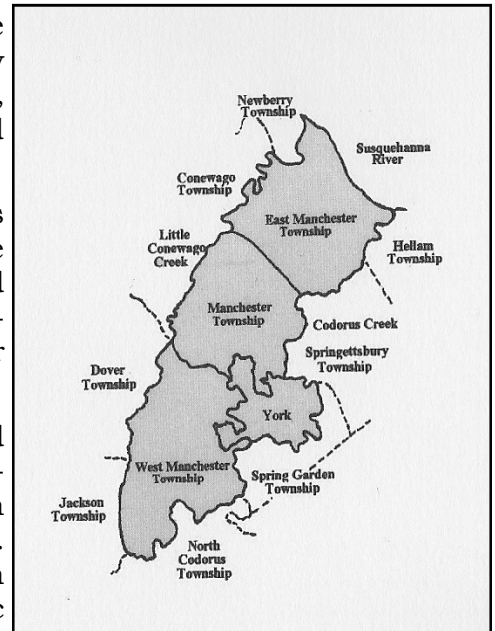# A Glimpse of Manchester Township History

By Maxine Lumsargis

The name of our township often causes confusion because there are three townships and one borough in York County with "Manchester" as part of the name. Manchester Township, West Manchester Township, East Manchester Township, and Manchester Borough share a common early history.

Today, Manchester Township, is the center portion of what was once a large township when it was first formed in 1740. The western portion became West Manchester Township in 1799 and East Manchester Township formed in 1887. Manchester Borough, once known as Liverpool, now lies within East Manchester Township.

The southwestern boundary is Roosevelt Avenue (Bull Road) and the northeastern boundary is from Codorus Creek to Little Conewago Creek along a line projecting northwest from near John Rudy Park to near the intersection of Bear Road and Canal Road. The current southern boundary of our township is smaller in comparison. It starts on the east at the Codorus, and is erratic along the south side of Route 30 until Pennsylvania Avenue where it jumps to the north side of Route 30. It is even more erratic until ending at Roosevelt Avenue and Greenbriar Road.

Manchester Township is the central portion of what was earlier a single, large township.

Early settlers

The names of many locations in the township are English in origin. William Penn was an English Quaker and his province was established under the rule of Charles II, King of England. There are also many names of nearby smaller villages, businesses, and many residents that are German.

Penn suffered religious persecution for his Quaker faith and held special sympathy for the religiously persecuted Germans during the Reformation. He appealed to them by special invitation to help settle his province in 1682. Twenty years later, the great German migration began and, by 1729, it became legal to be able to settle west of the Susquehanna River.

Many Germans were craftsmen and merchants, but most were farmers. The rich soil of York County drew many to our area. They brought with them their crafts, their knowledge of farming practices, their language, and their religious preferences. Many of the early settlers of Manchester Township were either part of that migration or were descendants of that first wave.

Mills

Water-powered mills appeared early to support agricultural needs and influence the growth of the area. Mills were built along two of the waterway boundaries of the township—the Codorus Creek on the east and the Little Conewago Creek on the northwest. Although a few of the mills remain standing, the only one still in operation is Con-Agra along the Codorus. Over time, the names of mills changed along with the names of their owners.

Codorus Navigation

Our Codorus Creek boundary was once used by the Codorus Navigation Company, which made the Codorus navigable from 1832 until about 1849 when it lost shipping business to more efficient railroads.

Navigation of the Codorus was conducted by a series of canals and locks, 10 miles in length, starting at landings on both George and Market Streets in York and ending at the mouth of the Codorus where it joined the Susquehanna River.

Rafts, arks, and boats, pulled by a horse or mule driven along a towpath, were used to transport materials and passengers. Two boats launched from York were the *Pioneer*, 40 feet long, and the *Codorus*, 70 feet long. The Codorus could carry 150 passengers. These two boats ran excursions after the completion of the first three miles of the system for round-trip tickets of 25 cents. The excursions ended at either Barnitz's Springs or Myers' Grove, just east of Emigsville, where picnics and celebrations were held.

Early churches

Early churches in rural areas were part of the "union movement." Since there were not sufficient means to support a church building and pastor for each denomination, it was more economical to share the cost of a building, take turns using it for worship services, and have the pastors travel a circuit to serve their particular denomination.

Many churches first started as Sunday Schools. The earliest churches established in what is present day Manchester Township were the Free Church of God and Bethany Union Chapel. The Free Church of God, also known as either Aughenbaugh Church, or Aughenbaugh School, was established in 1845 and is still standing, but unused, along the Susquehanna Trail at Bear Road. Bethany Chapel, Emigsville, was established in 1870 and was demolished in 1926 after each of its denominations established their own churches now known as St Mark's and Otterbein.

Railroads

There is one railroad line in the township and it is still in operation. The railroad, headed for Harrisburg, travels along the Codorus to Emigsville where it turns away from the creek and toward Mount Wolf.

Historic landmarks

We are indeed fortunate to have within our township three sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Oldest is the Willis House located on Willis Road near the southern edge of Prospect Hill Cemetery. It was built in 1762 by William Willis who "made the brick and raised the walls" for the original County Courthouse in 1754.

The second landmark is the Emig Mansion, located in Emigsville, and first built in 1850 by the family for whom the village is named. The third historic home is Sinking Springs Farms, located southwest of Emigsville. It boasts a manor house, four farmsteads, and a one-time radio station with a building and four radio towers.

York County

There were three counties in the new Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1682. They were Chester, Bucks, and Philadelphia Counties. In 1729, Lancaster County formed out of Chester County and included all of present-day York County. Then, in 1749, York County was formed from Lancaster County, and in 1800, Adams County was formed from York County. For the researcher, this means certain records for the area we know as York County are held in both Lancaster and Chester Counties.

Schools

The early non-public school system in our area began with so-called "free schools," which neglected poorer children. Our introduction into the public system was somewhat stormy when the acts of 1834 and 1849 met with opposition, but, ultimately, public schools were accepted.

A copy of a letter of agreement, dated November 1849, between a teacher and the president of the Board of School Directors of Common Schools of Manchester Township describes the school term of four months beginning on the second Monday of November for the compensation of $20 per month. By 1907 there were eight one-room schools. Three of these have been demolished. Five remain but four of these have been converted to residences. The only one still standing that has not been used as a residence is Centre Square School along Church Road in the village of Roundtown.

In 1938, a six-room school was built in Roundtown and provided the consolidation of students from all the smaller schools. In November of 1953, there was agreement to a merger of the Manchester Township School District with schools of North York Borough and schools of Springettsbury Township creating the Central Joint School System, now called the Central York School District. Currently there are three elementary schools in our township: Roundtown, Sinking Springs, and Hayshire.

Pfaltzgraff pottery

Johann George Pfaltzgraff was born in Germany in 1808. He was a potter by trade but couldn't own or operate a pottery because he could not acquire a Master Potters license since the industry was on the decline. He came to America in 1833 and purchased a farm in Conewago Township where he operated a pottery. Six years later he moved his operation to Freystown (East York) and again moved in 1848 to a farm in Foustown, Manchester Township where he again operated a pottery. A map dated 1876 shows the pottery and home along Brandywine Lane.

Johann George had five sons who were all engaged in pottery. Sons, George B. and Henry B., formed a partnership which became the early forerunner of the Pfaltzgraff Company. George B.'s granddaughter, Helen, married Louis J. Appell, whose family was engaged in the media business. This family merger later resulted in the formation of the Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Company.

The Emigs of Emigsville

John Emig Jr., for whom the village of Emigsville was named, was not only a farmer, but also a successful businessman. He built about a dozen houses and owned seven farms in Manchester Township.

Of his eleven children, three were sons who engaged in business.

John Albert and Edward K., in 1882, established the Acme Wagon Company, which manufactured farm wagons and carts and employed 90 to 100 workers. About 1927, the company was purchased by Carl Oermann who changed the name to American Acme Company and manufactured juvenile desks, table and chair sets, seesaws, sandboxes, and most popular of all, sleds. The locally made toys were in demand all over the country and were stocked by most department and furniture stores and, also, by mail order

CENTER SQUARE SCHOOL

Located at the intersection of Church Road and Sinking Springs Road, Centre Square is the only existing one-room school in the township that has not been converted to a residence. It's believed to have been built around 1885 and was closed in 1921. Currently, an effort is underway to conserve this historic structure. Contact us if you'd like to help:
ManTwpHistory@gmail.com

houses. The business ceased operations around 1967.

William Henry, along with his brother-in-law, owned Emig, Ruby & Co., manufacturers of cigars. When William Henry Emig died, the family farm passed to his son, Howard A., who entered into an agreement in 1961 to sell the farm to the York County Industrial Development Corporation. Emigsville has definitely been the manufacturing center of our township.

Emigsville Band

The Acme Cornet Band of Emigsville was organized in 1872. It was in existence for twenty years, then reorganized in 1906. Chronologically, it was ninth in the list of community bands in York County. Before the days of radio, television, and movies, "the prestige of the small community was often judged by the quality and size of its community band. It provided the entertainment for church picnics, park gatherings, parades, political campaigns and other celebrations." Today, the Acme Cornet Band is known as the Emigsville Band, which performs for picnics, parades, and serenades the village of Emigsville each Christmas morning with Christmas carols.

Agricultural heritage

In 1945, York County was one of the largest turkey producers east of the Mississippi. This was due to the development of the rearing house developed in 1944 by D. R. Abel and Son Farm. Abel succeeded in producing turkeys in confinement, which reduced both labor and losses of birds due to predators. It is believed this is the same D. R. Able who operated his turkey house on Eleventh Avenue near present Route 30—about where Wendy's now stands.

"In 1938, a dairy cattle breeding business was established at the Sinking Springs Farm owned by the Appells. It was supervised by Farm Manager Herman Stebbins whose pioneer work with genetic selection had an enormous impact on the nation's dairy industry and is responsible for the way dairy cattle are still bred today." (Historic York).

The first group of The Society of Farm Women in York County, a chapter of the Pennsylvania Society of Farm Women, was organized in 1930 in Emigsville by Mabel Rishel and Mary Gross. Ten years later, group five organized in Roundtown.

The National Grange began in 1867 as part of the Reconstruction after the Civil War. Members unite in elevating and advancing the interest of agriculture and rural life. The Grange has been a part of the Manchester Township scene since 1874 when it organized in Emigsville. This group was then 23 strong and contained the names, both men and women, from the early families who settled and developed the township.

It was typical for a local Grange to have its own Grange hall, where it was often the center of community activity. Grangers Hall appears on the 1876 map and is presently occupied by My Favorite Deli in Emigsville. The group reorganized several times and eventually, in 1970, consolidated with Valley Grange in Lewisberry.

Manchester Township Historical Society

Profiles is an educational outreach of the Manchester Township Historical Society. If you'd like to help us share the rich history of our area through oral history, photographs, or other memorabilia, we'd be interested in whatever you have to offer. Contact the Society at:

ManTwpHistory@gmail.com

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