. 18th.
- 1865 First oil well drilled.
- 1870 Population 1299.
- 1874 Post Office burned at Gray's Mill. (Rural Ridge Post Office)
- 1876 A church was established in what is now Bairdford, Aug. 23.
- 1880 Population is now 1438.
- 1883 Lewis (Hunter) Post Office is established near Deer Creek.

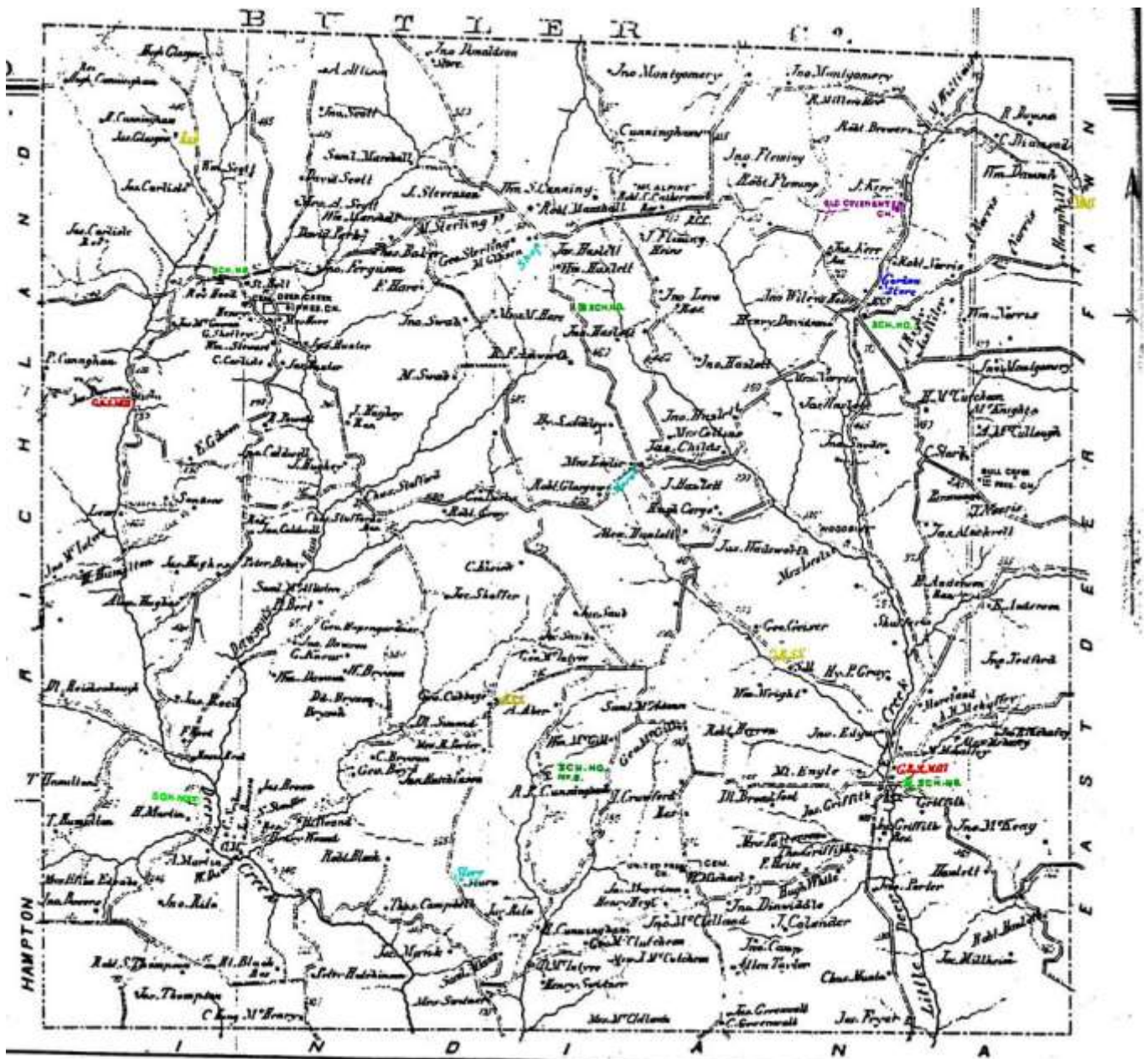
- 1887 Natural gas is discovered in West Deer.
- 1890 Population is up to 1307.
- 1892 Henry Geisy becomes Gray's Mill (Russellton) blacksmith.
- 1896 The railroad is built through West Deer.
- 1897 First passenger train goes through on June 19th.
- 1900 Population is now 1225.
Coal rights are being bought
Drilling tests are being made.
- 1903 Work began at Gray's Mill on the new mine. (Russellton No. 1) by Bessemer Coal and Coke Company
The first row of house built in Russellton became "Blue Row" when they were painted blue.
- 1904 Work began on building a town.
Still called Gray's Mill
Mine begins operation (Russellton No. 1)
- 1905 Bessemer Supply Company was set up about 1905 to serve as the company store
- 1906 Twenty-five double houses and two stores in Gray's Mill.
- 1907 Russellton is named in honor of Russell Love.
Rural Ridge Post Office, was put in the company store building it was renamed Russellton Post Office,
Rural Ridge office moved several miles to the south in Indiana Township.
- 1909 Curtisville shaft is dug and town is built. (Michigan Alkali Company/Ford Ford Collieries)
Monarch Fuel Co. digs a shaft and builds a town (Superior).
- 1910 Population is up to 2026..
A hard-surfaced road was built from Russellton to Harmarville
Superior mine begins operation
- 1912 The area north of the Russellton patch becomes a real estate development.
Curtisville Presbyterian Church is built.
The high railroad bridge over Bull Creek is being replaced by a giant landfill.
- 1913 Transfiguration Church was built.
- 1914 Company Bank is opened in Russellton.
Bairdford, town and shaft, are constructed.
A tornado struck Russellton.
- 1915 UMWA was first organized in West Deer.
Culmerville Russellton Transit Company was organized.
Bairdford Mine, begins operations.
- 1916 Mules were retired from the Russellton Mine.
Bus service was available to Springdale
- 1917 The first coal was removed from the new Russellton No. 2 shaft.(Bessemer Coal and Coke Company)
Superior mine has underground explosion closes (after May 1918 according to other sources)
- 1918 The great flu epidemic hit West Deer.
A tent hospital was erected near the old Flat Top Restaurant for flu epidemic. Many die.
January 1, 1918, Bessemer Coal and Coke Company sells mines to the Republic Steel Corporation.
Superior mine reopens
- 1919 St. Victor's was organized as a mission church.
- 1920 Curtisville YMCA built.
Electricity comes to Russellton
Griffith Theater opened
Population increased to 5290.
- 1921 Superior Mines closes because of depression in coal industry
- 1922 Blanchard is built.
Blanchard Mine begins operations.
Culmerville Tunnel has been "Daylighted" and is no more.
Superior Mine reopens
- 1923 Bad land fire burns from Superior to Bull Creek Church.
- 1924 Russellton No. 1 shaft closed.
Curtisville No. 1 shaft closed
Lyric and Davis theater in Russellton closes.
Every house in Russellton #2 have running water
- 1925 The yellow brick elementary school in South End of Russellton No. 1 is built.
The Great Coal Strike begins.
Superior Mine closes.
- 1926 Blanchard min is purchased by Batcher Coal Company from Blanchard Coal Company
- 1927 Great Coal Miners Strike

- 1928 Strike is over and mining operation resume
West Deer Consolidated School construction begins.
- 1929 Bowling alley burns in Russellton.
- 1930 The company store and post office in Russellton burn.
The population is now 6461.
- 1931 "Consolidated" School opens
American Legion Post organized.
- 1932 The (Company) bank in Russellton closed.
Allegheny Acres is started.
- 1933 The UMWA is again organized.
- 1934 A state study shows 1074 dwelling units in West Deer.
Eighty percent have no running water
Ninety-two percent have no bathrooms.
- 1937 Study reports that West Deer has 2616 coal miners.
- 1940 Population is now 7815
Russellton was established as the only retail center
Water lines have been extended to Russellton.
- 1943 West Deer High School opens in January with six rooms open.
- 1944 Republic Steel sold all of its houses to those who lived in them.
Company streets became township roads along with other changes
- 1945 First class graduates from West Deer High.
Blanchard mine closes
- 1947 Schoolteachers strike in February.
Curtisville dwellings were sold, mostly to those who lived in them.
Bairdford company house are sold to families living there or others
- 1948 West Deer has a new funeral home.
First approved plan of lots is for sale. (West Deer Manor, now part of Magill Heights.)
- 1950 Population is now 7484.
In the Superior area Republic Steel purchased additional coal rights and reopen mine.
- 1951 Pennsylvania Turnpike is built across southwestern corner of West Deer Township.
A large coal washing plant had been built at Russellton No. 2
- 1953 Bairdford mine closed down permanently
Curtisville #2 mine closes
- 1955 The building boom hits West Deer, Magill Heights and Fawn Haven begin.
- 1960 The population is now 9038.
- 1962 The Russmont development begins.
- 1963 Russellton gets a shopping center and a bank.
- 1964 East Union School Building opens as a Junior High
The Port Authority takes over local bus lines.
- 1969 Deer Lakes School District comes into being..
West Deer graduates its 25th class
- 1970 Population is now 10,074.
- 1973 The new Deer Lakes Senior High School opens.
- 1974 Bairdford Park breaks ground.
DCDBA incorporated Oct. 21.
- 1975 Deer Lakes Business Association organized.
- 1976 Home Rule becomes effective Jan. 1.
- 1978 West Deer begins digging sewers on Jan. 16,
Cedar Ridge becomes West Deer's newest development.
- 1979 Grouse Run becomes a reality.
- 1980 Sewer construction all over
Population officially 10,602.
- 1981 By May 2600 West Deer families have sewers.
Republic Steel sold their holdings in West Deer to the LTV Steel Corporation
- 1982 Russellton #2 mine was shut down in October 1982, idling about 170 miners.
- 1984 October Mining strike because of no contract, the cleaning plant, with no coal to clean, had to shut down, leaving West Deer with no operating mines or employed miners producing coal within the township.
- 1985 We are getting ready for a birthday.
- 1986 Happy Birthday!

This is a map of West Deer made about 1875 or early in 1876 showing the location of the farm families, schools, roads, churches, grist and saw mills, blacksmith shops, and stores of that time. If you look closely you can identify

1.	All six schools in their proper location.	8.	BSS near present VFW club.
2.	G and S Mill (Grist and Saw) at Gray's Mill (Russellton).	9.	Store on Donaldson Farm on Rittman Road.
3.	G and S Mill (Dawson Mill) near Burton Stevenson home.	10.	Store at junction of Kaufman Road and Logan Road.
4.	G M (Grist Mill) on Deer Creek near junction of 910 and Dawson Road.	11.	Shop at junction of Logan Road and Bakerstown-Culmerville Road.
5.	S Mill on Bull Creek at West Deer Line.	12.	Old Coventer Church north of Culmerville.
6.	BSS (Blacksmith Shop) on Glasgow Road.	13.	Gordon Store at Culmerville.
7.	BSS at Culmerville.	14.	BSS and SM on present McKrell Road.

(I was unable to find all the landmarks but tried to identify those that I think are correct but VERY unsure but this may help KEL)



The Flu Epidemic of 1918

Just at the close of World War I a global epidemic of influenza killed over twenty million people, more than had died in the war that had just ended. In America, where a half million died in a period of about six months, no community escaped. Some were better prepared to handle the sick than others. Many rural communities like West Deer were ill prepared for any such emergency. These communities which needed much help received it from the Red Cross and the U.S. Army. Since the war was in

its final stages or had just ended, the army was well supplied with men, trucks, tents, cots, blankets, medicines, and in a position to quickly give such help as we needed.

It was apparent that some type of emergency hospital was needed. To get any medical care at all the sick would have to be collected in one central location. The site selected was in the woods just north of the old Flat Top Restaurant. At the junction of Benjamin Street and the Little Deer Creek Road was a small bus station. Just below that building a dirt road was built going up hill and into the woods. This was the location of the tent hospital. A low place in the road bank is all that is visible today.

A number of wood platforms for the tents were built by local carpenters. Leonard Monnier (father of Clarence Monnier) was known to be one of the carpenters. How many were built is not known but several estimates place the number between twenty and forty. Upon each platform an army tent was erected and filled with appropriate cots and blankets. It is probable that from one to two hundred patients were cared for at one time.

Army ambulances were trucks with solid rubber tires and square boxes on the back. As long as roads were passable they served as ambulances or hearses. In the winter when the roads were too bad, horses and farm wagons were used for this duty. Word would come to the hospital where to go for the sick. The dead were either claimed by the family and taken to a temporary funeral facility in Russellton or to the Curtisville School, which served as a morgue. School was not in session during part of the fall and winter of 1918-19.

Soldiers did the hauling and some of the non-medical tasks involved. The Red Cross sent truck loads of food to the hospital. The Red Cross had one doctor and one nurse on full-time duty. These people stayed at the George Long Residence. Long, father of Melba Jean Hudon, was the Chief Mining Engineer at the Curtisville mines. Mrs. (Mae) Long spent many hours daily as a volunteer nurse at the hospital as did many of the local women. For the families of these volunteer nurses and helpers there was always a fear of bringing home the dreaded disease.

This epidemic started in the late summer or fall before the "normal" flu season. As winter approached, kerosene heaters were placed in the tents. These helped some, but it was bitter, cold winter for all concerned.

Medicines at this time were not nearly as effective as they are to day and there was not much hope for the serious cases. Daily deaths were the rule rather than the exception. There were stories of the sick, while being brought to the hospital, died on the way. Another tragic tale concerns the ambulance going for a whole family, only to find no one living when they got to the house.

The facts concerning sanitation at the tent hospital are sketchy. Water was believed to have been hauled in by the army. The sewage was simply carried out in buckets and dumped over the bank to flow away in the Little Deer Creek.

There were few families that were not affected. While a few local families lost sons in the war, a larger number of families lost a father, mother, or child to this terrible flu. Those alive today remember it as the most deviating experience in this community.

Some of those who died were buried in the Transfiguration Cemetery near Superior. A number of graves were marked with wood crosses, which long ago have rotted away. Others were buried in the Russian Cemetery in Russellton and some were sent to the St. Clement Cemetery in Tarentum when burial was refused in Russellton. Local Protestants were buried at the Bull Creek and Deer Creek Church Cemeteries.

Stories are told of parents, with sick children, who refused to have them moved to the tent hospital because of the harsh winter conditions. They would keep them at home, to live or to die, in a warm house and with loving care.

Another story is told of grocery deliveries. If there were any sickness in the house, the delivery boy from the company would walk in the kitchen door, place the groceries on the table, pick up the next order, and leave without any contact with the occupants.

Regular coffins were in short supply and burials were made in hastily constructed pine boxes. John Kaduk of Russellton was one of the men who made such boxes. The epidemic stopped as fast as it had started. As one senior citizen said, "It seemed to have started all at once and stopped the same way."

Dr. Cross of Curtisville and the Red Cross doctor were involved full-time and are remembered for their devotion to their patients. It may be assumed that the company doctor from Russellton possibly a Dr. McMasters, was also involved.

To those few who remember this great tragedy we owe a "thank you" for passing these few thoughts to the reader. Elio Tabacchi, Clarence Monnier, Melba Jean (Long) Hudon, Anne Lavrich, and Elva Taliani are among those who have passed a few remembrances to this author.

The Food Bank

West Deer Township operates a Human Services Department that is unique in Western Pennsylvania. It had its beginnings two years ago to aid the many unemployed in West Deer. Although a number of services are available, the most visible is the food bank, which aids many needy families. The department is involved with drug and alcohol abuse education, physical fitness programs, rabies clinics, senior citizen programs, and a special Christmas program for children but its major effort is toward supplying food for the needy.

It is funded, partially by the township and directed by Sherry Smith who works on a part-time basis. According to Mrs. Smith, "Human services turns out to be whatever anybody needs."

The food bank, called the West Deer TECH Food Bank, is funded through the Hunger Action Coalition and private donations. With funding from the coalition and special discount rates, offered by the Golden Dawn supermarket in Russellton, the food bank distributes food for over 150 families.

Deer Lakes Park

By Russell E. Montgomery

In the early 1960's there was considerable verbal speculation as to what was going on in the Russellton area concerning some large tracts of real estate. A local realtor, Russell E. Montgomery, was in the process of getting options on ten tracts of land totaling almost one thousand acres. There was a shroud of secrecy surrounding all this dealing and rumors were flying. It might be a refuse dump or maybe a storage place for cattle between shipping points now that the stockyards in Pittsburgh were closing. There was also speculation that a new joint high school would be built on the Vedro farm. All that "Russ" Montgomery could tell anyone was that it would be a good improvement for the community.

Upon final purchase of the tracts it was announced by the County of Allegheny that approximately seven "Baby Parks" were to be located throughout the county. Their purpose was to relieve the heavy recreational traffic at the larger North and South Parks and to make county parks more accessible to the people.

Later, through Mr. Montgomery, additional tracts were purchased to enlarge the park and include highway frontage, as parklands. This would help eliminate possible commercial aspects.

The purpose of the park was for simple recreation and to retain the natural beauty of the land. It was to be developed in phases. Phase One included the three fishing lakes and picnic areas. Phase Two had the ball fields, more picnic areas, sledding and cross country skiing areas and some hiking trails. It now consists of about 1200 acres and is considered one of the finest regional parks in the Allegheny County park system.

The park had been managed by the late John Sobran of Russellton who had been Park Superintendent from its opening until his death in July 1985. He had done an excellent job of maintaining the high standards of the park.

Notes from Ken Lewetag

*When "Russ" speaks of "additional tracts were purchased to enlarge the park " this was done by "eminent domain" or "condemnation" no matter how well maintained the home. All these families were **forced** to sell their home. Those that initially "sold" were given less than market value, however, in the end all were forced to sell. In this "purchase" several homes dating from before the 1867 were lost here are just two examples;*

1) The Mahaffey homes and the road to whom Mahaffey road is named and Deer Lake Park are centered where lost. Along with at least six other home on Mahaffey road alone.

2) One farm homestead later known as Baron's Grove (based on the 1867 map, spelling may not be correct hard to read the map) was one of two Fulnderson homesteads. One of the homes was a log cabin, one of only a few known to be in part a log home and that was still in good repair in the 1960's. After attempting to have West Deer Park preserve this log cabin, a part of our heritage, it was bull dozed into memory only.

Picture 109 – Deer Lake Park Lake



Upper Deer lake in 1967 (From Deer Lake Souvenir Program Dan Angeloni collection)

Picture 110 – Deer Lake Park Lake



Deer lakes play area in 1967 (From Deer Lake Souvenir Program Dan Angeloni collection)

Bairdford Park

Fifty years ago baseball teams were abundant in this area. Most of the mining towns, as well as other villages had a team and a field where league games were played. Bairdford used the field on Ford Collieries property just south of the town. There were two ball fields, each with a backstop. The teams arranged for dragging and other maintenance work.

When the company houses and other former mine property were sold about 1947, this field was dedicated to West Deer Township for recreational purposes and continued to be used for that purpose.

The township supervisors, realizing that better facilities for recreation were needed, purchased an additional seventy acres in 1974 and hired a landscape architect to design a park area.

The development of this park required a great deal of effort and financial support. The township received a Federal State grant of about \$100,000.00 from the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs to help with this project. From the county came personnel and equipment from the Works and Parks Department that was instrumental in the surface preparation. Locally, the supervisors committed as much manpower and money as they could afford. Donations from local residents and from civic and business organizations exceeded \$60,000.00. This included a \$7,500.00 gift from the West Deer Lions Club to be applied to the cost of the picnic pavilion.

The result of all this cooperation is quite evident. The Bairdford Community Park is a definite asset to the West Deer community. It is used for many purposes and by many groups. Ball games, picnics, family reunions. Communities Days, and for daily playground use, are among the activities common there. The addition of tennis courts a few years later added another dimension to the park.

The value of all grants, contributions, various aids, labor, equipment, and any other help has been estimated to exceed \$280,000.00 of which very little came from local public funds.

A Summary of Progress

Fifty years ago a book was written about West Deer Township. It was called "One Hundred Years of Progress" and described the changes in West Deer from pioneer days to the Great Depression. Those one hundred years saw the, coming of the railroads, motor cars, large coal mines, a new influx of population, new cultures, and many other changes in West Deer.

Now, fifty years later, we must pause for a look back, and contemplate these changes that this last half-century has brought.

We have witnessed the decline of the mining industry and the importance of the railroad in our township. We have seen the landscape change from one where the main features were farms and coal mines to one which consists primarily of "bedroom" communities dependent upon employment in Pittsburgh and the Allegheny Valley. The agriculture remaining in the West Deer has become either specialized or part-time and the mines have simply ceased to exist as such.

Fifty years ago the major utilities were electricity, an antiquated phone system, and natural gas if you happened to live near a well or gas line. Today the majority of our homes have available a public water supply, public sewers, natural gas, modern telephones, electricity, cable television, mail delivery, police available twenty-four hours a day, three excellent fire companies

available within minutes, and a well-trained and equipped ambulance service. We have a food bank, service clubs, and programs for the elderly, a modern medical clinic, and we can choose from a number of commercial enterprises and services.

Our school system has expanded and changed to meet the needs of the community and the requirements of the law. It is as good as any other around us and our graduates have done well in college.

A half-century ago West Deer Township had 1074 dwellings according to a government survey done at that time. We had fewer houses because many of the mining town houses were double. Of these dwelling units, 11% were owner-occupied, 80% were without running water, and 92% were without bathrooms. Today we have three times that number of houses and almost all have running water and bathrooms. Most of our homes today are owner-occupied. None can deny that this is progress. Our fifty years of progress in that area of housing is indeed, significant.

These new houses, for the most part, have been built in an orderly manner, regulated by what we call planning and zoning. These innovations were unheard of fifty years ago and required a great deal of effort to get them established here.

Who was responsible for these changes? The people of West Deer, of course! Some changes were brought about by individual effort but often it was a governing board who acted on the county or state level. We have always had the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Education that controlled most of the facets of township government but recent years have seen the formation of a number of other boards, authorities or agencies. These governmental groups are responsible for progress in their respective areas.

We now have the Deer Creek Drainage Basin Authority whose responsibility included the funding, construction, and operation of our public sewer system. The Planning Commission and the Zoning Hearing Board regulate and guide growth in the housing and land use areas. The Northeast Allegheny County School Building Authority funded school improvements and the construction of new buildings.

Individual groups have been responsible for some areas of progress, particularly in the field of health care.

None of this progress came easily. It took a great deal of planning and constructive effort to get such progress established. There have always been critics who say that this progress was not needed, or took too long, or cost too much, or was done for private gain, or in some manner did not please them. In spite of this opposition, progress has been made and will continue to be made.

In another fifty years West Deer will celebrate a bicentennial. There will be much to write about. What we do today will be history and judgments will be made concerning our present progress. We must not forget that today is tomorrow's yesterday.

Township Government

One hundred years ago we probably had three supervisors whose primary duties were scraping the dirt roads with a team of horses, repairing the public watering troughs, filling in washed out places, and levying taxes. Fifty years ago we also had three supervisors, most of whom worked on the road themselves and whose duties included repairing roads, mowing the roadsides, minimum snow plowing, and "red dogging" the dirt roads. The latter was probably the most important job. The township actually owned a steam shovel which was generally kept at the burned "bone" pile at Bairdford. Red-dog is burned "bone" and was the best and cheapest material available for building roads. The township also had two or three dump trucks which were housed in the township garage on the D Dillner farm.

These early supervisors were aided in their work by an elected tax collector, constable, and tax assessor. They met in homes and paid rent to the owner of the township garage. Before the Municipal Building was built about 1950 on East Union Road, the township garages had been on the Large and Dillner lands.

Today, how many people does the operation of our township facilities involve? First we have the elected offices. There are seven supervisors, a tax collector, a constable, and three auditors. Then we count the appointed, the hired, and the volunteers. There are nine on the Deer Creek Drainage Basin Authority but all are not from West Deer, on the Planning Commission there are seven, and three on the Zoning-Hearing Board. The Recreation Board has varied from none to nine. We have a Township Manager, an office force of three, a Director of Human Services, a Township Engineer, a building inspector, a road crew of at least seven, five police, three companies of volunteer fireman and the special fire police, and a bank to act as treasurer for township funds.

Life is more complex than it was fifty years ago. All governments from the national, state, county, and down to the local are likewise much more complex than five decades ago. People now expect so much more from government and take all our present services for granted. This requires much more money and many more people to provide them.

Home Rule Government by Catherine S. Kurtiak

In April 1972 the General Assembly passed Act 62 which granted every municipality in the state the opportunity to draft a home rule charter or to select an optional plan of government. A Government Study Commission was established which drafted a Home Rule Charter and made certain recommendations, which were voted on by public ballot on May 21, 1974. It was approved by a majority of those voting on that day and became effective in January 1976.

Many changes in local government were brought about by this new plan of government. The Board of Supervisors was increased from three to seven and their terms of office were reduced from six years to four years with a limit of two consecutive

terms. More power was given to the voters through the use of Initiative and Referendum. The charter imposed a ceiling of twelve mills for the township tax although the state law permits nineteen mills. When the new plan went into effect the tax rate was twelve mills, the ceiling which had been placed upon it. Under this charter no new authorities may be formed without submitting the matter to the ballot. The custom in the past was for supervisors to work for the township if they so desired. The new charter prohibits this and made it illegal for a supervisor to receive any compensation other than actual expenses incurred during the performance of duties.

The change most visible was that on the Board of Supervisors. Greater numbers meant more representation from the people and more competition at election time. Although the charter does not call for geographic representation, greater numbers gave the voters a better opportunity and wider choices. No one can hold political power for any great length of time. For the first time in township history a woman, Catherine Kurtiak, was elected to the Board of Supervisors. Women had served on the School Board for twenty-five years but this was a first in township administration.

The "Home Rule" Board of Supervisors has been responsible for considerable progress; Water line extension, the flood control program, annual Community Days, establishment of an Industrial Development Committee, participation in the Council of Governments, Allegheny League of Municipalities, and the State Association for Townships, and a number of programs including the Food Bank, the Human Resources Program, and programs and facilities for the Senior Citizens.

Picture 111 – West Deer Township municipal government, former Curtisville Elementary School



This building, the former Curtisville Elementary School, was donated to the West Deer Township municipal government, for municipal purposes, by the Deer Lakes Board of Education on May 16, 1983. It houses the municipal offices which include the administrative office, Police Department, Tax office, Planning and Zoning offices, and the Human Services Department. The building is also available to civic organizations in West Deer at no charge. This building and adjacent land will provide adequate space for our municipal government for many years into the future

Picture 112 – Members of the township government 1987



Matthew Arena

Thomas DeMartini

Catherine S. Kurtiak

James McCaskey

The township government, as we approach the sesquicentennial year, includes Joseph R. DiSanti, chairman of the supervisors, Michael Whitico, Jr., Vice Chairman, Charles R. Bergensky, township manager, and the following supervisors; James Yaconis, Catherine S. Kurtiak, Thomas DeMartini, Matthew Arena, and James McCaskey. Pictured below are the four supervisors whose pictures were available as this book went to press. Missing are DiSanti, Whitico, and Yaconis.

Photos by David Mathewson

HISTORY OF THE DEER LAKES SCHOOL DISTRICT

From the Dedication Program September 8, 1974

The Deer Lakes School District is the result of a merger effected on July 1, 1969 of the West Deer School District and the East Deer-Frazer Union District.

The school district encompasses a total area of 41 square miles, which include the following:

East Deer Township	2.15 sq. miles
Frazer Township	10.11 sq. miles
West Deer Township	28.65 sq. miles

In preparation for the finalization of the merger, an interim Operating Committee was formed on January 27, 1969 as part of the long range plans for the communities involved. This committee entered an Owner Architect Agreement with the firm of Foreman, Dorsch, Bashford and Wallace on June 23, 1969.

Plans were developed for a new high school building. And, through the efforts of many people to include citizens, educators, designers, planners, the Board of Education and Building Authority, ground breaking took place on March 19, 1972. The building was occupied by students on September 10, 1973, and dedicated September 8, 1974. Future plans encompass a renovation of the old high school to become an up to date Junior High and an addition to the Deer Lakes Elementary School.

Picture 113 – Deer Lakes High Illustration 1974



Picture 114 – Aerial view of the new Deer Lakes High School 1974 (from dedication booklet)



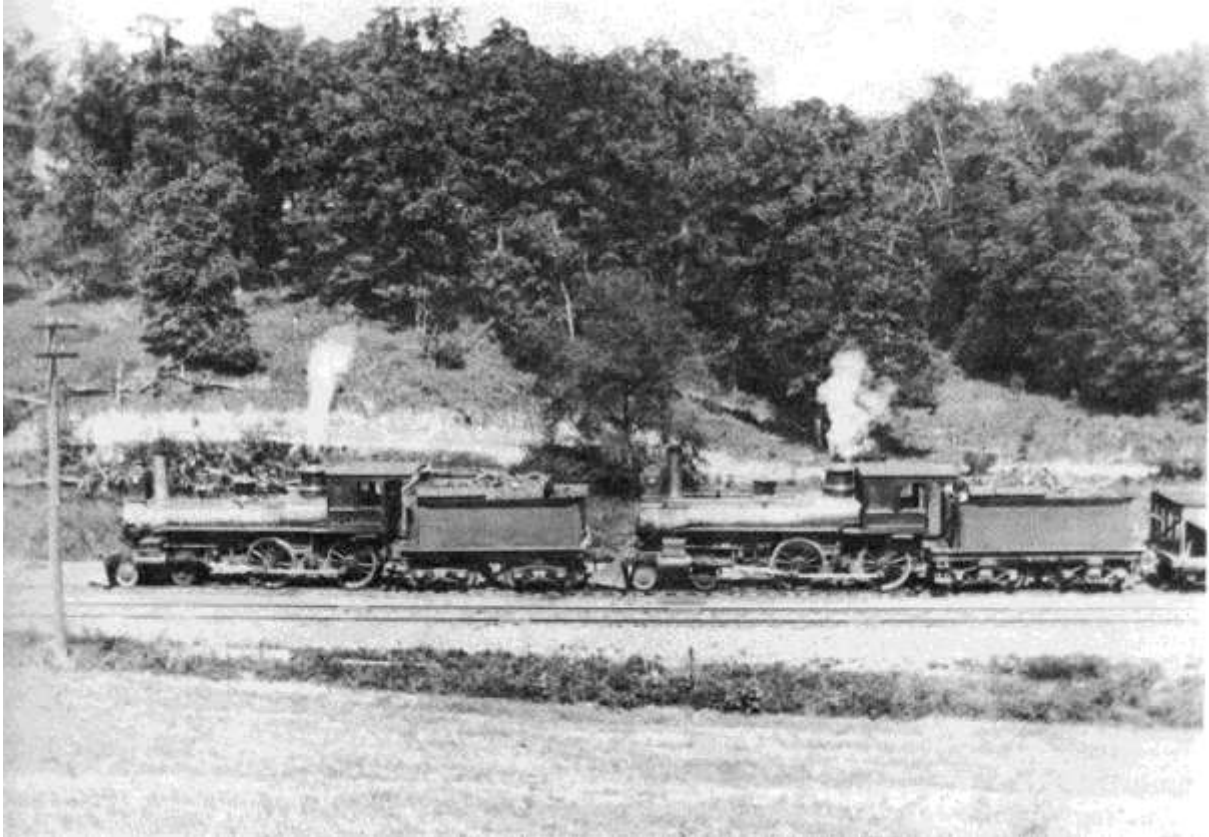
Picture 115 – Deer Lakes “Time Capsule”



Filling the “Time Capsule” in the corner of Deer Lakes High building in 1973 to be opened in 2073
Debbie Olean - Bob Bohach - Dan Yanicko - Anthony Marsico - Art Pilart
Student Council School Board Supt. of School Building Authority

History through pictures (various pictures)

Picture 116 – Double header going upgrade between Curtisville and Culmerville



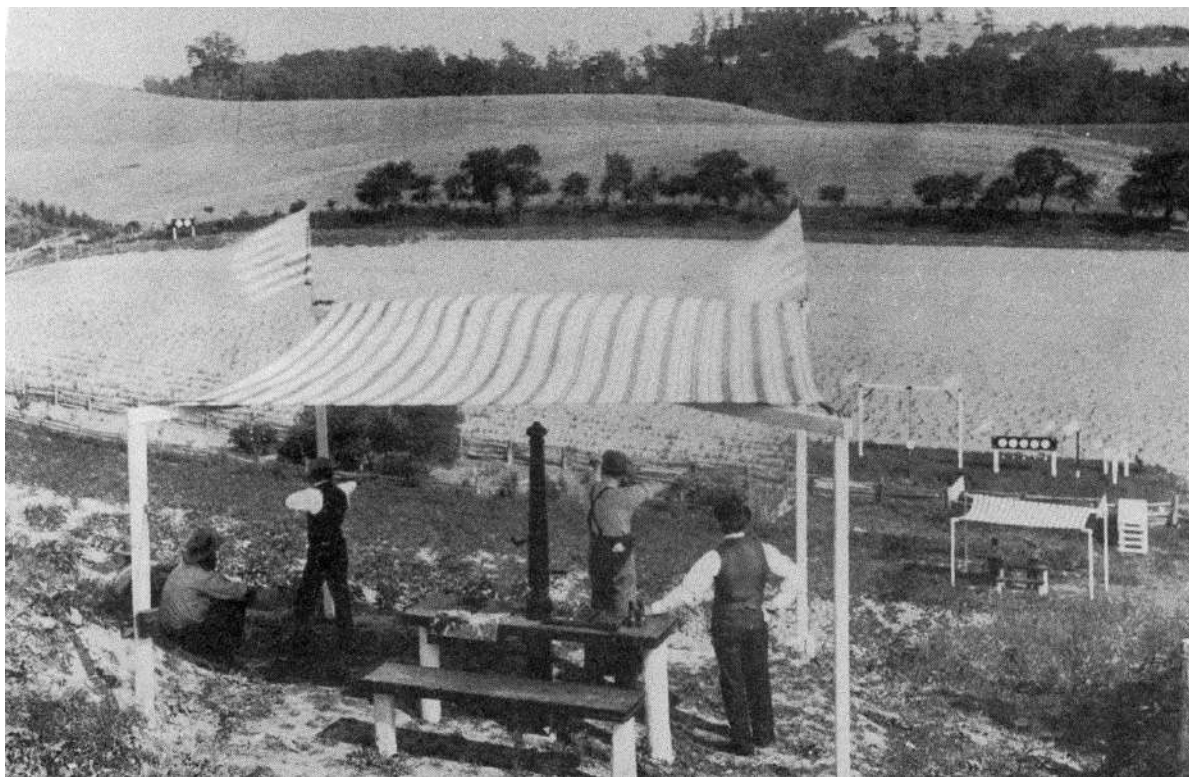
About 1905 shows a double header going upgrade between Curtisville and Culmerville. Photo by Leonard Monnier

Picture 117 – A. R. Pollock, general manager of Ford Colliers



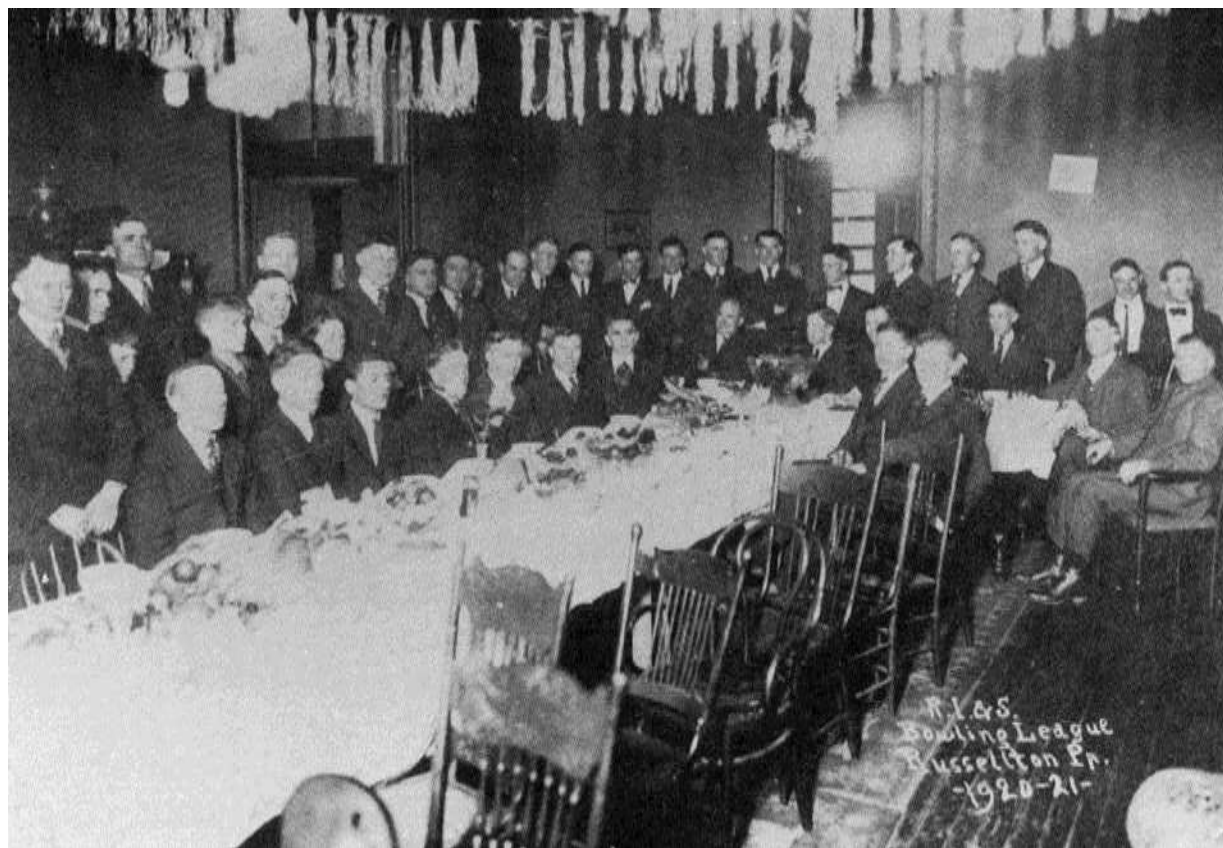
A. R. Pollock, general manager of Ford Colliers mines at Curtisville and Bairdford. The make and model of the car are unknown but the license is 1920. Photo from Mary Leggens.

Picture 118 – Murdy's Knob and target shooters



The high hill in the background is Murdy's Knob, at the time this picture was taken about 1905 the highest point in West Deer. It has been lowered by coal stripping and is now grown over with brush The target shooters have not been identified.

Picture 119 – A Bowling Banquet. 1920 style



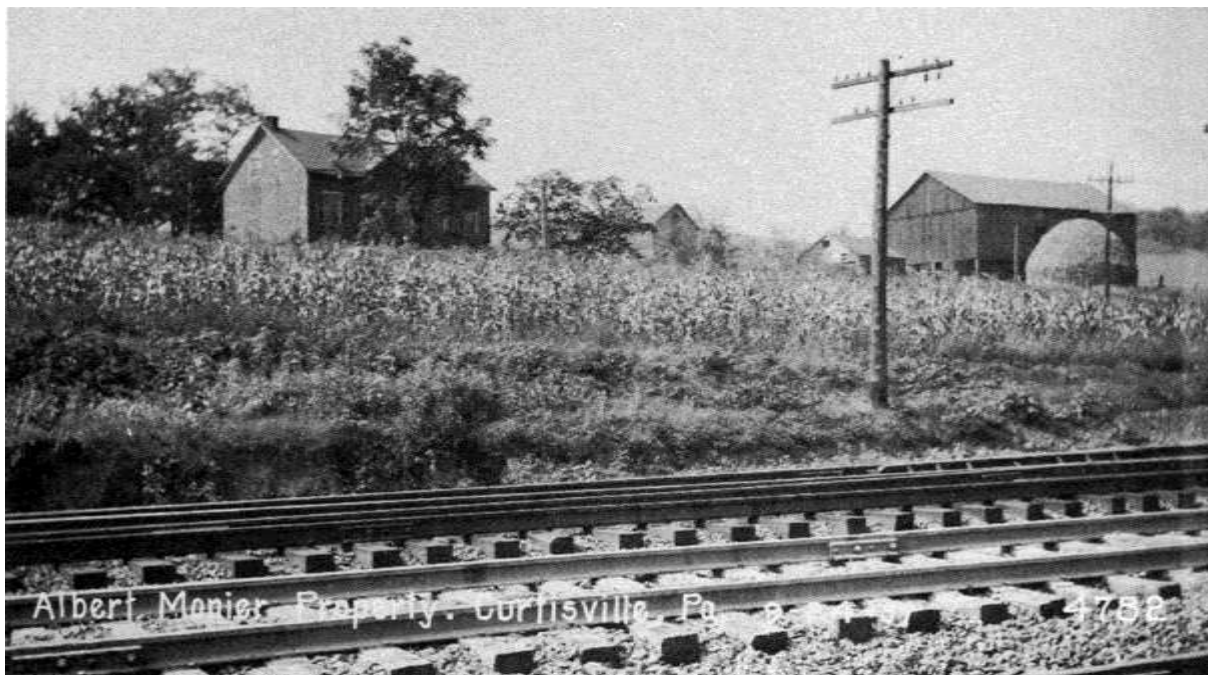
A Bowling Banquet, 1920 style. This picture has a number of Russellton's early citizens but where are the ladies? Photo from Threse Long

Picture 120 – Log house at Rittman Road



A log house in the process of being dismantled. It stood near the northern border on Rittman Road and was rebuilt at the Tour-Ed Mine near Tarentum where it is now on display at the present time. Photo from Valley News Dispatch.

Picture 121 – Hammerman residence



*Original Monnier farmstead near Curtisville built in 1854 from local brick. It is now the Hammerman residence.
Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad photo.*

Picture 122 – Officers of Oak Valley Grange



*The officers of Oak Valley Grange are having something explained to them by another officer. Does anyone recognize the young fell on the left?
(Lady on far left is believed to be Peg Hohman)*

Picture 123 – West Deer baseball late 1940's



This ball team was active in the West Deer area not long after World War II. Most were from Russellton and many still live in that area. They are now between fifty and sixty-five years of age. How many can you identify? Photo from Mary Jo Sypulski

Picture 124 – Mrs. William Bertha (Bonin) Gray



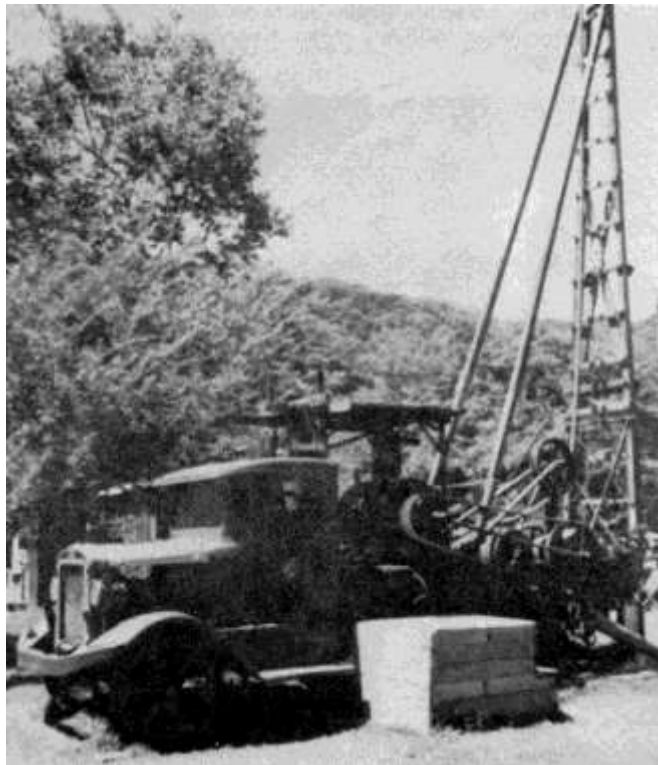
Bertha Gray (Mrs. William Gray) is the oldest known, native resident of West Deer Township and was so honored at the Bairdford Park during Community Days in August, 1985, she is pictured a month before her 96th birthday. Valley News Dispatch photo

Picture 125 – WW2 Spotters Shack, Humphry Wilson



During World War I many local citizens took their turn watching for enemy airplanes at this Spotters Shack on McCredie's Hill near Deer Creek. This photo from Mrs. Humphry Wilson shows her late husband, Humphry, standing in front of the shack

Picture 126 – 1917 Sanderson Cyclone Drilling Rig



The 1917 Sanderson Cyclone Drilling Rig pictured here belonged to John Marshall of Deer Creek and is now on display at Drake Well Museum, Titusville, PA. It was powered by a Cook water-cooled gasoline engine. The vertical engine on this machine was rated at 8 horsepower. It was used to clean out oil wells, drill water wells, blast holes, and drill coal mine ventilation shafts. It was originally designed as a self-propelled traction machine. Marshall mounted the rig on a 1927 GMC "Big Brute" truck. The model pictured is equipped with a four-cylinder engine and rolls on solid rubber wheels. Photo by Kirk Voeckel.

Picture 127 – Aerial Bull Creek-Millertown-Road



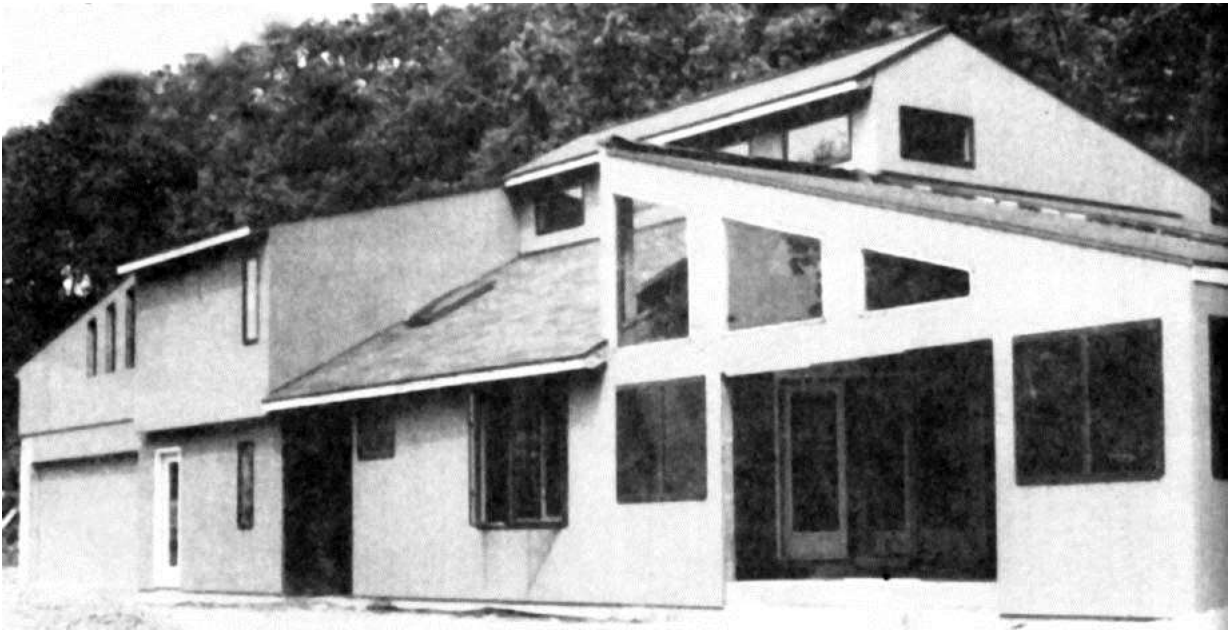
A view along the aerial Bull Creek (Millertown) Road

Picture 128 – Township garage about 1930



This building was the township garage about 1930. It is located on the Dillner Farm and is now used to store farm machinery.

Picture 129 – West Deer's newest homes by George Golojuh



One of West Deer's newest homes being built by George Golojuh. It contains a thermo hoop, a passive solar system which will both heat and cool the home

The Airports of West Deer

By Dan Angeloni (July 2004)

The Culmerville Airport was developed in the 1940's by the Bryan family of Culmerville. Not very active lately, but most current owner was Fred Eiler.

Russellton Airport was known originally as the Remich Airport, owned by Frank Remich. It is now known as the Rockporte Airport, owned by Rock Ferrone, president. It is being developed for active commercial and industrial usage.

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

All organizations in West Deer Township, in so far as the Anniversary Committee could determine from existing lists, were invited to submit an overview of their history for publication in this book. The following are those we received. Names are listed where available.

(Churches are listed in order of their founding.)

Bull Creek Presbyterian Church
Deer Creek Presbyterian Church (USA)
Pleasant Unity United Presbyterian Church
East Union Presbyterian Church
Bairdford United Methodist Church
Curtisville Presbyterian Church
St. Michael's Orthodox Church
Transfiguration Roman Catholic Church
St. Victor Roman Catholic Church
Church of the Nazarene
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Fundamental Church of West Deer
West Deer Community Men's Bible Class
Fire Departments, Auxiliaries, and Junior Department
No. 1
No. 2
No. 3

West Deer Ambulance Service
West Deer-Dorseyville Meals-On-Wheels
Oak Valley Grange
West Deer Garden Club
West Deer Lions Club
Women's Club of West Deer
Knights of Columbus
American Legion Post 593
Disabled American Veterans Chapter 38
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9817 and Auxiliary
West Deer Golden Years Club
West Deer Women's Travel Club
West Deer Township Sportsman's Club
Girl Scouting in West Deer
Boy Scout Troop No. 628
Boy Scout Troop No. 682

Bull Creek Presbyterian Church

Picture 130 – Bull Creek Presbyterian Church



Bull Creek Presbyterian Church is not only the oldest church in West Deer Township, but also the oldest church west of the Allegheny River and north of the Ohio River. Tradition puts the date of its founding at 1794. In 1796 the Redstone Presbytery sent Rev. Swan to minister to the congregation.

For eight years the services were held out-of-doors. The minister stood in a little tent while the listeners sat before him on logs or on the ground. Can you imagine Indians coming upon the church service held in the open? They were probably intrigued by the religion so different from their own. In the winter months the congregation would meet in the cabin of a member.

There have been five churches built upon the land that was donated by Judge William Wilkins and Matilda, his wife, in 1823. The deed says that the land is "granted to the Bull Creek Congregation in trust always and for the use as a place of Christian worship and education." The first church was of a simple backwoods round log style. The second was built in 1820 of rough-hewn logs "with an offset in the center." It was later weather boarded on the outside and lined on the inside. It was said to be hard to heat in the winter so about 1833 a smaller hewn log church was built.

Rev. Abraham Boyd was the first minister at Bull Creek. He served from 1802 to 1833. When he first came there were eleven members on the roll: Elias Thomas and wife, Benjamin Coe and wife, Ezekial Miller and wife, Nathaniel and Mary Montgomery, Ann Berry, Sarah Day, and Elizabeth Jack. Rev. Boyd increased the original congregation from eleven by adding one hundred and seventy-six members during his thirty-one years of service. Rev. Boyd is buried in the cemetery at Bull Creek.

The cemetery had an unusual beginning. A small child of Jacob Derry was quite ill and not expected to live. Mr. Derry and his brother-in-law, Mr. Elias Thomas, went to locate a suitable place for its burial. Fortunately, the child regained its health, but the location was accepted as the most suitable for a cemetery. The oldest marker bears the date January 10, 1804 and the name Thomas Negley. There are also many graves of those men and women who served our country during the wars from the Revolutionary through World War II.

The fourth church was a red-brick building, built in 1853. The bricks were burnt upon a spot nearby. The windows were stained glass, the walls were papered, and the floors were carpeted. Kerosene lamps swung from the ceiling and straight-backed pews completed the furnishings inside. This building served the congregation of Bull Creek as a worship place until 1953. During these years many changes were noted. In 1906 the building was damaged by a windstorm and then again a hurricane, which caved in one side. In 1914 Rev. H. E. Snyder drove the first automobile to the worship services. In 1923 a fire which started in Superior threatened the church. Two years later electric lights were installed. It was not until the early 1940's that the road past the church was paved.

The church remained much the same, but the congregation grew, so in 1953 they moved to a new stone building across the road. The growth continued and in 1958 the educational building was added. This was enlarged in 1968. To help the youth of the church and the area, the old brick building was made into a recreational hall.

During these one hundred and ninety-two years, eighteen ministers have served the congregation of Bull Creek, they have included:

MINISTERS

Rev. Abraham Boyd	1802-1833
Samuel Caldwell	1834-1856
Thomas W. Kerr	1840-1847
James Smith	1848-1856
G.W.Taylor	1857-1862
G.W.Jackson	1863
J.F.Boyd	1863-1870
J.C.Ambrose	1891-1900
W. A. Monks	1903-1909
H.E.Snyder	1914-1916
F.A.Coza	1917-1923
Robert Lloyd Roberts	1925-1931
Abraham Boyd Weiz	1931 -1940
Ardel W.Christie	1940-1943
Albert M.Beckes	1944-1972
Willis F. Kearns	1973-1977
John Jones	1978-1982
Rev. W. James Legge	1983-Present

Bull Creek is sometimes noted as the Mother of Churches. From this congregation several churches have been formed: First Presbyterian Church in Tarentum, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Butler County, and the Middlesex Presbyterian Church. Rev. Roberts helped organize the Curtisville Presbyterian Church in 1929. Quoting Rev. Legge. "The sense of being part of the Family of God is the strength of our church. To follow the will of God and bring the Good News to all people is our ministry."

We are proud to be part of the history of God's Church and the history of West Deer Township. Submitted by: Theta Fredley

Deer Creek Presbyterian Church (USA)

Submitted by: Oliver Diehl

Picture 131 – Deer Creek Presbyterian Church



The Present church 1986. The Sanctuary on the left was built in 1853 while the annex on the right was constructed in 1952.

The Deer Creek Associate Presbyterian Church was organized in 1802. Mr. Robert Porter was one of a group of men who founded the church. The record of ministers involved in this event has been lost. No doubt they were itinerant pastors that

rode the forest trails on horseback to minister to pioneer families in the townships. They preached from an open-air pulpit around which the people gathered for worship on the Sabbath Day, a replica of which stands in the field behind the church.

The first minister to serve at Deer Creek was the Reverend James McConnell. He was a native of Ireland and came to America in 1797 as a probationer. Two years later he was ordained as a minister in the Associate Reformed Church and became the pastor of the congregation of Big Springs, PA. In 1811 he assumed the pastorate of the united charge of Puckety and Deer Creek. He resigned the charge at Puckety after a few years to spend his full time with his congregation at Deer Creek. In 1817 a log church replaced the open-air pulpit. The log building served the congregation until 1834 when the first brick building was built in the center of the then known Deer Creek Cemetery.

Dr. McConnell served the congregation until his resignation in 1847. He died a year later at the age of 78. The second pastor was the Reverend A. G. Shafer who started his work on July 1, 1847. He served this charge with great favor until July 1, 1868, when, standing at the door of his home watching an approaching storm, he was struck by lightning and instantly killed.

It was during Mr. Shafer's term that the first brick building was dismantled and in 1853 the second brick building was built at its present location. It is still used as the sanctuary portion of the present church.

Also, during Mr. Shafer's term the name "Associate" was changed to "United Presbyterian" as the "Associate" and "Associate Reformed" branches joined at Pittsburgh, PA on June 15, 1858.

The next pastor was the Reverend S. M. Hood in 1872, who served until 1890. In 1892 the Reverend W. J. McClintock assumed charge and served until 1901.

Next, the Reverend A. P. Gipson was called by the congregation in 1901 and served until 1904. He was followed by the Reverend J. B. McIsaac who came from the Seventh U. P. Church in Pittsburgh and served until 1908.

The Reverend W. L. Brownlee came in May 1910 and continued until September 1919. The next spring the Reverend S. M. Laing came and served until 1923 when he became president of Knoxville College.

The Reverend Roy Grace, a 1924 graduate of the Seminary came and remained at Deer Creek until 1929. It was during his pastorate that the comfortable parsonage was built (1925).

On October 9, 1929, a call was extended to the Reverend John F. Aiken. He served until his death, November 11, 1932. He was followed by the Reverend Will M. Hughes, D. D., who began his pastorate in May 1934. Dr. Hughes served the congregation until 1947 when he was called to Morning Sun, Iowa.

Picture 132 – Deer Creek Presbyterian Outdoor pulpit from 1802



The Reverend Walter R. Kenyon succeeded Dr. Hughes in June 1948. As the congregation had been growing, additional space was needed. In 1950, plans were started for an-expanded educational unit plus pastor's study, kitchen facilities, and modern restrooms. The new addition, larger than the original sanctuary, plus connecting hall, etc., was completed in 1952. Also, in 1957, ten acres of adjoining ground was added to church property for outdoor recreation.

Some trying times came to the Deer Creek Church when in 1968 about 60 members could not accept the "1967 Confession" of the national church. They left the church to form the Fundamental Church now located on Bakerstown-Culmerville Road. Again, in 1975, Mr. Kenyon felt that ordaining of women to be teaching elders was against the teaching of the Bible, which put him at variance of the rules of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. This time, Mr. Kenyon decided to leave the United Presbyterian denomination and with about 125 members from the Deer Creek Church formed a unit connected with the Presbyterian Church in America. His last sermon at Deer Creek came on the last Sunday of October 1975.

The Deer Creek congregation that was left after two "splits" expressed their faith in God was a determination to continue worship in their church in spite of deep "hurts" in many families. Pittsburgh Presbytery provided considerable support and guidance through Dr. Richard Kennedy of the East Union Church as moderator of Session, and Dr. John M. Bald as pulpit supply.

A pulpit committee started work immediately and on May 1, 1976, invited the Reverend Foster C. Dryden, Jr., from New Castle, PA to preach a trial sermon. The congregation gave him a unanimous vote to become the pastor. Mr. Dryden became the

13th pastor on July 4, 1976. The congregation prospered under his leadership until April 3, 1983, when he accepted a call to Drexel Hill, PA.

A pulpit committee again went to work and issued an invitation to the Reverend Byron A. McElroy from Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, to preach a trial sermon on March 8, 1984. A call was given to Mr. McElroy to become pastor of the congregation starting July 1, 1984. He is the present pastor.

PASTORS

Rev. James McConnell	1811-1847
Rev. A. G. Shafer	1847-1868
Rev. S. M. Hood	1872-1890
Rev. W. J. McClintock	1892-1901
Rev. A. P. Gipson	1901-1904
Rev. J. B. Melsaac	1905-1908
Rev. W. T. Brownlee	1910-1919
Rev. S. M. Laing	1920-1923
Rev. Roy E. Grace	1927-1929
Rev. John T. Aiken	1929-1932
Rev. Will M. Hughes, D.D.	1933-1947
Rev. Walter R. Kenyon	1948-1975
Rev. Foster C. Dryden, Jr.	1976-1983
Rev. Byron A. McElroy	1984-Present

Pleasant Unity United Presbyterian Church

Submitted by: Kirk R. Voeckel

Picture 133 – Pleasant Unity United Presbyterian Church through the years



The Pleasant Unity Churches building 1842, 1853 and 1937

In 1840, missionaries, Rev. Milton Bird, D.D., and Rev. A. M. Bryan, D.D., came from Pittsburgh on horse back to Deer Township. They stayed locally and went to visit homes in the vicinity, attempting to accumulate enough interest to establish a

local church. There was much interest, but no one would agree to be an elder. Having had no success, they started back to Pittsburgh. After they left, Adam Norris called a council together and it was decided to have the ministers return to discuss the proposed plan more thoroughly. Mr. Norris mounted his horse and set off to ask the ministers to return and overtook them at Snitzers Corner. They returned and Adam Norris agreed to serve as elder and to help persuade others. When the three returned, they persuaded Dave McKnight and John Norris to join in constituting a session for the new church. Since there was no church building, the business required for organization of a mission was carried out in a store along Bull Creek.

Ministers appointed by the Presbytery were sent out regularly to conduct services until final measures were made to form a self-governing church. On August 10, 1841 ten people became charter members, some as professors of religion and some as seekers of religion. On Sunday, May 22, 1842, it was resolved that this society be known as the PLEASANT UNITY CONGREGATION of the CUMBERLAND CHURCH.

On April 29, 1874 the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania entitled an act requiring the churches to declare their purpose, terms, and provisions and to set a charter. On Dec. 10, 1900 Mr. J. L. Catherwood and William Norris, representing Pleasant Unity Cumberland Church, signed a charter declaring the name to be Pleasant Unity Cumberland Church and the purpose to be the support of public worship according to the faith, doctrine, discipline, and usage of same. Amendments have been made periodically to alter any proclamation as deemed necessary. The word Cumberland was extracted from the name by decree on Jan. 28, 1924.

The one and one-half acres of land for the original building were purchased for one dollar on Dec. 14, 1842 from Sarah Collins, who derived them from her father, Stephen Lowrey, by will dated Nov. 29, 1821.

The first church was a log structure on a site below the present sanctuary. The brick church was built in 1860 of bricks burned at the Adam Norris brickyard. This church was replaced in 1937 by the present stone structure. The existing church is in Fawn Township, with the borders of West Deer and Fawn Townships at the main entrance. A portion of the cemetery is in each township. The manse is in West Deer on land purchased from Harry W. Ekas and was built by men of the church for seven thousand dollars in 1923-24.

The church building was built by men of the church. Stained glass memorial windows accentuate its beauty along with other memorial gifts - a lighted wooden cross, chancel furniture, communion service, offering plates, etc.

Eighteen years after the stone structure was built an addition was made to accommodate the growing congregation. The church school facilities were nearly tripled and a new kitchen added.

With the growth of towns due to industrial and mechanical advances (glass factory, steel mills, etc.) Pleasant Unity began to lose some of her members. A daughter church, Central Presbyterian Church of Tarentum, was formed in 1888 to meet the needs of those who had moved to town. Pleasant Unity transferred thirty members at this time. A minister who had served Pleasant Unity for fourteen years was called to serve Central.

At this writing the membership of Pleasant Unity is in excess of 350 members. One-third of the members are West Deer residents, and more than one-half of the ruling elders are West Deer residents.

Ministers

D. I. Law	1841-42
Isaac Hogue	1842-48
William Campbell	1848-54
J. Moore	1854-57
James M. Gallagher	1857-59
I. F. Wall	1859-61
Samuel Bowman	1861-63
T. C. McClland	1863-65
James M. Norris	1874-76
J. R. McQuown	1876-78
Azel Freeman	1879-80
James Irwin Means	1881-95
F. A. Shape	1895-96
R. C. Byers	1896-97
N. F. New	1897-98
J. B. Miller	1898-98
Edward M. Kennison	1898-1901
Alanson Ritner Day	1901-03
J. R. Norris	1903-04
F. A. Shape	1904-06
J. S. McCluney	1906-09
Leroy W. Lewellen	1909-13
F. A. Gaupp	1913-18
Leroy W. Lewellen	1918-22
G. Karl Monroe	1922-27
G. Lee Forney	1927-31
Charles J. Callier	1931-37
George N. Neill	1937-59
Lester W. Crummy	1959-64

Fredrick P. Gibbs
Bernard E. Quick
Ralph W. McCandless

1965-67
1967-70
1971-Present

East Union Presbyterian Church

Submitted by: Carol Bock

June 1850 witnessed the first gathering for worship of a group of farmers from West Deer and Indiana Townships on the site that is now East Union Presbyterian Church. No minister presided in the church service, yet the people came to oak log pews to give thanks and praise.

Thomas Magill dug by hand the trench for the first church building. Within three months a building was constructed from donated time and materials. It wasn't until 1854 that East Union had a minister of its own. That minister was James Given, who served from 1854 to 1857.

The arrival of a regular minister saw an increase in church activities. Horses and buggies could be found in the stable (where the cemetery is now) most all day Sabbath. Prayer meetings were social times too. The Strawberry Festival and Fourth of July picnic, with hand-squeezed lemonade, were summer highlights.

A parsonage and barn were constructed in 1886. If a minister was not married the white frame parsonage was rented to a family.

The church itself also saw new construction. An annex of three classrooms with a kitchen and serving room underneath was added. Still more changes came in 1939 when a steeple and vestibule became a part of East Union. About this time red brick was laid over the earthen brick used during the original construction.

East Union's centennial in 1950 saw the installation of beautiful stained glass windows in Founder's Chapel. The horse stable was gone and old stovepipes removed as other changes came to East Union. In 1957 the educational unit and present parsonage came into being.

On May 17, 1959 the congregations of East Union and Russellton United Presbyterian Church (which had been a mission church supplied with the East Union minister) united to form East Union United Presbyterian Church.

Growth continued at East Union and on August 26, 1962 ground was broken for the present hilltop sanctuary, East Union burned the mortgage to this new addition in June 1982.

As a building, East Union offers itself to the community for activities and use. Many township organizations meet regularly in various rooms of the building.

As a congregation, East Union continues to grow in its outreach of serving Christ in religious and spiritual ways within West Deer Township.

From oak pews in a clearing to a hilltop dominating structure, East Union Presbyterian Church is a rich heritage within West Deer Township.

Bairdford United Methodist Church

Picture 134 – Bairdford United Methodist Church 1910



The above photo was made about 1910 by Leonard Monnier on a glass plate negative. The town of Bairdford had not yet been built and the church had no full basement. In 1950 a full basement was put under the church and central heating and stained glass windows were installed. In 1960 the vestibule was added and in 1972 a spire was lifted to its place. In 1984 a parsonage was built beside the church.

The Bairdford United Methodist Church had its beginnings in 1876 when a group of farmers got together and decided to form a congregation that would serve families in the area now known as Bairdford. A series of revival meetings were held in Martin's School, which was located along Route 910 between that road and the present Masonry Specialty building.

Under the leadership of Rev. James Baumgartner, an Evangelical evangelist, this group built a rather large frame building on three acres of land donated by several farm families. Rev. James Baumgartner was said to be only five feet three inches tall, giving rise to the nickname "Little Jim" Church.

This Evangelical church, which later became the Evangelical United Brethren Church, continued until 1899 when it became a Methodist church. The legal name change in 1899 was from the Deer Creek Evangelical Church to the Deer Creek Methodist Protestant Church.

After Bairdford became a town in 1914 it became known as the Bairdford Methodist Church. In 1968 when the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church united it then became the Bairdford United Methodist Church.

As West Deer celebrates its 150th birthday, "Little Jim" Church also celebrates its 110th birthday. Rev. Donna Snow is the present pastor.

History of Curtisville Presbyterian Church

Submitted by: Mrs. Charles Hudon

The Reverend Boggerstaff, pastor of the United Presbyterian Mission Church at Russellton, held the first Sunday School and church services at the Curtisville schoolhouse in August 1911. The Board of Church Extension of the United Presbyterian Mission Church appointed a commission to study the field and make a report. The first meeting of the commission was held in the Ford Collieries Company office at Curtisville on December 26, 1911. The report was favorable and a subscription paper for the church building was started. Ford Collieries Company gave the lease on the ground free of cost. J. B. Ford, E. L. Ford, and J. A. Curtis subscribed \$500.00 and the U. P. Mission Church Board gave \$600.00. Total receipts in July 1913 were \$2,300.00. A contract for the building was let on March 5, 1913 at \$2,630.00. The Church was dedicated on July 14, 1913.

A series of pastors preached here. They came out on the Staley Bus Line from Pittsburgh on Sunday mornings and were met at the bus by different members of the congregation. After the church services they would be the guests at the various homes, then return to Pittsburgh in the early evening.

In May 1926, Reverend Lloyd Roberts, pastor of Bull Creek Presbyterian Church, saw the opportunity and need of the people. He volunteered to start evening services without a contract.

On April 8, 1929 a petition was sent to Pittsburgh Presbytery to organize a Presbyterian Church at Curtisville. The petition was granted. Organization of the Curtisville Community Presbyterian Church was held on Sunday, May 5, 1929 at 7:00 P.M. The Philathea Class was organized in March 1929 with twelve charter members. One charter member, Mrs. Ellis Byers, has been residing in Alexandria, VA and is the only one remaining. The Philathea Class has been active down through the years, helping not only the church, but wherever needed. Dinners are prepared twice a month for the West Deer Lions Club and have been for quite a few years.

On January 30, 1931 Reverend Roberts and his family moved away. Reverend A. B. Weisz received a call to be the pastor at Bull Creek Presbyterian Church and the Curtisville Church. The installation service was held on November 22, 1931.

On September 22, 1940 a call was issued to Reverend Ardel Christie of Neville Island Church. On November 7, 1940 he began his pastorate. On December 1, 1943 his resignation was accepted.

On September 25, 1944, Reverend Albert Beckes was ordained and installed as pastor of Bull Creek Presbyterian Church and Curtisville Presbyterian Church. In 1972, after 28 years of faithful service, Reverend Beckes retired from Bull Creek Presbyterian Church, but stayed on at Curtisville Presbyterian Church. In October 1982, Reverend Beckes again retired after having been with the Curtisville Presbyterian Church for 38 years. Reverend Beckes is still serving as moderator for the church.

In November 1982, Frank DeLuce of Penn Hills became student pastor of the Curtisville Presbyterian Church and is still with them.

St. Michael's Orthodox Church

Submitted by: Father Alexander Poshyvajlo

The Orthodox Church is that body of Christians, which has existed without interruption from the day of Pentecost to the present day. It is the universal church of Christ, knowing no bounds of time or space and embracing all races and nationalities of man.

The orthodoxy was planted in America, 18 years after America's Independence, in 1794 by 10 missionary monks in Alaska.

The first orthodox hierarchy, Bishop Joasaf, was consecrated in 1799 for the American missionary territory of Alaska.

Large masses of orthodox people of every nationality began to arrive to America in the waves of migration following World War One.

The first settlers were simple hard working people, but they were just the kind of people who were authentic bearers of that three-fold Christian idealism, i.e. of spiritual vision, of moral discipline and of competition in doing good.

This was the backbone of their souls, inherited from their parents in the Old World. They lived up to it as much as they could, under changed circumstance. That was, and still is, their greatest contribution to the building of American civilization, parallel with their other contributions in sweat and blood, sweat, in mines and factories, and in blood in America's battlefields. They never became wealthy in this country of great opportunities, for they had to divide their modest earnings into three parts. One part for their sustenance and education of their children, a second part they used to send to their families in the old country, and the third part they gave to church, school, insurance and charities. They established churches, brotherhoods, schools, and monasteries. They kept their faith and traditions and they cultivated their ancient virtues. They have been a spiritual and constructive component of the New World's mankind. They have been in their own way a heroic generation - no less than other national or religious groups, - now blended into one great American nation.

Picture 135 – St. Michael's Orthodox Church Early Group of young people



Today there are approximately 2,000 orthodox' parishes in America, more than 60 bishops, many theological seminaries and monasteries, which belong collectively to the various orthodox jurisdiction in America. There are more than 6 million American orthodox faithful in the Western Hemisphere.

In the beginning of the 20th century, a group of such heroic pioneers came to West Deer Township, PA, from several Eastern European countries. They planted the seeds of the orthodoxy in this area. Their childhood spiritual teaching by their parents and their great love for Christ and His church had stirred them to have a place of worship which led to the establishment of St. Michael's Orthodox Parish in Curtisville, PA.

The first services were conducted by the Rev. Fr. John Gratson in 1913- long before official consecration of the church ground. Fr. John led the newly budding parish in worship and organization. With his guidance, a group of delegates of the newly formed congregation approached the Ford Collieries Co., owner of the surrounding land and mines, for a parcel of land on which to build an orthodox church. After obtaining the land, the delegates then petitioned the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church in America for approval of plans for a church building. The first parish council consisted of: Michael Fira, Peter Bereznyj, Paul Pelch Julian Krenytsky, John Lukach Sr., John Lukach Jr., John Filiak and other founders. They sought a contractor to help them build the church. The contractor undertook the project, with the understanding that the men of the parish were to do all the necessary work. These pioneer craftsmen and do-it-yourself carpenters began the project. With their hands, they lovingly laid the foundation of their long-awaited church. The job of hoisting the three large cast bells and mounting them in the belfry, 125 feet above the ground, was quite a task with no crane or such mechanical devices. The original iconostases, pews, and alt church furniture were made by these parish craftsmen. With the grace of God and their hard work, the church was completed, consecrated and incorporated in 1918. Many improvements since that time have been made. During the history of the parish a number of pastors devotedly have served St. Michael's parish. Here is a list of former pastors of St. Michael's Parish: The Rev. John Gratson, The Rev. Andrew Didick, The Rev. Elias Baran, The Rev. V. Kolesnikov, The V. Rev. Gregory Soroka, The V.

Rev. Damian Krehel, The V. Rev. Stephen Podlusk, The V. Rev. Elia Yankowsky, The V. Rev. Peter Tkach, The V. Rev. Vladimir Levkanich, The V. Rev. Vladimir Stephan, The V. Rev. Peter Perove, The V. Rev. Leo Chumak, The V. Rev. Peter Felechak, The V. Rev. Gabriel Daviduk, The V. Rev. Alexander Poshyajlo. St. Michael's Parish has had a number of cantors who serve the parish devotedly: Michael Radik, John Bazinetz, John Matechen, John Krepto, Geoge Mandzuk, John Rebrey, Sr., Matushka Anna Poshyvajlo.

The present pastor of St. Michael's Parish, Very Rev. Fr. Alexander Poshyvajlo, was assigned to this parish in 1963 by His Eminence the Late Archbishop Leonty, Metropolitan of all America and Canada. Since his assignment here, Fr. Alexander has worked zealously to promote spiritual and educational life of the parish.

Picture 136 – St. Michael's Orthodox Church A group of current parishioners



There is also a visible evidence of constant improvements at St. Michael's Parish. Standing and observing the church one can see the great changes that have taken place on its outside appearance. In 1967, two beautiful domes were mounted atop of the church adorned with mosaic trim. Two wings have been added to the front of the church. Mosaic icons of Christ the Savior and Mother of Our Lord are mounted on them while a mosaic icon of St. Michael is centered over the main church entrance. The interior of the church has been completely renovated and refurbished. New stained glass windows were installed. Beautiful murals depicting the miracles of Christ have been painted on the walls and ceilings of the church. All segments of this renovation and other articles have been donated by members of the Parish in memory of their departed loved ones, or to their own good health. Also, many were sponsored by special fund-raising projects of the church or Sisterhood of the Parish. The- pirogue project being the main source of income of the church has helped to pay for many of these renovations. Today the faithful parishioners of St. Michael's Church and its pastor are honored and glad to show visitors their beautiful church.

For more than half a century, the Parish of St. Michael's Orthodox Church of Curtisville has been a bastion of spiritual and moral strength in West Deer Township. It has provided inspiration, guidance and direction for its members and friends and perpetuated their faith and cultural traditions in this community. On this historic occasion, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of West Deer Township, all Parishioners of St. Michael's Orthodox Church of Curtisville, Pa., the Parish Council, and its Pastor Very Rev. Fr. Alexander with family - welcome the opportunity to greet all distinguished leaders and all God- loving people, - residents of West Deer Township. We pray that in the future, the ministry of our St. Michael's Orthodox Church of Curtisville will continue to be rewarding and beneficial, not only to its members but to all God's people of our community. For we are called not to be served, but to serve and to be servants to all.

A Short History of Transfiguration Parish

From the 50th Anniversary of Foundation of the Parish and School Dedication of Transfiguration Church

In 1913, the people of Russellton and Curtisville petitioned the Pastor of St. Mary's Church, New Kensington, Pa. for a priest to care for their spiritual needs. Father Francis Poszukanis came regularly in that year to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays. On November 8, 1913, Father Poszukanis wrote to Bishop Canevin and requested that the mission in Russellton be named in the honor of the Transfiguration. Until the following year, the area was considered a mission of St.

Mary's. On April 13, 1914, a Parish meeting was held to discuss plans for the building of a church. Then in August 1914, a church committee was formed, and Bishop Canevin was petitioned for permission to build a church. Up to this time. Mass had been celebrated in a house in Russellton No. 1, at a hall in Superior, and at a hall which stood on the corner of McKrell Road and Crest Street.

The first Communion Class was prepared at the house in Russellton No. 1 in 1915. By 1916 the church was completed and the Parish also received its first resident pastor, the Reverend Ladislaus Sliwinski, who also began construction of a rectory. The church received two more additions before reaching its present dimensions.

Transfiguration Parish includes the eastern portion of West Deer Township from the Butler County line southward to that portion of Indiana Township known as Rural Ridge, where it forms a common boundary with Our Lady of Victory, Harwick, at Rich Hill Road. On the West its neighbor is St. Victor's, Bairdford, and the common boundary is Saxonburg Boulevard and East Union Road. Geographically the Parish is in the shape of an irregularly- shaped rectangle approximately nine miles long and three miles wide.

Picture 137 – Transfiguration Church 1930



Pix Courtesy of the Arch Dioceses of Pittsburgh 2004

Parish firsts at Transfigurations, Russellton, PA.

First Pastor Father Francis Poszukanis

First Church Committee	1914
P. J. Dwyer, Wm. Lelis. F. Pawloski, B. Kuznicki, F. J. Gordon, Felix Watychowics	
First Permanent Church	1915-Started
First Permanent Church	1916-Completed
First Holy Communion Class	1915
First Baptism John Gordon,	August 20, 1914
First Marriage James Gordon and Catherine Doherty	August 9, 1916
First Confirmation By Bishop Canevin,	July 18, 1920
First Parochial School	1964

First Priest from the Parish Rev. Robert Spondike. M.S.C.

Priest that have served Parish

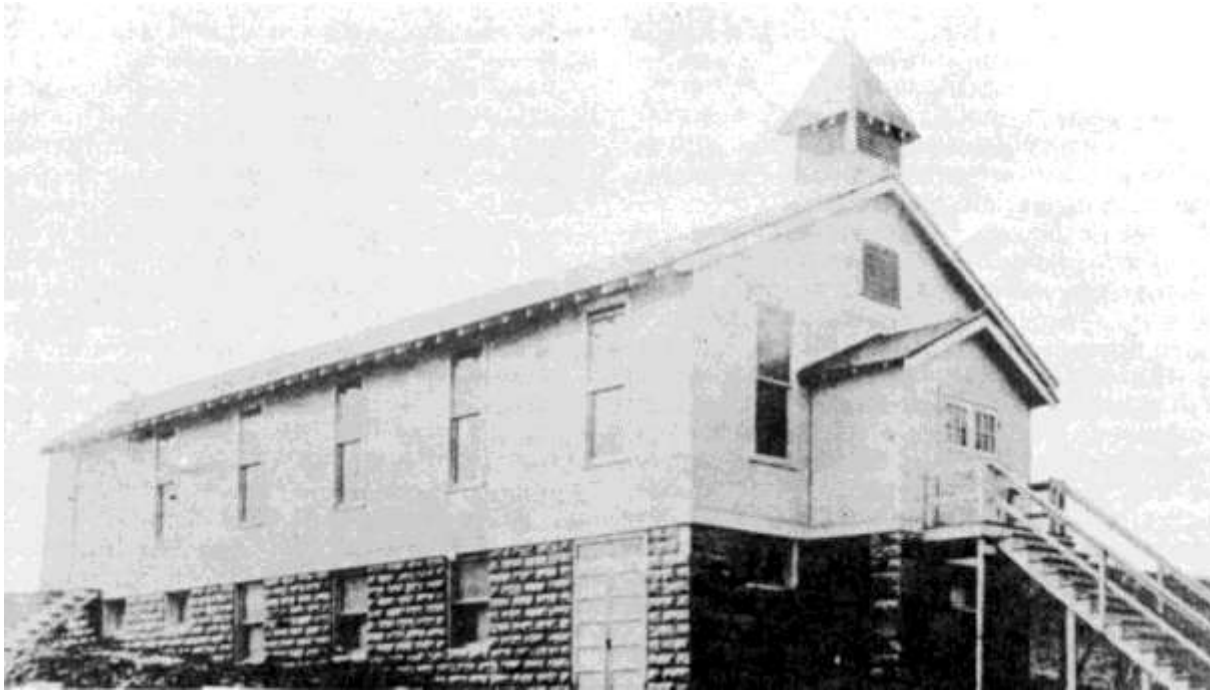
PRIESTS

Rev. Francis Poszukanis	1913-July 9, 1916
Rev. Ladislaus Stiwnski	1916-May 12, 1918
Rev. John Kopera	1918-March 21, 1920
Rev. S. K. Banasiewick	1920-September, 1923
Rev. Joseph Kulacz	1923-June 2, 1944
Rev. Joseph Stankiewics	1944-July 16, 1955
Rev. Stanley C. Piekarski	1955-1965
Rev. Francis Weaver	1965 to present

A quick item about Father Kulacz. At least once a year Father Kulacz would take time during church services to read ALOUD how much money each family gave to the parish. One of the things I remember most is the way he said "nut-TING" in a very loud way you did not want to be one of those in the parish. By Vicky Baron Lewetag.

Saint Victor Church - Bairdford, PA

Picture 138 – Saint Victor Church



Saint Victor Mission Chapel 1923-1947
Saint Victor Church 1947-1952

In June of 1919, Father D. A. Lawless, Director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, organized a mission in Bairdford and made arrangements for Mass to be said and for the opening of a religious instruction class. There are conflicting records about where the first mass was said, but it was said in either the coal company's boarding house or in the Bairdford School building during the fall of 1919.

Thereafter, Father Lawless said Mass the second Sunday of every month and the Confraternity teachers taught catechism every Sunday through March 10 1922. The teachers rode the bus from Pittsburgh to Geiser's farm and walked the railroad tracks or the unpaved road from Saxonburg Boulevard to Bairdford School.

In February of 1922, the Catholic community was told that it would not be allowed to have services or to teach religion in the school much longer. Application was then made for the use of the Miners' new hall but was rejected. By April 1922, the public school could no longer be used and there was no where to go but to an open field. When this proved too much of a hardship, Father Lawless offered Mass on the second Sunday in private homes where religious instruction was also taught. They were finally able to procure a tent and used it as a church from June through September.

Father Lawless celebrated Mass at the Bairdford Mission for the last time on the second Sunday of January 1922. Father Victor Majka was appointed the new missionary in charge. Because of his efforts and because of the good relations he established with the total community, permission was again granted to use the Bairdford School for services and religious instruction.

Father Majka canvassed the community in the interest of starting a Chapel Fund. The people responded generously. On October 7, 1923, the St. Victor Mission Chapel, named for Father Majka, was dedicated and a Solemn High Mass was celebrated by Fathers Majka, Kozar, and Lawless. At this time there were seventy-five families in the parish and an enrollment of one hundred and one children in the C.C.D. classes.

It wasn't long before St. Victor's became a Mission of St. Kilian's in Mars, PA and was served by the pastors of St. Kilian's until November of 1947, when Father E. Charles Patterson became its first resident pastor.

In July 1948, a building site was purchased for what was the beginning of St. Victor's as we know it today. The first project was the rectory. On May 1, 1949, the blessing and ground-breaking ceremony took place and work on the rectory began the next day. In May 1951, more acreage was purchased and permission given to build a basement church. Ground-breaking for this church took place on September 9, 1951. The last Mass in the Bairdford Mission Chapel was celebrated on September 15, 1952. On Saturday, September 21, 1952 Bishop Deardon blessed the new Basement Church and the following day, Sunday, September 22, Mass was celebrated in it for the first time.

In 1956, additional property was purchased for future expansion. In March 1960, permission was given to commence the building program. The blessing and ground-breaking ceremony for the Activity Building took place on June 19, 1961 and the project was completed in less than a year. Bishop Wright officiated at the dedication on January 6, 1963.

Due to the generosity and hard work of the St. Victor's parishioners, the expansion program continued. Approvals were granted and ground-breaking ceremonies for the present church took place on November 22, 1970 with Father Conroy officiating.

On December 12, 1971, Bishop Leonard presided at the ceremonies dedicating the new church, thus culminating the dream of those early parishioners who sat on boxes under a tent or in a public school building to hear Mass.

The present pastor, Father Jerome Filip, was appointed in August 1974. During the past decade, as in the past, we have let this mustard seed continue to grow into a tree of immense proportions. Family membership has grown during the past 62 years from 75 to 921 families and children in the C.C.D. from 101 to 10467. May Saint Victor Parish ever gain increased momentum as years come and go. May its good deeds spread and multiply until, like the sun, they shed their gold rays far and wide.

No matter where life's course may lead one, let Saint Victor Church ever be your beacon light! Saint Victor Church forever be to all peoples of West Deer Township "The house of God and the gate of Heaven."

Picture 139 – Saint Victor Church 1971



St. Victor's Roman Catholic Church Baird Pa (Photo from the Dedication booklet December 12, 1971)

[A Brief History of, The Church of the Nazarene, Curtisville](#)

In 1937 Mrs. Ana Wigham contacted Rev. F. Burchell to see if he would visit Dorothy Baughman, who was pregnant and not expected to live. Rev. Burchell learned she was unsaved and encouraged her to get right with God, which she did. Then they laid hands on her and prayed for her healing. She was healed and the baby was born well. Mrs. Wigham suggested prayer meetings be started in the home of George and Nellie Lowe. The first of many was held in November 1937. Those present were: Rev. and Mrs. Burchell, Ana Wigham, Aunt Mabel, George and Nellie Lowe, and Margaret and Richard Bottles. They called the group the Curtisville Gospel Church and began weekly prayer services. Many invitations were given and many healings and other miracles took place. The people just kept coming and brought others.

Since Sunday School room was needed they were granted the use of the schoolhouse in Curtisville No. 1. Other prayer meetings were being held in Curtisville No. 2, Russellton, and Baird. Soon a larger place was needed and the Union Hall in Little Italy was rented. When the doors closed at the Union Hall, an all-night prayer meeting was held and the Valley Grange in Baird was rented. Some of those saved and attending at this time were: Dave and Delia Thomas, Ronald Bailey, Marie Retallick, George and Nellie Lowe, Mrs. Solmon and others.

The church wished to be joined to a denomination and considered the Church of the Nazarene. Rev. D. D. Branadon, a Nazarene district superintendent, was invited to speak. The congregation voted in 1940 to join with the Church of the Nazarene. The church was organized with 41 charter members during a revival with Rev. Branadon on September 29, 1940. Land was

purchased from the Pish family, with a down payment made and the balance to be paid in three years. This was paid in full in one year. Next came the task of building a church. Word was received of an old Methodist church on the corner of Lincoln and Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh that was condemned and for sale for \$50.00. The building was purchased and the stone foundation was sold for \$50.00. This made the building virtually free. The building was hauled in 9X15 foot sections and stored in Geiser's barn. Bill, Dave, and Jim Thomas did much of the foundation digging on this present location where cement blocks were soon needed. People sacrificed to buy them and a stone mason, Mr. Valenti, donated his time to lay them. There was much praising God, and many revival services, healings, salvations, etc. The lumber was brought from Geiser's barn, where it was noticed that the back end of the church had been stolen. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey contacted a lumberyard in Milivale where all the needed lumber was donated. The building was dedicated to God on November 8, 1942.

Notes Of Interest

Pastors who have served the Curtisville congregation:

PASTORS

Rev. Frederick Burchell	1940-45
Rev. Everet Downing	1945-48
Rev. Jerry Woodcock	1948-53
Rev. Richard Phelps	1953-57
Rev. Edward Thornton	1957-72
Rev. Glenn Eagle	1972-78
Rev. G. A. Hankins	1978-Present

Charter members still living:

Daisey Kristoff

Edna Kristoff

Nellie Lowe

History of Resurrection Lutheran Church

It was on May 20, 1958 that Dr. Paul E. Daugherty, Missionary Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Synod of U.L.C. of America, brought James E. Bennett to West Deer Township to conduct a survey to determine whether a new U.L.C. in America Congregation should be established in the community.

Many factors were considered but most important was the interest shown by those who were the prospective members.

Thirty-five persons attended the first service on July 13, 1958, conducted by Seminarian Bennett at the Oak Valley Grange Hall on Saxonburg Boulevard. Soon a steering committee was formed to guide the new mission on its way, followed by a petition to have a Lutheran Church established in this area. Bennett had completed his task here.

On Aug. 31, 1958 The Rev. Robert Plumskey became the pastor and mission developer. Sunday school teachers, officers, and helpers were soon organized. Miss Mildred Krumpe was S.S. Superintendent. The Mission needed 60 charter members, so on Feb. 22, 1959 Resurrection Lutheran Mission became Resurrection Lutheran Church, with 66 adult members and 36 child members.

The first congregation meeting was held Mar. 1, 1959. The first council elected with John Gump as V.P. and two on Council still active in the congregation, Albert Ravin and Harry Currin. Soon after, on June 1, 1959, Pastor Raymond Hausile accepted the call to be the pastor.

The first confirmed were Donna Lee Johnston and Elizabeth Jean Currin on May 17, 1959. A women's group was also organized along with the Young Peoples Lutheran League. Pastor Hausile and his bride moved into the newly built parsonage with the dedication held on Dec. 27, 1959. The first Bible School classes were held in June, 1960.

Another milestone was reached on Mar. 26, 1961. The congregation approved the purchase of land next to the Grange Building for a church building site.

On June 1, 1962, Pastor Hausile left to accept the call at St. Marks in Jeannette, with Seminarian Gordon Hinkle being the student pastor for the summer.

In Aug. 1962, Rev. Donald Power accepted a call to be full-time pastor at Resurrection with installation on Aug. 12th. On Aug. 29, 1963, Boy Scout Troop 628 receded its charter and was sponsored by the church.

In July, 1962, we became a part of the W. PA- W. VA Synod - L.C.A. instead of U.L.C.A.

The Grange Building was purchased Nov. 27, 1964. A Moller pipe organ was purchased and installed with the dedication, recital, and a reception following on Dec. 20, 1964.

After much research and planning, a Lutheran Kindergarten opened on Sept. 7, 1965.

Groundbreaking for the new church took place on Nov. 21, 1965 at 3:00 p.m. at a special service.

Dreams were being realized with the dedication of the new church building-a very important milestone in the life of the congregation, with 134 confirmed members and 233 baptized members.

In 1975, Dr. Wm. C. Hankey came to be the pastor until Aug. of 1978. The Rev. Robert J. Sielhamer has served since that time as pastor.

A welcome mat is always there for any that come to worship with us. Come join with us in giving praise to our Lord for his many blessings. Our desire is to provide a significant ministry of witnessing and service to God and mankind.

May the Lord bless us to do his work.

Fundamental Church of West Deer

Picture 140 – Fundamental Church



In January 1967 a group of concerned Christians separated from a denominational church because they found themselves in doctrinal conflict with the beliefs of that church.

The organizational meeting was held in a home on January 17, 1967 with seventeen families represented. A Board of Directors was named, a name for the church chosen and a missionary program set up at this meeting.

The first Sunday morning service was held on February 5, 1967 with an attendance of 44. It was held in a home where there was a piano and an L-shaped living-dining area. Both rooms full of chairs faced the corner where a covered TV with a desk lamp on top was used for the pulpit. People carried their own folding chairs to the service and Sunday School classes met in bedrooms and the basement. After three Sundays when the attendance reached 69 it was obvious that a larger place was needed for the services. The Resurrection Lutheran Church kindly offered to rent the group the Oak Valley Grange on Saxonburg Boulevard, which they own. Until a piano was donated, a hand pump organ was used for the singing of hymns. 75 hymnbooks had been given to the group and a beautiful handmade wooden pulpit had been donated.

The Fundamental Church of West Deer was chartered at 2:15 p.m. on Feb. 23, 1967 in Pittsburgh with Common Pleas Court Judge Smith and representatives of the church signing the charter.

The ground-breaking ceremony for the original church building was held Sunday afternoon, March 17, 1968 with 64 people present. The first Sunday service in the new building was held November 10, 1968. In 1970 a garage was built. An addition to the back and side of the building in 1975 increased the size of the main auditorium, added a large educational and fellowship room and a vestibule, thus changing the main entrance from the front to the side of the church. A large picnic shelter was built in 1977.

In September of 1982 a mobile home was donated to the church. It was occupied for the first time in the summer of 1985 by missionary's home on furlough from Mexico.

An important part of the history of the Fundamental Church of West Deer is that it is totally independent and the Elders (equal and co-equal) are responsible for all spiritual matters such as pastor-ing and teaching. Because there is no paid personnel all income after current expenses can be directed toward missionary work. Thus, more than 55 percent of the total income is sent to faith missions.

West Deer Community Men's Bible Class

A picture hanging on the wall in the Deer Creek Church Annex building shows about one hundred men in a group titled, the "West Deer Community Men's Bible Class." The picture is probably fifty-five years old and represents a part of West Deer's religious history.

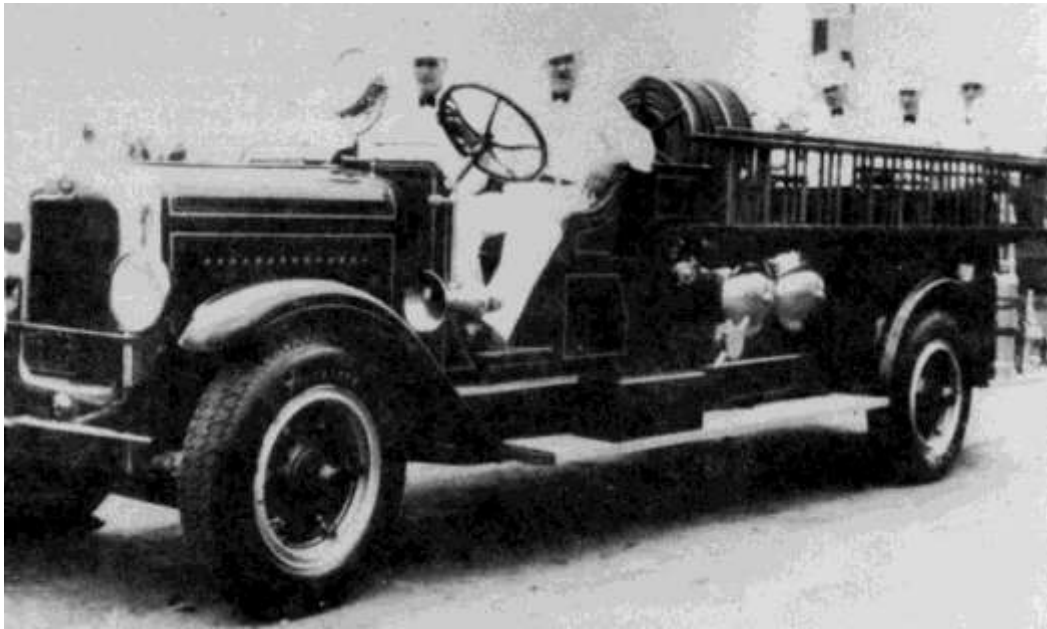
This group was organized in 1927 through the efforts of several local lay religious leaders among whom were Robert Malcom, William Christy, and A. R. Pollock. After organizing, the group met regularly, every Monday evening at Park Hall, the old wooden building which was beside the Deer Creek Church on part of the site where the present annex now stands. A. R. Pollock was the teacher and for sometime his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Calvin Pollock served as the organist.

The class was open to men of all faiths but the major group represented was Presbyterian. As a social activity they held an annual picnic. One of the major national issues at the time was prohibition and more than one discussion arose on this subject. This class ran its course in about ten years and closed some time in the late 1930's

History of West Deer V.F.D. #1

Submitted by: William Hazlett

Picture 141 – First fire truck at West Deer No.1



The first fire truck at West Deer No. 1. John Benke is behind the wheel with Dwight Bryan sitting beside him. At the rear of the truck from left to right are Bill Hazlett, Bill Catherwood, and Jim Staley.

In 1929 an incident occurred that would bring about a volunteer fire department to West Deer. The old Culmerville School was thought to be on fire, so several men ran to help, only to realize they had nothing to fight it with. Fortunately, it was not on fire, but this experience and the fire shortly thereafter at the home of Harry Davison, Sr. convinced a number of men to begin a fire department. Thus West Deer V.F.D. #1 was born. Harry Davison, Sr., James Staley, Henry Baumgartel, Herbert Hess, Floyd Dawson, J. C. Benke, and Karns and William Hazlett were among those who started the department. The men borrowed a piece of property from the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad located near the Culmerville Bridge and purchased an old blacksmith shop for \$70.00. They then proceeded to dismantle this same building, which was located in Dorseyville, and reconstruct it on their newly obtained site. This building, which housed one truck, was located next to J. Norris' residence and he became responsible for receiving fire calls and setting off a siren to call the volunteers to the building. A rope was installed from the siren switch to the Norris home so that he needed only to reach out his front door to set off the siren with a pull of the rope.

The first truck purchased by the department was an American La France and cost \$5,000. Raising this sum of money was a struggle, but the men persevered and with some township help they managed to raise it. In 1946 an additional truck was purchased, a World War II vintage army fire truck, to aid in fighting brush fires. In 1949 a water tanker was obtained and this was replaced with a new tanker in 1953, one with a stainless steel tank made at Allegheny Ludlum in Brackenridge. In 1956 a new Howe Pumperona GMC chassis was purchased. In 1962 a 1200-gallon tank truck was added and in 1967 the original community water truck was replaced with a 1000-gallon capacity tanker. In 1972 a modern fire/rescue unit was purchased, retiring the Gl. In 1976 a replacement pumper was purchased, replacing the 1956 pumper and costing four times as much as the old one. In 1981 a Mack Tanker Truck - 1200 GPM, 2750-gallon capacity was purchased.

As the department grew, so did the one-room firehouse. However, after expanding it several times, it was decided it was time to erect a new building. In 1969, some five acres of land was purchased from J. Davison, a few hundred yards from the old site, and at this same time work on the new building began. After several months and long hours of hard work by dozens of volunteer firemen and friends the new building was erected, one which was able to house all of the department vehicles and fire equipment. In addition to this, the building has a large social hall with a large, all-equipped kitchen and a comfortable recreation for volunteer members to relax or hold meetings in.

The men from West Deer Volunteer Fire Department #1 are truly proud of their record accomplishments and proud to be part of this community which they serve. From just a handful in 1929, the membership has grown to approximately 350 members, approximately 100 of whom are on the current active member roster.

1929 Line Officers and Administrative Officers

President	Herbert Hess
Vice President	James Staley
Secretary	William Catherwood
Asst. Secretary	O. G. Simmers
Treasurer	George Sillea
3 yr. Trustee	Henry Baumgartel
2 yr. Trustee	James Norris
1 yr. Trustee	Clark Porter
Chief	James Staley
Captain	Floyd Dawson
1st Lieutenant	John Montgomery
2nd Lieutenant	David Norris
3rd Lieutenant	Earl Baumgartel
Chief Driver & Mechanic	Dwight Bryan

History of the Ladies Auxiliary West Deer V.F.D. #1

Submitted by: Rita Lassinger
President of W.D. No. 1 Ladies' Auxiliary

This Ladies Auxiliary was organized in January 1956. Its purpose was to work for the benefit of the fire department in any way possible. It began from scratch with ideas and energies from some very dedicated women who wanted to do something to better their community. The organization became known as the West Deer Volunteer Fire Department #1 Ladies' Auxiliary, it was sponsored by our firemen.

The first officers were:

President	June Rush
Vice President	Connie Consolaro
Secretary	Martha Graznak
Ass't. Sec.	Jean Christy
Treasurer	Eileen Bohn
Ass't. Treasurer	Martha Norris
Custodian	Ruth Sobotka

The ladies met at the old fire hall (now torn down) that stood on railroad property across from Culmerville Bridge. Meetings were held on the second Tuesday of every month and still continue on that date.

Getting started wasn't easy. The ladies brought pots and pans from home to be used for dinners, socials, fall festivals, grocery bingo's, etc., to help earn money for a kitchen that was badly needed. We worked hard those first years to buy a commercial "Vulcan" ten burner, two thirty inch oven stoves that served us beautifully for twenty-six years. A refrigerator, dishes, silverware, pots and pans were purchased. West Deer Cabinet Company custom- built our base cabinets for our kitchen. That was all we could afford at the time.

The fire department was in need of so many things - fire masks, a new fire truck, and a new home because we were outgrowing the old one. This meant more planning on ways to earn more money for these necessary items. We worked hard for many years and are still doing our part in helping our fire department.

In 1969, our new home was ready. Open House was held on Nov. 2, 1969. By this time we had acquired the top cabinets for our kitchen. A large stainless steel commercial refrigerator was purchased by the auxiliary. A steam table, work table, scrap table and pot sink, all of stainless steel, were added to the kitchen by our firemen. Over the years, we kept adding to our kitchen to aid us in all of our endeavors.

The new fireball now has a large beautiful kitchen and a social hall that seats 350 comfortably for social engagements. At this time the auxiliary began a catering service for social events that are held in our fireball.

Through the years the auxiliary sponsored Christmas Parties for firemen, their wives, and auxiliary members and their husbands, and even held parties for their children.

We had the honor of having two cookbooks published. The first cookbook went into three printings, a real success. The second one was published in 1983, and is still available.

Our fire department celebrated its Golden Anniversary in May 1979. We presented a twelve-passenger van to the firemen on this occasion. We have also presented them with a two tap bar system, an ice machine, air packs, and monies, which total over forty-five thousand dollars to date to help with their responsibilities. We will continue to work hard and work with our firemen to make our community a safe place to live.

History of West Deer V.F.D. #1 - Junior Fire Department

Submitted by: John Medred

It wasn't until 1971 that the department started a Junior Fire Department to encourage and bring 14 to 18 years olds into the organization, Bill Betush, Jim Hazlett, Art Pillart and others were instrumental in starting this group.

The young boys are often referred to as "go-fors" and are first trained to help senior members. They train and learn the basic techniques and are familiarized with fire fighting and all that it involves.

They, too, hold regular meetings, electing officers and planning various ways to make money, such as holding raffles and other fund raising projects and by holding "early birds" on the fire company's Wednesday evening socials. The money earned is used to purchase different pieces of fire equipment, such as ladders, hand tools, and an Ajax Rescue Tool. Gifts of this nature are then presented to the Senior Fire Department at each annual Awards and Recognition Banquet. Besides gifts of fire equipment, this Junior Department had donated large sums of money to the Senior Department to use for anything they are in need of. It is the Junior Members' way of saying "thanks" to the Senior Department for taking the time to work with them.

The majority of our present line officers of today have come up through the Junior Fire Department ranks and many have given their time to work and be sponsor to the Junior Department, hoping to make them future Senior Members.

West Deer Township Independent Volunteer Fire Co. No. 2

Submitted by: James McCaskey

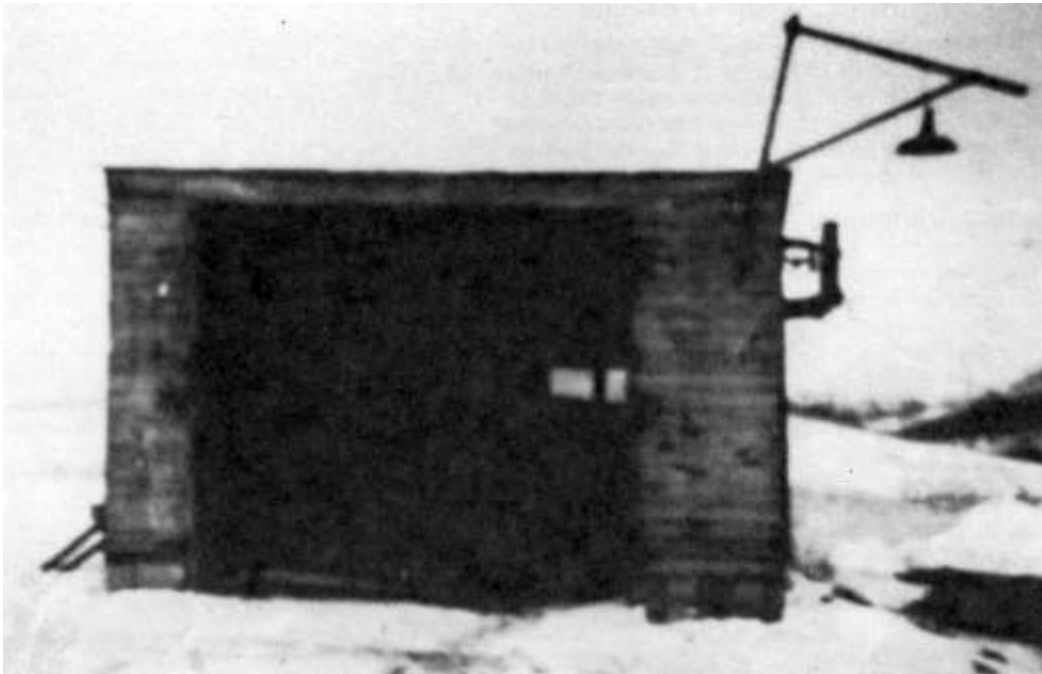
The West Deer #2 Volunteer Fire Department was chartered in 1945 with a total of 22 members. We now have a total of 51 volunteer members. Of these 51 members 21 are life members (15 years or more in the company). We have 3 members with 35 or more years in the company. They are Rusty Falconer, Harry Mull, and Veri Sampson. The company also has a ladies' auxiliary and a junior fire company with eleven members.

West Deer #2 had the first volunteer ambulance service in the township and later gave the ambulance to the newly formed West Deer Ambulance Service. We have since added on to the original two bay garage a third bay, a kitchen, and a 58 X 70 foot social hall.

Our fire equipment includes a 1968 tanker truck which we recently rebuilt, a 1972 brush truck which was assembled by the members, a 1982 Seagrave pumper, and a 1983 100 foot aerial truck. We have a 1983 GMC van, which carries a portable cascade system to fill air bottles at the scene of a fire. We also have a 5000-pound system at the station. The current chief of the company is Russell (Rusty) Falconer and the president is James McCaskey.

Our primary purpose is to provide fire protection to the citizens of West Deer Township and to aid in any other emergency that may arise. As no one in the company is paid, this is all done by volunteer members.

Picture 142 – West Deer #2 Volunteer Fire Company first garage.



This was the garage used for the first West Deer #2 Volunteer Fire Department Fire Truck

Picture 143 – West Deer #2 Volunteer Fire Company as it looks today



West Deer No. 2 - Ladies Auxiliary

Submitted by: Mrs. Jean Heid

The Ladies' Auxiliary of the West Deer No. 2 Fire Company was organized in 1946 with 32 members. It was organized to help the firemen with the heavy financial burdens of the Fire Company. One of its first major projects was to raise funds for an ambulance. When the firemen held a carnival, the ladies worked the concession stands.

They also had concessions at horse shows and other affairs. They held dinners and calendar parties to raise funds for the ambulance. This was West Deer's first public ambulance.

More recently they have furnished the new kitchen in the fire hall and remodeled the rest rooms. They also shared the payments on the van owned by Junior Fireman.

Picture 144 – Third anniversary celebration auxiliary of West Deer Township Fire Company No. 2



THIRD ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION — Members of the auxiliary of West Deer Township Fire Company No. 2 recently celebrated their third anniversary in the fire hall, Allegheny Acres. New officers were also installed. That three-layered cake you see on the table was baked by Mrs. Elmer Hollibaugh. The miniature ambulance, topping the cake, symbolizes an outstanding civic duty performed by the auxiliary. Through hard work on the part of the members, and with the help of the firemen an ambulance was purchased. Pictured above, left to right, are the auxiliary's new officers: Mrs. Jean Held. Vice president: Mrs. Peg Hohmann, secretary; Mrs. Nettle Boles, new president being congratulated by Mrs. Margaret Grissell, retiring president: Mrs. Hetta Flynn, treasurer and Eleanor Hanlon, Financial Secretary. All are from Allegheny Acres. (News)

The West Deer #3 Volunteer Fire Department

The West Deer #3 Volunteer Fire Department, located on Route 910, was incorporated on March 5, 1963 with only twenty-five members. Since the West Deer #2 Company was located almost six miles away, these twenty-five members saw a need for a Fire Department in this area of the township. A number of new homes had been built recently and a larger number was planned in the future.

A local contractor donated the land needed on which these dedicated men built their first firehouse. The original building was a small garage with a dirt floor and a coal stove. A 1947 Chevy truck was the first piece of fire equipment to be bought for this new fire company. A local Boy Scout Troop donated their Cadillac hearse to be used as a squad truck for hauling men and equipment. The first tanker to arrive and take its place in the garage was purchased from Ohio Township. At this time construction had already begun on an addition which would provide a kitchen and coat room.

Several women in the community organized an auxiliary to the Fire Company. Through the years the auxiliary has helped out in various ways. They have assisted the men in their projects for raising funds for the purchase of additional equipment. As a combined group they have enjoyed annual picnics at Deer Lakes Park and annual banquets. After many years of dedicated service the Ladies Auxiliary disbanded in 1985.

As the company expanded it purchased another pumper, a 1952 Ford from another Fire Company. The need for a larger firehouse was evident. Blue prints were drawn for another addition, which would include a three-bay garage, social hall, and recreation room. The Fire Company then purchased a 1971 G.M.C. truck chassis and had a thousand gallon tank constructed on it. In 1977 the tanker was enlarged to carry 1,500 gallons of water and repainted yellow to match the new 1974 Bean pumper which the company had purchased.

In 1973 eight women joined the Fire Company and at this time were the only women firefighters in this area. These women went through many hours of training with the original idea of being able to provide fire protection during daylight hours when the men were at work.

The Junior Fire fighting organization was formed in 1972 and at present has four members.

Since 1976 a two-bay garage has been added to the rear of the building. A TV room has been added to the side of the building. A new pumper, tanker, and squad truck have been added to the fire fighting equipment. At present, there are fifty-eight men and women volunteers in this organization.

With the dedication of the volunteers and the financial support of the community, this fire department has progressed to what it is today, dedicated to your protection.

This history has been prepared by Jennifer Giza from information in an article done by Lois Butler for the V.N.D. and records at the fireball.

West Deer Ambulance Service

Submitted by: Charles H. Fleischer, Donald Cushman, John Kurtiak, Peg Fleischer, Gerry Hickel, Bill Nolan, Bruce Kelley and the Board of Directors, West Deer Ambulance Service, Inc.

We are a relatively young organization in the community but our roots go back to 1945 when West Deer Fire Co. #2 bought a Studebaker ambulance from East Deer Fire Co and commenced ambulance service. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hollibaugh, Sr. were instrumental in purchasing this ambulance. West Deer Fire Co. #2 ran this service continually until Sept. 1, 1977 when West Deer Ambulance Service, Inc. was formed. J.R. Siwicki donated his 1973 Cadillac ambulance and West Deer Fire Co. #2 donated their Superior Modular Ambulance.

This service started with approximately twenty members and only a handful had any training in first aid. We were fortunate that we did start with five EMT-1 people who were invaluable to us at this time.

West Deer Township provided us with a two-stall garage at the municipal building where, from 1977 to 1983, we ran the ambulance service. In 1979 we achieved one of our primary goals when Ed Tabisc from Culmerville attained Paramedic-1 status. Our goal has always been to provide the best possible service to West Deer residents at the lowest cost and this was our first big step. Also in 1979 we replaced the 1973 Cadillac with a new Yankee Lexington modular ambulance and put a new chassis under the 1975 ambulance.

In August 1982 we took our biggest step when we broke ground for our present headquarters on East Union Road adjacent to the former West Deer Township Municipal Building. This building was built without any taxpayer monies, solely from memberships paid by our residents and bills collected from nonmembers who have used the service. We also had one very large donation of \$7500.00 from the West Deer Lions Club whose members thought we were a worthwhile cause for them to support in this way. We want everyone to know how grateful we are to this organization.

At the present time we have 15 paramedics, 30 EMT-1 s, 12 First Responders, 10 trainees, and 8 drivers. We also have 5 dispatchers who dispatch the crews when you call for the ambulance. We have a board of directors of 9 members who are responsible for the financial end of the service (collecting monies, paying bills, raising monies, etc.). All of these people from the paramedics to the board of directors are strictly volunteer and receive no pay whatsoever. Their reward is the satisfaction of helping their friends, neighbors, and fellow residents of West Deer Township in their time of need.

West Deer-Dorseyville Meals-On-Wheels

Submitted by: Don Power

"Great oaks from little acorns grow." West Deer- Dorseyville Meals-On-Wheels is not yet a "great oak" but it did have a "little" beginning. The first meeting, from which the present program developed, had six people in attendance. The date was Oct. 16, 1974, the place was Resurrection Lutheran Church, Saxonburg Blvd., and the Rev. Donald B. Power was convener. The purpose of the program was presented as well as some background information. The purpose of the Meals-On-Wheels program is to provide nutritional meals for those unable for some reason to provide their own meals, on either a temporary or permanent basis. The program operates with people serving people. Those present agreed to meet the following week.

At the second meeting, held on Oct. 23, 1974, the first steering committee was formed. The Rev. Donald B. Power was elected Project Chairman; Mrs. Maureen Kearns, Secretary; Charles Mountsier, Treasurer; and Mrs. Delores Wilson, Intake Chairman.

A letter was prepared and sent to doctors, hospitals, clinics, churches, and social service organizations advising them of the program and indicating that referrals could be made. A tentative target date for start-up of meal deliveries was set for Jan. 1, 1975. It was decided to meet weekly on Wednesday at Resurrection Lutheran Church.

By Oct. 30, 1974 the Steering Committee had expanded to include Mrs. Theta Fredley, Mrs. Amelia Brooke, Mrs. Arletta Behary, Mrs. Daisy McKamish, Mrs. Elva Engel, and Mrs. Sara Jane Newcomer, in addition to the previously elected officers. Guidelines were established for the operation of the program. The name selected, "WEST DEER-DORSEYVILLE MEALS-ON-WHEELS," indicated the geographic area to be served by the program. The Steering Committee took action to affiliate with the Lutheran Service Society of W. Pa. to take advantage of the service offered by them for M-O-W neighborhood programs in the greater Pittsburgh area.

A referral came to the committee asking for service for one client in an emergency situation. Since the operation of the West Deer-Dorseyville program was not yet ready, arrangements were made with the Springdale M-O-W kitchen to purchase one meal for each service day. The local volunteers delivered the meals. The West Deer Dorseyville program continued to operate on this arrangement until their own kitchen was established; Mrs. Agnes Smith, 87 years of age, living on Saxonburg Blvd., Curtisville was the first client to receive the delivered meals on November 11, 1974.

Additional interested persons were added to the committee. Andrew McDonald became the Purchasing Agent. Mrs. Mona Grubbs and Mrs. Flora Hazlett also became members.

As a result of letters sent to local churches and service organizations, contributions to the program began to be received from individuals as well as organizations. By Nov. 12, 1974, \$95.50 had been received.

By early December of 1974, Mrs. Elva Engel, Driver Chairman, had recruited eight drivers. The first metal cooler and the carrying baskets, both items used for meal delivery, had been purchased. Being a new program, the Coca-Cola Co. donated a metal cooler. There now was sufficient equipment for two delivery routes. The program was under way in earnest, now delivering to four clients.

Picture 145 – First deliver of Meal on Wheels



*Mrs. Agnes Smith receiving the first delivered meal from Phyllis Rosendale and Mrs. Helen Power on November 11, 1974.
Valley News Dispatch photo*

In February, 1975, Mrs. David Green was employed as the program's first cook. On March 3, the program's first kitchen opened at St. Victor's R. C. Church, Bairdford.

Each of the local churches had been contacted and invited to participate in the program by sponsoring an ingathering of food and cash to supply the program kitchen. A schedule was developed in which one congregation each month would sponsor among its members such an ingathering. Such an arrangement eased the storage problem, and kept the supply of food reasonably steady.

With the departure of Mrs. Green as cook, volunteers were used to do the cooking until Aug. 1975 when Mrs. Flora Hazlett was employed. The present cooking responsibilities are performed by Mrs. Theta Fredley, who has served since August 1979. About the same time that Mrs. Hazlett became the cook, the kitchen was relocated to the American Legion Hall in Superior, which is its present location.

Beginning in April of 1976 and continuing to the present, an annual Recognition Luncheon has been held for all those participating in the program during that year. This is one way of expressing appreciation to those who give of their time and effort as volunteers. It is also an occasion for all those involved to come together at one time to see all the other involved and to spend some time on friendly socializing.

The West Deer-Dorseyville Meals-On-Wheels kitchen is now serving twenty-one clients on a 3 day-a-week basis. Seventy-two persons presently serve in the program. During the history of this program more than one hundred persons have served as volunteers in one capacity or another.

From its small beginning this program has become a respected, effective, and efficient aid to those who need this type of assistance.

In a day when the span of life is lengthening, and the number of persons 65 years and older is increasing, such a program as M-O-W will continue into the future as a significantly vital program of ministry of people to people.

Oak Valley Grange

Submitted by: James Catherwood

The Grange is a great fraternal organization founded to benefit rural America by building character, developing leadership, encouraging education, promoting community betterment, instilling an appreciation of high ideals, and teaching through work and play the value of cooperation and service in the attainment of happiness. The Grange incorporates some phrases from the Bible in its ritualistic work. Each meeting is opened with an invocation and closed with a benediction. We do not pretend to take the place of Church worship but we do encourage Church participation.

In 1866 Mr. Oliver Hudson Kelley of Minnesota, a member of the newly created Department of Agriculture, was commissioned by Isaac Newton, our first Commissioner of Agriculture, to make a survey of farm conditions in the South. After traveling throughout the southern states, Mr. Kelley was deeply grieved with the havoc and demoralization the Civil War had wrought. He had a deep desire to discover ways and means to assist the southern farmers in restoring their homes and their prosperity. He decided that some form of organization was needed and concluded that not only the South but the entire nation would benefit by such a move. Mr. Kelley secured the help of six capable men who assisted in the organization and writing of the ritualistic part of the order.

Picture 146 – Three active Grangers about 1950



Bess Magill Robert Aber Harry Magill
Valley Daily News photo

The Grange has advocated and supported the pay as you go system to finance the building of roads and schools rather than saddle the costs onto future generations. Other constructive work backed by the Grange has been: The Pure Food Act of 1938; building the Girls Dormitory at Penn State College; helping to organize and finance the National Board of Farm Organizations; legislation for the State to appropriate funds for cattle indemnities in the campaign for the eradication of bovine tuberculosis in Pennsylvania; bringing rural electrification to all parts of the State; starting a campaign to bring the delivery of mail to the rural areas of the Nation; and later on bringing in the Parcel Post System.

A book titled "History of the Pennsylvania State Grange" gives a complete history of the Pennsylvania Grange and is available at the Deer Lakes High School library. The first and only Grange in West Deer Township was organized on January 9, 1911 with the following chapter members present: Harvey Moon, Harry Magill, Robert Aber, Harper Leslie, William Christy, Elliott Hutchman, Floyd Shaw, John Bryson, Sara Hutchman, Dillie Aber, Sarah Aber, Martha McIntyre, Rachael Magill, B.W. Hughes, Bertha Moon, Charles Allison, and J. L. Allison. This organization is known as Oak Valley Grange No. 1462. Many and varied were the topics discussed at the meetings. The National and State Grange topics were available to local granges. There were hundreds, possibly thousands of subjects available. Sometimes an authority was invited to speak on a subject, but in most instances the talks were given by the local members.

The following is a partial list of topics discussed: Are the majority of voters governed by custom or reason?

- The breed and care of chickens.
- To which President is the most honor due and why, Washington or Lincoln?
- Which is the most profitable breed of cattle for this community?
- Debate: For and against Woman Suffrage.
- Value of silage for dairy cattle.
- Does the average man get a helpmate or a burden when he marries?
- Which has the most real pleasure in life: boys and girls raised in the country or those raised in the city?
- Does it take more brains to earn a dollar than to save one?
- Can a better quality of milk be produced where cows alone are stabled rather than a stable where both cows and horses are kept?

Other activities included vocal, piano, and instrumental music; recitations; spelling bees; square dances; outside speakers coming in to inform us on subjects such as police and fire protection, safe driving habits, and rules for better health; and exhibits of farm, garden, and home economic items. These exhibits were on a local, county, and state level.

Bull Creek Grange (which was located in Millerstown) and Oak Valley Grange were within horse and buggy driving distance, thus making it convenient to visit one another and exchange programs. Mr. Harry Magill, Oak Valley's first master, met a lovely girl there. Her name was Bessie Dawson and she later became his bride.

Much of the farmer's income came from producing and selling butter. Around the year 1913, oleomargarine came on the scene. Pure oleo is white but the manufacturers colored it yellow and it was being sold for butter. This product can be made for a fraction of the cost of butter. This situation was taking away the farmers' butter market, thus financially hurting farmers. The Grange was successful in promoting legislation preventing the coloring of oleo, but the manufacturer placed a little capsule of coloring in with each pound of oleo and the customer would mix it himself. This system worked for a good many years. Later on the manufacturers were successful in having the law changed and oleo was sold just as you see it today.

Oak Valley Grange started a policy in 1911 of helping Grange members who met with a serious disaster such as a barn or home fire, a prolonged serious illness, or the death of the "bread winner" in the family. This is a statewide movement, which includes about 547 Granges. Scarcely a meeting goes by without an appeal of some sort. The validity of the appeal is screened through the country Grange from which the appeal came. The State Grange also must approve the request. Oak Valley responds to all appeals.

One of the greatest ambitions of Oak Valley since it was organized was to have a home of its own. For almost 15 years the meetings were held in Aber's schoolhouse. The seats in the school were fastened to the floor, thus making it difficult to place the officers and have marches that included in the installing of new members. A building fund was started soon after the Grange was first organized, but was not used until 1926. An abandoned one-room school building was purchased from Indiana Township School District for the sum of \$175.00. We purchased a lot on K.D.K.A. Boulevard (now Saxonburg Boulevard) near Bairdford Road for \$250.00. The Grange members proceeded to excavate the foundation with a horse powered drag scoop. We tore down the old building and moved it to location in one-ton Ford Model Trucks. We had to buy blocks, additional lumber, and roofing. We laid a gas line under the road and down over the hill where we connected it to the main line. The gas was used for both heat and lights. Our gas bills averaged under \$1.00 per month for several years. Not having enough money to complete construction of the building, three of the members loaned enough money at 4 percent interest to finish the job. A note signed by the executive committee was the only security given. The notes were later paid in full and burned at a regular Grange meeting on August 24, 1948. Many were the festivals, pie and box socials, cakewalks, plays, and square dances conducted at home and in other Grange halls in order to raise money to pay off the notes. In later years chicken barbecues were the main source of income.

The hall was made available to 4H meetings, Volunteer Fire Departments, V.F.W. meetings, boy and girl scouts, wedding banquets, churches and other worth while organizations. This building was first occupied in 1928 but was not dedicated until June 6, 1929.

Oak Valley Grange had joined a statewide cooperative in 1912. This was known as the Keystone Grange Exchange. Fertilizer, feed, and groceries were available through this organization, thus resulting in a savings to members. A similar operation is in effect at the present time.

The Grange master by virtue of his office is the representative entitled to attend the annual State Grange meeting. Oak Valley masters and their Wives have been representatives in many of the cities across the state. They have also attended National Grange in Pittsburgh, Atlantic City, and Cleveland, Ohio. In September 1958, Oak Valley invited West Deer Township teachers to hear an interesting lecture and South American Music by Miss Edith Dawson, who toured that continent.

The Resurrection Lutheran Church bought the lot adjoining our Grange property for the erection of a new church home. They needed more parking space and were desirous of purchasing our property, which we sold to them in July of 1964. We in turn rented the hall for our meetings for a short period of time. Then later on we rented the church social room. We are presently meeting in the East Union Church social room.

Agriculture is the first and noblest occupation of man. It is the only one directly instituted by our Creator. Without judicial agricultural planning our earth would be an arid barren waste. Most countries where agriculture has not been fostered have very selfish wealthy leaders with a large percentage of their population starving to death: We can be thankful that here in America one farm family produces enough food and fiber to feed seventy-eight people, while in some other countries it takes 50 percent of the population to produce enough for those not living on farms.

The Grange opens wide its doors to all who love the soil and their community, and to those who are seeking a happy and more prosperous way of life.

West Deer Garden Club

Submitted by Gladys Hess and Margaret Kristofic

"The Seeds we plant today are the flowers of tomorrow"

The West Deer Garden Club was organized in the 1940's after the era of the Victory Gardens. During World War II the government had urged citizens to plant vegetable gardens to increase the food supply for tables and canning. These vegetable gardens in West Deer Township were sponsored by the late Judge Lois McBride and Fred dark, a well-known county gardener from Treesdale Estates.

About 1943, a group of neighbors from Culmerville and Deer Creek met at a home and made plans to organize a garden club to be affiliated with the National Farm and Garden Council. The late Mrs. B. F. Ediund was elected president. One of their first projects was to hold a flower show at the West Deer High School. Entertainment was in charge of the sixth grade from the Russellton School.

Down through the years the club has been active in the following projects: -

1. Planting a tree each Arbor Day.
2. Contributing to community and school projects.
3. Sponsoring and assisting with birthday parties for veterans at Aspinwall Veterans Hospital during the 1950's.
4. Dressing a live doll at Christmas.
5. Assisting at the May Market, Pittsburgh Garden Center.
6. Helping financially with the National Garden Club toward a scholarship for a worthy youth.

In 1983 the club formed a new Horticultural Therapy Committee, which includes visiting nursing homes and shut-in residents. The club also participates in National Garden Club activities. Since the first public flower show in 1943, the club has continued holding a flower show each year, always featuring a replica of an old-fashioned country store.

The club is very active in the National Conservation Program, using the motto:

"I pledge, as an American, to defend from waste, the national resources of my country - its soil and minerals, forests, waters, and wildlife."

The club membership for 1985 is thirty-five members and meets every month.

West Deer Lions Club

Submitted by: Angela DiPasquale



The West Deer Lions Club had its beginning in 1949 when, under the sponsorship of the Tarentum Area Lions Club, it received its charter on January 13th. The club was actually organized in the fall of 1948 with elected officers before it could

receive a charter from the International. The first president was Joe Ellena, father of Ron Ellena, and presently a member of this club. The first secretary was William Burns, then High School principal and later Superintendent of West Deer Schools.

Of the original charter members still living, only two are presently members of the club. They are Louis Vidic and J. R. Siwicki.

The West Deer Club has averaged about forty members who have given their time freely for the betterment of the community and in aiding those less fortunate particularly in the field of eye care.

It has been the policy of the club for the president to serve only one term and most of the present members with more than five years membership have served as president. Other officers, however, have held their positions for longer terms. Most notable of these was the late William Burns who served as secretary for a total of twenty-eight years.

Past presidents who remain as members include Oliver Diehl, William Palmer, Burton Stevenson, Vincent Antonelli, Carl Bongiovanni, Alex Bibri, Leonard Szwarc, John Graff, David Douglass, Joseph Siwicki, Daniel Yanicko, Louis Vidic, Anthony Catanese, William Cenk, Raymond Grove, Joseph Danko, Carl Szyroki, Donald Grubbs, Andrew Staraniec, and Thomas DeMartini.

The officers for the 1985-86 year are:

President	Joseph Yourish
First Vice-President	Leonard Scimio
Second Vice-President	James McCaskey
Third Vice-President	James O'Neil
Secretary	William Austin
Treasurer	Burton Stevenson
Finanical Secretary	Vincent Antonelli
Lion Tamer	Oliver Diehl
Tail Twister	Charles Knight
Board of Directors	Tom DeMartini
	Albert Miller
	Carl Szyroki
	William Cenk

Women's Club of West Deer

Submitted by: Angela DiPasquale

The Women's Club of West Deer began in 1955 with only twelve members. Jean Jaloski was elected as the first president. The Club met in the old West Deer Township High School, which is now the Deer Lakes Elementary Center. Before the end of this first year, membership had grown to forty members.

During the first year, the Club contributed money towards the purchase of a new ambulance for the community and also for the purchase of a new station wagon to transport mentally retarded children to school. The Club also sponsored bus transportation for township children to swim at North Park. This project continued for several years.

Card parties, skating parties, bake sales, dances, luncheons, and, more recent, booths at Deer Lakes Art Festival and Community Days are among some of the fund raisers which helped make contributions to numerous organizations within the community and elsewhere. Some of the recipients have been: WQED, West Deer Little League, Robert Krauland Scholarship Fund, Ambulance Fund, Fire Companies, Bairdford Park, Meals-On-Wheels, Home for the Crippled Children, West Deer Welcome Signs, West Deer Christian Charities, Women's Crisis Center, dressing dolls for underprivileged children, Children's Hospital, and Veteran's Hospital. The Club has also been in support of PAP testing in association with the American Cancer Society, and has sponsored a free Polio clinic.

The Club also sponsors an Art and Sewing Contest for grades 7-12, and has a free pre-school vision screening every spring.

The Women's Club of West Deer has been very active in the community since it's beginning, and will continue to support all community needs.

Present officers who will lead the Club into the Sesquicentennial Year are:

President	Cheryl Ternyey
Vice President	Joan Johanson
Recording Secretary	Jane Dinning
Corresponding Secretary	Dolly Drauland
Treasurer	Carol Spelic

Knights of Columbus

John F. Kennedy, #5501



John F. Kennedy Council #5501 of the Knights of Columbus was chartered on January 19, 1964. The council draws its membership from Transfiguration, Church, Russellton; St. Victor' Church, Bairdfor; Holy Sepulcher, Glade Mills' and St. Mary's Church, Middle Road. The current 57 brothers are grateful for continued active membership of Tom Fissore, St. Victor's, and Tim Mikolay, Holy Sepulcher, who were charter members in 1964.

The Knights of Columbus is " . . . a Catholic, family, Fraternal, service organization." The brothers of the West Deer Council take part in and support Supreme Council, Pennsylvania Chapter and local council programs. Supreme Council programs include right to life, vocations, and patriotic campaigns. Locally, the council promotes a wide range of activities in five service areas; family, youth, community, church, and brotherhood. The brothers have recently been involved in a Basketball Free Throw contest, West Deer Community Days, Keep Christ in Christmas promotion, support of area churches, contributions to charities and scholarships, and social programs for the members and families.

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays at the former F&M Auto Parts Store owned by Brother Frank Zebracki. The council is, at this writing, in the process of purchasing the former Flat Top Restaurant, located along Little Deer Creek Road, to convert into a council home.

1985-1986 Officers

Grand Knight	Don Peters
Deputy Grand Knight	Jack Wachter
Chancellor	Joe Yourish
Financial Secretary	Bob Hawn
Treasurer	John Yourish
Recorder	Ron Green
Advocate	Bill Kennihan
Warden	Bob Corcoran
Inside Guard	Marv Benec
Outside Guard-	Gene Maciak
Trustees	Frank Zebracki
	George Tymas
	Tom Fissore

Past Grand Knights

William Burns	Joseph Yourish
Thomas Szymansk	James Cavanaugh
James Phillips	Frank Farkas
Mike Senge	Paul Alexandrenue
Donald Streiff	Darrel J. Hartman
Robert Janos	Regis Massack
Mario Bellavia	George Tymas
Joseph Hrason	Frank Zebracki

American Legion Post 593

Submitted by: John Graff

In a series of meetings in the fall of 1931, this post of the American Legion was formed. It's original name was the William Fish Post 593, named for the first veteran from West Deer to answer the final call in the first World War.

This post met in the Curtisville Community House and paid \$2.50 rental, money which they could not afford and with no way or facilities to make any.

Through the efforts of Vice Commander Pete Murray and the generosity of the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad an unused baggage car, fifty-two feet long, was obtained for use as a meeting place. This car arrived in Curtisville in March 1932. A. R. Pollock, general manager of the Ford Collieries operation here had provided the land and the foundation brick for the Legion Home, provided. "There shall be no drinking or gambling." Commander James Smith secured the services of a contractor and a lot of local help. With a great deal of effort and advice from half the population of Curtisville, the car was moved from the tracks

to the site, now occupied by the home of John Blaschak. The site is about a thousand feet north of the intersection of Benjamin Street and the Little Deer Creek Road.

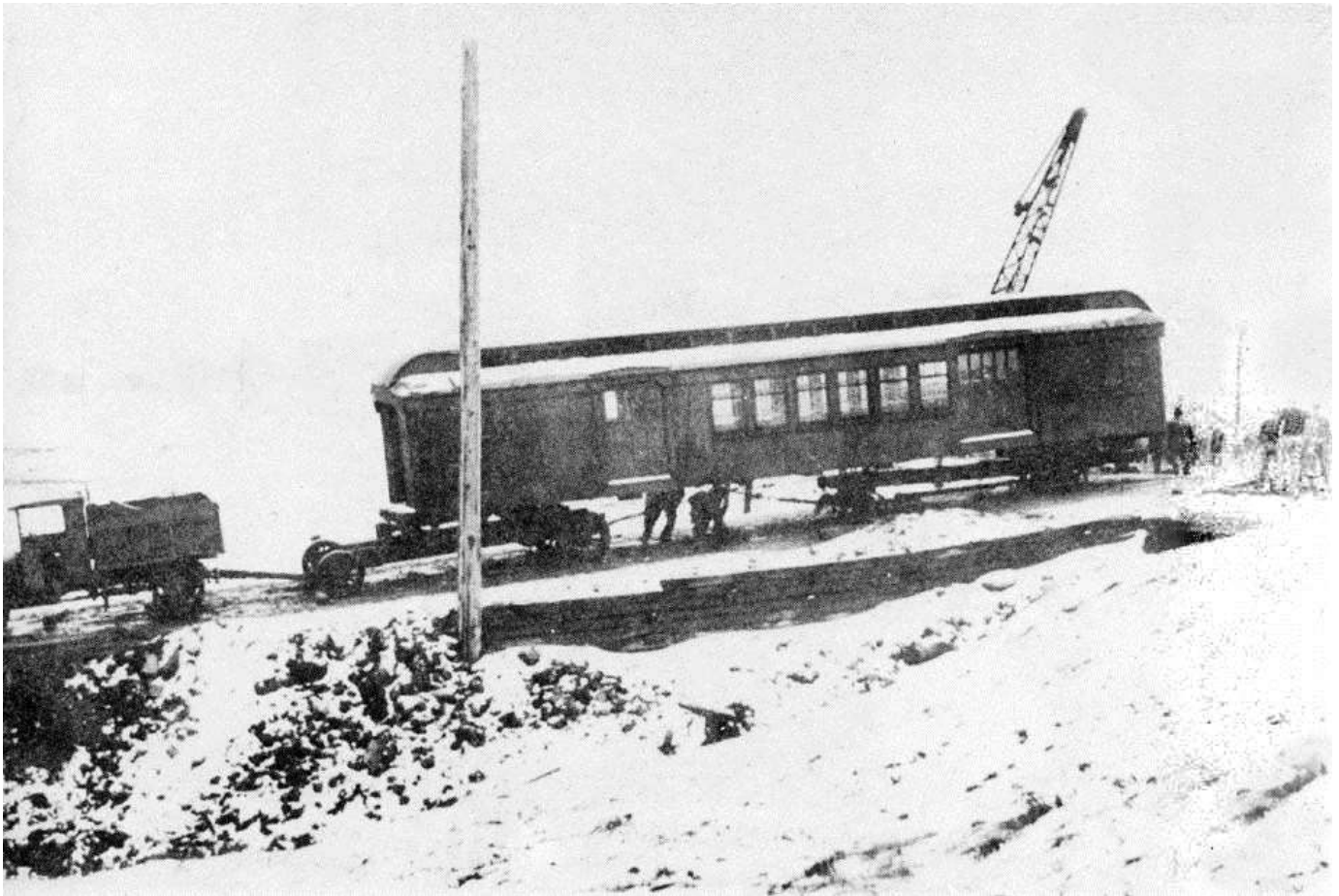
A partial basement was dug, the bricks from the mine cleaned and laid by the Legion members, and the car placed on the foundation. It was then painted aluminum with gold and blue trim. This car was the home of Post 593 from 1932 until sometime in the World War II period when a fire partially destroyed it. This was followed by a period of disrepair. Prior to the fire an elderly man, partially deaf, lived in the partial basement and took care of the building. After the fire the building fell into disrepair until it was completely torn down so that the land could be sold by the Ford Collieries. This is believed to have been about 1947.

In the meantime when there was no Legion home, the post met in the old No. 1 Fire Hall, the new West Deer High School, and in the Curtisville Y.M.C.A. building at various times.

Primarily through the efforts of Bob Malcolm, the Legion acquired its present tract of almost seven acres of land from Mrs. Jennie E. Sefton. The transaction was finalized on February 7, 1945.

No major effort toward a new building was made until West Deer's World War II veterans returned home and joined the Legion. Nick Angeloff, Rusty Bunder, and Oscar Siegal made up the building committee and through their efforts and with the help of many others the present home was built.

Picture 147 – American Legion baggage car



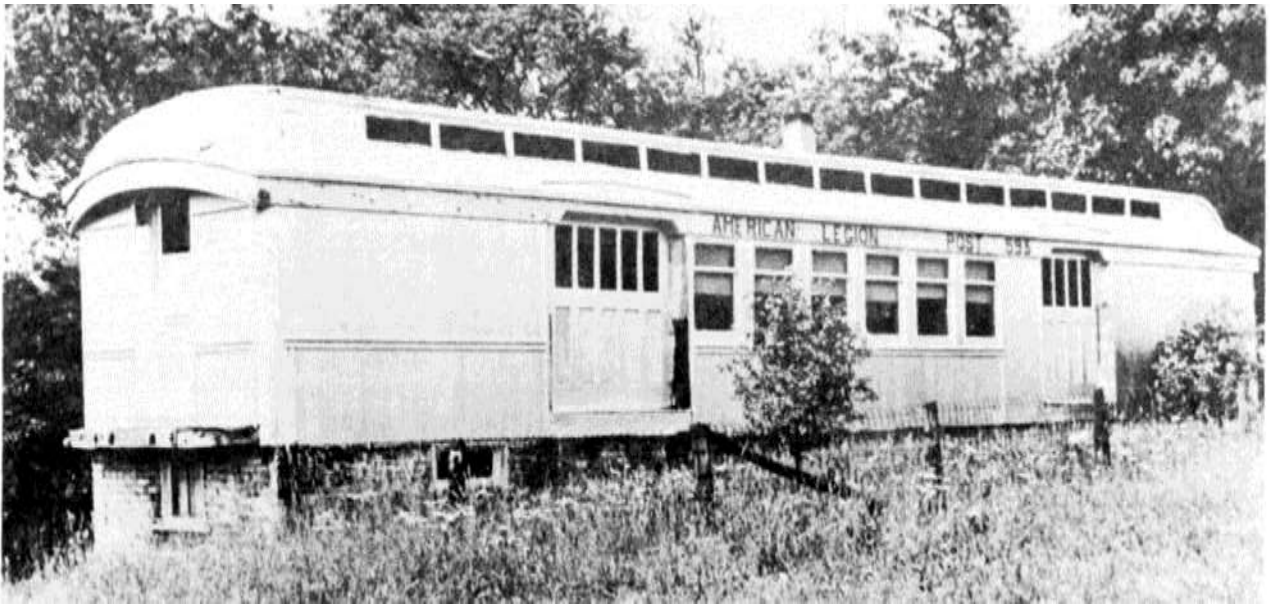
In 1932 shows the American Legion baggage car being moved from the railroad to the spot now occupied by the home of John Blaschak.

Mrs. Sefton had sold the property for an exceptionally low price. Hohman's Building Supply of Bakerstown was also very generous with the Legion in selling materials and financing the new building.

A fire in the early 1970's caused considerable damage and a great deal of rebuilding was required. Interior paneling and ceilings were improved.

The present home of this post evolved after a great deal of work by its members and a number of friends. Those charter members are almost gone, now numbering only three. The World War II members are now mostly past sixty years of age. The future belongs to the Korean and Vietnam veterans. Hopefully they will be the last veteran members of the American Legion

Picture 148 – American Legion baggage car building



Disabled American Veterans

Submitted by: Robert Coleman

Little Deer Creek Chapter 38 of the Disabled American Veterans was organized and chartered on July 1, 1969. This organization consists of war veterans from West Deer and several surrounding townships. Meetings are held every second Monday in the Rural Ridge Fire Hall.

The first and present commander is Robert Coleman of Allegheny Acres who has held that post for thirteen of the sixteen years of the post's existence.

Picture 149 – Little Deer Creek Chapter 38 of the Disabled American Veterans



The Disabled American Veterans, Little Deer Creek Chapter 38 received their charter on September 20 at the VFW Post on Starr Road. Shown above are from left to right: Leo Zak (standing in for Frank Troyak, who is Chaplain); August Wagner, Alternate FCC; Walter Kuczek, Sergeant at Arms; Michael Pugachow, Judge Advocate; George N. Ofiesh Past Dept. Commander presenting the Charter to Robert Coleman, commander; John Troyak Senior Vice Commander; Russell Kernisky Junior Vice Commander; Mario Contento treasurer and Robert Mack Adjutant and FCC

The goal of the DAV is to render service to disabled veterans or their widows. Memorial services are held annually in several local cemeteries in which veterans are interred. Dedication services are held whenever needed for memorials, municipal, and other activities.

Membership is open to veterans of all wars but certain guidelines must be followed. Charter members living presently in West Deer Township include Joseph Stanko, Robert Pugachow, and Joseph E. Siwicki. Other charter members living nearby include Mario Contento and John Yaworsky of Rural Ridge.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #9817

Rodger-Burger Post #9817 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars had its beginnings in 1947. As was often the custom with other veterans' organizations, this post took its name from local veterans who were first to give their lives in a particular war. James Burger was lost at sea and Hugh Rodgers was killed in military action on land. Both of these young men were from Allegheny Acres.

Joseph Stack, Commander of Post #156, Verona, Pa., came to West Deer in August 1947 and instituted the first officers of this post. The first Commander was August Porter and the Vice-Commander was William (Scotty) Thompson. Other officers included Jack Hollibaugh, Quartermaster, Joseph Symons, Adjutant, and Frank Parker Sr., Frank Parker Jr., Albert Alexander Sr., Edward Wilson, John Christen, Charles Jackson, and Tom Kelly.

Rodger-Burger Auxiliary #9817

Submitted by: Barbara Catanese

The Auxiliary of Rodger-Burger Post #9817 was instituted on August 19th 1948 in the West Deer #2 Fire Hall. Sister Ann Egan, president of County Council and Sister Alice Stack, a member of the same council, installed the following officers:

President	Sister Martha Hollibaugh
Sr. Vice President	Sister Lulu Tubaugh
Jr. Vice President	Sister Mabel Porter
Secretary	Sister Mary Jackson
Treasurer	Sister Ann Gerlitz
Chaplain	Sister Phoebe Christen
Guard	Sister Eina Ryan
Patriotic Instructor	Sister Myrtle Burger
Historian	Sister Leah Huffman
Conductress	Sister Alberta Alexander
Color Guards	Sister Evain Aymar
	Sister Bertha Hollibaugh
Trustees	Sister Irene McCorkle
	Sister Edna Jackson
	Sister Elizabeth Seabury
	Sister Edna Symons

The current officers, all having at least twenty-five years of membership, are:

President	Nicki Tedesco
Sr. Vice President	Sonia Montag
Jr. Vice President	Margaret Kochan
Secretary	Margaret Kristofic
Treasurer	Barbara Catanese
Chaplain	Dorothy Leight

West Deer Golden Years Club

Submitted by: John Beyer

On Tuesday, June 23, 1970, a group of retired citizens of West Deer Township and surrounding areas met at 1:00 P.M. in the Resurrection Lutheran Church, with Rev. Donald Power presiding, to form an organization. The purpose of this meeting was to develop a group to spread friendship and good will among elderly retired people. Twenty-four people attended and members of the Highlands Community Action Committee were present to give their ideas on this project. Mr. Ross Carson was elected president; Mrs. Albert A. Alexander, Vice President; Mrs. Charles Hudon, Secretary; Mrs. Pat Ward Treasurer; and Mrs. Ross Carson, Chaplain.

The fourth Tuesday of each month was set as the meeting date and the charter was open to all people 55 years of age and older. All financing would be by freewill contributions only.

Three names were given for the group to vote upon what the group would be called: "West Deer Senior Citizens", "The Golden Years Club," and "Golden Pals and Spares." "The Golden Years Club" received a unanimous vote and thus became the name chosen.

In good summer weather, meetings were held at Deer Lakes Park and in poor weather they were held in the Resurrection Lutheran Church.

Picture 150 – Golden Years Club



The new officers of the recently organized Golden Years Club of West Deer Township are from the left, Ross Carson, president; Mrs. Ross Carson, chaplain; Mrs. Charles Hudon, secretary; Mrs. Albert Alexander, vice president, and Mrs. Pot Word, Treasurer. The group meets in Resurrection Lutheran Church, Saxonburg Boulevard, West Deer Township.

In 1971, Reverend Kenyon, Deer Creek Pastor, (an honorary member) instituted the using of a bus to make trips to various locations. Buses were rented for this purpose. New officers were elected each year and as the membership increased, the meetings were changed to the Municipal Building. In 1972, activities were increased and during the summer months meetings and picnics were held at Deer Lakes Park providing the weather was

suitable. On May 22, 1973, due to the generosity of Father Conroy, the activity building at St. Victor Church was designated for future meetings. Membership was still increasing and a small checking account was opened at Pittsburgh National Bank in Russellton. The club was now being recognized by other organizations and our members attended other club meetings. Throughout the years 1974- 76 the membership grew to 60 members and activities for members increased. Trips were made to ball games, state parks, shopping malls, etc., to keep members active. Raffles, social parties, dinners, etc., were held to raise funds for these activities and to build up a fund in the treasury. Members even crocheted things and raffled them off at meetings to raise money.

In 1977 the Mike Site on 910 was given to the township with \$20,000.00 specified for senior citizens. Two rooms were immediately available, the kitchen needed redone and the Center was limited in activities until repairs were completed.

In 1978 the membership rose to about 80 members and due to this increase a mini bus was purchased by the township for use in picking up members for activities and meetings. The township would take care of maintenance but volunteer drivers would do the driving.

On July 25th, 1978 the Nike Site officially opened with the cutting of the ribbon at 1:00 P.M. At this ceremony Channels 2, 4, and 11, the Pittsburgh Press and the Valley News Dispatch were on hand. Tom Forester, Mr. Panza, Tom Gallagher, Larry Raymond, Terry Burkhardt, Winston Jones and township supervisors were present. Charles Knight acted as program chairman. A covered dish dinner was furnished by members.

Meetings were to be held only in summer months until the building was completely renovated. St. Victor's was to be the meeting place in fall and winter months. In 1979 improvements were made on the building. New kitchen equipment was acquired at a cost of \$11,725.00. Card tables were purchased. A series of bylaws were drawn up by the Board of Directors and approved by

the members. These laws set the age limit for membership at 60 years of age. In 1980, a kiln was purchased for ceramic classes and shelves were put in the room for classes.

Hot lunches were first instituted at the Center in 1980. These were funded from the Sharpsburg Center and sent here. Edith Seibert Paskorz was hired by the township as coordinator of the Senior Citizen Center. She had an office and was a full-time worker.

In 1981, membership increased to 110 members at meetings. The building was being improved and expansions made where needed. New card tables, drapes for the windows, and pool tables were donated by people for the Center. Bingo was started, being played every Friday evening and enjoyed by the public.

A fee of \$2.00 per year was initiated as a membership fee.

In 1982 the township set up an account for the Center Records were kept and given to the township.

In 1983, Cheryl Finn became and remains as, the acting coordinator of the Center. Progress is still being made through the years, and as the membership grows, the activities become greater and the Center stays alive for those who wish to use it.

The Center has been greatly improved. The kitchen equipment is modern and up-to-date. New rest rooms are available. The recreation room has been renewed with a jukebox, a game table, and pool tables, all donated by those who appreciate and respect the senior citizens. A ceramic class is available. There are other classes provided through the Community College throughout the year including yoga, dance, needlepoint, choral singing, and a stress clinic. The senior citizens are proud to say that they have one of the best centers in the state, and that their goal is to keep and maintain it for future generations. Activities are run by coordinator Cheryl Finn, who is employed by the township and keeps books and maintains financial records for all activities for the Center. Membership to date exceeds 300 people.

The clergymen of the township are to be commended for their support in making this organization a success. All those who served as officers of the club have given their support and should be commended as should all members who worked and are still working and volunteering their time to keep the Center going and make it more successful.

The township supervisors should be commended for providing the Senior Citizen Center with financial aid. They are responsible for the maintenance of the building, the buses that transport people daily for lunch, and any other financial aid needed by the Center.

The senior citizens of West Deer are so active, that they should be called "The Recycled Teenagers".

West Deer Women's Travel Club

The West Deer Women's Travel Club was founded in 1972 by Bibsy Olar Mennitto of Russellton, in the interest of friendship and adventure. The Club is a nonprofit organization whose aim is to foster affordable travel, camaraderie, and adventurous education.

Currently, the club has forty members who attend meetings monthly, on the second Monday of each month.

The first travel experience of the club was a trip to New York City in 1973. Since then, the club has traveled to Toronto, Nashville, Chicago, Boston, Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and Miami.

The many experiences during the past thirteen years are cherished by the members. There were some sad ones, to be sure, but the most cherished memory is one of good friends sharing good times together.

West Deer Twp. Sportsmen's Club Inc.

December 9, 1938 organized at Carmen's Pool Parlor. First officers: John Georgia, President; Adam Trevellini, Secretary; Carmen Daluisio, Treasurer.

September 13, 1939 Affiliation with the Allegheny County Sportsmen's League. Also affiliated with the PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and National Wildlife Federation.

Incorporated in 1948.

November 19, 1956 Purchase of 24.3 acres Frayer property, McKrell Rd.

April 7, 1958 affiliation with the National Rifle Association.

March, 1961 affiliation with the Pa. Rifle and Pistol Association.

Basic Purpose of the Club

To further enactment of favorable laws and promote policies for better propagation, control, and conservation of our wildlife, fish and the protection of our forests and purification of our streams. To encourage organized rifle and pistol shoots, better knowledge of safe handling and proper care of firearms, improved marksmanship and development of those characteristics of honesty, good-fellowship, self-discipline, team play, and self-reliance which are essentials of good sportsmanship, and to maintain good relations with the property owner and farmer with respect to his wishes and protection of his property.

Club facilities Club house, 100-yard rifle range, bow and arrow range. Future plans for addition of 50-yard rifle-pistol range, 25 yard pistol range, skeet launching range, and picnic area.

Presiding officers

President	Herbert Dufford
Vice President	Joseph Laus
Secretary	Carmen Daluisio
Asst. Secretary	Mike Swaiko
Treasurer	James Gill

Number of members 189. Meetings held every third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Girl Scouting in West Deer

Submitted by: Beverly (Kratz) Scheirer

Mary Manifold, along with the help of Margaret (Peg) Girdwood, started the first Girl Scout troop in West Deer Township about 1946. It was Intermediate Troop #282, which was active until around 1961 when it was disbanded for several years.

About 1954 Isabelle Scott, with Frances (Sis) Wood as assistant, started the first Brownie troop, #162. They were the leaders for nine years.

May Marshall and Marie Hess started the first Senior Girl Scout troop in 1960. It was Troop #1167. This troop as well as those previously mentioned were sponsored by the Deer Creek United Presbyterian Church.

Mary Manifold was the first Neighborhood Chairman for West Deer and later worked for the Allegheny County Girls Scout Council in Pittsburgh.

Doris McDonald held the first Day Camp for West Deer at her home in the summer of 1951. The following summer she and May Marshall held Day Camp at the V.F.W. grounds on Starr Road, where they were in charge for the next nine years.

West Deer had three patrols of girls who were fortunate enough to attend two of the four Senior Girl Scout Round-ups.

The first patrol of eight girls went to Button Bay, Vermont in the summer of 1962. The other two patrols with a total of sixteen girls attended the next and last Round up in Farragut, Idaho in 1965.

In 1962 a number of girls in Senior Troop #1 167 became the first in West Deer to earn their Religious Awards.

In 1963 the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. redesigned their program from three age levels. Brownie, Intermediate, and Senior, to a four-age level program; Brownie, Junior, Cadet, and Senior.

The first Cadet troop in West Deer was troop #1040 and the leader was Jan Beraensky.

West Deer had the most troops registered in 1973. There were twenty-two in all. They were Brownie Troop Numbers 162, 393, 602, 695, 1215, 1531. and 1586, Junior's Numbers 282. 288. 568, 698, 1 108, 1265, 1400, 1418, and 1655, Cadette Troop Numbers 488, 585, 614, 1040, and 1300, and Senior Troop Number 125.

West Deer has had three troops fortunate enough to travel to another country. In 1973 Jan Bergensky took the girls in Cadette Troop #1040 to Cuernavaca, Mexico. Pat Slimick, Bernice Fleishner, and Betty Ehlinger went with the girls from Senior Troop #575 to Canada in 1979. In 1982 another group of girls from the same Troop went to Toronto, Canada with their leader, Roberta Spichty.

In the near future West Deer may have its first Daisy Girl Scout Troop, the newest Girl Scouting program designed especially for five year olds.

From the start of the first troop until the present there have been many volunteers in many capacities, all with one aim: to help girls have an exciting and enriching Girl Scouting experience. Many of those girls from past troops have stepped into adult leadership positions in Girl Scouting, when the community where they were residing needed them. The girls in the troops of today will most certainly do the same for the Girl Scouts of tomorrow.

Boy Scout Troop No. 628

Submitted by: Jack Hollibaugh and Alex Wadlow

This Boy Scout Troop received its charter on May 31, 1963. It was sponsored by the Resurrection Lutheran Church. The first Scoutmaster was Alex Wadlow. The Assistant Scoutmaster was William F. Strausbaugh. The late Carl Rosendale was on the committee.

Among activities in the earlier years of this troop were two canoe trips down the Allegheny River from Tionesta to Sharpsburg, a distance of 149 miles.

Hiking trips took them to the Appalachian Trail along the Skyline Drive in Virginia and to the Warrior and Baker Trails in Pennsylvania.

Twenty of these boys became Eagle Scouts, an achievement worthy of note. They are as follows:

Douglas Biehl	Charles Mura
Wayne Biehl	Glen Ogershock
Paul Becker, Jr.	John Purcell
Ray Bamrick	Carl Rosendale
Rich Bamrick	Donald Streiff
Fred Fleck	Martin Streiff
Scott Gray	Tim Snyder
Jack Hollibaugh	George Wachter
Bill Koynock	Bennett Wadlow
Jeffrey Martin	Barkley Whitaker

One George Meany award from the A.F. of L.C.I.O. for service to youth was given to Jack Hollibaugh.

Three Silver Beaver awards, the highest award one can receive from the district, were given to Elmer Fleck, Alex Wadlow, and Jack Hollibaugh.

Picture 151 – Five WD youths earn Eagle award



Eagle scouts

Five members of West Deer Boy Scout Troop 628, sponsored by Resurrection Lutheran Church, recently received the Bogie Award, the highest award attainable in scouting. With Scoutmaster Jack C. Hollibaugh, right, are from left, Glenn Ogershok, Charles Mura, John Purcell, A. Bennett Wadlow and Jack Hollibaugh. The presentation was made by Roger Devonshire, scout executive, Allegheny Trails Council. Speaker was Robert Holton, Allegheny Trails Council wood badge coordinator.

Boy Scout Troop No. 682

This Boy Scout Troop was established in 1971 through the efforts of Ray Howells and the Rev. Albert Beckes with the former becoming the first Scoutmaster. In its fourteen years of existence it has involved many boys in West Deer Township and has produced fifteen Eagle Scouts. The troop has participated in all the Allegheny Trails Council Camps and in four National Jamborees including the last one at Camp A. P. Hill in Virginia, in 1985. The troop presently has fifteen active members led by Scoutmaster Thomas Pilston and Assistant Scoutmaster Joseph Helmininack. It meets every Monday evening from 7-00 to 9:00 in the old Bull Creek Presbyterian Church.

The fifteen boys who have achieved Eagle Scout status are:

Bill Adams	David Gilson
Keith Baker	Carl Heakins
Wade Baker	Jeffrey Howells
Daniel Becker	Jeff Norris
Mike Belliva	Scott Smith
David Carroll	George Tymas
Charles Chabal	Mike Waltz
Charles Gray	

FAMILY HISTORIES

The histories of the following families are included in this section.

Aber	Hutchman
Baumgartel	Magill
Black	Marshall
Bonin	Capt. John McClelland
Carnahan	McKrell
Catherwood-McKnight	Michael
Cunningham	Monnier
Dawson	Norris
Dillner	Dr. Daniel G. Rowley
Elliot-McKnight	Schwab
Gray	Scott
Hazlett	Snitzer
Hemphill	Stirling
Hunter	

The Aber Family

It is not known exactly when Alien Aber (1813-1886) and his wife Mary Ross (1815-1889) came to West Deer Township. History does record that one of their sons, Robert E., born in 1851, did grow up on his father's farm. We may assume that Alien and Mary did come to West Deer before the middle of the last century and built a log house, which stood just in front of the present Aber home on Saxonburg Road. This couple lived in this log house until the present house was built about the time of the Civil War. The log house was used for other purposes and was torn down after the turn of the century. Alien Aber was reported to have been quite interested in politics.

John Aber, the oldest son of Alien and Mary, was probably not born in West Deer but moved here with his parents when a boy. He later served in the Civil War and family stories indicate that when he came home after the war the new house had been built. He may well be the "John Aber" listed as a corporal with Capt. John McClelland's Company of the 63rd Infantry, Pennsylvania Volunteers.

Robert E., the younger son of Alien and Mary, was probably born in 1851 on his father's farm and grew to manhood there. In 1883 at the age of thirty-two he married Maggie Wilson of Harmar Township. To this union six children were born: Mary (Baumgartel), who died in 1916; twins Dillie and Tillie; William; Robert M.; and Sarah. Robert E., their father, died in 1912 and some years later Maggie Wilson Aber married Michael Haberlein and moved to Hampton Township.

Dillie married Carson Grubbs of the Rich Hill area. This couple settled in West Deer and had two daughters and a son. Hazel, the older daughter, married Sidney Davis of New York and lives in New York City. They have no children. Margaret, the younger daughter, married Hartle Thomas of Butler County and had two daughters. They, along with their daughters and grandchildren, live in the Meridian area. Wilson, the only son, married Ella Mae Gray of West Deer and lives in the East Union area. This couple had three children. Gary lives in Karns City with his wife, the former Terry Schneider of Mars, and daughter, Heather Lee. Janet is a nurse and lives at home with her parents. Robert, the younger son, died at age twelve.

Tillie, the other twin, died in 1907 at age twenty-one. William, the older son, is believed to have had a military career. Sarah, the youngest daughter, was born in 1892 and is now a resident of the Presbyterian home in Washington, Pa. She furnished some of the information for this family account.

Robert M. (1890-1968), the younger son, was the one who remained on the family farm. He married Wilda Black (1895-1924) and had two sons to this marriage. Chester lives in Penn Hills and William lives in Coraopolis. In 1929 Robert married again to Marian McCaslin and to them two daughters and a son were born. Marian (Auld) lives in McCandless and is a psychologist with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. She also furnished information for this account. Reva, the second daughter, lives in Ohio. Joseph resides with his family in the original Aber farmstead. His children are the fifth generation to have lived on the Aber farm. His house is believed to be at least 120 years old and is one of West Deer's original homesteads.

The Baumgartel Family

Submitted by: Martha Baumgartel

In 1872 Joseph Baumgartel of Indiana Township married Emma Eggers, also of Indiana Township, and moved to West Deer. They bought a farm on Cedar Ridge and immediately built a new house. Joseph was a carpenter, his specialty being building barns.

This couple had five children, two of whom lived in West Deer. Their son William married Louise Seibert from Hampton and bought a farm at the junction of Cedar Ridge and Martin Roads. This farm is now owned by the family of the late Dr. Robert Weber. They had ten children including a son Merle, who has continued to live in West Deer. Merle married Martha Hunter and lives on Shepherd Road. Harry, brother of Merle, married Bertha Pfirman and lived on the original family farm on Cedar Ridge Road. They had four daughters and one. Harriet (Setzanfand) built a home on their property.

Joseph Baumgartel preceded his wife in death by a number of years. Emma died in 1951 at age ninety-nine, having been active until the time of her death in the Dorseyville Home. The Baumgartel family has been in West Deer Township for one hundred and thirty-five years.

The Black Family

Submitted by: Martha Baumgartel

Margaret Eggers, sister of the above Mrs. Joseph Baumgartel, married Oliver Black and moved to a farm at the corner of 910 and Cedar Ridge Road. This was probably in the early 1880's. The 1876 map indicates that this was a Black farm at that time and may have been Oliver's father's farm. Oliver and Margaret spent their entire lives on this farm, both dying in the mid-1930's several years apart. Their son Archie married and lived there for a number of years with his wife and eight children. Another son, Lawrence, married Hazel Wood and built a house on Shephard Road, where they lived until his death in 1978 and hers in 1983. Their three sons all became pilots. They also had one daughter. The Black family had been in West Deer for over one hundred years.

The Bonin Family

Submitted by: Ella May (Gray) Grubbs

Peter Bonin and his wife Catherine Guyot left Rohrbach, Germany with their two small children and sailed in a small boat to America in 1852. They settled in West Deer Township on "squatter's rights," that is, the portion of land on which they settled became their personal property after they cleared the trees and cultivated the soil. They found a spring for water, put up some type of quick shelter and began the task of cutting down trees, digging out stumps and cultivating the soil with the little bit of equipment they had. It was hard work because not much could be brought over on the small boat and then be transported here by land, but they accomplished the task. God was good to these early settlers, giving them health and a strong determination to succeed. They began producing vegetables for market in Pittsburgh. They build a house and barn, planted fruit trees, raised chickens and had cows and horses.

In America, Peter and Catherine had four more children. The youngest child was Charles Bonin, who remained on the farm. He married Ella Kraft and at the time of his marriage his personal belongings were said to consist of a ham and \$20.00. However, the couple worked hard on the farm, Charles also working as a rigger on the local oil wells. They had six children.

Harry, the first child, married Annie Cook and had three children: Pearl, Helen, and Charles.

Bertha, the second child, married William G. Gray of West Deer and moved to the Gray farm near what is now Bairdford. This family is described in more detail in the Gray family account. Bertha is the oldest living West Deer native.

Irene, the third Bonin child, married Joseph Dillner. This couple, at this writing, is the oldest living native couple in West Deer, having been married seventy-one years. They had seven children. They reside on the well known "Dinner's Knob" farm.

The first of their seven children was Harry, who married Mildred Geisy. They have three children and eight grandchildren. They live in Butler County.

The second child was Ruth, who married Oliver Black. The Blacks have three children and three grandchildren and also live in Butler County.

Hazel married Clarence Mink and lives in Indiana Township. They have one son and four grandchildren.

Herman married Dorothy Patton and lives in West Deer. They have four children and five grandchildren.

Earl married Peggy Hetrick and they have two children and three grandchildren.

Howard married Louise Beach and they have three children and three grandchildren. Howard and brother Herman built their homes on their father's farm at the base of Dinner's Knob.

Elmer married Jean Frenchko of West Deer. They have four children and one grandchild.

John Carnahan

The following account is included here because of a number of references to names and places in West Deer Township. It was taken from Jordan's "History of Allegheny County" and was probably written about one hundred years ago.

John Carnahan, farmer, Culmerville, was born July 31. 1814, on his present farm, son of John and Martha (Kissick) Carnahan, former of whom was born in Juniata County, Pa. and died in 1830, aged sixty-five years: latter born in County Derry, Ireland, and died in 1833, age fifty-six years. The father settled here about 1796, and was closely identified with the United Presbyterian Church, and with affairs of the township. Mr. Carnahan's half brother, George, was in the war of 1812. John received his education in West Deer Township in the old log schoolhouse with paper windows. He was left alone at his father's death and took charge of the farm until it was divided between the three sons. He was married in 1836 to Eliza Catherwood, a half sister to Robert Catherwood, and daughter of John and Susan (Hessen) Catherwood. Nine children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Carnahan: Susan, Samuel, Robert, Martha, Elizabeth, Jane, Mary, Nelson, and Clark. Samuel and Robert were in the war of the rebellion, and both died in the hospital; the former was being educated for the ministry. Mrs. Carnahan died in 1855, and Mr. Carnahan was married in 1856 to Nancy Black, a native of West Deer township, her parents coming from Ireland. Six children blessed this union, viz.: Margaret, George (a minister in Kansas), Shafer, Sarah, Lawrence (deceased), and Blair. Mr. Carnahan is an old citizen of West Deer Township, has been a ruling elder in the United Presbyterian Church since 1836, and has been school director and supervisor. He is the only one of the children now living. He has 130 acres of land, which his two sons, Clark and Blair, cultivate.

The McKnight-Catherwood Families

Submitted by: James Catherwood

James McKnight was born in Ireland and immigrated to America in 1801, settling in Crawford County, Pennsylvania. He married a Danish girl whose maiden name was Colosson. He later moved to Pittsburgh where he operated a grocery store. From Pittsburgh he moved to Millerstown where he bought the old Schenley farm and opened a grocery store there. He and his wife were among the first settlers in Millerstown. They had ten children, four boys and six girls. One of these girls, Sara Caroline, was born in Millerstown and later married Robert Carson Catherwood, son of John Canning Catherwood who had immigrated from County Down, Ireland in 1812.

John Canning Catherwood came to America shortly after he was married and settled in Pittsburgh. While living there he bought a 114-acre farm between Bull Creek and Deer Creek. He walked from Pittsburgh to his new land while clearing it and building a log cabin. His wife died not long afterwards and at a later date he married an Elizabeth Fleming. They had one son, Robert, born in 1851. Elizabeth died in 1855 leaving Catherwood, a middle-aged man with two children, Susan and Robert Carson.

Susan married William Culmer, who spent many years working in the post office near the crossroads settlement that became known as Culmerville, named after the Culmer family.

In 1857 Robert Carson Catherwood married Sara Caroline McKnight and they lived on the old homestead. Robert bought part of the Fleming farm and annexed it to his 100-acre farm, making it 178 acres. He was the father of eight children, three girls and five boys. The girls all died of diphtheria, two of them dying in less than one week. This was a severe family tragedy. The boys were John Charles, James, Robert Fleming, Joseph Leonard, and William. William died when he was very young. The other four married and settled near Culmerville, except for James who settled in Pittsburgh. The oldest, Charles, married Martha Couch. Martha died when her daughter Mary was born. Mary married a man by the name of Kammerdiner. Eight days after her marriage she was on her way to her new home on the other side of the Allegheny River. Her horse shied on the bridge, throwing her into the river and drowning her. Her father, Charles, later married Martha Coe.

Robert Carson Catherwood and his wife Sara lived on the Catherwood homestead until their deaths, his in 1902 and hers in 1908. Their three surviving sons, Charles, Fleming, and Joseph, each inherited about sixty acres of land from their father. They each had their own home, barn, and other farm buildings but owned their machinery in partnership. They helped each other with many of the farm operations.

Charles, the oldest, married Martha Coe and had four children, Ira, who died at age four, Grace, Elva and James. Grace married Robert Norris who will be remembered as having a general store at Culmerville. (The Norris history appears elsewhere in this book) Elva married Victor Ramsey. They have four sons. They are now retired and living in Florida. James married Effie Donaldson and remained on his father's farm. They have two daughters, Dorothy and Ruth. Dorothy married David Colton and lives in State College with their five children. Ruth married Eugene Sullivan and has four children. The Sullivans live in Beaver Falls.

It might be said that teaching school seems to "run" in the Catherwood family. Dorothy and Ruth, as well as Ruth's husband, their mother, two aunts, four cousins, and several more distant relatives were teachers.

James and Effie lived on, and farmed, their sixty-three acres until his retirement in 1973. They now reside on two acres reserved from the original Catherwood farm in the house, which they had previously built. Catherwoods have lived on this same land for almost 140 years.

Fleming, the second son of Robert and Sara, married Elizabeth Bryan and had two daughters and one son, all now deceased. Olive, the older daughter, married John Monnier and had no children. Ruby, the younger daughter, married Paul Fredley and had two daughters Garnet and June. Garnet married Lynne Roth and lives near South Park. They had four children. June married James (Dick) Rodgers and resides on part of the original farm. They have two daughters and one son. The older daughter, Donna, is married to Paul Vokish and lives in Valencia. Both Donna and Paul are faculty members in the Deer Lakes School System. The second daughter, Laurie, and son James are at home. Charles, the only son of Fleming and Elizabeth, never married and remained at home on the farm for his lifetime.

Joseph Cathewood, the third son of Robert and Sara, married Martha Norris. This couple had two daughters and one son. The older daughter, Bertha, married Herbert Hausee and lives near Sarver. Edna, the second daughter married Hugh Cunningham and had one daughter, Jane, and three sons, Glenn, Harold, and Darwin. Jane married Clarence Scheerbaum and lives on Christy Road. They have two children, Gary and Diane. Glenn, the oldest son, married Erika Obert, and they live in Ohio with their two children. Harold married Janice Hazlett and they have three children, Sharon, Scott, and Amy. Darwin, the third son, now deceased, first married Florence Walker and had two sons, Jeffrey and Thomas. His second marriage was to Barbara Auelrich and they had one son, John.

William Catherwood, the third child of Joseph and Martha, was first married to Isabel Walters, who died a few months after their marriage. He later married Dorothy Strobel, now deceased, and had one son, Robert, and two daughters, Ann and Elaine. Robert married Janelle Lynk and has three children. Ann married Michael Wallace, has two children and lives in Ohio. Elaine married Ralph Viggano, also has two children, and lives near Washington, D.C.

William lived on part of the original Catherwood farm and farmed either full or part-time for many years. He was employed by Gulf Research, Harmarville for many years. He retired about 1970, sold the farm, and moved to the Marienville area.

Ed. note-The remaining Catherwood on the original farm is James who prepared this Catherwood history. He is an active member of the 150th Anniversary Committee.

The Cunningham Family

Abraham and Nancy (Glasgow) Cunningham emigrated in 1810 from Ireland to Butler County. Some time afterward they moved to this area, bought 200 acres of land, and became farmers. He died about 1861 and his wife in 1865. They had one son, Hugh, who married Eliza McNeal. She died in 1862 after becoming the mother of seven children. One son, Abraham, was the only child to reach adulthood. Hugh Cunningham married the second time to Jane Park. To this union two children were born, a boy and a girl. The son, William P., was born in 1867 and grew to manhood on his father's farm. His father died in 1891 and William continued to operate the family farm. In 1900 he married Jennie Conley and to this union five children were born:

1. Stella, the firstborn, married Andrew Wood, a well-known West Deer farmer, and had two children, Verna, whose family lives in Harrisburg, and Dale, whose family lives in Middlesex.

2. Hugh, the oldest son, married Edna Catherwood of West Deer and to them four children were born. Glenn lives in Ohio, Harold is married to Janice Hazlett, lives on Christy Road, and has three children, Sharon, Scott, and Amy. Jane is married to Clarence Sheerbaum and they too, live on Christy Road. Their children are Gary and Diane. Darwin is deceased.

3. Eria married Walt Hohman of Richland and had two sons. Howard married to Janice Kifer of Richland, lives in West Deer and has three sons, Dale, Daniel, and Darwin. Alvin lives in South Carolina.

4. Charles married Geraldine Beacom of the Cherry Valley area of West Deer and had three daughters. Jean, married to Joseph Lupnacca, lives in Fawn Haven with their children, Tracy and Douglas. Charlene married Dave Phillips and lives on Glasgow Road. They have one daughter, Dawn. Hope married Gary Thornton and lives in Middlesex.

5. John married Alma Stepp of Russellton and had one son, James. "Jim" married Lois Tomiczek of Russellton and is a career officer in the U.S. Air Force, holding the rank of Lt. Colonel.

The Dawson Family

Submitted by: Mary Etta (Dawson) Monnier

Ralph Dawson Sr. (1777-1864) and his wife Mary Henry (1784-1850) were born in Ireland. They came to America and settled in Pittsburgh where their eldest son, James was born. They moved later to Deer Township where they were joined by Ralph's brother William (1772-1847), who also immigrated from Ireland. Ralph Dawson Sr. purchased land grants from Stephen Lowry, who had purchased them from the government. Ralph Sr. divided some land among his three sons, James (1813-1877), Ralph Jr. (1814-1896), and John (1823-1895). In the possession of Ralph Jr's descendents is a deed dated April 17, 1935 from Sara Collins, daughter of Stephen Lowry, to Ralph Dawson Sr. for seven hundred twenty-one acres (more or less) for \$1,442.00, and also a deed dated May 9, 1839 for two hundred and five acres and sixteen perches from Ralph Sr. to Ralph Jr. for \$410.00. Also in their possession are two of the original land grant documents written on buckskin and in excellent condition. On the 1876 map of West Deer Township the original properties of the Dawson families may be located.

Picture 152 – Original James Dawson residence



The original James Dawson residence, later the Alex Hunter home and presently the home of John Hunter, grandson of Alex Hunter. This house was built of brick made on the farm.

Descendents of James Dawson Sr.:

James Dawson, son of Ralph Sr. and Mary, married Margaret Caldwell (1811-1877) and to this marriage six children were born: Joseph, 1836; Agnes, 1841; John, 1843; James, 1845; Robert, 1846; and Mary, who died at the age of six. The 1850

census lists this family as living in East Deer Township but they later lived in a large brick home along Dawson Run Road (now Shepherd Road). This farm later became the home of the Alex Hunter Family. Joseph was killed in the Civil War. Agnes was the second wife of Robert McKnight and lived on Dawson Run Road, perhaps on part of her father's farm. James Sr. set his three sons, James Jr., John, and Robert, up in the gristmill business. One of these mills was located on the father's farm along Dawson Run, now called Deer Creek. Aside from farming James Sr. and James Jr. were funeral directors. At that time the funeral directors built the coffins and decorated the interiors. John and Robert did not remain in the township. James Jr. stayed on the farm.

On August 19, 1875, James Jr. (1845-1916) and Margaret Montgomery were married by Rev. Samuel Hood, then pastor of Deer Creek United Presbyterian Church. They lived in the house with James' parents. James Jr. and Margaret had seven children: Sally (1876-1899), Susan (1877- 1951), Thomas (1879-1909), Charles (1881 -1953), Mary (1884-1971), Grace (1887-1905), and George (1889- 1903). Sally, Grace, and George died at early ages. Thomas married Edna Aiken and had a son, Ployd. Thomas was killed by a bull wheel while working at an oil well. His wife died previously. Susan married A. Jamison Norris, Charles married Anna H. Norris, and Mary married W. David Norris. They all made their homes in their Culmerville area.

Susan and Jamison had a son Herbert, who lived to be eight years old. After the death of Floyd's parents, he made his home with Susan and Jamison.

Mary and David had four children: Charles, Ethel, Howard, and Gertrude.

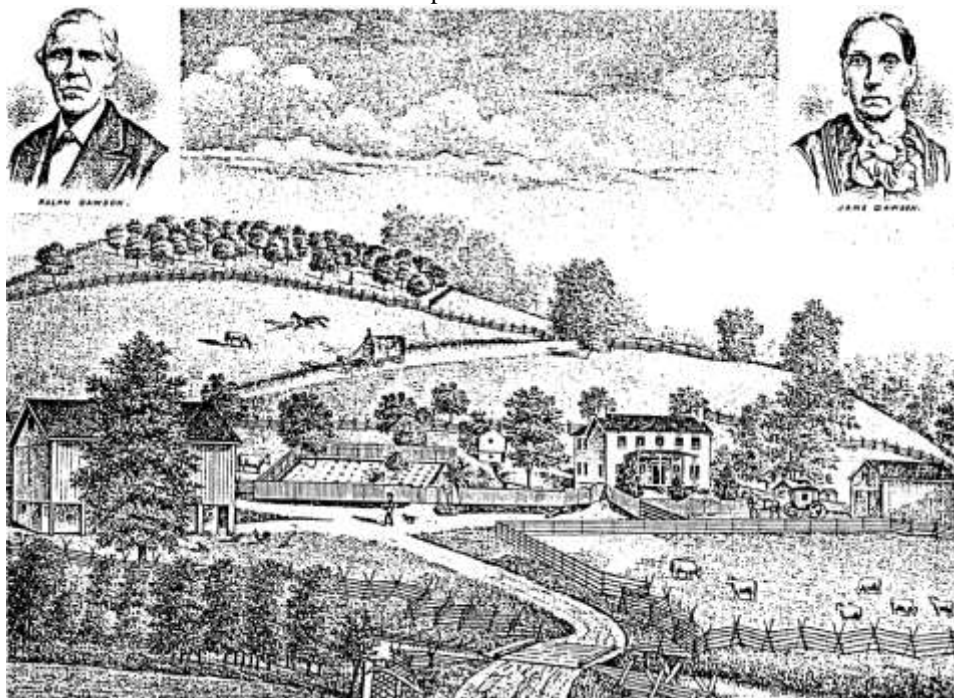
Charles and Anna had two daughters: Alice and Mary Etta.

All of James Jr. and Margaret's surviving children had homes in a small area along Tarentum-Culmerville, Millerstown-Culmerville, and Blanchard Roads. The descendents of James and Margaret still living in this same area are Floyd Dawson, his daughter Helen Murray and her three children, William, Michelle, and Edward; Ethel Knoch, her son Samuel and his daughter Marlinda; Ethel's grandson, David Thompson and his son Seth; Howard Norris; Gertrude Burns; and Mary Etta Monnier. Seth Thompson is the eighth generation descended from Ralph Sr. and Mary Dawson.

Descendents of Ralph Dawson Jr.:

Ralph Dawson Jr. (1814-1896) and his wife Jane (1817- 1891) lived on a farm off Saxonburg Boulevard on Dawson Road near the Butler County line. They had one son, William Henry. William Henry (1850-1937) married Mary Marshall (1862-1935) of West Deer and continued to live on his father's farm, it later being willed to him by his father. They had seven children: Flora, Cora, Laura, Ralph, Samuel, Alberta, and Scott. These children had a long walk each day to attend the Culmerville School. Aside from farming, the family operated a coal mine, doing commercial mining as early as 1845. A daughter, Alberta Linamen, remained on the farm after her marriage, raising her family. After the death of her father, William Henry, she managed to keep the coal mine in operation. Alberta and her husband, Lester, had lived in Penn Hills but returned to the farm when William Henry died. Lester operated the farm and worked on the railroad while Alberta managed the mine.

Picture 153 – Ralph Dawson Farm late 1800s



Ralph Dawson Farm as it appeared about a century ago. This is now the site of the Northern Allegheny Stone quarry operations.

Marlyn Linamen, a son of Alberta, is living on Christy Road in West Deer Township. He is the fifth generation descended from Ralph Sr. and his wife, Mary.

This farm has been depicted on a well-known line drawing published in a former county history and is now the site of the operations of Northern Allegheny Stone Inc.

Descendents of John Dawson:

John Dawson (1823-1895), son of Ralph Sr. and his wife Mary, married Lacey Conely (1821- ?). On the 1850 census John and his wife Lacey and their infant son, John Henry, are listed as living in West Deer Township in the same household as his father, Ralph Sr. They later lived in the area of what is now the Dillner property on Dawson Road. Dinner's Knob was once known as Dawson's Knob. Aside from farming, coal mining was also done on this property.

John Henry (1850-1931) married Isabelle McIntyre (1855-1923) and had a large family: Margaret (1874- 1899), John III (1875-1958), George (1877-1926), Alfred (1879-1955), Etta Lacy (1881-1955), Howard Wilmer (1885-1887), Howard Vernon (1879-1955), Hugh (1891- 1897), Harry (1897-198?), and Aida (1900-?). John Henry had a farm along Starr Road. Many of his children also had homes along Starr Road as well as Dawson Road.

John III married Wilda Mahan and had a son. William William and his wife lived along Saxonburg Boulevard near East Union Road. Their daughter, Doris Wilson, now resides in this area.

Alfred married Margaret Culp and lived along Starr Road. They had three children: Alice, who died at age five, Earl, and Prank. Earl and his wife Helen (1923-1967) had two children, Jane and Earl Jr. Both Earl and his son Earl Jr. reside along Starr Road in West Deer Township. Frank and his wife Dorothy had five children: Vivian, Frank Jr., Joyce, Terry, and Timothy. Frank lives along Starr Road in West Deer Township.

Harry Dawson, son of John Henry, and his wife Ruby lived along Bakerstown-Culmerville Road until shortly before his death. They had no children.

Descendents of William Dawson

William (1772-1847), a brother of Ralph Sr., immigrated from Ireland. He had one of the first gristmills in the township near where Dawson Run flows into Deer Creek near Route 910. William later had a farm adjoining the property of Ralph. William and his wife Jane had five children: Robert, Susie, Jennie, Ralph (a missionary who helped start the Millerstown Church), and James (killed in an explosion).

Robert married Mary Barker and their children were: Charles, Albert William, Bessie, and Paul. Bessie married Harry Magill and lived in West Deer at the present site of Magill Heights. Paul was killed in the millstream at Millerstown.

Susie and Jennie did not marry and continued to live on their father's farm.

The Dillner Family

Wilhem Herrman Dillner was born April 19, 1855 in Grozfriesen, Plauen, Germany to Johann Friedrich Wilhelm and Friederike Wilhelmine (Baumgartel) Dillner. He had two brothers, Wilhelm Ernest and Franz Oscar, and one sister, Marie Louise. (German spellings)

In 1871, when he was sixteen years old, Herman came to America with his brother Wilhelm Ernest and settled in West Deer Township. Most of the descendents of Wilhelm Ernest live in the Pittsburgh area at the present time.

Herman worked on the charcoal wagons, on the local farms, and at the coal mine on Martin's Hill Road. He is said to have hauled the brick for the Ben Hughes house on Middle Road Extension with his horses and wagon.

Herman purchased the farm on Dillner Lane from the Dawson's. There was a log house on the property which had been built between 1825 and 1835. Herman remodeled this house sometime after he purchased the farm. It has been said that there was a winding staircase in the log house and that the sheep stayed on the second floor in 1910 the house was enlarged. Herman's son, Raymond, lived in this house until his death in 1982. A fire destroyed this house in August 1985.

About 1878, Herman married Anna Elizabeth Snitzer, daughter of Henry and Catherine (Gumbert) Snitzer of Snitzer's Corner in West Deer Township. Herman and Anna had seven children, all born in West Deer: Henry, Menea, John, Fred, Joseph, Louis, and Raymond. These children attended Martin's School in West Deer. They all lived all or most of their lives here except for John and Fred who went to Kansas. Joseph, at age 93, is presently living with his wife at his home on part of the original Dillner farm.

Herman farmed and also worked at the oil wells on his farm. He was an early township supervisor and while in that position erected a shed on his property which was used to house the townships trucks of that time. The township in the 1920's was using many truckloads of red dog to improve the mud roads. As was the custom in those days, the shed reverted to the supervisor when it was no longer needed. This shed is on Dillner Lane and is still standing today.

Herman died on May 13, 1942 at age 87. His farm was divided between his sons, Joseph and Raymond. Raymond remained at the homestead.

Joseph married Irene Bonin, daughter of Charles and Ella (Kraft) Bonin of West Deer Township, in 1914. They had seven children, all of whom were born in West Deer: Harry, Ruth, Hazel, Herman, Earl, Howard, and Elmer, Joseph and Irene now have twenty-one grandchildren and twenty-five great-grandchildren. Joseph worked on his farm and in the coal mines for most of his life. Two of his sons, Herman and Howard, and Herman's son Herman Jr. and their families presently reside in West Deer Township.

Louis married Ethel Pittman, daughter of John and Ella (Fox) Pittman of Lardintown, Pa. in 1927. They had three children, Louis Glenn, Frederick, and Dorothy. There are thirteen grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Louis also worked in

the coal mines and farmed. Glenn and his daughter, Gloria (Dillner) Marshall and their families currently reside in West Deer Township.

Raymond married Hazel Bonin, a sister of the above Irene Bonin, in 1922. They had five children, all born in West Deer: Norman, Ethel, Clarence, Jean, and Frances. There are twelve grandchildren and twenty-one great-grandchildren. Ray, like his brothers, worked in the coal mines and farmed. He helped build the North Pittsburgh Telephone Company and was a director for fifty years. He was also a life member of the West Deer Volunteer Fire Company #1. Two of his sons, Norman and Clarence, and Clarence's son, Lawrence, and their families presently reside in West Deer Township.

The Dinner's have been in West Deer for 115 years. Submitted by: Judy Walker, granddaughter of Ray Dillner and Mrs. Herman (Dorothy) Dillner

The McKnight-Elliott Families

From information provided by Iva Mae Long

David Sterret McKnight (1800-1874) came to West Deer Township with his wife Elizabeth Wageley (1815-1897) and three children about 1839 and settled on what we might now call the Paholich farm in the Culmerville area. The McKnights had previously lived in several other areas of Pennsylvania before settling permanently in West Deer Township. Seven more children were born to this union. The McKnights were charter members of the Pleasant Unity Church and are buried there.

Two of their ten children are known to have married and had families in West Deer. A son, Robert P. born in 1838, married first to Ruth Ann Strohn and then to Agnes Dawson. There were four children born to this second marriage. Their home was in the Dawson's (Dinner's) Knob area. A daughter, Mary Elizabeth, born in 1850, married Daniel Elmer Elliot and lived in the Blanchard and Curtisville areas. They were living in Blanchard when their son, James Oliver, was born in 1889. They later moved to the Leslie farm where Curtisville#1 now stands. Young Oliver attended the Gray's Mill School. They later moved to Fawn Township where they operated a dairy farm.

Oliver Elliott had farmed, then worked in Hardware, returning to West Deer in 1931. He had eight acres and developed a nursery while working for the Ford Collieries Company. He had married Alma Irene Means and had three children, Iva Mae (Long), Arlene (Bargerstock), and James Oliver, Jr. In the 1950's he retired and moved two lots away from the nursery where he developed "Bell Haven", a bell museum. (See Bell Haven in Short Story section)

David Ferguson, born in Ireland in 1745, had a farm on the Butler County line. His twin daughters, Effie and Susannah, married brothers, Adam and James Norris. (See Norris family) Adam and Effie had a daughter Effie who married Robert Elliot (1831-1902). Effie and Robert had a son, the previously mentioned Daniel Elmer Elliot, father of Oliver Elliot, and grandfather of Iva Mae Long.

Iva Mae married Harry Long of Tarentum and built their home near the Elliot Nursery. This couple had three children; Harry is a medical doctor and lives with his family in Minnesota. Alien resides in Tarentum with his family. Margaret resides on Bull Creek Road and is the seventh generation of this family combination to live in West Deer. The past generations are buried in either the Bull Creek or Pleasant Unity Church cemeteries.

The Gray Family

William S. Gray married Elizabeth Leslie and settled on a farm in West Deer Township. It is believed that he saw service in the Civil War. The name William S. Gray appears on the plaque of the 63rd Infantry Regiment in Company E which was Captain John McClelland's company. This plaque is on the Pennsylvania Monument at Gettysburg. William and Elizabeth had a son Robert who may also have served in the Civil War in a different company than his father. Robert married Annie Norris and remained on the farm. The 1876 map, found elsewhere in this book, shows Robert Gray on the Gray farm near what is now Bairdford. Robert and Annie had four children.

Janet, the oldest, married Howard Kellar and had three daughters, Roberta, Addie, and Janet.

Robert and Annie's second child was a son, William G., who remained on the farm. He married Bertha Bonin, born September 22, 1889, and who at this writing, is the oldest living native West Deer resident. This couple has six children, Harold, Ella Mae, Anna, Olive, Charles, and David.

Harold married Clara Eisele of Indiana Township and lives in Bairdford. They have two children, William and Arlene. William, married to the former Beth Nesbit of the New Castle area, has one daughter, Gwendolyn and lives in Bedford County. Arlene, married to John Nury of Harmarville, resides in Indiana Township. They have two sons, David and Douglas.

Ella Mae, second child of William and Bertha, married Wilson Grubbs and had three children, Gary, Janet, and Robert. Gary lives in Karns City with his wife, the former Terry Schneider, and daughter, Heather Lee. Janet, a nurse, lives at home and Robert, the younger son, died at age twelve.

Anna lives with her mother on the Grubbs property on Michael Road.

Olive married William (Scotty) Thompson of West Deer and resides in Indiana Township. They have two sons, William Jr. and Dale, and a daughter, Lynn.

Charles married Marie Biehl of West Deer and Jives in the East Union area. They have six children: Colleen, who teaches in Conneaut and lives at home in the summer; Charles, who married Roberta Rider of Indiana Township and lives on the Russellton-Dorseyville Road; Darlene (Zimmerman), who lives in Dover, Delaware; Kenneth, who is married to Amy Harbison of Harwick Crossroads and lives in Bairdford; and Scott and Richard, who live at home.

David, the youngest son of William and Bertha, married Phyllis George of West Deer, and resides near New Wilmington where he teaches at Westminster College. They have three daughters, Amy, Lisa, and Gwen, and a son, Josh.

Stanley, the third child of Robert and Annie Gray, married Elma Rush and had five daughters, Ann, Mary, Jean, Franny, and Dorothy. Many of our older residents remember Stanley Gray's Garage, which was across the road from the present Consolaro Garage. Stanley sold Model T Fords here in the 1920's and moved to Mars in 1927, where he also sold Fords, this time the Model A's.

Robert and Annie's youngest child was Paul, who married Bertha Campbell and had twelve children. They were Ruth, Barton, Edna, Sarah, Lois, Emerson (deceased at age three), Merle, Bob, Stanley, Lawrence, Mary, and Harriet.

The Hazlett Family

William Hazlett emigrated from Ireland sometime in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, settling in what is now West Deer Township. He may have come here even before Deer Township was formed. Old records indicate that Hazlett School existed on his farm by 1800. Family records indicate that he married a Miss Lesley and became a farmer. His homestead was just south of the Culmerville- Bakerstown Road, east of Logan Road.

A son, George Hazlett, was born in 1800. In 1829 he married Eliza Karns, from what is now Harrison Township and Brackenridge, and shortly afterward moved to that area for the next twenty-one years. In 1851 the Hazletts returned to that old homestead. They had three sons and three daughters but only the sons survived their parents, who died in 1870 and 1871.

One of the sons, James E., was born on the Harrison- Brackenridge site and moved with his family to West Deer in 1851. In 1859 at the age of twenty-two he married Nancy Porter, whose grandfather, Robert Porter, was one of West Deer's pioneers. This union bore six children, two of whom were life-long West Deer residents. Clara A. married Dr. Daniel G. Rowley and later taught school for many years in the Culmerville Schools. George W. married Margaret May McCorkle of Dorseyville and established himself as a progressive farmer on the Hazlett farm, the farmstead which is located behind the present West Deer Municipal building (Curtisville School). Their two sons, Karns and William, have been well known in West Deer for many years.

Karns married Sarah Bryson of Gibsonia and to them two sons were born. Vernon lives in State College where he is with the Animal Sciences in Penn State's College of Agriculture. He has two children. James, the younger son, is married to Nancy Mitrecik of Hampton Township and they live on part of the Hazlett farm. They have three children, Todd James, Tracy Jane, and Tara Jean. These children are the seventh generation to bear the Hazlett name in West Deer Township and the fourth generation to live on the same land.

William married Flora Fredley of West Deer and lives on part of the Hazlett farm. They have two children, a boy and a girl. Carl, an attorney, lives in Tucson, Arizona and has four children. Janice is married to Harold Cunningham of West Deer and their home is on Christy Road. They have three children, Sharon, Scott, and Amy. These children are the seventh generation on the Cunningham side to live in West Deer.

The Hemphill Family

Robert Hemphill Sr. born in Ireland in 1792, settled in this area with his wife Catharine in 1812. Their farm, located in what we call the Blanchard area, contained between two and three hundred acres and extended to what is now the Fawn Township line and south to the Bull Creek Road.

The Hemphills had seven children. Two sons reached adulthood and each inherited half of the original homestead. David received the western end of the farm and Robert the eastern half.

David Hemphill married Isabella Means and to this union seven children were born. Of these, only two sons reached full adulthood and married. John, born in 1858, remained on the old homestead, now known as the Mark Stewart house in Blanchard. He was married twice, first to Carrie Katz and to them three children were born, Florence, Edna, and Cyril. His second marriage was to Mary F. Mays and they had one daughter, Margaret.

When John Hemphill died in 1920 the farm went to his son, Cyril W. Born in 1888, he was first married to Bessie Olson and had three children; Marvin, Doris, and Irene. His second marriage was to Christine Kaiser. Two sons, Lester and Elmer were born to this marriage. Cyril was killed in the Blanchard mine in 1929.

Marvin, Cyril's son by his first marriage, married Eleanor Cotton of the Saxonburg area and lives in the Bull Creek Road area of West Deer. They have one son, Victor, who also lives in the Culmerville area. He is the father of two daughters, Vickie and Ronnie. These girls are the seventh generation to have the Hemphill name.

David Hemphill's other son, Wilson, married Nancy McCurdy and they had two sons, Samuel J. and David E. Samuel J. never married and after his death his homestead was sold to Miles Smolic. David E. became a doctor and practiced in the South Pittsburgh area.

Robert Hemphill Jr., second son of the original Hemphill, (1831-1915) got the eastern end of the farm now owned by his grandson, Glenn Hemphill. He was married first to Frances Bryson (1840-1923). To this second marriage nine children were born, three dying in infancy, three growing up and leaving the area, and three staying in West Deer. These three were Edward, Harry, and Blaine.

Edward (1862-1945) married late in life and left no children. Harry married Emily Elliot and had six children, four of whom reached adulthood. These two brothers traded farms in 1925. Edward had the section of the original farm between the Pleasant Unity Church and the Elliot Nursery, which he traded to brother Harry for another section of the original farm. Of Harry

and Emily's four children, Lois and Harold are deceased and Melvin and Kenneth live in the Clinton area. They had lived in West Deer for some time.

When Robert Hemphill Jr. died in 1915, his son Blaine D. got the homestead. Blaine (1884-1956) married Haze Woodrow (1891-1927) and to them seven children were born, five of whom are now living in the area, with two in West Deer. James and Lyie live in the Sarver area. Ray lives in Fawn Township, and Clyde and Helen are deceased. Glenn, mentioned previously, lives on the farm which the first Hemphill ancestor settled. His home is well over a hundred years old. Charles lives in the Bull Creek Valley area as does his son, grandchildren, and two great grandsons.

Charles Hemphill married Alma Stroh and to them two children were born. A daughter, Sylvia, married Robert Grubs and lives in the North Hills area. Their son, Blaine, married Elsie Gibe and they have three children, Lora, Linda, and Daniel. They are the owners of Hemphill Cabinets. Daughter Lora is married to Ronald Okras and they have two sons, Scott and Steven. These boys are the seventh generation of the Hemphill family to live in West Deer Township.

The Hunter Family

Submitted by: Martha Baumgartel

James Hunter II was born in Ireland in 1762. His daughter, Jane (McCord) was the first Hunter to come to America. She and her husband wrote back for more of the family to follow. A number did come, five dying in route. James III, brother of Jane, married Margaret McCord, sister of Jane's husband in 1823 in County Down, Ireland. In 1830, with three children, James and Margaret came to America, settling in Pittsburgh. James worked at the Eagle Cotton Mill but poor health forced him to leave this type of work. He and his brother George bought a farm on Bull Creek and moved to Fawn Township in 1840. Ten years later, in 1850, the Hunters moved to West Deer, having bought farms in the Deer Creek area. James bought his farm on what is now Bairdford Road next to the Deer Creek Church and immediately built a log house there. The Ferguson and Schwab farms were next to his. His wife died on the farm and he lived the rest of his life with married daughters, Nancy (Lytle), Margaret (Stewart), and Ellen (Taylor), who lived in the area. His son James lived at the end of Middle Road Extension, where he had a store and post office. This post office was Lewis Post Office, named for Jane (Hunter) Lewis and was also known as Hunter Post Office.

Mary Hunter, daughter of James III, married Robert Hunter (no relation) of Pittsburgh and bought the Bell farm on Hunter Road, just west of the Deer Creek Cemetery. Their youngest daughter, Elinor Bolin, lives there today.

Francis Hunter, youngest son of James III, married Martha (Wallace) Schwab in 1874. She was the widow of Nicholas Schwab who had been killed by a bull. She was widowed with four small children and had six more, all sons, to her second husband.

George Hunter was building his home on Middle Road Extension when he met an untimely death in a railroad accident. He taught school at Martin School prior to his death. He left three small children.

Frank Hunter taught school for almost twenty-five years and was teaching in Russellton at the time of the nationwide flu epidemic, to which he succumbed early in 1919. His brother Charles was killed in an auto accident in Bairdford. Another brother, Robert, remained on the farm, later selling to the Hunkles.

James Alexander Hunter, also called Alex but more often by the familiar name "Pixie", married Margaret (Maggie) McIntyre in 1905 and moved to a farm on Shepherd Road, then called Dawson Run Road, which his parents had bought some years before. This had been the James Dawson farm and had on it the remains of a gristmill with the old burrstones and millrace. The house, one of West Deer's oldest, was of three-brick construction and had been built of bricks made on the farm about 1850. Bricks for the Deer Creek Church were made at the same time.

Alex and Margaret Hunter had two sons and ten daughters. Alex later bought the adjoining Glendenning farm and continued as a farmer for the remainder of his life. These farms also had several oil wells on them. A grandson, John Bruce Hunter, and his family live on this farm today.

Of their ten daughters, six were teachers, with five of these teaching at one time in the schools of West Deer Township. Ruth (Cunningham), retired teacher, lives in the George Hunter house on Middle Road north of Deer Creek. Florence (Snitzer) retired teacher, lives on Russellton Road near Snitzer's Corner (see Snitzer family). Martha (Baumgartel), retired teacher, lives on Shepherd Road as does brother Bruce and sister Marian (Kratz). Two other sisters, both deceased, had previously lived on Shepherd Road. Frances (Mrs. Burt Stevenson), also a teacher, and Norma (Mrs. Don Kirkpatrick) had built their homes on part of the original Hunter farm. Ethel (Mink), also a retired West Deer teacher, lives in Florida. Grace, a retired teacher, lives in California. The youngest daughter, Verna, lives with sister Ruth.

Two granddaughters of Alex and Margaret Hunter live in the area. Diana (Baumgartel) Gilch lives on Shepherd Road and Janet (Cunningham) Allaman lives in Fawn Haven.

Members of other branches of the Hunter family include the Girdwood families, Robert Ley of Middle Road, and Robert Stewart of Donaldson Road.

The Hunters hold an annual family reunion at the Deer Creek United Presbyterian Church. The 1985 gathering marked the 60th reunion of this family, which has been in West Deer for 135 years.

The Hutchman Families

Submitted by: William E. Hutchman, Marion, Ohio

An entry in the Allegheny Court House, Deed Book, Vol. 124, page 489, reads as follows: "A piece of land which James Ross and others conveyed to Jane Anderson, who afterwards intermarried with Samuel Hutchman Sr. by deed October 7, 1837."

John Anderson, from Bedford, PA, owned large tracts of land in Hampton Township and other places. He sold some of these to his friends and family. This land was from the Revolutionary War Grants. His family lived in the Hampton Township area, and his four grandchildren, Mary Ann, Jane, James and John, inherited several of these tracts of land.

Samuel Hutchman and Jane Anderson Hutchman moved to a log cabin located near Star Road on approximately 125 acres of land. They had three sons; John Anderson (1839-1913), who married Amanda Kingan; William, (?) who married Ceenia Snow and moved to Iowa; Samuel (1844-1903), who married Mary Agnes Hazlett, daughter of Alexander Hazlett and Jane Sweeney Hazlett, who lived in West Deer Township near the spur railroad track which goes from the Bessemer Railroad to Curtisville #2.

The two married sons, John A. Hutchman and Samuel Hutchman, lived in the log cabin along Starr Road and raised their children there. Using Starr Road as a dividing line they formed two almost equal sized farms with Samuel Hutchman owning the one on the east side of the road.

The Samuel Hutchman log and frame house was built beside Starr Road in the early 1880's and my father, Elliott Hutchman, stated that he moved there as a child of about eight years. Samuel and Mary Hazlett Hutchman had these children: Jennie (Murray), Sarah, Elliott, Merle and an infant daughter.

Elliott Hutchman (1878-1951) and his sister, Sara (1875-1929), were very helpful in their work for East Union United Presbyterian Church and in the formation of Oak Valley Grange where they were treasurer and secretary for many years. They knew that their parents, Samuel and Mary, were one of the founding families of East Union, and they followed the family tradition.

In 1908 Elliott Hutchman and Ida Monnier of West Deer Township (daughter of Henry and Eliza Monnier) were married. They had four children: Mabel (Wardle) (1909), William E. (1911), Helen A. (1914-1933), and Merle E. (1920). Mabel lives in Florida now; William lives in Marion, Ohio; and Merle E. lives in the family homestead on Starr Road.

Merle E. Hutchman is married to Rebecca Johnson and they have two sons: Eugene and Ralph William Hutchman. Eugene is married to Margaret Hamilton, and they have two young sons. They live in West Deer Township. Ralph William lives at home with his parents.

This history places six generations of the Hutchman family living in the original family home. This house is 100 years old or more. For most of these ancestors the two farms provided a financial living, and several of the fields are in production yet in 1985.

The Magill Family

Submitted by: Blanche (Magill) Banks

John and Sara Ross Magill came to West Deer Township in 1828. Two years later they purchased a tract of land from Samuel Richards and his wife, who had been granted the land by the State of Pennsylvania. John and Sara had four sons and four daughters. Among the children were Mrs. John Allison, William Henry Magill and George Chambers Magill.

Mrs. John Allison was the grandmother of LeRoy Allison, a well-known farmer of this community. LeRoy and Elizabeth Hazlett Allison are the parents of a family of thirteen children of outstanding ability and achievement.

During the time John and Sara resided in West Deer Township, they occupied the original house, later the residence of William Henry Magill, their son. John was a leader in local affairs and one of the organizers of the East Union Presbyterian Church in 1850. He later moved to Freeport to run a woolen mill. However, he returned to West Deer before his death in 1875.

George Chambers Magill married Mary Hutchman and they had six daughters and two sons. The sons, John and Roger, ran the farm for many years after the death of their father in 1917. It was later sold, part of it being the area where the present Deer Lakes Jr./Sr. High School stands, another part being sold to William Dyer, and another section to the Brnardic family. A remaining part still belongs to Daniel Thompson, a grandson.

One daughter, Christine Magill, was a teacher in West Deer and Rural Ridge for a number of years.

William Henry Magill served in the Civil War from 1861 until 1864, including the battle of Gettysburg. The 63rd Infantry plaque on the Pennsylvania Monument at Gettysburg lists William H. Magill as one of the two sergeants in Capt. John McClelland's Company E. This company was recruited in Allegheny County and lists a number of local names. In 1868 William Henry married Phoebe Jane Crawford and took over at least half of his father's farm, purchasing it in 1874 just before his father's death a year later.

William and Phoebe had four daughters and four sons, one of whom was the late Harry T. Magill. About 1911 Harry took over the farm because of his father's poor health. His father was not able to operate the farm but he continued as a justice of the peace. He had previously served three terms in the state legislature but returned to his justice of the peace position, which he held from 1882 until his death in 1916.

Just before Harry Magill took over the farm, the original house burned. Under Harry's direction and his father's sponsorship a new home was built to which Harry brought his bride, Bessie Dawson Magill, in 1913. They lived in this house until

1962 when they sold it, after selling the farm for a housing development. The house burned that year during the remodeling process.

Harry purchased the farm from his mother in 1919. During the years he farmed he participated in many of the first innovative farming procedures, such as contour farming, pond building, and other conservation practices. He owned one of the first combines in this area. Harry and Bess were both active in church and community affairs.

In 1952 Harry and Bess sold the first tract of land to Ideal Homes and Victory Construction, owned by F. P. Galata, for residential development. Upon completion of one section, another tract was sold to Galata in 1954. When that was completed the final section of the farm was sold to him in 1955. Harry and Bess retained the homestead as their home until 1962 when they moved to the Poconos to reside with their daughter Blanche and son-in-law T. E. Banks. Today the two hundred homes of Magill Heights are the culmination of the Magill family history. While no Magill's live there the name will probably continue for many generations.

Picture 154 – Magill Farmstead



The Magill Farmstead before the building of Magill Heights. The house burned in the late 1950's and the other buildings were torn down. The chicken house on the right was built from the barracks used in the coal strike of 1927.

The Marshall Family

Information from: Gertrude Marshall Ekas

Samuel and Martha (Swan) Marshall came from Ireland to Pittsburgh in 1848 and shortly afterwards located in West Deer Township on 200 acres of land. Of their nine children, seven reached maturity but by the end of the century only three remained, and only one of these stayed in West Deer. Samuel and Martha's son, William, born in 1832 in Ireland, came with them to America at age sixteen and assisted his father in becoming a successful farmer and breeder of high grade cattle.

The original Marshall farm was north of the Culmerville- Bakerstown Road and west of Rittman Road. This farm, originally two hundred acres, was divided in two sometime in the last century and had a road, now long abandoned, between the two farms. The 1876 map shows William Marshall on the southern farm and Samuel Marshall on the northern or "lower place" near the present Marshall shaft of the old Russellton mine. The original farmhouse, built in 1859 of stone at the edge of a stone quarry, is now used as the summer place of a Pittsburgh family. The house near the Marshall shaft is now unoccupied and is visible from Rittman Road.

In 1864, at age thirty-two, William Marshall enlisted in the 6th Pennsylvania Artillery and served in the final year of the Civil War. Later in life he would serve as commander of the William Scott Post (see Scott family story) of the Grand Army of the Republic in West Deer Township. This Post had a building on the Culmerville-Bakerstown Road at one time.

William married Mary Ferguson in 1856 and to this couple seven daughters and one son were born.

Thomas, the only son, married Sarah Monnier, a West Deer native, and to this union six children were born. A daughter and granddaughter of this couple live on the Culmerville-Millerstown Road. The children of Thomas and Sarah were: W. John,

Samuel F., Mary I., Selden H. (Ben), Robert T., and Gertrude A. Gertrude (Gertie) married Wilbur Ekas and has lived much of her life in the Culmerville area. She had four children. Floyd lives in Harrison Township, Kathleen lives in Fawn Township, Linda lives in Buffalo, N.Y., and Penny is deceased. Carol Holsing, daughter of Ben Marshall lives in the Culmerville area, she has three children.

Rebecca Marshall married Samuel McIntyre and had nine children; Mary, Maggie, George, Thomas, Lillie, Iva, Martha, Emma, and Clara were their names. Two of these daughters married men whose names became well known locally: Maggie married Alex Hunter and was the mother of at least five daughters who taught school in West Deer (see Hunter family history). Lillie, also a schoolteacher, married Ray Alien and lived for years in a log house near the present community park at Bairdford. Their children left West Deer years ago but one. Dr. Atien, gynecologist, resides and practices medicine in nearby Oakmont.

Martha Marshall, postmaster at Bakerstown for many years, married William Scott and had one son, L. Vernon. An old family picture shows the Butler Plank Road in front of their house and post office in Bakerstown, Martha told of the rumbling noise made by the wagons on this road.

Mary Marshall married William Henry Dawson and had six children. They were Cora, Laura, Ralph, Samuel, Alberta and William Scott. William Henry was affectionately called "Uncle Bill Hen" by his many nieces and nephews.

Nancy married Selden Goodrich and also had six children. These six were named Merle, Vera, Sesta, W. Marshall, Harold, and Carrie.

Lillie died at a young age. It is believed that Rebecca's daughter Lillie (Alien) may have been named for her.

Clara first married George Rittman and had one

daughter, Georgilla, before his death. She later married again to Daniel Smith and had five more children. They were J. Ronald, Lawrence, Leona, Daniel, and Howard.

Emma married Samuel Schwab and had one son Curtis He was killed in an auto-truck accident between Culmerville and Deer Creek not too many years after World War II. This occurred not far from the original farmstead of his great-grandfather.

Gertrude Marshall Ekas supplied much of the information for this account of her family.

Captain John McClelland

George McClelland came to Deer Township in 1811, buying 235 acres of land for \$265.00 in what is now the East Union area of West Deer. This property was originally Lot No. 1 52 in James Cunningham's survey district No. 4 in the Depreciation Lands described earlier in this book. It had been sold previously for unpaid taxes but after becoming McClelland (d) property remained in that family for eighty years and witnessed a number of family hardships.

John was born on the family farm in 1817 and little is known of his early life. When West Deer became a township in 1836 he was already nineteen years old. It may be assumed that he remained on the farm, becoming owner of part of it after the death of his father and mother. He became a member of the East Union Presbyterian Church shortly after its organization in 1850 and became an elder in 1865 upon his return from the Civil War.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he enlisted in the 63rd Infantry Regiment, organized in Pittsburgh in August 1861, enrolling its members for three years service. This regiment was part of the 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 3rd Corps and participated in many engagements with the enemy in Virginia and at Gettysburg. The 63rd Infantry bronze plaque on the Pennsylvania Monument at Gettysburg lists Captain John McClelland as company commander of Company E. One account states that he enlisted and rose through the ranks to company commander while another states that he joined the regiment as a captain. Some knowledge of Civil War military history would lead this author (John Graff) to believe both accounts. As military groups were organized, the officers were usually elected by their men.

The 63rd Infantry was mustered out in June 1864 except for the veteran volunteers, of which Capt. McClelland was obviously one. These men were transferred to the 155th Infantry and continued with hard fighting in the final year of the war in Virginia.

Captain McClelland returned to his farm in 1865 and continued farming until 1870 when he was elected an Allegheny County Jury Commissioner. Five years later he was elected to the Board of County Commissioners and again in 1878, holding that position until his death the following year, on April 11, 1879.

He was one of West Deer's outstanding citizens at that time and was well known both in the township and in Allegheny County. He is interred in the East Union Cemetery.

The McClelland homestead on the Russellton- Dorseyville Road has been the Cox family home for a number of years.

The McKrell Family

Submitted by: Nancy McKrell

James Boyd McKrell Sr. was born on a farm on the present McKrell Road, West Deer Township, on January 13, 1891. This farm is now owned by John Dlugopolski. Boyd now resides with his wife Frances on the farm on which he grew up, across the road from his birthplace.

Boyd's forebears in West Deer go back to at least 1840. Bull Creek Church records show that his great- grandfather, Alien Taylor, joined the church in that year.

Alien Taylor and his wife, Flora Blakely Taylor arrived from Ireland in the 1830's. They settled in the East Union area, where Alien worked as a stonemason. The 1876 map identifies their home. Their oldest daughter, Jane, married James Lynn McKrell in the 1850's. As far as is known, James Lynn was the only one of his family to settle in West Deer.

James Lynn and Jane bought a farm in the Bull Creek area on what is now Superior Road. The old barn is still standing. James and Jane had seven children. The third, William John, was born in 1861. He married Pauline Geiser in 1890.

Pauline was the daughter of John George Geiser and Philamina Rumpsburger Geiser. They emigrated from Germany in the mid-1800's. Pauline, the seventh of eight children, was born in 1861.

John George Geiser bought a two hundred-acre farm in the 1860's on the present McKrell Road. This is shown on the 1876 map. The original farm encompassed land from the present Sportsmen's Club to the far side of Saxonburg Boulevard. Young James Boyd discovered a number of arrowheads in the Saxonburg Boulevard area of the farm during plowing.

Upon his marriage to Pauline, William John McKrell moved to the Geiser farm, where he both farmed and bought, broke, and sold colts. He and Pauline had five children: James Boyd, Olive Mabel, Elsie Jane, Sarah Marjorie, and Alice May.

Of William John and Pauline's four daughters, three are deceased and the fourth no longer lives in West Deer. Mabel married Harry Kearn but died in 1925 at age thirty- one. They had no children. Elsie Jane married Andrew Schohn of West Deer. They had three daughters: Phyllis (Campbell), Dorothy (Vogele), and Betty (Patsko). Betty and her daughter Joni still reside in West Deer. Elsie died in 1932. The third daughter, Marjorie, married W. S. Buzard. Their children are Lois, William, and James. Marjorie died in 1979. The youngest daughter, Alice, married George Trevorrow and resides in Bethesda, Maryland.

William John and Pauline's only son, James Boyd, worked with his father on the farm, worked for a time for the Bessemer-Lake Erie Railroad, and worked for Ford Collieries in the Curtisville office, where he was purchasing agent for many years. He married Frances Campbell of the Portersville area in 1928. They had two sons, John H. and James Boyd Jr. John H. lives in the family homestead and James Boyd Jr. lives next door. He married Nancy Mawhinney, also of West Deer. They had three children, all of whom grew up in West Deer. These children are the sixth generation through the Taylors and the fifth generation through the Geisers to have lived here. Jonathan D., the oldest, now lives in Canton, Ohio, and Mark D., the youngest, resides in Rochester, New York. Judith L. continues to live on McKrell Road, West Deer Township.

The Michael Family

William Michael and his wife Margaret came to West Deer Township from Sharpsburg in 1872. They purchased a one hundred-acre farm near the East Union Church and began farming. The 1876 map shows W. Michael on the site of the present Michael Brothers operation.

Henry W. Michael, son of William and Margaret, remained on the farm, eventually taking over its operation and continuing the family farm. He and his wife, the former Katherine Henrich of Indiana Township, began raising tomatoes and plants in addition to their general farming. They began to place more emphasis on dairy-ing about the time of the First World War. This couple had ten children, six boys and four girls.

These children are as follows: Howard, deceased; Russell, who first set up the nursery operation, also deceased; twins Nora and Dora, Nora lives in Virginia and Dora in St. Louis; Alice, Walter, and Martha, all of whom live in California; Wilbur who lives on the home farm; Richard who resides in the Slippery Rock area; and Therman, the youngest, who also lives on the home farm.

Henry was killed in 1936 in a farm accident when a tree fell on him. This was a very trying time for the Michael family. Russell had started the nursery but it was not in full production. The family placed more emphasis on vegetables as cash crops until the nursery was in full production. Russell died unexpectedly and brothers Wilbur, Richard, and Therman took over the nursery thus explaining the Michael Brothers name, although the nursery is now operated by Therman alone. The brothers then bought the farm from their mother and operated the poultry farm, greenhouses, and nursery under the Michael Brothers name. At one time there were over 20,000 hens in the poultry operation. Wilbur is now in semi-retirement, operating an egg sales business.

Wilbur married Esther Baker of Kentucky and has three children. Joyce, an accountant, is married to Jeffrey Mulkern and lives along the Saxonburg Boulevard across from the Aber farm. David is a ceramic engineer and lives in White Oak. Linda is married to Raymond Pater of McKeesport and lives on the original Michael farm.

Therman married Mary Trevellini of West Deer and lives beside his nursery. He and Mary have four children. Alan, their only son, is a horticulturist and lives on the Russellton-Dorseyville Road. He is associated with Channel 4-TV and has his own program on Saturday mornings. Marie is a biologist and Carol is a horticulturist. Both are involved with research with the United States Department of Agriculture near Beltsville, Maryland, Beverly, the oldest daughter has earned a Ph.D. and teaches math at the University of Pittsburgh. She lives in Holiday Park.

The Michael Brothers Nursery and Poultry Farm is a well-known local operation and draws customers from a large area. Therman and Mary operate the nursery while Wilbur and Esther manage the poultry department.

The Monnier Family

Submitted by: Clarence Monnier

We first hear of the Monniers, who were French Huguenots, during the reign of King Henry the IV. It was he who signed the Edict of Nantes, giving the Huguenots religious freedom. King Henry IV was loved by the Monniers. One of the Monniers was a cup bearer to the king and another was a Captain of the Guard. Their love of the king was shown by at least one member of

each generation having a son named Henry. Even my great grandmother was named Henriette. With the death of King Henry IV, the Huguenots were persecuted and when King Louis XIV, the grandson of Henry the IV, repealed the Edict of Nantes as many as 400,000 Huguenots left France for other countries. France thus lost many of her finest subjects from its army and navy and from its magistrates and businessmen. Most of these people were skilled workmen.

Our Monnier family fled almost two hundred miles from Cheny to the St. Imier Valley of Switzerland where they settled in the town of Sonceboy about 1700.

Apparently Charles Henry Monnier, who drove stagecoach between France and Switzerland, was the first of that family to seek a new home in America. In 1820 at the age of eighteen he crossed the Atlantic, but not until nineteen years later did he purchase land as his future home site in the Little Deer Creek Valley, West Deer Township, a location he said reminded him of the St. Imier Valley in Switzerland.

On his second trip from Switzerland in 1826, he became friendly with the family of Fredrick and Henriette Petram Vorpe, who were passengers on the ship. They were also Swiss from Sonceboy. He was particularly attracted to their bright-eyed, dark-haired, ten-year-old daughter, Henriette. Charles waited until 1834 when she was eighteen and he was thirty-two to marry her.

After living a short time in Bakerstown with a friend by the name of Garroux, Charles and Harriet (Henriette anglicized) bought 129 acres from Merriman and Sarah Oxuinn in what is now Curtisville. On this land they built a log cabin where they lived while erecting a barn in 1850 and the present redbrick house, the Monnier Homestead, in 1854. Bricks for the house were purchased from the brickyard of James Leslie, which adjoined the Monnier farm on what is now known as Ford and Church Streets, Curtisville. This property which Charles and Henriette Monnier and their descendants lived for three generations was known as the Woodbine Farm.

Charles and Harriet bought an additional 25 acres on September 13, 1856 and 107 1/2 acres on April 9, 1861 from Christian King and his wife Elizabeth, the widow of David W. Thomann.

Charles and Harriet had six sons and one daughter: Henry, Emile (died an infant), Fred, John, Lydia, Julius (died at the age of seven) and Alben.

Harriet had long black hair that when brushed hung to her knees. Indians of the Shawnee, who camped nearby, admired her long hair and would sometimes be observed looking through the window as she brushed it. They would visit her on bread baking day and she would give them a loaf of bread. As a result, the Monniers never had any trouble with the Indians. Harriet carried a gun when she rode up to Brimstone Corners (Culmerville), not for protection from the Indians, but because of the wolves that lived in Leslie's woods. Charles was attacked by a wildcat (called a panther then) one night while on his way home.

Charles Henry and Harriett's son Henry married Eliza Crawford, daughter of Isaac and Mary (Reinhart) Crawford. They bought the 107 1/2 acres from Henry's father and later built a large frame house that replaced the log house. This house is along what is known as the Monnier Road and is now the residence of the Rogan family. Henry and Eliza were successful farmers devoted to general farming but their specialty was the breeding of Jersey cattle and Chester White hogs.

Picture 155 – Henry Monnier farmhouse



The Henry Monnier farmhouse on Monnier Road. The log house to the left was the main house before the new one was built. This picture, by Leonard Monnier was made about 1905. It is now the home of the Rogan family.

Henry and Eliza had ten children: William Henry who died as a young boy; Albert J., who married Clara Schroder; Sarah A., who married Thomas Marshall; Frank E., who married Rachel Magill; Charles E., who married Rosa Murray; Clara, who married John Vorpe; Ida A., who married Elliott Hutchman; Ella M., who married Clyde Thompson; Leonard C., who married Bella Kamp; and a deceased infant. Six of the children lived all of their lives in West Deer Township.

Leonard, as a boy, trapped and with some of the money purchased a Seroco glass plate camera, which I still have and which is in excellent condition. He took and developed many pictures of the surrounding country. Often people would ask him to take their family's picture. Several of Leonard's pictures have been reproduced in this book. Leonard Monnier married Bella Kamp and they had their home along the East Union Road, now owned by the Bernardic family. While their new house was being built, they lived in a log house across the road. Leonard did some farming and chicken raising but spent most of his life working at various coal mines. Later, he was employed by West Deer Schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Highways. He passed away in 1970 at the age of 84 and was buried in the East Union Cemetery with his parents, grandparents, and his four brothers, William, Albert, Frank, an infant boy unnamed, and one sister, Ida Hutchman.

Picture 156 – Ida and Clara Monnier



Two young ladies, Ida and Clara Monnier, in the fashions of the early 1900's.

Picture 157 – All dressed up and somewhere to go in 1905



All dressed up and someplace to go! Just where or who we don't know but this picture probably was taken about 1905 by Leonard Monnier shows these people all dressed up and ready to go in their buggies.

Leonard and Bella had one son, Clarence, who married Mary Etta Dawson of West Deer Township. To this union was born two daughters. Judith Lorraine married William Dyer of West Deer Township. They have a son and a daughter. Joyce Etta married Richard Field of West Deer Township. They have two daughters. Both families now reside in Maryland.

Clarence and Mary Etta live along the Culmerville- Millerstown Road. Together, before retiring, they taught school a total of seventy years, all in West Deer Township Schools.

Norris Family

Submitted by: Mary Etta Monnier & Dorothy Voeckel

The earliest Norris of whom we have definite records is Robert, whose description was found in Central Pennsylvania History, published by Beers and Co. of Chicago. It reads as follows: "Robert Norris was a wealthy citizen of Ireland who took great delight in hunting and spent much time in following the hounds. He was six feet six inches tall and weighed two hundred fifty pounds." This Robert was married twice having a son, Robert, to his first wife and seven sons and two daughters to his second wife. They lived in Castle Dawson, Derry County, Ireland.

Robert (1785-1867), the son of Robert's first wife, his wife Catherine Dowling Norris and their son, James (1810-1870), came to America in the early 1800's. It is not known if more of their ten children were born in Ireland. Robert and Catherine settled in Deer Township in the vicinity of what is now Culmerville. Robert sent back such a glowing report of his new home that his stepmother (then a widow) decided to take her family to America.

Shortly after the family started their long journey the mother became ill. Fearing her death, two sons took their mother back to Ireland in a life raft, staying with her until her death two years later. In the meantime the oldest brother had a difficult time managing to get his charges to their destination. A story was told about one of the little girls falling overboard and was kept afloat by her hoop-skirt until she could be reached by a life raft.

These young people went to the home of their half brother, Robert. Daniel, Adam, John, James, and Henry settled in Deer and Buffalo Townships. The two girls, Nancy and Esther, went to New Jersey and two other brothers, not mentioned above, settled in Norristown.

It is known that Robert, the half brother, owned two hundred fifty-five acres of land in and around Culmerville. There were two tracts of land purchased from Sara Collins. It is not known what kind of a house they had at first but a brick home was constructed later from bricks fired at a nearby kiln. This home was located west of Culmerville along Saxonburg Boulevard and is

the present home of Mr. & Mrs. John Consolaro. Robert and Catherine's daughter, Margaret, married Robert Culmer and had a daughter Mary Ann. It was for this daughter, Mary Ann Culmer, which Culmerville was named.

The property of Robert and Catherine was willed to their children and grandchildren and much of it was sold, by these heirs, to H. M. Davidson. Their son, Dowling, inherited the section where the brick home stood. Dowling died at the age of twenty-nine and the property was willed to his wife Elizabeth K. Norris. She continued to live in this home for many years. Older residents may remember it being referred to as the "Mrs. Norris Place". In 1912, Elizabeth Norris deeded the property to her daughter Mary Norris Bryce. It was later bought by the Consolaro family.

Adam (1800-1870)

Adam, half brother to Robert, married Effie Ferguson (1795-1867), a daughter of David and Susannah Pollard Ferguson. David fought in the Revolutionary War and was a scout for George Washington. Adam and Effie located on a knoll in what is now Blanchard about 1820. They later built a brick home using bricks made in the Norris kiln which was located along what is now known as Blanchard Road. All of the children of Adam and Effie were born in this house and the names of these children were said to be recorded in the basement floor. These children were: Adam, Nancy, Robert, David, William, Rebecca, Effy and Susan. This brick home is now occupied by the Caponi family.

Adam (1832-1909), son of Adam and Effie, married Isabella Matthews (1833-1908) and lived in the father's home on the knoll in Blanchard. Their children were: James, William, Effie Etta, David, and Adam Henry. Benjamin Black, and Logan Robert. Their childhood days were spent in West Deer but many established homes in the Pittsburgh area. Logan and his wife Estella lived in Tarentum and had six children. Their youngest son, Adam, married Virginia Hanna and they lived in West Deer until their deaths. Their son, James, grew up in West Deer and attended its schools.

William (1836-1902), son of Adam and Effie, married Rebecca Matthews (1839-1912) and had a home along what is now Blanchard Road. Their first home was on the right hand side of the road near a spring. They built a new brick home across the road using bricks, which were made at the Norris kiln. This house is still standing but is not occupied. "Uncle Will and Aunt Becky", as they were affectionately called, had a large family and many of their descendents remained in West Deer and had much to do with its development. Their children were as follows: Mary Ann who married Charley Porter; Agnes did not marry; George, who married Rachel McIntyre; Adam Jamison, who married Susan Dawson; James Alex, who married Inez Henry; Bertha, who married A. R. Means and after his death married McClain Henry; Sara, who married John Fleming; Silas Milton, who married Lavina Henry and William David who married Mary Dawson.

Picture 158 – William Norris house built about 1865



This house, owned by Samuel Knoch, was one of the finest examples of the two story, eight room brick farmhouse in West Deer Township. This house is very similar to the Ben Hughes house on Middle Road extension. According to the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation the carvings in the keystones over the windows are among the finest Italianate ornaments in the county. It was built of local brick about 1865 by William Norris. Photo by John Graff

Descendents of this family still living in West Deer are as follows: Sara Porter Drum, daughter of Mary Jane; Harold Norris, grandson of George, his daughters Deborah Irvine and Nancy Johnson and Nancy's daughter, Rachel; David Norris, great grandson of George and his daughters, Michelle and Lauren; Alien Norris, great-grandson of George and his son Alien, Jr.; Edna Catherwood Cunningham, daughter of Martha, her daughter Jane Scheerbaum and her children, Gary and Diane; Edna's son, Harold, and his children, Sharon, Scott, and Amy; Robert Henry, grandson of Bertha, and his daughters Tricia and Rebecca; Clarence Norris, son of Milton; Ethel Norris Knoch, daughter of David, her son Samuel and his daughter Marlinda; Ethel's grandson David Thompson and his son, Seth; W. Howard Norris, son of David and Gertrude Norris Burns, daughter of David. All of the surviving children of David have homes on the original homestead, which was purchased from Sara Collins.

Effie (1834-1904), daughter of Adam and Effie, married Robert Elliott (1831-1902) and had seven children. The children were: Adam, James, Daniel Elmer, Elizabeth, William David, Effie and Robert Milton. See the Elliott history for more details.

John (1801-1896)

John, half-brother of Robert, and Mary E. Moore (1805- 1886) were natives of County Derry, Ireland. In 1824 they emigrated to Canada and in 1828 came to Allegheny County. They were married in Newfoundland in route to their new home. The dates indicate that John was one of the brothers who went back to Ireland with his mother. The children of John and Mary were: William and Henry, farmers in Jefferson County; Jane and Esther married and settled in the Pittsburgh area; Robert married Jane Mays and lived in Pittsburgh; Nancy died at the age of twenty- three; Joseph, Ruth, Adam and Sara settled in West Deer.

Joseph, son of John, and his wife, Margaret, lived on the homestead, which was located on Tarentum-Culmerville Road east of the Bull Creek Church. Joseph and Margaret's children were: Samuel, who married Mae Henry. Samuel can be remembered as a fine carpenter; William and his wife had a son, Joseph. William taught school in Bakerstown and walked from the homestead to the school; Charley married Ollie McCullough; Bert went to California; Ella taught at the Culmerville school and afterwards married Mr. Darby and went to New York to live; Nettie married Ora Love and at one time lived in the "Mrs. Norris House" with their three children. Pauline, Jean, and Donald; Mary married Robert Bovard and had two children, Helen and Herron.

Of this family Joseph, son of William, and his" wife Margaret Austin reside in Deer Creek. They have four children. Their son, David Glenn, also resides in Deer Creek.

Ruth, daughter of John, lived on the homestead with her brother, Joseph.

Sara (Lizzie), daughter of John, married John Stark and lived on a farm west of Bull Creek Church. They died during the flu epidemic of 1918 and were buried the same day.

Adam (1844-1911), son of John, married Mary Montgomery (1852-1930) and lived on a farm in the valley east of Bull Creek Church cemetery. It was just down the hill from the homestead. The children of Adam and Mary were: Thomas and Howard who married and lived in the Pittsburgh area; John, who stayed on the farm until his death; Lilly, who married Harry Thompson and raised her family of four boys in West Deer Township; Anna married Zeivin McKibbon and went to Butler County; Edna married Curtis Cunningham and went to Butler County; Edith married Mr. Burns and remained in the township. Herson, Wilmer, is the only descendent of this family living in West Deer at the present time.

Henry (1814-1900)

Henry, (half-brother to Robert) and his wife had six children. They were: Rev. James, Add, Robert, Lydia Norris McGeary, Mary Ann Norris Hazlett and Nancy Jane Norris Woodrow. Henry, the father, was one of the first members of Pleasant Unity Church. His son, James, and his grandson, James, son of Robert, were both ministers at Pleasant Unity. Many of the family settled in the Tarentum area but some descendents of the Woodrow family are still living in the township.

James (1805-1877)

James, (half brother of Robert) married Susannah Ferguson (1795-1858), daughter of David and Susannah Pollard Ferguson and lived in Clinton Township. Their children were: Maria, Susannah, Lucinda Jane, Elizabeth, Esther and Robert.

After the death of James' wife, Susannah, he married a widow, Violet Sweeney Carnahan, Violet and her first husband, John Carnahan, lived in a log house on a farm in Culmerville. They had three daughters: Ellen (1847-1861); Rachel (1850-1850) and Mary Jane (1851-1929). Violet remained on the farm after her first husband's death. It was during this time that a June frost killed all of the farm crops.

After Violet's marriage to James Norris, she and her two daughters went to Clinton Township to make their home. Later James' son Robert married Violet's daughter, Mary Jane. Robert and Mary Jane went back to Culmerville to live in the log house in which Mary Jane was born. All of their children were born in this same log house. Their children were: Rachel, who married Harry Ekas; James, who remained on the farm and never married; Nancy, who married Robert Marshall; Anna, who married Charles Dawson; John, who married Annie Donaldson; Ida, who married Anthony Myers; Robert, who married Grace Catherwood; Elsie, who married Clyde Schroder and Franklyn who died at the age of four.

When the railroad came through the farm, the barn had to be moved and a new house was built. Many descendents of this family still reside in West Deer. Some of these descendents are as follows: Sara Jane Ekas Mewcomer and Harry Ekas, grandchildren of Rachel; Grace Ekas Fredley, daughter of Rachel, her son Clair and his son, Jay; Grace's son Loyal and his children, Wayne and Alice; Mary Etta Dawson Monnier, daughter of Anna; Kenneth Norris, son of Robert, his daughter Elaine Shatter, and her daughters, Bethany and Joilyn; Leroy Norris, son of Robert, his son, Robert, and his children, Sarah, Abraham, and Zachery; Leroy's son James; Phyllis Myers Passarella, granddaughter of Ida, and her daughters, Susan and Karen; Glenna Schroder Stark, daughter of Elsie, and her son, Raymond, and his daughter Kimberly; Dorothy Schroder Voeckel, daughter of Elsie, and her son Kirk.

To the second marriage of James (half-brother of Robert) and Violet Sweeney Carnahan, two children were born. The children were: Anna Lee and James Newton. One of James Newton's children, Arthur, married Annie Sterling and lived in West Deer. Their son, Matthew, is still a resident of the township. The Norris family will be remembered as a group of hard working, dependable citizens who contributed much to the development of West Deer Township. Aside from farming and other occupations they owned and operated a brickyard, a bus company, and a general store. They also had much to do with the founding of Pleasant Unity Church.

Picture 159 – James Norris, and his plane from



James Norris, formerly of Culmerville, and his plane from which the aerial pictures were made by John Graff

Dr. Daniel G. Rowley

Myron H. Rowley, father of our subject, was born in Vermont in 1805 and was educated in the field of medicine in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from medical college there in 1829 and shortly afterward began practicing medicine in Millerstown. He practiced in that location for almost sixty-three years until his death in 1899. He was twice married, his first wife dying in 1852. Three years later he married again and to this union one son was born. This son, Daniel G., born in 1858, acquired a good education, read medicine with his father, and when finished with his medical education, practiced medicine in the Culmerville area for his lifetime.

In 1893, at the age of thirty-five, he married Clara Hazlett of West Deer. To this union, one son, Myron E. was born in 1899. Dr. Rowley continued practicing until his death in 1916. He went out with a bad cold in a freezing rain to attend a patient. His condition worsened and he died within a short time at age fifty-eight. At the time of his death, his son was in college at Washington and Jefferson.

Dr. Rowley was a well-known and beloved personality in his profession and was highly regarded by West Deer's earlier citizens and fellow members of the Bull Creek Church. His home and office were in the house now occupied by the Larry Murray family.

Reference to Dr. Rowley is made in two other sections of this book, Culmerville and Medical Services. Hughes/Weisz also refer to Dr. Rowley and the elder Rowley who are the father and son in this writing.

Dr. Rowley's grandson is the Hon. James E. Rowley, judge of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania at Beaver, PA, who kindly supplied most of this information.

Judge Rowley also sent a sheet of his grandfather's stationery showing his letterhead, which is quite interesting. It is shown below.

Picture 160 – Dr. Daniel G. Rowley letterhead



The Schwab Family

Submitted by: Dorothy Mathewson

The Nicholas Schwab family emigrated to the United States from Oberweil, near Berne, Switzerland in 1845 and settled in West Deer Township.

The original Schwab farm consisted of 100 acres and was located on both sides of the Bairdford Road and extended to the Saxonburg Road. Today this location contains several commercial establishments, a church and many houses. It would extend from the Stanich Cafe to the Shema residence, about half way to Bairdford, on both sides of the road.

The Schwab family included three sons; John, Nicholas Jr., and Jacob, and three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, and Ann.

Nicholas Jr. became one of the "49'ers" who went west to California to seek gold. He later sent for his brother John to join him. When the brothers returned they used the money made in California to purchase two farms in West Deer Township. These farms were located on Monnier Road. In later years the Ford Collieries Coal Company purchased the John Schwab farm, which was known for a long period of time as the Company Farm. Nicholas, Jr. was killed by an enraged bull when he was forty-five years old.

Jacob, the third son of Nicholas Sr. married Keziah Gibson. They had four children, one of which was Leonard Schwab who worked at the Bairdford mine in the machine shop. Leonard married Ada Wright from Etna. She had previously taught school at the Martin School on the present Route 910. They had four children, a daughter, Gladys, and three sons, William R., L. Delmont, and Bert D.

These three sons have all left West Deer Township. William was in management for Pittsburgh Plate Glass in Ford City. L. Delmont worked for the Ohio State Machinery Co., in Columbus, Ohio. Bert D. was a technical representative for Douglas Aircraft Corporation and lives in California. Their children and their families all reside in areas other than West Deer.

Gladys, the only daughter of Leonard and Ada, married Roy Sterling from the Bakerstown-Culmerville Road area. They built their home on a portion of the Matthew Stirling farm. Their daughter, Dorothy, who married David G. Mathewson, presently resides on a part of that land. Dorothy and David have two daughters, Sharon and Ruth. The daughters also have homes on a part of the original Sterling farm. The Schwab family and their heirs have lived in West Deer Township for 141 years.

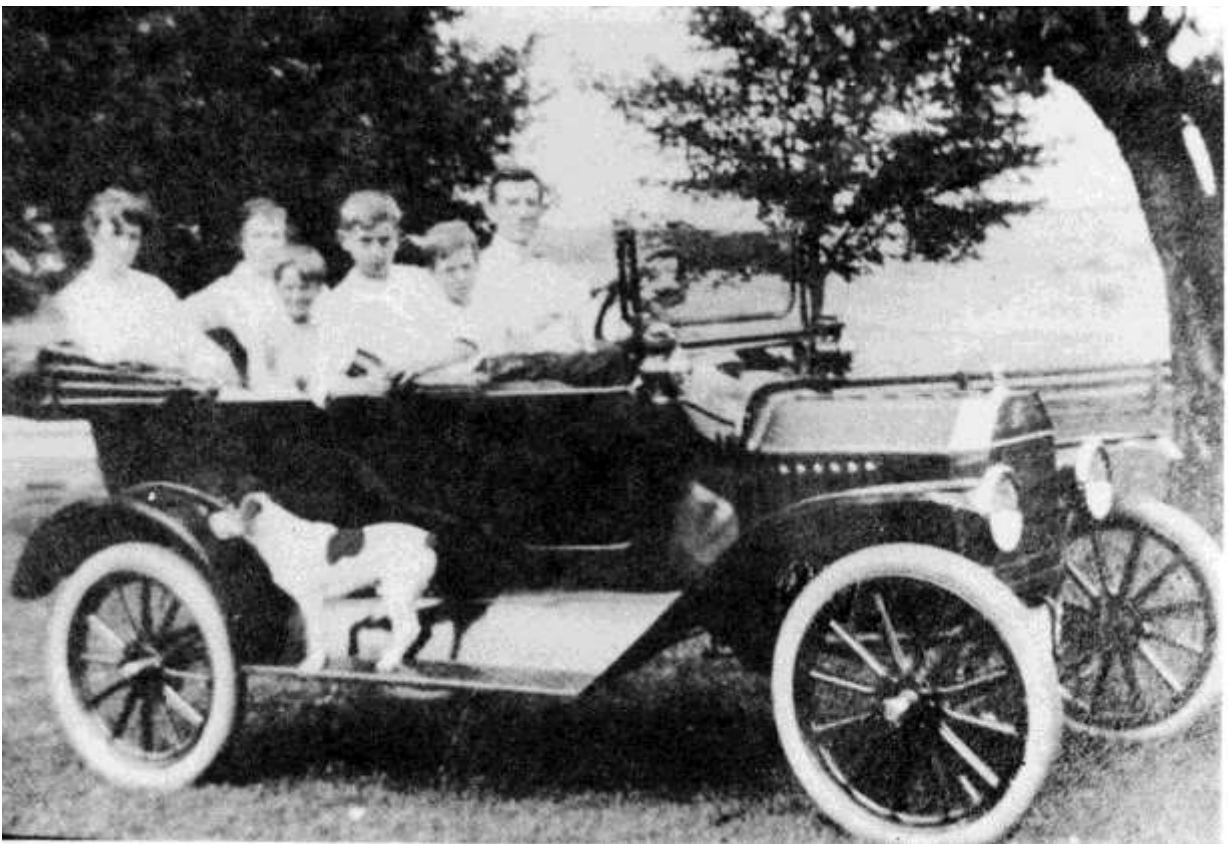
The Schwab family and the Sterling family were joined by marriage as were many of the families described in this account. Both families have been in West Deer Township for more than 140 years.

Picture 161 – Len Schwab, fine horse and buggy



Len Schwab, the man on the left in the light suit, had a fine horse and buggy. This photo, taken about 1912 shows his method of transportation. The gentleman in the dark suit is not identified. Photo from Dave Mathewson.

Picture 162 – Len Schwab, new method of transportation, probably about 1915



A few years later Len Schwab went modern. He is shown with his family in his new method of transportation, probably a 1915 model. Photo from Dave Mathewson.

The Scott Family

John Scott (1792-1875) and Sarah (Dain) Scott (1795- 1866) emigrated from Ireland to West Deer, then Deer Township, along with their three children in 1822. Seven more children were born after their settling in this area a half-mile north of the Deer Creek crossroads. David, the only son to survive his father, was born in West Deer in 1839. He was educated locally, then in a Pittsburgh commercial college. After working for some years in Pittsburgh, he returned to the farm, making it his principal business.

David's brother William was an officer in Company B, 61st Infantry Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. He is listed in one record as a Lieutenant and in another as a Captain. He survived their first battle at Fair Oaks, Virginia, but afterwards while searching for missing comrades, was killed by a sharpshooter's bullet. The William Scott Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, a local post, was named in his honor.

David (1839-1937) married Elizabeth Caldwell (1840- 1904) before the Civil War and to them nine children were born. Three of these children have descendants at present living in West Deer Township.

Cornelia (1868-1937) married Harper Donaldson and had one daughter, Effie, who is married to James Catherwood and lives in West Deer. Her family is described in the Catherwood family history.

Robert G. (1873-1957), who remained on the farm, married Clara Donaldson (1875-1931). This couple had four children, two of whom died in infancy and two of whom remained on parts of the original Scott farm. Wilbur (1908-1970) married Esther Bunting, a West Deer teacher, and lived on the farm on the east side of the public road, which divided the original farm. They had no children. Glenn married Isabelle Moody of West Deer and built their home on another part of the Scott farm. They had one daughter, Kathleen, who lives with them in the home, which they built. Kathy is the fifth generation Scott to live on this land, which has been lived on by Scotts for 164 years.

Dain Carlisle Scott (1879-1934) married Anny Mae Seibert (1881-1973). They had four children, one of whom remained in West Deer. They lived on the west side of the road in the original Scott homestead. Their son, Dale David, married Eleanor Vanderlin, also of West Deer, and continued to live in this township. They had one son, Dain Vanderlin, who married Shirley Beasley. They had two children, Lori Lynn and David Craig. Dain served in the Vietnam conflict and has been West Deer's only Missing in Action casualty. His children now live in Nevada with their mother and attend college there.

The original Scott homestead is now the residence of the Robert Casian family. The second Scott home on the east side of the road is now the Richard Thompson home. Just south of it on part of the original farm is the present Glenn Scott home.

The Snitzer Family

Submitted by: Florence Snitzer

Martin Schnitzer (Snitzer) and his wife came to Pittsburgh from Hessen, Germany in 1820 with their nine-year-old son, Henry. Martin was a farmer and shoemaker and had served twelve years in Napoleon's army. Records show that a farm in West Deer Township was deeded to him in 1842. This farm was located at the intersections of Campbell Road, Starr Road, Saxonburg Road, and the Russellton-Dorseyville Road. This intersection became known as Snitzer's Corner. A small grocery store and gasoline station was built there in 1920. Farm produce was sold to the city people, who were out for a ride in the country in their cars of which they were so proud.

Henry married Catherine Gumbert and this couple had eight children: Annie (Mrs. Herman Dillner); Lewis, whose son, Herbert and wife Pearl remain on a farm near East Union Church; Philomena (Mrs. John Pfirmann); Katherine (Mrs. Philip Jennewine); and John Philip, whose descendants still live in the area of Snitzer's Corner. Two sons died unmarried. The farm is now a real estate development with Christine Drive and Deerton Road in it.

The Stirling Family

Submitted by: David and Dorothy (Stirling) Mathewson

The Stirling family has resided in West Deer Township since 1840. George Stirling and his wife, Isabell (Kirkland) emigrated from Glasgow, Scotland in 1840, bringing with them their three children. Three additional children were born in West Deer Township; Christina, Matthew, and James. The farm on which the Stirlings lived was located on the Bakerstown-Culmerville Road. In 1861, Matthew, son of George and Isabel, joined the Union Army at age 15, after the start of the Civil War. His service included duty in Georgia with one of the regiments of General Sherman in the famous "March to the Sea".

Upon his return, he married Euphemia McCormick from Kaufman Road in West Deer Township. He began farming and blacksmithing on the Stirling farm. This couple had four children; James, Mary, Matthew, and Jesse. After his wife's death, he married again, this time to Mareta Porter. This marriage resulted in seven additional children; George, Clyde, William, Roy, Nellie, Annie, and Margaret. Matthew died in 1925 and was buried in the Deer Creek Cemetery along the Baird Road, in the family plot.

Several years after Matthew's death, the farm was divided among the remaining children. Some took a portion of land while others received a monetary value as their settlement. George remained on the larger portion and continued farming. Roy received about fifteen acres, on which he built a house in 1934.

Roy's daughter Dorothy Mathewson built a house on part of that property in 1949. She and her husband David still reside on part of the original farm, as do their two married daughters, Sharon Campbell and Ruth Kaufman.

Sharon, a graduate of Westminster College, is a teacher in the Pine-Richland School District. She married John Campbell of Turtle Creek. John, a graduate of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, is an ordained minister and is the Pastor of the Cross Roads Presbyterian Church of Gibsonia.

Ruth is a graduate of Edinboro State College and works for Dr. R. J. Smolen in McCandless Township. She married Charles Kaufman of Edinboro. He is a carpenter and works in the Pittsburgh area. Their daughters Amanda Ruth and Melanie Ann, represent the sixth generation since the arrival of George Stirling from Scotland in 1840. Ruth also resides on land, which was part of the original Stirling homestead and has been in the family for 146 years.

Note: David, father of Sharon and Ruth, printed most of the pictures for this book.

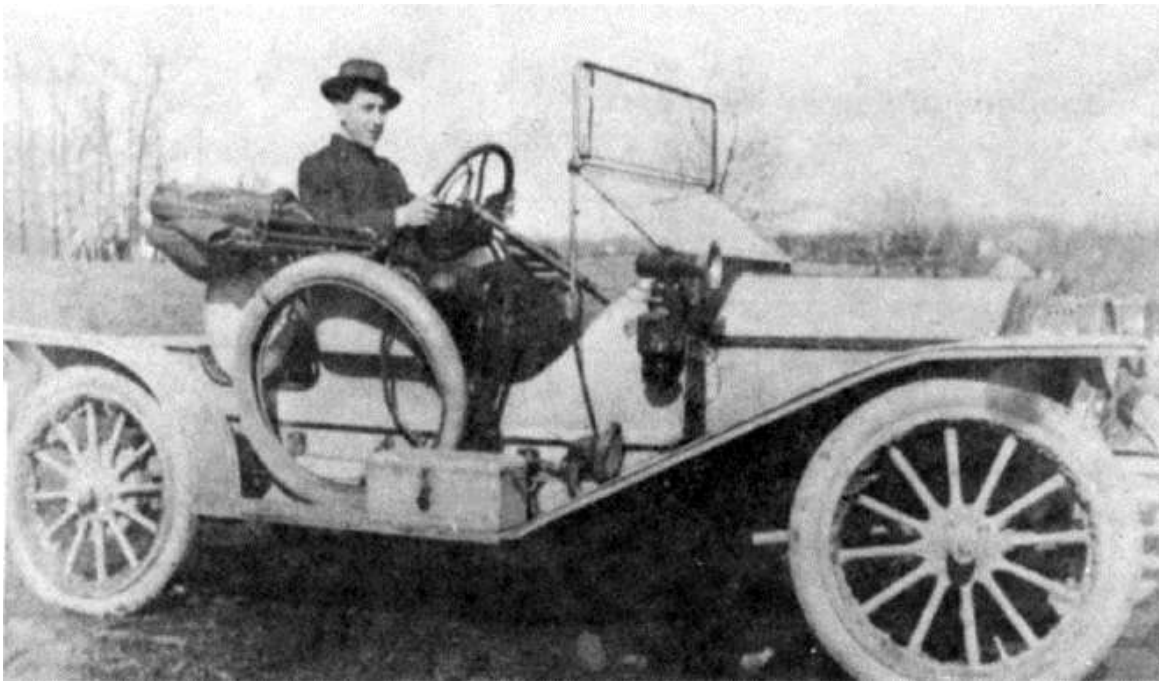
Other grandchildren of Matthew Stirling residing in this area are George Drum and Matthew (Sterling) Norris. George Drum, the son of Nellie, had two children, Roy and Diane Drum, who have moved from West Deer. Matthew, the son of Annie (Norris), had three children, Kathleen, Richard, and Susan, none of which now reside in the township. A third grandson, Melvin Norris resides in Franklin, PA.

Picture 163 – Matthew Stirling 1865



The photograph was, taken in 1865, shows Matthew Stirling as he returned from the Civil War. He was the second generation of Stirlings to live in West Deer.

Picture 164 – Roy Stirling 1911



Matthew Stirling son, Roy Stirling is pictured below in his new 1911 Buick.

Picture 165 – Four generation of Stirling



Third generation Dorothy Stirling Mathewson is pictured with her daughters. Ruth Mathewson Kaufman on the left and Sharon Mathewson Campbell on the right. Ruth is holding her daughter Amanda Kaufman who is the sixth generation to live in West Deer and on the same land settled by her great, great, great grandfather, George Stirling.

Our Family (fill in sheet)

Our Ancestors came to America from (country) _____
 in the year _____ and settled in _____
 the first members of our family to come to West Deer were _____
 who settled in (area) _____ and worked (farm, mine etc.)?

Members of our family who were born in West Deer Township

Name	Date	Name	Date

Members of our family who have died in West Deer Township

Name	Date	Cemetery

Schools and Graduations of Family Members

Name	Date	School

Clubs and Organizations to which we have belonged

Name	Organization	Offices	Date

Marriages in our family in West Deer Township

Family Member	Spouse	Date

Our family's Church affiliation in West Deer _____

Special offices or Duties: _____

Different homes we have lived in, in West Deer _____

Military Service _____

Special Events in our Family Life _____

Other events or comments _____

Family Group Sheet (fill in sheet)

For the _____ family

Father's Name _____	
Born:	Date: _____ in: _____
Immigrated to US	Date: _____ from: _____
Married	Date: _____ in: _____
Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____	
Mothers Maiden Name _____	
Born:	Date: _____ in: _____
Immigrated to US	Date: _____ from: _____
Died:	Date: _____ in: _____
Child 1	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 2	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 3	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 4	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 5	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 6	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 7	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____
Child 8	Name: _____
	Born: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Married: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Died: _____ Date: _____ in: _____
	Spouse: _____

Information provide by _____ Date (s) _____

* Use Letter (Jan, Feb etc) rather than numbered month to avoid mistaken Month/Day

Miscellaneous

Webster describes this word as dealing with diverse topics or subjects. This section contains some of the various stories given this author which could not or should not be included with other accounts of our history. The following is included:

The "Ford Lamp"
The First Radio
The Market Train
Threshing Day
Can I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight Mister?
The Ford Lamp
"Our Little Corner"
The Company Store
The Bairdford Tornado
The Plane Crash
The 1923 School Teachers
Deer Lakes Arts Festivals
The Memorial Bell
The Blacksmith Shop
Bell Haven
The Three Barrels
The Mule's Tale
The Central Garage
The First Bus
Veterans of the American Revolution
Police Duties
One possibility of how Curtisville got its name
63rd Infantry
The Girl Scout Gold Award
Authors and Pictures

The First Radio

The first known radio in West Deer is believed to be one built by Melvin Monnier in 1920. He built a crystal set, winding the coil on his mother's rolling pin after finding a rolled oats box not firm enough. The coil was wrapped with 24-gauge wire. He used the handle of his father's shaving brush to hold the cat whisker. A double wire anchored to the top of a chestnut tree served as an aerial. Earphones were used on this radio. In the summer of 1920 KDKA played records at indefinite times, but began on a regular schedule on November 20, 1920. The place where this radio was first used is now the site of Terry Trevellini's home near the Deer Lakes Jr./Sr. High School.

The Market Train

Beginning in August 1874, a special market train ran daily from Freeport to Allegheny City (North side) and hauled farm products such as fruits, vegetables, and other produce. Two days a week calves, sheep, and lambs were hauled in a stock car. This service went through Hites Station (Creighton) and was only three miles from the closest farms in West Deer. How much it was used by local farmers is not known, but it can be assumed that a number of them in the eastern part of the township did use this service. A calf could be shipped to market on Tuesdays and Fridays for the price of a single fare, the same as a person on a passenger train. The train arrived in Allegheny City in the morning and returned in the afternoon with all the baskets, boxes, and crates. In all probability most goods were sent on consignment to dealers along the way or at the North side station.

Threshing Day

One of the most important days on the farm in the late summer or fall was threshing day. On this day the farmers helped each other so that a crew of at least a dozen men was available. Farm wives fed the crews an abundant meal at noon and sometimes the evening meal also if they had to work late to finish. They would often attempt to outdo each other in "setting the table". If the threshing was done outside there would be at least four teams and wagons to haul the grain sheaves from the field. This was the safest way years ago when steam engines were used and sparks were flying. Some smaller threshers used horses, which were driven, in a circle hitched to a machine, which transmitted their power to the thresher. Today on the farms remaining in West Deer the combine has replaced the thresher and one or two men do the work of the threshing crew.

Can I Sleep in Your Barn Tonight Mister?

These were the words of a hobo song, which was popular in the depression days of the 1930's. It was neither a hobo song nor a jest in 1909 when the Curtisville towns were being built and the mine shafts and drifts being dug. A number of workers boarded at the Hazlett Farm while buildings were being put up. This farm sits just behind the West Deer Municipal Building (old Curtisville School). The men slept in the barn under horse blankets and ate at a large table in the yard near the house. These men wanted a fare of bread, meat, and potatoes and that they had with Mrs. Hazlett's culinary touch. She baked fifteen loaves of bread daily in a beehive-type oven common to farms of that day. Mrs. Hazlett was the mother of Bill and Karns Hazlett.

"The Ford Lamp"



"The Ford Lamp" was a monthly publication for the Ford Colliers Company. Although one would assume that this would be of company business it was but in addition it contain a lot of other information. Pictures of family, new births, pictures of kids, stories of hunting trips, news of the local churches. Although many of these are lost to time some have been preserved. Many of the miner's pictures in this book came from those pages, which this book owes hardy thanks for capturing the lives of the miners and their families in its pages.

Picture 166 – Collage of samples from "The Ford Lamp"

Wins Bicycle

All follow with interest the young men who enter the annual Allegheny County "Soap Box Derby" held at North Park.

This lad, James Hamer, entered with Long-Stewart's in Tarantum as his buckner in the race. Having made the fastest time for this dealer, he is now the proud owner of a "snoozy" bicycle.

He went to see the finals at Akron and hopes that, by another year, he may be one of those participating there.

Good luck to you, Jimmy!



Wedding Bells Toll for Summer Brides

Strains of Lohengrin and showers of rice sparked the summer weddings of two of the community's loveliest brides, Dorothy Vuchinich and Lillian Walkiewicz.

Dorothy Vuchinich became the bride of Peter Pysh in a memorable ceremony at St. Michael's Church in Curtisville. The Reverend Gabriel Daviduk performed the services.

The new bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vuchinich and Pete, a loader at Berry Mine, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pysh.

Another beautiful bride was Lillian Walkiewicz of Curtisville who recently married Lawrence Selepena at Russellton Transfiguration Church. The couple is now at home with the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Walkiewicz.



MR. AND MRS. LAWRENCE SELEPENA



MRS. PETER PYSH

FRANK TROUP, fire boss at No. 3 Mine, bagged this eight-point buck fifteen minutes after the season opened in Forest County. He was accompanied by his son, Bernell (left) and a brother from Ohio.

DONALD KIPP, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clair Kipp, shot this eight-point buck in his second year of deer hunting.

Don is a senior in West Deer High School, serving as president of both the Hi-Y and Hall Patrol.

He and his brother, Billy, enter other outdoor sports in addition to hunting; namely, skating, swimming and camping.

We would like to mention those in Curtisville No. 1 who also got their deer this season—Gerald Hoak, Joe Hoak, Jake Sheets, Joe Boda, Mr. Sharina and Mr. Szotyik.





WHO WOULDN'T LOOK HAPPY to have such sweet little granddaughters about them? The proud grandma is Mrs. Jessie Irvine, wife of William Irvine, who is a Francis employee.

Little Donna Jean, right, doesn't look too well pleased at the moment, but we'll vouch that she is a happy and congenial little lady.

Baby Ruth Elaine doesn't seem to mind posing for her photograph—she is curious about this big world.

These attractive children are daughters of Eugene and Emily Ruth Garvin.



THE HANDSOME LAD is Anthony Steve Wilkosz, four-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Wilkosz of Bairdford. "Mom" is the former Doris Moore. "Dad" has six years' service in the Berry Mine and also served three years in the Navy.



BILL HARBAUGH looks as if he is all ready for the coming hunting season. Lots of luck Bill!

In the Land of Fog



Cpl. Leonard Hudson

For 21 months, Cpl. Leonard W. Hudson, Pipe Dept. (S.P.), has lived what isn't exactly the life of Riley in the barren, boggy wastes of the Aleutians. When it doesn't rain there's fog; and when there isn't fog there's rain and nothing bigger than a bunch of moss to stand under. Len hasn't had a furlough since he was inducted. No wonder he is looking forward to a trip back to the States and civilization to say a cherry "Hello" to the boys in the shop.



THE REVEREND PETER FELEUNCHAK, second from left, who was in charge of special service at St. Michael's.



Old-Timers 1918

Who are these? The Pirates? No, but remember back in 1918 when the Ford Collieries had their own ball team?

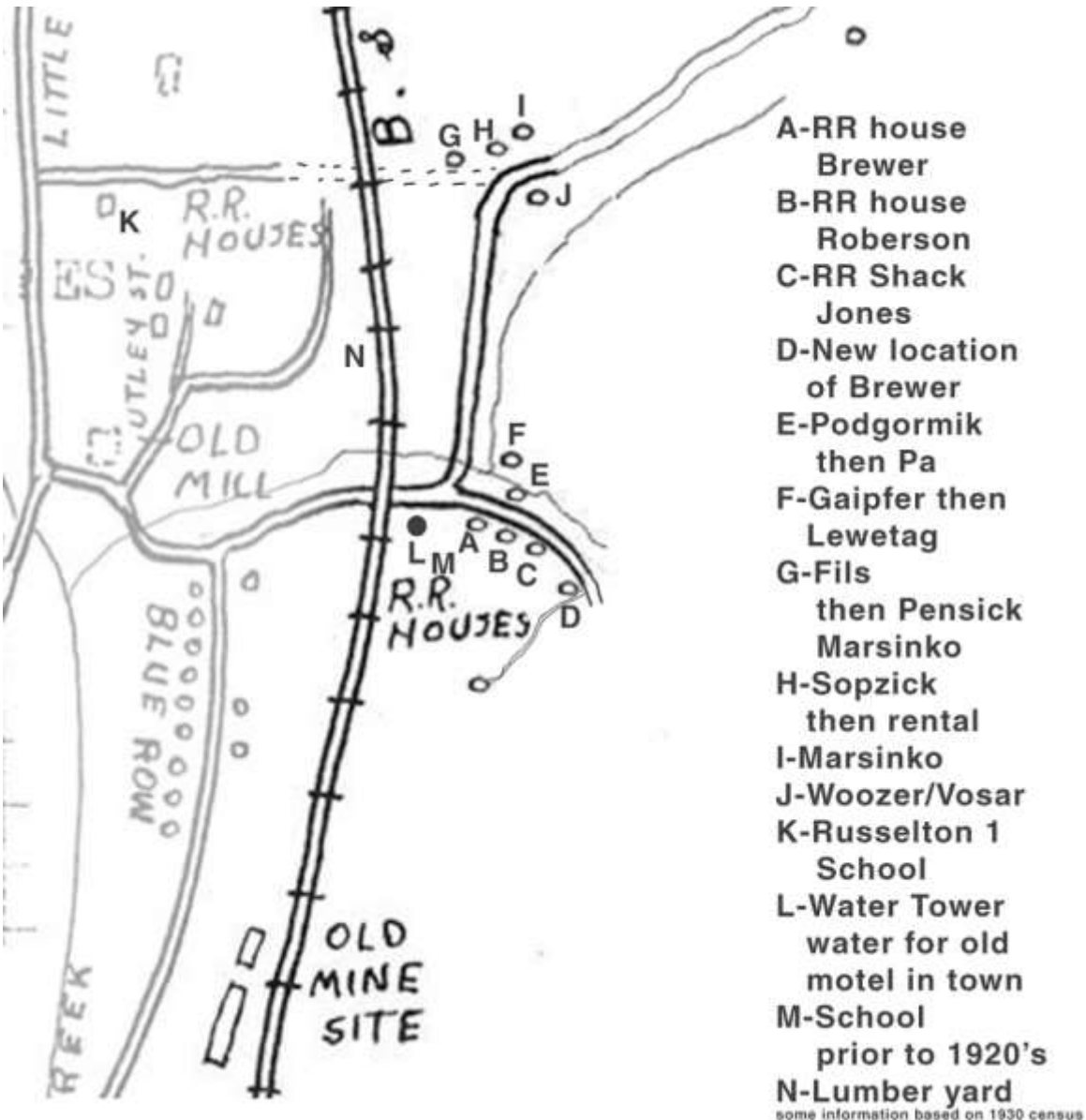
We're sure you'll recognize a few of these athletes even though they have changed a little through the years. Top row: unidentified, R. McVicker, John Ramsey, Barney Murray, unidentified. Middle row: Hugh Morgan, Denny Connor (Motor Boss, Berry), Bill Woodapple, Ellis Byers (Asst. Gen. Supt.) Montgomery, Ernie Lewetog (Berry Mine) and John Foster. Front row: Clarence Henry, Johnny Falconer.

Our corner of West Deer

By Sophie Podgornik Pensick and Ken Lewetag

This is a little history of a small section of West deer located at the corner of what was Logan road (now Creighton Russellton Road) and Mahaffey Road. A little history of Sophie's family; Prior to the Coal miner strike of 1927 Mr. Podgornik worked in Russellton #1, Superior and Russellton #2 mines. The family lived in Russellton #1 up the hill from the "yellow School" on what is now Michael Road. When the strike came, Mr. Podgornik went to Wyoming leaving his family in the company house. Of course, the mine kicked out the family since there was no miner living there during the strike. The belongings were to be thrown out when Mrs. Mary Podgornik pleaded for someone with a truck to take her to the union camp. They were placed, since there was no miner in the family, in the end of the barracks near the creek. During the strike, they stayed there picking coal from the bonny dumps of #1. During the time, they were there; one daughter was sick and below the bed were icicles due to the cold and drafty building.

After the strike, still no miner in the family they could not return to the company houses. So Mrs. Mary Podgornik purchased the farm about 1928.



Now for the short history of "our little corner"

In town was Miller's Drug Store (now Palmers). At some time around Mahaffey Road was cut at the railroad and joined with then Logan road, the original part of the road extending from Deer Creek to the railroad on the West Side. The current Railroad Bridge made a kind of "T" one side turning left to the newly redirected Mahaffey Road, and the right turn took you up a roadway that was 20 to 30 feet higher then the current roadway. (The roadway was lowered in the late 1950's and the removed

material was used to fill in the swamp at the junction of the two creeks just to the north. An additional road paralleled the railroad to the south and then turned east to the Brewers Garage that was owned by the railroad.

Going East on Logan was the Podgornik farm. A Garage was alongside the road with a small one room "apartment" under it. A bachelor lived there while the Podgornik's lived there (the garage was leveled during the road lowering in late 1950's). On the Farm were Mary the Mother Children; Annie, Mary, Andrew, Stella, Lewis and Sophie. On the Podgornik farm was raised chicken and cattle. The farm had home, chicken shed and a small barn.

The farm was later divided among the children; Lewis and Stella kept part of the farm and built homes and they still lived there in 1987 (these homes were not taken by the park service). Sophie stayed in the homestead with her daughter Barb until the Park service took their home.

Immediately to the South on Rail Road Property on top of the hill were two homes and one "shack" all owned by the railroad. Wade Brewer Sr. lived in the first of these with his wife Edna, and children Edward, Virginia and Wade Jr. (The Brewer's later built to the east a home that later burnt, that burnt home's basement was later used as a home and a mobile home was also used by Wade Jr. his wife Jennie and his children).

Immediately to the North East of the junction was the Lewetag home from the 1950's to 1964 was a working farm. It had a Brick home, barn sheds and an outside fruit cellar. There were stories that the previous owners had hidden money somewhere in the house and that all the remodeling by the Lewetag was trying to find that money (no money was found or looked for). This home was taken by the park service in 1964. The house was originally to be used as the "park manager" home but was later leveled.

I was unable to get in touch with the Woozers and Marsinko's for their history but they were both long time residents of the area. Steve Marsinko was one of the first to own a color TV that I remember. The Woozers home was a real nice home with a lots of blue glassware but that is all I remember of their home. All these homes taken by the park service and leveled.

The Company Store

(By Ken Lewetag)

It is hard to think today how much hold the mines had on the miners. One way was to pay the miners but to control all the spending. This was in the form of rent for the housing, water and "honey dipper". These are essential services and seem somewhat reasonable, but like the song "Sixteen Ton" said "...I owe my soul to the Company Store..." The company store I have been told was where all miners HAD to purchase the goods, they were forbidden to go in to New Kensington. Now for the mines that was a good thing you pay the miner then take his money for the things he needed. In the late 1950s and early 1960s one company store still was in Russellton #2 but by this time the hold that the mines had on the miners was no longer but I still remember buying "jumbo" there.

Picture 168 – Russellton #1 Company Store.



Russellton #1 Company store one of 3 (Russellton #1, #2 and Curtisville #1) note no post office sign on front of porch. The boy driving the mule is Theodore Albert Gall, the year is 1917; he was twelve. (Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

The Bairdford Tornado

Some time in the early 1930's a tornado hit Bairdford! The approaching funnel was observed to descend very close to the old St. Victor's Church on the hill and travel east in the direction of the Bairdford school buildings. A portable room near the main building was picked up from its foundation and promptly dropped, breaking into many pieces. The tornado then continued toward the present picnic pavilion, tearing a large oak tree out of the ground like a weed. A path was torn through the woods toward the Alien log house but lifted before it did any further damage.

The Plane Crash

On a sunny afternoon in May 1956, a military T-33 jet trainer experienced a flameout while on a training mission over northeastern Allegheny County. The copilot was ordered to bail out and he did so, landing in an apple tree in the Martin orchard west of Millerstown. He suffered some facial cuts. The pilot, apparently trying to bring the plane down, waited too long to eject. Bailing out only a hundred feet or so above the ground, his chute had barely opened when he hit only a few feet from the intersection of the Bull Creek and Culmerville-Tarentum Roads. He was killed instantly. The plane continued on, passing over the Curtisville Elementary School only a few feet up and crashed just beyond it in Little Italy. The jet engine plowed a hole in the ground almost four feet deep.

Picture 169 – Plane crash in "Little Italy" (Curtisville)



The 1956 plane crash in "Little Italy". The pilot ejected too late near the Clarence Norris residence and was killed.
Photo from Valley New Dispatch

The 1923 School Teachers

Submitted by: Melva (Christy) Harper, Natrona Heights faculty member at the time Superior

During the 1923-24 school term there was a supervising principal and thirty-six teachers in West Deer Township. Mr. F.E. Puff was the supervising principal at a salary of \$2,200 per year. The teachers' pay ranged from \$900.00 to \$1400.00 per year, depending on their education and experience. This education ranged from six weeks of summer school to four years at a state normal school. Most teachers had one or two years at a normal school. Each teacher was responsible for the janitorial duties in the schoolroom. Many teachers were single women who would be fired if they got married.

Deer Lakes Arts Festivals

By: Doris McDonald In 1967 the Creative Arts Group was formed.

It was the brainchild of Miss Helen Miller and Mrs. Doris McDonald, teachers in West Deer Elementary Schools. Its purpose was to promote cultural development in the area. This group of about thirty persons met in East Union Church monthly. The members enjoyed various classes in painting and crafts, tours to museums, and talks by such authorities as Janet De Coux, Joseph Fitzpatrick, John Johns, and Nal Youngblood. They also were given an opportunity to display their artwork at The Country Kettle Restaurant in Russellton.

Their first outdoor Arts Festival was held in August 1967 in the Minnow Grove of Deer Lakes Park on the day the park opened to the public. An unexpected large crowd attended the display of local art displayed on snow fence and enjoyed the music of local church choirs and other musical groups. The attendance grew yearly and in 1974 the crowds had swelled to 12,000. By 1978 the Festival was discontinued because it was too much to handle.

The Memorial Bell

By: Gladys Hess

In the Community Park at Bairdford stands West Deer's memorial to her veterans of all wars. This memorial has a history that goes back over forty years.

It had its beginning with the scrap drives of World War II. The people of West Deer, which included many housewives and children, collected scrap metal for the war effort. They collected huge mounds of scrap from all over the township. This scrap went to the furnaces and foundries, which were producing the goods needed in the war effort.

The proceeds from these scrap drives were turned over to a three-man committee, who in turn set up a fund to purchase a bell as a memorial to the veterans of West Deer.

After the war ended, a bell was purchased from a firm in Germany noted for its high quality work. The bell was to have a tone of unusually high quality. The cost was about \$2,500.00.

The bell was mounted in front of the Municipal Building on East Union Road on what was assumed to be the permanent site. It was dedicated there in a ceremony in 1969. Not long afterwards a number of veterans from several organizations requested township officials to erect a larger memorial in the new park being built near Bairdford.

Several designs were considered and finally one was chosen that would be lighted at night, have the memorial bell mounted on top, and bear bronze plaques honoring the veterans of various wars.

Funds were collected and the project begun. The pyramidal type structure was built in a prominent location in the new West Deer Community Park. This park is the site of many family gatherings, organization affairs, ball games, and the popular Community Days. Thousands of people have observed our monument and bell.

The Blacksmith Shop

There are at least a dozen shops in West Deer where either general or specialized auto repairs can be obtained. The forerunner of these repair shops was the blacksmith shop. The 1876 map shows four such shops operating in West Deer. Another one opened later in Gray's Mill (Russellton) and operated there until after World War II.

The early blacksmith made nails, spikes, hinges, door latches, shovels, spades, and all sorts of items from iron. The early farmers worked with oxen, which were not shod. As more horses came into use, horseshoes became more popular.

The later blacksmith made horseshoes and nailed them on the horses' hooves. He had the skill and the equipment to shoe even the most difficult horses. He also made repairs on farm machinery and was the local welder and ironworker. Few people today have the skill to forge weld a chain link or a wagon tires.

Like the livery stable, the blacksmith shop was a favorite hangout for men and boys. Farmers would bring work to be done and exchange news while waiting. Young boys would watch with wide-open eyes while the smithy turned his forge or pounded the red-hot iron.

The blacksmith shop which was in operation in West Deer longer than the others was in operation well into the twentieth century. It is not known exactly when John Griffith set up a blacksmith shop near Gray's Mill, but he did sell it to Henry Geisy in 1892. Henry operated it for sixty-five years, retiring a few months before his death at age ninety-four. Just before his death he was proclaimed to be the oldest blacksmith in the state. His daughter, Beulah, with whom he made his home after the death of his wife in 1934, was postmaster in Russellton for many years.

Bell Haven

The "Guidebook to Historic Western Pennsylvania" lists only one landmark in West Deer Township. It states, "Bell Haven is the brain child of Oliver Elliot who owns a collection of bells sprawling over most of the acre of lawn which adjoins his house, as well as much of the space within."

Oliver Elliot began this extensive collection when he was on a dairy farm and delivered milk from house to house, ringing a bell for the housewife to come out and get the fresh milk. This collection has been visited by thousands of people over the years. The bells are rung on the Fourth of July and on New Year's Eve. Oliver died in February 1983 and the one-acre of woods and possibly 35,000 bells is now the home of Iva Mae Long, his daughter.

The Three Barrels

"When you're writing that book, don't forget to mention those three barrels in front of Freedman's Store." This suggestion was given by a resident of Russellton who remembered these barrels. This store, now gone for many years, faced the Little Deer Creek Road near the bridge in Russellton.

In the 1930's and into the forties Freedman often had three large barrels sitting in front of his store from which several products were sold in bulk. One barrel contained soda crackers from which the term "cracker barrel" probably came. Another one

contained pickles which were then sold in bulk by the pound. The term, "pickle barrel" was better known in the past than it is today. The third barrel contained salted fish and had a distinctive odor as did the pickle barrel. Most housewives today would be horrified by the sight, odor, and possible lack of sanitation of the foodstuffs in these barrels. Some of their parents and grandparents thought that these barrels didn't smell too badly and their contents made "right good eatin".

The Mule's Tale

In every success story there is usually an unsung hero. It is generally someone behind the scenes and away from the limelight who has given his all for the cause and who gets no credit for his efforts. So it is with the mine mule. This animal, which often never saw daylight for months, worked to his limit, was indispensable to the early mines, then gave way to the electric locomotive and was soon forgotten.

Picture 170 – John McPhee Stable man



This picture is of John McPhee who was in charge of the mules in Superior mine. Pictured with him is his daughter Irene taken about 1922. (photo from Faye McPhee)

Few people in West Deer are aware of the part the mine mule played in the early coal mines. These mules lived underground much of the time and were used to pull the loaded coal cars to the bottom of the shaft where a steam powered hoist could bring the cars to the surface and dump them. These animals were often ill tempered and, considering their lot in life had little chance to be anything else. Their ears were often worn flat from rubbing the roof, their back legs skinned from being hit with the car, and their legs stiff from their damp, underground existence. Some mules were brought up on weekends to pasture while others stayed under for months at a time. Some former miners tell of the stables still in the mine under Superior. Most early mines had a mule barn near the shaft or man entry. This mine mule was smarter than the mine ponies. He could not be foundered with cold water or overheating and most could not be overworked. There are many tales of mules simply stopping when overworked or given too heavy a load to pull.

Sometimes these mules were sold to local farmers when they became too stiff to work in the mines. Under the care of a good horseman they would completely recover and worked well on the farm. One thing they would not do was hold back a load. Their memories of the coal car hitting their back legs stayed with them.

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The Central Garage

Submitted by: Melan Junik

Mike Junik came to the United States from Serbia in 1914 and settled in the Russellton area in 1917. With the help of his cousin Sam Pundzo, Mr. Junik constructed a cement block building in 1920 and went into the business of automobile repair. His garage was called The Central Garage, and he became the first fully franchised new car dealer in West Deer. He sold Dodge and DeSota cars and trucks. Since Mr. Junik was a machinist by trade, the garage also contained a small machine shop. Mr. Junik's garage still stands today but now houses a beer distributor.

The First Bus

Story from Bill Catherwood and note a from John Graff

One of our senior citizens tells us that the first "bus" service in West Deer was from Culmerville to the Railroad Station in Cheswick. It was a covered truck with benches on each side of the bed for passengers to sit upon. There was a set of steps on the floor between the benches that was pulled out and shoved back for the passengers getting on and off. In addition to the driver there was a conductor who collected fares and took care of the steps. This service was started about 1912 by people whose last name was McHarg who later sold it to the Norris family, {story from Bill Catherwood}

It is interesting to note that a similar service was started at the same time using very similar vehicles near Hibbing, Minnesota transporting workers to the open pit iron mines. While the West Deer bus service later became part of the P.A.T. system, the other became...Greyhound. (JG)

Veterans of the American Revolution

Buried at Bull Creek Church:

1. Robert Elliot served a tour of duty in the Revolution. Though not a resident of West Deer or Allegheny County, he lived not far away in Butler County and was a charter member of the Bull Creek Presbyterian Church. He was the direct ancestor of Iva Mae and Margaret Long, the latter being a seventh generation descendent. Robert was born in Ireland in 1764 and apparently did military service at a rather young age.

2. David Ferguson, born in Ireland in 1745, was a veteran of both the French and Indian War and the Revolution, serving four years in the latter war. His farm was in both Allegheny and Butler Counties and is listed under both. Twin daughters Effie and Susannah married brothers, Adam and James Norris of Culmerville, and have many descendents in this area. David was given a sword by George Washington, which is now in the possession of Iva Mae Long.

3. Capt. Fulton was the paymaster of the Pennsylvania, 8th Regiment. He was also the father-in-law of the Rev. Abraham Boyd, first minister of Bull Creek Church. He is buried on the east side of the old church.

4. Andrew Jack (1764-1844) also served in the Revolution at a rather young age. He settled in West Deer at some time after the war. His wife is believed to have been a Leslie.

5. James Jack (1758-1823) served in the 1st Battalion, Cumberland County Militia, Col. James Johnston commanding. He was also an early West Deer settler.

6. A. Lane - His grave is at the edge of the hill across from the Shedfair graves. This is all the information given in the Allegheny County listing of the Sons of the American Revolution.

Buried at Deer Creek Church:

7. John Henry (1752-1858) died at age 106. His grave's marked by an American Legion stone marker. He is included in the S.A.R. listing.

8. S. G. McCalister - 6th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteer Militia. His grave is next to the Sam McAlister monument. He is also included in the S.A.R. listing.

This account is from information submitted by Iva Mae Long and from the Allegheny County listing of the Sons of the American Revolution, found in the Pennsylvania Room of the Carnegie Library, Oakland, Pittsburgh.

Curtisville, Origin of the Name

Betsy Broadbent Grovenburg, Monument CO

One possible explanation for the name Curtisville is a connection with James A Curtis, from his Great Granddaughter Betsy comes the following:

"In his obituary it is documented that James A. Curtis was the vice-president & general manager of Ford Collieries Company, Detroit. James' son-in-law and grandson maintain that they were told a town in Pennsylvania was named after him, due to his involvement in the coal business.

Interestingly, two of the three mines at Curtisville have names that are known family names: I understand that the first mine was named the Benjamin mine. Although christened Bernard James, James A. Curtis was known for some years as Benjamin in his native England. We do not know when exactly he began going by his middle name, James; only that it was in his adult years.

His only child, a daughter, was Frances Mae Curtis. Assuming that naming a mine for a woman would bring bad luck, it is possible that the second mine was named Francis, the masculine version of the child's name. So far there is no known family connection to Berry, the name of the third mine."

Picture 171 – James A. Curtis and family



James A. Curtis (left), his daughter Frances Mae Curtis (Mrs. E.R. Broadbent) on the right, James' mother Catherine Leadbetter Curtis in the rocker, and Frances' infant son James Curtis Broadbent.

Police Duties

Listed below are the hours and duties, which our police had to follow twenty-five years ago. Conditions are better today but these older rules and regulations were considered a fair beginning. Times have changed; at least today we don't have to call the policeman's wife during lunch!

Working Hours:

Day Shift

7:30 to 9:00 A.M.

11:30 to 5:00 P.M. (7 hours)

Night Shift

7:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. (7 hours)

This schedule is to be worked daily during the school term - excepting Saturdays and Sundays - Police get one day off each week - work 42 hours and 6 hours held in reserve to answer calls in case of unforeseen incidents.

Day shift man must be at school locations or on school run during hours - 8 A.M. to 9 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M.- 3:30 to 5 P.M. This schedule can be broken only in case of emergency.

Police will be responsible to one man only- this man will be chairman of the Police Committee - Police must not contact any other person. In case problems arise that chairman of Police Committee cannot settle, they will be settled by the entire board at time of meeting.

While on duty, police must stay out of beer gardens unless called or unless police business is to be transacted.

All publicity of police cases is to be handled through the chairman of the Police Committee - Police are not permitted to give out information.

While on duty police must be in or near police car to benefit from police radio service - If police stop for coffee or lunch they must turn radio off and notify wife where they can be reached.

No more than one policeman will be permitted to be in court at one time - If one policeman must appear in court the other policeman must be on duty during the day and policeman in court will work night shift.

Police must keep a daily log and this must be turned in on the first Thursday of each month.

Violation tickets are to be in duplicate and are to be numbered - One to go to the Squire and the other to be returned to the Secretary of the Board of Supervisors.

63rd Infantry

This information appears on a bronze plaque on the Pennsylvania Memorial Monument at Gettysburg. It contains the names of a number of West Deer citizens at the time.

1st Brigade	1st Division	3rd Corps
	Co E Capt.	
	J. McClelland	
	1st Lt.	
	R. H. Miller	
	2nd Lt.	
	A. C. Williams	
	Sergeants	
	W. J. McClaren	
	Wm. H. Magill	
	Corporals	
John Blair	*David Stoup	
David D. Mehaffey	Michawl Schultz	
Hugh Cunningham	John R. Aber	
John Heist	Alfred H. Jones	
	Privates	
James A. Clowes	Thomas Lamb	
Ralph H. Dawson	I. A. Marshall	
Issac Edgar	Geo. W. McCutcheon	
Charles Flagg	David Mcintyre	
John Frayer	William Pears	
Jas. V. Fleming	J. G. Robinson	
William S. Gray	Jos. O. Steiner	
Jas. G. Galbraith	Jacob Smith	
John G. Homyer	Peter Smoulter	
John S. Hunter	Thomas Thrumston	
Robert Hare	T. J. Woodward	
Josiah Kelley	John M. Yahres	
Jas. M. Kincaid		

The 63rd Infantry Regiment arrived at 8 PM on the first day, July 1 and did picket duty that night. They were doing skirmish firing all of the second day, July 2. The regiment lost one killed on that day and had twenty-nine wounded. There were four reported missing.

**Killed or mortally wounded -this man is one of two in the entire regiment to have this notation by his name. It is not known if he were killed during the second day's battle or was seriously wounded and died later.*

The Girl Scout Gold Award

Submitted by: Roberta Spichthy

This award, the highest honor that a Girl Scout can receive, has been earned by only one young woman from West Deer Township. Kathy J. Spichthy, a 1982 graduate of Deer Lakes High School was the recipient of this award which recognizes a commitment to excellence in designing and executing a plan of activities covering community service, career exploration, specialized interest projects, and leadership skills.

Kathy was responsible for the community bulletin board, which kept residents informed of community events. She also participated in Scout Clean-up Day along East Union Road. Other contributions to Girl Scouting included being assistant leader in several troops on the Brownie, Junior, and Cadet levels. She also trained Cadet Scouts for primitive camping, and was Senior aid at Patrol Encampment. She has served as secretary and president of her troop for the last two years. Accomplishments include the earning of ten-interest project patches, each requiring twenty-five hours of service.

This volunteer service included work in community activities of all kinds. These activities concerned children, adults, and the elderly. For her outstanding contributions she received a congratulatory citation passed by the Senate of Pennsylvania, personal congratulations from State Senator Ed M. Early, President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, and the Girl Scout National President, Jane Freeman.

Troop #347, of which she was a member, had fund raising projects over the last two years and rounded out the year by flying to Canada for a week's vacation in Toronto and Niagara Falls.

Kathy is presently a senior at Seton Hill College in Greensburg with a major in biology and a minor in chemistry. Her career goal is to become a surgeon. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John R. Spichthy, Jr. of East Union Road, West Deer.

A Four Eagle Family

From the Valley News Dispatch

Scott Gray and his brother, Richard Karl, followed a family tradition when they earned Eagle Scout status recently.

Their brothers, Charles Gray, Jr., and Kenneth, are listed on the Eagle Scout Honor Roll of Boy Scout Troop 628.

All four are sons of Charles Sr. and Marie Gray of Michael Road. Kenneth, self-employed as a contractor, still is active as a Webelo leader with Cub Scout Pack 305. Charles is a mechanic employed by Deer Lakes School District.

Charles Sr. said it marks the first time four brothers have won Eagle awards in the Guyasuta District, a region that encompasses the townships of West Deer, Richland, Indiana and O'Hara, plus Aspinwall and Sharpsburg.

The Grays have been involved with scouting for about 20 years. Charles Sr. served as a committeeman for Troop 628, while his wife has been active with Cub Scouts, Webelos and Girl Scouts.

The Eagle awards were presented to Scott and Richard at a ceremony in East Union Presbyterian Church. Troop 628 is sponsored by Resurrection Lutheran Church.

The ceremony included the display of a flag carried by Robert P. Gray, the boys' great-grandfather, during World War I in France. Robert Gray served with the Army as a "teamster", a driver who picked up battlefield casualties.

Scott Gray's community service was to paint the basement of the Grange Hall in West Deer. He earned 11 skill awards and 23 merit badges. He also received the God and Country award.

He attends Pittsburgh Technical Institute.

Richard Gray painted the exterior of the West Deer Senior Citizens Center along Route 910, completing the project last summer.

As a member of Troop 628, he earned eight skill awards and 22 merit badges. He participated in six summer camps and five browse cuts. He also earned the God and Country award.

Also receiving Eagle awards were Tim Snyder, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Snyder, and Paul Ogershok, son of Mr. and Mrs. Andy Ogershok. Glenn Ogershok, Paul's brother, is troop scoutmaster and a former Eagle.

Tim Snyder, who leaves this month for service in the Air Force, collected food for the West Deer Food Bank for his Eagle project. He earned 21 merit badges and skill awards. He obtained the God and Country award with the help of Dr. Richard Kennedy of East Union Presbyterian Church.

Paul Ogershok, who cleaned McIntyre Road as his project, has held many leadership positions including senior patrol leader with Troop 628.

Ogershok, who plans to attend the University of Pittsburgh, is a member of the Order of the Arrow and earned the scouts' "50 Miler Award".

Alex Wadlow, a former scoutmaster whose son Alexander is an Eagle, was master of ceremonies for the court of honor where the awards were presented.

The Authors

John Graff came to West Deer in January 1947 to teach vocational agriculture in the West Deer Township High School. He was born, and grew up, in Indiana County in a farming-mining environment much like that in West Deer. His interest in township history was demonstrated when he researched and wrote "Settlement Patterns in West Deer Township 1900-1950" for his masters thesis at the University of Pittsburgh. He is retired after thirty-six years of teaching in the West Deer-Deer Lakes Schools. His wife, Ruth, is also retired after teaching in the same school districts for over twenty-five years. Their older daughter, Bonnie, is married to Lonnie Stock of Superior and both teach and live in northern Virginia. Their younger daughter, Barbara, is married to Stephen Szallay of Clarksville, and teaches in the Deer Lakes Jr.-Sr. High School. This family has a total of almost one hundred years of teaching school.

Picture 172 – John Graff



Dorothy (Schroder) Voeckel was born in West Deer Township and was educated in the elementary schools of West Deer and the Tarentum High School. She was office manager and bookkeeper for a construction company for eight years. She married George W. Voeckel of Tarentum who is now retired from Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corporation where he was printing supervisor. They have one son, Kirk, who attended Deer Lakes Schools, A. W. Beattie Technical School and Penn State University. He is the senior electronic technician and automatic testing programmer and operator for Compunetics, Inc.

Culmerville history has been of interest to her since her maternal ancestors settled there before 1800. She has been researching and recording family and community histories whenever any information became available.

Picture 173 – Dorothy (Schroder) & George W. Voeckel



The Pictures

David Mathewson came to West Deer when he was six years old, moving with his parents from Fayette County to Bairdford. He attended the West Deer public schools and graduated from Etna High School, Duffs Business College, and Hofstra University. After college he went to work for the U.S. Customs Service in Pittsburgh where he continued for thirty-five years except for four years during World War II. He was a chief photographer in a Naval Intelligence Unit. After the war he returned to the Customs Service from which he retired in 1974 acting as Director-of the Port of Pittsburgh. In retirement he has continued with photography and has made or reproduced most of the pictures in this book and has devoted many hours to this public service.

Picture 174 – David Mathewson



He is married to the former Dorothy Sterling and their home is on the Culmerville-Bakerstown Road. Their daughters, Sharon and Ruth have their homes on each side of their parents' home. Sharon teaches in the Pine- Richland School District and is married to the Rev. John Campbell, pastor of the Cross Roads Presbyterian Church of Gibsonia. Ruth is married to Charles Kaufman and works for Dr. R. J. Smolen of McCandless Township. Her husband is a carpenter, working in the Pittsburgh area.



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The following people have shown their support of the Anniversary Committee by-placing an advanced order for the history and advancing financial assistance.

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Business that supported this book

Palmer's Drug Store

(Previously Miller's Drug)

Picture 175 – Palmer's Drug Store 1944, Irene Vozar, Rosemary Palmer & Vicky (Baron) Lewetag



Irene Vozar Rosemary Palmer Vicky (Baron) Lewetag

In 1944 these were the familiar faces at Palmer Drug

PALMER DRUG STORE

Main Street

Russellton, Pennsylvania

265-2632

Serving the West Deer Area for 50 Years

Winston A. Palmer

Rosemary Palmer Montgomery

William W. Palmer

Grace Palmer

For two generations we have lived and worked in West Deer, watching its growth and development. We have tried to grow with each phase, so that now we are a computerized pharmacy, offering the newest techniques possible to our customers, but still keeping the "old" hometown flavor with our fountain, where many local folks can have their coffee and conversation daily. We are still your neighborhood drugstore.

Catanese Auto Salvage

Picture 176 – The six Catanese Brothers in Uniform



Steve

Charles

Tony

Peter

Angelo

Roger

Greetings from the Catanese Brothers

The Catanese Family has been serving the People of West Deer for over Fifty Years.

Our father, Joseph Catanese, sold fruit from his fruit stand in Russellton, beginning about 1920 and for almost twenty years operated this business and sold fruit from his truck on routes all through West Deer Township. Some folks still remember his Gilford truck with solid rubber tires.

All the Catanese Brothers served in the Armed Forces in World War II or the Korean War. After the wars we started an auto salvage business and have continued in the present location for over thirty years.

Along with our auto salvage yard, repair shop, and gasoline service, we supply new auto parts through Globe Auto Parts, managed by Ronald Catanese, the third generation of our family to be part of the business community of West Deer Township.

Michael Brothers Nursery

Picture 177 – Michael Brothers



Richard

Wilbur

Therman

The Michael Brothers pose in front of their original greenhouse in the 1950's.



"Plant America"

MICHAEL BROS. NURSERY, INC.

GREENHOUSE-GARDEN SHOP
EVERGREENS, TREES AND SHRUBS

MAILING ADDRESS: BOX 126. R. D. 1 CHESWICK, PA. 19024
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LOCATION: MICHAEL ROAD OFF MAIN STREET, RUSSELLTON, PA.

Michael Brothers Nursery has been growing quality nursery stock since 1938.

Originally operated by the three brothers pictured above which gave the nursery its name.

Presently operated by Therman and Mary Michael.

The Michael Brothers offers a complete line of garden supplies, greenhouse plants, and one of the areas most complete selections of nursery stock.

With 48 years experience in landscaping, we invite you to come out to our nursery and discuss your problems with us.



"Serving the people of West Deer for 37 years"

"I'm renewing the promise I made in 1948, when I opened my funeral home... I will provide the residents of this area, my services with complete dignity and respect for each family." — J. R. Siwicki

To the community:

"I applaud the people of West Deer as we celebrate our 150th Anniversary. Our progress as a community must continue as we live, work, and play together."

"May our sesquicentennial honor the contribution and sacrifices of our forefathers, and may it celebrate and renew commitment to West Deer by her residents."

Our History:

J. R. Siwicki, a life-long resident of Russellton, Bairdford, and Culmerville, graduated from Springdale High School and the American Academy of Mortuary Research in New York City. In 1940 he became a licensed Funeral Director.

During World War II he served as a sergeant in the 381st Air Service Group in the China-Burma-India Theatre.

After World War II he opened the J. R. Siwicki Funeral Home on McKrell Road in Russellton.

J. R. is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the West Deer Lions Club, and the Knights of Columbus. He and his wife, Rose, have four children and two granddaughters.

3 McKrell Road, Russellton, PA 15076
Business 265-3800 Home 265-3045

Zrebny's Pizza

Picture 179 – Zrebny's Pizza Shop



ZREBNY'S PIZZA SHOP

FORMERLY FOX'S PIZZA DEN IV

Main St., Russellton

265-4400

PIZZA • HOAGIES
HOT SAUSAGE
MEAT BALL
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CALL AHEAD FOR
TAKEOUT OR HOME DELIVERY

Delivery Hours — 5 PM - 11 PM Nightly

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Mon.-Fri.	11:30
Sat.-Sun.	12:30

CLOSED

Sun.-Thurs.	11:00
Fri.-Sat.	12:00



LAST ORDER TAKEN 15 MINUTES BEFORE CLOSING

SEE US FOR
FUND RAISING INFORMATION

Yute' Ideal Cleaning & The Bongiovanni Family

**Congratulations on your
150th Anniversary**

Yute' Ideal Cleaning, Inc.
Main Street, Russellton
265-3360

Complete Dry Cleaning
and
Laundry Services

Drapery Specialists

Bud and Velma Yute
Owners

Best Wishes and Congratulations
to the
People of West Deer Township
from
The Bongiovanni Family

**Operating Business in
West Deer Township**
Since 1925

Benke Motors

Picture 180 – Benke Motors

BENKE MOTORS INC.

FORMERLY BENKE MOTOR COMPANY

Saxonburg Boulevard at Bakerstown Road
Culmerville at the bridge

412-265-2090

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Serving the area 57 years

Front wheel drive - four wheel drive - rear wheel drive

From the days of the Hudson to the present, we have provided the area with a wide selection of cars and trucks. We thank our past customers and welcome those who have not yet joined the family of **Benke Customers**.

**AMC Eagle
Renault Alliance
Renault Encore
GMC**

**Jeep CJ
Cherokee
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Comanche Pick-up**

Pick-Ups — Suburban — Jimmy



Hemphill Cabinets, Inc.

Custom Wood and Formica

Established 1973

Tarentum 265-1809

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Blaine and Elsie Hemphill
Owners

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"Men and Women Hair Styling"

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**Style Cuts
Children's Cuts
Men's Regular Cuts
Custom Made Toupees**

Open Evenings

**Main Street
Russellton, PA**

"In our fourteenth year"

George Golojuh
Owner

Shady Brook Golf Course **1960-1980**

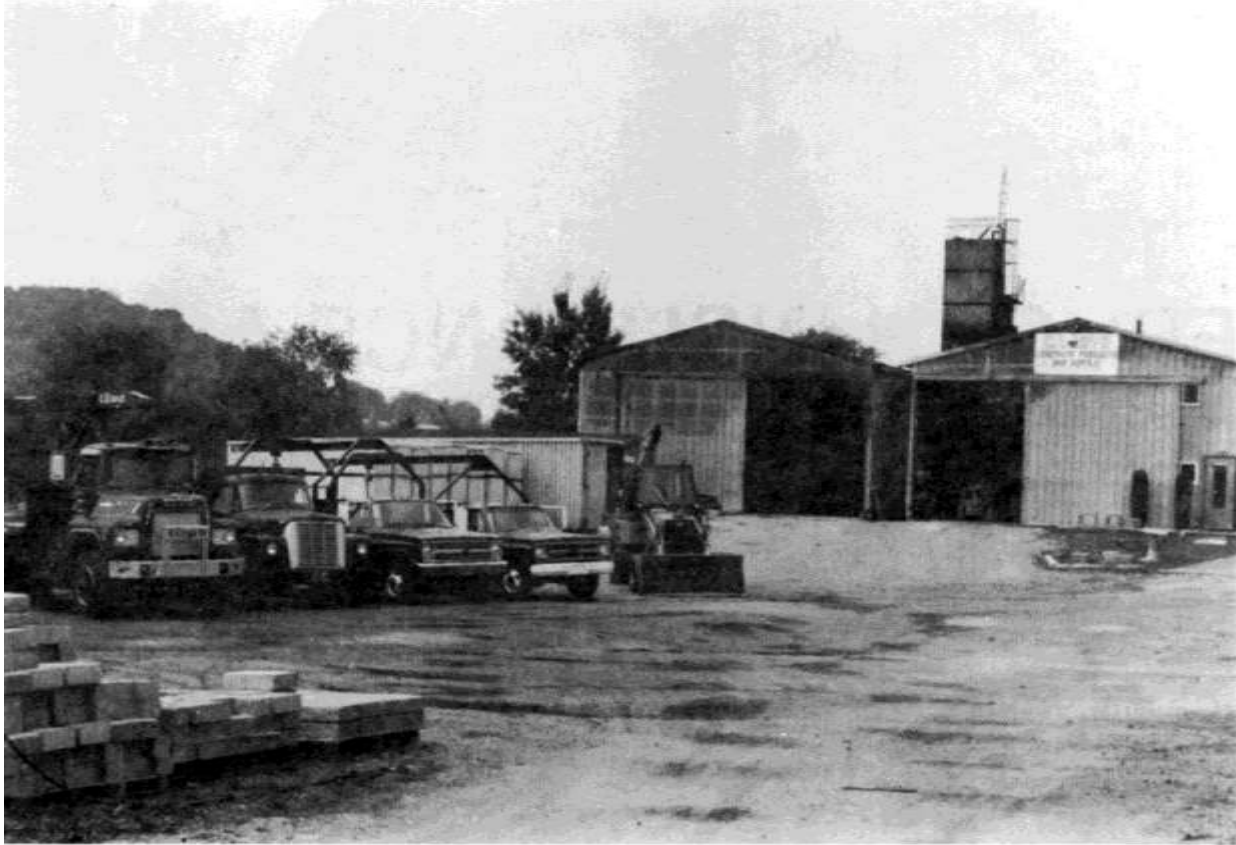
*Thank You
for your
Patronage and Kindness
for twenty-one seasons*



Gertrude Ekas
(Mrs. Wilbur Ekas)

Lloyd Concrete

Picture 181 – C. Lloyd Company



C. Lloyd Company

Concrete Products & Supply

SAXONBURG BLVD., CURTISVILLE, PA

Our 25th Year

Owner: Mary M. Lloyd
Manger: Stacy Oliver
Founded by Charles G. Lloyd, *deceased*

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265-1508

MERVOSH INSURANCE AGENCY

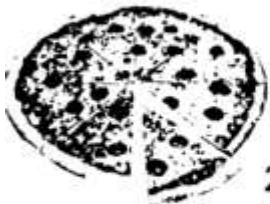
ALL LINES OF INSURANCE

GEORGE MERVOSH, JR.

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Lunch Meats
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Pizza & Hot Sandwiches
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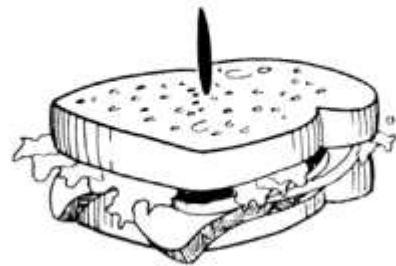
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East Union Road & McClure Road
R.D. #1, Box 180
Cheswick, PA 15024

Best Wishes

STANICH CAFE

Saxonburg Boulevard



*in the same location
since 1949*

Laurel Savings

Picture 182 – Laurel Savings and staff



LAUREL SAVINGS ASSOCIATION

The Deer Lakes Office of **Laurel Savings Association** (originally Allison Park Savings & Loan Association) opened on December 17, 1971. Since then there have been many changes in the Savings and Loan Industry and with our Association.

One of those changes occurred when Allison Park Savings and Loan Association merged with Peoples Savings Association of Etna on January 1, 1982 to form Laurel Savings Association. Since the merger, Laurel Savings has offered the following financial services to meet our customers' needs:

Money Market Fund Accounts
Checking Accounts
Savings Certificates
IRA & KEOGH Accounts
CashStream (Automated Teller)

Personal Loans
Auto Loans
Mortgage Loans
Home Improvement Loans
Home Equity Loans

The officers, directors and employees are dedicated to providing a complete line of financial services and still maintain a personal touch with our customers.

We wish to thank the community of West Deer for their ongoing support.

Happy Birthday West Deer Township

from
**Suburban Hardware
and
Flooring Center**
Russellton, Pennsylvania

Robert P. Clarke
Proprietor

Bailie's Flower Shoppe

Bill and Hilda Bailie
owners

Kathie Bailie - Designer
Judy Carroll - Designer

Corbett Street
Tarentum, PA 15084

Shope Phone 224-9557
Night Phone 226-2693

Visa and Mastercharge



Best Wishes
from

Margaret's Beauty Salon

Bairdford, PA

Serving this community for 34 years

Margaret Castello
265-1377



[Starr Road Mushroom](#)

Picture 183 – Starr Road Mushroom Lee & Derek Smay



Derek Smay and his mother, Lee Smay hold a sixty-five inch long hoagie which they have just made for a special order for a sixty-fifth birthday party.

STARR ROAD MUSHROOM MARKET

Open 7 Days a Week

Starr Road, Orange Belt, Russellton

Our own "In-Store" Bakery

Italian Groceries, Deli

Delicious Take-Out Foods

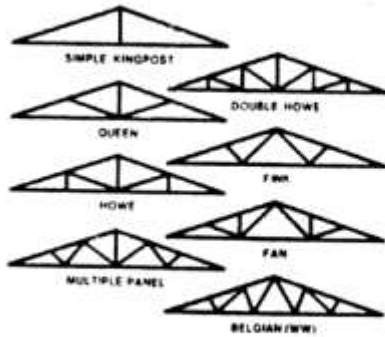
Fresh Mushrooms

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"WE'RE THE LITTLE STORE WITH A WHOLE LOT MORE"

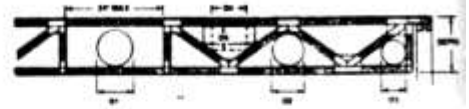
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POLE BUILDINGS



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NATIONAL
BANK**

CARL E. SZYROKI
MANAGER
RUSSELLTON OFFICE
PITTSBURGH, PA
AREA CODE 412
274-7711

**R. W.
GEISER
COMPANY INC**



- HOME HEATING
- GASOLINE
- DIESEL FUEL
- MOTOR OIL
- KEROSENE
- STORAGE TANKS

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R.D.3 - SAXONBURG BLVD., TARENTUM, PA 15084

Deer Lakes Family Health, Graham Dentistry, Golden Dawn Supermarket

Picture 184 – Deer Lake Family Health Center



DEER LAKES FAMILY HEALTH CENTER

MAIN OFFICE

John C. Morphy, M.D.
Michael J. Marks, D.O.

Box 299A, R.D.1, Russellton Road
Cheswick, PA 15024
265-1535 — 767-5387

John T. Matthews, M.D.
Paul S. Baecher, M.D.

Deer Lakes Family Health Center
Box 299A, Russellton Road
Cheswick, PA 15024

Other Offices

Aspinwall Office *by Appointment* **782-5666**

Oakmont Office *by Appointment* **828-5050**

Wexford Office *by Appointment* **367-3132**

by Appointment **265-1535 — 767-5387**
Mon.-Wed.-Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Tues.-Thurs. 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

24 hour coverage. Doctors on staff at St. Margaret Memorial Hospital and Passavant Hospital.

james joseph graham, d.m.d.
family dentistry
post office building
main street
russellton
pennsylvania 15076
412-265-3730



RUSSELLTON GOLDEN DAWN SUPERMARKET

Quality Meat and Produce

Friendly Service

Phone 265-5333

[Ellena Funeral Home](#)

Picture 185 – Ellena Funeral Home



RONALD J.

Ellena Funeral Home

STARR ROAD

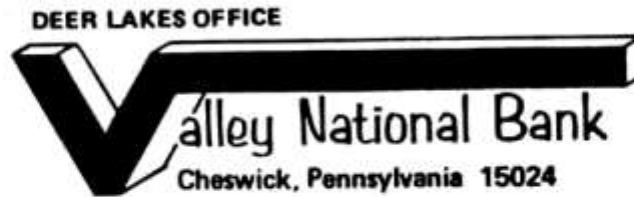
RUSSELLTON, PENNSYLVANIA 15076

TELEPHONE: 265-1501
AREA CODE 412

On May 14, 1941, Jennie Engle Prager, daughter of the late Michael Engle, sold a parcel of land to the Italian Workers' Aid Society. During the 1940's, because of a smoldering land fill containing boney, a portion of the property was excavated and became a soccer field. In the 1950's and early 60's, it was a major site of baseball games for the West Deer Little League. The West Deer Fire Departments held a carnival on the field at one time.

On March 19, 1965, a part of this property containing 2.67 acres was sold to Joseph Ellena. Later in the year, construction began on the 110' x 85' block building with brick facing. The Ellena Funeral Home was officially opened on April 15, 1966.

**Congratulations
WEST DEER
on your 150th Birthday**



Deer Lakes
Freeport
Slate Lick
Kittanning Highlands
Buffalo Township
Member F.D.I.C.

Val-Tel 24 hour

**EAST UNION
GARAGE**

**GENERAL REPAIRS
and
TRANSMISSIONS**

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Cheswick, PA 15024
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Indiana, Pennsylvania 15701
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Books * Pamphlets * Brochures
Letterhead * Envelopes
Programs * Tickets * Posters
Invoices * Business Cards

AND ALL YOUR PRINTING NEEDS!

Robert Spichty
Owner

Sisters Corner Shoppe

Picture 186 – Sisters Cornere Shoppe, T.M. Dineff



SISTERS CORNER SHOPPE

T.M. Dineff, Owner

Corner of Bairdford Road and Saxonburg Boulevard

DONUTS - Made Fresh Daily *See them made!!*

PIZZA - Every Tuesday thru Sunday *NEVER ON MONDAY!*

ICE CREAM CUSTARD - Seven days a week *Noon to 10:00 P.M.*

Call 265-1350

HELPERS!

Sophia

Suzanne

Tom (T.P.)

All in the family since 1955. Thanks to all our customers for their support and friendship!

Joseph D. Gizienski
PRESIDENT

**NORTHERN ALLEGHENY
STONE, INC.**

Box 1, Curtisville, PA 15032
(412) 265-3610

**ALL TYPES OF AGGREGATES
DRIVEWAY STONE
SEPTIC TANK STONE
DECORATIVE STONE**

Congratulations West Deer on 150 Years of Progress!



Robert and Pauline Shaffer came to West Deer in 1976 when they purchased the Reid Bowling Lanes. Robert had previously managed the West Hills Bowling Center and Pauline had owned and operated the Polly Restaurant on Greensburg Road for nine years.

Their two children and their spouses are also partners in this family enterprise. Their daughter, Polly, and husband, Joseph Schwarzel, and Robert, Jr. and his wife, Paula, are all included.

With this combined experience, they now operate the Deer Lakes Lounge and Bowl and offer their patrons complete lounge, restaurant, and bowling facilities.

DEER LAKES LOUNGE AND BOWL

LOUNGE
265-3626

"Relax with a Friend"

BOWL
265-2990

Benjamin House

Picture 188 – Benjamin House old "Company Club House"



BENJAMIN HOUSE

Curtisville was the classical example of a complete self-sustaining mining town. In addition to the many "company houses" and other buildings it had three boarding houses. There was the "English-speaking" boarding house and the "Non-English speaking" boarding house for the miners and the "Club House" for the mine officials and office personnel. The Club House also had facilities for business and dinner meetings. In 1947 when the company town was sold, it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. McCready who continued to operate it as a boarding house predominately for miners and railroaders.

Jack Rees bought it in 1969 and completely restored the building including the replacement of such things as heating, plumbing, and wiring. In addition to that, the latest state of the art safety devices such as heat detectors, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and fire stairs were installed. All structural members such as walls, ceilings, and doors were renovated to meet current fire and panic regulations.

This venerable old building still serves it's original purpose of providing room and board for the citizens of our community. But now it does much more. It is staffed 24 hours per day by personnel who provide, in addition to room and board, assistance with activities of daily living such as dressing, bathing, remembering medications, etc. It also had wonderful cooperation from local volunteers such as church groups, scout troops, garden clubs, etc. in providing recreational activities for the residents.

For further information please call 767-4686

Breyak & Kutchko

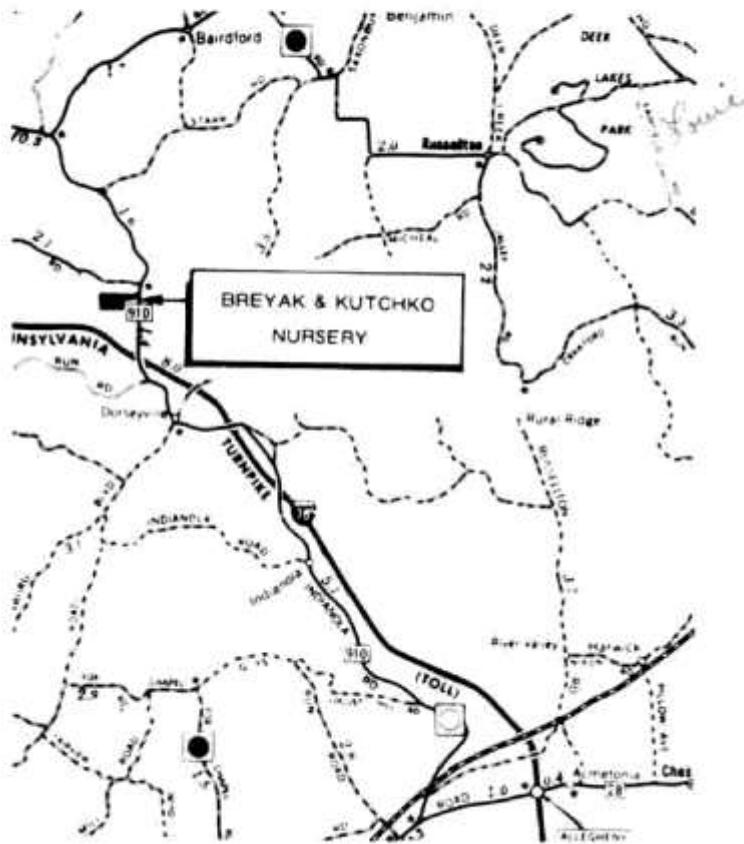
Breyak and Kutchko Nursery, Inc.

Route 910, R.D. 3, Allison Park, Pennsylvania 15101



*Congratulations West Deer Township
on your 150th Anniversary*

*For eighteen years it has been our pleasure
to do business with the residents of this Township.*



**Landscaping
Designing
Garden Center
Lawn Service
Nursery Stock
Garden Supplies**

**"We are on Route 910
between
Routes 8 and 28"**

Joseph Kutchko

Edward Breyak

Phone 443-5656 or 781-5445

Pictures from the Past

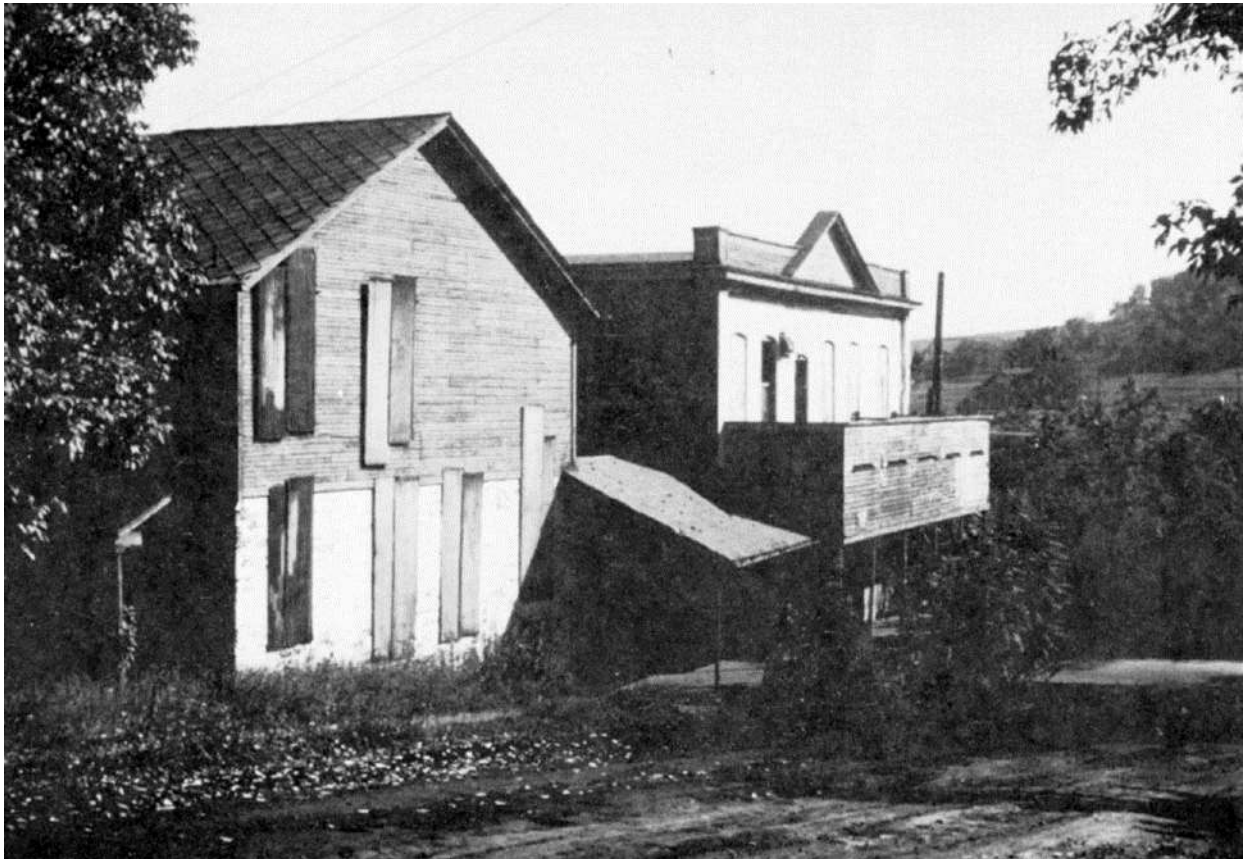
Some of the following are pictures taken from the second 150th Anniversary book. The first part was pictures of the celebration, which are not included in this publication. The second half contains additional pictures showing West Deer through the years. Other pictures come from the Ford Lamp and family connections.

Picture 189 – Curtisville #1 Company store about 1909



This first photo shows the Curtisville #1 Company store and office just after it had been built about 1909. The Leslie farmhouse was still standing. It was later torn down and a larger two-story building erected. The two buildings then served the Ford Collieries operations for many years until the mine closed. (Photo from C. Monnier)

Picture 190 – Curtisville #1 Company store after it closed



This second photo shows the Curtisville #1 Company store after it closed up the buildings. (Photo by J. Graff)

Picture 191 – Curtisville #1 Company store being burt.



*Some time afterward the upper building was demolished and the old store building burned as shown in the third photo.
(Photo from Janelle Zrebney)*

Picture 192 – Holzworth's store "Sears and Roebuck"



A landmark for many years in Allegheny Acres was Jake Holzworth's store. Many nicknamed it "Sears and Roebuck" because of the variety of items sold. Photo from Harold Atkinson

Picture 193 – Petroff's General Store in "Little Italy" in 1926

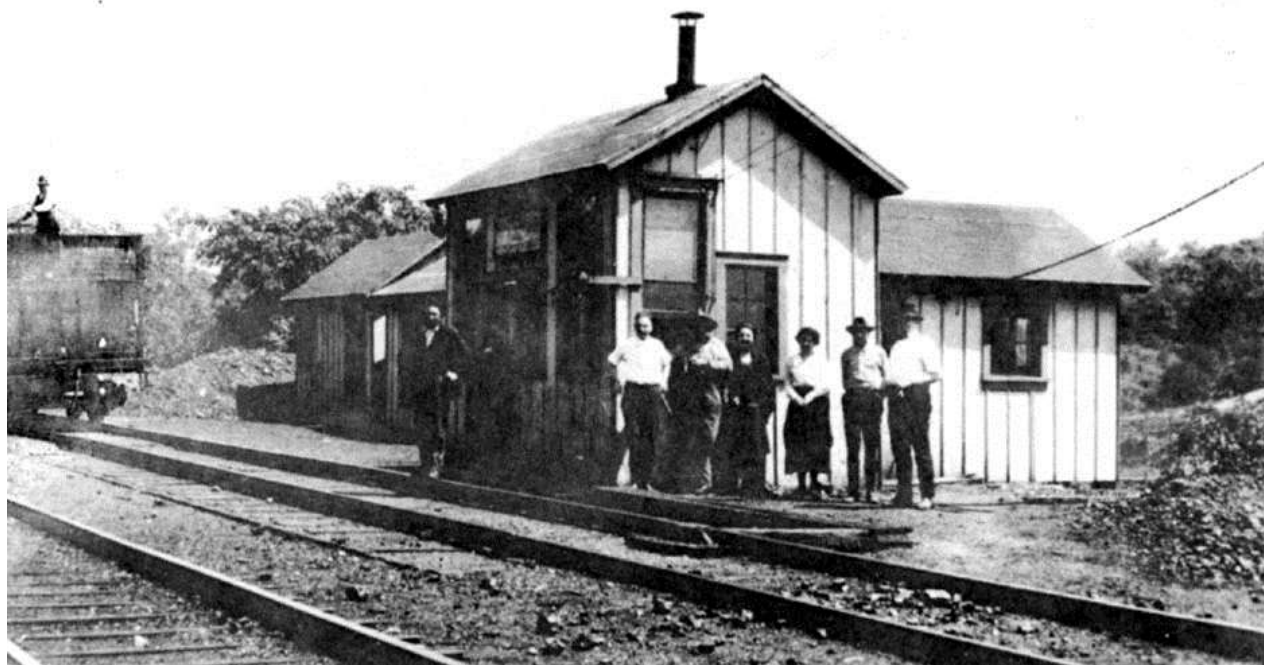


This was Jim Petroff's General Store in "Little Italy" in 1926. Mr. Petroff is the tall man in the center of the picture with his hands on his hips.

Mrs. Joe (Magdalene) Grill is on the left with a water bucket and Christ Hodges, wearing a cap, is on the right. Jim Hodges and Alexander (Sundra) Hodges are also pictured along with several other young people who are not identified. The UMWA local 3139 used the second floor.

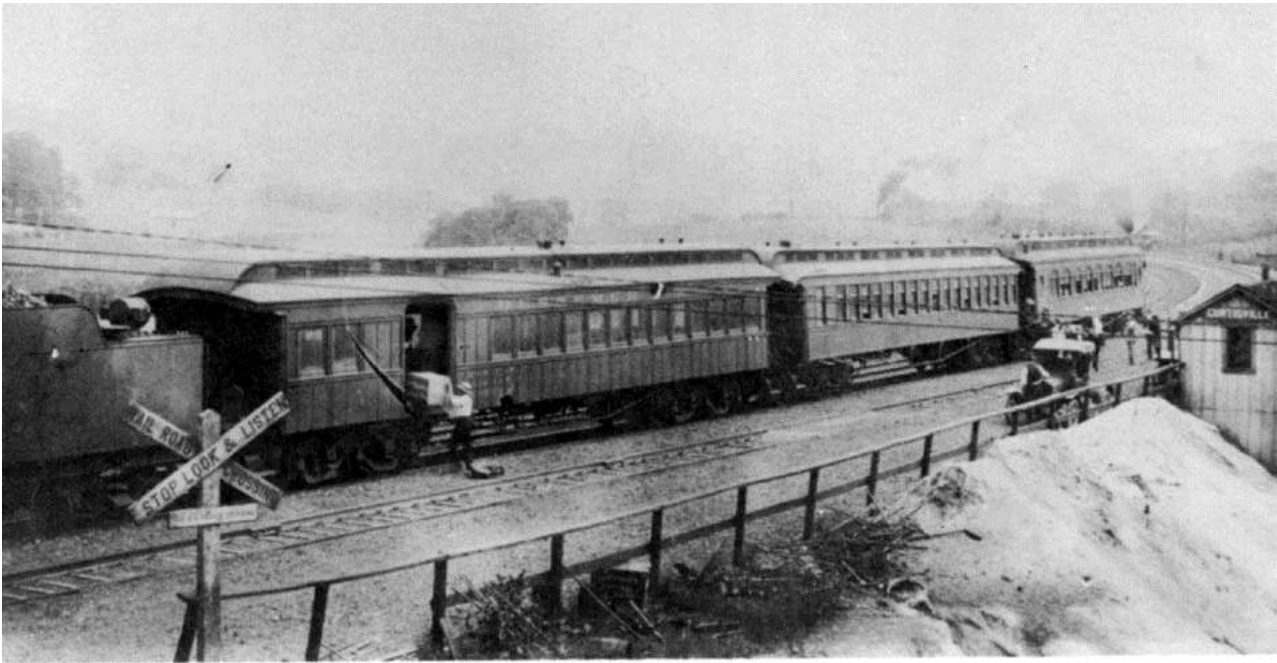
Photo from Mrs. James (Mary) Hodges

Picture 194 – Curtisville Train station about 1920



Waiting for the train at Curtisville about 1920. Tom Monnier is on the left and Calvin Pollock on the right. (Photo by Mary Leggens)

Picture 195 – Curtisville train station in 1920



A passenger train stops for mail and passengers at Curtisville in 1920. Photo from Mary Leggens

Picture 196 – Coal and Iron Police



Picture 197 – Coal and Iron Police saddling up



These good-natured, friendly, and loveable gentlemen occasionally made their presence felt in West Deer Township. They were the Coal and Iron Police, an authorized, legal, private police force with a great deal of authority who were generally on the scene in force during a strike. In this area they patrolled the region which included Harmarville, Indianola, Russellton, and the Ford mines of Bairdford and Curtisville. These photos show their horses, rifles, and other equipment. Photos by C. Monnier

Picture 198 – Coal and Iron Police crossing the tracks near Curtisville



What appears to be the Seventh Calvary going out to protect a wagon train is simply the Coal and Iron Police crossing the tracks near Curtisville. During the great coal strike of 1927-29 they were a common sight in West Deer Township.

Picture 199 – Coal and Iron Police on patrol in a company town



The Coal and Iron Police on patrol in a company town. In some other coal mining areas they were called "Yellow Dogs" but the name was not used in West Deer. The names used here were usually unprintable.

Picture 200 – Coal and Iron Police - Frank Parker



Ordinarily only a "Company Cop" was on the scene in the mining towns. Pictured here is Frank Parker who held that position for many years. Their duties were similar to a policeman today except that they were hired by the coal company and had authority only in the company town.
Photo from Mary Leggens

Picture 201 – 1924 flood Down Town Russellton



*Do you recognize the Long Building on the right? The water in front is part of a 1924 flood, which swept through Russellton.
Photo from Theresa Long*

Picture 202 – 1924 Flood Griffith (Claus) house



Another view of the 1924 flood in Russellton. The white objects in front of the Griffith (Claus) house are not identified. Any ideas?
Photo from Theresa Long

Picture 203 – The "Chuty-Chute"



The "Chuty-Chute", a favorite for boys to play in at Curtisville in the 1930's. They climbed under its superstructure and had many wonderful BB gun battles, all forbidden! Photo Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad

Picture 204 – Earl Ekas and his horse

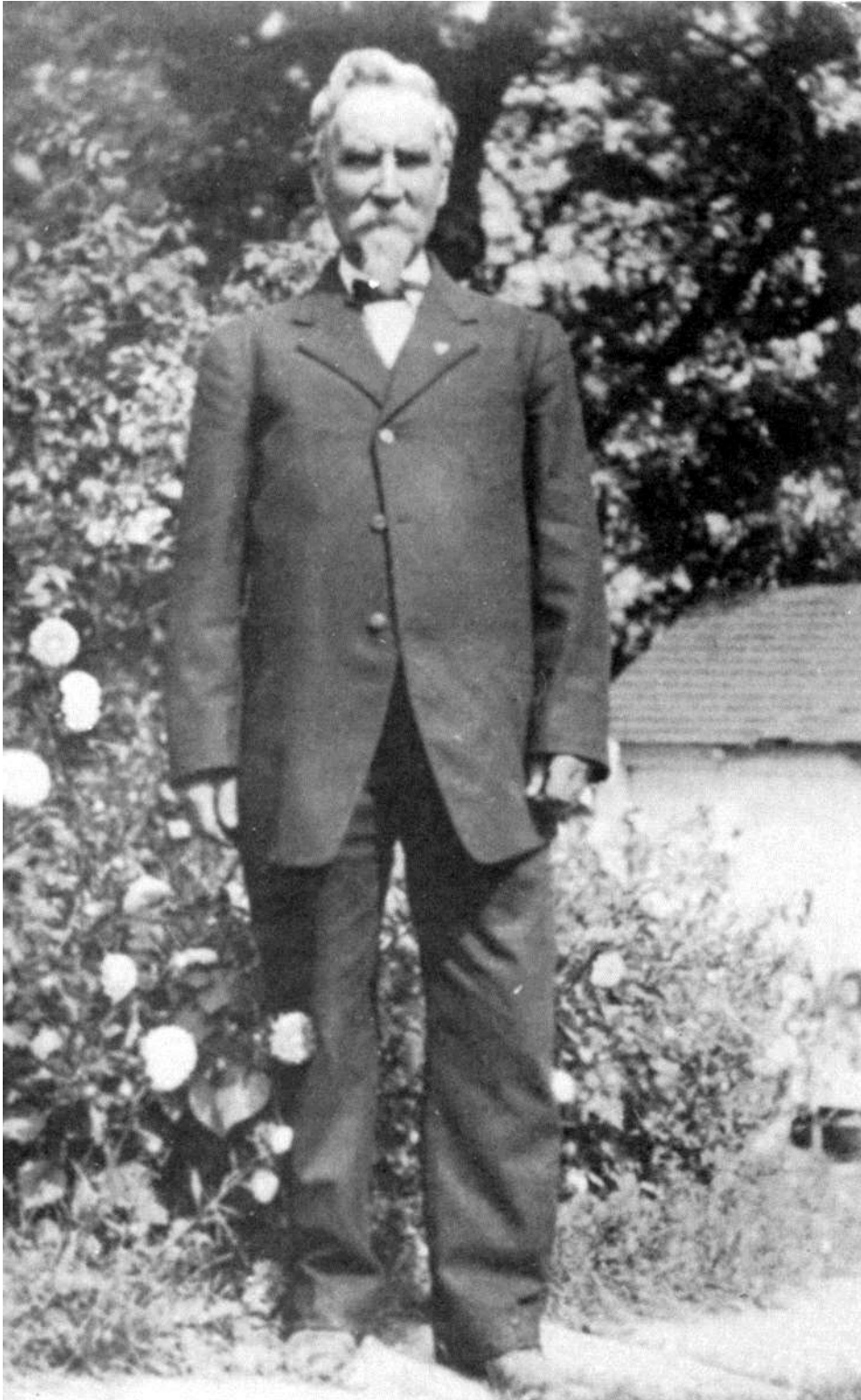


Earl Ekas and his horse, Prince, delivering milk in Curtisville in the early days. He carried three cans holding five gallons each and poured out whatever the customer wanted. Photo from Gertrude Ekas



West Deer's Two Towers - The left photo, from Florence Snitzer, shows the beacon light that stood on the Alex Hunter property near the Richland Township line on what is now the Eiter farm. This beacon guided airplanes in the 1930's. The right picture shows the MCI tower on Dinner's Knob, which is used for telephone communication. Photos by John Graff

Picture 206 – Captain Shoaf



Captain Shoaf was the engineer responsible for the layout and building of the town of Curtisville. Shoaf Street bears his name. Photo from Clarence Monnier

Picture 207 – Eliza McIntyre



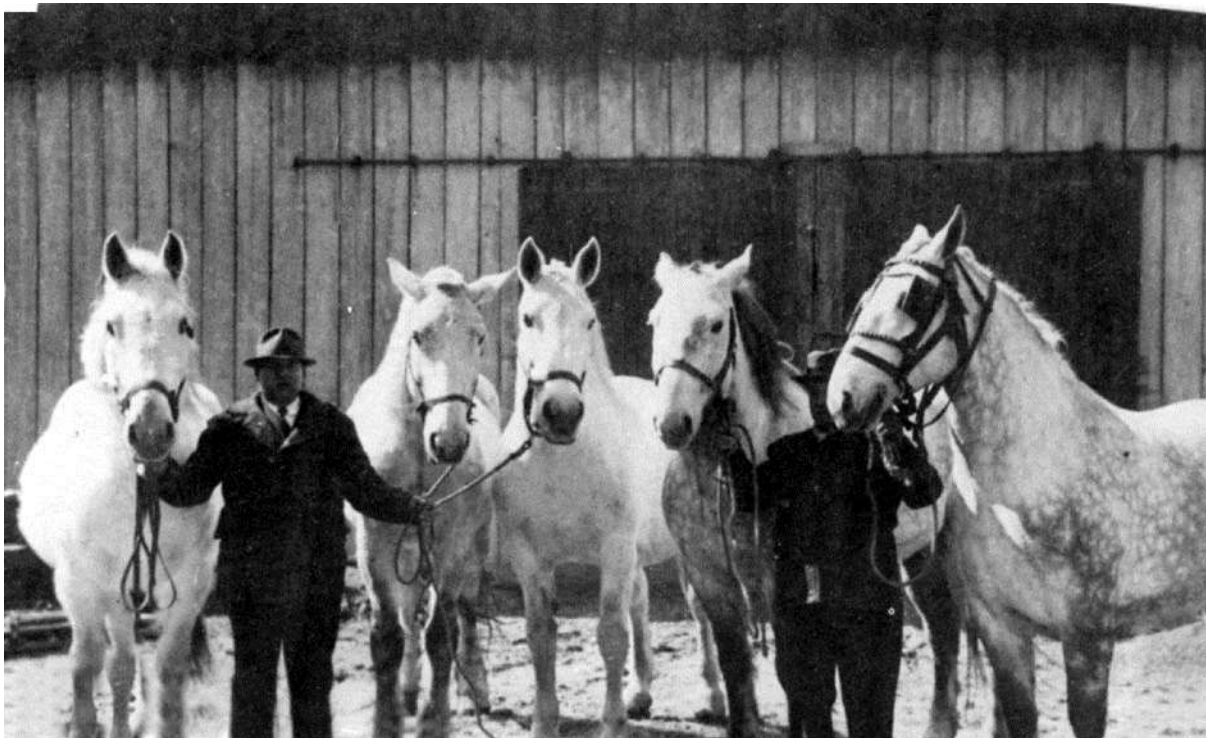
This may well be the oldest picture in this book. It was taken in Glasgow Scotland, probably in the late 1850's. On the right is Eliza McIntyre who came to America and West Deer. She is buried in an unmarked grave in the East Union Cemetery. Photo from Florence Snitzer

Picture 208 – Alex Hunter harvesting wheat about 1940



Not long afterwards these binders were replaced by combines. Photo from Florence Snitzer

Picture 209 – John and Richard Snitzer with horses



This farm occupied the present Deerton area. Photo from Florence Snitzer

Picture 210 – Old Russellton School coming down



CULMERVILLE SCHOOL 1911 - 1912 TEACHER - ANNIE DONALDSON

Bottom Row - Margaret Hemphill, Herbert Grubbs, Anna Heasley, Samuel Knoch, Mary Knoch, Alfred Ekas, Paul Thompson, Blanche Carnahan, David Norris, Louise Campbell, and Samuel McCullough

Second Row - Margaret Means, Clarence Norris, Scott Dawson, Sadie Carnahan, Joseph Norris, Anna Feree, Frecho Tabacchi, James Norris, Irene Love, Charley Christy, Frances Grubbs, Charles Thompson, Mae Norris, Dolly Feree, and Grace Ekas

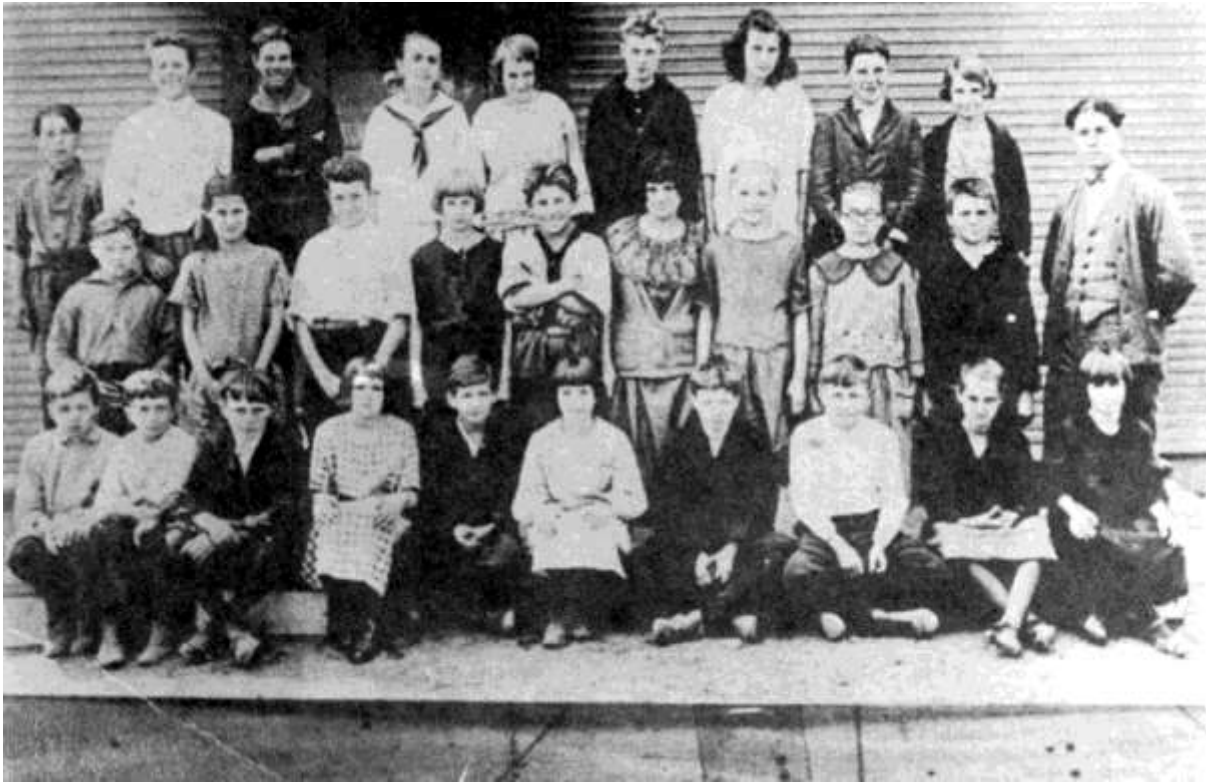
Top Row - Ruby Christy, Myron Rowley, Alberta Dawson, Annie Henry, William Henry, Della McCullough, Annie Donaldson, the teacher. Pearl Carnahan, Nelly Grubbs, Myrtle Rigby, Walter Feree, and Grier Henry. This photo was furnished by Clarence Norris, the little boy on the left wearing a necktie, now retired and formerly Superintendent of the West Deer Schools.

Picture 211 – Culmerville Class 1911 - 1912



The old Russellton School coming down! Photo from V.N.D.

Picture 212 – Curtisville calls of 1922-1923



CURTISVILLE SCHOOL 1922-23 TEACHER - HOWARD STEWART

Bottom Row - Lawrence Gizienski, Stanley Gasienski, Nick Snyder, Thelma Bytheway, James Pendergast, Bada Moskala, Red Murray, Joe Tutak, Laura Calderelli, and Rose Telowsky

Second Row - Pete Telowsky, Elizabeth Grubbs, Elio Tabachi, Anna Allison, Andy Mehalic, Rose Tristani, Anna Yanko, Mary Shurina, and Buddy Falconer

Top Row - Gate Thomas, George Dzvonich, John Myers, Mary Skyrnic, Thelma Fagart, Skinny Allison, Mary Gizienski, Paul Grubbs, and Fanny Melnick. Standing on the right is Howard Stewart, teacher.

Picture 213 – Curtisville Baseball Team 1987



These proud young men are the Curtisville Baseball Team who won the Championship Awards this season (1987).

Front row, left to right. Bill Kurth, Bob Miller, John Murray, Duffy Murray, Richard Foust and Buck Foil.

Back row, Bob Budz, Anthony Soster, Samuel Roberts, Ronnie Thomas, Don Grubbs, Bill Miller and Tim Murray.

Picture 214 – Russellton Kindergardern class of 1958-1959



Mrs Baker teacher

*Back Row - Cynthia Watt - Patty Lewetag - Joyce Walt - Stephen Zakour - Gregg Pompe - Wesley Palmer
Front Row - Kenny Lewetag - Lorelee May- Daryl Brucher • Michael Michlow - Tom Simonelli -Joe Marynarczyk -Danny Zaworsky
(names West Deer news paper 'Where are they now" from Dan Angeloni collection)*

Picture 215 – Hazlett School site.



This pictures, although not very definitive, show the site of one of West Deer's most historic sites. To find this one, drive to the intersection of Logan Road (west) with the Culmerville-Bakerstown Road, six tenths of a mile south on Logan Road, to a dip in the road. Just before the bottom of the dip on the left there is a large depression in the woods. Pictured above, it was the coal or wood pit under Hazlett School. Photo by John Graff



WEST DEER BASKETEERS DINE ON SPAGHETTI

As guests of a group of West Deer Township business men, members of the first and second basketball teams of West Deer Township High School were recently treated to a spaghetti dinner in the high school domestic science room. Coach Schenley and his athletes assured News Photographer, Lud Lippert as he shot above photos that the spaghetti and meatballs were fine.

Upper photo shows the athletes left to right,

front row—Wade Stepp, John Stec, Joe Bohatch, Coach Schenley, Ed Stanchek, Frank Hrobak and Nello Colpo;

back row, left to right—Jim Murray, Ed Czwalga, Vincent Mauak, Al Lewetag, John Biser, Lee Goodlowand Bill Makuta.

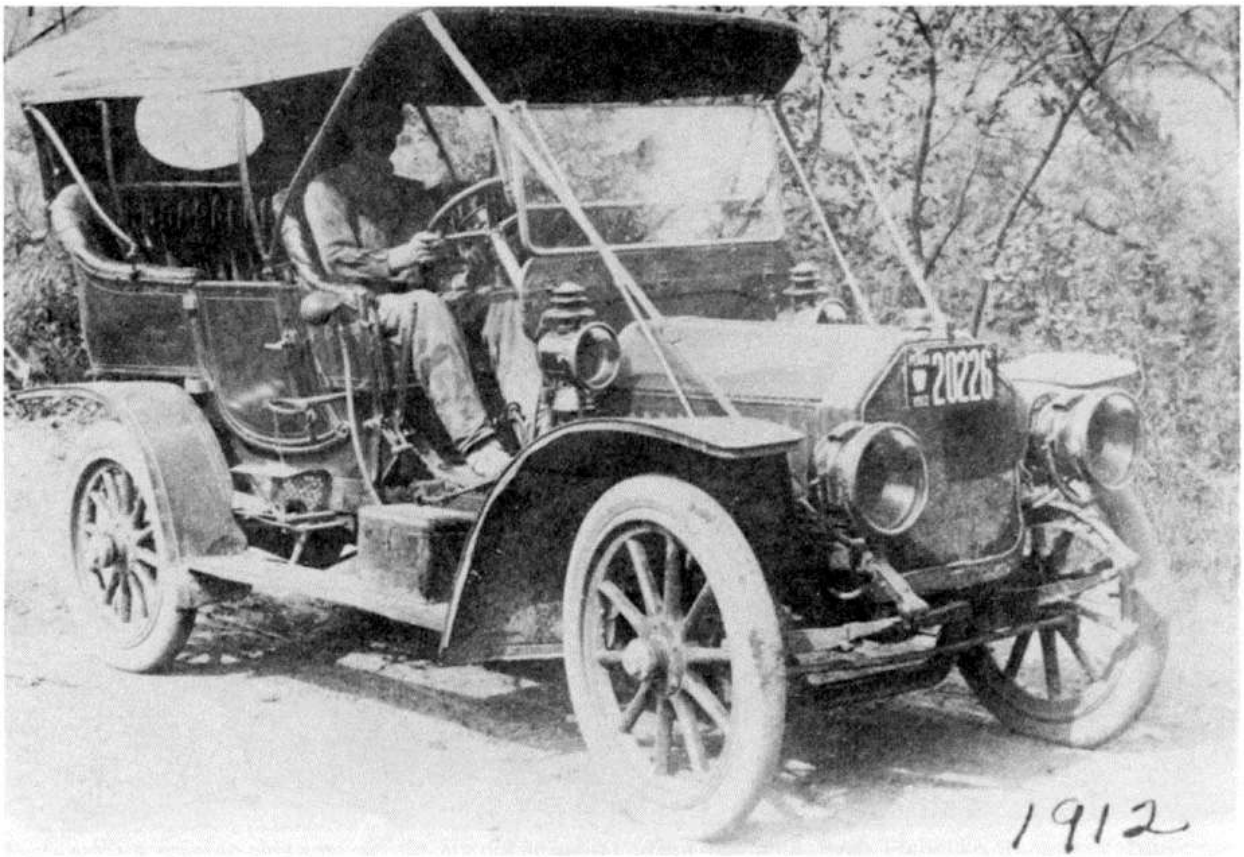
Shown in lower photo are the business folk who staged the dinner. They are;

front row, left to right—Floyd Sarver, Superintendent Edlund of the West peer schools, Ivan Mathewson, Mrs. Palmer, Coach Schenley, High School Principal Burns, Robert Graham, president of the Board of Education and West Deer Township Patrol-man Al Sabatini.

Rear row, left to right—Frank Marsili, Vincent Cesarino, Louis Taliani, Louis Schaffer, Joey Alien, Clarence Norris, John Squiller, John Makuta and Dominic Grill.

Valley Daily News April 5, 1944

Picture 217 – Dillner family car 1912



These fine vehicles belonged to members of the Dillner family in the years indicated on the pictures. Photos from Mr. & Mrs. Norman Dillner

Picture 218 – Dillner family car 1920



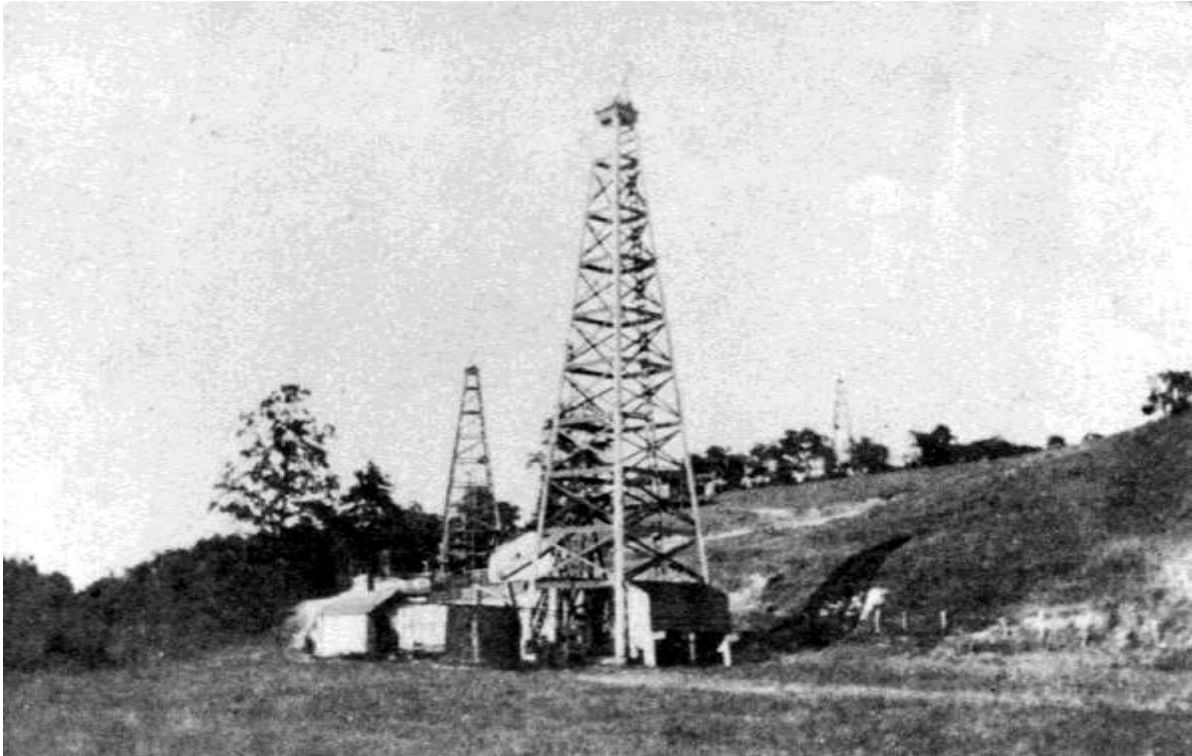
These vehicles were probably in better shape than the roads they traveled upon. Photos from Mr. & Mrs. Norman Dillner

Picture 219 – An oil well drillers shack



An oil well drillers' "shack" of the 1900 era. The man standing in the doorway is George Dawson, an uncle of Mary Etta Monnier who furnished this picture. Dawson died in 1903. Photo from Mary Etta Monnier

Picture 220 – Old oil well about 1900



Another old oil well scene in West Deer about 1900. Photo from Mary Etta Monnier

Picture 221 – East Union Church 1850



Picture 222 – East Union Church 1986



Picture 223 – St. Victor Church 1952



A large crowd was on hand to take part in the GroundBreaking Ceremony of the Saint Victors Church at Bairdford. The ceremony took place on September 16th with the Reverend Father Daniel J. McCullough officiating. Father McCullough was the former pastor of the Saint Agnes Church in Pittsburgh before coming to Bairdford. John Buydoso and Michael Woscek broke the ground for the new church, which is being built along the Bairdford Road adjoining the rectory. (The Ford Lamp 1952 page 11)

Picture 224 – St. Victor Church 1986



Picture 225 – Bull Creek Presbyterian Church



Our oldest church. Bull Creek Presbyterian, before the present structure was built. In this building you see the model railroad display at Christmas time.

Picture 226 – Out of the Past



The Rev. Richard Kennedy, D.D., pastor of East Union United Presbyterian Church, West Deer, escorts Mrs. John Biser to the 125th anniversary celebration of the church. Mrs. Biser was a member of Russellton Mission Church which was disbanded in 1958 and the congregation joined the East Union church. The Rev. Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Biser pause in front of the Founders Chapel, en route to the four-day celebration, which ended yesterday (1987). The pair arrived as people did for church services more than a century ago.

Picture 227 – Oldest marked tombstone



Our oldest marked tombstone, behind the above church and dated 1804. Carol Bock, Herb and Sarah Jane Newcomer, and Elizabeth Cox can be seen while examining the stone. They were on a field trip of a Community College class on the History of West Deer. Photo by J. Graff

Picture 228 – The 1918 Flu Hospital Site



The 1918 Flu Hospital Site - your starting point would be in Curtisville by the old company store. Cross the tracks, come to the Little Deer Creek Road and turn right toward Russellton. On the left you will see a low spot on the road bank with the mailbox on its right. This was the entrance to the Flu Hospital, which covered a wide area in the woods behind it. Photo by John Graff

Picture 229 – Great railroad trestle at Bull Creek



This is all that is left of the great railroad trestle that crossed the Bull Creek valley from 1896 to 1912. This pier, visible only in the winter, can be seen on the hill just west of the Saxonburg Road at the Butler County line near Cherry Valley. Photo by John Graff

Picture 230 – One West Deer's log house



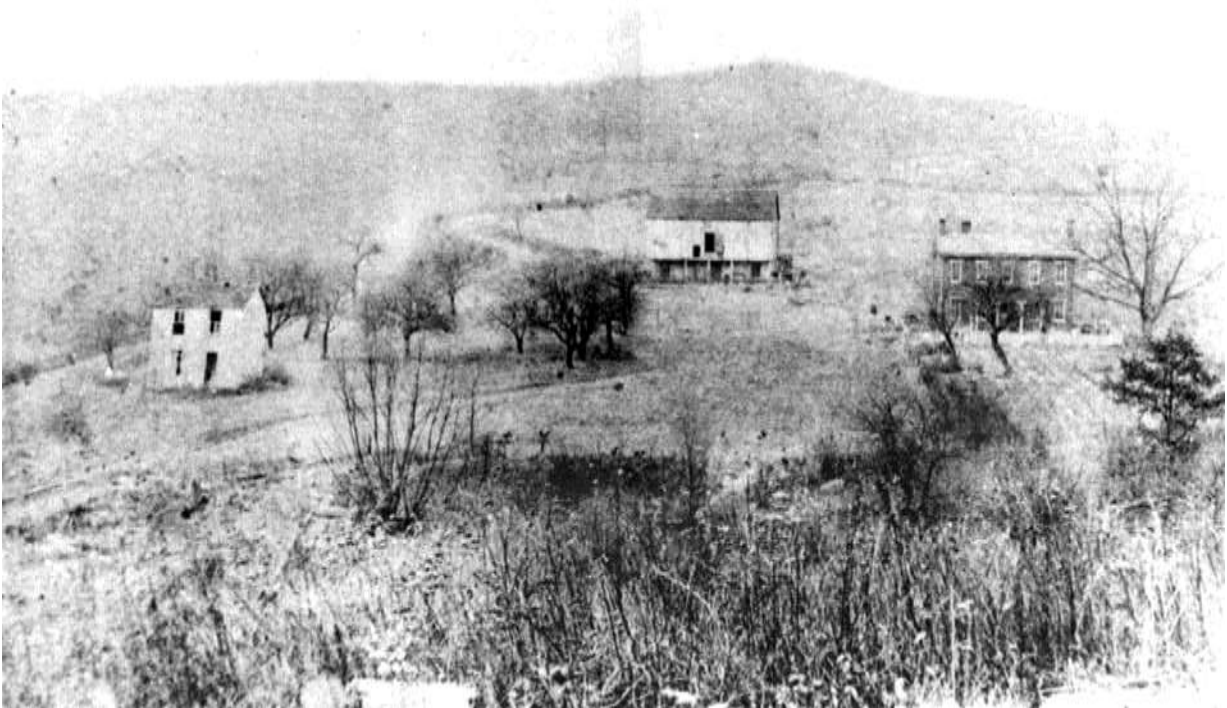
One of the last of West Deer's log houses to be lived in continuously was this house which was occupied until the early 1960's after at least 100 years of use. Photo by John Graff

Picture 231 – The McClelland-Cox house about 1900



*The McClelland-Cox house about 1900 when it belonged to the Sauer family. The people pictured belong to the Sauer and Snitzer families.
Photo from Elizabeth Cox*

Picture 232 – The Dawson-Hunter farm about 1900



The Dawson-Hunter farm about 1900. The two story building on the left was known as the "mill house" where grain was stored. The old mill, one of the first in West Deer, would have been in the lower center of the picture. Photo from John Hunter

Picture 233 – McClelland-Cox house



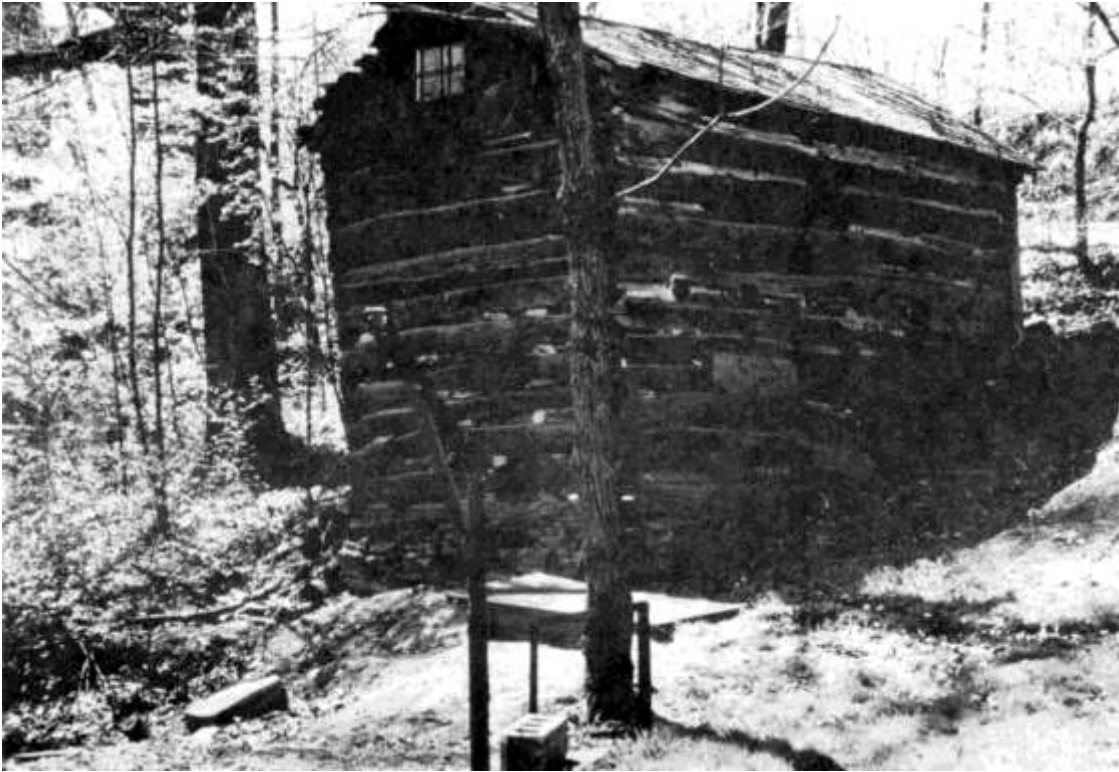
At the McClelland-Cox house on Russellton-Dorseyville Road, Elizabeth Cox and several helpers gave an excellent historical account of this house and some of the stories of its interesting past. Photo by J. Graff

Picture 234 – Gertrude Ekas Home



The home of Gertrude Ekas on the Culmerville-Millertown Road was built in 1865 and has been lived in continuously by members of the Montgomery and Ekas families since. Photo by J. Graff

Picture 235 – Alexandrunas farm two-story log spring house



*At the Alexandrunas farm on Sandy Hill Road the tour participants saw this original two story log spring house.
Photo by J. Graff*

The next four drawing are of fine old houses all built about 1865, are shown here in drawings done by Tara Robeinson, West Deer native, and a graduate of West Deer Lakes School.

Picture 236 – The Jennie Camanini House drawing



Picture 237 – The Jmontgomery-Ekas House drawing



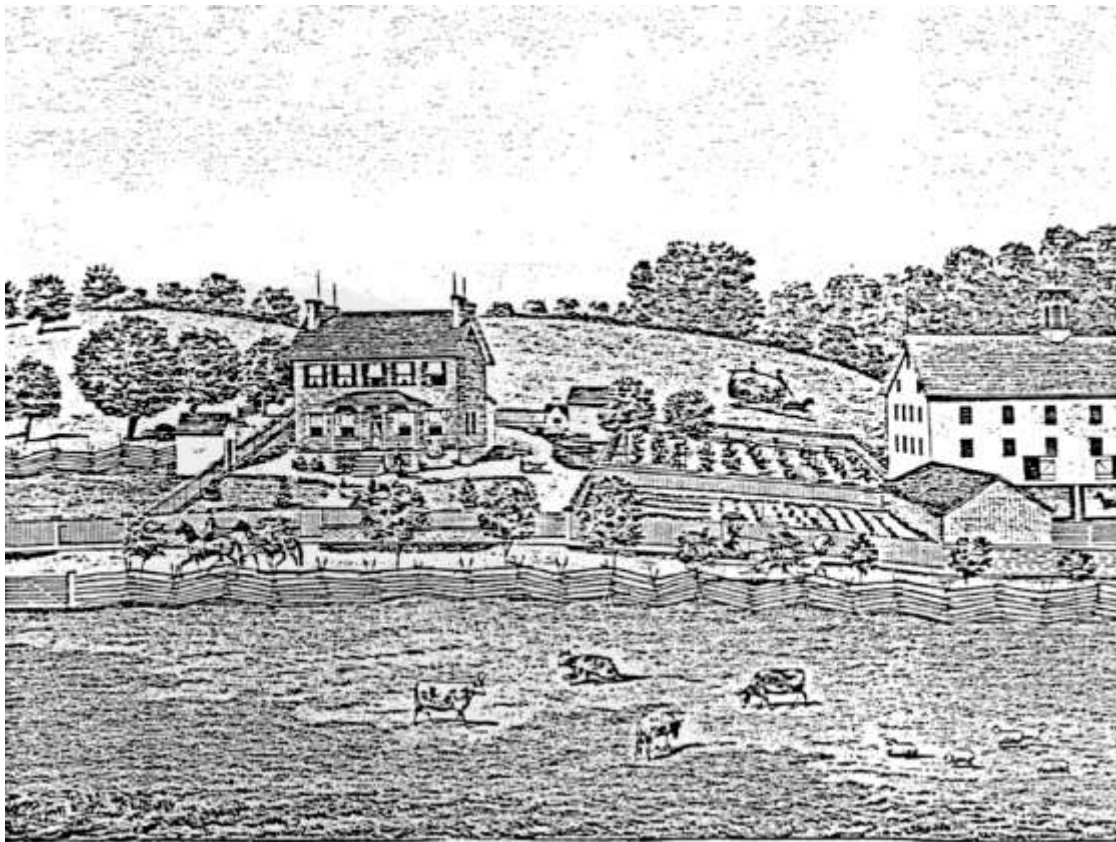
Picture 238 – The Ben Hughes-Calboun House drawing



Picture 239 – The McClelland-Cox House drawing



Picture 240 – The Hamphill Farm



RES. OF DAVID HEMPHILL, WEST DEER TP., ALLEGHENY CO., PA.

An old drawing of the David Hemphill farm in what is now Blanchard, later known as the Stewart farm it is now the home of Bill Erskine.

Picture 241 – The McClelland-Cox House drawing



The Graffith-Claus house in Russellton is West Deer's only example of Queen Anne architecture The Drawing was made by Doris McDonald.

Picture 242 – The Old Italian Club in Russellton



Photograph of a painting of the Old Italian Club in Russellton. Doris McDonald made the painting when the old house was still standing.

Picture 243 – The Old Dane house



A drawing of the old Dane house which stood near the crossroads of Kaufman and Logan Roads. Many of our older citizens will remember this house and the Dane blacksmith shop, which stood nearby. Doris McDonald made this drawing before the house was torn down.

Picture 244 – The Muntz house



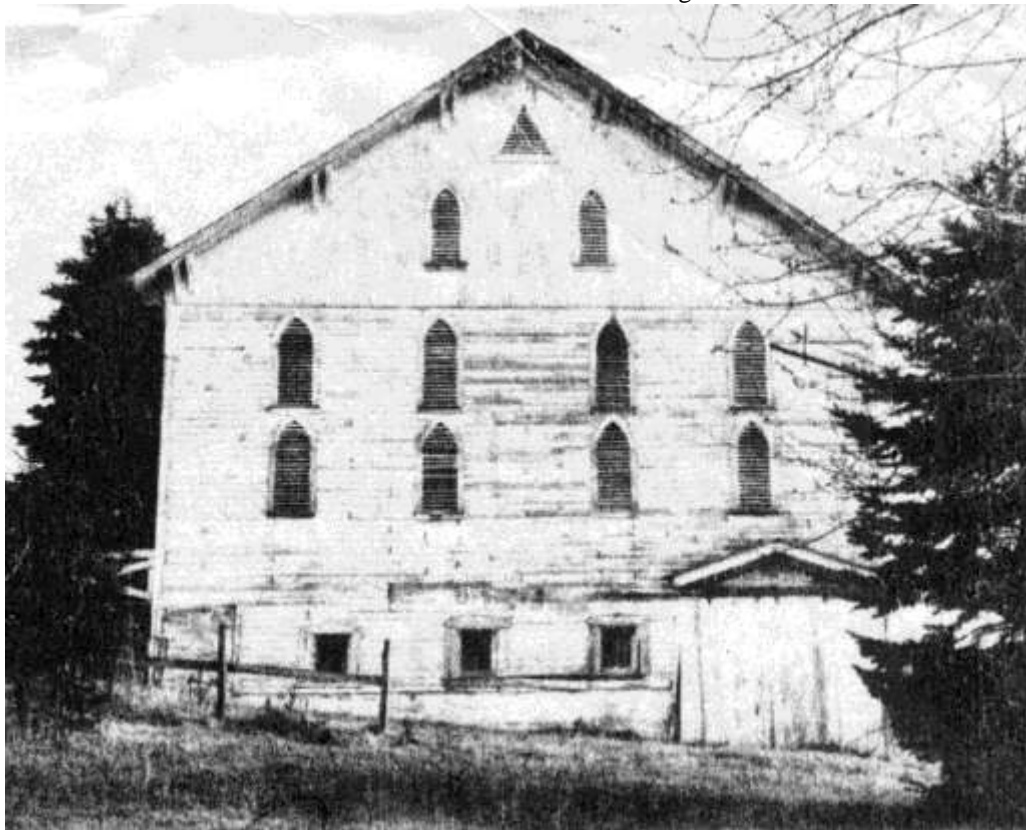
The Muntz house on Little Deer Creek Road just south of the DCDBA building. It is over 100 years old and is the only original farmhouse still standing in that immediate area. Photo from James Fryer whose grandfather owned the house.

Picture 245 – The Goipher - Lewetag House



The Old Goipher - Lewetag House built about 1900 of local brick was located at the corner of Logan (now Creighton-Russellton road and Mahaffey road. This picture taken about 1950. The house torn down by Park service about 1970. Photo from Ken Lewetag

Picture 246 – Barn Clendenning



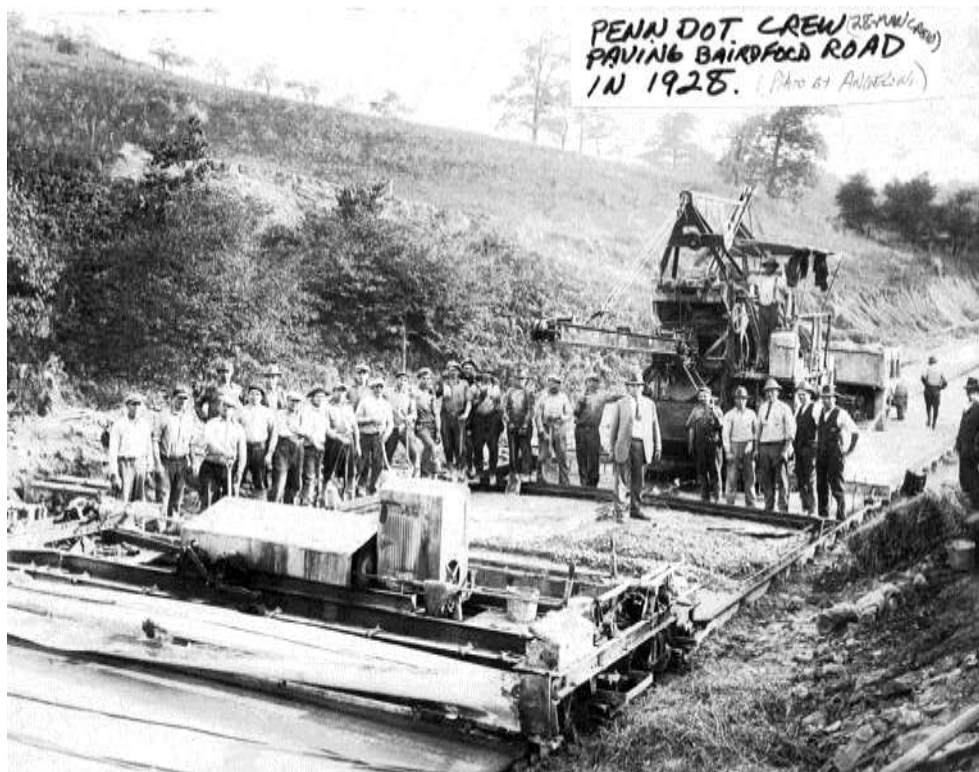
*Clendenning, Road between McMorran and Shepard Roads, West Deer about 1870 Barn Builders indulged their fancies in the nineteenth century just as architects did, through their means were more limited. Here, from bottom to top, the carpenter was able to include three types of pointed window heads, though admittedly the lowermost ones, typical carpenter's Greek Revival, are pointed very bluntly.
(Picture courtesy Dan Angeloni)*

Picture 247 – Water drilling



Well drilling in the 1940's (many a day my dad would come home from the mine knowing they had just cut through someones well casing)
(Picture courtesy Dan Angeloni)

Picture 248 – Paving Bairdford Road



PA DOT Paving Bairdford Road 1928 Mr. Prato is at the front right (with dark overalls) of paving machine. (Picture courtesy Dan Angeloni)

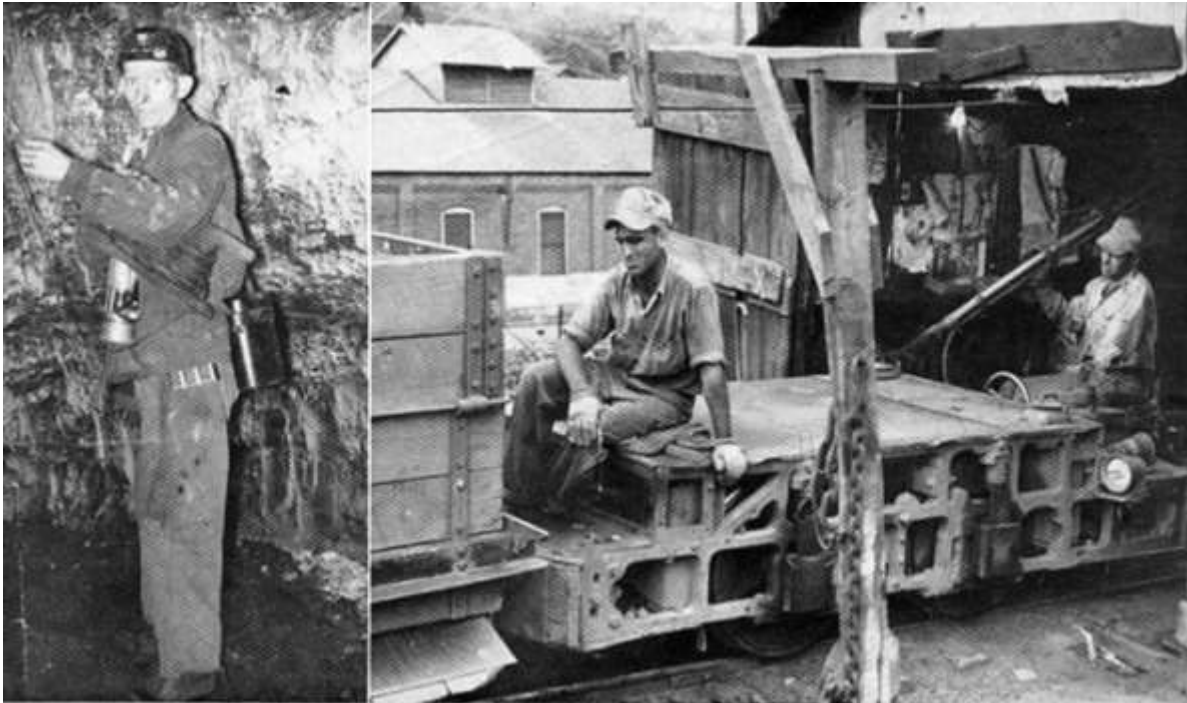
Picture 249 – Womenless wedding from 1950



"Womanless Wedding" was a comedy skit put on by the men of East Union Church in 1950. The actors were as follows: front row; Rev. Allan Shannon, the bride, Clair Marshall, the groom, and Bill Claypool, the maid of honor. Back row from the left; Dick Michael, C. Randall Myers, Wilson Grubbs, Clayton Mallinson, flower girl, Mr. Clouse, flower girl. Bill Newman. Ralph Hoburg - bridesmaid, James Wilson, Franklin Quinette, bridesmaid, and Harry Magill, Matron of Honor.

Pictures for "Around the mines"

Picture 250 – Miners Anderson, Adams & Romack



*Left - Russel Anderson shoter, preparing to shoot.
Right - Tommy Adams and Tom Romack Bony Motor Crew, Francis Mine (Curtisville #2)
From The Ford Lamp 1950*

Picture 251 – Miners Nolkerm Peters & Hice



Richard Nolkerm, Phillip Peters and Earl Hice trim a loaded car (The Ford Lamp 1950)

Picture 252 – Miners



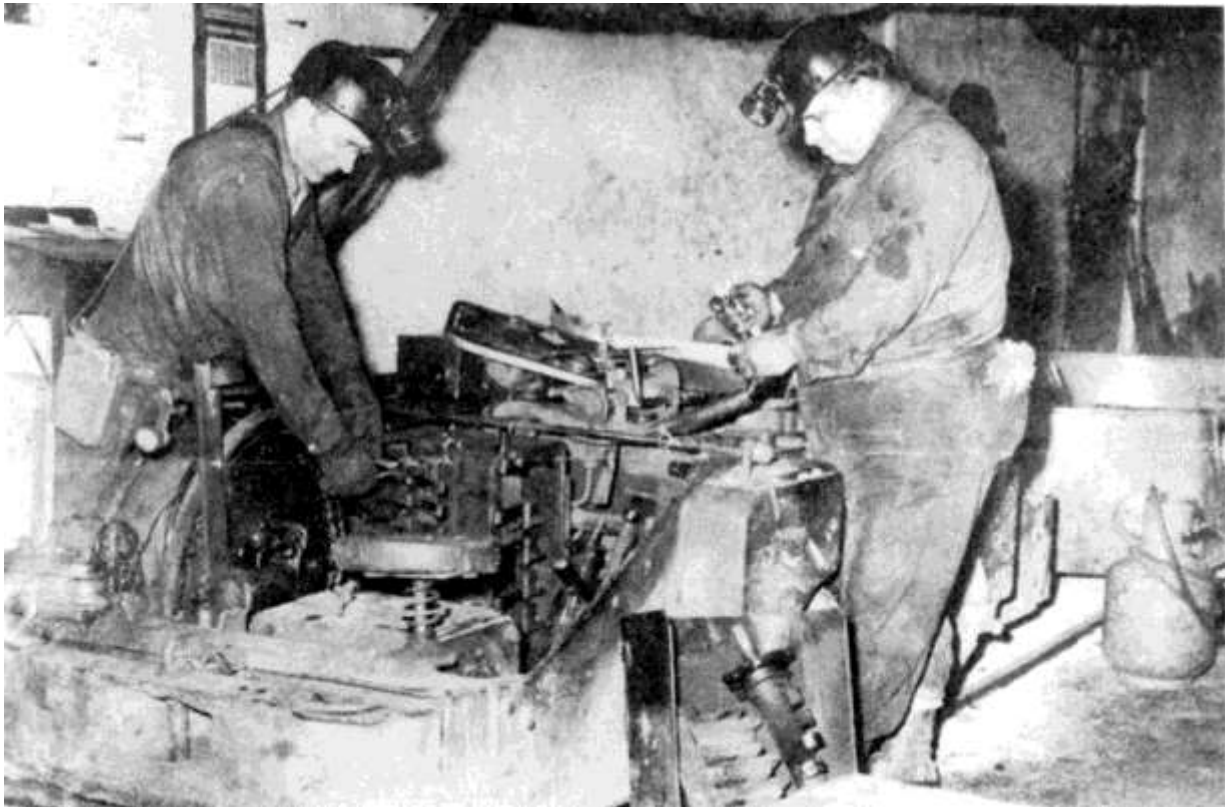
These miners, from an old Lamp picture, are not all identified but the names Pysh, Frenchko, Shopa and Haluschak are there. Can you find them? From an old Lamp loaned by Mike Pysh

Picture 253 – Miners with over 25 years in 1952



These Ford Collieries miners were retired with twenty or more year's service when this picture was taken in 1952. Photo from the Lamp loaned by Josie Stello

Picture 254 – Curtisville train station in 1920



Gabe Tabacchi (left) and Mike Radage are repairing a mine car at the Berry Mine (Curtisville #3).

Picture 255 – Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) employees 1952



DISCUSSING AFFAIRS of the day are Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) employees Carl Mann, Joseph Boynick, Frank Brbri, Walter Lewetag, John Nwreenshi, and Jacob Derlink (left to right). From Ford Lamp August 1952

Picture 256 – Miners Suskovich and Piper



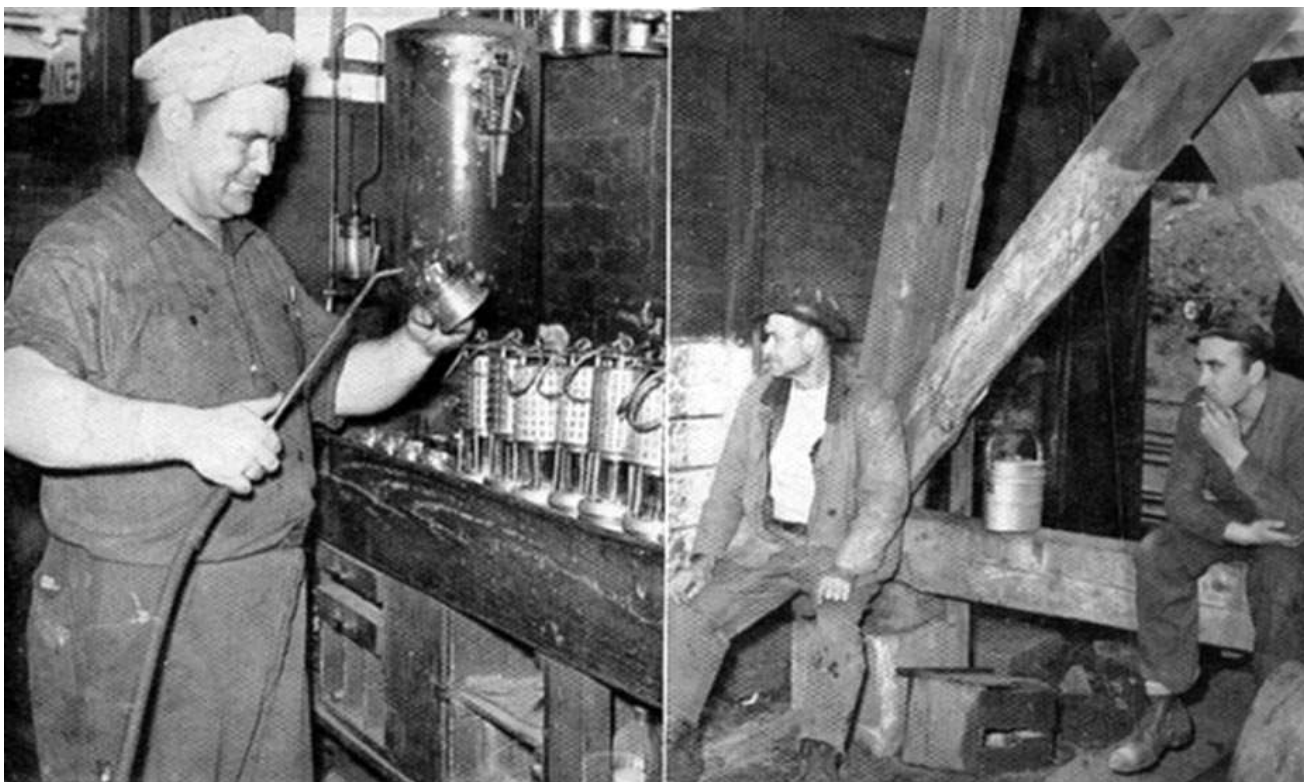
Shotfirer Joe Suskovich, right prepares to shoot following cutting of place. General Assistant Mine Forman L.W. Piper tests for gas. (The Ford Lamp 1951)

Picture 257 – Miners Maholic and Lawton



Duck Bill Crew Tom Maholic and C.W. "Butch" Lawton load rock (The Ford Lamp 1951)

Picture 258 – Miners Moore, Sabaki & Ramaley



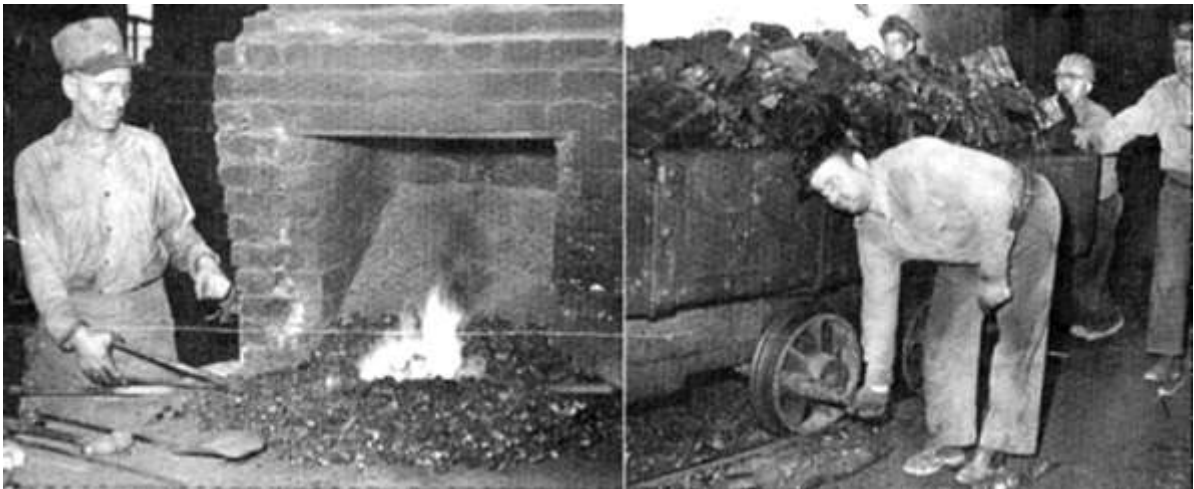
*Left - Alfred Moore, Berry Mine (Curtisville #3) Lamp House Attendant, cleans safety lamps
Right - Vincent Sabaki and Richard Remaley relax outside Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) where both are employed.
(The Ford Lamp 1952)*

Picture 259 – Miner Hoak & Davis



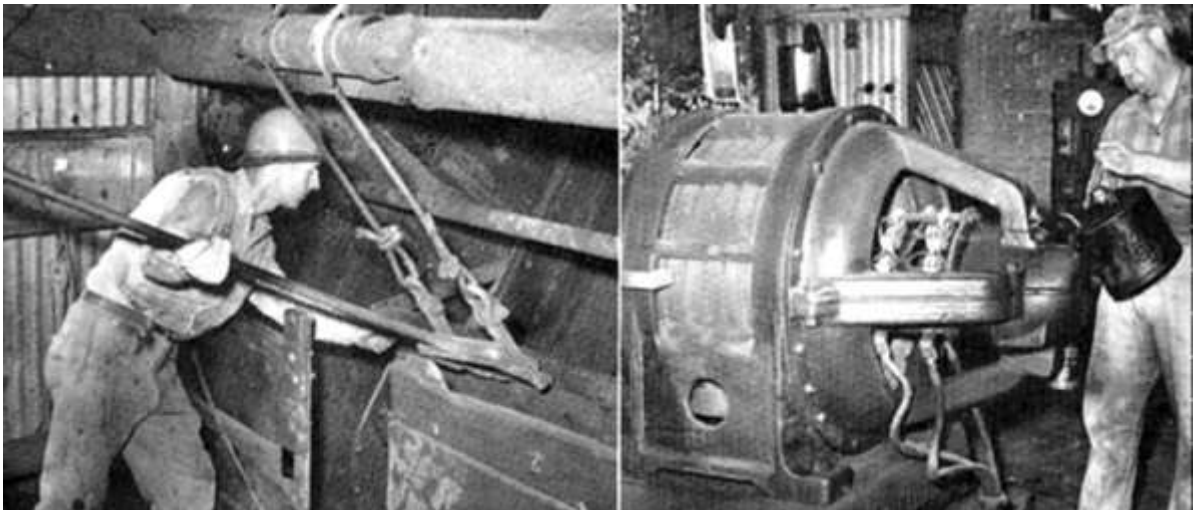
*Left - Digging Down Loose coal is Charles Hoak, loader for the Berry Mine (Curtisville #3) with 7 years service
Right - Irwin Davis is shown getting one of the pumps started at the Berry Mine (Curtisville #3), where he has been a pumper for the last 17 years (The Ford Lamp about 1952)*

Picture 260 – Miners Simon, Cotton, Litterini, Kelley & Bohuch



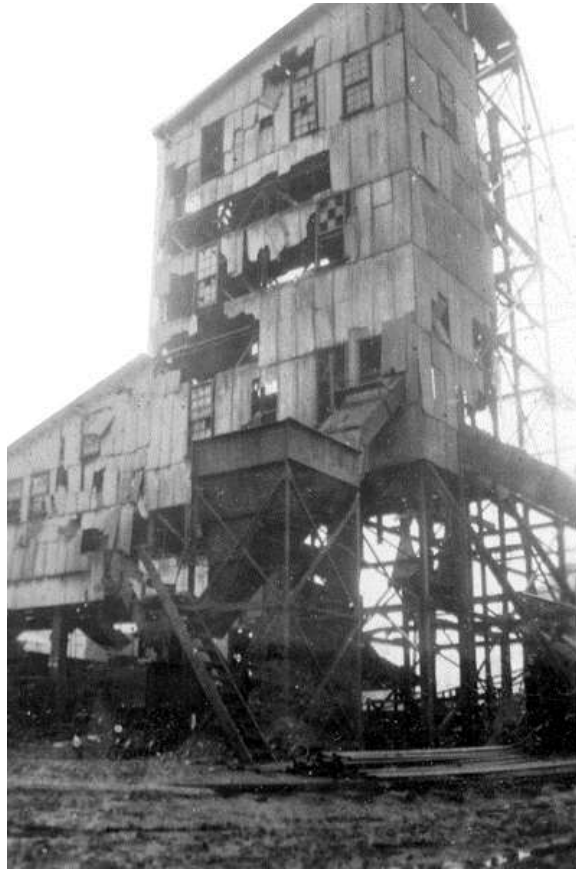
*Left -George Simon, a blacksmith at Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) for the last five years, is heating a strap in the Forge.
Right - A Group who cage the coal cars on the cage on the shaft bottom are, left to right, Anthony Cotton, 8 years service; Bernard Litterini, 2 years; Dave Kelley, 22 years; and Mike Bohuch with 28 years service. All four men work at France Mine (The Ford Lamp about 1952)*

Picture 261 – Miners Anderson & Miller



*Left - Catching End Gates at the car dump is Ernest Anderson and Army Vereran with 17 years service as dumper at the Berry (Curtisville #3) Mine.
Right - Howard Miller, shown oiling a fan motor, has worked at Francis Mine (Curtisville #2) for nearly 20 years. (The Ford Lamp about 1952)*

Picture 262 – Superior mine about 1917 after the explosion side view.



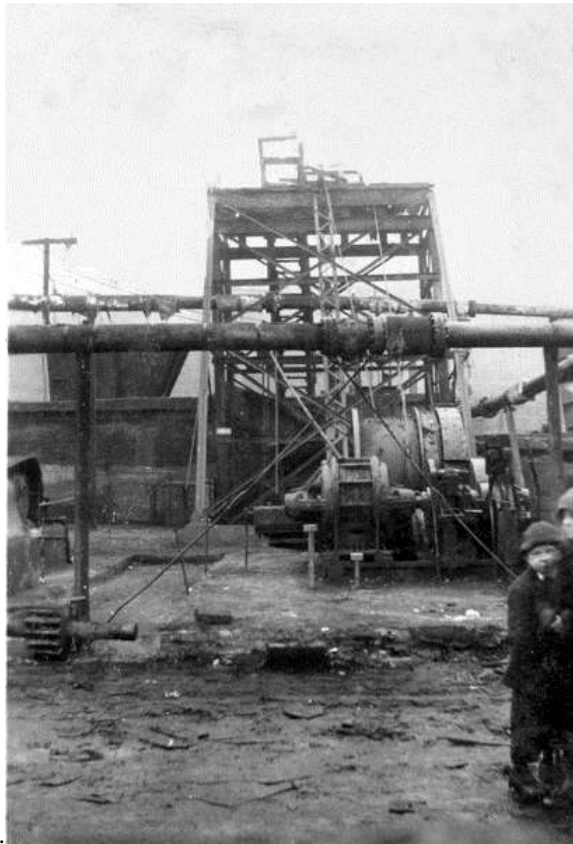
(Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

Picture 263 – Superior mine about 1917 brick building



(Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

Picture 264 – Superior mine about 1917 equipment



(Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

Picture 265 – Superior mine house damaged in the explosion in 1917



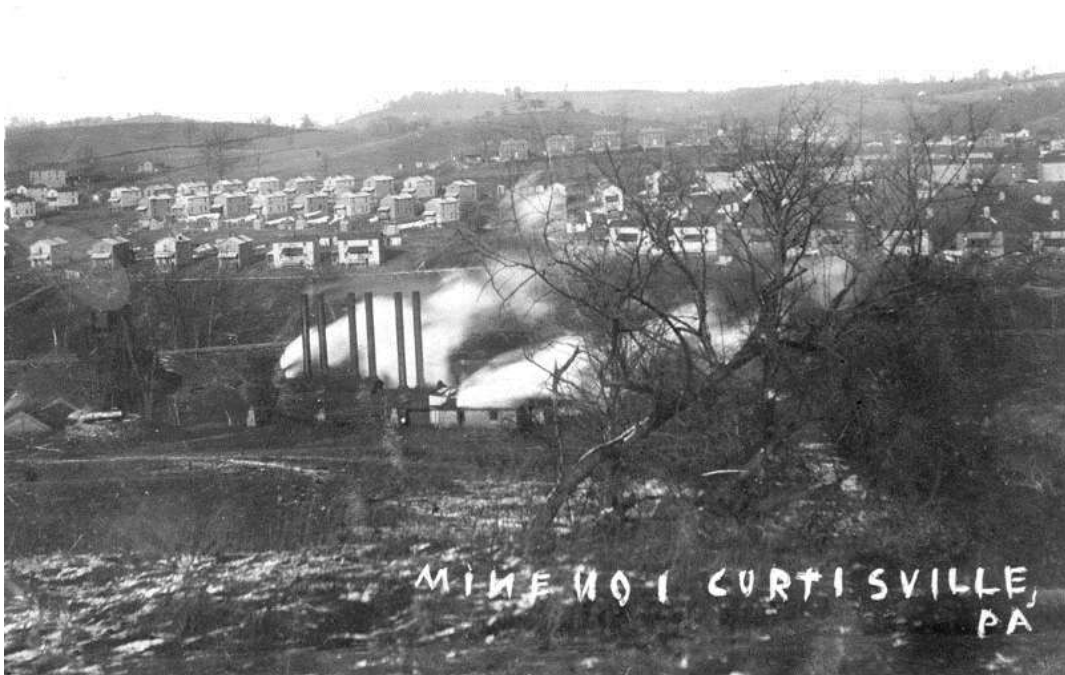
(Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

Picture 266 – Superior mine after 1918 after repairs



(Picture courtesy Theodore Albert Gall & daughter R. S. "Sue" Sukle)

Picture 267 – Curtisville # post card around 1911



This view of Curtisville comes from a post card that was never sent it was marked with Mrs. Ernest (Maggie Scully) Lewetag no postage so never sent.

NOTE that the town looks like it was newly placed since no trees are around the homes also snow on the ground in foreground and clothes on the laundry lines. If you look real close you will see a walking bridge in the middle left that crossed the creek presumably so the man could walk to work. (Post card Flo Lewetag Gavin)

Picture 268 – Dan Angeloni



Dan has supplies many of the supplementary pictures without him this republication would not be as rich.

Dan is a loyal resident who calls West Deer Township his "beloved long-time hometown." Dan is considered the township's keeper of the archives, as well as the caregiver of its pulse. He has a vast inventory of local photographs, many of which he professional and personally created. In addition, his storehouse of knowledge concerning the region is often called upon for reference and research.

Dan has a long history of journalistic endeavors, having served as writer, photographer, and editor of numerous publications. He is affectionately remembered by the many hundreds of students he mentored during his 37 years as a teacher and guidance counselor at the West Deer and Deer Lakes school districts.

Dan credits a hometown newspaper as being invaluable for helping to create a foundation of solidarity and progress for a treasured community such as West Deer and its environs. He welcomes the suggestions of local residents for suggestions of feature stories or human-interest photographs. (Town Flyer monthly newspaper from 2004)