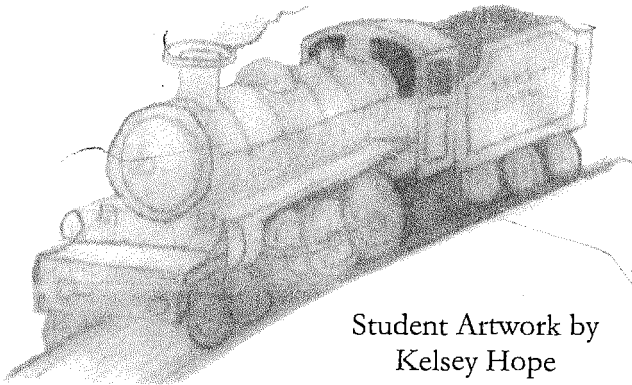


A HISTORY OF DERRY BOROUGH 1881-2006

IN HONOR OF THE QUASQUICENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION



Student Artwork by
Kelsey Hope

THE
125TH ANNIVERSARY OF
DERRY BOROUGH
CELEBRATION

**JULY 28 THROUGH JULY 30
2006**

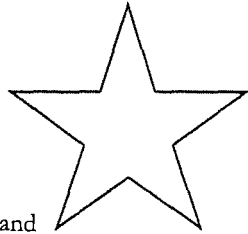
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



Wednesday July 26, 2006

Miss Derry Pageant

7:00 pm - Miss Derry Pageant
Derry Middle School Auditorium



Friday, July 28, 2006 – Downtown Derry Bandstand

6:00 – 7:00 pm - Commencement Church Service
7:30 – 8:30 pm - Miss Derry Pageant, winner crowned

Saturday, July 29, 2006

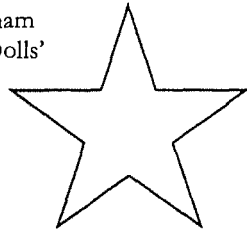


9:00 am - Celebration Opens
9:00 – 10:00 am - Parade line up @ Corner of Leo and Ridge Streets
10:00 – 12:00 pm - Parade
12:30 – 2:30 pm - “Primo and the Times Before” Band
3:00 – 6:00 pm - “Majority Rules” Band
6:00 – 9:00 pm - Free swim and musical performance by “TJ”
Country Singer - at Derry Pool
9:45 pm - Fireworks at Paskovitch Field



Sunday, July 30, 2006 - Downtown Derry Bandstand

11:00 am - Celebration Opens
12:00 – 1:00 pm - Children’s hour with Tom Beckham
1:00 – 2:00 pm - Performance by the ‘Diamond Dolls’
2:00 – 3:00 pm - Casey & RJ (Country Duo)
3:00 pm - 50/50 and other Prize Drawings
3:30 – 4:30 pm - Casey & RJ (Country Duo)
5:00 pm - Celebration Closes



*The 125th Anniversary of Derry Borough Committee is pleased to
join with you in the celebration of Derry's 125th Birthday.*

Sincerely,

R.T. Bolen
Chuck Denunzio
Lori Dudzinsky
Jodi Edminston
Lynn Ewing
George F. Kacenga
Richard McGinnis
Don McGraw

Enid Mercinko
Martin Rectenwald
Mary Rectenwald
Curt Robbins
Kathy Robbins
Cindy Rowe
Denise Swarner



A POEM ABOUT DERRY

In the foothills of the mountains
At the base of the Chestnut Ridge,
Lies the little town of Derry
With its arching railroad bridge.

It was once called Derry Station
When the railroad bustled here,
The name became- just- Derry
Eighteen- Eighty- One – the year.

Now circling all around the town
In a wide and rolling band
Is the part called Derry Township
Where first settlers claimed their land.

Here, once the Indians hunted
Any many wild beasts did roam,
But soon the settlers cleared for fields
Then built themselves a home.

Small villages dot this countryside
Too numerous, here to mention.
Yet you will find, inside this book,
They do receive attention.

We hope you'll like this little book,
We hope it gives you pleasure,
To learn of things—both then and now
And memories to treasure.

Isabel L. Green

August 20, 1975



A HISTORY IN BRIEF OF DERRY, PENNSYLVANIA

By George F. Kacenga

In a small borough, nestled among the foothills of the Laurel Mountains and alongside Chestnut Ridge, rests the community of Derry, Pennsylvania. Endowed with substantial deposits of natural resources native to Southwestern PA and a rich history that stretches into the corners of four centuries, this small town is looking towards the future for opportunities, growth and an enduring place in history.

John Pomeroy and James Wilson were the first settlers in the area in 1762, while the Greater Derry Area began to be settled in 1769, as the country embraced its manifest destiny and confronted the wild frontier. First came New Derry, laid out by the Guthries in 1815, then Derry Station in 1852, and then finally, Derry Borough.

As with much of the country at that time, agriculture was the primary industry in Derry until the advent of the burgeoning Railroad System in the early 1850's. The railroad brought life to small towns across Pennsylvania and in 1881, Derry Borough incorporated and began serving as a popular hub in the transportation of goods, services, ideas and culture from New York, through Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, and eventually across the nation.

Today, Derry continues to see trains on a daily basis, but as times have changed, so has this small town. The smoke filled skies of the bustling railroad days have cleared, and provided new horizons for expansion and development. Derry Area serves as a community based neighborhood with an eye on its most valuable resource, the young men and women, and children of Derry. With an outstanding educational system, community center and recently reconstructed community pool at a cost of one-half million dollars, the future of Derry rests with the great potential found in its youth.

As Derry Borough celebrates its 125th Anniversary, it becomes clear that the good nature and lasting commitment of the members of this community will serve to make Derry, PA not just a stop on an old railroad, but a destination where a pleasant blend of old customs and traditions in a contemporary modern setting can be found.



A HISTORY AT LENGTH OF DERRY, PENNSYLVANIA

Many excerpts below come from the Derry Area
America's Bicentennial Celebration Program, 1976,
with updates as needed.

INDIANS

Relics have been found in Western Pennsylvania proving that Indians once roamed over these hills in great numbers. Their presence is also reflected in the beautiful names give to our rivers, valleys and towns. The Indians maintained their traditions, customs and laws only through mental retention, transmitting them by word-of-mouth from generation to generation. Consequently the true story of the Indians is almost entirely lost, or has remained a tradition within their own native culture. The Six Indian Nations of Southwestern Pennsylvania included the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onandagas, Cayugas, Senecas and Tuscaroras.

Early settlers of Derry were exposed to the incursions and depredations of the Indians from the earliest known times to a very short period before the Revolution. The old military road which ran directly through Derry, the old trails along the streams worn smooth from savages' moccasins, the dense woods to the north, all of these presented extremely dangerous environs for the location of a community. Wild animals and reptiles caused intense apprehension to the pioneer settlers. Rattlesnakes were rampant those days and to this day some can be seen sunning themselves along the side of the Chestnut Ridge. Many bears flourished in this wilderness also, and were troublesome to early settlers because they carried off young hogs and small livestock. Wolves, too, created many problems. Christian Post, in his second journal, for the 9th of November, 1758, entered this remark from his camp along the Loyalhanna Creek: "The wolves made a terrible music this night." Local historians have frequently noted that to the middle years of the Revolution this region was literally a "howling wilderness" from the cries of the wolves.

To the early settlers there was probably no sound so terrifying as that of these famished wolves, unless we can accept the howls of those two-legged wolves, the Indians. Unless one has heard a wolf howl, one can scarcely imagine its bone-chilling terror. Wolves did not, for instance, howl coarsely, but in a tremulous long shrieking, ever-increasing in volume as they raised their heads, beginning first with the leader then followed by the chorusing pack.

EARLY SETTLERS

It is probably, but not certainly provable, that settlements were made in the Derry area shortly after the formation of the old military road, or Forbes Road (1758), that is to say, some of the settlements as early as 1762, or previous to Pontiac's War.

Among the first settlers, if not the very first, was John Pomeroy, a man who was not only the first in respect to time, but who remained among the first men of the settlement in many respects until his death, nearly the space of a generation later. Pomeroy, a young farmer in Cumberland Valley, heard of the large quantity of good rich land in this vicinity, after the occupation of the region by the army of General Forbes. Being adventuresome and ambitious, he decided to see for himself. Crossing Chestnut Ridge by way of Fort Ligonier, he selected a prime piece of land, marked it off with boundaries, and claimed possession by building a cabin.

Roaming inquisitive Indians would stop by his curious cabin. One day a white man appeared. This man was James Wilson who afterwards became a fast friend and chose a plot for himself about a mile from Pomeroy. With the help of Pomeroy, he also built a log cabin, and the two men passed the night alternately together. These two homes for all needful purposed may be designated as being the original village of New Derry.

Having cleared some land by hewing trees to construct their cabins, the two men raised some corn and potatoes during their first summer, and they sowed winter wheat in the fall, having carried the seed in their backpacks from Fort Ligonier. Together, they returned to their homes in Cumberland Valley to spend a more comfortable winter with relatives and friends. They following spring, they met as agreed, and returned to their cabins in the wilderness, then known only as the Frontier of Cumberland County. Their property was in order. Although there was evidence of inquisitive prowling Indians examining their homes, there was no destruction. They spent the summer making their cabins more weatherproof and comfortable, and cleared more land for larger crops.

During the second winter, Pomeroy and Wilson returned to their old homes east of the mountains. The following spring they returned to Derry with new brides. John Pomeroy's wife was Hannah Graham, the daughter of Francis Graham, a neighbor and friend of John's father, George; and James Wilson's bride was Isabel Barr. Contrary to some previous historical publication this information is based on factual evidence. The Pomeroy's are buried in the Old Salem Churchyard in Derry Township; the Wilson's are buried in the Old Fort Barr Cemetery at New Derry.

EARLY CUSTOMS

The first and most important duty of the pioneer in this section was to protect himself and his family from the Indians tomahawks, which spared neither age nor sex. All inmates of the house were trained to perform a part in its defense when necessary.

The Indians, to be sure, had no artillery; otherwise the settlers' crude



forts would not have withstood a long siege. The first settlers necessarily brought with them all their household good and farming machinery. All products to be sent any distance were carried on pack horses.

Many of the early settlers in Derry Township arrived before the land had been purchased from the Indians. When the land office was opened in 1769, however, many of them were successful in obtaining warrants for their holdings. Among the early settlers were John Pomeroy, James Barr, James Wilson, Robert Barr, William Guthrie, John Shields, Samuel Craig and Richard Wallace.

Samuel Craig, Sr., was among those who were in the campaign of 1777 with General George Washington. He was one of the leading local military men. He moved with his family from Jersey about 1769, and purchased a large farm on the east side of the Loyalhanna Creek nearly opposite where the Crabtree flows into that stream. He and his three eldest sons, John, Alexander and Samuel, all participated in the Revolutionary War. The life of the elder Samuel Craig was cut short. Upon his return from the War, he took an active part in the defense of the frontier border. He was raised to several fiduciary appointments and offices of responsibility. Among others, he held the trust of commissary. The duties of this office called him to Fort Ligonier and on one of his frequent journeys to the fort, he was taken on the road. His horse was found on the Chestnut Ridge, between his home and this post. The horse had been felled by eight bullets, but all efforts of the family to ascertain the fate of Samuel Craig were fruitless.

The men of this family were, as we have said, among the first to enlist at the call for troops, and they suffered in common with their comrades in the campaign in the Jerseys. In one of the battles, Alexander had a lock of hair cut from his head by a bullet from the enemy. On the night before the battle of Princeton, they slept on the wet ground. Alexander was not twenty years of age when he entered the army in Captain John Shields' company. He was commissioned a Lieutenant Colonel of the State Militia in 1789, and Brigadier in 1807, and again in 1811. He was, however, better known as Captain and with the Shields's, and the Solans, the Wilsons and the Wallaces, was one of the great fighting men of the Derry Settlement, and figured in the old stories among its heroes.

Thomas Culbertson settled on early land and is said to have built the first stone house in this part of the country. William Hughes was a very early settler. His oldest son was said to have been the first male child born in the Derry area.

The first Federal Census of 1790, give the population of Derry Township as 285 families, 824 males, 778 females, 67 slaves and 6 others. According to the Lincoln Library, the category "others" in the first census, may have included bond servants and convicts. The former gave four to seven years of their labor in exchange for passage to the colonies. Archibald Trimble had 10, James Barr had 10, and William Herron had 4. Sam Parr had one slave, Dr. Walls had one slave, James Wilkins was unmarried, but had three slaves and James Wilson, also, had one slave.



FORTIFICATIONS

Fort Barr, Fort Wallace and Pomeroy's Blockhouse were erected as places of refuge prior to 1774.

Fort Barr was located on the Barr farm about a mile north of Derry. Later, its location was better known as being on the Gilson Farm, many persons called it for Gilson. This is incorrect. Although the elder Gilson bought the land from the Barrs, the fort had been abandoned prior to the transfer.

Fort Wallace was about five miles distant and was located on the Wallace farm on Magee Run, 5 1/2 miles north of Derry. Richard Wallace, soon after getting his farm in order erected a mill which was one of the first in the region. The first mill was a small one and had but one run of stones. Before this mill was built, the settlers had to crush their grain in mortars or with hand mills. The Fort stood immediately above the site of Wallace's Mill. The House, with portholes still intact, is not the George E. Curnow home.

One of the foremost men of the settlement about Wallace's Fort was James Wilson. Colonel Wilson and John Pomeroy remained close and fast friends all their lives. Pomeroy, although not such a leader in military affairs as Wilson, was always a leader in civil affairs. He was one of the five commissioners appointed by Act of Assembly in 1785 to locate a county seat for the county, and whose labors resulted in the selection of Greensburg.

John Pomeroy's cabin, built of logs and containing portholes in the loft for guns, was known as Pomeroy's Blockhouse. The Blockhouse was situated east of New Derry, about one mile, on the ground where Bergman's Dairy Bar once was and where Ridgeview Veterinary Clinic currently stands.

The signal for the settlers to flee was three rifle shots fired in quick succession. The Indians were more troublesome during harvest and in the fall than at any other season. The last hostile demonstration about Fort Wallace was after the Revolution in 1783. At that time, a half-breed, used by the British under their pay, and partly equipped in the uniform of an officer, approached the fort with a flag. This was shortly after the raid on Hannastown. This fellow was actually a decoy. But the settlers there suspected him at once, having been deceived in this manner so frequently, they shot and killed him. No attack was made.

NEW DERRY

An old settlement in the area is New Derry. About 1860 it was located on the main highway connecting Pittsburgh and the East. New Derry had three hotels to lodge travelers. The main occupations of the settlers were coal mining and farming. Around 1850 Silas Riggs built a foundry from which several kinds of steel were made. The steel was hauled to the Pennsylvania Canal in Blairsville, loaded on boats and shipped east.



GRAY STATION

The present community of Gray Station was settled in 1830 by John D. Gray. He was born in England and came to America in 1830. In 1832 he married and built a large brick house which is still standing. It is the only house located on the north side of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks in Gray Station.

HILLSIDE

Hillside is one of the oldest villages in Derry Area. In its earlier days, it boasted two thriving industries, a woolen mill and a tannery. In 1826, Alexander Craig had 300 acres one-fourth mile east of Hillside, on which he built a large woolen factory with a water-wheel and millrace to drive the machine. At approximately the same time, Mr. Anderson bought a tract of land from Mr. H.B. Kuhns, where he operated a large tannery. Shortly thereafter, a colony of Swedish people settled in Hillside and opened a quarry. Large orders of hand-cut blocks were shipped to Pittsburgh for the hilly streets.

EARLY SCHOOLS IN DERRY TOWNSHIP

Early schools were built on land donated by a farmer, who thereby secured for his children the advantages of a school nearby. They located near a spring for a supply of water was necessary. The school also was located centrally, so that it would receive the largest possible patronage from the people.

Prior to 1825, there was no country schoolhouse in the county that was not built of logs. The first frame schoolhouse built in Derry Township in 1825, at what is known as No. 7 School, and was called "Center Union School House." It was located near Keystone State Park. The building was about 12'x12' and the ceiling was about 7 feet high. It had a door at one end and a window at the other. The writing desks were fastened around the wall. The seats were "log seats." The room was heated by a tenplate stove, using wood for fuel. In 1835, the schoolhouse increased to 16' x 16', but the ceiling remained at its original height. This prevented the master from using the stick as he might have wanted to. This building remained in service until 1853, when it was torn down. A new one was erected in the same place that year. In 1904, the third schoolhouse was erected near the original site. The use of this building as a school was discontinued in 1951.

BEAR CAVE

Probably the greatest natural curiosity within the limits of the area is the "Bear Cave." It is a monstrous cavern in the Chestnut Ridge, and the nearest designated point to it is Hillside.

There have been many accounts written descriptive of the great natural wonder, which have appeared from time to time in various periodicals. The first general public notice taken of this cave was probably about the year 1840. Prior to



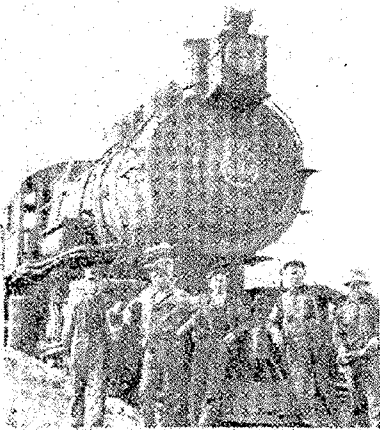
that time it is not likely it was explored, if, indeed, a knowledge of it was even locally well known.

An account of an exploring party appeared in "the Blairsville Record of November," 1842. This party was made up of young men mostly from Blairsville, who were well prepared to make a thorough examination of the cave. At the cave, they divided into two parties; one of these entered to the right, the other to the left. In their progress they passed along over deep fissures, and heard far beneath them gurgling of subterranean streams, into whose depths the light from their torches did not penetrate, nor could dropped stones be heard to reach the bottom.

The party, which had difficulty sometime, was compelled to crawl under the rocks, at other times to stoop low and walk awkwardly. They penetrated a distance of nineteen hundred and forty-seven yards, where at the end of a narrow passageway there was a room-like cavity. Here their journey ended. They said they explored in all forty-nine different rooms or apartments, varying in size from eight to thirty and forty feet square. In some, were found large quantities of carbonate of lime.

In 1872, the Patrick Fleming family moved from Pittsburgh and located on what was known at that time as the Bear Cave Farm near Hillside. This well-known cave was under the farm. Their son, Robert J., is credited with saving three lives of cave explorers. At one time, he saved two girls who had become lost in its mazes; at another time, a young man who had become separated from exploring party and became lost. A searching party continued until nine in the evening when Robert, being more familiar with the various rooms and chambers, located the young man.

RAILROAD



One of the many typical early train crews.

On December 10, 1852 the Pennsylvania Railroad had successfully reaches its ultimate objective of connecting Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. The first locomotive, the Henry Clay, made the initial run between the two cities before the end of the year. The Main Line was so called as the railroad then consisted of a single track.

Locally two Irish work crews were employed by the Pennsylvania Railroad during the summer of 1852. One group of approximately 300 "Linstermen" were laying rails from Hillside to Greens-





DERRY STATION,

PENNSYLVANIA
1906

THE DERRY ROAD

Up and down the little road
We walked and talked together,
While in the field the Bumblebees
Mumbled to the heather.

Kingcups bloomed and blackbirds sang,
And oh, we two were merry,
As hand in hand we walked along
The little road to Derry

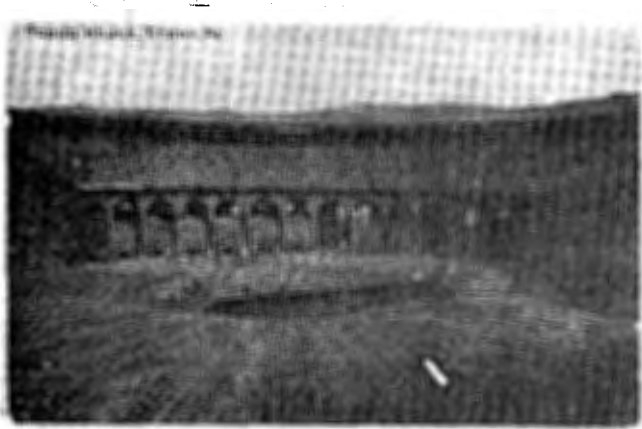
Leona Bishop Mealey



burg; the other group of approximately 200 "Fardowners" were working in the Packsaddle and Bolivar area. Because of nationalistic jealousy, the two crews got into available kind of weapons from axe handles to shooting irons. Two men were killed and buried where they fell, twenty-three were injured. When additional tracks were laid during the 1860's the graves of the two men were covered out of sight. The incentive for the battle was born in Ireland prior to or at the time of the Battle of Boyne. Bitter feelings existed between the Northern Irish and the Southern Irish similar to that of our country prior to and following the Civil War.

In 1852, a railroad station was built in Derry. Because of the nearness of the settlement of New Derry, then known as Derry Town, the name "Derry Station" was given to this new development. Ironically, this mere train stop gave birth to a community which later completely overshadowed the settlement from which it derived its name. When this new town was later incorporated into a borough, the word "Station" was dropped as part of the name.

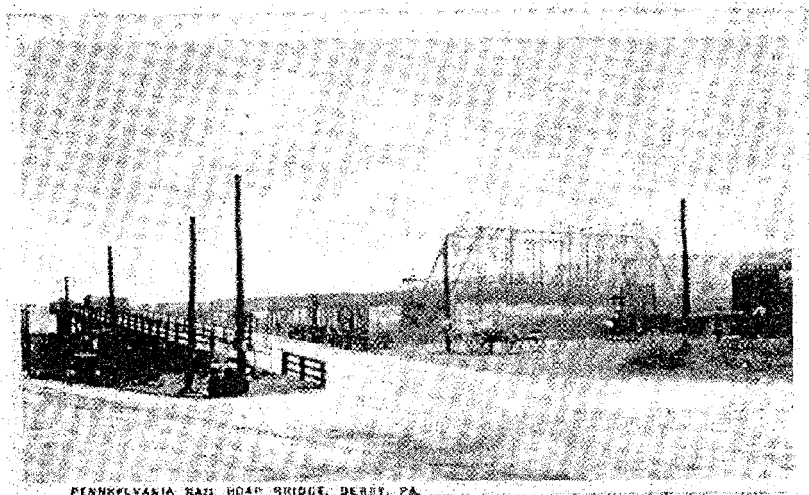
The railroad crossover west of Derry has become known as Burd's Crossing, named for Simon K. Burd, a Civil War veteran, whose farm had this roadway at its west boundary. His farm extended from Burd's Crossing north to what is now Ridge Avenue, and from the state road, now Hickory Avenue, to what used to be called Sutton's Hill east.



Repairs being made on locomotives at Engine House (Round House.)
One of the many typical early train crews.

Shortly after the station was built, the railroad erected a frame engine house big enough to accommodate six engines. As it provided no working room, the servicing and repairs to the engines had to be done outside the building. A second engine house of brick construction was built later, and it housed thirty engines and sufficient work areas.

The first "Y" rails for turning engines were built on the present site of the Westinghouse property in 1869 or 1870. These "Y" rails enabled engines to be headed east or west. The growing importance of the railroad in Derry required



PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD BRIDGE, DERRY, PA.

The original Railroad Bridge.

the building of a third engine house, colloquially known as "The Round House", in 1916.

The Derry terminal became the main center of operations between Pittsburgh and Altoona. Because of its location, Derry became one of the most important stations on the railroad. Here, all freight cars were overhauled, inspected, weighed, separated and made into trains and routed on their journeys. The average daily checklist of railroad cars numbered eighteen hundred.

The one Main Line had by now grown into two Main Lines plus the five sidings on the northside, two sidings on the southside, and a third siding for delivering freight to Derry. The shifting of eastbound trains was done without a locomotive by taking advantage of the sloping contour of the land in that direction; however, a locomotive was required to shift westbound trains.

In 1893, a wooden L-shaped overhead bridge was constructed to eliminate the danger of numerous grade crossings. The freakish bridge, connecting First and Second Wards to the south of the railroad, with Third and Fourth Wards to the north, was the solution to the engineering dilemma. Its purpose was to provide necessary clearance over the tracks from First Avenue to Second Street. The Pennsylvania Railroad engineers solved the problem by erecting a steel span over the Main Line and placing a steep approach to the south and an L-shaped approach to the north.

The bridge had been in use for five years when its first fatal accident occurred. On August 13, 1898, Hamilton Smith and his daughter, Miss Georgia Smith, of Ligonier Valley, were driving over the bridge in a horse and buggy when a locomotive passing under the bridge frightened the horse and caused it to bolt. The horse dashed headlong, not making the 90 degree L-turn, crashed through the railing and fell to the street below. All were killed. The bridge figured in a near tragedy in 1941 when the Derry Volunteer Fire Company's pumper skidded

on ice at the turn in the bridge and crashed through the railing separating the pedestrian walk from the roadway. Considerable damage was done but no fatalities occurred.

During the height of activity at the Derry Yards, there were 42 east bound crews working on the runs between Derry and Altoona hauling coal and coke from the surrounding area. In addition, 25 crews worked on the local mine runs. The boom in railroad activity has declined steadily since the peak years of World War II. "The Round House," yard office and numerous other buildings have been dismantled as the operation center has been relocated in Pittsburgh and Altoona. The Pennsylvania Railroad, now Penn Central, has two remaining tracks in use going through Derry.

On September 4, 1965, the new Derry Bridge was opened for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The bridge was built to replace the old wooden structure which was deteriorating and was no longer adequate to handle the increased flow of motor vehicle traffic. A Grand Opening Program of events marked the day for Derry residents. The program was sponsored by the Greater Derry Junior Chamber of Commerce and included a large parade, a luncheon, and dedicatory ceremonies. Derry's old bridge had been in service since 1893, and it was a commonly shared belief that if a person learning to drive could negotiate the 90 degree angle turn on the bridge, while facing oncoming traffic, he or she would have little difficulty in passing the driver's test!

FIRST HOMES IN DERRY

One of the first houses in Derry was a log home built by the Mossholder family. It was located at the north end of South Chestnut Street before the railroad came into being. It was situated on the rail road right-of-way and had to be torn down. Mr. Mossholder owned all of the land north of the railroad that bisected the town, including Mossholder Hill as it is still known today. He refused to sell lots, but after his death, his heirs sold the property with one plot of 103 acres purchased by Edward Pitcarin, J.C. Cambell and two Saxman brothers from Latrobe, about 1878 or 1879.

Sebastian and Rose Kolb came to Derry from Germany and built a log house on First Avenue in approximately 1854. The Kolbs gradually purchased all of the land east of Ligonier Street from the Railroad into Chestnut Ridge. On East Second Avenue, the Kolbs operated a stone quarry, the stone from which the present railroad bridge in Johnstown was constructed. Mr. Kolb, a finish carpenter with a flourishing timber business, built another log house on South Ligonier Street near a clear water spring and later sold the property to another Derry family, Mr. and Mrs. George Werner on May 11, 1868. The Werners built their home nearer the Street, and it is now 402 South Ligonier Street.

One of the oldest homes in the area surrounding Derry is an old stone farmhouse. The farm was originally part of a land grant made in 1769 from William Penn, extending from new Alexandria into Chestnut Ridge. The home was built in 1789 as verified by the cornerstone date, with the initials "W.G." referring to William Guthrie. It is said to be the second oldest house in Westmoreland County.

EARLY STORES AND BUSINESSES IN DERRY

Two of the first stores in Derry were grocery stores owned by Hiram Yealy and Fred Beltz. These stores were erected in 1860. The Beltz store was located along Railroad Street, and the Yealy Store was located on the same street, not far from the Beltz Store. In 1872, Mr. Beltz moved his store into the "Big Brick," and August Fink opened a store in the former Beltz Store. Both Mr. Beltz and Mr. Yealy had come to Derry from Ligonier.

Another early businessman in Derry was W.J. Blair, who was a photographer and in 1865 had his shop at the corner of what is now First Avenue and Railroad Street. Another photographer in Derry was Edward V. Bridge. From 1902 until 1915, he conducted his business in his second floor studio, over Vitale's Store at 137 First Avenue.

Derry had a tannery in the early 1860's located near the overhead bridge. The owner and operator was Mr. Herrod. Joseph Piper operated the General Store. Johnson D. Neely erected a Flour Mill in 1877. The mill was located on the north side of town. Magee Run powered the mill. Amos O. Caven came to Derry from Ligonier Valley in 1876 and became one of Derry's most prominent merchants and bankers. He had a General Merchandise Store on Railroad Street for several years. He built and founded Derry Citizens Bank in 1886, and prior to 1877 he had built the two-story large brick building at the corner of S. Chestnut Street and First Avenue.

Joseph Greubel operated a bakery and confectionary store and was the first man in Derry to make ice cream. The ice cream making machinery was operated by a steam engine. Mr. Greubel had an ice cream parlor in the back of the store accessible by a side entrance, and a soda-fountain in the front of the store. The family also lived there. His brother-in-law, Charles A. Ziegler, and his sister, Annie, worked with him. About 1898, the Ziegler's started a business of their own across the street on First Avenue. They, too, had a bakery, ice cream and soda fountain. Ziegler had a peanut roaster wagon on Saturday evenings. The aroma of the roasting peanuts in the air drew many people to purchase a large bag of peanuts costing 5 cents! Later Mr. Ziegler had a restaurant next door.

Another prominent citizen was Warner Utts, owner of a general merchandise store in 1882. His daughter, Mrs. Walter (Helen Utts), Thomas, of Latrobe, reports that he established the original Electric Power Plant on S. Chestnut Street and the Utts's home at 315 S. Chestnut had the first electric lights in Derry. He was also instrumental in starting the first sewage plant in the early 1900's. Mr. Utts had an office in the First National Bank Bldg. and served also as Burgess of Derry.

George M. Thomas had the first drugstore from 1879 until 1929. In 1880, a sawmill was erected at the corner of South Chestnut Street and Second Avenue. Frank Cordi started a fruit market at the corner of North Chestnut Street and Second Street, and then branched into the ice cream and restaurant business. The first Derry physicians were Doctors King and Miller, who began practicing shortly after the railroad was completed.

DERRY BECOMES A BOROUGH

On May 14, 1881, the inhabitants of Derry Station filed a petition in the proper court in which they prayed for their erection into a borough. The Grand Jury, at the May term of the same year, returned the application with the endorsement that they believed it expedient to grant the prayer of the petitioners. The solicitor of petitions prepared a decree of incorporation, and on October 22, 1881, the court decreed that "The village in said county of Westmoreland, at Derry Station, on the Pennsylvania Railroad, be and the same is hereby erected into a borough, and shall be entitled to the several rights, privileges, and immunities conferred upon boroughs by the several acts of the 'Borough of Derry', and that the boundaries of the same should be the same boundaries fixed in the petition."

Originally called Derry Station, the name was changed to Derry so its name would not conflict with the neighboring village of New Derry, although New Derry is the older of the two communities. New Derry received its name from Derry in Northern Ireland. It was so named by the first settlers who were mainly of Scotch-Irish origin.

The first election of borough officials was held Tuesday, November 8, 1881, in the Number 28 school house. Henry Neely was appointed Judge of Elections; Alexander Wynn and Manasses Sweeney were Inspectors. The first town officials were as follows: Burgess, J.K. Russell; Council Members: Emmett Johns, John Houston, Daniel Kist, Sr., J.W. Toner, and J.G. Alexander; George S. Kiner served as clerk. Following the first election of November 8, 1881, it was decreed that the borough of Derry should become a separate election district as well as a separate school district after the end of the current school year.

When the town of Derry was incorporated as a borough in 1881, J.K. Russell, a prominent official of the railroad, was named Burgess by acclamation. At that time the term of office for the Burgess was only one year. As the time came to elect a new Burgess, Seymour Hollingsworth was nominated on the Citizen's ticket and elected to serve in 1882.

To lay out the borough limits a committee, consisting of Dr. Klingensmith, Alex Wynn and S.C. Hollingsworth was named. Dr. Klingensmith was a prominent physician of the county and Mr. Wynn was a lineman for the PRRR. The Committee soon struck a number of snags. David Brown, with large property interest, did not want to be included inside the Borough limits and another physician, Dr. Miller, was anxious to have his property in the borough so that his children could attend school in Derry instead of the Ridge School. However, Dr. Miller and Dr. Klingensmith were not on the best of terms and this caused some trouble. Finally the town was laid out, with the lines very erratic, to take care of all who had some influence, and did or did not want their property included. If the plans of Mr. Hollingsworth, the Burgess, had been carried out – Derry Borough would have been much larger than it was at that time. The other two committee members out-voted Mr. Hollingsworth.

When Dr. Charles Bernard Leitzel was a candidate for Burgess, his slogan was "Let Derry Own Its Own Water Works." He was elected Burgess – kept his campaign promise and Derry became owner of its own water company.

It had previously been owned by a Greensburg Company.

DERRY SCHOOLS

What is thought to be the oldest school was the Norris School, also known as the "Crusher School" as it was located near the Sand Crusher Plant at the southern most end of Ligonier Street, on the Charles Norris Farm. As was the custom at the time, the owner of the property on which the school was built chose the teacher(s). Built in 1861, this frame structure housed all grades in one room and remained in use until 1916-17. It later was remolded as a residence for Paul Del Costello, and after subsequent changes in ownership, burned to the ground. When this school was about to be discontinued, a new brick school was built about 1916 on the Ridge Road, now Seventh Avenue. Gertrude Smith Bush was the teacher at the time the Norris School closed and became the first teacher of this new school. Another teacher at this school was June Allshouse Walheim, with her classroom being an added frame building for accommodating the increased number of pupils.

Five Point Road School was built near the top of Derry Ridge for the several children whose families lived in the vicinity, namely the Learys, the Sticksles, The O'Briens', The Clarks, etc. Dorsey Yealy was one of the first teachers at this school, riding horseback from his home in Derry; Laura Cole also taught students here. As Derry and neighboring communities developed, these isolated families gradually left their homes to settle in the towns. The school as well as the ridge homes deteriorated from disuse and were razed by nature.

The First Ward School at the corner of Y St. and Fourth Avenue was built in 1913 as a high school, at which time the Little Brick School and Riverside Academy were discontinued. After World War I, the Little Brick School was razed. It is interesting to note that the first high school graduate was Laura (Mowry) Kelly, the one and only member of the class of 1893. Laura's father was the Derry School Superintendent at the time and at a meeting with the school board composed of thrifty town pioneers, decided that the purchase of one diploma was a needless extravagance. As Mr. Mowry could personally attest to his daughter's graduation, Laura received no diploma!

A new era of education was launched in 1955 when the Derry School District, Derry Township and New Alexandria combined to form the Derry Area Joint School System. The present Derry Area Senior High School building was built in 1961 with the central part of the main building being the former Derry Township High School which had been built in 1923. Another large addition was made in 1967 at the present junior high school. Ground was broken in 1975 for the erection of a new elementary school in this same general area.

Today, the Derry Area School District is roughly 109 square miles and contains Derry Area High School and Middle School, along with Grandview, Loyalhanna and New Derry Elementary Schools. With several major construction, renovation and improvement projects already completed in the school district in recent years, the Derry Area School District Foundation is now looking to the future with its proposed Derry Community Wellness Center. With support from the community, this outstanding project is bound to become a reality for future generations.

ETHEL SPRING LAKE AS THE TOWN WATER SUPPLY

In the late 1880's, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company used high stone "tubs," located at the corner of S. Ligonier Street and First Avenue, as its source of water. The rapid growth of the railroad demanded a greater supply, and the company purchased a cornfield on the Susan Layton farm for its water site now known as Ethel Spring Lake. A Greensburg engineer, H. S. Stark built Ethel Spring Lake about 1900. Five years later, the railroad company built a large dam near Ross Mountain Park, New Florence, PA., to accommodate its ever-increasing needs and piped water to the Derry Railroad Yards. (Now known as the High Ridge Water Company). Through negotiations with the railroad, town officials secured Ethel Spring Lake as the water supply for the community, supplementing the two water dams constructed in the ridge, south of Derry, as Derry's principal source of drinking water.

THE DERRY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

With the rapid growth of Derry as a railroad community, a trained fire-fighting group became a necessity with the Derry Volunteer Fire Company was formed in 1892, eleven years following the incorporation of Derry into a borough. Johnston Neal, a merchant and businessman, is credited as the founder and first fire chief. He devoted about 40 years of service, 10 or 11 years were served before Derry was incorporated as a borough.

A motorized fire vehicle first appeared in Derry in 1921, with the purchase of a Howe Truck. This truck carried the firemen to Derry's most tragic fire which occurred in 1923 when four members of the Perry Worman Family perished. This is the only record of a life lost in a fire in the borough. The Howe was replaced by a 600-gallon American LaFrance in 1929, and it served the community for many years. It compiled its greatest record in July, 1925, pumping several straight hours during the Derry Twp. High School fire, the highest property loss in the district. Prior to this fire, the largest fire loss recorded in the borough occurred in the morning of November 4, 1935 when the Cullen block was gutted. The damage was estimated in excess of \$65,000. Another great fire to hit the community was that of the C. Blair Lyons Garage, located on the site of the Fischer Warehouse, resulting in the destruction of two trucks, eight cars and four buses, causing over \$30,000 in damage.

For even more fun facts about Derry Area,

contact the

Derry Area Historical Society

www.derryhistory.org

DERRY FAST FACTS

Courtesy of the Derry Area Historical Society

1700's

- 1762—John Pomeroy and James Wilson became the first area settlers
- 1769—Fort Barr Built
- 1775—Derry Township Chartered
- 1789—Wallace Guthrie stone house built
- 1790—First Federal Census 285 families in Derry, 824 males, 778 females, 67 slaves, 6 bond servants
- 1799—Salem Church Built

1800's

- 1815—"Derry" (New Derry) laid out by Joseph Guthrie
- 1817—The Fulton house, a stage coach stop/Tavern is built in New Derry
(Recently renovated, be sure to visit soon!)
- 1822—Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church built
- 1842—Bear Caves first mentioned in newspaper
- 1848—Salem Church burns. Brick church built
- 1852—The first train to pass through Derry was the Henry Clay
- 1853—First Post Office built
- 1881—Derry Borough Incorporated, Derry Borough School District created
- 1893—Wooden L-shaped overhead bridge built in Derry
- 1886—First Derry Fire Company established

1900's

- 1904—Powder house in Bradenville blows up on March 5th, 4 pm.
Dynamite Hill gets its name.
- 1909—First Derry Fire Whistle
- 1910—First streets in Derry are paved
- 1912—Mastorocco's Food Market opens
- 1920—First Latrobe/Derry football game played. Derry 6, Latrobe 0
- 1930—Football Champions of Westmoreland Co.
Derry 26, Greensburg, 15
- 1958—Derry Area Pool constructed at a cost of \$50,000.00
- 1963—First musical "Bye Bye Birdie" in Derry High School
- 1977—Old Derry Post Office Burns
- 1981—Derry Celebrates centennial
- 1990—First Railroad Days held in Derry Borough
- 1995—Derry Area Historical Society formed
- 1996—Derry Cheerleaders ranked first in state
- 1997—Derry Area Historical Society starts historical rehabilitation of 180 year old log/stone building in New Derry—the Fulton House

2000's

- 2001—One-Half million dollar renovation to Derry Area pool

