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Covington Township

About 25,000 acres, including this township was purchased of the State in 1787 by Henry Drinker, father of H. W. and Richard Drinker. It has since been known as "Drinker's Beech," From the timber that covered it. In the summer of 1814 these lands were resurveyed by Jackson Torrey, of Bethany, Wayne county, into lots averaging one hundred acres each. Lots were sold at \$5 per acre on five years credit, the first two years without interest; payment to be made in lumber, shingles, labor, stock, produce, or anything the farmer had to spare.

The township of Covington was formed in 1818 from the township of Wilkes-Barre, and embraced at that time the whole of Drinker's possessions in the south part of old Luzerne county. It was named Covington at the suggestion of H. W. Drinker, in honor of Brigadier General Covington, who fell at the battle of Williamsburg, in Upper Canada.

Encampment and Clearings

The first encampment of the force of the Messrs. Drinker was made in 1815 near the mouth of Wild Meadow, now known as Mill creek, on the Lehigh river, where they built a bark shelter and slept rolled in their blankets on a bed of boughs, while a large fire blazed in front of the cabin. Now and then they were annoyed by the serenade of a school of owls attracted to the camp by the strange glare of the fire, or the piercing screams of the sleepless panther, and in damp weather by the bite of gnats, or "punkies," as they were sometimes called. Trout and venison fed them abundantly, but if they needed other provisions supplies were taken up the Lehigh from Stoddardsville in a large batteau, towed by horse power and pushed with setting pole.

The first clearing was made in Drinker's settlement, in 1815, by the late H. W. Drinker, on a ridge of land about a quarter of a mile south of his late residence, where he built a log house.

In 1792 John Delong, of Stroudsburg, was employed by Mr. Drinker, with several others to mark or cut a wagon road to these beechen possessions, from a point at or near "the twenty-one mile tree" on the north and south road, also called the "Drinker road" from the fact that it was opened principally at the expense of Henry Drinker. The road cut by Delong extended in an easterly direction, passing Lake Henry, and crossed the line of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, and thence taking a southerly course terminated on the Bell Meadow brook, a tributary of the Lehigh. After the return of the choppers the road grew full of underbrush and was a thoroughfare only to the hunter and his game. In reopening it in 1821 the inscription "Henry Drinker, 1792" was found rudely carved upon a tree. The celebrated "Drinker turnpike" was built through this township in 1828, the charter having been obtained in 1819. This road runs nearly due north and south through the township. Its terminal points were Philadelphia and Great Bend. The next road was from near J. Kitson's to Turnersville.

Among the early settlers were Edward Wardell, David Dale, Esby and William Holmes, George Frazee, John Genter, Henry Ospuck, John Thompson, Jacob Gress, Owen and John Simpson, Thomas and George White, William and John Copeland and Daniel Staples.

The first grist-mill was built in 1864, by Nicholas Marcy, in the northeast corner of the township, on Roaring brook. It is now owned by Mr. Poston and operated by A. Hinds of Moscow. The pioneer saw-mill was built in 1821, by Esby and William Holmes, and was subsequently burned. It stood on the site of William Beck's mill. A saw-mill was built about 1840 on Roarin brook, at the grist-mill of Mr. Poston, which is still operated by A. Hinds. The first steam saw-mill was built by David Dale in 1855. Another was soon after built by Daniel Staples. The next was built by David Dale & Sons, on the Spring Brook road, a little west of Daleville. This mill, four houses and twobarns were burned in May, 1880, by forest fires. The next steam saw-mill was built by William Dale & Sons, at Daleville. Each of the present mills is doing an extensive business.

In 1827, when Edward Wardell, jr., was township collector, the duplicate amounted to \$96. The territory embraced in the township at the time covered the present townships of Covington, Buck, Lehigh, Clifton, Spring Brook and Madison. There was no one living in what is now Spring Brook township. Mr. Wardell was the first justice of the peace for Covington township and served 25 years. He was 75 years of age in July, 1880.

The first settler at what is now Holgate's Mill was Mathew Hodgson, who came from London, England and built a log house at the intersection of the Lake Henry road and the Drinker turnpike. Both roads and teams were rather scarce, and to get boards for a floor and door Mr. Hodgson carried the lumber on his back from the Lehigh river –six miles. The old log cabin gave way to a frame house a little nearer the turnpike, the foundation of which is still visible. Soon after Mr. Hodgson other settlers came in.

As a great deal of the timber in this vicinity was sugar maple, sugar making in the spring was the principal business. After that was over, the pioneers would strap a portion of the sweet proceeds of their labor upon their backs and start for the store at Nobletown, in Wayne county, a distance of ten miles; there they exchanged their sugar for a few necessaries of life, such as snuff, tea, tobacco, and occasionally a little rum, just for camphor.

The pioneer who, more fortunate than his neighbor, owned a cow and ox, would hitch them together to do logging, farming and milling. The nearest mills were at Stoddardsville, down on the Lehigh and at Slocum Hollow, now Scranton. Previous to the advent of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad the product of the Holgate mills had to be carted to Philadelphia on wagons, which took ten days to make a trip.

The following justices of the peace for the township were elected in the years mentioned in connection with their names: Richard Drinker, 1840; Jacob Beesecker, 1840, 1845; Charles A Havenstrite, 1845; Mahlon R. Risler, 1848; Edward Wardell, 1850, 1858, 1863, 1868, 1873; Nathaniel Whitmore, 1850; John P. Havenstrite, 1853; Allen Hodgson, 1856, 1865; David Dale, 1876. The population of the township in 1870 was 1,182; in 1880 it had fallen to 881.

Daleville.

Daleville is the principal village of the township. The first settler here was Edward Wardell, a native of Yorkshire, England. He located here in September, 1819, having bought 250 acres of land of H. W. Drinker, at \$5 per acre. His house was of hewn logs, and stood between the site of the residence of E. Wardell and the Spring Brook road.

The next settler, coming a week later, was David Dale, also from England, after whom the village was named. His log cabin stood in the rear of the hotel now kept by Lewis Jones. He bought of H. W. Drinker the land on which most of the village is situated. The next settlers were Matthew Hodson, Robert Roseman, John Fish and Frederick Raish.

The first wheat crop in this part of the township was raised by Edward Wardell and David Dale, in 1820. It was sown in the fall of 1819. The first frame house in Daleville was built in 1826 by Edward Wardell, where he now resides. The present hotel was built in 1827, by David Dale. The pioneer blacksmith in Daleville was Thomas White. His shop stood where William Dale's store now stands. The first shoemaker was George White. His shop stood directly opposite Dale's store. Mrs. Sarah Raish was the pioneer weaver. Mr. Miller's house stood on the site of Mrs. Raish's log cabin.

The pioneer merchant in this village was Mr. Dale, the present merchant. His old store was on the opposite side of the road, at the north side of the cemetery. He commenced business here in 1831. The next store was opened the same year by Levi Lillibridge, in the front room of E. Wardell's house. The first tavern at this place was opened by David Dale in 1827. The same house is now occupied by Lewis Jones as a hotel. The next Tavern was one kept a few years by E. Wardell where he now lives. Amasa Hollister kept tavern where Frank Hollister now lives. In 1856 E. Wardell built the store opposite his present residence, where he was engaged in the mercantile business several years. The pioneer physician hereabouts was Dr. C. Frieschkorn, who is still in practice. The first couple married in Daleville (1823) were Mr. John Dale and Miss Ellen Yates, of Philadelphia. The next were E. Wardell, jr., and wife. The oldest cemetery in this township is the one opposite William Dale's store in Daleville. The land for cemetery purposes was donated by E. Wardell and D. Dale. The school-house standing opposite Dale's store was built in 1829. One was built in Turnersville in the same year. The first death in this township was that of Henry Raish in 1828. He was a son of Frederick Raish, one of the pioneer settlers, and was about eight years of age. The pioneer school was taught in 1824 by John Fish, in his own house. Some of the surviving pupils are David, William, Franklin and Mark Dale, and Allen, Susan and Harriet Hodgson. The first carrier of mail from Stroudsburg to Great Bend was William Cottrell. The route was over the Drinker turnpike, and Daleville was one of the offices at which the mails were charged. David Dale is the present one.

There are now at Daleville two churches (Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal), the steam saw-mill of W. Dale & Sons, a school house, a hotel, the blacksmith shop of M. W. Hurley, a wagon shop, the store of William Dale & Sons, and about 150 inhabitants. There is a branch railroad from the D. L. & W. at Beck's Mills to this place. The grade is such that the cars loaded at the mills at Daleville run down by gravity to the main line, and on their return mules are the motive of power.

The Methodist Episcopal society of Daleville, which is now a part of the Moscow charge, was organized in 1877, and consisted of Methodists living in that vicinity, together with several from the Methodist Protestant church in that place. D. F. Wardell, one of the latter, was appointed pastor of the new organization. Since 1878 this place has been united with Moscow in pastoral relation. In 1878 a new church edifice was dedicated, Rev. Dr. Charles H. Fowler, late editor of the Christian Advocate, and Rev. L. W. Peck, presiding elder, officiating. D. F. Waddell was appointed pastor in 1877, G. M. Colville in 1878, and W. B. Westlake, the present pastor, in 1879.

Turnersville

Was settled in 1826 by William Copeland, John Simpson, Owen Simpson, John Holgate and Godfrey Janes. Four of these men were turners by occupation, hence the name. There being a large quantity of the right kind of timber in this vicinity, inducements were offered by Henry W. Drinker, the owner of the land, mills were built, and manufacture of all kinds of brush handles was soon commenced. George Frazee, now a resident of Turnersville, worked for H. W. Drinker on the first saw-mill built here. He is the oldest resident of the place. He was born in New Jersey, September 15th, 1792; was a private in Captain Coon's Company, 16th U.S. infantry, during the war of 1812, and was in the battle of Cook's Mills. The first frame house in this place was built in 1827 by John Simpson; it is still standing.

In 1830 Rev. George Evans, of the Oneida M.E. Conference, made Turnersville one of his appointments. A class was formed and a church built, which is still standing and occupied by the Methodists, with Rev. Mr. Stanley as pastor.

Turnersville is now a farming community, as the timber is all gone, and nothing remains of the extensive turning business except some of the foundations upon which the mills stood.

Beck's Mills

The first mill here was built in 1821, by Richard Esbee. The old saw-mill was taken down several years ago, and the present large mills were built by Mr. Beck. There are several dwelling and about 50 inhabitants.

Staplesville

Was settled in November, 1866, by J. W. Brock and Daniel Staples, who built a steam saw-mill. In July 1867, Mr. Brock retired from the firm, leaving Mr. Staples sole proprietor. In 1873 Mr. Staples introduced improved machinery for making clothes-pins, and in 1874 he associated J. S. Brown with him in business. The firm continues to make all kinds of lumber, also 1,000 boxes of clothes-pins per week, of five gross; 25 men are employed.

Holgate's Mills

Cornelius Holgate, great-grandfather of the Holgate Brothers, who now operate the turning mills at this place, commenced the turning business in Roxbury, a suburb of Philadelphia, in 1775. In 1805 he transferred the business to his son, John Holgate, who in 1818 moved his brush block factory to Laurel Run (now Parsons borough), Luzerne county, and in 1826 to Turnersville. In 1841 he transferred the business to his son, Silas G. Holgate, at what is now Holgate's Mills, where the latter in turn was succeeded in 1873 by his two sons, the Holgate Brothers, who now are making all kinds of brush blocks and handles. The enterprise and thrift of this establishment are shown in the continual increase of facilities, and the extent of their orders, which far exceed the increased capacities of their mills.

Wilderness Experiences.

In the winter of 1819 and 1820, which was a severe one, the family supplies had all to be brought from Stoddardsville (18 miles), Wilkes-Barre (30 miles), or Slocum Hollow (13 miles); either on hand –sleds or on men’s shoulders, as it was very rarely that a team came from either of those places, and the settlers were not able to hire any conveyance. David Dale, father of Mark Dale, came near losing his life on one of those trips to Stoddardsville. Having gone for flour he was drawing a bag or barrel of it on a hand-sled; but not getting home when he was expected, the family, became alarmed and went to meet him. They found him about 2 miles from home almost overcome by fatigue, and he would have perished with the cold before morning.

Another incident looks very much like a “providence.” Before the raising of the first log building that Mr. Dale put up, probably the next summer, they had no meat and no way to get any; but on the morning of the raising a fawn seemingly about four or five weeks old came to where they were preparing the timbers. Not thinking of trying to kill it they drove it away, but in an hour or so it came back and would not leave them; and at the suggestion that it must have been sent to supply the lack of meat it was killed and dressed, and proved very good. So remarkably timid and wild are young deer, that Mark Dale, after sixty year’s experience with wild animals, can account for the actions of the fawn on no instinct or habit of the deer kind.

About the middle of October, 1855, a little girl named Elizabeth Pembridge got lost in the woods. “Uncle Mark” Dale, of Markhampton, near Daleville, known to be familiar with the wilderness, was appealed to for aid in the search, and shouldering his trusty rifle (“Old Precision” he called it) he set out. The child was traced to the lower end of Cabin hollow, but here all traces disappeared; and it was only after most of the searchers had gone home, tired out, that one of the few men remaining, impelled by an influence he could not understand, and disregarding repeated calls from the others, walked directly to a spot in the neighborhood of where the most thorough search had been made, and found the missing child. Mr. Dale fired his rifle three times to announce the discovery to all interested, and the long and anxious search ended with great rejoicing.

Two or three years after this Uncle Mark led a search for a man who had wandered into the forest in a fit of insanity, and again had the pleasure of being with the successful party and announcing the glad tidings to the others through the medium of “Old Precision.”