

Washington and Jefferson were rich men. Monroe could not have been called a poor man but Franklin the 15th child of a poor candle maker had nothing.

Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston. Because of the meager circumstances that existed in his home he moved to Philadelphia where it is said that he spent his last three cents for a loaf of bread. Having been raised in a stern New England Calvinist philosophy and believing in the help of God, he did not see his situation as being hopeless. He went out and borrowed some books and began to read. In time he became the most learned man in the colony of Pennsylvania.

It was Franklin who invented many things connected with electricity. He had to invent words to describe what he was doing, as armature, battery, and condenser. He became the leading publisher in Pennsylvania. The invention of the bifocal lens is credited to him. He established the first fire department in Philadelphia, became affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania by becoming president of the board of trustees. He was the only man to sign all these important documents: the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Treaty of Alliance in 1778 and the Constitution of the United States of America in 1787. He was instrumental in securing aid from France for the Colonies during the Revolutionary War. He helped to establish the U.S. postal system and to make the present map of the United States.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude that we salute the memory of Benjamin Franklin and all those other great leaders who have given us so rich a heritage. In 1976 as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of our nation we are amazed at the wisdom of our founders.

As we celebrate the 200 years of our great national achievements we wonder what the role of Wayne Township has been during these years and what heritage we can leave to those who must follow us.

It is true that we had no part in the momentous happenings in Philadelphia in 1776 nor have we contributed anything to the invention of the automobile, the airplane, or even the atomic bomb, but our community like thousands of small communities all over America, has made a contribution to civilization that will be beneficial to future generations.

Wayne Township provides a clean and healthy environment where all children have equal opportunities for growth and education in wholesome and rewarding community living. We have lived close to the ideals and principles that our founding fathers sought for their new nation. During the past quarter century our population has increased considerably as many families from other areas have chosen this as a desirable place to live. We have welcomed them and have been proud to share our heritage with them.

It is our hope that with the guidance of our Creator and the inspiration of the heritage which we proudly claim that Wayne Township will long remain a leader among the communities of our nation for years to come.

ANCIENT INHABITANTS THE INDIANS

The Indians in this section in the early days were a remnant of the Shawanese, Naticoke and Delaware tribes. Three of the original six nations with whom William Penn made the treaty. The others being the Susquehannas, Hurons and Eries. There existed a continuous chain of Indian villages from the Delaware to the upper waters of the Susquehanna. One of the chain of war paths extended to Sunbury, where stood Fort Augusta, named in honor of the daughter of George the Second. Schuylkill county was not on the chain of war paths, but the savage marauders raided the locality as history shows.

Shamokin an Indian village stood on the present site of Sunbury, from which Shamokin afterward took its name.

The Indians that remained in this vicinity after the Indian War were not of one powerful tribe but included some Mochicans in addition to those indicated above. The Moravians farther southeast made strenuous efforts to Christianize the red man. Rev. David Zeisburger converted Shekilling, the chief of the Delawares. The war of extermination waged against them so reduced their number that those that scattered beyond the pale of their tribal restrictions were considered harmless, but falsely as the settlers discovered to their undoing.

Nothing very definite can be ascertained as to Indian occupation of Wayne Township previous to the beginning of white settlement. On the farm of Michael Fritz various implements and weapons of Indian make have been discovered pointing to the probability that at an early period there was an Indian fort there. At some distance from this place, but on the same farm, it is believed a permanent Indian dwelling once stood. Four or five hundred yards Northwest from the "Old mill property", in a field now under cultivation, are several graves supposed to be those of a family who were massacred by the Indians.

In 1775, near what is now Friedensburg, a neighbor from Panther Valley went over to Henry Hartman's house and found him lying on his face in the doorway. He had been scalped by the Indians. Two men were found scalped on the State road to Sunbury and they were buried by the settlers who turned out to hunt the red fiends.

In December of 1756, Michael Ney was killed near Summit Station. He and his brother were ambushed by two Indians while gathering firewood. One Indian was being badly beaten by Michael when the other Indian came to his rescue and killed Ney. Michael's brother pretended he was dead, later crept away and warned his family.

Many of the settlers fled into Berks County in the wake of the raids, but erection of Fort Henry gave them some protection and they moved back. Pursuing forces had difficulty finding the Indians after the raids. One of their hiding places was the "Red Hole", a deep gap between Klingerstown and Fort Henry, four miles east of Pine Grove.

After the forts were built, the raids halted for a time. Abandonment of the forts after 1758 was followed by more Indian raids in 1763. On September 8 of that year, the Indians murdered four children of Nicholas Miller in the Long Run Valley. They returned the same day to John Fincher's mill in Schuylkill Haven and killed him, his wife, and two sons and captured his daughter.

How "Old Dress" scared the Indians in the great Indian massacre just after the French and Indian War shows what a strategist can do if he has courage and is endowed with enough presence of mind. The Dress family lived in the Panther Valley (Bender Thal) on or near the farm now owned and occupied as a summer home by Doctor B_____, a leading physician in the town of Pottsville about six miles Northwest.

The Indians had been friendly at first, but since success was beginning to crown the efforts of the hardy pioneers, there were mutterings of discontent among them, and they had upon one or two occasions shown their hostility, but no real depredations have been perpetrated as yet.

Murder had been committed farther south, defenseless women and children were scalped or taken into captivity, their homes burned and their cattle driven away and the settlers were tortured beyond measure, but "Bender Thal" remained unmolested.

Word came one day that there was an uprising among the Indians and that they were headed for the Valley. The block stockade, Fort Lebanon, near what is now Auburn, had served upon several occasions as a place of refuge for the settlers when in danger of being attacked; and thither the now thoroughly frightened pioneers in "Bender Thal" made their preparations to flee.

The women and children were gathered together and placed in charge of Zerbe; Kemmerling and Markel gathered the cattle to drive them to a place of safety. The Dress family formed part of the little caravan that turned toward the fort, but "Old Dress" was obdurate. He would not go.

He was the first settler to discover the rich farming land in that locality. He had spent several years in the "Thal" returning again and again to it and finally brought to it his wife and family. The Indians had given him the first kernels of corn which he planted as seed and in turn he had shown them how to fashion the rude farming implements they used, the iron for which he brought from the Pott furnace on Maxatawny Creek.

Once he had opened a great abscess for "Sagawatch" the chief of the mongrel tribe and dressed it with home-made salve. Not without some display of the necromancer's art, it must be confessed, for he knew he was powerless among them, and "Sagawatch" was cured. He had frequently treated their "boils" with which they were afflicted, the result of dirt and squalor and improper food, for they were a lazy set, and looking upon him as something of a medicine man, the Indians called him the "little White Father", and believed, some of them, that he had supernatural powers.

It was only the week before that an apparently friendly set had visited him. The mother had just completed the family baking in the huge Dutch oven back of the log cabin and on the pleas of wanting a present from the "Little White Father" every one of the large brown well-baked loaves of bread had found their way into a sack with other things they managed to lay hands on, and the good wife had another batch of bread to bake.

Just a glance at "Old Dress" would show that he was not a man to be trifled with. Short, stout, broad of girth, and with sinewy muscles that stood out like whip cords, he was the picture of health and alert activity. He wore his hair, which was scant, for he was partially bald, all combed up after the fashion of those days into a single tuft on the top of his head. This tuft from long practice stood up straight. If anyone could circumvent the Indians, the settlers knew he could. There was little time for parleying and the women and children with their leaders were soon out of sight.

Dress made his way hurriedly to the hillside and screened from view by some friendly bushes watched the approach of the redskins. They came some seated on their Indian ponies, the young braves running at the sides of the old men. Smearred with their war paint and with their war toggery on, beating their tom-toms and yelling like mad, they struggled up the defile.

He could not count them, although he at first tried. There was Sagawatch, too, the greasy villain and traitor. What could he do single handed against so many, with his one old flint lock musket and home-made cartridges and Marie not here to help load.

He fingered the tuft of hair, his top-knot which he knew would soon be hanging with the other smoking and gory' scalps from the belts of the foremost of the band, and his mind was made up. Taking an extra hitch at his rusty brown linsey woolsey trousers and rolling up the sleeves of his yellow grey woolen shirt, he ran as hard as he could in the direction of the oncoming murderous crew and in full view of them to the crest of the near-by hill. Screaming and yelling at the top of his voice and wildly gesticulating with his long bare arms and pointing with his fingers; "Come on, Boys", he yelled. "Here are the Indians". (Cum Buva, Dah Sin Sie, Die Incha) He screamed until he was purple with rage and told one imaginary party, with the wildest of signs and commands, to close up the defile and prevent their escape, the others should file up the left and right and surround them, and the rest should follow him. "Sagawatch" the murderous "tuyfel" could understand German, he knew, for he himself had taught him many words in the current vernacular. And then still screaming as loud as he could and doubly gesticulating, he ran down the hill with all his might toward the red warriors, who thought they were being attacked by as least a battalion of soldiers under command of "Old Dress", and they showed the white feather and turned tail and fled as fast as they could in the direction in which they had come.

All night "Old Dress" watched at the single window of the little log hut. His blunderbuss and old musket ready, he would sell his life as dearly as possible, if they returned; but they never did.

When the Kemmerling's, Zerbe's and the others returned "Old Dress" was quietly sitting in front of his cabin mending an old fish net. The cattle had all been recovered by him from their impounding in the clearings in the mountain fastness and returned to their rightful owners. The cows had been milked, the cream was ready for the good wives to churn and everything was going on as usual. The Indians never molested the settlers again, and even to this day "Old Dress" is a hero to the descendants of the families of the early settlers of "Bender Thal".